

## Of Mission and Vision Statements and Their Potential Impact on Employee Behaviour and Attitudes: The Case of A Public But Profit-Oriented Tertiary Institution

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### Abstract

*Research on mission and vision statements as strategic management tools has often been limited to private for-profit organisations and more so to the experience of senior executives and managers. This paper reports the perspectives of employees of a unique public but profit-oriented tertiary institution with a renewed corporate mandate in a developing country. Based on a survey of 120 employees, this paper explored employees' state of awareness of mission and vision statements, perceptions about their level of ownership and whether the institution's mission and vision statements impact/can impact on their behaviour and attitudes. The results indicated that most employees have first hand knowledge of the mission and vision statements though they do not frequently come across them; also the level of knowledge of the components/contents and perceptions about ownership are low. Employees see ownership as a prerequisite for the statements to impact on their behaviours and attitudes.*

**Keywords:** Mission and vision statements, Employee behaviour and attitudes, Strategic management, Public tertiary institution, Ghana

### Introduction

Mission and vision statements have been overwhelmingly accepted as an indispensable part of the strategic management process for organizations of all types; be it public sector, not-for-profit, private, for profit, a multinational or a small and medium scale enterprise. It is widely believed that mission and vision statements impact on strategy and most aspects of organizational performance. Most firms have mission and vision statements. In the worst case scenario, mission and vision statements are implied implicitly. Supporting the above argument, Bart *et al.* (2001) posited, referring to Bain *et al.* (1996) study, that mission statements had consistently been shown to be the top-rated management tool deployed by senior managers during each of the ten years prior to his study. Mullane (2002) argued and supported it empirically that mission and vision statements are useful for practical day-to-day operations, taking a contrary view to those who assert they are archaic documents that are typically exhibited as wall hangings.

Several works (Campbell, 1997; Mullane 2002; Rigby, 1994; Matejka *et al.*, 1993; Campbell and Yeung, 1991) have delineated how mission and vision statements can be used to build a common and shared sense of purpose and also serve as conduit through which employees' focus are shaped. Other schools of thought believe mission and vision statements tend to motivate, shape behaviours, cultivate high levels of commitment and ultimately impact positively on employee performance (Mullane, 2002; Collins and Poras, 1991; Daniel, 1992, Campbell, 1989; Ireland and Hitt, 1992, Klemm *et al.*, 1991, Drucker 1959).

Having accepted at least notionally the potential strategic role of mission and vision statements, managers, researchers and academics have tried to explore empirically their importance, especially in terms of how the components impact on organizational performance since 1987 when the first attempt to investigate the relationship was made (see Pearson and David, 1987). Yet most of the earlier empirical works have concentrated on senior executives and managers; if not investigating how they formulate their mission and vision statements then it is about how comprehensive their mission statements are and how they impact on performance. The perspective of the employee and, therefore, the larger work force has remained relatively neglected.

For instance despite the mission's significant and fundamental role in the management and leadership of organizations, we know relatively little about how employees perceive the missions and how these perceptions relate to other organisational attitudes such as satisfaction and behaviours such as turnover (Brown and Yoshioka, 2003). While studies suggest that mission and vision statements have a positive impact on profitability and can increase shareholder equity, they also reported that almost 40 percent of employees do not know or understand their company's mission and vision (Bart and Tabone, 1998). There is therefore the need to explore and establish whether the case is widespread. This study is also motivated by the fact that Africa-specific cases are woefully lacking. The paper reports a study conducted among the workforce of a unique organization- a Ghanaian public tertiary institution that is profit-orientated to ascertain their perspectives on whether the institution's mission and vision statements impact or could potentially impact their behaviour and attitudes. More specifically, the research examined:

- The state of awareness of an existing mission and vision statements and its purpose.
- The state of awareness of the content/components of mission and vision statements and how it relates to them as employees.
- Whether the institution's mission and vision statements impact or may impact their behavioural choices and attitudes.

### **Mission and vision statements: conceptual and definitional issues**

Many different organizations use different vocabularies to communicate strategy, some do so blatantly in an effort to portray uniqueness whilst others according to Sufi and Lyons (2003) confuse them unknowingly. There is no doubt in the strategic management literature about the distinctiveness of mission and vision statements. This notwithstanding it is not uncommon for organizations to capture their mission and vision statements in a single statement (see Sufi and Lyons, 2003) for that of Hilton hotels.

Mission statements are widely believed to be antecedents to any strategy formulation effort (Thompson and Strickland 1992; Wheelen and Hunger, 1998; Lyles *et al.* 1993). More fundamentally, mission statements are supposed to capture the overriding purpose of an organization in line with the values and expectations of stakeholders and should typically answer the questions: 'what business are we in?' (Johnson *et al.*, 2008); and 'what is our business for?' (Drucker, 1973). In furtherance of these arguments, mission statements are said to do a good job in capturing corporate level strategy in terms of scope, boundaries and value creation (Johnson, 2008; David; 1993). Mission statements have been reported as a broad overarching framework around which other strategic concerns like vision, strategic intent and capabilities, goals, objectives, core values, behavioural standards, business models etc evolve (Campbell and Tawadey, 1992; Lynch, 2000).

