

***“Together we ask, listen, discern,
plan, serve, and ask again...”***

"Hey! We hear you've done some research!"

Some of the methods used in OC research are fabulously simple. With clipboard in hand, we can make ticks on a paper survey or "x"s on a map. Other projects benefit from more sophisticated tools (read expensive software 😊) and require complicated permissions to comply with academic and "industry" standards. Furthermore, some of our research efforts principally benefit single communities, and others have the potential for global impact.

In this Winter 2022 issue of the OC Research Link, we continue our series **“Hey! We hear you’ve done some research!”** by casting light on Andrea Dugan's research on behalf of International Christian Schools. She completed a study on the learning-centered leadership of school principals, the degree of congruence of perspectives between principals and their teachers, and the possible impact on teachers' organizational commitment. Her observations and conclusions can confidently be applied not only to the specific schools where our own OC MKs are educated, but to students enrolled in international Christian schools all around the world. Andrea's work, which reflects the robust regulations governing methodology in our increasingly data-protective world, earned her a doctorate in Education from Bethel University in St. Paul MN. (Note: you will see from the accompanying photo and from Andrea's concluding remarks that both she and her husband Donovan did doctoral-level research in 2021.) Andrea is the Superintendent of Mountainview Christian School in Central Java, Indonesia.



Here's Andrea's story:

[GRT] Hi Andrea! We hear you did some research. What were the questions you were trying to answer? **[AD]** From previous personal experiences, I have observed school principals who seemed to perceive their own leadership behaviors differently from their teachers. In some cases, principals believed themselves to be more effective than their teachers would assert and in other cases principals underestimated their leadership behaviors when compared with the perspective of their teachers. This potential incongruence or misalignment of perspectives might be a factor in teachers' commitment to their school.

[GRT] Why was this important?

[RS] I have been a school administrator in an International Christian School for over 8 years. I recognize this context is complex and unique. These schools must work hard to hire and retain quality teachers to meet the challenges of cross-cultural and international education. School principals must work to improve teachers' organizational commitment. Principals may need to better align their perspective of their leadership with that of their teachers' perspective to improve their teachers' organizational commitment.

[GRT] What did you do?

[AD] After securing permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which confirmed my research plan addressed possible ethical concerns, I also received permission from Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and NICS (Network of International Christian Schools) to request their principals participate in my research study. I personally emailed the principals of 52 international Christian schools that were accredited with ACSI to request their participation. From these initial inquiries, 21 principals agreed to participate. I was only able to use the completed data from 15 of those principals. These principals represented schools in South America, Africa, Europe, Northeast Asia, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. From each principal, at least one of their teachers needed to participate as well in order to compare teachers' perspective with that of their principal. I used 2 online surveys to collect data. Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education survey (VAL-ED) was used to collect principals' and their teachers' perspective of the principal's learning-centered leadership behaviors. This survey is proprietary and required I work with Resonant Education to secure its use. Teachers also completed the TCM Employee Commitment Survey which assessed teachers' affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment, and an overall score of organizational commitment.

After collecting data from both principals and their teachers, I used SPSS (statistical analysis software) to analyze my data. To compare the VAL-ED data from principals and teachers, I first used simple difference to determine a value of self-other agreement. The smaller the difference, the smaller the misalignment of perspectives and the greater the self-other agreement. Following simple difference, I used a one-sample T-test to determine if there was a statistical difference between the perspectives of principals and teachers. I also ran a one-way ANOVA test with unequal variance to confirm if differences in perspectives was statistically significant. Finally, to analyze the difference of perspectives and teachers' organizational commitment, I used Pearson r to determine if a correlation existed between these two variables.

[GRT] What went right?

[AD] The process of dissertation research required tremendous reading, processing, writing, reading some more, writing, editing & revising, and still more writing. I am grateful for the season of significant study and deep thinking about school leadership and organizational commitment. While the end goal of securing my doctorate in Education was wonderful, I am more encouraged by the depth of learning and direct application my study has had on my own leadership at Mountainview Christian School. I hope that others will consider the implications of my study to help improve school leadership and teachers' organizational commitment.

[GRT] What went wrong?

[AD] I defended my proposal on March 12, 2020 with the hope that I would begin data collection (online surveys with principals and teachers of international Christian schools) in early April 2020. When the pandemic hit in early March, many International Christian schools had to immediately pivot to online instructional formats. The dynamic shift (as well as the hardships of Work From Home and quarantine expectations) added too much strain to my population. So, I decided to delay data collection until October 2020 when I hoped more schools would be "back to normal". While we are all still dealing with the consequences of pandemic and definitely not back to normal, I decided to push forward and collect data. It was a much slower and more challenging experience than I expected. I added an incentive (\$10 eGiftcard from Amazon) but that did little to encourage participation. Online surveys were known to have low response rate prior to the pandemic. My response rate was certainly impacted by the pandemic concerns. I had hoped to collect data between October and December 2020, but did not have all my data collected until April 2021.

[GRT] What did you learn?

[AD] The findings of my study confirmed a misalignment of the perspectives of principals and teachers of the principal's learning-centered leadership. While previous studies asserted principals often overestimate their leadership behaviors when compared with their teachers, my study found the opposite. The majority of the principals who participated in my study underestimated their leadership. An additional notable finding was most of the principals were classified as basic leaders, rather than proficient or distinguish leaders. International Christian Schools need quality leaders as well as quality teachers. Principals need to develop more learning-centered leadership behaviors to increase their own effectiveness and strengthen school improvement efforts.

My study did not find a correlation between the difference in perspectives and the teachers' organizational commitment. More study is needed in the factors that directly impact teachers' organizational commitment, specifically at International Christian Schools.

[GRT] Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

[AD] While some people may have thought Donovan and I were crazy to complete our dissertations within the same year, I am so grateful to have completed this journey alongside Donovan. Dissertation work can be lonely, so having Donovan really understand the work and effort necessary to complete it

was tremendously helpful. I know I have a better written product because of his feedback and suggestions.

[GRT] Well done, Andrea! We're glad and grateful that your hard work will benefit so many young people in so many places. Thank you!!

If you'd like to read Andrea's dissertation in its entirety, click here:

<https://spark.bethel.edu/etd/749/>

Andrea and Donovan joined OC in 2010 and have been serving in Indonesia with the Central Java team since 2012. Prior to life in Indonesia, Andrea was a secondary science teacher for both public and private schools. She earned her master's in educational leadership from Concordia University, St Paul, in 2009 and completed her doctorate in educational administration from Bethel University in December 2021. She and Donovan have 3 kids, Natalie (15 yrs old), Bethany (12), and Josiah (8). In addition to school leadership, Andrea enjoys running, digital scrapbooking and coffee shop visits with friends.

Questions or Comments?

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