

Analyzing Student's Perception of Vision and Mission Statements in Higher Education Institutions: Implications for Strategic Alignment

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Abstract: -

The purpose of this paper is to understand how the elements of the Vision and Mission statements impact the strategic direction and identity of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). They serve as guiding principles for institutional development, academic programs, and student engagement. This case study explores students' perceptions and awareness of their institution's Vision and Mission Statements, analyzing the extent to which these statements influence their educational experience, motivation, and sense of belonging. Quantitative data obtained from the non-probability sampling via a standardized questionnaire to analyse the extent to which these statements influence their educational experience, motivation, and sense of belonging. By conducting a detailed survey among students, this research aims to examine the alignment between institutional aspirations and student outcomes. The study also investigates how well these statements are communicated and whether they impact key areas such as curriculum design, research opportunities, and community involvement. The findings of the research state that there is a positive correlation between awareness and understating of the vision and mission statement and its impact on activities, academic experience, but the relationship is not very strong. This provides educational leaders and management to focus on improving the relevance and engagement of Vision and Mission Statements to better serve both institutional goals and student development.

Keywords: - Vision and Mission Statement, Higher Education, Perception and Students.

Introduction: -

Vision and Mission Statements serve as the foundational pillars of strategic planning in Higher Education (HE). These statements are designed to articulate the long-term goals, values, and purpose of an institution, guiding not only its operations but also shaping the academic and personal development of its internal and external stakeholders. In an increasingly competitive and globalized educational landscape, HEIs rely on these statements to communicate their identity, differentiate themselves, create and sustain its brand, and align institutional objectives with the broader needs of the local community.

However, while these statements are often seen as a top-down directive, their true impact is realized through the extent to which they resonate with and influence its customers i.e. the students who have enrolled in these institutions. For students, the Vision and Mission Statements should offer clarity about the institution's commitment to academic excellence, societal contribution, and personal development. Yet, in many cases, students may lack awareness or understanding of these guiding principles, limiting the statements' intended impact on shaping educational outcomes and student engagement.

This research aims to explore the perceptions of students regarding the Vision and Mission Statements of their HEI, analyzing the extent to which these statements influence their academic experience, participation in institutional initiatives, and personal development. The study will also examine how effectively these statements are communicated to students and whether they perceive alignment between institutional goals and their own educational aspirations. Through this analysis, the study seeks to provide insights into the role of Vision and Mission Statements in enhancing the student experience and aligning institutional objectives with student outcomes.

Objective: -

1. To assess students' awareness and understanding of the Vision and Mission Statements of their Higher Education Institution (HEI)
2. To evaluate students' perceptions of the relevance and alignment of Vision and Mission Statements with the institution's practices
3. To analyze the impact of Vision and Mission Statements on students' academic engagement and participation in institutional activities
4. To determine the influence of Vision and Mission Statements on students' overall satisfaction with their educational experience and institutional loyalty
5. To explore ways to improve the communication of Vision and Mission Statements to students.

Statement of Problem: -

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are increasingly relying on Vision and Mission Statements to articulate their long-term goals, values, and strategies for fostering academic excellence and social impact. These statements serve as critical tools for guiding institutional development, shaping curricula, and defining the student experience. However, there is often a gap between the intended purpose of these Vision and Mission Statements and students' understanding, awareness, and engagement with them. This disconnect raises important questions about the effectiveness of these statements in shaping students' academic journeys, motivating their involvement in institutional initiatives, and aligning institutional goals with student outcomes.

In particular, the problem centres on whether students perceive the Vision and Mission Statements as relevant to their educational experience and if these statements influence key areas such as learning outcomes, research opportunities, and personal development. Additionally, challenges in the communication and integration of these statements into everyday academic life may diminish their intended impact. Therefore, it is essential to explore students' perspectives on the effectiveness of their institution's Vision and Mission Statements and the extent to which they feel aligned with the institution's actions and policies.

Review of Literature

Vision and Mission Statements are widely recognized as critical components of organizational identity and strategic direction (Morphew and Hartley, 2006). In the context of HEIs, Vision Statements typically outline the institution's long-term aspirations, while Mission Statements define its core purpose and objectives (David, 1989). Together, these statements provide a framework for decision-making, guide institutional policies, and signal the institution's commitment to stakeholders, including students, faculty, and society at large (Palmer & Short, 2008). Several studies emphasize the importance of well-crafted Vision and Mission Statements in fostering institutional success. According to Bart et al. (2001), institutions with clearly defined and widely understood Vision and Mission Statements tend to exhibit higher levels of organizational effectiveness. These statements act as a strategic roadmap, ensuring that all institutional

activities, from curriculum development to community engagement, align with the broader goals and values of the institution.