The literature is inundated with those scholars who believe that before writing a mission statement, leaders in the organization must have an idea of what is in store for the future and thus the vision is the foundation for the mission statement. The vision provides a strategic direction, which is the springboard for the mission and related goals. Whilst this element of discourse exists, there is overwhelming consensus about the future orientation of a vision statement as opposed to that of a mission statement. Logically no organization wants to remain static; it is not uncommon to come across what is often referred to as a 'dream' that a founder of an organization has. A vision is meant to evoke powerful and compelling mental images of the desired future states of their organizations. 'Dreaming' and aspirations about tomorrow is a defining tenet of entrepreneurial organizations as well as those organizations whose strategy formulation process could be described as entrepreneurial according to Mintzberg and Waters (1985). Vision statements are supposed to be challenging and ambitious yet workable enough to evoke employees' ingenuity as far as its realization is concerned. Core values are enduring principles, ideologies and worldviews that the founding fathers of organization hold in high esteem; these are sometimes referred to 'organizational vision' (Sufi and Lyons, 2003). The enduring nature of these core values according to Sufi and Lyons (2003) must provide the toast for a vision for that matter. Authors such as Hussey (1998) and Mintzberg and Quinn (1996) explained that the vision statement should include core values or core ideologies that distinguish one organization from another.

### **Mission and vision statements: the debate about their relevance**

Do mission and vision statements matter? Piercy and Morgan (1994) and Simpson (1994) are amongst the many who questioned the usefulness and benefits of mission statements.

A careful look at the literature however presents an interesting dichotomy of arguments. There are those strategists who question the need at all for mission and vision statements on one hand and those who believe creating one is good, but using it is even better. Sharing a thought in these arguments, Mullane (2002) explained that it is not the contents of the mission statements that stirs debate, rather it is the process used to prepare the document and how the finished document is employed in the organization that comes to question. Most often than not mission and vision statements are thought of as a creation of senior management largely reflecting a mandatory formal process which product is either an obscured document that only is mentioned in annual reports or tacked up as a wall hanging that almost immediately gets forgotten about. Goett (1997) was one of the authors who critiqued the pro-mission and vision statement arguments based on these observations. Calfree (1993) observed that mission and vision statements developed this way are better communicated to Wall Street rather than those within the organization as they tend to reflect messages about growth and profitability. One of the main objections of those from the anti-mission and vision school of thought is that too many of these statements sound generic and are not actionable (see Goett, 1997; Simpson 1994). It has also been argued that people often mistake vision statements for mission statements (Sufi and Lyons, 2003); creating more confusion than clarity.

The body of literature and research supporting the relevance of mission and vision statements to organizations however far outweighs the opposing view. Probably there is a considerable attempt by academics and practitioners to legitimize a tradition long established. This crusade has triggered in its wake empirical studies of all forms to make a case for the need and relevance of mission and vision statements. A study by Rigby (1994) rated mission statements second of all used tools particularly because they believe it is a useful ingredient in organizational integration which gets everyone focused on objectives and working together to pull in the same direction. Numerous studies have also delineated this ‘rally-around the flag’ type of contribution that mission and vision statements do (Klemm *et al.*, 1991; Coulson-Thomas, 1992; Raynor, 1988).

There seems to be an overwhelming consensus that mission and vision statements are communication tools for both internal and external stakeholders. They portray organizational image and uniqueness. Lynch (2000) made a strong case for mission and vision statements as tools for communicating organizations uniqueness in terms of ownership, resources or environmental circumstances. The managers of Hilton hotels believe their mission statement contains elements that distinguish it from other businesses (Sufi and Lyons, 2003). According to Germain and Cooper (1990) these statements communicate public image of the firm to important stakeholders and groups in the firm’s task environment. Internally mission and vision statements are believed to communicate desirable attitudes, work ethic, cultures, and values that employees can operationalise in their choice of actions and inactions. Karami (2001) suggested that a mission statement focused on customer values can lead to creation of a customer service culture and increased levels of customer satisfaction.

According to Bartkus *et al.* (2004) the primary role of a mission statement is to communicate the strategic direction of the organization to stakeholders in order to guide strategic planning. In study of USA, Japanese and European businesses motivation and inspiration of employees strongly featured as the second most important objective for mission statements (Bartkus *et al.* 2004). Mission statements are deemed relevant to the extent that they deliver high levels of motivation and inspiration to employees. Some authors like Bartkus (2004) have studied and have attempted to establish independent outcomes- satisfaction, behaviours, motivation, commitment, performance, and inspiration etc. as impacts that mission and vision statements might have on employees (see also Mullane, 2002) and Forbes and Seena, 2006). The vast majority however have modeled a set of dependent relationships that should ultimately lead to improved performance.

Bart *et al.* (2001) found that mission statements could positively affect employee behaviour which had a direct effect on firm financial performance and this could only happen when internal policies/programs are derived from the statement. Hussey (1998) explained the ‘interdependent theory’ and posited that objectives are derived from vision, linked to the measurement of corporate progress, and cascaded down to personal performance. Majetka *et al.* (1993) suggested that mission statements could induce desirable behaviours if it is first clearly communicated and reinforced through the reward system. Another dependent relationship they stated was the need for the mission statement to be shared among employees before it could be effective as a behavioural guide. In the views of Peters and Waterman (1982), shared ideology is a source of motivation for employees primarily, which then drives behaviour. In an attempt to establish a relationship between mission statement and firm performance in terms of financial outcomes Bart *et al.* (2001) developed a model based on the relationships among various mission constructs.

Lastly, a stream of mission and vision statement research has linked the development of mission and vision statements to the foundations of survival and growth of any business (Analui and Karami, 2002; Falsey, 1989; Smith and Fleck 1987; Churchill and Lewis, 1983, Levitt, 1960).

