

ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF  
THE MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

by

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## ABSTRACT

### ADMINISTRATORS' BELIEFS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

by Anthony Shane Blanton

May 2017

The Mississippi Association of Independent Schools was born out of the turbulent years of the Civil Rights Era. *Plessey v. Ferguson* in 1896 had established the doctrine of separate but equal facilities, including schools. While the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, handed down by the Supreme Court in 1954, ruled that no student could be denied admittance to public schools because of race, the state of Mississippi continued to maintain separate schools for Blacks and Whites. Even after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was designed to end a number of racial inequities, was passed, Mississippi and the South as a whole resisted desegregation in the public schools. It was not until 1969 when the 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. District in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* intervened to prohibit any further noncompliance with desegregation that Mississippi schools began to allow Blacks to attend school with White students *en masse*. The end of segregation brought about many changes in Mississippi's system of education, one of them being the establishment of many new independent or private schools. The purpose of this study was to establish a baseline view of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools from the school administrators' perspectives and determine if there were statistically significant differences between administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness with regard to school size, location, and tenure.

The primary data for this study were obtained from MAIS administrators from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. For this quantitative study, the responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA. The study produced no major findings but suggested that MAIS administrators are generally satisfied with the organizational effectiveness of the Association. The respondents agreed that the MAIS maintains a certain level of organizational effectiveness regardless of school size, location or tenure of the administrator.

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## DEDICATION

I would like to first thank God for giving me the opportunity, drive, determination, and time to complete this process. This work is dedicated to my wife, Dawn, who constantly encourages and supports me in all that I do. I want to thank you for standing behind me in this process. Your passion has inspired me to be the best. Completing the doctoral program could not have been accomplished without your love and support. I love you and I thank God for you and all that you do for our family.

To my sons, Shane, Seth, Samuel, and Stone: thank you for your patience and understanding. Know that you are the driving force behind this goal. I look forward to watching your pursuit of the goals set before you. Always press toward that mark.

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## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

This study will examine the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS) member school administrators' beliefs regarding the Association's organizational effectiveness. The research questions will seek to determine whether differences exist between administrators' beliefs of the Association's organizational effectiveness and their administrative tenure, schools' size, and location. The study is needed because the MAIS has not been the subject of a study in twenty years. Additionally, since the MAIS impacts the education of approximately 80% of all non-public school students in Mississippi, as well as a number of students in member schools located in surrounding states, current research that will provide insight into the organizational effectiveness of the Association is warranted.

The Mississippi Association of Independent Schools was born out of the turbulent years of the Civil Rights Era. *Plessey v. Ferguson* in 1896 had established the doctrine of separate but equal facilities, including schools. While the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, handed down by the Supreme Court in 1954, ruled that no student could be denied admittance to public schools because of race, the state of Mississippi continued to maintain separate schools for Blacks and Whites. Even after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which was designed to end a number of racial inequities, was passed, Mississippi and the South as a whole resisted desegregation in the public schools. It was not until 1969 when the 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. District in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* intervened to prohibit any further noncompliance with desegregation that Mississippi schools began to allow Blacks to attend school with White students *en masse*. The end of segregation brought about many changes in Mississippi's system of education, one of

them being the establishment of many new independent or private schools. According to Mathis (1975), the large increase in the number of private schools in Mississippi from the late 1960's to the mid-1970's was related to the mass integration of the public schools.

Mathis (1975) discusses two possible reasons for the sudden boom in private schools during the years after integration. Many believed that the schools were formed in order to provide White students a place to flee from public schools in which they would be educated with Black students. Others believed that integration would have a negative impact on the quality of education provided in the public schools. Mathis also states that confidence in the private schools was bolstered because of the many former public school administrators and teachers who had begun working in them.

The Mississippi Private School Association was founded in 1968. The association changed its name in 2009 to the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS) to move away from the negative connotation of the word "private." Additionally, there are two organizations that operate under the umbrella of the MAIS: The MAIS Educational Association and the MAIS Coaches' Association. The MAIS Educational Association (MAISEA) is made up of teachers and administrators from MAIS member schools. Each year, the MAISEA sponsors a number of interscholastic competitions, events, scholarships, and teacher awards as well as a teacher convention. Among the association-wide events, it sponsors are Art Competition, Quiz Bowl, Reading Fair, and Spelling Bee. It recognizes teachers for their years of service and selects an elementary and a secondary "teacher of the year" from among school-nominated personnel. The MAIS Coaches' Association builds collegiality and community among the coaches of MAIS member schools. Three of its annual

responsibilities are to run a coaches' clinic, select new members to the Hall of Fame, and name the Coach of the Year (MSAIS.org).

Today the Association has distanced itself from those segregationist beginnings and currently serves as the accrediting agency for 120 schools in the Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas area. In addition to accrediting schools and certifying teachers, the MAIS also oversees competition in the following sports: football, basketball, baseball, track, soccer, fast and slow-pitch softball, tennis, swimming, archery and golf.

The change from MPSA to MAIS reveals the significance of distinguishing these two terms. Whereas the Mississippi Association of Private Schools was an association of schools established to restrict the educational benefits they offered to white children in the state, the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools offers its benefits to all the children of the state and champions the self-government of its member schools. Most MPSA schools were no different in their educational philosophy or pedagogy from the state schools: they were staffed by former state personnel, used state-approved curricula, and adopted the state's accreditation and certification standards; some even sought state funding. While some MAIS schools accept state and federal funding for their operations, most are no longer all-White versions of schools in the state system (MSAIS.org).

In general parlance, "public schools" is synonymous with state schools, schools which are owned, funded, and governed by the state, adhering to state standards of education and meeting all state and local laws relating to schools. Nevertheless, considering the meaning of "public," MAIS schools can rightly be called "public schools" because they are open to children in general and devoted to the welfare of the communities in which they operate. Think of a motel as a "public accommodation." A

motel is open to the public; state and federal laws and regulations have made sure of that. Even so, a motel may refuse to rent a room to a minor (someone who doesn't meet its age requirements) or a person who can't offered the room rate—just like public independent schools may have entrance requirements and charge fees. Therefore, the chief difference between “public schools” and “independent schools” (as the terms are commonly used) is governance. Public schools are run by the state; independent schools are self-governed (MSAIS.org).

The Association is now moving into its fifth decade of operation. Over the course of its existence, the MAIS has been the subject of five major studies that have evaluated the quality of education offered through the member institutions. The first study, a doctoral dissertation at Mississippi State University by Sansing (1971), described 54 of the 106 member schools with regard to the constitutional and legislative provisions that permit private schools to operate, the number of private schools in the state in 1971, the rate of growth, the financial condition, the types of schools, the curricula offered, the system of accreditation, the faculty, certification, the faculty and administrative salaries and the schools' facilities. The second study analyzed the Association itself and was conducted by the Bureau of Educational Research at the University of Mississippi (McDonald, 1973). The Bureau of Educational Research study developed a profile of the Association from the 1970-1971 school year. A third study, a doctoral dissertation at the University of Mississippi by Mathis (1975), examined the history and current status of the Association through 1974. In 1981, a doctoral dissertation at the University of Southern Mississippi by Carroll (1981) established a historical perspective and descriptive information on member schools in 1979. The most recent study of the

member schools of the Association was a doctoral dissertation at the University of Mississippi by Lishman (1989) that compiled data to identify association trends that had occurred from 1974 to 1989.

The current study will explore the collective organizational effectiveness of the MAIS from the perspective of the administrators of member schools.

### Theoretical Framework

Organizational effectiveness is a concept used to describe the successfulness of an organization in meeting its intended purposes and goals (Cameron, 1986). Being a subjective construct, organizational effectiveness can be a difficult term to define and the idea of effectiveness has changed over time and among organizational types. In a practical sense, the effectiveness of a service organization may be identified by excellence in customer service and satisfaction, communications, marketing and other similar output (Reimann, 1975). For parents choosing a school for their children, organizational effectiveness could be measured in terms of grades, test scores, and rates of admittance to institutions of higher learning, which would fall under the external category of satisfaction with outcomes. However, organizational effectiveness could also include satisfaction with internal processes, such as quality of teacher/student interaction, quality of instruction, satisfaction of one's child with the school, etc. Certainly, organizational effectiveness has as much to do with the attitudes and beliefs of the stakeholders as any score or percentage. According to Herman (1999), "Organizational effectiveness is not an objective reality; rather, effectiveness is a social construction, an achievement of organizational agents and other stakeholders in convincing each other that an organization is pursuing the right objectives in the right way" (p. 109).



Bedeian and Zammuto (1991) observed that the construct of organizational effectiveness is one that is widely used, although neither the definition nor the measures of organizational effectiveness have been agreed upon by researchers. More than one researcher has suggested discontinuing using the concept of organizational effectiveness due to the lack of consensus among researchers (Bluedorn, 1980). Campbell (1987), for example, identified 30 different indicators used by researchers to measure effectiveness and concluded that there was no correct way to choose among them. The highly subjective nature of the construct leads different researchers to use different indicators to measure it, which in turn leads to the lack of agreement about its structure. To solve this problem, some researchers have tried to integrate the research by reducing the various indicators used to assess effectiveness to some basic models. Scott (1977) diagnosed the problem of multiple approaches as one arising from the different views of what organizations basically are. The different theoretical perspectives taken towards the assessment of organizations reflect different theoretical perspectives about the nature of organizations.

The main approaches that have been advocated by various researchers for measuring the effectiveness of organizations are the goal approach, the system resource approach, the stakeholder approach, and the competing values approach (Kataoka, 1995). Additionally, the term “capacity building” has been utilized since the late 1990s to describe an organization’s effectiveness. Eisinger (2002) asserts that capacity building refers to activities in which the organization engages to improve and fulfill its mission.

The goal model is the most commonly used approach for assessing organizational effectiveness (Herman, 1999). The model suggests that the way to assess organizational

effectiveness is to establish measures of how well its goals are being achieved (Price, 1972). Even though this approach seems to be a logical way to assess effectiveness, it has some shortcomings. Some theorists have argued that goal attainment is an unrealistic standard of effectiveness since goals describe ideal future states and therefore some discrepancy between goals and effectiveness is usually unavoidable (Zammuto, 1984). Also, organizations usually have multiple goals and attainment of one of these goals may be at the expense of others. Still another limitation of this approach is the difficulty of establishing unambiguous indicators for measuring effectiveness (Bedeian & Zammuto, 1991). Some organizations have only vaguely stated goals and others sometimes have immeasurable goals. Despite these shortcomings, the goal model has been the most highly used approach (Hall, 1980; Rojas, 2000).

The system resource model focuses on the interaction between the organization and its environment and defines effectiveness as the degree to which an organization is successful in acquiring scarce and valued resources (Georgopoulos & Tannebaum, 1957). Even though this approach has long been valuable in the absence of other measures of effectiveness, it has been criticized because it does not take into account that the acquisition of resources may not be of any significant value if the resources are not used properly (Daft, 1992). Other limitations of this organizational effectiveness model are the difficulty in operationalization and the ambiguous determination of relevant scarce and valued resources (Bedeian & Zammuto, 1991).

The competing values model was developed by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) through an empirical study using various indicators employed in the literature to measure organizational effectiveness. Multidimensional scaling techniques showed that three

value dimensions underlie the criteria of effectiveness: (a) organizational structure, (b) organizational focus, and (c) organizational effectiveness. According to the competing values approach, the combination of these values gives rise to four models of organization effectiveness: (a) human relations model structure, (b) open systems model structure, (c) internal process model structure, and (d) rational goal model structure. The main contribution of the competing values approach is that it recognizes that effectiveness indicators are dependent on management values, and it integrates the various organizational effectiveness models into a unique framework by recognizing that there are various levels of goals that an organization tries to attain, such as output, resource acquisition, and human resource development (Daft, 1992).

The stakeholder model suggests that organizational effectiveness can be measured by satisfaction of the various constituency groups within or outside the organization that have a stake in the organization's effectiveness (Connolly, Conlon, & Deutsche, 1980). These groups include people such as owners, employees, customers, suppliers, etc., who affect or are affected by the organization's effectiveness. The main assumption of this model is that measures of organizational effectiveness are inevitably contingent on whom one is asking; that is, effectiveness is an inherently value-based construct (Zammuto, 1984). Because the various constituency groups are related to the organization for different reasons, their preferences and expectations for the organization's effectiveness are not necessarily the same. Therefore, since different stakeholders have different interests in the organization, each of them usually has different criteria of effectiveness, and none is necessarily right or wrong (Connolly et al., 1980). Therefore, according to

this approach, it makes little sense to think in terms of a single standard of overall organizational effectiveness.

Drucker (1999) stressed the connection between an organization's mission and the performance of the organization with relation to its strategic plan in meeting goals and objectives. Capacity building refers to the actions of an organization to improve and fulfill its mission (Eisinger, 2002). The literature reveals many different aspects of capacity building. Capacity building activities can range from a small outcome to a large outcome; discrete internal visibility to explicit external visibility; or short-lived versus long-term (Light & Hubbard, 2002). Many authors address elements that contribute to an organization's effectiveness under the broad spectrum of capacity building. Included in the areas needed for high performance are mission, vision, and strategy, governance and leadership, administration, program delivery and impact, strategic relationships, resource development, program development, fundraising, human resources, systems and infrastructure, culture, and internal operations. (Connolly & Lukas, 2001; Linnell, 2003; McKinsey & Company, 2001)

Even though it may seem that the models are mutually exclusive, Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) suggested that this is not the case, since organizations usually have multiple goals. Therefore, they suggested that indicators from different models can be combined to yield a composite measure of effectiveness. Cameron and Whetten (1983) also suggested that, because effectiveness is clearly a multifaceted concept, the different models presented in the literature can be complementary. Therefore, one should not restrict analysis to a single model.