Despite the strategic importance of Vision and Mission Statements, research suggests that student awareness and understanding of these statements are often limited (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). A study by Klemm, Sanderson, and Luffman (1991) found that while institutions invest significant effort in crafting Vision and Mission Statements, these statements are often poorly communicated to students. As a result, many students remain unaware of how these statements influence their educational experience or how they can contribute to achieving the institution's goals. The limited awareness of Vision and Mission Statements among students is concerning, as these statements play a key role in shaping student engagement and institutional loyalty (Bart & Baetz, 1998). When students understand and internalize the institution's vision and mission, they are more likely to engage in academic and extracurricular activities that align with the institution's goals (Sufi & Lyons, 2003). Moreover, a clear understanding of these statements can help students make informed decisions about their academic and career paths, ensuring alignment between personal aspirations and institutional offerings (Williams, 2008).

The effectiveness of Vision and Mission Statements is often measured by their ability to influence institutional culture and academic outcomes. Morphew and Hartley (2006) argue that these statements have the potential to impact student learning experiences by guiding curriculum design, teaching methods, and research priorities. Institutions that align their academic programs with their mission are more likely to foster environments that support student success and holistic development (David, 1989). Furthermore, the alignment between institutional Vision and Mission Statements and students' academic and personal goals is critical to improving learning outcomes (Bartkus, Glassman, & McAfee, 2000). When students perceive a strong alignment between their values and the institution's mission, they are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and successful in their studies (Palmer & Short, 2008). This alignment also enhances student satisfaction and institutional loyalty, contributing to higher retention and graduation rates (Keller, 1983).

Despite the potential benefits of Vision and Mission Statements, challenges remain in effectively communicating and implementing these statements within HEIs. Research by Palmer and Short (2008) suggests that the communication of Vision and Mission Statements is often inconsistent, with many students receiving little exposure to these statements outside of admissions materials or official websites. This limited exposure can lead to a disconnect between institutional goals and student perceptions, reducing the overall effectiveness of the statements in guiding student behavior. Additionally, while Vision and Mission Statements may reflect aspirational goals, there can be a gap between the stated vision and the actual practices of the institution (Bart et al., 2001). When students perceive a misalignment between the institution's mission and its actions, their trust in the institution may erode, leading to decreased engagement and satisfaction (Klemm, Sanderson, & Luffman, 1991).

The literature underscores the importance of Vision and Mission Statements in guiding the strategic direction of HEIs and shaping student engagement. However, the effectiveness of these statements largely depends on students' awareness and understanding of them. While many institutions invest in crafting meaningful Vision and Mission Statements, their communication and implementation often fall short, resulting in limited student engagement. This research aims to fill the gap by investigating students' perceptions of their institution's Vision and Mission Statements, exploring the impact of these statements on their academic and personal development, and providing recommendations for improving their communication and relevance.

Research Gap

The review of existing literature reveals that Vision and Mission Statements are widely recognized as essential tools for guiding institutional strategy and shaping student engagement in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Studies have established the importance of these statements in defining institutional identity, influencing organizational effectiveness, and aligning institutional goals with broader societal needs (Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Bart et al., 2001). However, several critical gaps remain unaddressed, particularly in the context of students' awareness, engagement, and perception of these statements. Limited Focus on Student Perception and Awareness While much of the research on Vision and Mission Statements focuses on their role in organizational strategy and leadership (David, 1989; Palmer & Short, 2008), there is comparatively little empirical evidence on how students perceive and engage with these statements. Studies have acknowledged that students often have limited awareness of their institution's Vision and Mission Statements (Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Klemm et al., 1991), but few have explored the depth of this awareness or the factors that influence it. There is a need for more research that examines how students interpret these statements and the extent to which they influence their academic choices and engagement in institutional initiatives. While Vision and Mission Statements are universally acknowledged as critical to the strategic functioning of HEIs, there is a significant gap in understanding their impact on students. Specifically, there is limited empirical research on students' awareness, perceptions, and engagement with these statements, as well as their influence on educational outcomes. Additionally, the communication of these statements and how well they align with institutional practices from the students' perspective is an area that remains underexplored. Addressing these gaps will provide valuable insights into how HEIs can better leverage their Vision and Mission Statements to enhance student engagement, success, and overall institutional effectiveness.

Hypotheses:-

Hypothesis 1

H₀: Students' awareness and understanding of the institution's Vision and Mission Statements are not positively correlated with their academic engagement and participation in institutional activities

H₁: Students' awareness and understanding of the institution's Vision and Mission Statements are positively correlated with their academic engagement and participation in institutional activities

Hypothesis 2

H₀: The perceived alignment between the institution's Vision and Mission Statements and its actual policies and practices does not significantly influence students' overall satisfaction with their educational experience.

H₂: The perceived alignment between the institution's Vision and Mission Statements and its actual policies and practices significantly influences students' overall satisfaction with their educational experience.