### **Mission and vision statements: a review of its components**

The length and content of mission and vision statements may vary; some broad others narrow. Fundamentally vision statements include and capture a myriad of stakeholder values and expectations; more importantly how the organization creates value for its stakeholders (Johnson *et al.*, 2008). According to Mullane (2002) a typical mission statement identifies key stakeholders and states the organisation's commitment to meet these stakeholders' needs. He went on to suggest the concept of 'measurables' as key to the practical application of the mission: These 'measurables' are hybrid of goals and objectives. He observed in a study of the casket making subsidiary of a diverse US corporation that these corporate 'measurables' were used to create the company mission statement. Forbes and Seena (2006) has categorised the components into broad strategic imperatives of financial objectives, geographic scope, distinctive competence. Various practitioners and academics seem to converge on some common themes that a typical and effective mission statement includes or should include (see Table I).

**Table I: Common mission themes**

Theme	Advocates
Overriding purpose of the organization	(Johnson <i>et al.</i> , 2008; Sufi and Lyons 2003; Want, 1986; Karami, 2001; Rarick and Vitton, 1995)
Basic beliefs, philosophies, tenets, principles, values, aspirations of the organization	(Fred 1996; Campbell and Tawadey, 1992; Pearce, 1982; Want, 1986; Ackoff, 1996; Raynor, 1998; Baetz and Bart, 1996)
Defining organisations's customers	(Abell, 1980; Pearce, 1982; Fred 1996; Campbell and Tawadey, 1992)
Organisation's scope and boundaries in terms of products, markets and geography	(Johnson 2008; McGinins 1981; Pearce, 1982; Campbell and Tawadey, 1992; Fred,1996; David 1993; Baetz and Bart, 1996)
Organisation's commitment to financial and economic objectives	(Pearce, 1982; Want, 1986; Fred, 1996, Baetz and Bart, 1996)
Organisation's commitment to long term survival and growth	(Campbell and Tawadey, 1992; Fred, 1996; O'Gorman and Doran,1999)
Organisation's identity, distinctive capabilities and basis for competitive advantage	(Johnson et al. 2008; Lynch, 2000; Pearce, 1982; McGinnis, 1981; Ackoff, 1986, Want, 1986; Baetz and Bart, 1996)
How the organization aims to create value for stakeholders including shareholders, employees, customers etc	(Johnson <i>et al.</i> ,2008; Abell, 1980; Ackoff, 1986, McGinnis, 1981; Campbell and Tawadey, 1992; Baetz and Bart, 1996 O'Gorman and Doran,1999)

The literature on the components of a mission statement is clear and unambiguous about the most frequent attributes used universally. However, Sufi and Lyons (2003), in a study that included some of the largest global hospitality enterprises introduced an industry context - appreciating the peculiarities of different industries. Sufi and Lyons (2003), for instance, suggested that managers in the hospitality industry must keep the components of the mission statements simple because of these peculiarities- much of the industry is composed of small units, even if large firms own them; being an international industry, mission statements must translate into many languages and cultures; also the level of franchising requires a simple, widely understood and shared mission.

### **Research methodology and scope**

#### **Population and sampling frame**

The institution studied is a corporate body with academic, financial and administrative autonomy. Currently the institution is serving as a "Centre of Excellence" for training in leadership, business management and public administration for clients in Ghana and countries from the West African region including Liberia, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. It also provides a forum for discussion and resolution of important contemporary national and international issues.

This institution was chosen because it provided a unique model for exploring the topic having witnessed a change in mandate from a purely management development institute to a public tertiary institution with its associated renewed mission and vision. Unlike the others, this institution is the only self-financing public tertiary institution in Ghana since it is off government subvention.

The study population included about 450 employees of the institute. Deans, Heads and Directors of departments, schools, and units were excluded from the study in line with the purpose of the study. The employees were stratified into faculty, senior administrative staff, middle level staff, and support staff as per the staff categorization in the institution's statutes. A stratified purposive and judgmental sampling approach was employed; first to enable the inclusion of every staff category and to aid comparisons amongst the different categories. Second some level of judgment was needed in selecting the size of the sample in each staff category to reflect a familiarity and comprehension of the topic and issues at hand. Vella *et al.* (2009) employed this design in a related study of employee perspectives.

### **Data collection technique and procedure**

The main research instrument employed was a survey questionnaire including mainly closed but some open-ended questions. The closed questions were primarily in the form of five-point Likert scale whilst the open-ended left blank spaces for additional comments from respondents. These allowed for a mix of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Analui and Karami (2002) in a previous and related study used this research instrument. The popularity of survey questionnaire in this area of research has been corroborated by a later study (Forbes and Seena, 2006) who researched the effect of introducing a single mission statement into an association of 18 not-for-profit hospitals by investigating the views of different groups of employees.

Survey questionnaires were personally distributed to participants with the assistance of some Support staff of the institution. A cover letter which explained the aims and motives of the research and also assurances of confidentiality of information and their sources accompanied the questionnaire. To generate interest and encourage participation, participants were schooled on the potential benefits of the results of the research to them. The set of questions asked employees to achieve the objectives of the research were put into three broad categories- "awareness issues", "ownership issues" and "impact issues". This categorization is an adaptation of Bart *et al.* (2001), arguably one of the first researchers who attempted to study the relationship among various mission constructs (such as mission content, satisfaction with the mission, mission organizational alignment) and their effect on employee behaviour and most importantly, their collective relationship with financial outcomes. The second reason for the broad categorization of the issues is policy implications. Subsequently, the leadership of the organization can work out more targeted and systematic interventions around these three broad categories. Data was collected from May 2010 through October 2010. Within each staff category, simple random sampling was applied; the number of staff selected for each category depended on the likelihood of familiarity and comprehension of the topic under investigation. According to Shepherd and Mathews (2000), the main concern is understandability of the questions.

