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## High school principals in South West Ghana: profiles and perceptions regarding problems of practice

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HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH WEST GHANA:  
PROFILES AND PERCEPTIONS REGARDING  
PROBLEMS OF PRACTICE

DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO

The School of Education and Allied Professions

THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership

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THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

DAYTON, OHIO

MAY 2010

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH WEST GHANA:  
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HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH WEST GHANA:  
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PROBLEMS OF PRACTICE

By

Michael Amakyi, Ph.D.

The University of Dayton, 2010

Theodore J. Kowalski, Ph.D.

This study examined senior high school principals in South West Ghana regarding the frequency and severity of problems they encountered, their perceptions of preparedness to handle the problems, and possible associations between selected principal demographic variables and perceived preparedness.

Findings showed that approximately 3 out of 4 respondents were males, nearly 2 out of 3 respondents were 54 or older, and none was younger than 45. The modal principal had completed a bachelor's degree in a discipline other than education. The principal profile reflected two primary requirements for principals set by the Ghana Education Service: a bachelor's degree (major unspecified) and at least 15 years of teaching.

Problems of practice identified in the study were categorized as leadership-related, management-related, or political. Political problems were more frequent and more severe than those in the other two categories. Respondents, however, felt most prepared to handle management-related problems. A small segment of the study population with a

master's degree in educational administration (10%) was compared with the other principals regarding perceived preparedness to address problems. The former felt more adequately prepared to address leadership-related problems and problems generally (all three categories combined); however, the other principals felt more adequately prepared to handle management-related problems.

Using correlations as a descriptive statistic, none of the associations between selected demographic variables and perceived preparedness to handle problems was found to be high. Three variables (amount of experience as a principal, amount of experience as an assistant principal, and major in the highest degree completed), however, were found to have positive and moderate associations with perceived preparedness.

Policy recommendations included (a) requiring principals to have a graduate degree in school administration, (b) lowering the teaching experience requirement, and (c) adopting incentives for principals to receive continuing education for school improvement. Research recommendations included (a) conducting qualitative studies to clarify the benefits of having a graduate degree in school administration, (b) exploring factors that influence how principals perceive problems, and (c) replicating this study in other designated regions in Ghana.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother, Sabina Amakyi, whose love and support have sustained me throughout my career and to the lasting memory of my late father, Charles Ignatius Amakyi.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A member of the task force on “Reinventing the Principalship” constituted by School Leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Initiative, Institute for Educational Leadership, Washington, DC in 2000, is credited with the saying that “no one can say for certain how the schools of the new century will differ from those of the past century, but there can be little doubt that these schools will require different forms of leadership” (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000, p. 1). The emphasis on the school leader as key to achieving the mission of the school is given further credence by Bennis and Nanus (1985). They argue that the factor that empowers people and ultimately determines which organizations succeed or fail is leadership.

In reference to schools, the above statements are applicable to principals. The leadership role in schools rests primarily on the shoulders of these educators. Any type of system change requires a principal to be the implementer of the change.

Affirming this point, Sarason (1996) wrote:

I have yet to see any proposal for system change that did not assume the presence of the principal in the school. I have yet to see in any of these proposals the slightest recognition of the possibility that the principal, by virtue of role, preparation, and tradition, may not be a good implementer of change. (p. 140)

Today's school is changing rapidly and serves a more technologically-oriented society in which students are expected to have essential knowledge and skills. The evolving nature of school environments places new demands on school principals. Literature is replete with examples of how the normative role of today's school administrator has changed from primarily manager to primarily instructional leader (DuFour & Eaker, 1992; Fink & Resnick, 2001), facilitator (Hallinger & Heck, 1996), and communicator (Kowalski, 2008). In essence, today's principal is expected to lead and manage.

The society now places a premium on school leaders who can collaborate with others to create a vision of success for all students, and who can use their skills to communicate effectively and build a learning community. In highly effective schools, top-down decision making is replaced with democratic decision making—a process that gives teachers, parents, and other stakeholders opportunities to plan school improvement initiatives. The operational model of a hierarchical structure in these schools has been replaced with intersecting spheres of influence (Hanson, 2003). The paradigm shift found in effective schools requires cultural change in traditional schools.

The evolving role of education in Ghana indicates that challenges facing principals are not unlike the ones found in most other countries. There is increasing demand for schools to change and become more effective. The principal is thus expected to primarily lead change and produce school improvement. Expectedly, who becomes a principal has come under scrutiny. The debate centers largely on whether the knowledge base of many current principals is adequate in terms of providing essential leadership for change and school improvement.



## Statement of the Problem

High school principals in Ghana are not required to complete a professional standardized preparatory program in educational administration. The Ghana Education Service (GES)—the body empowered by the constitutions of Ghana to conduct pre-tertiary education—has no requirement for a prospective principal to complete a specified academic preparatory program(s) in post-graduate studies in educational administration or educational leadership. High school principals are required to meet the following criteria:

- Be a professional graduate teacher with satisfactory work history and conduct within the GES.
- Have served at the rank of deputy director for at least 2 years.
- Have served as an assistant headmaster/mistress, unit head at the headquarters, or an equivalent position for at least 3 cumulative years.
- Not be over the age of 55 years at the time he or she applies for the position.

(Ghana Education Service Council [ESC], 2009)

In addition to the above criteria, the GES states that post-graduate studies in education or a second degree in a relevant field and computer literacy will be an added advantage for the position of school principal (ESC, 2009).

Educational reforms (e.g., Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education in 1995; Educational Reforms in 2007) in Ghana demand greater accountability from schools, improved student achievement, increased community involvement in schools, and partnership with non-governmental organizations. A major change of the reforms was the

change in configuration of the high school years from 3 to 4 years and the introduction of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) as a core subject.

The reforms also emphasized community participation in public education and entrusted the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDA) with the responsibility of providing infrastructure and supervision for pre-tertiary education. The emphasis on school-community relations has heightened the interest of parents and other stakeholders in the activities of the school. Schools are ranked annually based on students' academic performance on national exams, and the ranking is publicly displayed. In addition, the reforms established an independent National Inspectorate Board with the primary responsibility of conducting periodic inspection of schools and to ensure compliance with the tenets of the reforms.

Coming in the wake of the reforms is the proliferation of media houses, especially broadcast media. The media houses are naturally competing for information, hence prying into what goes on in the schools. No longer can principals isolate themselves and what happens in their schools from the public. Though these expectations collectively have made the high school principal's role more demanding, required academic knowledge remains basically undefined and requisite experiences have remained unchanged for years.

Zame, Hope, and Respress (2008) intimate that education reforms in Ghana have paid little attention to the importance of leadership development for principals. "There is rarely any formal leadership training and principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching record rather than their leadership potential" (Bush & Oduro, 2006, p. 359).

Amezu-Kpeglo (1990) posits that the Ghana Education Service (GES) policy is premised

on the assumption that a successful classroom teacher can be an effective principal even when he or she has no academic preparation in school administration. What is in place is an (unwritten) assumption that good teachers can become effective managers and leaders without specific preparation.

Teaching experience, however, does not ensure that a person has the technical, analytical, and human relations skills required for administrators. Kowalski (2008) points out that the knowledge base in school administration includes both theoretical knowledge and craft knowledge (or artistry); hence a need for a blend of the two to facilitate the principal's work. The aforementioned statement is supported by Sergiovanni. "One cannot run a school effectively by simply applying theory, but one cannot also run a school effectively without using theory either" (Sergiovanni, 1987, p. xv).

Because the current requirements for becoming a high school principal in Ghana are broad and do not include graduate study in school administration, the extent to which principals in this country have studied subjects such as educational leadership, school management, school-community relations, law, and finance are essentially unknown. The absence of these data is arguably problematic for at least two reasons. First, one cannot ascertain whether principals are properly prepared to carry out school reform; second, one cannot ascertain whether it would be prudent to alter existing requirements for high school principals.

Instead of heightening requirements for principals, the GES perpetuates selection policy and requirements that appear to be incongruent with demands for school improvement. This condition is unlikely to change unless more is known about current

principals, the problems they encounter, and their preparedness to deal effectively with the problems.

### Purpose of the Study

The population examined in this study consists of all high school principals in South West Ghana. The research addresses three overall goals:

1. To determine the credentials of high school principals in South West Ghana.
2. To describe and quantify the frequency and severity of problems of practice encountered by high school principals in South West Ghana.
3. To ascertain principal perceptions regarding preparedness for dealing with problems of practice encountered.

Specifically, the investigation is intended to produce the following information about the study population.

- A demographic profile (e.g., gender, age).
- An academic preparation profile (i.e., level and nature of formal education completed).
- A professional experience profile (i.e., the quantity and nature of professional experiences).
- Frequency and severity of problems of practice examined through the eyes of high school principals and perceptions of their preparedness to deal with the problems.

## Research Questions

The study is framed by the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the study population?
2. What is the academic profile of the study population?
3. What is the professional experience profile of the study population?
4. What is the frequency of the problems of practice identified by the study population?
5. What is the severity of the problems of practice identified by the study population?
6. To what extent do members of the study population believe they were prepared to deal with the problems of practice they encountered?
7. Is perceived preparedness to address problems of practice associated with selected respondent characteristics?

## Significance of the Study

The findings and conclusions reported in this study are important for three reasons.

First, they provide data for future policy analysis and development concerning administrator qualifications and preparation in Ghana. Second, they provide data that employers (those who employ principals) should find beneficial. Third, they constitute an important addition to the professional knowledge base.

## Delimitation

The study will be limited to high school principals in South West Ghana. Findings deduced from this study, using a defined population, will describe only the study respondents and will have no bearing on those who chose not to respond. Specifically, the study population will involve high school principals in the Central Region and Western Region. Ghana is divided into 10 administrative regions (Upper East, Upper West, Northern, Brong Ahafo, Ashanti, Eastern, Volta, Greater Accra, Central, and Western Regions). There are 520 government-sponsored high schools unevenly scattered throughout the regions. The total number of high schools to constitute the study population is 89. The two regions were selected because first, it was not manageable to consider all the high schools in Ghana within the time framework for the study. Second, the two regions have high schools falling into the three categories of Highly Effective schools, Effective schools, and Less Effective schools. Third, the two regions have high schools with demographic characteristics similar to high schools in the other regions.

The study will also be limited to only high school principals of government-sponsored high schools. In government-sponsored schools, the Ghana Education Service sets the criteria to determine who becomes the principal and is also responsible for hiring principals.

The study instrumentation is limited to measuring the perceptions of principals. Interviews, peer evaluations, or observations will not form part of the instrumentation. The study employs the self-assessment technique to evaluate principals' perceptions regarding frequency and severity of problems and their level of preparedness to deal with the problems. Barber (1990) argues that self-assessment techniques lack objectivity,

accuracy, and reliability compared with observation or peer evaluation. In general, respondents in self-assessment tend to self promote and may be unwilling to disparage their professional preparation, believing that doing so may be personally or politically detrimental.

### Method

The study population is defined as high school principals in South West Ghana. Members of the study population were identified from the personnel directory of the Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS). The researcher used a survey instrument to collect data about principals' perception of the frequency and severity of problems of practice they encounter on their jobs. The survey instrument also was used to collect data on the extent of preparedness of the principals to adequately handle problems of practice they encounter. Finally, the survey instrument was used to collect data regarding individual profiles such as a demographic profile, an academic profile, and a professional experience profile of the high school principals. The survey instrument consisted of 34 Likert-type items and seven individual profile questions.

Descriptive statistical analyses were used to analyze data collected via the survey research. Means, standard deviations, frequency counts, and percentages were used to report respondents' perceptions of the frequency and severity of problems of practice encountered and their preparedness to address the problems of practice. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze demographic data. Finally, correlation analysis was conducted to determine possible associations between principal profiles—academic

preparation and professional experience—and perceptions of level of preparedness to address problems of practice encountered.

### Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this research, the following key terms are operationally defined:

- Academic preparation. This refers to the level of college education and the major area of study for degrees completed.
- Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools. Association of principals of high schools that receive funding from the national government.
- Deputy Director of Education. A rank attained after 15 years of post-baccalaureate teaching experience and successfully passing an interview conducted by a panel of eminent educationists.
- Frequency of problems. The number of times a principal encounters a problem in a semester. This is measured on an ordinal scale of 1 representing *never*, 2 representing *sometimes*, and 3 representing *often*.
- Ghana Education Service (GES). The body empowered by the constitution of Ghana to conduct pre-university education in the country. The GES sets policies for all pre-university educational enterprises in the country.
- Instructional leadership. Entails leadership in promoting, supervising, evaluating, and coordinating curriculum within a school setting.
- Leadership-related. Refers to what needs to be done and why.
- Level of preparedness. The extent of professional knowledge base, skills, and disposition acquired through theory and artistry. This has three levels of low,



medium, and high. Level of preparedness is measured on an ordinal scale of 1 representing *not at all prepared*, 2 representing *somewhat prepared*, and 3 representing *well prepared*.

- Management-related. Addresses how and when things are done.
- Political-related. Pertains to issues involving competition for scarce resources.
- Principal. The administrator of a high school. The principal is referred to as headmaster or headmistress in the study population.
- Problems addressed adequately. This takes place when stakeholders are satisfied with solutions to problems proffered by the principal.
- Problems of practice. They are perceived difficulties in performing a professional responsibility regardless of its cause.
- Senior house master or mistress. The dean of high school students. High schools in Ghana have boarding facilities, and the senior house master or house mistress is in charge of facilitating the smooth running of the boarding house.
- Severity of problems. This entails how serious the problems are in relation to the school and the principal. This is measured on an ordinal scale of 1 representing *not serious*, 2 representing *moderately serious*, and 3 representing *serious*.
- Standardized preparation. Prescribed program of graduate study leading to the award of a government-issued certificate or license to qualify for the principalship.
- Theoretical knowledge. Consists of evidence-based and pedagogic knowledge.

### Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 will include an introduction, background of the problem, statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, design of the study, delimitations of the study, definitions of terms, and a summary of the chapter. Chapter 2 will contain the review of relevant literature including educational journals, periodicals, doctoral dissertations, and books related to educational administration, educational leadership, and effective principalship. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology that was used in conducting the study. Chapter 4 will contain a presentation and discussion of the data collected. Chapter 5 will present conclusions, recommendations to improve practice, and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Overview of the Chapter

The review of related literature and research is organized into the following sections: (a) understanding the principalship, (b) problems of practice, (c) principal leadership and effective schools, and (d) readiness of principals to address problems of practice. Several subtopics were explored in each section.