## Statement of the Problem

Member schools of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS) educate approximately 80% of all non-public school students in the state of Mississippi, as well as a number of students in member schools located in Arkansas and Louisiana. While the MAIS has been the primary topic of five research dissertations, no one has examined the overall organizational effectiveness of the Association. Additionally, over twenty-five years have passed since the last study was conducted (Lishman, 1989). Since the MAIS impacts the education of many students, current research that will provide insight into the organizational effectiveness of the Association is both timely and warranted.

This study will be beneficial to those involved in education at multiple levels. First, the study will assist the MAIS in ascertaining its current level of organizational effectiveness. The information provided by the study can be helpful to the MAIS for the planning and implementation of the goals of the Association as it moves into its sixth decade. The Mississippi Department of Education may also find the study useful, as it will provide insight into the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS, whose member schools educate 40,000 students each year. State policymakers, particularly legislators, who write statutes that impact private education, may find this study beneficial. Additionally, the parents and citizens of the areas encompassed by the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools may find the study helpful in determining the quality and nature of alternative education opportunities available to students.

### *Research Questions*

This study will address the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ 1. How do administrators rate the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS)?
- RQ 2. Is there a difference between the beliefs of small school administrators and large school administrators regarding the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS)?
- RQ 3. Is there a difference between the beliefs of new administrators and seasoned administrators regarding the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS)?
- RQ 4. Is there a difference between the beliefs of administrators in various geographic locations regarding the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS)?

### *Definition of Terms*

The following terms will be used throughout this study.

*Private school:* A school that is *private*, which is to say “intended for or restricted to the use of a particular person, group, or class.” or “properly, separate; unconnected with others; hence, peculiar to one’s self.

*Independent school:* A school that is not subject to control by others: self-governing: not affiliated with a larger controlling unit or not dependent.

*Public school:* A public school is any school funded and operated under the direction of a state or municipality. As a result of government funding, the school must

adhere to government standards of education and to all state and district laws relating to schools.

*Blacks:* The term will be used to describe Americans of African ancestry.

Researchers have used various terms to describe this group, including African-American, Afro-American, and Black American.

*Whites:* This term will be used throughout to describe Americans of European ancestry. Researchers have used various terms to describe this group, including Caucasian American, Caucasian, and White American.

*School choice:* School choice is defined as the freedom for families to send their children to educational settings other than the one public school within their attendance zone.

#### *Delimitations*

The study is not representative of all independent school administrators. Additionally, the study is not representative of all independent or private school associations. It is delimited to independent schools in the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, and to the Association itself.

#### *Assumptions*

1. It is assumed that all participants will complete the questionnaire honestly and as accurately as possible.
2. The administrators are limited to those from the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalized beyond this population.

3. It is assumed that the participants voluntarily completed the questionnaire and participated without fear of negative consequences for their truthful responses.

#### Justification

The purpose of this research project is to establish a baseline view of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools from the school administrator's perspective. This study will be beneficial to those involved in education at multiple levels. First, the study will assist the MAIS in ascertaining its current level of organizational effectiveness. The information provided by the study can be helpful to the MAIS for the planning and implementation of the goals of the Association as it moves into its sixth decade. The Mississippi Department of Education may also find the study useful, as it will provide insight into the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS, which educates 40,000 students each year in the state. State policymakers, particularly legislators, who write statutes that impact independent education, may find this study beneficial. Additionally, the parents and citizens of the areas encompassed by the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools may find the study helpful in determining the quality and nature of alternative education opportunities available to students.

This study could give greater credence for governmental entities to underwrite such initiatives as vouchers or help remove barriers by offering tuition tax credits programs if the private school system demonstrates practical significance in organizational effectiveness of the MAIS.



## Summary

Major gaps exist in the research about private education and accrediting associations in general, and specifically about the beliefs of administrators in Mississippi private schools about the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. Although the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools was established in 1968, private (or “non-public”) education is as old as civilization and independent schools have played an undeniably significant role in the foundation and development of the United States. The first schools in North America were established by Roman Catholics in what are now the states of Florida and Louisiana long before any state funded public schools existed on the continent. Indeed, an organized system of “public” schools did not exist in the United States until the 1840s, and concerned parents have always made educational choices for the beneficial development of their children. Since 1968, the MAIS has certified the educational integrity of its member schools, which have taken great pride in providing exceptional educational opportunities for children in Mississippi and surrounding states. The Association’s member schools are integral participants in their communities, both economically and socially.

In the British educational system, independent, fee-paying schools are known as “public schools”—that is to say, like British “pubs,” they are open to and supported by the public on a voluntary basis. In the American system, the term “public” applies to schools that are strictly regulated by the states (and increasingly by the US Department of Education) and funded through compulsory taxation. American “private schools” are open to the public and are supported voluntarily by families who use their services and by people who value their mission, their product, and their place in the community. Private

schools operate independently of tax-payer funding and exercise the freedom to pursue missions that they believe best serve their unique constituencies and support their values; however, the stigma of a lack of diversity still haunts private schools in the South. The Mississippi Association of Independent Schools facilitates communication and fosters mutual accountability among its member schools in the mid-South, so that “private schools” do not have to operate in isolation. Like private schools themselves, the Association is funded by schools that voluntarily join the Association and by voluntary contributions from the public—from people who value educational freedom and the exceptional opportunities that private schools provide in a community.

Chapter I establishes the foundation for examination of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. Chapter II provides an in-depth and critical review of literature related to the subject of administrators’ beliefs of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. The literature review is diverse, from the legal and political issues that led to the formation of private academies and the organization that would come to be known as the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools to the possible beliefs of school administrators toward accrediting associations. The theoretical framework is examined to serve as a foundation for the current study. In addition to the theoretical framework, the limited information that is available about the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools is reviewed. Chapter III details the methodology that will be utilized in the research process.

## CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an in-depth and critical review of literature related to the subject of administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. It is important to note at the outset that there has been very little research on the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools over the past nearly 40 years. Students at universities in Mississippi completing their doctorates have conducted the few studies that exist about the Association or the beliefs of stakeholders about the work of the Association. While this might seem to be a limitation for conducting an in-depth literature review, and it certainly is a limitation, the lack of academic research regarding the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools does not make a critical review of relevant literature and issues related to the topic impossible.

The literature and information reviewed and examined as part of this literature review is about the historical background that led to the creation of what would become the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. While the focus of this study is not one of history or the historical significance of private schools in Mississippi, it is worthwhile and necessary to understand how the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools came to exist and why its existence and operations are worthy of study and investigation today. Even more, the information of how the Association came to exist and why it continues to be an important part of the educational culture of Mississippi may provide some context for understanding the beliefs of administrators of private schools that fall under the oversight of the organization.

Another important part of this literature review will be a review of information about organizational effectiveness, which is the theoretical framework that has been chosen to guide this study. An in-depth review of literature about the concept of organizational effectiveness and the many different constructs associated with organizational effectiveness will be provided. From this theoretical framework, the methodology used to conduct this investigation is derived. Furthermore, the larger conclusions that are drawn from this study will be based on the foundations and concepts of the organizational effectiveness framework.

Because of the lack of research regarding the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, it is necessary to attempt to gain some idea about how administrators might perceive the Association and its actions and operations. Literature regarding school accreditation organizations and the interactions and beliefs of school administrators and teachers with those organizations will be reviewed. While the studies that are reviewed will not be about private schools in Mississippi that fall under the oversight of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, insights will be gained about the issues and problems that have been identified with other school accreditation organizations in the United States. As with the literature on the historical nature of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools and the literature on the organizational effectiveness framework, the goal of reviewing the literature on school accreditation organizations will be to be able to place the findings of this study into a broader context.

#### Historical Context of Private Schools in Mississippi

The historical context of the current existence of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools is rooted in the broader issue of school desegregation that began in

the late 1960s (Andrews, 2002). From the end of the Civil War to the 1950s, schools in Mississippi were generally operated under a basis of du jour segregation, meaning that the actions of the leaders of school districts across the state made segregation of white and black students the norm were based in law (Lowry, 1973). A key legal foundation that allowed segregation in Mississippi was the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, which made separate but equal the standard by which the treatment of Whites and Blacks were treated in the use of public facilities such as schools (Wyatt, 2006). However, the foundation of separate but equal was not followed in the operation of public schools in Mississippi because while modern schools were constructed beginning in the 1940s across the state, most of those schools were in areas in which Whites lived. The schools constructed in areas with large black populations were only one or two rooms. In many areas of the state, schools intended for black students were not actual school buildings at all. Instead, rooms in churches were used for the education of students (Lowry, 1973).

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court made its ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* that separate but equal was unconstitutional (Wyatt, 2006). With the decision came the demand of the Court that desegregation of public schools should occur. However, little effort was made by most schools in the South or in Mississippi actually to desegregate. As a result of the lack of effort of the leaders of public schools to carry out desegregation, the Supreme Court issued a ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education II* that stated that schools had to make deliberate efforts to achieve desegregation (Eckes, 2006).

Throughout the latter half of the 1950s and into the 1960s, political leaders in Mississippi took great efforts to avoid the desegregation of schools. James Coleman,

who was elected Governor of Mississippi in 1956, understood that laws could be enacted on the state level to prevent desegregation of schools even if they were unconstitutional because years would be required before those cases challenging those laws would be heard by the Supreme Court (Ophelia, 2009). The general course of action to stop the desegregation of public schools in Mississippi was one of legal defiance. The State Legislature simply passed one law after another making desegregation either illegal or impossible based on the actions that could be taken by local school systems.

One such law that was passed in the Mississippi Legislature involved the principle of interposition, which is a legal principle based on the idea that if a ruling of the United States Supreme Court was in violation of the Constitution of the State of Mississippi and the United States Constitution, then the ruling was unconstitutional (Andrews, 2004). In essence, the State political leaders argued that segregation was not prohibited by the Constitution of the United States nor the Constitution of Mississippi; so, the rulings in *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Brown v. Board of Education II* were unconstitutional. Other laws were implemented during the last half of the 1950s and into the 1960s that prevented the civil liberties of minorities, particularly African-Americans, from being fully realized with regard to access to the same quality of public education as white students.

In addition to the legal efforts being undertaken in Mississippi to prevent school desegregation, the Citizens' Council was formed following the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. The Citizens' Council, which was comprised of Whites, acted to prevent the efforts of the NAACP and African-American citizens from petitioning leaders to carry out school desegregation (Andrews, 2004). For example, the Citizens' Council

would publish the names of people who signed petitions for school desegregation in local newspapers as a way of making their identities known and causing harm to them in their local communities. Local business owners could choose to fire the people who were identified as signing the petitions. In addition, local white residents could boycott the businesses of African-Americans that signed the petitions.

It is important to recognize that the efforts to prevent school desegregation in Mississippi in the 1950s and 1960s were both political and social. On a political level, the political leaders of the State made every effort, including passing laws that they knew, were unconstitutional, simply as a means of avoiding or at least delaying segregation (Ophelia, 2009). On a social level, local white citizens across the State worked to intimidate African-Americans who worked with the NAACP actually to bring about the desegregation demanded by the Supreme Court (Andrews, 2004). The combination of political and social attempts to prevent school desegregation means that Whites were not simply waiting for politicians in Mississippi to take action against the demands of the Supreme Court. The desire of Whites to become involved in the effort to prevent desegregation would be at least part of the reason why the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools would come to exist (Andrews, 2002).

In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was signed into law and allowed the federal government to withhold federal funding from school systems that were not integrated (Ophelia, 2009). However, a two-stage approach to segregation was allowed. In the first stage, school districts implemented what were known as freedom of choice plans in which parents could register their children at any school in that district (Andrews, 2002). The problem with the freedom of choice option was that true school integration did not

occur. African-Americans who attempted to enroll their children in predominately or completely white schools faced the same types of backlash that occurred to those whose names were printed in newspapers by the Citizens' Council for signing NAACP petitions. Even more, African-American students faced violence if they actually attempted to attend the schools in which their parents enrolled them (Andrews, 2004).

The overall result from the freedom of choice plan and the larger two-stage plan was that school integration did not occur. In fact, statistics showed that with the freedom of choice option, 88% of African-American students still attended all-black schools (Andrews, 2004). In total, only about 400 African-American students attended white schools and only 25 white students attended predominately African-American schools (Lowry, 1973). The efforts of White citizens to use intimidation and even outright violence against African-American parents and students that attempted to attend white schools had succeeded. At the same time, the schools in Mississippi that were reported to have lost around \$9 million of funding from the federal government in 1968 were able to attempt to regain at least some of those funds (Ophelia, 2009). It could be argued that the political leaders of Mississippi had attempted to prevent the loss of federal funds as allowed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by making a half-hearted gesture at achieving school desegregation.