A total of 160 questionnaires were distributed. Based on the sampling criteria discussed above Faculty were targeted with 60 questionnaires whilst 30 were sent to Senior administrative staff. Forty (40) were distributed to the Middle level staff and 30 to Support staff. This sample size is justified for the purposes of the study since Faculty and Senior administrative staff who are expected to be provide more quality responses because of their better understanding of the issues at hand received the highest number of questionnaires when their total population is compared to those of the other two staff categories.

A total of 120 responses were received and analysed as a representative sample of the employees; a high and satisfactory response rate of 75% was recorded.

### **Findings and discussions**

#### **Background of respondents**

Eighty (67%) of the 120 employees who completed and returned the survey were male while only 40 (33%) were female. This is a reflection of the fact that female employees represent 31% of the employee population of the institution as of the time of this study.

In terms of the staff category of respondents 43 (36%) were Faculty; 11(9%) were Senior administrative staff; 29 (24%) were Support staff and 37 (31%) were Middle level staff (see table II). Also majority of the respondents (73%) have been working in the institution for periods spanning one to five years; 18 % have been working less than one year and 9% more than five years.

**Table II: The composition of the sample**

Staff category	Responses	Percentage of responses
Faculty	43	36%
Senior administrative staff	11	9%
Middle level staff	37	31%
Support staff	29	24%
Total	120	100%

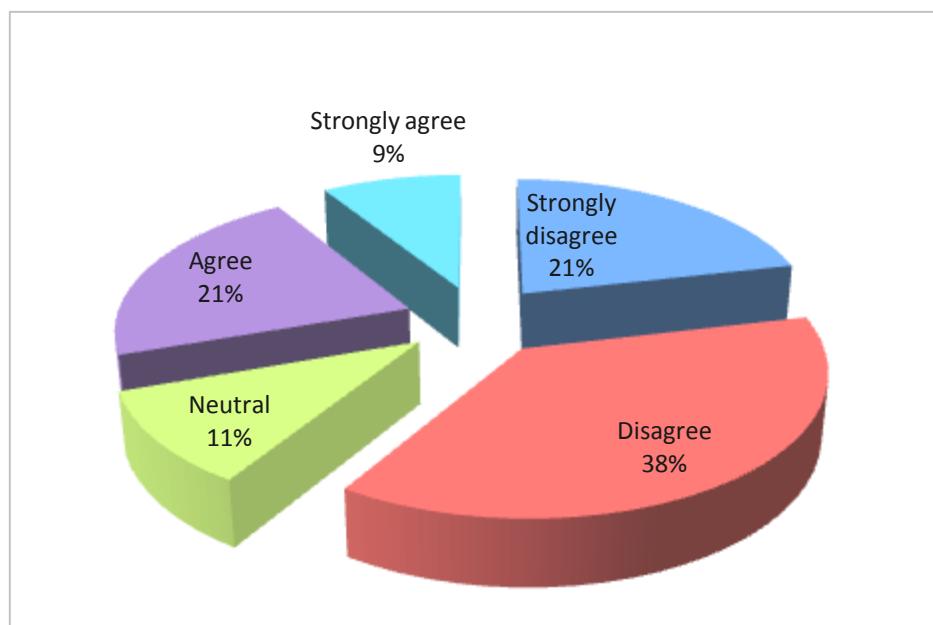
### State of awareness and knowledge of mission and vision statements and their components

The awareness section of the survey was intended to capture employees' level of awareness and knowledge of the institution's mission and vision statements and its components. In a similar study, Brown and Yoshioka (2003) employed and defined 'awareness' as how salient the mission is in employees' minds.

The data collected showed that the majority (97.5%) were aware that the institution has mission and vision statements. Second, they were asked to score on a five-point scale (Strongly disagree = 5; Disagree = 4; Neutral = 3; Agree = 2; Strongly agree = 1) whether their awareness of the mission and vision statements were a result of the fact that an institution of that caliber surely would have mission and vision statements or whether they have first hand knowledge at the other extreme. As should be expected some employees, 10 (9%) expect the institute to have mission and vision statements hence their awareness is by default; however a greater proportion clearly have either seen or have first hand knowledge of the mission and vision statements (see figure 1) contrary to observations by (Bart and Tabone, 1998) that almost 40 percent of employees do not know their company's mission and vision. The reason for this observation might be that the majority of respondents have had higher levels of business and management education and thus have some knowledge of the place of mission and vision statements in organizations. Invariably, a middle level staff had her thoughts about the need for first hand knowledge and better still how to operationalise the institute's mission and vision statements as follows:

*"The institute's mission and vision statements should be made known to every employee at the time of employment or stated in their employment contracts so it serves as a guide to their performance"*

**Figure 1: Agreement on whether awareness of mission and vision statements is by default rather than first hand knowledge**



The most common places where employees see the mission and vision statements were probed; 20 employees however did not respond to this inquiry. The findings turned out that the institute's website was the most common place accounting for 32% and vacancy publication turned out to be the least with only 3% of employees coming across the institute's mission and vision statements by this way (see table III). Bart (2001) suggested that one of the means of communicating and disseminating mission statements is through the internet by posting it on an organisation's website. Websites have become powerful communication tools globally; thus most organizations are resorting to it as a means of reaching their stakeholders.