The review in this chapter is guided by the hypothesis proffered by Rasiel and Frigal (2001). They intimate that organizations are inundated with problems of practice which can only be addressed adequately by competent leaders; that is, leaders who have received appropriate preparation. Rasiel and Frigal postulate that effective organizations are the outcome of organizational leadership addressing problems of practice adequately. Adopting the *McKinsey Mind*—tools, techniques, and strategies of the McKinsey Consulting Firm to solve an array of core business problems—Rasiel and Frigal contend that the ability to think in a rigorous, structured manner can be a learned behavior. Organizational leaders should be equipped with the ability and skill to correctly frame problems of practice by acquiring relevant knowledge (both theory and craft) through well-defined preparation programs.

## Understanding the Principalship

The review of literature and research on understanding the principalship focuses on a brief historical overview of the school principal, the role of the school principal, and the nexus between the principal and student achievement. The historical sketch highlights how the position evolved and it also touches on some key descriptors for the principalship over the years. The historical sketch concludes with how the principalship evolved in Ghana. The literature on the role of the school principal looks at the principal from various perspectives and explores the question: Who is the principal? This review examines the contemporary role of the principal and looks at the nexus between the principal and student achievement. This section also looks at the career path to the principalship in Ghana and concludes with the role expectations of the principal in Ghana.

### *Historical Overview of the School Principal*

The position of principal emerged after schools grew from one-room institutions to multiple-grade and classrooms institutions. Hitherto, schools had been run in a one classroom block. Teachers, referred to as principal-teachers, initially assumed both administrative and teaching responsibilities. However, as schools became larger, principal-teachers became full-time administrators. According to Grady (1990), the addition of supervision of instruction to the principal's job precluded the possibility that administrators could continue teaching. Principals, however, functioned primarily as managers who were responsible for financial operations, building maintenance, student scheduling, school personnel, public relations, and student discipline.

Over the years, different role conceptualizations emerged and were stressed for principals in the United States. Each evolutionary stage was associated with a corresponding role expectation spanning curriculum supervision, vision maker, building-based management, and climate and culture caretaker (Weiss, 1992). Sergiovanni (2002) noted that instructional leadership became a key responsibility during the 1980s as a result of mounting pressures for school reform.

Barth (1990) contends that the principal is seen by most people as the most important, influential, and powerful person in the school. He or she plays a key role that makes a difference in what goes on in the school. Barth adds that research demonstrates that principals play a significant role in school improvement, because they influence the quality of the educational program, teacher professional growth, and school climate.

About 37 years ago, a U.S. Government study on education made a heartwarming declaration on the importance of the school principal in the education enterprise:

In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. It is his leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for learning, the level of professionalism and morale of teachers, and the degree of concern of what students may or may not become. If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal's leadership as key to success. (U.S. Senate Select Committee on Equal Opportunity for Education, 1972, p. 305)

The import of this statement is echoed by most educational researchers (e.g., Calabrese, 1991; Grogan & Andrew, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Waters, Marzano, &

McNulty, 2003). They conclude that the principal makes a difference in school effectiveness.

In 1978 staff at the Maryland Department of Education studied schools whose students were high achievers on standardized tests. Weldy (1979) buttressing the important role of the school principal concluded from the study that, it is the principal who made a difference in these schools. He noted that schools with principals who have very high expectations of themselves, their teachers, and their students dominated the upper end of the test scale. Studies such as this and statements such as the one made by the U.S. Senate served to attach importance to the principalship.

The evolving role of the principal in Ghana paralleled the pattern prevalent in the United States. Formal education was introduced to Ghana, then the Gold Coast, with the advent of the European merchants in the late 1400s. Missionaries accompanying the merchants set up the first schools, referred to as the castle schools. The schools were conducted in the castles, which housed the European merchants, hence the name, castle schools. The purpose of the schools was to primarily educate the offspring of European merchants with native African women—children known as mulattos. The schools operated in a single room under the tutelage of one teacher (Adu-Boahene, 1985).

The structure of the castle schools was semi-formal. A more formal educational structure came into existence during the period of colonization in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Circa 1882, the British colonial government drew the first plans to guide the development of education in Ghana. The plans called for the establishment of a General Board of Education, and for the formation of local boards to assume the responsibility of education and to grant certificates to teachers. The position of the headmaster or mistress

was thus created. The headmaster or headmistress, hereafter, referred to as principal, was entrusted with the responsibility of day-to-day school operations. A central body, the Ghana Education Service (GES) was entrusted with the responsibility to run the schools. Over the years, the principal's role was primarily to manage the school.

### *Contemporary Role of the School Principal*

Hallinger (1992) opines that the daily leadership activities of the principal significantly influence school culture and lead to higher student test scores. Smith and Piele (2006) stress that it is the duty of the principal to maintain instructional excellence and to improve instruction because they have substantial authority over curricula, staffing, and fiscal resources. In addition, these administrators typically determine which persons should be involved in making important decisions, and the optimum level of employee involvement.

Today, the principal is at the front and center of school reform, leading change in the school and involving the community. He or she is responsible for identifying stakeholder expectations for promoting the development of competencies necessary for staff to meet the expectations (Fullan, 2003).

Tandem to the position of Fullan, Cushman (1992) describes the principal as the agent of change—the fulcrum of the change process. It is the principal who introduces the change agenda and then adapts it continually in response to those who will have to live with it. Moreover, this administrator is expected to give equal attention to enabling others, especially teachers, to be leaders.

The Institute for Educational Leadership's (IEL) Task Force on the Principalship (2000), identified instructional leadership as the top priority of the principalship. This group's report identifies three key roles for 21<sup>st</sup> century principals.

1. Instructional leadership. Focuses on strengthening teaching and learning, professional development, data-driven decision making, and accountability;
2. Community leadership. Manifested in a big-picture awareness of the school's role in society; shared leadership among educators, community partners and residents; close relations with parents and others; and advocacy for school capacity building and resources; and
3. Visionary leadership. Demonstrates energy, commitment, entrepreneurial spirit, values and conviction that all children will learn at high levels, as well as inspiring others with this vision both inside and outside the school building. (IEL, 2000, p. 4)

Examining articles on educational leadership published from 1985–1995, Leithwood and Duke (1999) identified core functions of the principal:

- Instructional – influencing the work of teachers in a way that will improve student achievement,
- Transformational – increasing the commitments and capacities of school staff,
- Moral – influencing others by appealing to notions of right and wrong,
- Participative – involving other members of the school community,
- Managerial – operating the school efficiently, and
- Contingent – adapting their behavior to fit the situation. (pp. 47-48)



Using a slightly different categorization of the core role of the principal, Cotton (2003) identified five categories.

1. Establishing a clear focus on student learning. This includes having a vision, clear learning goals, and high expectations for learning for all students.
2. Building interactions and relationships. This entails communication, interpersonal support, visibility and accessibility, and parent and community outreach and involvement.
3. Establishing a positive school culture. This includes manifesting behaviors such as shared leadership and decision making, collaboration, support of risk taking, continuous improvement, and professionalism.
4. Being an instructional leader. This includes discussing instructional issues, observing classrooms and giving feedback, supporting teacher autonomy, protecting instructional time, and promoting professional development.
5. Upholding accountability. This calls for monitoring progress and using student progress data for program improvement.

Sergiovanni (2002) sees the principal's role as trying to constantly make sense of messy situations by increasing understanding, discovering new insights, and communicating meaning. According to Sergiovanni, because situations of practice are often characterized by unique events, uniform answers to problems are not likely to be helpful. Murphy (2005) argues that any discussion on the role of the principal is incomplete without mention of the Interstate School Leaders License Consortium (ISLLC) standards. The ISLLC standards identify the following roles.

- Visioning,

- Building a positive school culture,
- Managing the school,
- Promoting community participation,
- Having a moral purpose, and
- Understanding and responding to the political, social, and cultural context of the Community (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

Murphy sees these standards—based on research on school leadership—as the logical starting point for any discussion of the principalship. Each of the standards begins with a preamble that describes the school administrator as promoting the success of all students (Commission on NCLB, 2007).

McEwan (2003) observes that while researchers have generated a slightly different set of descriptors that characterize effective or excellent schools, one variable always emerges as critically important—the leadership abilities of the principal. It is the building principal who “sets the tone as the school’s educational leader, enforces the positive, and convinces the students, parents, and teachers that all children can learn and improve academically” (Andersen, 1997, p. 27).

### *The Principal and Student Achievement*

The relationship between the role played by the school principal and student achievement is explored in this section. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) posit that there is a significant relationship between school leadership and student achievement. They argue that effective leaders not only know what to do, but how, when, and why to do it. These leaders are able to choose the appropriate strategy from a list of proven

strategies and apply it to optimize student achievement. Waters et al. proffer that effective leaders produce effective schools, which in turn produce competent students.

Sergiovanni (2005) is of the firm belief that there is a strong relationship between the type of school and the type of principal in the school. He argues that quality schooling does indeed lead to quality learning, and the key to quality schooling is the amount and kind of leadership that the school principal provides directly and promotes through and among teachers and supporting staff. Sergiovanni believes that one will rarely find an effective school without an effective principal.

On the contrary, schools managed by incompetent leaders simply do not get the job done—that is, student achievement is generally low. According to Murphy and Meyers (2008), such schools are characterized by confusion and inefficiency in operation and malaise in human climate. Student absenteeism, discipline, and violence may be frequent problems. Dysfunctional conflict may also characterize interpersonal relationships among faculty or between faculty and supervisors, and parents may feel isolated from the school.

School reforms reports (e.g., *A Nation at Risk*—National Commission on Excellence, 1983; *A Nation Prepared*—Carnegie Task Force, 1986) and laws (e.g., No Child Left Behind—Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2001) identify students' outcomes as the key issue. According to Woodruff (2008), it is the principal who “most directly and routinely influences factors that impact student outcomes such as (a) teacher expectations and performance, (b) consistent application of policies and procedures that support teaching and learning, and (c) curricular and instructional decisions aimed at high achievement for all students” (p. 16).

Cotton (2003) also says that it is the principal's leadership that determines the extent to which schools meet the prescriptions of recent school reforms. She further states that "it is no longer satisfactory to show that good, effective programs are being implemented in schools. The demand is for schools to show improved academic achievement for each student" (p. v).

Sammons, Hillman, and Mortimore (1995) also postulate that student success is attributable to an effective principal. They define effective principals as (a) having the ability to keep good order, (b) consistently enforcing fair, clear and well-understood rules, and (c) providing a safe and orderly school environment.

Johnson and Asera (1999) write that successful students' outcomes are influenced by school leaders. They contend that principals can foster in students a sense of responsibility for appropriate behavior, and create an environment in which students are likely to behave well.

Heck and Marcoulides (1993) too argue that student achievement is contingent on the behavior of the principal. Student achievement is enhanced when the principal promotes professionalism and provides support of teacher autonomy. Proffering similar arguments, Gullatt and Lofton (1996) posit that student achievement is positively correlated to the behavior exhibited by the principal. Principals who promote teacher autonomy by shielding staff from excessive intrusions or pressure exerted by forces outside the school—interference from the community and the central office—enable teachers to perform and ultimately enhance student achievement.

Levine and Levine (2000) mentioned that it is the actions of the principal that make school improvement attainable and manageable. Positive interventions include providing

specific guidelines and procedures for teachers to use in implementing new activities, deploying staff creativity so as to keep classes as small as possible, and making instructional assistance available to teachers.

According to Hallinger and Heck (1996), although at the hortatory level there is little disagreement concerning the belief that principals have an impact on the lives of teachers and students, both the nature and degree of the effect continues to be an open debate. This relationship is complex and not easily subject to empirical verification. (p. 6)

Leitner (1994) argues that principals' effects on student achievement are indirect and complex, being mediated through principal-teacher interactions. Leitner notes that principals in high achieving schools use more of the norms and values regarding successful instruction and student learning. Using similar arguments, Russell (1997) writes that school leadership influences student progress by an indirect process—through its influence on teachers. Russell argues that crucial leadership characteristic in this process was found to be leadership support—leadership that is reliable, approachable, supportive, engaging in communication, and aware of problems faced by teachers.

Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) also argue in favor of the principals' influence on student achievement as being indirect. They posit that there is a strong relation between the degree of instructional leadership provided by the principal and the existence of a clear school mission. This in turn influences student opportunity to learn and teachers' expectations for student achievement.

Hallinger and Heck (1996) find the debate on direct or indirect impact as merely an academic exercise. They argue that indirect effect means no less effect nor less important

than direct effect. If principals' effects on student achievement are mediated through other in-school variables, there is no diminishing of principals' importance. What is of interest is the establishment of the fact that principals impact student achievement.

Hallinger and Heck make an important statement about leadership—that achieving results through others is in fact the essence of leadership. The importance of the principal's role in fostering student achievement therefore cannot be overstated.

### *Career Path to the Principalship in Ghana*

The Ghana Education Service (GES) requires high school principals in Ghana to meet the following criteria to be eligible as a principal:

- Be a professional graduate teacher with satisfactory work history and conduct within the GES.
- Have served at the rank of deputy director for at least 2 years.
- Have served as an assistant headmaster/mistress, unit head at the headquarters, or an equivalent position for at least 3 cumulative years.
- Not be over the age of 55 years at the time he or she applies for the position.

(Ghana Education Service Council [ESC], 2009)

The career path to the principalship begins with certification as a professional graduate teacher. The GES recognizes two alternate paths to certification. One path consists of an aspiring principal obtaining a bachelor's degree in education. The alternate path consists of the aspiring principal obtaining a bachelor's degree in a field other than education, and 12 semester hours of prescribed courses in education—history of education, guidance and counseling, measurement and evaluation, psychology of

education, philosophy of education, and methodology. Both paths require the successful completion of a 4-week supervised teaching experience.

The certified graduate professional teacher goes through various ranks—Senior Superintendent I, Assistant Director II, Assistant Director I, Deputy Director—in the GES over the years (ESC, 2009). Progression through the ranks occurs after completing at least 3 cumulative years at each rank and successfully passing an interview conducted by a panel of eminent educationists. Being a professional teacher with a minimum of 15 years of teaching experience thus becomes a prerequisite for becoming a principal.

Principal certification is not a requirement.

#### *The Role of the Principal in Ghana*

The principal's role expectations in Ghana are prescribed by the Ghana Education Service (GES). The role expectations are outlined in the Ghana Education Service (1994) *Head Teachers' Handbook*. The handbook is divided into two sections: (a) Managing your School and (b) Improving the Quality of Learning. Five proficiencies are identified under the former section.

1. Managing people
2. Managing instructional time
3. Managing co-curricular activities
4. Managing learning resources
5. Managing financial matters

The latter section also has five proficiencies.

1. Increasing school intake and attendance
2. Assessing pupil performance

3. Assessing teacher performance
4. Staff development
5. Improving relations between school and community

Oduro (2003) identifies various clusters of competencies that principals are required to meet in order to accomplish their tasks.