The half-hearted attempt by political leaders to achieve school desegregation was challenged and once again, the Supreme Court became involved. In 1969, the Fifth Circuit Court ruled in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* that school segregation had to end immediately (Lowry, 1973). The Nixon Administration actually required a delay in the desegregation order, a request that was granted by the Fifth Circuit



Court. However, the Supreme Court intervened and ruled that desegregation did indeed have to begin immediately (Andrews, 2004). Several options, including changing the zoning of schools to encompass areas in which both Whites and African-Americans lived and the use of busing, were suggested. However, regardless of the technique that was used, the Court made it clear that school segregation in Mississippi had to end (Lowry, 1973).

The reality of the Supreme Court's ultimate decision in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* was fully recognized by Mississippi Governor John Williams. Following the ruling of the Court, Williams informed the state that school segregation was over and that the efforts that had been made to delay desegregation had been unsuccessful. Even more, the Governor acknowledged that the ability to use legislation as a means of preventing school desegregation, as had been used for more than a decade, was also over:

The Moment that we have resisted for fifteen years—that we have fought hopefully to avoid, or at least delay—is finally at hand. I am frank to tell you that our arsenal of legal and legislative weapons has been exhausted. Make the best of a bad situation with God's help. (Ophelia, 2009, p. 266)

#### Social Reaction to School Desegregation in Mississippi

While the legal ability of politicians and citizens in Mississippi to continue school, segregation ended in 1969, a new social approach to segregation actually began. White citizens of Mississippi had feared that the courts and the federal government would prevail in their efforts to force the state to end school segregation (Ophelia, 2009). The way in which Whites attempted to use a social approach to preventing their children from

attending desegregated schools was by forming what were called private academies (Brown-Nagin, 2000). Across the South in states such as Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and even Virginia, private academies were established in which students were charged tuition to attend (Wyatt, 2006). The purpose of the private schools or academies as they were called was to cultivate a system of education free from federal control. The tuition cost was a barrier that most African-Americans could not overcome in Mississippi in the late 1960s.

Between the 1968-1969 school year, the year in which the decision in *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* was issued and the 1969-1970 school year in which segregation had to end, public school enrollments in Mississippi declined by 15.29%. In the period from the fall semester to the spring semester of the 1970-1971 school year, public school enrollments in Mississippi declined another 15% (Andrews, 2004). What was clear from these statistics was that Whites were indeed removing their children from public schools across the state.

In the 1970s, 158 private academies were created across Mississippi (Ophelia, 2009). Even in some of the most rural areas of the Delta region of Mississippi, private academies were established (Eckes, 2006). The average tuition charged by the private academies was \$60.00 per month, but even for Whites, this was often a financial burden. Women who had not previously worked outside of the home took jobs so that they could pay the tuition to allow their children to attend segregated schools (Lowry, 1973). However, the private academies could not afford to operate solely on the tuition fees charged to students. The Mississippi State Legislature for a limited time provided

students who transferred from public schools to private schools a \$240 annual voucher (Andrews, 2004).

At the same time, the resources needed to begin these schools were not merely purchased with private tuition fees and monies provided by the state. Instead, public school districts actually made donations of land, school supplies, and equipment to private academies (Andrews, 2004). This only served to take resources that were intended for the use of public schools and moved them to private schools for the use of white students. White teachers who left public schools to work for the private academies were also involved in the movement of resources. Ophelia (2009) noted that one white teacher actually reported that upon returning from the Christmas holiday, lab equipment was missing or had been destroyed so that it could not be used in the desegregated public school.

In many instances, the private academies had all of the look and feel of the formally segregated schools from which their white student bodies came. For example, because private academies were often comprised of most of the white students that had attended a single public school, the same names for athletic teams and the same mascots were used. The names of the student newspapers were also transferred to the new private academies, as well as any other symbols that were viewed as being important (Andrews, 2002). The fact that Whites attempted essentially to mirror the look and feel of the formally segregated public schools that they left in the new private academies provides further evidence for the social means by which school segregation was continued in Mississippi.

However, even as Whites moved their students to the private academies, those that held power on local school boards and in local school districts continued to wield that power (Ophelia, 2009). Whites made decisions about how local funding for schools and the educational practices of schools even as they believed that their children should not attend desegregated schools. This desire to continue to control local school systems even as they pulled their children from those schools is an irony of the Whites that fought school desegregation from the 1950s into the 1970s. Another irony may also be that because the White leaders who sent their children to the private academies controlled the local public schools, it was easy for the private academies to take the images, mascots, and team names with them from the public schools leaving the school without a real identity. Teachers and students had to begin creating their own school cultures and school identities.

#### Formation of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools

The creation of the private academies across Mississippi gave rise to a process of accreditation and a desire to stay connected in some way with regard to the establishment of educational standards, as well as connections for the purposes of athletic competition (Andrews, 2004). Initially, the Citizens' Council claimed to be an accrediting body for the private academies, and its accreditation was recognized by the State of Mississippi (Lowry, 1973). However, the argument has been made that the Citizens' Council was not to play a direct role in the actual structure and connection of the private academies (Andrews, 2002). Instead, the Citizens' Council was initially important in providing information to local communities about how to go about creating the private academies. The information that the Citizens' Council provided was certainly important as it allowed

people who had little knowledge about how to create a private school to establish the private academies.

Another important role of the Citizens' Council with regard to the initial creation of the private academies was to continue to connect people around a common interest (Andrews, 2002). As it had done in publishing the names of the signers of NAACP anti-segregation petition, the Citizens' Council brought people together and rallied them around a common goal. In this way, the work of the Citizens' Council in the early formation of private academies should not be discounted. Instead, without the Citizens' Council, it is possible to speculate that the private academies that were created would not have been able to begin operations in the unified manner in which they did so quickly across the entire state.

Additionally, the creation of the private academies and the need for a unifying body to represent educational standards brought about the creation of the Mississippi Private School Association. The first meeting of the Mississippi Private School Association was held in 1968 (Andrews, 2002). The Association served essentially to oversee the educational and athletic activities and standards of the private academies. The Association was operated by educators who had been previously associated with the public schools who chose to leave those schools once compulsory integration became a reality in Mississippi.

The Mississippi Private School Association continued to operate and oversee the educational standards and accreditation of a large number of the private academies in Mississippi until 2009. Even more, the Association also became responsible for the accreditation of private schools in some areas of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee. In

2009, the leadership of the Mississippi Private School Association found that negative lingering connotations existed about the idea of private schools and the history of the reason the Association had been formed. The decision was made to change the name of the Association to the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools.

It has been noted that most of the students, particularly those in public schools, are unaware of the reason that the private academies exist in the state or of the civil rights history associated with them (Ophelia, 2009). The fact that students are not aware of the historical past of private schools in the state is a testament to the Association and academies across the state to be more inclusive and focus solely on the education of students rather than politics. Regardless of whether young people in Mississippi are aware of the history of private academies or the organization that has come to be the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, the reality is that the Association still plays an important role within the larger educational system in the state.

The fact that the Association continues to oversee the accreditation of a large number of private academies across the state and even into neighboring states is one of the reasons why the current study is important and worthwhile. An organization that oversees the educational and athletic standards of a large number of the private schools in Mississippi is one that is worthy of study and investigation.

#### Modern Mississippi Association of Independent Schools

Given the large amount of space within this literature review that has been devoted to the history surrounding the formation of what would become the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, it is appropriate that some space be used to examine the current condition of the Association. Unfortunately, conducting what might be

considered a truly academic review of the modern practices and actions of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools is impossible given that very little information about the Association is available from academic sources or even official reports. One of the reasons for the lack of official information from the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools is because it is indeed a private organization for which reporting on issues related to academics or policies related to race are not required to the same standard as public schools (Carr, 2012).

It must be remembered that the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools does not actually operate any of the independent schools that exist within the state. Instead, the function of the Association is to oversee the educational and athletic standards of the schools for which it provides accreditation. The Association has an extensive list of policies and procedures that it uses in order to determine if the schools seeking its accreditation sufficiently provide for the education, welfare, operation, and administrative of independent schools (Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, 2008).

One of the issues that is acknowledged by the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (2008) is that the schools for which it has accreditation oversight are indeed private schools, and as such, have different philosophies and standards that guide their operations. This is an important recognition and statement by the Association because in no place in the accrediting guidelines are issues of race or diversity of students or personnel mentioned. The Association seems to have attempted to remove itself from any focus on racial diversity with regard to the specific operations of its member schools.

While little information is available about the policies or actions of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, the acknowledgment as part of the Association's accreditation standards and practices that its member schools have different philosophies and standards might be a demonstration of a desire to avoid any discussions about diversity in the independent schools in the state. The focus of the Association has become one of academic and athletic standards and practices and not of the lingering issue of diversity within the schools that it oversees. However, this underlying focus on academic and athletic standards rather than on larger issues of diversity has been part of the current Mississippi Association of Independent Schools and the former Mississippi Private School Association since the 1970s, and, in reality, since its inception (Carroll, 1981). In this regard, the focus on academic and athletic standards rather than on the diversity practices of member schools has not changed over the course of the Association's more than 40-year history.

For the purposes of the current study, what seems to be a hands-off approach by the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools may provide some evidence for the beliefs that administrators will have about the organization and its effectiveness. Administrators may perceive that the Association provides little support because of the hands-off approach of the individual actions and policies of member schools. On the other hand, the strong focus on academic and athletic standards combined with a hands-off approach regarding other areas of operation may be desirable by administrators. The lack of current information from the Association provides further evidence for the importance of this study and the necessity of this study at the present time.



## Modern Conditions of Private Academies in Mississippi

The lack of official guidance or policies from the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools on issues of diversity warrants a deeper examination of the current state of the private academies in Mississippi with regard to student diversity.

Unfortunately, much like the lack of information regarding the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, there is little recent academic research about the actions and policies of private schools in Mississippi regarding diversity. One of the recent studies conducted on racial diversity in private schools in Mississippi found that the issue of diversity might not be entirely White vs. African-American, but upper-class White vs. the poor (Fairlie & Resch, 2002).

Specifically, Fairlie and Resch (2002) used data from the National Center for Educational Statistics to investigate whether so-called White flight from public schools to private schools in Mississippi was still dominate in the state. The researchers found that there was still a large lack of diversity among many of the private schools in Mississippi. However, on a broader level, the flight of Whites from public schools in the state was not solely related to the percentage of African-American students in those schools. Instead, the public schools with the lowest levels of diversity, meaning the highest percentages of African-American students, were those with high levels of poor African-American students. Based on recent data, it would indeed seem that income and choice are the factors that impact the decision of Whites to move their children to private schools in Mississippi rather than race.

Conlon and Kimenyi (1991) reported similar findings of their examination of the racial makeup of schools in Mississippi. The researchers explained from their

examination of school data that Whites were more likely to move their children out of public schools that were comprised of large percentages of poor African-American students as opposed to upper-income African-Americans. These findings combined with the findings of the research conducted by Fairlie and Resch (2002) suggest that race has become at least a little less dominant in the decision of white parents to send their children to private academies in Mississippi as opposed to public schools.

However, Conlon and Kimenyi (1991) also found in their examination of school data that the movement of white students from public schools to private schools was less likely in public schools in which there was a higher percentage of poor white students. Whites from upper-income levels were more likely to attend public schools in which there were large white student bodies even if the Whites were from lower socioeconomic levels than in schools with larger African-American student bodies, even if those African-American students were from higher socioeconomic levels. The conclusion would seem to be that race is indeed still a factor though not the driving force in the decision of Whites to send their children to private academies in Mississippi rather than public schools.

Overall, 85% of the students in private academies in Mississippi are white, while only 8% are African-American. In comparison, 48% of the students in public schools in Mississippi are white and 51% of the students are African-American (Reardon, Yun, & Orfield, 2006). Based on these data alone, it would seem appropriate to conclude that the private academies that were established some 40 years ago across the state of Mississippi have made progress in removing the perception of race as a factor of selection though they are still somewhat segregated in much the same way as when they were formed.

Over more than four decades, the desire to not be federally controlled, which was the desire of those who formed the private academies in Mississippi, continues to be prevalent in private schools across the state. However, the lack of diversity, as an underlying issue, is a stigma that plagues Mississippi.

As has been noted, there is not a great deal of very recent academic literature regarding the condition of private academies in Mississippi with regard to diversity. While the statistics that have been discussed are certainly important and helpful to understanding the diversity, or lack thereof, among private academies in Mississippi, qualitative information from student and staff members would also be helpful. In order to obtain recent qualitative information from students and staff, it is necessary to turn to news reports and news articles about private academies in the state. While these articles are not academic in nature, they can provide further information about the private academies as they operate today, which may be important background information for understanding the beliefs of administrators regarding the effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools.

One of the areas of Mississippi in which private academies are still largely segregated is the Delta Region. In recent months, the US Department of Justice has argued in court that public schools in the Delta Region are not desegregated as required. In fact, even in towns in which two public schools may operate, one public school exists in a white area with a nearly total white student body while the other school exists in an African-American area that may have a completely African-American student body (Usborne, 2013). A similar pattern exists among private academies in the Delta Region. A recent report showed that 35 private academies in Mississippi, many of them in the

Delta Region, could be deemed as being totally segregated as they have student bodies with less than 2% of students who are African-American (Carr, 2012).