**Table III: Places where mission and vision statements are seen**

Places	Responses	Percentage of responses
<b>Institute website</b>	32	32%
<b>Other institute-published literature</b>	21	21%
<b>Institute annual report</b>	15	15%
<b>New employee induction/orientation/training exercise</b>	14	14%
<b>Wall hanging/display on institute premises</b>	10	10%
<b>Other sources</b>	5	5%
<b>Vacancy publication</b>	3	3%
<b>Total</b>	100	100%

According to the literature (Karami, 2001; Bartkus, 2004 ), mission and vision statements are strategic tools that are meant to continually communicate desirable attitudes, work ethic, cultures, values that employees can operationalise in their choice of actions and inactions. The study therefore investigated the frequency with which employees come across the mission and vision statement after they first saw them. In the comments of a Middle level staff:

*“....it is only upon employment as staff that one neglects the duty of finding out more about the company ..... expecting management to ‘tutor’ them about it”.*

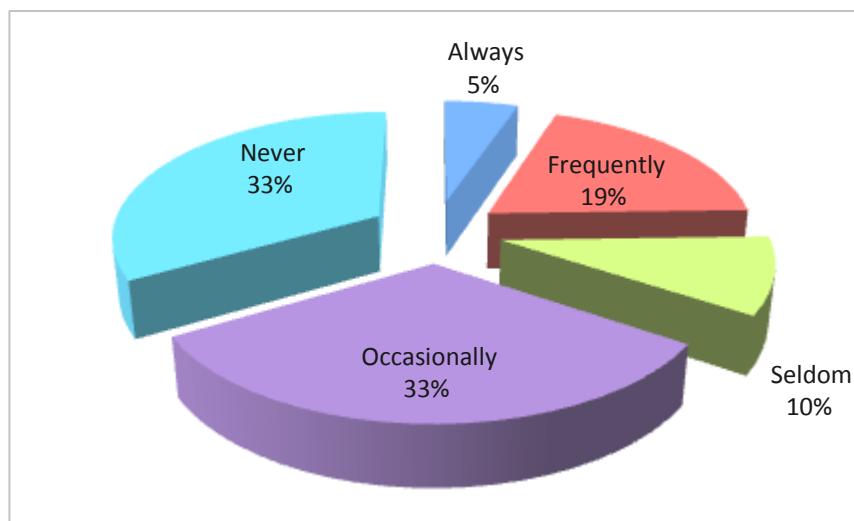
Invariably, the tendency for an employee to suddenly loose interest in mission or vision statement after getting employed is rife. From the view point of this employee it can be suggested that employees tend to seek information on potential employers' mission and vision prior to employment. By means of a five-point Likert scale (Never = 1; Occasionally = 2; Seldom = 3; Frequently = 4; Always = 5), respondents scored how frequent they saw the institute's mission and vision statements. As shown in figure 2, more than half of the respondents either have never seen (32%) or occasionally see (33%) the mission and vision statements since the first time they saw it. The low frequency levels may be attributed to the fact the institute's mission and vision statements are either not readily displayed or made reference to in the day to day operations of the institute. The most common place where they are seen is the institute's website (see table III) so that when an employee either by job description or interest fail to visit the institute's website, he or she is not likely to frequently come across the institute's mission and vision statements. A faculty member of the Business School expressing his opinion on this inquiry wrote that:

*“Vision and mission statements are the map and demarcating boundary hence the more vigorously the institute preach and imbue them in the community, the more results will it achieve”*

In what seems like alternatives for practically fulfilling the suggestions by the above faculty member, a Senior administrative staff advocates as follows:

*“I suggest at least the mission statement should be put boldly on a bill board at the institute for everyone to read, in so doing it becomes part of every staff”*. Meanwhile a Middle level staff thinks:

*“Every employee must have a copy of the mission and vision statement and be made to understand; they should be reminded from time to time during durbars and other meetings”*

**Figure 2: Frequency with which mission and vision statements were seen**

Comparisons were made between staff categories to ascertain whether there exists some relationship between the staff categories (Senior members comprising Faculty and Senior administrative staff and junior members comprising Middle level and Junior staff) and the frequency with which they come across the mission statements. Since the sources where employees see these statements (see table III) are equally available to both senior and junior members it is believed there is no association. Based on this line of reasoning, the following hypothesis was developed and tested using Chi-square:

Ho: There is no association between staff category and frequency with which statements are seen

Ha : There is an association between staff category and frequency with which statements are seen

The results are shown in table IV. Contrary to expectations, we failed to accept the null hypothesis (Ho) meaning that there exists some association ( $p$ - value = 0.010 at 5% significance level)

Further a possible association between number of years in employment and frequency was tested with Ho and Ha as follows:

Ho: There is no association between number of years in employment and frequency with which statements are seen

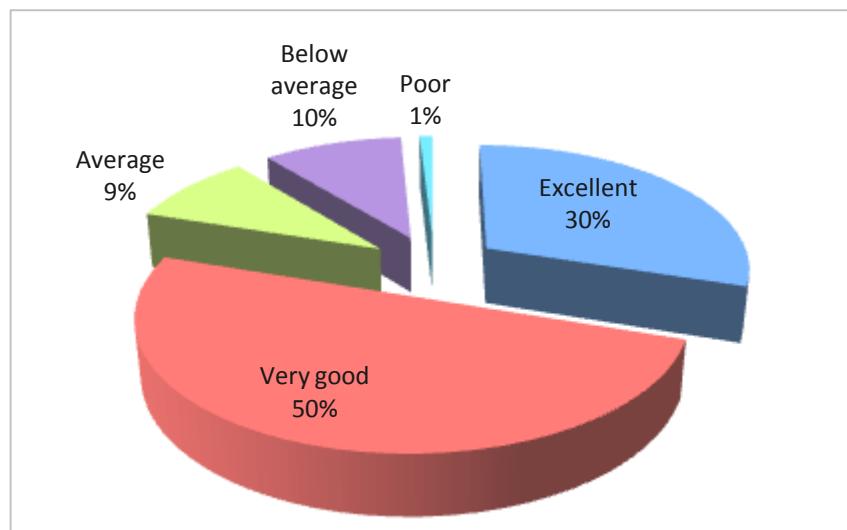
Ha: There is an association between number of years in employment and frequency with which statements are seen.