Administrative capacity. This includes the ability to keep school records; for example, maintaining school finance records, keeping admission records, filing documents.

Professional capacity. This includes the ability to manage student assessment, knowledge of teacher appraisal techniques, knowledge of student teaching techniques, skills for teaching adults, ability to vet teachers' lesson notes, and knowledge about leadership.

Personal capacity. This includes exhibiting fairness, firmness, tolerance, patience, and commitment to work.

Interpersonal capacity. This includes the ability to relate well with staff, students, parents, central office personnel, school board, and the general school publics. (p. 211)

Zame, Hope, and Respress (2008) identify the Ghana Education Service appraisal instrument as another source of principals' role expectations. Principals are evaluated on:

- Management activities
- Instructional supervision
- Staff development
- Record keeping
- Relationship with the community



- Communication skills

These role expectations have basically remained unchanged during the past 30 years. Major educational reforms (i.e., School Reforms in 1987; Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education in 1995; and Education Reforms in 2007) did not address principals' role expectations and student achievement. Educational reforms instead have focused primarily on intensification mandates—increasing the number of (a) subjects, (b) contact hours with students, and (c) school weeks in a year (Kowalski, 2006). Scant information dating back to the 1970s exists on the nexus between principal leadership and student achievement in Ghana.

### Problems of Practice

Problems of practice are perceived difficulties in performing a professional responsibility regardless of cause (Woodruff, 2008). Relevant studies tend to focus on administrative problems (Hardy, 2004; McBride, 2008; Tucker & Coddling, 2002). Problems of practice identified in the literature and addressed here are grouped under (a) increasing demand for improved test scores, (b) school principal burnout, (c) inability to manage time, (d) demand for instant results, and (e) misconceptions about personnel evaluations. The review examines the frequency of occurrence and severity of these problems. Also explored are problems of practice in Ghana.

#### *Increasing Demand for Improved Test Scores*

McBride (2008) posits that today's principals face problems that stem from increased demands to raise the academic bar while closing the academic achievement gap. The demands by central office, for example, the superintendent, for immediate improvement

in state achievement tests were intimidating and appeared to be a daunting task. Though he acknowledged that both objectives are relevant, he pointed out that school district officials did not always establish an environment for pursuing them. As examples, some principals have had insufficient resources, unrealistic timelines, and threatened sanctions. He concluded that the pressure to deliver tended to be the problem and not the substance of what was to be accomplished.

Portin and Shen (1998) report that increased administrative requirements associated with accountability measures were problematic for principals and as a result, they compromised leadership effectiveness. Principals sought ways of meeting just the minimum requirements and focused on short-term gains. Another common problem faced by the principals was that they rarely were consulted by central office administrators about new programs or policies, yet they are considered part of the management team and are held accountable for the objectives of the programs.

Murnane and Levy (1998) aver that there is a mismatch between the growing skill demands of employers and the skills of graduating students. This mismatch drives the urgency for dramatic school improvement. They posit that until such time that parents and other stakeholders are satisfied with the performance of public schools, pressure will continue to be exerted on principals. Stewart (2008) notes that many states require high school seniors to pass achievement test in mathematics and English to graduate; however, 12% of the students fail the examinations. He opines that there will be no respite for principals if this percentage is not reduced drastically. Stewart acknowledges that there may be other contributing factors besides what happens in the school, yet the principal bears the full brunt of the situation and is held accountable by all.

Many states grade or rank schools in an attempt to force improvements in student achievement. According to Taylor and Williams (2001), this strategy has rather increased tension for principals and those who take their jobs seriously grow weary of the pressure and negative messages that bombard them. Principals are leaving the position to escape the untenable pressures of accountability and student achievement test scores. About 48% of principals who participated in the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) survey in 2001 thought holding principals accountable for test results was a bad idea.

### *Principal Burnout*

Principal burnout is a growing phenomenon among principals. A *Public Agenda* survey in 2001 of about 909 principals reported that a large majority (88%) of school administrators feel overworked. Additionally, the survey reported that about 83% of those surveyed expressed frustration at their inability to get focused on student learning due to the stress of unfunded mandates, threats of litigation, the need for endless negotiation to make substantial progress, and unbridled bureaucracy. Constant interruptions and demands from parents, teachers, and other stakeholders add to the stress of a principal's day.

A 2003 study of 1,006 superintendents and 925 principals by The Wallace Foundation, *Rolling Up Their Sleeves: Superintendents and Principals Talk About What's Needed to Fix Public Schools*, noted that the nature of principals' working environment—rife with politics and bureaucracy—creates stressful conditions and heightens burnout. Sixty-nine percent described the principal's work as generally stressful. Additionally, 88% identified red tape, competing laws and regulations, and

inadequate resources to meet increased requirements and mandates as stressful experiences.

Whitaker (1995) writes that the very nature of the principal's job makes him or her susceptible to burnout. Whitaker cites role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload as highly probable causes of principal burnout. The principalship is buffeted by conflicting requirements and resource shortages.

Vandenberghe and Huberman (1999) intimate that studies of the causes of school principal burnout point to heavy workload, relations with staff, resources management, lack of support, and unfavorable working conditions. In addition to managing an army of conflicting forces within the school community, school principals gradually have acquired so many new responsibilities that sometimes even they do not realize how overextended they are.

Friedman (2000) ascribes principals' burnout to stress arising from professional and personal unaccomplishment. He intimates that principals experience accomplishment when they successfully demonstrate leadership (e.g., inspiring all stakeholders to collaborate to attain the school's vision). Using a professional efficacy discrepancy approach to understand stress leading to burnout, Friedman observed that principals without adequate preparation for adaptation to school reality—a complex world demanding rapid response to many varied, often competing demands—cannot possibly live up to their own performance expectations. They become frustrated and feel unaccomplished.

Maslach (1995) identified principal burnout antecedents as (a) job stress; for example, workload, role conflict, and role ambiguity; (b) relationship with stakeholders; for

example, teachers, parents, central office, and the school community; and (c) job expectations; for example, high stakes testing. Similar principal burnout antecedents were identified by Mackler (1996) as (a) role definition, (b) power and authority, (c) relations, and (d) support.

According to Chaplain (2001), managing oneself, managing others, and managing finance; the curriculum; and change are major causes of principal stress leading to burnout. Lovely (2004) states that long hours, an excessive workload, increasing responsibility, and insurmountable expectations from competing factions lead to incredible stress. She goes on to say that inexperienced principals face additional stress, which manifests into three major concerns.

1. Absorbing volumes of information.
2. Working for change despite significant resistance.
3. Proving oneself to others.

#### *Inability to Manage Time*

The inability of school principals to manage time manifests itself in a lack of control of the use of time—too many impromptu meetings, frequent requests for information, and screening advertisements and unsolicited materials. Robertson (1999) observes that the inability of principals to have control of the use of their time is a theme that runs through various research.

According to Tanner, Schnittjer, and Atkins (1991), principals complain that events were for the most part dictating how they use their time and manage their daily routine. Principals experienced an inability to get planned things accomplished due to frequent interruptions from school personnel, students, and parents. The principals intimated that

being interrupted by district administrators was a greater problem because these persons expected principals to give them full and immediate attention.

Fullan (1997) intimates that researchers characterize the work of principals as brief, varied, and fragmented, stating that principals are “victims of the moment” (p. 37). Hardy (2004) states that “the job of the school leader has become a 24/7 job, and you have no personal life” (p. 12). Nearly 74% of principals surveyed in the 2003 study by The Wallace Foundation referred repeatedly to the “nonstop, always-on-the-run, crisis-a-minute nature of their jobs” (p. 15). They averred that daily emergencies rob them of time to attend to planned activities.

A national study sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in 2001, reported that high school principals worked more than 62 hours per week on administrative duties. These principals reported that their most time-consuming duties related to parent issues, community related tasks, discipline, and facilities management. They also mentioned that they spent very little time on instructional leadership. Nevertheless, the principals opined that their important role pivoted around providing instructional leadership. Accordingly, the principals identified the frequently problematic issues as including supervising and evaluating teachers, finding time to perform instructional leadership tasks, and balancing work and personal commitments.

### *Demand for Instant Results*

The concept of Just-In-Time (JIT) delivery—promoted by Taiichi Ohno for the Toyota manufacturing plants—has made its way into schools, pressuring principals to produce instant results (Carr, 2001). Many contemporary principals are expected to

deliver results quickly and consistently. Thus, principals do not have the luxury of waiting months or years to decide on a course of action to improve schools or find out whether a new instructional strategy is going to work (Rudy & Conrad, 2004). Principals admit that technology has elevated stakeholder expectations that their questions and concerns will be addressed quickly and adequately.

Principals observe that in an instant gratification society where parents get instant results in so many areas, they demand instant results from schools. Smith and Piele (2006) say that if parents do not get the information they are looking for, they will not leave the principal alone.

#### *Misconceptions about Personnel Evaluations*

Demands for accountability make it imperative for principals to evaluate the performance of teachers and other staff. It is not uncommon for parents and other stakeholders to want information on teachers' effectiveness. Ovando (2001) writes that accountability demands represent a challenge for schools that aim to achieve academic success for all students through teacher and staff evaluations. Keith and Girling (1991) observe that because performance evaluation had been primarily summative (i.e., used to determine if performance was adequate), the process has been viewed by employees as threatening and punitive. Thus, conducting performance evaluations typically generates tensions and possibly conflict. Under such conditions, many principals experience anxiety in relation to conducting evaluations (Robbins & Alvy, 2009).

#### *Frequency and Severity of Problems of Practice*

A phenomenological study of 25 principals conducted by Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) identified four problem categories that were reported much more frequently.

1. Teachers. This includes assignment of duties, conflicts among teachers, conflicts between teachers and students or administration or parents, dereliction of duty, level of competency, and teacher evaluation.
2. School routines. This includes planning, budgeting, coordinating, controlling, scheduling, supervising, and maintenance.
3. Students. This includes attendance, placements, evaluation, and discipline.
4. Parents. This includes communication, parental involvement or lack thereof, and complaints.

The study also identified problems emanating from the teacher category as *most severe* and the ones from the student category as *least severe*.

Lyons (1999) noted that principals reported the following problems as being frequently encountered:

- Workload
- Compliance with state and federal policies and mandates
- Time commitment and time management
- Staffing issues
- Paper work meetings
- Decision making

The National Association of Secondary School Principals' (NASSP) study of principals in 2001 reported frequent problems in the following areas (a) supervising and evaluating teachers, (b) finding time to deal with instructional leadership tasks, and (c) balancing work and personal commitments. The NASSP study concluded that 70% of the principals surveyed identified lack of time and too much paperwork as the most severe



problems they encounter. They also identified their limited authority to deal with low-performing teachers as the next severe problem.

Woodruff (2008) concluded that principals experienced frequent problems with (a) role clarification, particularly with regard to assuming the role of supervisor and evaluator of instruction, (b) managerial responsibilities such as identifying and allocating resources and complying with local, state, and federal mandates, and (c) adjusting to the position; for example, managing the workload and effects on personal and family life. She identified four problems as the most severe problems.

1. Committing time to all job responsibilities,
2. Managing the workload,
3. Effects on family and personal life, and
4. Complying with local, state, and federal mandates.

#### *Problems of Practice in Ghana*

Studies of problems of practice in Ghana are limited. The few studies noted that principals in Ghana face problems of practice similar to those documented in the United States; however, they also face problems peculiar to a developing nation. Sayed, Akyeampong, and Ampiah (2000), for example, observed that the following problems were identified by principals in Ghana.

- Inadequate funding due to delinquent national government fiscal distributions.

Principals in Ghana are constantly operating with insufficient funds. The Government of Ghana often is delinquent in making fiscal distributions to schools. Thus, a principal is under stress to keep the school operational without

adequate funds. Cutting corners and making decisions just to match the resources are the unintended consequences of school principals' decision dilemma.

- Inadequate funding due to delinquent payment of school fees. Problems related to inadequate funding also stem from parents not paying school fees on time.
- Staff morale and turnover. Teachers and other school employees have relatively low salaries and meager fringe benefits. As a result, principals typically encounter low morale and high turnover of talented teachers (Bush & Oduro, 2006).

Employing talented educators has become increasingly more difficult.

- Politics and bureaucracy. Principals in Ghana operate in a rigid hierarchical structure in which reforms are pursued in the context of political-coercive strategy (i.e., the reforms are determined by government officials, and principals are forced to implement them). Principals are not only expected to carry out new mandates, they also must explain them to the school publics, and procure support for them. This approach to school reform has proven problematic for most principals (Oplatka, 2004). On one hand principals are relegated to being implementers, and on the other hand, they are evaluated for their performance as leaders.

Oplatka (2004) writes that principalship in Ghana has minor significance. "The principalship is conceived of more as another public position, rather than as a means to improve student achievements" (p. 432). Consequently, principals in Ghana are too often transferred to another school. He posits that principals in Ghana are unable to do strategic planning.

## Principal Leadership and Effective Schools

This section looks at the characteristics of effective schools and the type of principal leadership predominant in them. The review specifically discusses leadership style and strategy associated with effective schools. Four types of principal leadership—instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, and leadership in a culture of change—are discussed in this section.

### *Characteristics of Effective Schools*

McEwan (2008) highlights three key elements—the climate, the learning, and the people—as the defining characteristics of an effective school. These three elements impact each other and the results are manifested in an effective school. McEwan identifies the following attributes of these schools.

- Climate is academically focused.
- Multi-direction communication channels keep information flowing among the principal, staff, students, and parents.
- Members of the school community agree on parameters defining acceptable behavior.
- Learning, academic achievement, and educational excellence are top priorities.
- A relevant academic curriculum is applied.
- Resources are made available to enhance teaching and learning.
- High academic expectations are set for students.
- The principal, staff, students, and parents, work together as a team supporting one another and creating a synergy that moves the agenda of the school forward.
- Teachers are well-trained, motivated, and use methods that produce results.

- Students are motivated, disciplined, self-directed, and eager to learn.
- Parents are involved in the life of the school in real and important ways.
- The principal sets the school agenda, communicates the school's mission, determines what gets measured and noticed, and distributes the necessary resources.

Clewell, Campbell, and Perlman (2007) lend support to McEwan's description of effective schools. They contend that these institutions have the following characteristics:

- Principals who encourage innovation and school-based improvements.
- A high-quality teaching force that appears is committed to the school.
- Parent-friendly policy that results in parents serving as volunteers and otherwise participating in the school.
- A sense of urgency for reforms rather than superficial efforts related to student test scores.
- A collective effort to sustain reforms and create a meaningful, time-sensitive plan that keeps the school on course.