It is important to note that some in Mississippi argue that private academies continue to be segregated because of the cost of sending children to them. Most of the private academies in Mississippi have annual tuitions of around \$4,000, which is cost-prohibitive for many families, particularly poor African-American families (Byrd, 2003). Some private academies offer what is known as minority scholarships in which monies are made available in an attempt to increase the racial diversity of the student bodies. Unfortunately, the monies made available are often not that great. At one particular private academy with a student body comprised of less than 2% African-Americans, a recent IRS filing showed that only \$6,500 was allotted for the minority scholarships (Carr, 2012).

Others, however, have argued that private academies have maintained their importance in Mississippi not because of racial or even economic segregation, but instead because of the ability of parents to choose how their children are taught (Byrd, 2003). Because the academies are private schools, they are able to implement policies such as prayer in school or teaching the Bible from a religious standpoint rather than solely from an academic standpoint. Furthermore, those school systems with higher academic achievement outcomes also have greater diversity, which may lend more evidence to the idea that the private academies are sought after because of the desire of parents to send their children where they believe they will receive a better education (“Racial Balance,” 2013).

The prominence of private academies, however, may be creating a self-fulfilling prophecy about the poor academic performance of public schools. The existence of private academies means that the public schools in Mississippi are often under-funded as people who do not utilize the public schools do not want to pay increased taxes to support them. In one area, a bond issue to pay for improvements to schools failed three times because a large percentage of the white families in the area do not send their children to the public schools (Byrd, 2003). The public schools need money to update facilities, but voters who send their children to private academies see little evidence that increased funding is the answer for public education.

In the end, while the purpose of this investigation is not related to issues of diversity or segregation, the current condition of most of the private academies in Mississippi with regard to issues of racial and economic segregation, as well as the perceived superior academic performance of students at private academies is important to understand. Being able to fully interpret the beliefs of administrators of private academies with regard to the effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools requires an understanding of the current issues facing the schools which the administrators oversee. In addition, it is important to understand the larger social conditions in which these schools exist and operate at the present time, as those factors may impact how school administrators perceive the effectiveness of the Association.

#### Beliefs of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools

The actual number of studies that have been conducted specifically on the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools or its predecessor in name, the Mississippi Private School Association, along with the member schools of the

Association is very small. Over the past four decades, only five studies have been conducted about the Association and its member schools, all of which were graduate level theses or dissertations written by students of colleges and universities in Mississippi. Even more, the graduate students who conducted the research were often directly involved in the independent school movement or even the Association in some way (Carroll, 1981; Mathis, 1975; Lishman, 1989). The fact that the people who have conducted research on the Mississippi Private School Association have been involved in the organization or its member schools in some way does not mean that their research has been biased or lacked validity. Instead, it is worth noting this connection because the larger implication is that very little attention has been given to the Association and its involvement in private academies and schools across Mississippi beyond those involved with it in some way.

Sansing (1971) conducted the first major study of the Mississippi Private School Association. The researcher conducted a largely descriptive analysis of 54 of the 106 schools that were members of the Mississippi Private School Association only three years after the Association was formed. Some of the more interesting and perhaps important findings of this initial study was that most of the member schools were indeed very small with only a couple hundred students each and very small numbers of faculty and staff. The information contained in this study provided a means by which to understand that most of the private academies that were formed in the immediate aftermath of forced desegregation in Mississippi were indeed very small and served small numbers of students in the areas in which they existed.

The purpose of the research conducted by Sansing (1971) was not to conduct an in-depth examination of the beliefs of the faculty or staff of the member schools of the Mississippi Private School Association, nor to attempt to draw connections between the ways in which each of the schools in the study operated and larger racial or economic issues. Instead, the study was conducted as a means of compiling and reporting on the condition of the schools. While this type of study might not seem very interesting at the present time, it must be recognized that at the time of the completion of the study, the Mississippi Private School Association and its member schools were still in their infancy. The study provided information about the new private academies and their accreditation organization that had quickly become the educational environment throughout Mississippi.

The next study to be undertaken about the Mississippi Private School Association was not written by a graduate student, but by the Bureau of Educational Research at the University of Mississippi (McDonald, 1973). Much like the research conducted by Sansing (1971), the study conducted by the Bureau of Educational Research provided a descriptive profile of the Mississippi Private School Association and its member schools. Information about the Association and the schools that it oversaw was obtained for the 1970-1971 school year. The profile that was created showed that the Mississippi Private School Association was relatively small in terms of the number of people who were members of the Association, as well as the individuals responsible for conducting the accreditation and oversight work of the Association.

Taken together, the research conducted by Sansing (1971) and McDonald (1973) might be considered out of date and even somewhat simplistic, but an image of the

Mississippi Private School Association and its member schools was created. The information that was compiled allowed for an understanding of the Association in its very earliest years of existence, as well as an image of the schools that had formed as a result of desegregation in Mississippi. Once again, one of the criticisms of both of these studies might be that little information was provided about the underlying issues of racial segregation that were the catalyst for the formation of private academies in Mississippi. However, for those who wanted to attempt to understand the Mississippi Private School Association and some of the schools that were part of the Association in terms of academic and athletic practices, the studies created an image of an organization that was somewhat small in terms of its own size and the size of each member school.

Mathis (1975) examined both the history of the Mississippi Association of Private Schools and the status of the organization as it existed in the early and mid-1970s. Once again, the Mississippi Private School Association was fairly young as it had only existed for about six years in terms of the information and data contained in the study. However, this particular study did provide some information about changes in enrollments and changes in the number of private academies that operated under the academic and athletic guidance and oversight of the organization.

Carroll (1981) provided a slightly more in-depth image of the situation involving the member schools of the Mississippi Private School Association as it existed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. One of the interesting explanations provided by the author in his study was the idea that the member schools of the Association seemed to some to have stopped working together and had begun to compete against each other for students and for funding. Some of the founders of the Mississippi Private School Association were



quoted within the research as complaining that newer leaders and members of the Association had forgotten the work that had occurred to form the Association and to create a strong network of private schools across Mississippi.

Another interesting explanation provided by Carroll (1981) from his research about the Mississippi Private School Association was the general lack of strong control of member schools. The researcher noted that member schools had a great deal of control over their local operations. The Association, while having detailed guidelines for academic and athletic standards, had little specific standards about how each school should operate in terms of local policies and procedures. In essence, the academic standards were created by the Association, but the way in which those standards were achieved was left entirely to the member schools. The argument seemed to be made that the reason for this was because of a concern for litigation if the standards of the Association were deemed to be illegal in some way. Furthermore, the desire among local communities in Mississippi was so great for local control, something that people believed they lost because of rules imposed by the federal government on public schools, that the Association wanted to allow local schools to have the freedoms they sought.

It is noteworthy that Carroll (1981) did note that little information was available about the ways in which students and faculty were selected to attend or teach in the private academies that were part of the Mississippi Association of Private Schools. With the historical context of how private academies came to exist in Mississippi, the lack of information and examination about private school faculty and students in Mississippi was an important gap in the body of knowledge on the subject in 1981 and still seems to be an important gap that researchers need to examine. While the goal of the current

investigation is not to examine issues of faculty and staff selection or administrative policies in private schools in Mississippi, researchers that want to further the knowledge of private schools in the state might considering studying these issues.

Lishman (1989) conducted the final and most recent study about the Mississippi Private School Association. The researcher essentially carried on the research conducted by Mathis (1975) in which the Association was examined from its beginning through 1974. Lishman examined the Association from 1974 through 1989. The information compiled for the study was, as it had been for the other studies, descriptive in nature. The information helped to create an image of the Association as it had begun to change during the transition to the modern era. The member schools of the Association were still providing private education to students in Mississippi, but they were also operating on relatively low budgets and with the assistance of individuals who were committed to private education.

Overall, the studies that have been conducted about the Mississippi Private School Association have been useful in providing an image of the Association over time, but have also overlooked or ignored important issues about member schools and the Association's operations. The studies that have been conducted about the Association generally examined information about the number of schools in operation and other basic statistics. None of the studies conducted with regard to the Association have examined deeper issues, such as the beliefs of school administrators about the Association. Even more, the last study of any type to be conducted specifically about the Association or its member schools was in 1989. With the ongoing social and cultural changes that have occurred in Mississippi with regard to education, a current study is certainly necessary.

In the end, the most important outcome of reviewing the five studies that have been conducted about the Mississippi Private School Association may be the demonstration of the need of a current study. While the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools may only seem of importance to those interested in private school education in Mississippi, it is an important part of the larger educational system in the state. The lack of current research beyond simple examinations of historical data is a major problem in the larger attempt to understand private school education in Mississippi. The current examination will fill some of the gap that exists in this regard and hopefully, encourage additional research from others.

#### Beliefs of the Accrediting Association and the Accreditation Process

As with other areas of the background literature for this study, there is little research regarding the beliefs of teachers and school administrators regarding accrediting associations and the accreditation process (Fairman, Peirce, & Harris, 2009). Given the importance that an accrediting association such as the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools has played in the educational system of Mississippi over the past 40 years, and likely many other accrediting bodies in states across the country, the lack of research on the beliefs of teachers and school administrators about the accrediting process is a major gap in the academic literature. However, some literature does exist that might provide some insights into the beliefs that the administrators of private schools in Mississippi toward the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools and its oversight of academic and athletic standards of its member schools.

The relationship between the leaders of private schools and the accrediting bodies that oversee their academic standards might be viewed as somewhat distant because of

the control that private schools and their leaders are accustomed to having in the educational process (Chubb & Moe, 1988). From an operational standpoint, private schools, regardless of where they are located, are generally considered to be independent. Private schools are certainly independent as compared to public schools that face strict levels of control and oversight because of the fact that they receive public monies for their operations. In this way, the bodies that accredit private schools may recognize that while they provide guidance and oversight of academic standards, they are not able to realistically provide strict oversight about how the educational process should be carried out.

The issue of the independent nature of private schools may also mean that administrators and teachers do not necessarily have negative beliefs of accrediting associations, but their beliefs may also not be overly positive. Instead, private school teachers and administrators may have a somewhat distant relationship with the accrediting bodies, which may be deemed acceptable and appropriate by all stakeholders (Chubb & Moe, 1988). The accrediting bodies operate to ensure that member schools maintain certain academic standards. At the same time, the accrediting bodies that oversee private schools recognize that they are overseeing schools that are accustomed to being largely independent. The end result may be a relationship that is not perceived as being positive or negative but rather viewed as amicable and even necessary to allow the schools to operate.

Other research has suggested that school administrators and teachers may not fully understand the rules and guidelines under which accrediting associations operate or the rules that they put into place that impact their decisions as to whether particular

schools should receive accreditation (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). The lack of knowledge about the rules that accrediting organizations have in place regarding whether teachers are qualified to teach and partnerships with other organizations on the part of teachers and administrators does suggest that these associations may not be important in the professional lives of most educators. Even more, teachers and school administrators may not fully understand the role that accrediting associations have in the larger educational process in the areas in which they operate.

It is important to note that the ideas that have been presented thus far about the beliefs and relationships between educators and accrediting associations are largely speculative. Some research has resulted in information about the knowledge that educators have regarding the accrediting associations that oversee the academic standards of the schools for which they work (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). However, the connection between accrediting associations and front-line teachers and administrators is largely theoretical in nature because of the lack of empirical research that has been conducted on this topic (Fairman et al., 2009). In recognizing the speculative nature of the beliefs of educators regarding accrediting associations, an argument can be made about the need for the current study. A major gap exists within the academic literature regarding education in general and the academic oversight of both public and private schools. The gap that exists within the literature on the subject is leading to a great deal of speculation about how teachers and administrators may feel about accrediting associations. The problem is that these speculations may not be accurate and they may not be valid given the nature of different schools, such as the differences in attitudes about independence between public and private schools.

The idea of differences in beliefs about accrediting associations between public and private school administrators may be more important than some realize or appreciate. The argument has been made that public school administrators and leaders place a great deal of attention on ensuring that policies of accrediting associations regarding the hiring of teachers, maintaining educational environments, and adhering to the academic standards are met (Cuban, 1990). The reason for the attention that public school administrators place on adhering to the academic standards established by accrediting associations may be related to the larger nature of the way in which public schools are operated. Public schools face very strict rules and oversight, not only from politicians but also from the general public that fund them (Chubb & Moe, 1988).

One hypothesis that might be created from this idea that public school administrators are more concerned about meeting the standards established by accrediting associations as compared to private school leaders is that the principals of the private schools in Mississippi will not be greatly concerned or even have strong beliefs at all about the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. The private school principals in Mississippi that operate under the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools may simply see the organization as something that is necessary to provide guidance and support for academic and athletic standards, but not an organization that is feared or even called upon very often for strict guidance about how to conduct the educational process. Once again, the independent nature of private schools in Mississippi may mean that a lack of strong beliefs, either positively or negatively, exists toward the accrediting organization.

Only two recent empirical studies could be found in which the beliefs of educators toward the accrediting process and accrediting bodies were investigated. Both of the studies in question were doctoral dissertations in which the area of interest was limited to particular states and generally to public schools. Flynn (1997) investigated the beliefs of high school principals, superintendents, and school board members from 130 public high schools in Massachusetts regarding the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, which is the main accrediting association in that state. The researcher found that the high school principals, superintendents, and school board members that took part in the study had positive beliefs about the accrediting association and the impact of accreditation on the performance of their schools. The principals that took part in the study believed that the accreditation process was an important mechanism through which positive changes occurred in their schools.