The null hypothesis was not accepted by the test ( $p$ -value = 0.000 at 5% significance level) either. Hence some association between number of years in employment and the frequency with which the statements are seen has been established (see table IV). Perhaps depending on how long or short an employee has been in the institution's employment, he or she would have seen the mission and vision statements more or less frequently. A careful look at table III shows that the second and third most common sources of the institute's mission and vision statements are other institute-published literature and annual reports respectively; invariably longer serving employees see these a lot more. Though researchers from the anti-mission statement school of thought disagree, much of the mission and vision statement literature identify wall hangings/display on premises as the most useful way of continually communicating an organisation's mission and vision to its stakeholders (see Bart et al, 2001). The differences that exist between length of service and the frequency with which mission statements are seen may be because the wall hanging/display strategy has not been adopted. With this strategy both new and old employees can continually be communicated to.

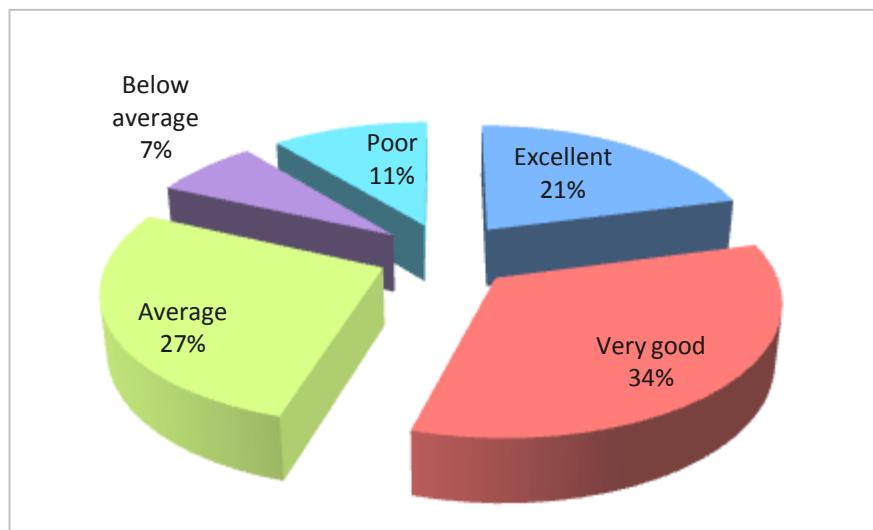
**Table IV: Chi-Square test results for various relationships**

<b>Relationship tested</b>	<b>P-values (significant at 5% level)</b>	<b>Ho hypothesis</b>
Staff category and frequency of seeing statements.	0.010	not accepted
Staff category and level of knowledge of components of statements.	0.001	not accepted
Number of years in employment and frequency with which statements are seen.	0.001	not accepted

In terms of the knowledge of the purpose of the institute's vision and mission statements, respondents had to indicate their level of knowledge on a five-point Likert scale as ( Excellent = 5; Very good = 4; Average = 3; Below average = 2; Poor = 1). As shown in figure 3, knowledge on the purpose of the mission and vision statements is widespread; 88% of employees who responded to this question either have excellent or very good knowledge of the purpose of the mission and vision statements.

**Figure 3: Level of knowledge of the purpose of the institute's mission and vision statements**

Further, in line with suggestions in the literature (see Johnson *et al.*, 2008; Mullane, 2002), employees' knowledge of the components/content of the institute's mission and vision statement were investigated. Knowledge of the components/content of mission and vision statements is very critical to the objectives of this study. Mission and vision statements are supposed to communicate both the organisation's expectations of employees and as well as the organisation's commitment to meeting the needs of this group of key stakeholders. When the components are conceptualized as 'measurables', it enhances the practical application of the mission and vision statements. According to Bart *et al.* (2001) when organisational recruitment, reward and information systems are aligned with the specific components in a mission statement, they serve to reinforce for employees the message in the mission. On a five-point Likert scale (Excellent = 5; Very good = 4; Average = 3; Below average = 2; Poor = 1) respondents described the level of their awareness of the components/content of the institute's mission and vision statements (see results in figure 4). The results show that 11% have a poor level of knowledge about the components/contents of the institute's mission and vision statements and a slight majority (55%) ranked their level of awareness of the components/contents of the mission and vision statements above the average level ( Excellent; 21% and Very good 34%). It can be deduced that the level of awareness of the components/contents of the mission and vision statements is relatively low given the backdrop that the level of awareness of the statements in general was 97.5% and level of knowledge about their purpose was 30%, excellent and 50%, very good (see figure 3).

**Figure 4: Level of awareness of the components of the institute's mission and vision statements**

Perhaps employees do not see the point in acquainting themselves with all the fine details for as long as they know the institute has mission and vision statements unless their job descriptions point them in that direction. A second reason may be attributed to management's inability to get that mission-organisational alignment where components form the basis for measuring and rewarding performance as suggested by Bart *et al.* (2001). In an attempt to explore any possible relationship between staff category and the level of awareness of the components/contents of the mission and vision statements, the following hypothesis was tested:

Ho: There is no association between staff category and level of awareness of components/content of statements

Ha: There is an association between staff category and level of awareness of components/content of statements