### *Instructional Leadership*

While acknowledging the role played by other factors in shaping an effective school, Clewell et al. (2007) point out that the principal's leadership is essential to creating an effective school. They identify instructional leadership as the model most prevalent in effective schools. Instructional leaders have knowledge of school reform, curriculum, and instruction, and they have the ability to motivate staff. They provide focus and direction to curriculum and teaching, establish conditions that support teachers and help children to

succeed, and inspire others to reach ambitious goals. Closing the achievement gap between groups is most attributable to instructional leadership (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). King (2002) sees instructional leadership as involving the core technology of teaching and learning, focusing on how professional development enhances learning, and emphasizes the use of data to make decisions. In this role conceptualization, the principal promotes school improvement, constructivist teaching, professional development, and state-mandated standards (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2006).

### *Transformational Leadership*

Lashway (2006) posits that there is a positive nexus between a principal's transformational leadership and a school's effectiveness. Transformational leaders rely on persuasion, idealism, and intellectual excitement. They appeal to the deepest longings, interests, and values of teachers and convince them that these goals could be fulfilled through the school's agenda. Transformational leadership emphasizes the school's mission and shared vision, commitment to achieving the vision, and restructuring the school in ways that are needed.

Transformational leadership entails building both capacity and commitment for change. Sashkin and Sashkin (2003) describe transformational leaders as good communicators, credible persons—behaving consistently over time, conveying a sense of caring for people, and willing to take the risk of trusting followers with major responsibilities. Kowalski (2006) posits that administrators in highly effective schools combine transformational, democratic, and ethical leadership.

### *Ethical and Moral Leadership*

Sergiovanni (1992) argues that moral leadership is a behavior that transforms schools into communities, and makes them centers of excellence. As educational leaders attend to the three principles of moral leadership—authenticity, balance, and systems thinking—they are teaching lessons to all within the community, especially the students (Sergiovanni 1992, 2002).

Beck and Murphy (1997) posed the following insightful query: How do educational leaders act as "stewards" for their respective institutions? The manner in which principals answer this question has a moral connotation. Quick and Normore (2004) point out that leadership is always a moral responsibility, but especially so in schools. Not only are principals responsible for school success, but their behavior affects others—including students who will assume leadership positions in all types of organizations in the future.

### *Leading in a Culture of Change*

Fullan (2001) argues that in an era of frequent reforms, instructional leadership is valuable but standing alone, insufficient. He suggests a new paradigm of leadership that he calls "leading in a culture of change" (p. 3). It is embedded in the following characteristics: (a) driving school improvement, (b) delivering through people, (c) building commitment, and (d) creating a system-wide educational vision. Fullan argues that sustainable change requires leaders who exhibit energy, enthusiasm, hope, moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making (p. 3).

Fullan's (2001) conceptualization of effective school leadership emphasizes moral purpose and notes that it sets the tone for success. Moral purpose is acting with the

intention of making a positive difference in the environment. It urges the school principal to be concerned about the development of other leaders in the school. Moral purpose requires attention to what schools are all about and what they do, how decisions are made, as well as the nature of those decisions (Kowalski, 2006).

### Principal Readiness and Problems of Practice

The review of literature on professional preparation of school principals covers two broad areas. First, the review of literature focuses on the readiness of principals to address issues facing the principalship and problems of practice as manifested in the debate on the justification for professional preparation programs. This review looks at professional and stakeholder expectations for principals and especially demands for them to be change agents.

Second, the review of literature explores the knowledge base of school principal preparatory programs. This includes the nature and intent of professional preparation. Specifically, the review focuses on the type of knowledge, skills, and dispositions preparatory programs provide.

#### *The Debate on Professional Preparation of School Principals*

Tyack and Cuban (1995) conclude that principals are considered critical contributors to superior school operations. A principal shapes school capacity—the critical variable in affecting instructional quality and corresponding student achievement (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000).

Fullan (2001) argues that deep and lasting reforms require a paradigm shift in the way principals function. Commenting on this conclusion, Ferrandino and Tirrozi (2004)

observe that the concerns and preoccupations of today's principal are already different from those of yesterday's principal. In the past, principals were often desk-bound disciplinarians and managers more concerned with buses than with academic outcomes. Today's principals have broader responsibilities, and incessant pressures for reform have literally forced the principals to pay more attention to instructional leadership and school improvement. The implications of the evolving realities practice for practitioner preparation are axiomatic.

Commenting on the new challenges, Tucker and Coddling (2002) wrote:

The job is no longer to keep school, the job we have trained principals for over the decades. Today we need people who can do a job we have never advertised before, a job that current serving principals were never expected to do. We need people who can lead and manage the school to much higher levels of student achievement at little or no increase in cost, in an environment in which they have much less control over the key factors that determine the outcome than similarly situated leaders and managers in most other fields. That is a tall order. (p. 4)

The increasing demands and pressure on the principalship is a global phenomenon. Observing the principalship in four European countries (i.e., England, Sweden, Greece, and Cyprus), Thody, Papanou, Johansson, and Pashiardis (2007) state that "principals' accountability and competition have extended: local site-based management has made principals directly responsible for school quality and performance and parents and community leaders have become more powerful in school councils and governing bodies" (p. 41).



Cowie and Crawford (2007) write that anxieties regarding school underperformance in an increasingly competitive global economic environment have intensified political pressures to raise educational standards. Over the past 2 decades principals have had to face the reality that their leadership role has expanded while their management role has not diminished. Gronn (2003) intimates that the expanded complexity of the position has made it difficult to recruit persons with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and experience.

Bush and Heystek (2006) argue that allowing principals to enter practice without adequate academic preparation is a recipe for personal and system failure; and thus, this decision has ethical implications. Professions commonly stipulate that practitioners must possess necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities (Kowalski, 2008).

Price (2004) notes that both current and novice principals express the concern that they are ill-prepared to manage infrastructure that supports the technical core of teaching and learning to effectively respond to the demands for school improvement. He subsequently recommends that principals develop four key skills to create and manage the type of infrastructure needed to support instructional improvement:

1. Ability to manage information,
2. Ability to analyze and use data to determine areas in need of improvement,
3. Ability to align and monitor curriculum to meet needs, and
4. Ability to build a professional community of learners (stakeholders) committed to instructional improvement. (p. 36)

The urgency for preparing school leaders adequately stems from the linkage of the leadership of the school principal with school improvement. For example, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) argue that the leadership provided by the principal has immeasurable effects

on student learning, second only to the effects of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. Crawford (2005) opines that most stakeholders and professionals involved in education would agree that without competent principals schools may be ineffective and efforts at school improvement are unlikely to succeed.

Echoing the sentiments of Leithwood and Riehl and Crawford, Lashway (2006) intimates that a failure on the part of the school principal to provide essential leadership can demoralize the faculty and polarize the community. Lashway goes on to say that "even worse is failure to thrive, with the principal not really succeeding but not failing so badly that anyone is willing to endure the pain of correcting the mistake. A school can spend years mired in mediocrity when that happens." (p. 104)

Although those who are appointed principals are usually selected from the ranks of teachers who are thought to be especially effective, after their appointments they engage very little in the technical aspects of teaching that earned them their reputations. Owens and Valesky (2007) argue the skills needed to do the work, and the outcomes by which one's success is judged are so different, that one literally leaves teaching and enters a new and different occupation.

Cowie and Crawford (2007) posit that there should be no argument among policymakers over the need to develop the capacities of those who aspire to become school principals. The argument should rather center on the type of preparation programs that are needed. Upon appointment as principals, leaders acquire power and cachet, and are therefore inevitably pulled and hauled from many different directions by those who want to enlist that power and cachet in support of their causes. Preparation for such

conditions is in part cognitive—learning basic principles of organization and the behavior of people who work in them (Hanson, 2003).

Adding to the debate for principal preparation, Davenport, DeLong, and Beers (1998) argue that preparation requires an individual to internalize organizational knowledge, which consists of critical intellectual assets within the organization. Nonaka (1994) writes that internalizing organizational knowledge equips one to develop the kinds of leader behavior that will be authentic, consistent, and effective even under conditions that may seem contentious or bordering on the chaotic.

Basing his arguments on Nonaka's assertions, Vick (2004) associates principal preparation programs with internalizing organizational knowledge. Internalizing organizational knowledge equips the principal with a set of values, beliefs, and principles to guide him or her in developing effective strategies and actions in the ever uncertain future. Taken together, these values, beliefs, and principles mold and shape the principal's vision of what the school ought to be like (Smith & Piele, 2006).

The assumption that the quality of the principal is directly linked to the quality of instruction and student learning has been embedded in nearly every major school reform strategy of the past decade. Stein and Gewirtzman (2003) argue that if high quality school leaders are so important, it must be determined where they come from and whose responsibility it is to develop them.

The need for principal preparation has focused prominently on the agenda of various educational professional bodies. Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass (2005) write that the tone was set by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) with the publication in 1992 of *Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators*, which is

a set of preparation guidelines and standards for building and central office administrators. The AASA document presents the skills that school leaders must have in order to meet the demands of school reforms and effectively function.

Specifically, the AASA outlines the needed skills as “encouraging a school climate and interpersonal behavior that fosters learning communities for students and teachers; building support for schools; developing school curriculum; developing instructional management strategies; evaluating staff, developing staff competencies; allocating resources; and evaluating and planning programs and policies” (p. 10). Hoyle et al. (2005) intimate that these eight skill areas became the template for later standards and recommendations by other educational professional bodies.

The National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP, 2002) asserts that principals need to be well prepared. The NCAELP proposes that the preparation of principals be a shared responsibility of universities and school districts. According to Young (2002), the NCAELP sees preparation of school principals as pivotal to the success of school reforms and offers a collaborative design to assure the participation of all key players. The NCAELP proposes that universities, central offices, and public schools work together as an entity with a common purpose to prepare school leaders.

Tandem to the position of the NCAELP, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) argue that professional preparation will equip school principals with the relevant knowledge, skills, and dispositions for the position. The NAESP and NASSP postulate that the acquisition of the relevant knowledge, skills, and disposition is the

assured means of maintaining the quality of school principals (Herrington & Wills, 2005).

Bass (1990) writes that it is essential that principals be seen by co-workers, especially subordinates, as having expert power. Research in various fields indicates that leaders who demonstrate mastery of the core technical skills of their job are more likely to be seen as leaders and that subordinates readily accept their professional credibility.

Lashway, Mazzeella, and Grundy (2006) argue that every job requires mastery of certain ideas and processes, and in education, they are addressed in professional preparation programs.

McCarthy (2002b) states that opponents of principal preparation argue that there is no strong relationship between academic preparation programs and effective school leadership. This conclusion, according to McCarthy, is a result of substantial variation in types of programs offered by universities and variations in research methods.

According to Hale and Moorman (2003), principal preparation programs are not essential to the success of the school principal. They intimate that principal preparation programs are too theoretical and not related to the demands of the job. They see principal preparation programs as being poorly structured, having inadequate clinical experience and low admission standards.

Other opponents of professional preparation argue that many of the key characteristics of leaders (e.g., social orientation, initiative, emotional intelligence, and psychological balance), are not easily taught. Professional preparation rather focuses on teaching the peripheries of leadership—whatever is learned will not have quite the flavor of the real thing (Lashway, Mazzeella, & Grundy, 2006).

As the debate on professional preparation of school principals goes on, Feistritzer (2003) writes that although opponents of professional preparation have proposed quick-entry pathways to the principalship for capable people from other occupations, few states have heeded that call. According to Kowalski (2006), Michigan and South Dakota are among the few states that have heeded the call and do not require professional principal preparation. Lashway (2006) ascribes this to several reasons, prominent among them being:

- A period of formal preparation, whatever the content, is a crucial socialization tool. It forces future leaders to consciously confront the issues they will face as principals. University classes provide the opportunity for focused reflection on leadership dilemmas. Once on the job, leaders will find reflective opportunities to be much rarer.
- In today's frenetic education climate, on-the-job training is a luxury. There may have been a time when a district could install promising candidates and patiently wait for them to get up to speed. With the pressures of No Child Left Behind, rapid changing demographics, and limited resources, that kind of grace period no longer exists.
- People who choose to enter training programs may have illusions about the nature of the job. A well-designed program will confront them with some hard realities, allowing them to rethink their plans before they take a job, not in the middle of it.
- Formal preparation exposes prospective principals to state-of-the-art ideas, critical perspectives, and new paradigms. On-the-job- training is more likely to teach

people how to cope with the job as it exists, not how to transform it into something better. (p. 111)

### *Knowledge Base of School Principal Preparation Programs*

Literature on what constitutes the knowledge base of school principal preparation programs was reviewed under this section. This review examined the philosophy and assumptions that inform the courses in preparation programs. In addition, the review explored various pedagogies in sync with the knowledge base.

Young (2004) is of the opinion that a starting point for building a knowledge base for principal preparation programs is to have an agreement on a set of irreducible minimums in professional preparation. Young sees the Interstate School Leaders License Consortium (ISLLC) standards as a beginning point in framing a knowledge base for principal preparation. The standards could serve as an irreducible minimum for the content and competencies of school leaders. Viewing ISLLC as a minimum provides program stakeholders with a foundation from which to build programs that are appropriate for their particular contexts.

McCarthy (2002a) intimates that the history of educational administration programs is rather brief. Its development is neither as orderly nor as well defined as that of preparatory programs of other professions (e.g., law and medicine) which have state and national boards that influence program standards, content, instructional processes, and licensing. Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass (2005) state that:

Since the 1950s, state education agencies, universities, and professional associations, referred to as the "iron triangle," have collaborated in defining requirements for administrator licensure. Consequently, these requirements

have influenced the number and content of courses taught in universities. Most principal preparation programs have a common core of management-oriented courses, including courses on personnel, law, school-community relations, and finance that are aligned with principal licensure requirements. (p. 6)

McGough (2003) posits that three broad notions—principal as technician, principal as expert, and principal as craftsperson—define the knowledge base of principal preparation. Sharp and Walter (1994) note that the principal as a technician notion emphasizes the standard-based technical preparation of principals, training them to be both managers and instructional leaders.

According to Hallinger, Leithwood, and Murphy (1993), the “principal as expert” notion seeks to identify and disseminate problem-solving skills used by successful, effective, or expert principals. Barth (1990) and Sergiovanni (2005) identify the “principal as craft person” notion as describing the pragmatic craft of the principalship toward a reality based understanding of the role.

In 2002, the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) declared that the knowledge base of educational leadership should be grounded on the collective best understanding of latest research on student learning and school system improvement. The NCAELP sees the knowledge base as having a prime purpose of preparing school leaders to create schools in which all children are successful.

Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, and Petzko (2004) report that a national study on essential competencies for principal preparation programs had more than 60% of principals, polled from highly successful schools, ranking as *high* on the list, skills of



developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, middle-level best practices, collaborative decision making, staff supervision and evaluation, and instructional leadership. Valentine et al. report further that between 50% and 60% of the principals ranked organizational development, change process, and communication skills as essential components of preparation programs.

A similar study conducted by the NASSP in 2001 has curriculum development, program evaluation, professional development, strategic planning, and student assessment listed as essential areas for principal preparation.

Petzko (2008) concluded from his study, *The Perceptions of New Principals Regarding the Knowledge and Skills Important to their Initial Success*, that of paramount importance is human relations and personnel domains, defined as ability to communicate, resolve conflicts, motivate employees, manage teams, and select, evaluate, and further develop faculty and staff. Petzko reports further that educational leadership, defined by knowledge and skills needed to provide vision, create effective schools, and use situational leadership theory and instructional leadership, defined by knowledge and skills related to curriculum (alignment, content, instructional process, tracking, student evaluation, and curriculum change process), were also cited as next key elements. The least important area cited by the principals is the knowledge and skills in historical foundations of education.

Donaldson and Quaglia (1991) suggest a six-strand framework for shaping the course work and curricular planning of principal preparation programs:

- Ethical/philosophical – value system and a structure of ideas that permits you to develop goals, objectives, and working principles consistent with that value system.
- Pedagogical – knowledge of the processes, styles, and technical edge of teaching, knowledge of learning and the learner, knowledge necessary to evaluate both teaching and learning.
- Organizational – alternative models for understanding how organizations work, skills necessary to read your organization and to act within it in a more productive way.
- Technical – knowledge of specific strategies for administering program, personnel, and policies (law, finance, management of building, curricular and strategic planning, scheduling).
- Interpersonal – knowledge of people and the processes they need to be involved in so they feel invested in the school and district, ability to read relationships and roles that exist among staff, faculty, community, students, and others and to act appropriately for the productive development of the group, school, community.
- Intrapersonal – knowledge of yourself, the level of your skills in all other forms of knowledge, and the extent to which your given personality influences your leadership of others, ability to deploy your skills and qualities for the benefit of your school or district. (p. 24)

The education of the successful school leader requires the integration of these forms of knowledge into a useful body. The professional expertise is greater than the sum of the facts, skills, values, and competencies one might acquire in a graduate program. It is

characterized by the student's active integration of these with his or her experiences as educator, learner, and leader to produce ready strategies for thinking and acting as a school leader (Donaldson & Quaglia, 1991).

Touching on the kind of training that produces effective principals and corresponding behaviors to attain long lasting school improvements, Krug (1993) envisages a principal preparation program that addresses five categories. The categories describe behaviors a principal engages in, in creating an effective school—"defining a mission, managing curriculum and instruction, supervising teaching, monitoring student progress, and promoting an effective instructional climate" (p. 240).

According to Sybouts and Wendel (1994), the National Commission for the Principalship developed a framework of the knowledge base for preparing principals. The framework was to serve as a guide that ensures that the minimum is achieved. In addition, the framework provides general concepts which cut across various perspectives. The framework is built upon four areas:

1. Functional – Addresses the organizational processes and techniques by which the mission of the school is achieved. They provide for the educational program to be realized and allow the institution to function. The functional area consists of seven performance domains (i.e., leadership, information collection, problem analysis, judgment, organizational oversight, implementation, and delegation).
2. Programmatic Area – Focuses on the scope and framework of the educational program. It reflects the core technology of schools, instruction, and the related supporting services, developmental activities, and resource base. These areas consist of instructional program, curriculum design, student guidance and

development, staff development, measurement and evaluation, and resource allocation.

3. Interpersonal Area – Recognizes the significance of interpersonal connections in schools. It acknowledges the critical value of human relationships to the satisfaction of personal and professional goals and to the achievement of organizational purpose. The interpersonal area consists of motivating others, sensitivity, oral expression, and written expression,
4. Contextual Area – Reflects the world of ideas and forces within which the school operates. It explores the intellectual, ethical, cultural, economic, political, and governmental influences upon schools, including traditional and emerging perspectives. This area consists of philosophical and cultural values, legal and regulatory applications, policy and political influences, and public and media relationships. (pp. 27-29)

In a study conducted for the Stanford Educational Leadership Initiative, Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) suggest that the knowledge base of principal preparation and development programs should be predicated on the current research on school leadership, management, and instructional leadership. In addition, “the content should be aligned with the program’s philosophy, and courses should build upon each other integrating important disciplinary theories and concepts linking them to internship experiences” (p. 8).

Commenting on the pedagogy consistent with the knowledge base of principal preparation programs, Davis et al. (2005) recommend that the knowledge base should be

framed around adult learning theory. Merriam and Caffarella (1991) proffer five assumptions about adult learners:

1. Mature adults are self-directed.
2. Adults accumulate a reservoir of experience.
3. An adult's readiness is closely related to the developmental tasks of their social role. In other words, if I need to know it, I will learn it.
4. Adults are more concerned about problem solving than simply acquiring knowledge.
5. They are motivated by internal factors. (p. 272)

Peel, Wallace, Buckner, Wrenn, and Evans (1998) identify four pedagogies they consider consistent with the knowledge base of preparation programs and also appropriate with adult learners : (a) theory to practice, (b) mentoring, (c) internship, and (d) cohort study (p. 28). The theory-to-practice program allows students to apply their theoretical knowledge to real life situations in a non-threatening environment using role playing, reflection groups, and in-service training. The mentoring orientation utilizes an experienced resource person who offers feedback and guidance in the field to the prospective principal.

Playko (1992) opines that the internship orientation provides aspiring principals with a more realistic perception of the field by placing them in a school setting where it is possible for them to observe and reflect on the day-to-day tasks of a school principal. The cohort orientation emphasizes the shared experiences among aspiring principals as they create a network of peers and journey together through the program. Making a case for cohort orientation for principal preparation, Chickering and Ehrmann (1997) argue that

working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's ideas and responding to those of others improve thinking and deepen understanding.

Petzko (2008) says that a highly acclaimed study from the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute identified effective preparatory programs as consisting of field experiences that are well planned and developed with highly qualified mentors, in addition to being standards-based and focusing on improving student achievement. Geltner, Price, and Tracy (1998) point out that research reveals that aspiring principals value programs with integrated experience. McCarthy (2002b) reports that faculty as well as students (aspiring principals) respond favorably to the knowledge base of preparatory programs when the pedagogy utilizes cohorts, the use of practitioners, problem-based learning, and field-based research. Agreeing with McCarthy, Shipman (1999) identifies effective pedagogy for principal preparation programs as hands-on, applied knowledge, internships, reflective practices, case studies, and problem-based learning.

The purpose of principal preparation programs is to equip practitioners with the skills to learn how to identify what the school community's needs are and how the principal can manage and deploy the talents in the school and resources available to match those needs (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Donaldson and Quaglia (1991) state "school leadership requires an education, not training. It requires us to learn how to learn about leadership needs and about pedagogical needs. It must happen in the workplace where the people and problems are the instructional experiences. Viewed in this manner, the polar opposites of theory and practice or textbook and experience can be seen as complements to one another" (pp. 27-28).

## Summary

The review of related literature examined principal leadership and its effect on school effectiveness. It also highlighted problems of practice faced by principals. Postulates of various authors (e.g., Chaplain, 2001; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995; McBride, 2008; Portin & Shen, 1998; Woodruff, 2008) were explored concerning the nature and frequency of problems of practice and how they impact school improvement efforts. Additionally, the chapter explored the nexus between the knowledge base of principal preparation programs and readiness of principals to adequately address problems of practice.

Salient issues that emerged in the chapter included the association between how principals frame problems of practice (i.e., frequency and severity) and individual principals' profiles, such as, years of teaching experience, years as assistant principal experience (Woodruff, 2008), level of academic and professional experience (Lyons, 1999). Finally, the chapter looked specifically at the principalship in Ghana. It focused on the career to the principalship in the country, the normative role of the principals, and problems of practice encountered by the principals.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this study was to determine the credentials of high school principals in South West Ghana, to describe and quantify the perceptions of frequency and severity of problems of practice encountered by high school principals in South West Ghana, and to ascertain the perception of their preparedness to address the problems of practice they encountered. Specifically, the following research questions were examined:

1. What is the demographic profile of the study population?
2. What is the academic profile of the study population?
3. What is the professional experience profile of the study population?
4. What is the frequency of the problems of practice identified by the study population?
5. What is the severity of the problems of practice identified by the study population?
6. To what extent do members of the study population believe they were prepared to deal with the problems of practice they encountered?
7. Is perceived preparedness to address problems of practice associated with selected respondent characteristics?



To investigate these questions, the researcher conducted a non-experimental design using survey research to collect data for the study. Survey research is the method of gathering data from respondents thought to be representative of some population, using an instrument composed of closed-structure or open-ended items (Fink & Kosecoff, 2005).

Angus and Katona (1953) argue that survey research does not belong to any one field and it can be employed by almost any discipline. "It is this capacity for wide application and broad coverage which gives the survey technique its great usefulness" (p. 16). The survey research design is a very valuable tool for assessing opinions and trends. Even on a small scale, assessing and evaluating opinion with carefully designed surveys can surface in-depth information.

Punch (2003) distinguishes between two basic survey designs; the cross-sectional surveys and the longitudinal surveys. In cross-sectional surveys, data are collected at one point in time from the study population. In the longitudinal survey, data are collected at different points in time. Surveys also vary widely in sample size and sampling design. A distinction can be made between large-scale, small-scale, and cross-cultural studies. Large-scale probability surveys are the ideal, and the target population is the entire nation (e.g., the United States).

Typical large-scale surveys of a national population use a sample size of 1,500-3,000 respondents, but can run much larger. Small-scale surveys sometimes involve non-probability sampling, and a typical sample size of 200-300 respondents. Comparative or cross-cultural surveys usually involve 3-6 nations, and sample sizes that typically involve 1,000 people per nation (Fowler, 1993). Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) intimate that

obtaining answers from a large group of people to a set of carefully designed and administered questions, lies at the heart of survey research.

The researcher used the survey instrument to collect data about principals' perceptions of the frequency and severity of problems and the extent of their preparedness to adequately address the problems of practice they encountered. The survey instrument was also used to collect data regarding individual profiles such as a demographic profile, an academic preparation profile, and a professional experience profile of the high school principals. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis—means, standard deviations, frequency counts, percentages—and correlation analysis, used in this study as descriptive statistics, to determine possible associations between principal academic preparation and professional experience profiles and level of preparedness to address problems.

### Population

A defined population of high school principals in South West Ghana (described in chapter 1) constituted the study population. This study was limited to only high school principals in schools in South West Ghana that come under the jurisdiction of the Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS). Principals from other high schools were excluded from the study. Selection and appointment of such principals do not have to adhere to the criteria set by the Ghana Education Service (GES) as outlined in chapter 1. The criteria set by the GES are enforceable only for principalship in Government-Assisted Schools.

The study population consisted of 89 high school principals. The list of high schools can be found in Appendix A. The principals are heads of either co-educational schools or single-sex schools. The principals are also from high schools located in a metropolis (suburban), in a municipality (urban), or in a district (rural). The principals in the study population are heads of schools spawning the three categories of school effectiveness; highly effective schools (25%), effective schools (55%), and less effective schools (20%). The categorization was based on a ranking of schools by the GES using standardized test scores of the West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE).

The researcher identified members of the study population from the GES directory. The list was cross-checked and confirmed using the membership list of the regional CHASS associations of Western and Central regions. All the principals of the high schools in the study population were solicited to participate in the study. Using the entire population for the study increased the potential power of the study by providing the largest possible *N* size, thereby strengthening the data analyses (Heimann, 2006).

Letters introducing the researcher to the members of the study population were sent by the Regional Directors of Education for the Western and Central regions. The members of the study population were then invited to participate in the study through personal contacts. The mode of contacting the principals was either through personal visits or through telephone calls. The researcher then sent to each principal the research study packet consisting of a cover letter, a consent form, the research instrument, and postage-paid envelope with the return address of the researcher. The cover letter explained the purpose and scope of the research and formally invited them to participate in the study. The letter also assured the participants of confidentiality and anonymity

(Appendix B). The survey packet was distributed—in person or through mail—to the principals. Ten principals were selected for the pilot study and were thus excluded from the final study. The survey packet was sent to the remaining 79 principals.

### The Research Instrument

The instrumentation used for the study consisted of two sections—perceptions regarding problems of practice encountered and profiles of principals. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix C.

#### *Measuring Perceptions of Problems of Practice*

The instrument for this section consisted of 34 Likert-type items. The Ghana Education Service (GES) *Headteachers' Handbook* (1994) served as the primary source for the development of the questionnaire items. Additional sources included a review of literature on problems of practice and *High School Principal Survey* (Woodruff, 2008). The items in this section covered three broad categories of leadership-related, management-related, and political problems. Leadership deals with mission, vision, values, facilitation, empowerment, and setting direction. Management consists of supervision, evaluation, support, and control of organizational resources. Politics is concerned with relations (both internal and external relations) and building coalitions (Johnson, 1996). The number of items in each category—leadership-related, management-related, and political problems—was informed by the emphasis the GES places on each category in the handbook. Each of the 34 items was assigned to only one leadership-management-political typology using the following rubric:

Leadership-related items. Items referring to what needs to be done and why.

Management-related items. Items addressing how and when things are done.

Political-related items. Items pertaining to issues involving competition for scarce resources and building of social capital.

Appendix D shows the assigned questions to the leadership-management-political typology.

The leadership-related category consisted of 10 items—Questions 1, 4, 9, 10, 11, 14, 20, 22, 30, and 31.

The management-related category consisted of 15 items—Questions 2, 3, 6, 7, 13, 15, 17, 19, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, and 34.

The political-related category consisted of nine items—Questions 5, 8, 12, 16, 18, 21, 23, 24, and 25.

The statements on the questionnaire elicited responses from participants in the following categories, (a) perceptions of frequency of problems, (b) perceptions of severity of problems, and (c) perceptions of preparedness of the principal to address problems. The responses to ascertain the perceptions of frequency of problems were selected from one of three response choices: *never*, *sometimes*, and *often*.

The responses to ascertain the perceptions of severity of problems were selected from one of three response choices: *not serious*, *moderately serious*, and *serious*.

The responses to ascertain the perceptions of preparedness of the principal to address problems were selected from one of three response choices: *not at all prepared*, *somewhat prepared*, and *well prepared*.

### *Measuring Profiles of Principals*

The instrument for measuring profiles of principals consisted of seven items to gather data on selected demographics (i.e., age and gender), academic preparation experience profiles (i.e., level of formal education completed and major of highest academic degree), and professional experience profiles (i.e., years of teaching experience, years as assistant principal experience, and years as principal experience).