The insights about accreditation from the high school principals that took part in the research conducted by Flynn (1997) are important for this study because of the indication of a positive perception of accreditation and the accrediting association. One conclusion that might be drawn for this study is that the principals of the private schools in Mississippi will hold positive beliefs of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools because of the belief that the Association's oversight and guidance results in positive outcomes for the educational environment. However, it is necessary to emphasize again that the way in which private school principals perceive an accrediting association and the accreditation process may be different from the beliefs of public school principals because of the independent nature of private schools (Chubb & Moe, 1988).

Cushing (1999) conducted a second study involving the beliefs of school principals about an accrediting association and the accrediting process. The researcher collected data from high school principals, superintendents, and school board members from 66 public high schools in New Hampshire. Interestingly, the accrediting association that oversees the academic standards and practices of schools in New Hampshire is the same as the accrediting association in Massachusetts that was the focus of the study conducted by Flynn (1997): The New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The researcher found that the principals from the public schools in New Hampshire that took part in the study had positive views about the accrediting association and the accrediting process. The principals believed that the accrediting process was beneficial to their schools with regards to improvements in academic practices.

Drawing conclusions from the study conducted by Cushing (1999) for the current investigation involves the same problem as with the study conducted by Flynn (1997): the participants for the study were derived from public schools. The principals may have had positive beliefs about the accreditation process because of an underlying focus and even acceptance of adhering to academic standards established by outside bodies (Chubb & Moe, 1988). The schools that operate under the academic oversight of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools have different standards and practices, so the beliefs of the Association may not be as positive as the beliefs of the principals in Massachusetts and New Hampshire toward the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

The fact that the studies conducted by Flynn (1997) and Cushing (1999) involved schools that were accredited by the same accrediting association may also explain the similar results. The way in which the accrediting association interacted with its member



schools and the principals of the schools may have resulted in positive beliefs of the accrediting process on the part of the principals. If the studies had involved different accrediting associations, then the findings may have been different in terms of how the principals perceived both the accrediting associations and the accrediting process.

Overall, the research that has been reviewed about the beliefs of school administrators regarding the accrediting process leaves much to speculation in terms of how the principals of private schools in Mississippi may perceive the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. While much of the literature that has been reviewed has been theoretical in nature, the empirical studies that were reviewed were based on the beliefs of principals and other administrators of public schools in one particular area of the country operating under the oversight of a single accrediting association. The lack of empirical evidence regarding the beliefs of principals toward accrediting associations in areas of the country outside of the Northeast and of principals of private schools is a major gap in the academic literature that the current study will help to reduce. However, in terms of helping to allow for hypotheses to be drawn about the current study, the literature that has been reviewed is of little help.

#### Theoretical Framework

The concept of organizational effectiveness has been chosen as the theoretical foundation for this study. Organizational effectiveness is one of the most widely used theories to explain the success of an organization, but it is also one of the most debated in terms of the criteria that should be used to determine whether an organization is actually effective at achieving its goals (Quinn & Cameron, 1983). The reason for the debate about how to define the effectiveness of an organization is because different

organizations have different standards by which to measure whether they are effective. While goal attainment is the most often cited measure of effectiveness, the way in which one organization formulates and measures a goal may be drastically different than the way in which another organization formulates and measures a goal (Reimann, 1975). Even more, the attainment of a stated goal, such as achieving a specific level of revenues, may not be completely indicative of whether an organization has been effective at serving its customers and other stakeholders (Quinn & Cameron, 1983). In other words, a stated goal may not be enough to fully determine whether an organization is effective in a larger sense with regards to the way in which stakeholders are served.

In addition, organizations are not likely to have a single goal or a single measure of effectiveness (Reimann, 1975). Organizations, particularly large organizations, may have several goals that have been formulated to determine effectiveness. Even more, the goals may actually conflict with one another. For example, the goal of providing the best customer service possible may conflict with the goal of reducing customer service costs by using the smallest number of customer service representatives possible. In this way, it is possible to understand how different goals cannot only be in conflict with one another but how determining the way in which overall effectiveness will be measured can be problematic. Determining organizational effectiveness is truly not as easy as deciding upon a single goal for an entire organization and then attempting to measure whether the goal has been achieved.

Furthermore, if organizations are using the idea of organizational effectiveness to attempt to determine which factors or concepts are most important to measure effectiveness, this may also be problematic. Researchers have identified as few as 10

factors of organizational effectiveness and as many as dozens of factors of organizational effectiveness (Reimann, 1975). It is this seeming inability to concisely define what is meant by effectiveness across all situations and organizations, combined with the many factors that can be used to determine effectiveness, that has made the theoretical concept of organizational effectiveness as criticized as much as it has been used in recent decades (Quinn & Cameron, 1983).

The large number of factors and different ways in which effectiveness can be measured based on the differing goals that organizations may have has led researchers and theorists to create several models of organizational effectiveness. The models of organizational effectiveness have been created based on the purposes for which organizations exist, as well as the nature of the operations of an organization (Cameron, 1986). The model of organizational effectiveness that is most popular and most often used is the goal model, which is based on the idea that a criterion or set of criteria exists in relation to a stated goal that can objectively be measured (Etzioni, 1960). The problem with the goal model is that it is only useful when an organization has goals that can be quantifiably measured in relation to a given amount of time (Cameron, 1986). For example, the goal of increasing revenues by 10% over the course of two years is measurable using quantitative means and is set in a specific amount of time.

However, even with a goal that seems quantifiably measurable in a given amount of time, the use of the goal model may not be realistic or even prudent given the real-world conditions under which organizations operate (Etzioni, 1960). The goal of achieving a 10% increase in revenues within two years is based on what is expected to be ideal conditions. If the larger economy were to be impacted by a recession, then

achieving 10% growth might not be realistic while a rate of growth of 7% might be considered phenomenal. In other words, the goal model does not allow for value judgments about what is realistic or appropriate given larger, real-world conditions.

Another model of organizational effectiveness is the system resource model, which is based on the idea that an organization can be considered effective when it acquires the resources that are necessary for its operations from the environment in which it operates (Cameron, 1986). For example, a private school might be considered effective if it is able to acquire the best teachers in a particular community away from other public and private schools in the same area. With the use of the system resource model, the private school would be considered to be effective if it could indeed obtain the best teachers in the area in which it exists as employees.

The problem with the system resource model, however, is that the sole focus of organizational effectiveness is indeed the acquisition of scarce resources. The focus of the model is not on how the resources are used, or even if the resources were necessary for the operation of the organization (Etzioni, 1960). The private school in question might obtain a large number of teachers solely for the purpose of denying the best teachers in the area to other public and private schools. The problem that might occur is that the number of teachers acquired might not be necessary, given the number of students that are enrolled in the school. Furthermore, the teachers that are hired might not be used in the most effective way for the education of the students.

Another model of organizational effectiveness is the competing values model, which is a multidimensional model of effectiveness based on human relations, open systems, internal processes, and rational goals (Quinn & Cameron, 1983). The idea

underlying the competing values model is that organizations operate with competing goals or goals that are unclear and change over time (Cameron, 1986). The competing values model allows for the ability to consider effectiveness based on various aspects of an organization rather than a single set of goals that may or may not be recognized to be in competition with each other.

One other model of organizational effectiveness is the stakeholder model, which is based on the idea that organizational effectiveness should be measured in relation to the satisfaction of customers and other stakeholders of an organization (Henri, 2004). In order for an organization to be effective, the stakeholders who are served and impacted by the organization should be happy with the products or services they receive. In the case of a private school, organizational effectiveness using the stakeholder model would be determined by the satisfaction of the parents of the students who are served. However, it must be recognized that while an organization may have competing goals, the stakeholders of an organization may have different desires for the services that they receive (Reimann, 1975). Some stakeholders of an organization may be focused on efficiency or cost reduction while other stakeholders may be focused on receiving the best product or service possible. In the case of a private school, some parents may want their children to receive the best education possible as measured by test scores. Other parents, however, may want their children to receive an education that is rooted in the Bible or religion in some way. While it may be believed that the stakeholders are best served through a quality education, the way in which different stakeholders define a quality education may be drastically different from each other.

Overall, some have argued that the competing ideas and conditions in which organizations operate mean that multiple models of organizational effectiveness should be used to determine whether an organization is operating in an effective manner (Cameron, 1986). In this regard, the benefits of each of the models that have been discussed can be used to measure effectiveness, while the downsides of each model can be reduced. The quantifiable goals of an organization, such as test scores in the case of a private school, can be pursued along with goals of achieving the desires of parents for a quality education or even an education based on specific doctrine.

As a theoretical foundation for this study, the organizational effectiveness model through the lens of multiple models of effectiveness is appropriate for evaluating the beliefs of independent school administrators based on their own needs and concerns, as well as the needs and concerns of their stakeholders. All of the literature that has been reviewed regarding the formation and development of the private academies in Mississippi that have come to exist under the academic oversight of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools suggest that there are competing values and concerns of stakeholders. Some parents, teachers, and administrators may indeed still desire to send their children to racially segregated schools, but other stakeholders may be focused on ensuring that their children receive a higher level of education than they believe is possible in the public school systems of Mississippi. From these competing values and concerns, it is easy to understand how a multiple model approach to examining organizational effectiveness with regard to how administrators perceive the effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools is appropriate.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide an in-depth and critical review of literature related to the subject of administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. The literature that has been reviewed in this chapter has been diverse, from the legal and political issues that led to the formation of private academies and the organization that would come to be known as the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools to the possible beliefs of principals and school administrators toward accrediting associations. The limited information that is available about the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools was also reviewed. Finally, a theoretical framework to serve as a foundation for the current study was examined.

The information that was reviewed about the formation and proliferation of private academies in Mississippi was as much about the history of civil rights in Mississippi over the course of the past 40 years as it was about education. While some parents and students may not fully appreciate how private academies came to exist in Mississippi, the fact that they do exist is a consequence of federally mandated action. In fact, the decision of the leaders of the Mississippi Private School Association to change the organization's name to the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools reflects a desire to attempt to overcome the negative connotation associated with how the organization and its member schools came to exist.

Another important issue that arose from the literature review was the major gaps that exist in the literature with regard to the beliefs of principals about accrediting associations in general, and specifically about the beliefs of administrators in private

schools in Mississippi about the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools. The last major study conducted about the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools was completed in 1989. In the past 24 years, the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools has largely gone unexamined in any meaningful and scientific way. The current study will help to not only provide relevant information about the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools but also expand upon the relatively limited research regarding the beliefs of school administrators toward accrediting associations.

The current study will also provide information about the beliefs of school administrators working in private schools toward an accrediting association that strictly accredits private schools. The limited research that was available for review was generally conducted on samples of school administrators in public schools. The current study will bridge an important gap that exists in the literature regarding private school administrators and how they perceive accrediting associations. While the focus of this study will be limited to a single accrediting association in a single state, important information may be obtained that can be the basis for studies involving accrediting associations in other states that oversee the academic standards of private schools.



## CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the methodology used in this study. It includes the research questions, hypotheses, information related to the participants, and the instrument used to measure administrator beliefs of the MAIS organizational effectiveness. This study investigated the administrators' beliefs of the MAIS organizational effectiveness, focusing on fairness, commitment, and confidence to determine if any statistically significant differences exist between the administrators' beliefs of the MAIS organizational effectiveness and selected variables.

### Research Design

The purpose of this study was to quantify the beliefs of organizational effectiveness held by administrators of the MAIS with respect to fairness, individual commitment and confidence in the association compared to administrative tenure, school location, and school size. The quantitative dependent variable was administrator beliefs of the MAIS organizational effectiveness with respect to fairness, commitment, and confidence. The quantitative independent variables were administrative tenure, location, and school size. The researcher also gathered demographic items, including gender, age, compensation range, and accreditation status to run possible future multiple linear regressions.

### *Research Questions and Hypotheses*

#### Research Questions:

- RQ 1. How do administrators rate the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent School (MAIS)?

- RQ 2. Is there a difference between the beliefs of small school administrators and large school administrators regarding the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS)?
- RQ 3. Is there a difference between the beliefs of new administrators and seasoned administrators regarding the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS)?
- RQ 4. Is there a difference between the beliefs of administrators in various geographic locations regarding the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Private School Association (MAIS)?

This study addressed the following research hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>. There will be a significant difference between the administrator beliefs of organizational effectiveness and school size.
- H<sub>2</sub>. There will be a significant difference between the administrator beliefs of organizational effectiveness and administrative tenure.
- H<sub>3</sub>. There will be a significant difference between the administrator beliefs of organizational effectiveness and school location.

### *Participants*

After obtaining approval from the Executive Committee of the MAIS and the Institutional Review Board of the University of Southern Mississippi, the researcher conducted a study of the MAIS. Participants for this study included all MAIS lead administrators.