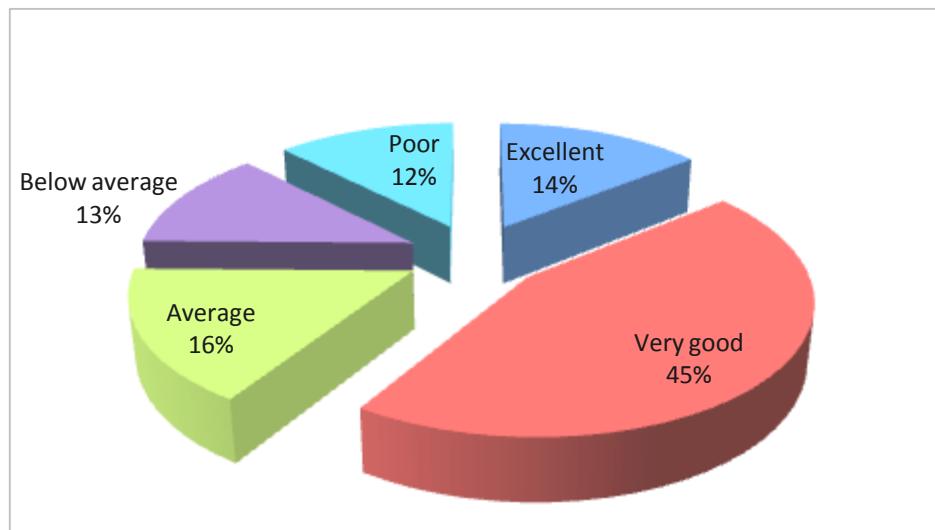
We failed to accept the null hypothesis ( $p$ - value = 0.001) implying there exists some association and that senior and junior employees differ in their level of knowledge of the components/contents of the mission and vision statements (see table IV). Some Senior administrators or Faculty by virtue of what they do (teaching, preparing documents/literature, representing the institute at various forums etc) may be more conversant with the components/contents of these statements. Two (2) senior employees for instance indicated that they came across the institute's mission and vision statements a lot when they served on the institute's strategic plan committee.

#### ***Employees' perceptions of ownership of the mission and vision statements***

The ownership section of the survey was meant to explore employees' perceptions regarding the extent to which they see the institution's mission and vision as their own in terms of how it addresses them and their expectations as employees. Calfree (1993) observed that mission and vision statements that tend to reflect messages about growth and profitability only are not useful to employees but Wall Street. According to Calfree (1993) therefore, mission and vision statements must capture the interests of employees if they are to make any meaningful impact on them.

First respondents were asked to respond to the extent to which the institute's mission and vision statements include a focus on the institution's responsibilities and commitment to them as employees. The results showed that on a five-point Likert scale (Excellent = 5; Very good = 4; Average = 3; Below average = 2; Poor = 1) 45% of respondents described the mission and vision statements as very good in capturing the institute's concern for them whilst only 14% described them as excellent.

**Figure 5: Perceptions on the extent to which the institute's mission and vision statements include a focus on the employee**



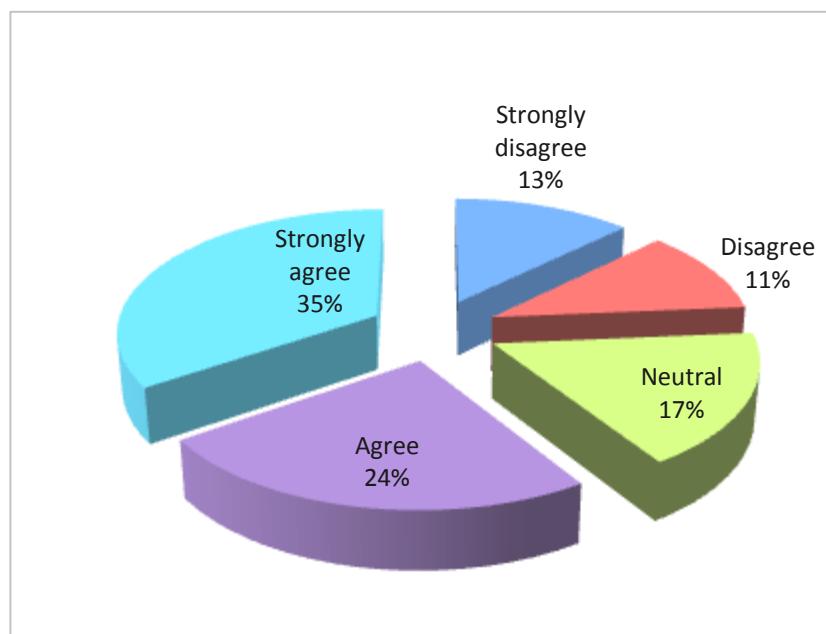
This finding is not too surprising; it may be as a result of the earlier observation that the level of knowledge of the mission and vision statements components/content amongst a substantial number of respondents was low (see figure 4). It can be inferred that an appreciable level of knowledge of the components/content of the mission and vision statements is required to make a meaningful assessment by the employee in this regard.

Second, mission and vision statements are largely management and leadership tools that guide strategic decisions in organizations. As those decisions are not in the employees' domain in most cases, some employees may perceive them as serving the sole purpose of management. In order to empirically study this tendency amongst employees, they were asked to rank on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly disagree = 5; Disagree = 4; Neutral = 3; Agree = 2; Strongly agree = 1). It turned out as shown in figure 6 that the feeling that mission and vision statements are not real concerns of employees is rife. Thirty five percent (35%) strongly agree to the assertion; another 24% agrees yet only 13% disagree with this position. There is some consistency with earlier works. Forbes and Seena (2006) and Mullane (2002) have reported and explained that there is often no involvement at all or at best insignificant involvement of employees in the design of the mission and vision statements and as a consequence they perceive them to be a 'property' of senior management. Put bluntly, one middle level staff had this to say:

*"The development of the vision and mission statement and the strategies underlying its implementation should not be limited to senior management. The success of the institution depends on how every stakeholder knows about where we're heading towards"*

So that even though redrafting a new set of mission and vision statements may not be a first choice, there is some feeling of "we do not own them" amongst employees and as suggested by the above employee, the more employees are directed through deliberate policies to the statements the more they will discover that they own them after all.