### Validity

The survey instrument was pilot tested with participants ( $n=10$ ), randomly selected from principals of the study population. The 10 participants were excluded from the final study. Fink and Kosecoff (2005) intimate that a pilot study is designed to test logistics and gather information prior to the main study in order to improve the quality and efficiency of the study. A panel of experts also reviewed and provided feedback on the survey instrument. The deficiencies in the research instrument revealed through the pilot study and the critique of the panel of experts were remedied before the instrument was administered to the study population.

The review by the panel of experts assured judgmental validity (i.e., content and face validity) for the survey instrument. The panel made judgments on the appropriateness of the survey contents and also judged whether the instrument appeared to be valid on the face of it. Also, using the standards outlined in the Ghana Education Service *Headteachers' Handbook* and the *High School Principal Survey* as a basis for designing the questionnaire conferred a high degree of construct validity on the instrument.

## Reliability

The survey instrument was used to measure principal practice construct in three sub-areas—leadership-related, management-related, and political problems. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the reliability of the instrument in measuring the sub-area constructs. Sarantakos (1997) says that reliability refers to the ability of an instrument to produce consistent results. An instrument can only be classified as reliable when it produces the same results whenever it is repeated, even by another researcher.

The Cronbach's alpha was calculated using the statistical function of the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)*. Cronbach's alpha can be written as a function of the number of test items and the average inter-correlation among the items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to check the reliability of the instrument. Alpha coefficient ranges in value from 0 to 1 and may be used to describe the reliability of factors extracted from multi-point formatted questionnaires or scales. The higher the score, the more reliable the generated scale is. The decision rule for Cronbach's alpha is that a reliability coefficient of .80 or higher is considered acceptable (Patten, 2005). The *High School Principal Survey* (Woodruff, 2008) has a reliability of .87.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficients calculated for the three sub areas were as follows: leadership-related sub-construct was .893, management-related sub-construct was .822, and the political-related sub-construct was .838.

## Data Collection

The survey instrument was distributed—in person or by mail—to the principals of the study population ( $n=79$ ). As mentioned earlier, a postage-paid envelope with a return

address of the researcher was added to the survey instrument. The survey instrument was returned to the researcher via expedited mail. Data were collected over a period of 4 weeks, specifically from September 16 to October 16, 2009. The researcher received 63 surveys out of the 79 surveys distributed. Two of the surveys were rejected by the researcher because they were completed by assistant headmasters (principals). The final number of returned surveys used for the data analyses was 61, constituting a response rate of about 77%. For surveys administered through the mail, Punch (2003) proffers the following as acceptable response rates:

- 50% response is adequate,
- 60% response rate is good, and
- 70% response rate is very good.

### Reciprocity

The researcher assured the members of the study population that the summary of the findings of the study will be shared with them.

### Data Analysis

The data collected were entered by the researcher into a computer for analyses using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)* version 16.0 software program.

The data were coded and analyzed to answer the research questions.

Research question one: What is the demographic profile of the study population? The researcher used frequency counts and percentages to describe gender. Coding for demographic profiles of principals was done as follows:



Gender:

Male = "1"

Female = "2"

Age:

39 years or less = "1"

40 – 44 years = "2"

45 – 49 years = "3"

50 – 54 years = "4"

55 – 59 years = "5"

Research question two: What is the academic profile of the study population? The researcher used frequency counts and percentages to describe the level of formal education completed and major of highest degree attained. Coding for the academic experience profile was done as follows:

Level of formal education completed:

Bachelors = "1"

Masters = "2"

Post-Masters = "3"

Major of highest academic degree:

Educational Administration = "1"

Other area in Education = "2"

Area other than Education = "3"

Research question three: What is the professional experience profile of the study population? The researcher used frequency counts and percentages to describe years of

teaching experience, years as assistant principal experience, and years as principal experience of the respondents. Coding for the professional experience profile was done as follows:

Years of teaching experience:

14 years or less = "1"

15 – 19 years = "2"

20 – 24 years = "3"

More than 24 years = "4"

Years as assistant principal experience:

0 year = "1"

1 – 5 years = "2"

6 – 10 years = "3"

More than 10 years = "4"

Years as principal:

1 year = "1"

2 – 6 years = "2"

7 – 11 years = "3"

More than 11 years = "4"

To address research questions 4, 5, and 6, the researcher conducted the analyses in two stages. The first stage consisted of calculating the means and standard deviations of the responses of all 34 items in terms of perceptions of frequency and severity of problems encountered and the perception of preparedness to address the problems. The second stage consisted of classifying each of the 34 items as leadership-related,

management-related, or political problem. The means and standard deviations of the responses in the three areas were then calculated. The researcher compared the calculated means and standard deviations in terms of perceptions of frequency and severity of problems encountered and the perception of preparedness to address the problems across principal academic and professional experience profiles.

Research question four: What is the frequency of the problems of practice identified by the study population? First, the researcher calculated the percentage of respondents for each of the three response choices of *never*, *sometimes*, and *often*. Second, the researcher rank-ordered the responses based on calculated means and standard deviations of the responses to determine which of the problems of practice identified occurred most frequently. Third, the researcher compared the calculated means and standard deviations of the 34 items when grouped into leadership-related, management-related, and political problems. Coding for the frequency of problems of practice was done as follows:

(1) – *never*

(2) – *sometimes*

(3) – *often*

Research question five: What is the severity of the problems of practice identified by the study population? First, the researcher calculated the percentage of respondents for each of the three response choices of *not serious*, *serious*, and *very serious*. Second, the researcher rank-ordered the responses based on calculated means and standard deviations of the responses to determine which of the problems of practice identified were most severe. Third, the researcher compared the calculated means and standard deviations of

the 34 items when grouped into leadership-related, management-related, and political problems. Coding for severity of problems of practice was done as follows:

- (1) – *not serious*
- (2) – *moderately serious*
- (3) – *serious*

Research question six: To what extent do members of the study population believe they were prepared to deal with the problems of practice they encountered? First, the researcher calculated the percentage of respondents for each of the three response choices of *not at all prepared*, *somewhat prepared*, and *well prepared*. Second, the researcher rank-ordered the responses based on calculated means and standard deviations of the responses to identify which problems of practice respondents believed they were prepared to address. Third, the researcher compared the calculated means and standard deviations of the 34 items when grouped into leadership-related, management-related, and political problems. Coding to ascertain perceptions of preparedness to address problems of practice was done as follows:

- (1) – *not at all prepared*
- (2) – *somewhat prepared*
- (3) – *well prepared*

(4) Research question seven: Is perceived preparedness to address problems of practice associated with selected respondent characteristics? The researcher conducted correlation analyses using Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ). According to Green and Salkind (2008), Spearman's correlation coefficient is a suitable test of association between variables in which one or both variables are ordinal. Spearman's

correlation coefficient is a nonparametric test—it is distribution free. It is an effective determinant of monotonic associations.

The Spearman's correlation coefficient, ( $r_s$ ), can assume a value from -1.00 to +1.00. A correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) of  $r_s = +1.00$ , signifies a perfect positive linear relationship; that is, the paired values on the respective variables being exactly equal in terms of standardized  $z$  scores. A correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) of  $r_s = -1.00$ , indicates a perfect negative or inverse linear relationship between two variables. A correlation coefficient ( $r_s$ ) of  $r_s = 0$ , suggests that there is no relationship between the respective values of the two variables. Bobko (2001) concludes that the closer  $r_s$  is to 1.00 (absolute value), the stronger the relationship between the paired variables; the closer  $r_s$  is to 0.00, the weaker the relationship between the paired variables. Correlation coefficients are usually interpreted with reference to their statistical significance in exploratory studies. Statistical significance when referred to a correlation usually describes whether or not the correlation obtained is different from zero at a given level of confidence. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2008), affirming the earlier work of Borg and Gall (1974), state that if the correlation is not significantly different from zero, then an assumption can be made that no relationship exists between variables. They intimate that a general decision rule to determine the strength of association is as follows:

- $.20 \leq r_s \leq .35$  indicates small association, although this relationship may be statistically significant.
- $.35 < r_s < .65$  indicates moderate association and is statistically significant beyond the one percent level.
- $.65 \leq r_s < .85$  indicates large association and is statistically significant.

- $r_s \geq .85$  indicates a very strong association and is statistically significant.

Kachigan (1991) posits that the key to interpreting correlation coefficient between two paired variables lies with the degree to which they covary—how much of the variation in one of the variables can be attributed to variation in the other, and vice versa. He defines a quantitative measure, the square of the correlation coefficient,  $r_s^2$ , (also known as the coefficient of determination), as indicating the proportion of variance in one of the variables accounted for, explained, or predictable from the variance of scores of the other variable.

Specifically, the researcher used Spearman's correlation coefficient to ascertain association between perceptions of preparedness to address problems of practice and:

- years of teaching experience,
- years as assistant principal experience,
- years as principal experience,
- level of formal education completed, and
- major of highest academic degree.

### Ethical Considerations

All appropriate ethical standards and statutory requirements were applied in the collection of data from the members of the study population and in the execution of the research. The researcher submitted the research for review to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Dayton. Approval for the research was granted on September 7, 2009.

## CHAPTER IV

### REPORT OF FINDINGS

#### Introduction

Data for this study were collected over a period of 4 weeks from September 16 to October 16, 2009. Statistical analyses using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) version 16.0 produced the findings presented in this chapter. Details of the data analyses procedures are provided in chapter 3. Findings presented in this study are based on responses provided by 61 of the 79 principals (77%) in the study's defined population.

#### Findings

##### *Demographic Profile*

Approximately three-fourths of the respondents (74%) were males. Nearly two-thirds of them were 54 or older, 93.5% were 49 or older, and none was younger than 45. The mandatory retirement age for public workers in Ghana is 60; thus, no respondent was older than 59. Data for gender and age are included in Table 1.

Table 1

*Gender and Age Distribution of Respondents (N=61)*

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	45	74
Female	16	26

  

Age	Number	Percentage
Less than 44 years	0	0
45 – 49 years	4	6.5
50 – 54 years	20	32.8
55 – 59 years	37	60.7

*Academic Preparation and Experience Profile*

Academic preparation as defined in this study refers to the level of college education and the major area of study for degrees completed. Data pertaining to this variable are shown in Table 2. Approximately 7 of 10 respondents had not completed a graduate degree; and only 6 of the 61 respondents (9.9%) had completed a master's degree with a major in educational administration. Among the 42 respondents without a graduate degree, 57% had completed a bachelor's degree with a major other than education. The



distribution of majors outside of education, both at the bachelor's and master's degree levels also are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

*Academic Profile of Respondents (N= 61)*

Level of formal education	Number	Percentage		
Bachelor's	42	68.8		
Master's	19	31.2		
Master's +	0	0		

  

Major for highest degree	Number	Percentage		
			Bachelor's	Master's
Educational Administration	6	9.8	0	6
Education	25	41.1	18	7
Area other than education	30	49.1	24	6

  

Area other than education	Number	Percentage		
			Bachelor's	Master's
Languages	8	26.7	6	2

(table continues)

Physical Sciences	3	10	3	0
Biological Sciences	5	16.7	4	1
Social Sciences	11	36.6	9	2
Business Administration	3	10	2	1

### *Professional Experience Profile*

Data regarding experience in education were collected in three categories: teaching, assistant principal, and principal. All respondents reported having at least 15 years of teaching experience. As per the policy of the Ghana Education Service, provided in chapter 2, only deputy director educators—a rank attained after a minimum of 15 years of teaching—are eligible for a principal's position. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents had more than 23 years of teaching experience. Approximately four-fifths of all respondents had been assistant principals previously. The amount of experience the respondents reported having as principals varied with approximately 70% having between 2 and 11 years of experience in the position. Complete data on experience in education are provided in Table 3.

Eleven of the respondents (18%) were novice principals at the time of this study; that is, they had not previously served in this position. Six of the 11 (54.5%) had completed a master's degree and among these 6, 4 (66.7%) had completed graduate degrees with a major in educational administration.

Table 3

*Professional Experience Profile of Respondents (N=61)*

Years of teaching	Number	Percentage
15 – 19 years	6	9.8
20 – 24 years	16	26.2
More than 24 years	39	64
Years as assistant principal	Number	Percentage
0 year	12	19.6
1 – 5 years	31	51
6 – 10 years	18	29.4
Years as principal	Number	Percentage
1 year	11	18
2 – 6 years	22	36.1
7 – 11 years	20	32.8
More than 11 years	8	13.1

### *Frequency of Problems of Practice*

Respondents indicated how frequently they encountered problems by selecting one of three response choices: *never*, *sometimes*, and *often*. Percentages of respondents reporting frequency of problems for all the 34 items are presented in Table 4. Problems of practice are listed in the order in which they appeared in the survey.

Table 4

#### *Frequency of Problems (N=61)*

Potential problems	Percentage of principals reporting frequency of problems		
	Never	Sometimes	Often
Developing a vision focused on high learning for all students	8.2	72.1	19.7
Dealing with the effects of job responsibilities on personal life	9.8	60.7	29.5
Dealing with teacher absenteeism	3.3	45.9	50.8
Ensuring a safe environment for the school community	8.2	18	73.8
Practicing two-way communication with parents about student issues	0	34.4	65.6
Supervising staff	13.1	34.4	52.5
Evaluating staff	13.1	11.5	75.4

(table continues)

Potential problems	Percentage of principals reporting frequency of problems		
	Never	Sometimes	Often
Finding the headship rewarding and satisfying	0	49.2	50.8
Communicating effectively with school staff	9.8	36.1	54.1
Communicating effectively with students	9.8	31.2	59
Communicating effectively with external stakeholders	9.8	23	67.2
Dealing with conflict between and among school employees	3.3	18	78.7
Dealing with low staff morale	4.9	21.3	73.8
Sharing administrative responsibilities with staff	21.3	59	19.7
Dealing with effects of job responsibilities on family	0	63.9	36.1
Having sufficient funds to operate the school	0	4.9	95.1
Managing the budget	0	18	82
Complying with the Ghana Education Service mandates	9.8	16.4	73.8
Managing student discipline	3.3	14.8	82
Facilitating effective instructional program	29.5	37.7	32.8
Seeking input from stakeholder groups (e.g., staff, parents, students, and community members)	8.2	72.1	19.7

(table continues)

Potential problems	Percentage of principals reporting frequency of problems		
	Never	Sometimes	Often
Applying goals that promote high levels of achievement for all	13.1	52.5	34.4
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with staff	0	16.4	83.6
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with students	0	21.3	78.7
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with external stakeholders	0	9.8	90.2
Employing competent teachers	29.5	45.9	24.6
Conducting formal observations in the classrooms	49.2	27.8	23
Managing extra-curricular activities	9.8	41	49.2
Scheduling class time-table for teachers	19.7	50.8	29.5
Selecting in-service activities that are consistent with the school goals	18	68.9	13.1
Having a school philosophy (principles or values) to guide decision making	24.6	60.7	14.7
Dealing with school accountants	0	19.7	80.3
Dealing with non-payment of school fees	0	23	77
Providing quality meals for students	0	45.9	54.1

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the responses to each possible problem. The means were rank-ordered from highest (signifying most frequent problems) to lowest (signifying least frequent problems); the results are presented in Table 5. The 10 most and 10 least severe problems were then analyzed to determine if they were leadership-related, political, or management-related. Classification was based on a typology developed by the author using definitions presented in chapter 1 and the methodology described in chapter 3 (see Appendix D for classification of problems).