### *Instrumentation*

The Mississippi Association of Independent School Organizational Effectiveness Questionnaire (OE Questionnaire; Appendix A) designed by the researcher was used to measure the presence of differences between administrator beliefs of the Association's organizational effectiveness and school size, location, and administrative tenure. The questionnaire contains 42 questions that were assigned to one of four categories: demographic information, organizational effectiveness/fairness, organizational effectiveness/commitment, and organizational effectiveness/confidence. A Likert scale of 1-6, 1 equating to don't know to 6 equating strongly agree were used to identify administrators' beliefs of organizational effectiveness of the MAIS. Section one comprised of questions 1-14 seeks to identify administrators' beliefs of organizational effectiveness of the MAIS from the vantage point of fairness. Section two comprised of questions 15-22 seeks to identify administrators' beliefs of organizational effectiveness of the MAIS from the vantage point of commitment. Section three comprised of questions 23-32 seeks to identify administrators' beliefs of organizational effectiveness in the MAIS from the vantage point of confidence. Section four obtains descriptive information about the participants. The section consisted of nine questions concerning gender, age, income, school size, location, and administrative tenure. The option for school size included twenty-one groups with a range of forty-nine students. The groups are as follows: 1-50, 51-100, 101-150, 151-200, 201-250, 251-300, 301-350, 351-400, 401-450, 451-500, 501-550, 551-600, 601-650, 651-700, 701-750, 751-800, 801-850, 851-900, 900-950, 951-1000, and 1000+. The options for school location include three groups above I-20, below I-20 and outside of Mississippi. The information for MAIS years of

tenure is divided into eight groups. The groups are as follows: 1-3, 4-7, 8-11, 12-15, 16-19, 20-23, 24-27 and 28+.

The validity of the instrument was established through a focus group of experts consisting of two current school administrators and one former MAIS director. Panel members are professionals with knowledge of the MAIS and its characteristics.

Upon review of the instrument by the panel of experts, the instrument was edited and finalized. In addition, a pilot study was conducted after Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained to ensure the reliability of the instrument. The pilot study included 20-30 MAIS administrative participants and was conducted using Qualtrics software package. All data obtained from the pilot study was analyzed using SPSS. A Cronbach's Alpha was obtained to test the reliability of the instrument.

### *Procedures*

The study was conducted utilizing the following procedures. The researcher provided the questionnaires electronically to participants. All MAIS administrators were given the online questionnaire *uniform resource locator (URL)* through Qualtrics and allowed three weeks to complete the questionnaire. A paper survey was available upon request. An information section was attached to each survey to provide information on how to complete the questionnaire and layout. Additionally, a permission letter was attached to the instrument for review by the individuals whose participation in the study was requested. The letter advised recipients of the voluntary nature of participating and it assured them that there were no negative consequences if the participant chose not to participate. The participants were informed that filling out the questionnaire indicated that they had agreed to participate in the research study. A copy of all questionnaires will

be kept in a locked file cabinet by the researcher for no more than three years. After that period, they will be properly destroyed. The researcher plans to present a summary of findings at the annual MAIS Administrators' Conference. The results of the findings are discussed in chapter four.

Prior to collecting data, the researcher applied to The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Research Board (IRB; Appendix B) for approval of the study. Before IRB approval was obtained from The University of Southern Mississippi, the researcher submitted a request to the MAIS Executive Committee to participate in the study. Following receipt of approval from IRB, the researcher began the data collection process. All MAIS administrators were sent an information letter requesting participation.

#### *Delimitations*

The study was conducted with the following limitations:

1. The results are limited by only administrators in the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools participated.

#### *Data Analysis*

For this quantitative study, the responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and ANOVA. Items 1-32 are divided into three subscales, questions 1-14 organizational effectiveness/fairness, question 15-22 organizational effectiveness/commitment, question 23-32 organizational effectiveness/confidence and questions 33-41 contained demographic information. Descriptive statistics of minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation were used to produce descriptive statistics for the demographic items. An ANOVA was used in the examination of the data for research question one, to determine if there were differences between administrators'

belief of the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS with regards to school size, location, and tenure. An ANOVA was used in the examination of the data for research question two, to determine if there were differences between administrators' belief of the organizational effectiveness/fairness, organizational effectiveness/commitment, and organizational effectiveness/confidence with regards to school size. An ANOVA was used in the examination of the data for research question three, to determine if there were differences between administrators' belief of the organizational effectiveness/fairness, organizational effectiveness/commitment, and organizational effectiveness/confidence with regards to school location. An ANOVA was used in the examination of the data for research question four, to determine if there were differences between administrators' belief of the organizational effectiveness/fairness, organizational effectiveness/commitment, and organizational effectiveness/confidence with regards to MAIS tenure. A significance test was conducted to determine whether or not a significance differences existed; the value was set at  $p = .05$ .

Value codes were created for school size, and tenure. For school size, three groups were created with equitable distribution across groups. The value codes assigned for school sizes were as follows: 50-350=1, 351-600=2 and 601+=3. The value codes assigned for MAIS tenure were as follows: 1-3 years=1, 4-15 years=2 and 16+ years=3. The data from the questionnaire was analyzed using the statistical program SPSS.

### Summary

Chapter three describes the methodology for this study. The purpose of this study was to establish a baseline view of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools from the school administrator's vantage point and

determine if there were statistically significant differences between administrator's beliefs of the organizational effectiveness with regard to school size, location, and tenure. The results provide the descriptive and statistical data components of the study. This study will be beneficial to those involved in education at multiple levels. First, the study will assist the MAIS in ascertaining its current level of organizational effectiveness. The information provided by the study can be helpful to the MAIS for the planning and implementation of the goals of the Association. The Mississippi Department of Education may also find the study useful, as it will provide insight into the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS, which educates 40,000 students each year in the state. State policy makers, particularly legislators, who write statutes that impact independent education, may find this study beneficial. Additionally, the parents and citizens of the areas encompassed by the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools may find the study helpful in determining the quality and nature of alternative education opportunities available to students.

## CHAPTER IV - RESULTS

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to establish a baseline view of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools from the school administrators' perspectives and determine if there were statistically significant differences between administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness with regard to school size, location, and tenure. The results provide the descriptive and statistical data components of the study.

The research design for this study regarding the beliefs of administrators was non-experimental and employed quantitative analyses. Data were gathered from a questionnaire completed by lead administrators in the MAIS. The questionnaire focused on organizational effectiveness with regard to school size, location, and tenure.

A pilot test was administered to 22 participants prior to the study in order to determine reliability of the study instrument. The data from the responses of pilot test participants were analyzed using the statistical program SPSS. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient test was used to determine reliability for each subscale. The test disclosed a reliability of greater than .70 for all subscales, with the exception of one, which produced reliability results of .61. Because the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient test was below .70 the test was run again dropping question 22 in the commitment subscale. The second test disclosed a reliability of greater than .70. The subscales addressed administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS with regard to commitment. The validity of the instrument was established through a focus group of experts consisting of two current school administrators and one



former MAIS director. Group members are professionals with knowledge of the MAIS and its characteristics.

Table 1

*Cronbach's Alpha for Pilot Study*

$\alpha$	Subscale
.95	Organizational effectiveness (All)
.92	Organizational effectiveness/fairness
.74	Organizational effectiveness/commitment
.94	Organizational effectiveness/confidence

Data Analysis

The study sample size was 71 MAIS administrators from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. The dependent variable for the study is the beliefs of administrators of the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS. The independent variables in the study were school size, location, and MAIS tenure.

Value codes were created for school size, and tenure. For school size, three groups were created with equitable distribution across groups. The value codes assigned for school sizes were as follows: 50-350=1, 351-600=2 and 601+=3. The value codes assigned for MAIS tenure were as follows: 1-3 years=1, 4-15 years=2, and 16+ years=3. Additionally, the response 1 equating to don't know was coded as missing data.

The reliability and internal consistency of the variables were explored using Cronbach's Alpha. A Cronbach's Alpha test of coefficient reliability was performed on each set of items to determine how well each set of items measured a single construct. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or greater is considered acceptable. The Cronbach's Alpha test for each subscale yielded a reliability of greater than 0.70.

Table 2

*Cronbach's Alpha for Final Study*

$\alpha$	Subscale
.95	Organizational effectiveness (All)
.92	Organizational effectiveness/fairness
.90	Organizational effectiveness/commitment
.89	Organizational effectiveness/confidence

Descriptive statistics and ANOVA were used in the examination of the data for research question one to determine if there were differences between administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS with regard to school size, location, and tenure. An ANOVA was used in the examination of the data for research question two to determine if there were differences between administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness/fairness, organizational effectiveness/commitment, and organizational effectiveness/confidence with regard to school size. An ANOVA was used in the examination of the data for research question three to determine if there were differences between administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness/fairness, organizational effectiveness/commitment, and organizational effectiveness/confidence with regard to school location. An ANOVA was used in the examination of the data for research question four to determine if there were differences between administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness/fairness, organizational effectiveness/commitment, and organizational effectiveness/confidence with regard to MAIS tenure.

## Results of Descriptive Analyses Related to Demographics and Research Questions

### *Demographic Items*

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the responses from the demographic items for MAIS lead administrators. A frequency table was generated for all items. The following demographic information was obtained from the data; 69 responses were received. Of those responding, 50 participants (72.4%) were males, 19 (27.6%) were females. Table 3 provides the frequencies and percentages for this item.

Table 3

### *Frequencies of Professional Positions*

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Gender	<i>f</i>	%
Male	50	72.4
Female	19	27.6
Total	69	100.0

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The administrators reported a wide range of school sizes. Out of 68 respondents, 27 (39.6%) reported a school size of 50-350 students, 20 (29.4%) reported a school size of 351-600 students, and 21 (31.0%) reported a school size of 601-1000+ students. The demographic frequencies and percentages can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

### *Frequencies of School Size*

---

School size	<i>f</i>	%
50–350 students	27	39.6
351–600 students	20	29.4
601–1000+ students	21	31.0
Total	68	100.0

---

The administrators reported school location in one of three areas. Out of 67 respondents, 37 (55.2%) reported a school location North of I-20, 23 (34.3%) reported a school location South of I-20, and 7 (10.5%) reported a school location outside of Mississippi. The demographic frequencies and percentages can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

*Frequencies of School Location*

School location	<i>f</i>	%
North of I-20		
South of I-20	23	34.3
Outside Mississippi	7	10.5
Total	67	100.0

The administrators reported a range of MAIS tenure. Out of 68 respondents, 20 (29.4%) reported 1-3 years of MAIS administrative tenure, 22 (33.4%) reported 4-15 years of MAIS administrative tenure and 26 (38.2%) reported 16+ years of MAIS administrative tenure. The demographic frequencies and percentages can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

*Frequencies of MAIS Tenure*

MAIS tenure	<i>f</i>	%
1–3 Years	20	29.4
4–15 Year	22	32.4
16+ Years	26	38.2
Total	68	100.0

### *Items Related to Administrators' Beliefs of MAIS Organizational Effectiveness*

Descriptive statistics were used to provide elements needed in the analyses related to administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness. This section dealt with comparing the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness. Scores were divided into subscale. The means as follows: scores for questions 1-14, which identified administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness with regard to fairness, for questions 15-22, which identified administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness with regard to commitment and 23-32, which identified administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness with regard to confidence.

The items for administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness with regard to fairness/commitment/confidence are on a 6-point Likert scale with a rating of 1 equating to *don't know* and a rating of 6 equating to *strongly agree*. The mean score was (M=5.03) for administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness for all respondents. The lowest rated question was in the area of commitment to the MAIS. The means (M=4.04) for question twenty-two, one of the negative consequences of leaving the MAIS would be the scarcity of available alternatives. The highest rated question was in the area of fairness of the MAIS. The means (M=5.66) for question nine, the MAIS considers my input.

The subscale of organizational effectiveness/fairness highest rated question was nine (M=5.61), the MAIS considers my input. The lowest rated question was question four (M=4.42), the MAIS has appropriate representation on the Academy Athletic Commission. The frequencies and percentages can be found in Table 7.

The subscale of organizational effectiveness/commitment highest rated question was 18 (M=5.42), I would be happy to spend my career in the MAIS. The lowest rated question was question twenty-two (M=4.06), one of the negative consequences of leaving the MAIS would be scarcity of available alternatives. The frequencies and percentages can be found in Table 8.

The subscale of organizational effectiveness/confidence highest rated question was twenty-six (M=5.49), I am confident that MAIS school graduates are prepared after graduation. The lowest rated question was question twenty-seven (M=4.87), I am confident that the MAIS will be supportive in problematic situations/crises with regard to the Academy Athletic Commission. The frequencies and percentages can be found in Table 9.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Effectiveness/Fairness*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
The MAIS considers my input.	5.61	0.86
I have a strong relationship with MAIS office	5.40	0.70
The requirements placed on me by the MAIS as an	5.39	0.56
The service I receive from the MAIS is adequate.	5.32	0.63
Procedures utilized by the MAIS are fair regarding	5.28	0.73
The MAIS has appropriate representation on the	5.26	0.77
The Mississippi Association of Independent	5.16	0.70
The MAIS has appropriate representation on the	5.12	0.89
Procedures utilized by the MAIS are fair regarding	5.11	0.82
The communication I receive from the MAIS is	4.98	0.94
When communicating decisions, the MAIS offers	4.93	0.73
My input on what could be done to	4.79	0.90
Procedures utilized by the MAIS are fair regarding	4.54	1.15
The MAIS has appropriate representation on the	4.42	1.33

*Note.* MAIS lead administrators (N = 57).

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Effectiveness/Commitment*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I would be happy to spend my career in the MAIS.	5.42	0.84
The MAIS means a great deal to me.	5.37	0.85
I feel a sense of obligation to remain in the MAIS.	5.00	0.91
I owe a great deal to the MAIS.	4.94	1.06
I would feel guilty if I took a job in education outside the MAIS.	4.07	1.01
One of the negative consequences of leaving the MAIS would be scarcity of available alternatives.	4.06	1.09

*Note.* MAIS lead administrators ( $N = 67$ ).