Research Methodology

Research Design:

This study adopts a descriptive and correlational research design. The descriptive aspect aims to assess students' awareness, understanding, and perceptions of the Vision and Mission Statements of their institution, while the correlational aspect will explore the relationships between these perceptions and various outcomes, such as academic engagement, institutional satisfaction, and loyalty. This design allows for a comprehensive understanding of how Vision and Mission Statements impact students' educational experiences and overall satisfaction.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study consists of students enrolled in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Given the variability in institutional settings, the study includes students from various disciplines, year groups, and academic levels (undergraduate and postgraduate, students).

Sampling Technique: A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure representation across different student demographics, including academic level, discipline, and year of study. This will enable the study to capture a diverse range of experiences and perceptions.

Sample Size: Based on the estimated population of the institution, a sample size of 107 students enrolled in higher education was collected during 12th September to 17th September 2024 based on random sampling technique.

Data Collection Method: Primary data will be collected through a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on the objectives and hypotheses of the study, with closed-ended (Likert scale, multiple choice) questions. Questions ranging from demographic information, awareness and understanding, perceptions, engagement and satisfaction and improvements. Questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to the respondents.

Pilot Testing: Prior to full-scale data collection, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of 10 students to check the clarity of the questions, reliability of the scales, and overall flow of the questionnaire.

Reliability and Validity: Cronbach Alfa test on reliability and validity of data was conducted.

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^k \sigma_v^2}{\sigma_x^2} \right)$$

Reference of number of scale items	5
Reference of variance associated with items	4.61
Reference of variance associated with observed total score	21.45
Cronbach Alpha Score	0.981351981

Hence from the above score it is concluded that the questionnaire and data level of reliability is >0.80 -1.00 which is very reliable.

Data Analysis Techniques: Descriptive Statistics was applied. Correlation analysis (Pearson's correlation) to assess the relationships between students' awareness, understanding, perceptions, and outcomes such as academic engagement and satisfaction (Hypothesis 1) and (Hypothesis 2). Two proportion test of agreement and disagreement used to explore the impact of awareness and understanding of Vision and Mission Statements on academic engagement, as well as the impact of perceived alignment on overall satisfaction and institutional loyalty. (e.g., awareness of Vision and Mission and participation in institutional activities).

Limitations: -Self-reporting Bias as the study relies on self-reported data, there is the potential for response bias. Some students may overestimate or underestimate their awareness or engagement. Only student responses were considered. Other stakeholders' views need to be included.

Analysis: -

Summary of the Tests performed to test Null Hypotheses

Hypothesis	The Null Hypothesis	The Alternative Hypothesis	Value of the test statistics and the associated P Value	Conclusion
Hypothesis 1	Ho: Students' awareness and understanding of the institution's Vision and Mission Statements are not positively correlated with their academic engagement and participation in institutional activities	H1: Students' awareness and understanding of the institution's Vision and Mission Statements are positively correlated with their academic engagement and participation in institutional activities	Awareness r = 0.166196 Understanding r= 0.212237 Communication r = 0.27825 P value= 0.000 Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient	Reject Ho Accept H1
Hypothesis 2	H o: The perceived alignment between the institution's Vision and Mission Statements and its actual policies and practices does not significantly influences students' overall satisfaction with their educational experience	H 1: The perceived alignment between the institution's Vision and Mission Statements and its actual policies and practices does significantly influences students'overall satisfaction with their educational experience	Z= 3.25 P= 0.0012 Test of two proportions	Reject Ho Accept H1

Conclusion: -

- The coefficient is positive, indicating a positive linear relationship between student awareness and understanding of the Vision and Mission statement translating into participation in academic and related activities. This means that as student awareness increases, their participation in such activities tends to increase as well, though not in a very strong way. Many students may be aware of the vision and mission but do not strongly feel compelled to participate, or they may participate due to other reasons (e.g., peer influence, incentives, or personal interest).
- There is a significantly strong relationship between perception, awareness and understanding of vision and mission statement with the policies, activities and academic experience in HEIs.

Recommendations: -

- Further investigation might be needed to explore other variables affecting student participation, such as **motivation, accessibility of activities**, or the clarity of the vision and mission statements.
- Making students aware might not be sufficient. A more **comprehensive strategy**, including making activities more engaging or connecting the vision and mission more clearly with student aspirations, could be necessary.
- Colleges should actively promote activities that align with their vision and mission through **interactive campaigns**, such as student-led discussions, workshops, and digital media. Highlighting how these activities contribute to personal growth and career success can make them more attractive and relevant to students.

- Additionally, offering **leadership roles** or encouraging students to contribute ideas for events can make them feel more connected to the institution's values, fostering a deeper sense of ownership and involvement

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