The 10 most frequent problems were equally divided between political problems (50%) and management-related problems (50%). However, leadership-related problems constituted 40% of the 10 least frequent problems. Management-related problems also constituted 40% of the 10 least frequent problems while the remaining 20% political.

Table 5

*Rank-Ordered Frequency of Problems (N= 61)*

Potential problems	FREQUENCY	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Having sufficient funds to operate the school	2.95	.218
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with external stakeholders	2.90	.300
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with staff	2.84	.373
Managing the budget	2.82	.388
Dealing with school accountants	2.80	.401

(table continues)

Potential problems	FREQUENCY	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Managing student discipline	2.79	.487
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with students	2.79	.413
Dealing with non-payment of school fees	2.77	.424
Dealing with conflict between and among school employees	2.74	.513
Dealing with low staff morale	2.72	.616
Ensuring a safe environment for the school community	2.66	.479
Practicing two-way communication with parents about student issues	2.66	.629
Complying with the Ghana Education Service mandates	2.64	.659
Evaluating staff	2.62	.711
Communicating effectively with external stakeholders	2.56	.671
Providing quality meals for students	2.54	.502
Finding the headship rewarding and satisfying	2.51	.504
Communicating effectively with students	2.49	.674
Dealing with teacher absenteeism	2.48	.566
Communicating effectively with school staff	2.44	.671
Managing extra-curricular activities	2.39	.665
Supervising staff	2.39	.714
Dealing with effects of job responsibilities on family	2.36	.484

(table continues)



Potential problems	FREQUENCY	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Applying goals that promote high levels of achievement		
for all	2.21	.661
Dealing with the effects of job responsibilities on personal life	2.20	.601
Developing a vision focused on high learning for all students	2.11	.520
Seeking input from stakeholder groups (e.g., staff, parents, students, and community members)	2.11	.520
Scheduling class time-table for teachers	2.10	.700
Facilitating effective instructional program	2.03	.795
Sharing administrative responsibilities with staff	1.97	.657
Employing competent teachers	1.95	.740
Selecting in-service activities that are consistent with the school goals	1.95	.561
Having a school philosophy (principles or values) to guide decision making	1.90	.625
Conducting formal observations in the classrooms	1.74	.814

Group means and standard deviations based on the typology were calculated and the results are shown in Table 6. As a group, political problems were the most frequently reported.

Table 6

*Frequency of Problems and School Leadership Dimensions*

Potential problems	FREQUENCY	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Political problems	2.70	.28
Management-related problems	2.45	.32
Leadership-related problems	2.23	.26

*Severity of Problems of Practice*

Respondents indicated the severity of problems by selecting one of three response choices: *not serious*, *moderately serious*, and *serious*. Table 7 includes response percentages for all 34 potential problems listed in the order in which they appeared in the survey.

Table 7

*Severity of Problems (N=61)*

Potential problems	Percentage of principals reporting severity of problems		
	Not serious	Moderately serious	Serious
Developing a vision focused on high learning for all students	13.1	57.4	29.5
Dealing with the effects of job responsibilities on personal life	24.6	42.6	32.8
Dealing with teacher absenteeism	0	26.2	73.8
Ensuring a safe environment for the school community	1.6	31.1	67.2
Practicing two-way communication with parents about student issues	0	14.8	85.2
Supervising staff	6.6	40.9	52.5
Evaluating staff	4.9	32.8	62.3
Finding the headship rewarding and satisfying	13.1	63.9	23
Communicating effectively with school staff	0	16.4	83.6
Communicating effectively with students	0	49.1	50.8
Communicating effectively with external stakeholders	0	41	59

Potential problems	Percentage of principals reporting severity of problems		
	Not serious	Moderately serious	Serious
(table continues)			
Dealing with conflict between and among school employees	9.8	60.7	29.5
Dealing with low staff morale	0	21.3	78.7
Sharing administrative responsibilities with Staff	24.6	49.1	26.2
Dealing with effects of job responsibilities on family	8.2	62.3	29.5
Having sufficient funds to operate the school	0	3.3	96.7
Managing the budget	0	9.8	90.2
Complying with the Ghana Education Service mandates	13.1	21.3	65.6
Managing student discipline	0	29.5	70.5
Facilitating effective instructional program	16.4	59	24.6
Seeking input from stakeholder groups (e.g., staff, parents, students, and community members)	11.5	54.1	34.4
Applying goals that promote high levels of achievement for all	8.2	54.1	34.4

Potential problems	Percentage of principals reporting severity of problems		
	Not serious	Moderately serious	Serious
(table continues)			
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with staff	0	37.7	62.3
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with students	13.1	24.6	62.3
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with external stakeholders	11.5	19.7	68.8
Employing competent teachers	6.6	32.8	60.6
Conducting formal observations in the classrooms	59	27.9	13.1
Managing extra-curricular activities	24.6	26.2	49.2
Scheduling class time-table for teachers	19.7	55.7	24.6
Selecting in-service activities that are consistent with the school goals	21.3	55.7	23
Having a school philosophy (principles or values) to guide decision making	13.1	57.4	29.5
Dealing with school accountants	0	21.3	78.7
Dealing with non-payment of school fees	0	3.3	96.7
Providing quality meals for students	0	9.8	90.2

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the severity responses to each possible problem. The means were then rank-ordered from highest (most severe) to lowest (least severe); these data are included in Table 8. The 10 most and 10 least severe problems were then analyzed to determine if they were leadership-related, political, or management-related. Classification was based on a typology developed by the author using definitions presented in chapter 1 and the methodology described in chapter 3 (see Appendix D for classification of problems).

Table 8

*Rank-Ordered Severity of Problems*

Potential problems	SEVERITY	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Having sufficient funds to operate the school	2.97	.180
Dealing with non-payment of school fees	2.97	.180
Managing the budget	2.90	.310
Providing quality meals for students	2.90	.300
Practicing two-way communication with parents about student issues	2.85	.358
Communicating effectively with school staff	2.84	.373
Dealing with low staff morale	2.79	.413
Dealing with school accountants	2.79	.412
Dealing with teacher absenteeism	2.74	.444

(table continues)

Potential problems	SEVERITY	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ensuring a safe environment for the school community	2.70	.460
Managing student discipline	2.66	.513
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with staff	2.62	.489
Communicating effectively with external stakeholders	2.59	.496
Evaluating staff	2.57	.590
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with external stakeholders	2.57	.694
Complying with the Ghana Education Service mandates	2.52	.721
Communicating effectively with students	2.51	.504
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with students	2.49	.722
Supervising staff	2.46	.621
Employing competent teachers	2.43	.618
Applying goals that promote high levels of achievement for all	2.26	.603
Managing extra-curricular activities	2.25	.830
Seeking input from stakeholder groups (e.g., staff, parents, students, and community members)	2.23	.643
Dealing with effects of job responsibilities on family	2.21	.581
Dealing with conflict between and among school employees	2.20	.601

(table continues)

Potential problems	SEVERITY	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Developing a vision focused on high learning for all students	2.16	.637
Having a school philosophy (principles or values) to guide decision making	2.16	.637
Finding the headship rewarding and satisfying	2.11	.608
Dealing with the effects of job responsibilities on personal life	2.08	.759
Facilitating effective instructional program	2.08	.640
Scheduling class time-table for teachers	2.05	.669
Selecting in-service activities that are consistent with the school goals	2.02	.671
Sharing administrative responsibilities with staff	1.98	.719
Conducting formal observations in the classrooms	1.54	.721

Of the 10 most severe problems, 6 were management-related, 3 were political, and only one was leadership-related. Among the least severe problems, 6 were leadership-related, 4 were management-related, and none was political.

Group means and standard deviations based on the typology were calculated and the results are shown in Table 9. As the means reveal, political problems were slightly more severe than the other two categories.



Table 9

*Severity of Problems and School Leadership Dimensions*

Problem categories	SEVERITY	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Political problems	2.51	.30
Management-related problems	2.45	.41
Leadership-related problems	2.33	.27

*Preparedness to Address Problems of Practice*

Respondents indicated their preparedness to address potential problems of practice by selecting one of three response choices: *not at all prepared*, *somewhat prepared*, and *well prepared*. Table 10 shows the percentages for responses to all 34 potential problems. The problems of practice are listed in the order in which they appeared in the survey.

Table 10

*Preparedness to Address Problems (N=61)*

Potential problems	Percentage of principals reporting preparedness to address problems		
	Not at all prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared
Developing a vision focused on high learning for all students	26.2	40.9	32.8

(table continues)

Potential problems	Percentage of principals reporting preparedness to address problems		
	Not at all prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared
Dealing with the effects of job responsibilities on personal life	18	49.1	32.9
Dealing with teacher absenteeism	29.5	24.6	45.9
Ensuring a safe environment for the school community	40.9	49.1	10
Practicing two-way communication with parents about student issues	45.9	34.4	19.7
Supervising staff	9.8	6.6	83.6
Evaluating staff	8.2	13.1	78.7
Finding the headship rewarding and satisfying	19.7	49.1	31.2
Communicating effectively with school staff	42.6	41	16.4
Communicating effectively with students	31.2	39.3	29.5
Communicating effectively with external stakeholders	36.1	47.5	16.4
Dealing with conflict between and among school employees	13.1	27.9	59

(table continues)

Potential problems	Percentage of principals reporting preparedness to address problems		
	Not at all prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared
Dealing with low staff morale	24.6	27.9	47.5
Sharing administrative responsibilities with staff	8.2	41	50.8
Dealing with effects of job responsibilities on family	42.6	47.5	9.8
Having sufficient funds to operate the school	50.8	29.5	19.7
Managing the budget	54.1	26.2	19.7
Complying with the Ghana Education Service mandates	13.1	18	68.9
Managing student discipline	14.8	23	62.2
Facilitating effective instructional program	6.6	16.4	77
Seeking input from stakeholder groups (e.g., staff, parents, students, and community members)	18	59	23
Applying goals that promote high levels of achievement for all	31.1	37.7	31.1

(table continues)

Potential problems	Percentage of principals reporting preparedness to address problems		
	Not at all prepared	Somewhat prepared	Well prepared
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with staff	32.8	44.2	23
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with students	41	36	23
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with external stakeholders	34.4	44.3	21.3
Employing competent teachers	6.6	14.8	78.6
Conducting formal observations in the classrooms	9.8	23	67.2
Managing extra-curricular activities	29.5	21.3	49.2
Scheduling class time-table for teachers	19.7	14.8	65.5
Selecting in-service activities that are consistent with the school goals	16.4	19.7	63.9
Having a school philosophy (principles or values) to guide decision making	34.4	32.8	32.8
Dealing with school accountants	65.6	8.2	26.2
Dealing with non-payment of school fees	62.3	13.1	24.6
Providing quality meals for students	32.8	42.6	24.6

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the preparedness responses to each possible problem. The means were then rank-ordered from highest (well prepared) to lowest (least prepared); these data are included in Table 11. The 10 problems respondents were most and least prepared to address were then analyzed to determine if they were leadership-related, political, or management-related. Classification was based on a typology developed by the author using definitions presented in chapter 1 and the methodology described in chapter 3 (see Appendix D for classification of problems).

Of the 10 problems respondents were most prepared to address, 60% were management-related and 20% each were leadership-related and political. Forty percent of the 10 problems respondents were least prepared to address were management-related, while 30% each were leadership-related and political.

Table 11

*Rank-Ordered Preparedness to Address Problems*

Potential problems	PREPAREDNESS	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Employing competent teachers	2.72	.581
Facilitating effective instructional program	2.70	.587
Supervising staff	2.70	.630
Evaluating staff	2.70	.615
Conducting formal observations in the classrooms	2.57	.670
Complying with the Ghana Education Service mandates	2.56	.719

(table continues)

Potential problems	PREPAREDNESS	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Managing student discipline	2.48	.744
Selecting in-service activities that are consistent with the school goals	2.48	.766
Dealing with conflict between and among school employees	2.46	.721
Scheduling class time-table for teachers	2.46	.808
Sharing administrative responsibilities with staff	2.44	.646
Dealing with low staff morale	2.23	.824
Managing extra-curricular activities	2.20	.872
Providing quality meals for students	2.19	.759
Dealing with teacher absenteeism	2.16	.860
Dealing with the effects of job responsibilities on personal life	2.15	.703
Finding the headship rewarding and satisfying	2.11	.709
Developing a vision focused on high learning for all students	2.07	.772
Seeking input from stakeholder groups (e.g., staff, parents, students, and community members)	2.05	.644
Applying goals that promote high levels of achievement for all	2.00	.796

(table continues)

Potential problems	PREPAREDNESS	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Having a school philosophy (principles or values) to guide decision making	1.98	.826
Communicating effectively with students	1.98	.785
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with staff	1.90	.746
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with external stakeholders	1.90	.768
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with students	1.82	.785
Communicating effectively with external stakeholders	1.82	.719
Communicating effectively with school staff	1.74	.728
Practicing two-way communication with parents about student issues	1.74	.772
Ensuring a safe environment for the school community	1.69	.647
Having sufficient funds to operate the school	1.69	.786
Dealing with effects of job responsibilities on family	1.67	.651
Managing the budget	1.66	.793
Dealing with non-payment of school fees	1.62	.882
Dealing with school accountants	1.61	.881

Group means and standard deviations based on the typology were calculated and the results are shown in Table 12. As data in Table 12 reveal, the respondents generally felt

most prepared to handle management-related problems and least prepared to handle political problems.