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistics of Organizational Effectiveness/Confidence*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I am confident that MAIS school graduates are prepared after graduation.	5.49	0.54
I am confident that administrators can depend on the MAIS.	5.44	0.60
I am confident that the MAIS maintains rigorous academic standards.	5.36	0.65
I am confident that the MAIS will be supportive in problematic situations/crises with regard to the Accreditation Commission.	5.35	0.65
I am confident that the MAIS office personnel understand the challenges in member schools.	5.33	0.72
I am confident that the MAIS personnel address crises in an acceptable manner.	5.31	0.66
I am confident that the MAIS will be supportive in problematic situations/crises with regard to the Executive Committee.	5.27	0.76
I am confident that other MAIS administrators maintain consistent standards.	4.93	0.86
I am confident that the MAIS will maintain a quality core of administrators.	4.87	0.86
I am confident that the MAIS will be supportive in problematic situations/crises with regard to the Academy Athletic Commission.	4.87	1.09

*Note.* MAIS lead administrators ( $N = 55$ ).

Four research questions were generated for this study. Questions two, three and four had an associated hypothesis. Hypothesis 1 was stated as follows: there is a significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of organizational effectiveness and school size. This hypothesis contrasts the beliefs of administrators with regard to school size. An ANOVA was used to test hypothesis 1. This test revealed no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness and school size as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=.685, p=.508$ . Hypothesis 1 was also tested using an ANOVA to examine each organizational effectiveness subscale for a difference between the administrators' beliefs and school size. The test revealed no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness/fairness and school size as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=.386, p=.681$ . The test revealed no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness/commitment and school size as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=.811, p=.449$ . The test revealed a no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness/confidence and school size as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=.956, p=.390$ . Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2 was stated as follows: there is a significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of organizational effectiveness and administrative tenure. This hypothesis contrasts the beliefs of administrators with regard to administrative tenure. An ANOVA was used to test hypothesis 2. This test revealed no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness and school size as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=.370, p=.692$ . Hypothesis 2 was also tested



using an ANOVA to examine each organizational effectiveness subscale for a difference between the administrators' beliefs and administrative tenure. The test revealed no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness/fairness and administrative tenure as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=1.26, p=.292$ . The test revealed no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness/commitment and administrative tenure as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=.288, p=.751$ . The test revealed a no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness/confidence and administrative tenure as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=.587, p=.559$ . Therefore the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 3 was stated as follows: there is a significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of organizational effectiveness and school location. This hypothesis contrasts the beliefs of administrators with regard to school location. An ANOVA was used to test hypothesis 3. This test revealed no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness and school location as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=1.74, p=.183$ . Hypothesis 3 was also tested using an ANOVA to examine each organizational effectiveness subscale for a difference between the administrators' beliefs and school location. The test revealed no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness/fairness and school location as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=2.51, p=.089$ . The test revealed no significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness/commitment and school location as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=.734, p=.484$ . The test revealed no

significant difference between the administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness/confidence and school location as indicated by the Univariate F-test,  $F(2, 65)=.995, p=.376$ . Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected.

### Summary

This study investigated whether there were differences in beliefs of administrators of the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS with regard to school size, administrative tenure, and school location. This study utilized subscales of organizational effectiveness in the areas of fairness, commitment and confidence. The study included 71 participants from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. Data for this quantitative study were entered into SPSS to be statistically analyzed and reported. Descriptive statistics and ANOVA analyses were used to identify statistically significant differences among the variables.

Frequency data from this sample indicated that the respondents were somewhat evenly distributed for years of experience, 1-3 years (29.4%), 4-15 (32.4%) and 16+ years (38.2%). Male administrators outnumbered the number of female administrators who responded. A large number of the respondents were from North Mississippi, followed by South Mississippi, then those outside Mississippi. The majority of the respondents worked in a school that has 350 or more students.

The study indicated that administrators value the MAIS and hold the belief the Association seeks and considers their input. The items with the lowest values of administrators' beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness pertain to the organizational effectiveness of the Academy Athletic Commission. This study revealed that there was no difference in the beliefs of MAIS organizational effectiveness with regard to school size, administrative tenure, and school location.

## CHAPTER V - CONCLUSION

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to establish a baseline view of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools from the school administrators' perspectives and determine if there were statistically significant differences between administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness with regard to school size, location, and tenure.

The intent of this research was to present findings on the disparities in beliefs of lead administrators regarding the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS. This information can provide policymakers, administrators and parents with a foundation for reexamining the independent school movement in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. The findings of this study may better enable the Association and lead administrators to work together as a team. This chapter includes a discussion of the findings, conclusions, recommendations, and summary.

### Major Findings

The demographic data from the study indicated that a majority of the respondents were administrators with 10 years or less experience in MAIS independent schools, while a majority of those same administrators reported 16 or more years of total public and independent school experience. It is possible that these school administrators' primary experience was in public, or state, schools. A large number of respondents reported working in schools with a student population between 300-500 students. The overwhelming number of administrators who responded was from schools inside Mississippi. There was a fairly proportionate distribution for the location of respondents

who were from North Mississippi and South Mississippi. The low response from schools outside of Mississippi could be due to the discomfort of respondents with this particular type of questions, or possibly a heightened unwillingness of administrators in schools outside Mississippi to participate in this survey.

Descriptive statistical summaries indicated that respondents were generally satisfied with all three governing groups of the Association. The groups are the Academy Athletic Commission, Accreditation Commission, and Executive Committee. Though the respondents were generally satisfied, the Academy Athletic Commission on average received the lowest ranked responses, while the Accreditation Commission received on average the highest ranked responses. Descriptive statistical summaries of the subscales organizational effectiveness/fairness, organizational effectiveness/commitment and organizational effectiveness/confidence on average showed a general level of satisfaction with the MAIS. The highest rated question was the MAIS considers my input as compared to the lowest rated question that references the scarcity of available alternatives outside the MAIS.

Research question 1 asked how administrators rate the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent School (MAIS). The descriptive statistical summaries used indicated that administrators were generally satisfied with the organizational effectiveness of the Association.

Research question 2 addressed whether there is a difference between the beliefs of small school administrators and large school administrators regarding the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS. The ANOVA used to test the related hypothesis indicated that

there were no significant differences in the subscale means for school size with regard to organizational effectiveness

Research question 3 addressed whether there is a difference between the beliefs of new administrators and seasoned administrators regarding the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS. The ANOVA used to test the related hypothesis indicated that there were no significant differences in the subscale means for administrative tenure with regard to organizational effectiveness.

Research question 4 addressed whether there is a difference between the beliefs of administrators in various geographic locations regarding the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS. The ANOVA used to test the related hypothesis indicated that there were no significant differences in the subscale means for geographic location with regard to organizational effectiveness.

### Discussion

The results of the study suggest MAIS administrators are generally satisfied with the organizational effectiveness of the Association. The respondents agreed that the MAIS maintains a certain level of organizational effectiveness regardless of school size, location or tenure of the administrator. The findings are revealing particularly if one removes the lens of Southern social injustice and examines the root causes of private school formation and growth over the past fifty years. Cameron (1986) asserts organizational effectiveness is a concept used to describe the successfulness of an organization in meeting its intended purposes and goals. The literature review revealed that throughout the latter half of the 1950s and into the 1960s, political leaders in Mississippi went to great lengths to avoid the desegregation of state schools. James

Coleman, who was elected Governor of Mississippi in 1956, understood that laws could be enacted at the state level to prevent desegregation of schools even if they were unconstitutional because years would be required before cases challenging those laws would be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court (Ophelia, 2009). The general course of action to stop the desegregation of public schools in Mississippi was one of legal defiance. The State Legislature simply passed one law after another making desegregation either illegal or impossible based on the actions that could be taken by local school systems.

While the legal ability of politicians and citizens in Mississippi to continue school segregation ended in 1969, a social approach to segregation began. White citizens of Mississippi had feared that the courts and the federal government would prevail in their efforts to force the state to end public school segregation (Ophelia, 2009). The way in which Whites attempted to use a social approach to prevent their children from attending desegregated schools was by forming private academies (Brown-Nagin, 2000).

Andrews (2002) indicated the historical context of the current existence of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools is rooted in the broader issue of school desegregation, but the study also suggests that the issue is related to federal or outside control. Being mindful of the history and the results of the study, one cannot lose sight of the fact that the founders of the MAIS were men and women who left the state system to start independent schools, and in so doing, brought with them the curriculum, structures, teachers, students, and mascots of the state schools they left. Had it not been for the federal intervention in the state system, they would not have left it. They accepted the principle of state-controlled education—they just did not want it to be controlled by outsiders with different values from their own. One is left to consider whether they

would have left the state school system if the federal intervention had been congruent with their values. In other words, on what principle (if any) did they reject the federal control?

The change in name from the MPSA (Mississippi Private School Association) to the MAIS (Mississippi Association of Independent Schools) is both reflective of the general contentment of MAIS administrators concerning the organization's effectiveness and also evidence of the desire of member schools to de-emphasize the social and political reverberations of the organization's origins in favor of emphasis on the organization's advocacy of independence in education. Whereas the Mississippi Association of Private Schools was an association of schools established to restrict the educational benefits they offered to primarily white children in the state, the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools offers its benefits to all children of the state and champions the self-government of its member schools. Most MPSA schools were no different in their educational philosophy or pedagogy from the state schools. They were staffed by former state personnel, used state-approved curricula, and adopted the state's accreditation and certification standards; some even sought state funding. While some MAIS schools accept state and federal funding for their operations, most are no longer all white versions of schools in the state system (MSAIS.org).

In general parlance, "public schools" is synonymous with state schools, referring to schools owned, funded, and governed by the state, adhering to state standards of education and meeting all state and local laws relating to schools. Nevertheless, considering the meaning of "public," MAIS schools can also rightly be called "public schools" because they are open to children in general and devoted to the welfare of the

communities at large in which they operate. Think of a motel as a “public accommodation.” A motel is open to the public; state and federal laws and regulations have made sure of that. Even so, a motel may refuse to rent a room to a minor (someone who does not meet its age requirements) or a person who cannot afford the room rate—just like a public independent school may have entrance requirements and charge fees. Therefore, the chief difference between “public schools” and “independent schools” (as the terms are commonly used) is governance. Public schools are run by the state; independent schools are self-governed.

The study indicates from the administrators’ perspectives the Association is serving its mission as a buffer to external control, whether real or perceived. It is noteworthy that the respondents recorded the lowest level of satisfaction with the areas of the Association that exercise the most control, specifically the Academy Athletics Commission. This finding parallels the thoughts of Herman (1999), “Organizational effectiveness is not an objective reality; rather, effectiveness is a social construction, an achievement of organizational agents and other stakeholders in convincing each other that an organization is pursuing the right objectives in the right way” (p. 109).

Building on Herman’s idea of effectiveness as a social construct and the achievements of organizational agents, one must examine the MAIS administrators in order to grasp the current state of MAIS independent education. Additional exploratory correlation analysis of tenure and MAIS organizational effectiveness revealed a moderate positive correlation between MAIS administrative tenure and a sense of belonging to the organization,  $r(66) = .307, p < .05$ . The MAIS reflects the national trend of a shortage of individuals willing and able to make long-term careers as independent school



administrators. This phenomenon is evident in the MAIS as member schools increasingly turn to retired administrators from the state system to fill head of school vacancies. Retired state school administrators with retirement benefits can afford the relatively low wages offered to independent school heads. They are experienced administrators who are retired from career-long service in state-controlled schools—with vested retirement benefits and a desire to continue to serve in school administration. However, they are not in a growth phase of their careers, and their careers are indicative of their embracing the belief that the state is responsible for educating children. Their habits of thinking and leading have been shaped in the state system. They are likely to maintain the status quo as long as possible and/or transfer their habits from the state system to the independent schools they head. Exploratory correlation analysis suggests, because of state school tenure, they may not fully understand nor appreciate the principles, obligations and the possibilities of independent education. The correlation analysis of tenure and MAIS organizational effectiveness revealed a small positive correlation between MAIS administrative tenure and a sense of obligation to the organization,  $r(66) = .270, p < .05$ .

Thus, one who has retired from the state system is unlikely to believe the state should not control the way parents educate their children—their whole career was based on that premise. Also because of state control at the local level, the retired state school employee has not experienced the freedom (and requirement) to be creative in designing an educational environment to meet the needs of local families. He or she is unlikely to begin taking risks in the sunset of his or her career.

Additional research is needed because little prior analysis exists in the literature of the organization effectiveness of independent schools. The student viewpoint for future analysis is also important because it was noted during the literature review that most of the students, particularly those in state schools, are unaware of the reason that the private academies exist in the state or of the civil rights history associated with them (Ophelia, 2009). The fact that students are not aware of the historical past of private schools in the state is a testament to the Association and academies across the state as they have become increasingly more inclusive and focus solely on the education of students rather than politics. It is unfortunate, as Carr (2012) noted, that conducting what might be considered a truly academic review of the modern practices and actions of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools is impossible, given that very little information about the Association is available from academic sources or even official reports. One of the reasons for the lack of official information from the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools is that it is indeed a private organization that does not require academies to report on issues related to academics nor policies related to race at the same level as the Department of Education requires public schools. Therefore, interpretations of the beliefs of administrators of the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS based on this study need to be approached with caution, since the study utilized only one avenue to examine the MAIS. The literature coupled with this study suggests evidence exists, then, that perhaps not all MAIS schools understand what it means to be an independent school. The study is more of a launching point for future studies than a current barometer of MAIS effectiveness.