**Figure 6: Employees position on the perception that mission and vision statements are solely meant for management/leadership**



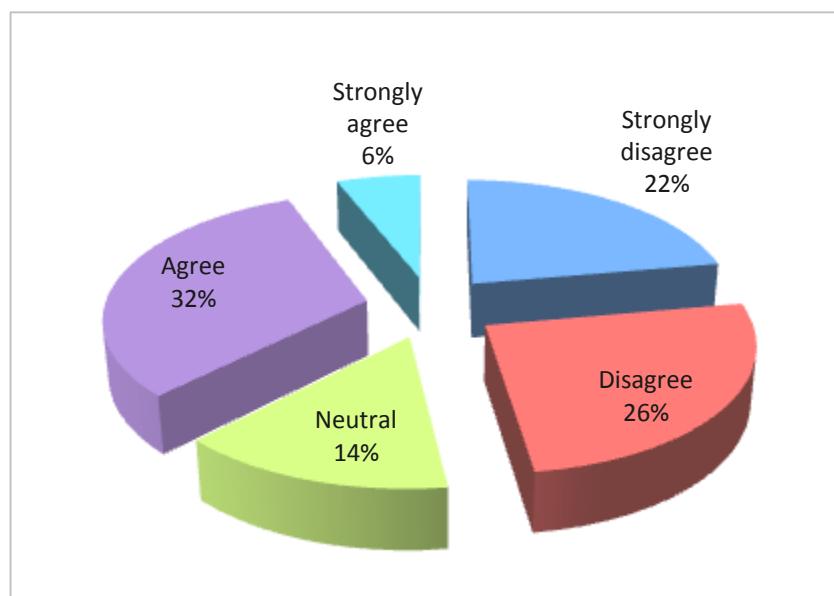
#### ***Employees' perception about the impact of mission and vision statements***

The ‘impact’ section of survey was intended to capture whether the institution’s mission and vision statements impact or may impact on employees in the form of behaviours or attitudes. The potential impact that mission statements can have on employee behaviour or attitudes cannot be taken for granted as demonstrated in the words of a female support staff:

*“The institute’s mission and vision statements will influence workers when they know of them and implement them in their day to day work. As it stands, they are not consistent with what the workers are doing”*

An attempt was made to explore whether an awareness of the mission and vision statements alone was enough to influence behaviours and attitudes or whether ownership is a condition on a five-point Likert scale (Strongly disagree = 5; Disagree = 4; Neutral 3; Agree = 2; Strongly agree = 1). There appears to be an agreement amongst about half of employees that an awareness of the mission and vision statements is not enough to stimulate desired behaviours or attitudes communicated by these statements and that some element of ownership is a prerequisite in getting the statements to make the desired impact. Thirty-two (32%) agree that ownership is a condition whilst 6% strongly agree with this position (see figure 7). It therefore follows that ownership of the mission and vision statements can be of outmost importance to employees of the institute and the more they are inclined towards believing that the statements capture their interests, the better the impact that the statements will make on them. Bart and Tabone (1998) made similar observations in a related study on how satisfied employees were with their mission statements and whether that translates into performance.

**Figure 7: Employees' position on whether ownership of mission and vision statements is a necessary condition for impact on behaviours and attitudes**



A middle level staff has been sharing her thoughts about ownership of mission and vision statements saying:

*'The mission and vision statements should also take into consideration the institute's responsibility towards employees- the surest way of getting them to own and act on the mission and vision'*

### **Conclusions and policy implications**

This paper has explored employees' knowledge and perceptions about mission and vision statements and has shown that mission and vision statements are still relevant strategic management tools that can impact employee behaviour and attitudes in consistence with other empirical studies. Attempts were particularly directed towards probing and highlighting issues relating to awareness of mission and vision statements, leading to ownership and subsequently impact. Drawing on the findings of the study, the following major implications are identified:

- The institute's employees appreciate the importance of mission and vision statements and quite a good number have first hand knowledge of their existence. However management needs to put in measures to get them acquainted with it on a more frequent basis.
- In responding to the above recommendations, management should give particular thought to the places where these statements would be posted so they have the necessary impact. The most popular places according to the literature are wall hangings/displays on institute's premises. It was found that this is not the case with the institute. This and other more innovative initiatives such as constant reference at meetings and gatherings must be explored to augment the traditional ones.
- The seemingly high levels of knowledge about the mission and vision statements and their purpose notwithstanding, most employees do not have a good knowledge of the components/contents of the mission statement which calls for intervention. It is proposed the components be broken down into 'measurables' or proxies of desired outcomes so employees can be schooled in them. This effort would also intervene in reshaping the perception amongst a substantial number of employees that the institutes' mission and vision statements do not include a focus on them.
- The perception that mission and vision statements are solely meant for management or leadership is very rife amongst employees though they appreciate their importance to the institute. It is thus necessary as a matter of outmost importance to identify ways to disabuse their minds and inculcate a better sense of ownership in them. Suggestions made earlier under the second policy implication could be a good starting point.
- Since ownership is a prerequisite for impact, management's main area of focus must be towards getting employees to see and appreciate the mission and vision statements as theirs because the study shows that making them aware of the existence of the statements is just one step towards getting the needed impact on their attitudes and behaviours.

- Finally, some differences exist in the level of awareness amongst the various staff categories. It is suggested that efforts are concentrated on employees whom by virtue of either poor knowledge or job description are not aware of the existence and role of mission and vision statements.

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