## Delimitations

There were some factors that limited this study's findings. Participants for the study were limited to MAIS school administrators who work in member schools in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. Also, school administrators used in the study were limited to lead administrators. The response rate, while producing sufficient participants for most analyses, was not as high as desired.

One of the independent variables was the location of the school. The intent was to determine if school location affected the beliefs of administrators with regard to the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS. However, school administrators outside Mississippi were poorly represented in the study.

## Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Ironically, the MAIS is a creation of the state. It is the state's approval of the Association that legitimates its privilege to certify teachers and to accredit schools. It stands in some measure as a buffer between the Department of Education and individual schools so that every legislative education mandate and regulatory edict governing state schools does not apply to member schools. Nevertheless, some percent of member schools avail themselves of state and federal provided goods, services, and funding. Thus far, the regulatory strings that accompany these provisions have not proved too burdensome on their ability to be self-governing. Member schools would welcome individual tax relief to enable more parents to choose their schools and less regulative oversight to allow them to function freely while quite the opposite is the reality. Policymakers work in the names of "independence" and "freedom" with enticement of funding and an ambiguous swath of regulations in the School Choice movement. The

School Choice movement is viewed by some as a redistribution of wealth scheme disguised as an innovative approach to education with a changing paradigm of limiting regulations. Policymakers should be mindful that at present, receiving schools proclaim they will give up the provisions when the state benefits infringe on their missions. This should raise the question: where does independent fit in MAIS member schools' missions and how important are Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas independent schools? States are not currently prepared to handle the number of students currently enrolled in independent schools. One might get the image of a teenager who demands independence while being supported by his parents. The teenager cannot support himself in the manner to which he's become accustomed so curbs his desire for independence from his parents. However, teenagers grow up and become independent of their parents' curfew and dress code and accompanying financial support. Policymakers should explore the reasons individuals support independent education and consider the potential educational benefits of reducing the burden of taxes and regulations.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Many times, research yields the opportunity to investigate further. These findings reveal additional opportunities for future inquiry. The following studies would produce additional insight for MAIS schools and the independent school movement in general.

Research is needed to explore the hallmarks of an independent education and what constitutes organizational effectiveness. It is recommended that future studies explore the differences between MAIS schools' beliefs of what constitutes an independent education compared to quality independent schools around the country.

Research is needed to explore the beliefs of independent school governance. It is recommended that future studies explore the differences between MAIS school governance models and quality independent school governance models utilized across the country.

Sports and activities are a vital part of the educational process. The sports culture of the day is dominant and having an impact on the educational process and its effectiveness. Future studies are recommended on the effects of sports and activities on the operations of MAIS schools.

Additionally, government involvement and increased regulatory oversight are the reality of our time. Education is a primary tool of the government. Future studies are recommended on the effects of government funding, regulations and school choice legislation on the independent school movement.

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to establish a baseline view of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools from the school administrators' perspectives and determine if there were statistically significant differences between administrators' beliefs of the organizational effectiveness with regard to school size, location, and tenure.

The primary data for this study were obtained from 71 MAIS administrators from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. The study examined the beliefs of lead administrators of the organizational effectiveness of the MAIS with regard to school size, location, and tenure. For this quantitative study, the responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA. The differences in beliefs of the administrators of the

organizational effectiveness with regard to school size, location and tenure were found to be non-significant.

The study produced no major findings but suggested that MAIS administrators are generally satisfied with the organizational effectiveness of the Association. The respondents agreed that the MAIS maintains a certain level of organizational effectiveness regardless of school size, location or tenure of the administrator. The study also showed that the MAIS reflects the national trend of a shortage of individuals willing and able to make long-term careers as independent school administrators as MAIS member schools increasingly turn to retired administrators from the state system to fill head of school vacancies.

Limitations existed in this study. However, recommendations for policy and practice were made, which could include that policymakers should endeavor to support those who favor independent education schools by reducing the burden of taxes and regulations.

Recommendations for further research included future studies to explore the differences between MAIS school governance models and quality independent school governance models utilized across the country. Other recommendations included exploring the differences between MAIS schools' beliefs of the hallmarks of an independent education compared to quality independent schools around the country.

## APPENDIX A - MAIS OE Questionnaire



Dr. John Dale Dumas  
President  
Parklane Academy

Allen Scott  
1st Vice President  
Central Hinds Academy

James Madden  
2nd Vice President  
Glenbrook School

Dr. Bill Alford  
Secretary  
Magnolia Heights School

Jim Quinn  
Treasurer  
Pillow Academy

A. Shane Blanton  
Executive Director

To: MAIS Executive Committee  
Subject: USM Research Project


I am a research student at the University of Southern Mississippi and the Executive Director of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS). I am seeking your consent to allow administrators in the MAIS to participate in a research study that I plan to conduct in the fall of 2016. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and confidentiality will be maintained and protected at all times. This study will examine the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS) member school administrators' beliefs regarding the Association's organizational effectiveness. The research questions will seek to determine whether relationships exist between administrators' beliefs of the Association's organizational effectiveness and their administrative tenure, schools' size, and location. The study is needed because the MAIS has not been the subject of a study in twenty years. Additionally, since the MAIS impacts the education of approximately eighty percent of all non-public school students in Mississippi, as well as a number of students in member schools located in surrounding states, current research that will provide insight into the organizational effectiveness of the Association is warranted.

Information will be obtained from one source: The Mississippi Association of Independent School Organizational Effectiveness questionnaire designed by the researcher will be used to measure the presence of relationships between administrator beliefs of the Association's organizational effectiveness and school size, location and administrative tenure. The questionnaire contains forty-two questions all questions were assigned to one of four categories: demographic information, organizational effectiveness/fairness, organizational

Anonymity will be maintained and protected at all times. The data collected will be used solely for the study that is being conducted. Anonymity will be protected. At no time will the administrators surveyed be identified in the study findings. All student data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's locked classroom closet and will be shredded at the end of the school year.

If you have any questions related to the study, please call Shane Blanton (601) 618-0094. This project will be reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820.

176 Country Place Parkway  
Pearl MS 39208  
601.932.2007  
MSAIS.ORG

Approved:  Date: 10/19/16

## APPENDIX B - Institutional Review Board Approval



### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | [www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board](http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board)

### NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.  
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 16103107

PROJECT TITLE: Administrators Beliefs of the Organizational Effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools

PROJECT TYPE: New Project

RESEARCHER(S): Anthony Shane Blanton

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology

DEPARTMENT: Educational Research and Administration

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 11/15/2016 to 11/14/2017

**Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.**

**Institutional Review Board**



## APPENDIX C - MAIS Survey

MAIS Administrators, Major gaps exist in the research with regards to independent education and accrediting associations in general, and specifically about the perceptions of administrators in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas independent schools concerning organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS). Although the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools was established in 1968, independent (or “non-public”) education is as old as civilization and independent schools have played an undeniably significant role in the foundation and development of the United States. The first schools in North America were established by Roman Catholics in what are now the states of Florida and Louisiana long before any state funded public schools existed on the continent. Indeed, an organized system of “public” schools did not exist in the United States until the 1840’s, and concerned parents have always made educational choices for the beneficial development of their children. Since 1968, the MAIS has certified the educational integrity of its member schools, which have taken great pride in providing exceptional educational opportunities for children in the State of Mississippi and surrounding states. The Association's member schools are integral participants in their communities, both economically and socially. Like independent schools themselves, the Association is funded by schools that voluntarily join the association and by voluntary contributions from the public—from people who value educational freedom and the exceptional opportunities that private schools provide in a community. Listed below is a series of statements that may represent an individual’s view of the organization which they are a member. With respect to your own view of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by filling in the corresponding circle using the following scale: 6 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Agree, 4 = Ambivalent, 3 = Disagree, 2 = Strongly Disagree, 1 = Don't Know Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

## Organizational Effectiveness/Fairness

Listed below is a series of statements that may represent an individual's view of the organization which they are a member. With respect to your own view of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by filling in the corresponding circle using the following scale: 6 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Agree, 4 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 3 = Disagree, 2 = Strongly Disagree, 1 = Don't Know

- Q1 The Mississippi Association of Independent Schools (MAIS) dues/fees are appropriate.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q2 When communicating decisions, the MAIS offers explanations that make sense.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q3 The service I receive from the MAIS is adequate.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q4 The MAIS has appropriate representation on the Academy Athletic Commission.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know

- Q5 The MAIS has appropriate representation on the Accreditation Commission.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q6 The MAIS has appropriate representation on the Executive Committee.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q7 The communication I receive from the MAIS is adequate.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q8 The requirements placed on me by the MAIS as an administrator are reasonable.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q9 The MAIS considers my input.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know

- Q10 My input on what could be done to improve the MAIS is solicited.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q11 I have a strong relationship with MAIS office personnel.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q12 Procedures utilized by the MAIS are fair regarding the Academy Athletic Commission.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q13 Procedures utilized by the MAIS are fair regarding the Accreditation Commission.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know
- Q14 Procedures utilized by the MAIS are fair regarding the Executive Committee.
- Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't Know

## Organizational Effectiveness/Commitment

Listed below is a series of statements that may represent an individual's commitment to the organization which they are a member. With respect to your own commitment as a result of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by filling in the corresponding circle using the following scale: 6 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Agree, 4 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 3 = Disagree, 2 = Strongly Disagree, 1 = Don't Know

Q15 I feel a strong sense of belonging to the MAIS.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q16 I feel like "part of the family" in the MAIS.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q17 The MAIS means a great deal to me.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q18 I would be happy to spend my career in the MAIS.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q19 I feel a sense of obligation to remain in the MAIS.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q20 I would feel guilty if I took a job in education outside the MAIS.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q21 I owe a great deal to the MAIS.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q22 One of the few negative consequences of leaving the MAIS would be scarcity of available alternatives.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

## Organizational Effectiveness/Confidence

Listed below is a series of statements that may represent an individual's confidence level in the organization which they are a member. With respect to your own view of the organizational effectiveness of the Mississippi Association of Independent Schools, indicate the degree of your confidence level with each statement by filling in the corresponding circle using the following scale: 6 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Agree, 4 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 3 = Disagree, 2 = Strongly Disagree, 1 = Don't Know

Q23 I am confident that the MAIS maintains rigorous academic standards.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q24 I am confident that the MAIS will maintain a quality core of administrators.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q25 I am confident that the MAIS office personnel understand the challenges in member schools.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q26 I am confident that MAIS school graduates are prepared after graduation.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q27 I am confident that the MAIS will be supportive in problematic situations/crises with regard to the Academy Athletic Commission.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q28 I am confident that the MAIS will be supportive in problematic situations/crises with regard to the Accreditation Commission.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q29 I am confident that the MAIS will be supportive in problematic situations/crises with regard to the Executive Committee.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q30 I am confident that administrators can depend on the MAIS.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

Q31 I am confident that other MAIS administrators maintain consistent standards.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know



Q32 I am confident MAIS personnel address crises in an acceptable manner.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

## Demographic Information

Q33 Please indicate your gender.

- Male
- Female

Q34 Current age in years.

- 25-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 56-60
- 61-65
- 65+

Q35 Administrative Position Tenure (MAIS Member Schools).

- 1-3 Years
- 4-7 Years
- 8-11 Years
- 12-15 Years
- 16-19 Years
- 20-23 Years
- 24-27 Years
- 28+ Years

Q36 Administrative Position Tenure (Total Public and Private).

- 1-3 Years
- 4-7 Years
- 8-11 Years
- 12-15 Years
- 16-19 Years
- 20-23 Years
- 24-27 Years
- 28+ Years

Q37 How long have you been in your current position?

- 1 Year
- 2 Years
- 3 Years
- 4 Years
- 5 Years
- 6 Years
- 7 Years
- 8 Years
- 9 Years
- 10 Years
- Over 10 Years

Q38 Current compensation range.

- \$30,000 and Below
- \$31,000 - \$50,000
- \$51,000 - \$70,000
- \$71,000 - \$90,000
- \$91,000 - \$110,000
- \$111,000 - \$130,000
- \$131,000 - \$150,000
- \$151,000 - \$180,000
- \$181,000 and above

Q39 School Size.

- 0 - 50 Students
- 51 - 100 Students
- 101 - 150 Students
- 151 - 200 Students
- 201 - 250 Students
- 251 - 300 Students
- 301 - 350 Students
- 351 - 400 Students
- 401 - 450 Students
- 451 - 500 Students
- 501 - 550 Students
- 551 - 600 Students
- 601 - 650 Students
- 651 - 700 Students
- 701 - 750 Students
- 751 - 800 Students
- 801 - 850 Students
- 851 - 900 Students
- 901 - 950 Students
- 950 - 1000 Students
- 1000+ Students

Q40 School Location.

- Located North of I-20
- Located South of I-20
- Located Outside of Mississippi

Q41 In addition to MAIS/AdvancED/SACS accreditation is your school SAIS accredited?

- Yes
- No

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