Table 12

*Preparedness to Address Problems and School Leadership Dimensions*

Problem categories	PREPAREDNESS	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Management-related problems	2.20	.34
Leadership-related problems	2.09	.39
Political problems	2.01	.32

Separate analyses were conducted for two sub-groups: one consisting of the 6 respondents whose highest degree was in educational administration and one for the remaining 55 respondents whose highest degree was not in educational administration. The intent was to determine if the two sub-groups differed with respect to perceived preparedness to deal with potential problems of practice. Means were calculated for the preparedness responses to each possible problem for the sub-groups;  $M_1$  for respondents whose highest degree was in educational administration and  $M_2$  for respondents whose highest degree was not in educational administration. Results are included in Table 13. Respondents with their highest degree in educational administration felt most prepared to handle leadership-related problems while respondents with their highest degree not in educational administration felt most prepared to handle management-related problems. The computation of the mean of means for the sub-groups indicated that generally respondents whose highest degree was in educational administration felt most prepared to



handle problems ( $M = 2.44$ ) than respondents whose highest degree was not in educational administration ( $M = 2.15$ ).

Table 13

*Preparedness to Address Problems and Highest Degree in Educational Administration*

*( $N = 6$ ) and Highest Degree not in Educational Administration ( $N = 55$ )*

Potential problems	$N = 6$	$N = 55$	$D$ ( $M_1 - M_2$ )
	$M_1$	$M_2$	
Developing a vision focused on high learning for all students	3.00	1.96	1.04
Dealing with the effects of job responsibilities on personal life	1.67	2.09	-0.42
Dealing with teacher absenteeism	2.00	2.27	-0.27
Ensuring a safe environment for the school community	2.83	1.56	1.27
Practicing two-way communication with parents about student issues	2.50	1.71	0.79
Supervising staff	3.00	2.82	0.18
Evaluating staff	3.00	2.78	0.22
Finding the headship rewarding and satisfying	2.33	2.20	0.13
Communicating effectively with school staff	2.50	1.62	0.88
Communicating effectively with students	2.67	1.87	0.80

(table continues)

Potential problems	<i>N</i> = 6	<i>N</i> = 55	
	<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub>	<i>M</i> <sub>2</sub>	<i>D</i> ( <i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> - <i>M</i> <sub>2</sub> )
Communicating effectively with external stakeholders	2.83	1.71	1.12
Dealing with conflict between and among school employees	2.50	2.56	-0.06
Dealing with low staff morale	2.33	2.35	-0.02
Sharing administrative responsibilities with staff	3.00	2.38	0.62
Dealing with effects of job responsibilities on family	2.50	1.71	0.79
Having sufficient funds to operate the school	1.67	1.87	-0.20
Managing the budget	2.83	1.87	0.96
Complying with the Ghana Education Service mandates	1.69	2.67	-0.98
Managing student discipline	2.15	2.62	-0.47
Facilitating effective instructional program	3.00	2.67	0.33
Seeking input from stakeholder groups (e.g., staff, parents, students, and community members)	2.50	2.15	0.35
Applying goals that promote high levels of achievement for all	2.87	1.87	1.00
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with staff	2.17	2.00	0.17

(table continues)

Potential problems	$N = 6$		$N = 55$
	$M_1$	$M_2$	$D$ $(M_1 - M_2)$
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with students	2.17	1.89	0.28
Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with external stakeholders	2.17	1.95	0.22
Employing competent teachers	3.00	2.84	0.16
Conducting formal observations in the classrooms	3.00	2.64	0.36
Managing extra-curricular activities	2.00	2.29	-0.29
Scheduling class time-table for teachers.	3.00	2.55	0.45
Selecting in-service activities that are consistent with the school goals	3.00	2.42	0.58
Having a school philosophy (principles or values) to guide decision making	2.87	1.87	1.00
Dealing with school accountants	1.00	1.64	-0.64
Dealing with non-payment of school fees	1.50	1.69	-0.19
Providing quality meals for students	1.67	2.00	-0.33

#### *Association of Principal Profiles and Preparedness to Address Problems*

Spearman's correlation coefficient, ( $r_s$ ), was applied as a descriptive statistic to determine strength of association between principal profiles (i.e., level of formal education completed, major for highest degree completed, years of teaching, years as

assistant principal, and years as principal) and preparedness to address problems. The decision rule to determine strength of association is shown below and is described in greater detail in chapter 3.

1.  $r_s < .20$ , negligible association;
2.  $.20 \leq r_s \leq .35$ , small association;
3.  $.35 < r_s < .65$ , moderate association; and
4.  $r_s \geq .65$ , large association.

Outcomes are provided in Table 14.

Table 14

*Association between Selected Demographic Variables and Perceived Preparedness to Address Potential Problems of Practice*

Principal profiles	Preparedness	
	$r_s$	Strength of Association
Level of education	.035	Negligible
Degree major	.371	Moderate
Years of teaching	.096	Negligible
Years as assistant principal	.529	Moderate
Years as principal	.633	Moderate

As data in Table 14 reveal, none of the association was found to be high. Experience as a principal produced the highest coefficient but it was in the moderate range.

Computation of the coefficient of determination revealed that

1. The major of highest degree completed accounted for 13.8% of the variance of respondents' preparedness to address problems.
2. The number of years as assistant principal accounted for 28% of the variance of respondents' preparedness to address problems.
3. The number of years as principal accounted for 40.1% of the variance of respondents' preparedness to address problems.

### Summary

This chapter examined data collected for the study that consisted of responses from survey participants ( $n = 61$ ) of principals from South West Ghana. The study findings informed the description of the demographic, academic preparation and experience, and professional experience profiles of the study population. Data were also used to describe and quantify frequency and severity of problems of practice encountered and preparedness to address the problems. Finally, correlation analyses were done to describe associations between principal profiles and preparedness to address problems of practice and ascertain the extent to which they share variances.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of Findings

The findings of this study were based on analyzed data from survey research of high school principals ( $n = 61$ ) in South West Ghana. A profound understanding of principal profiles and level of principal preparedness to handle problems was deduced from the study findings. This section presents a summary of findings associated with each of the seven research questions.

1. What is the demographic profile of the study population?

This study examined gender and age distributions of the study respondents. Approximately three-fourths of the respondents (74%) were males. Nearly two-thirds were 54 or older, 93.5% were 49 or older, and none was younger than 45. The range of ages is explained by Ghana's teaching experience requirement for becoming a principal (a minimum of 15 years) and by its mandatory retirement age for public workers (age 60).

2. What is the academic profile of the study population?

A typical respondent held a bachelor's degree with a major in a discipline other than education. Approximately 7 of 10 respondents (68.8%) had not completed a graduate degree; and only 6 of the 61 respondents (9.9%) had completed a master's degree with a

major in educational administration. Among the 42 respondents without a graduate degree, 57% had completed a bachelor's degree with a major other than education.

3. What is the professional experience profile of the study population?

This study ascertained respondent teaching and administrative experience (both as assistant principals and principals). All respondents reported having at least 15 years of teaching experience as per the policy of the Ghana Education Service. Approximately two-thirds (64%) had more than 24 years of teaching experience and approximately four-fifths (80.4%) had been assistant principals previously. The amount of experience as a principal varied with approximately 70% having between 2 and 11 years of experience in the position; and, only one-fifth were novices at the time of this study. Six of the 11 (54.5%) novice principals had completed a master's degree and among these 6, 4 (66.7%) had completed graduate degrees with a major in educational administration.

4. What is the frequency of the problems of practice identified by the study population?

Means and standard deviations were calculated for responses to each possible problem. The 10 most and 10 least frequent problems were analyzed to determine if they were leadership-related, management-related, or political. Classification was based on a leadership-management-political typology described in chapter 3. Among the 10 most frequent problems, 5 were political and 5 were management-related. Among the 10 least frequently occurring problems, 4 were leadership-related, 4 were management-related, and 2 were political. Based on the mean scores for each category, political problems were perceived as occurring most frequently and leadership-related problems were perceived as occurring least frequently.

5. What is the severity of the problems of practice identified by the study population?

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the responses to each possible problem. The 10 most and 10 least severe problems were analyzed to determine if they were leadership-related, management-related, or political. Classification was based on a leadership-management-political typology described in chapter 3. Among the 10 problems perceived to be most severe, 6 were management-related, 3 were political, and 1 was leadership-related. Among 10 problems perceived to be least severe, 6 were leadership-related and 4 were management-related. Based on mean scores for each category, political problems were perceived as being the most severe and leadership-related problems were perceived as being the least severe.

6. To what extent do members of the study population believe they were prepared to deal with the problems of practice they encountered?

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the responses to each possible problem. The problems respondents felt most and least prepared to handle (10 in each category) were then analyzed to determine if they were leadership-related, political, or management-related. Classification was based on a leadership-management-political typology described in chapter 3. Of the 10 problems respondents felt most prepared to handle, 6 were management-related, 2 were leadership-related, and 2 were political. Of the 10 problems respondents felt least prepared to handle, 4 were management-related, 3 were leadership-related, and 3 were political. Based on the mean scores for each category, respondents felt most prepared to handle management-related problems and least prepared to handle political problems.



Separate analyses conducted for two sub-groups: one consisting of the 6 respondents whose highest degree was in educational administration and the other for the remaining 55 respondents, revealed that the former felt most prepared to address leadership-related problems, while the latter felt most prepared to address management-related problems. Additionally, computation of mean of means for the sub-groups revealed that, in general, respondents whose highest degree was in educational administration felt more prepared to address problems of practice than respondents whose highest degree was not in educational administration.

7. Is perceived preparedness to address problems of practice associated with selected respondent characteristics?

Using Spearman's correlation as a descriptive statistic as defined in chapter 3, levels of association between perceived preparedness and five demographic variables (amount of teaching experience, level of formal education completed, major the highest degree completed, amount of experience as an assistant principal, and amount of experience as principal) were determined. None of the association was found to be high. Three associations (amount of experience as a principal, amount of experience as an assistant principal, and major in the highest degree completed) were found to be positive and moderate. The remaining two associations (amount of teaching experience and level of formal education) were found to be positive but negligible.

Computation of the coefficient of determination revealed that

4. The major of highest degree completed accounted for approximately one-sixth of the variance of respondents' preparedness to address problems.

5. The number of years as assistant principal accounted for approximately one-third of the variance of respondents' preparedness to address problems.
6. The number of years as principal accounted for approximately two-fifths of the variance of respondents' preparedness to address problems.

## Conclusions

### *Gender*

Male principals outnumbered female principals in South West Ghana (by a ratio of 3 to 1). This finding suggests that efforts by the federal government—endeavors such as, affirmative action for gender equity and the creation of the Girl Child Educational Unit for the Ghana Education Service (GES)—to combat prejudice and stereotyping have been only marginally effective. This finding, however, needs to be considered in light of the fact that only 30% of college students in the country are females (University of Cape Coast, 2009). Nevertheless, the underrepresentation of female principals does not augur well in a culture where females (a) are perceived to be the custodians of social traditions, (b) have major responsibilities for the sustenance and welfare of household members, and (c) are expected to be role models for children (Gyekye, 2002).

### *Experience and Academic Preparation Criteria*

The amount of teaching experience possessed by principals in South West Ghana was found to be high, especially in relation to countries such as the United States (Kowalski, 2010). The higher level of teaching experience in Ghana is almost certainly due to the existing GES policy requiring a minimum of 15 years of teaching experience for the principalship. Yet, the GES has no academic requirements for being an administrator.

Both conditions are arguably counterproductive. On the one hand, the current policy on teaching experience ensures that persons enter the principalship at mid or late-career stages. According to Zame, Hope, and Respress (2008) persons at this career point may be experiencing rigidity, ineptitude, and resistance to change. On the other hand, most principals were not prepared academically to be education leaders generally and change agents specifically. Zame et al. (2008) aver that a lack of leadership preparation is a pervasive education problem in Ghana. They add that without principals capable of diagnosing and correcting instructional problems, “the chances of systemic educational reform leading to a quality education system will more likely than not remain elusive” (p. 117).

This study found the credentials of principals in South West Ghana to be limited, especially in relation to the United States. Rodriguez-Campos, Rincones-Gomez, and Shen (2005) reported that almost all principals in the United States held master’s degree and about 19% held an advanced graduate degree (e.g., Ed.S., Ed.D., or Ph.D.). However, a typical principal in South West Ghana had only completed a bachelor’s degree. Principals who have not completed graduate studies are unlikely to have knowledge and skills in subjects deemed highly relevant to school improvement (Oplatka, 2004)—subjects such as instructional supervision, curriculum development, research, and evaluation.

### *Principal Stability*

This study found limited stability in the principalship in South West Ghana. Studies in the United States have shown that when there is a revolving door to the principal’s office, protracted school improvement efforts rarely have been successful (Kowalski,

2003). According to Oplatka (2004), leadership instability in Ghana has had the same detrimental effect; specifically, initiating and sustaining long-term reforms have been very difficult. Both he and Oduro (2003) contend that greater position stability would allow principals to acquire more tacit knowledge, an important asset for counteracting limited theoretical knowledge.

### *Problems of Practice*

This study found that political issues, especially seeking sufficient funds and other resources to operate the school efficiently, were the most frequently identified problems. This outcome is not uncommon; public schools in virtually all countries have to overcome problems caused by limited resources. Specifically in Ghana, the finding suggests an over-reliance on subvention from a central government with a struggling national economy. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2008) reports a deteriorating budget with a deficit of 8.2% of GDP for Ghana. Bush and Oduro (2006), Oduro (2003), and Oplatka (2004), intimate that private partnerships and community involvement were limited in this country; and the central government, to a greater extent, is the sole provider of resources for education. Other sectors, for example, health, defense, and energy, compete with education for the meagre government subvention (Bush & Oduro, 2006). Oplatka (2004) avers that sufficient resources to embark on meaningful reforms are non-existent in developing countries, Ghana included.

This study also found that political problems were more severe than either leadership-related or management-related problems; differences in means for principal responses for problem severity were substantial. Findings that leadership-related problems were less

frequent and less severe may be associated with a lack of knowledge and skills in educational leadership. Principals who have not been prepared to assume certain responsibilities may not be able to recognize and define problems related to those responsibilities (Woodruff & Kowalski, 2009).

### *Perceived Competence*

Respondents in this study felt more prepared to handle management-related problems than they did either leadership-related or political problems. According to Sayed, Akyeampong and Ampiah (2000), this outcome could be ascribed to three conditions:

1. Limited academic preparation. Principals without academic preparation in either education or educational administration may be viewed by teachers as managers rather than instructional leaders. This perception arguably makes it difficult for them to challenge existing structures and proffer changes (Smith & Piele, 2006).
2. A highly centralized governance system. Principals in Ghana work in a highly centralized system where policy manuals and handbooks stipulate standard operating procedures. Consequently, these administrators tend to envision their major task as maintenance operation; making only decisions with known outcomes (Oduro, 2003). Hill and Bonan (1991) write that "bureaucracy hampers professional judgment, innovation, and creative capacity" (p. 65). Oplatka (2004) contends that instructional leadership functions are relatively rare in Ghana schools, because most principals are socialized to behave as managers.
3. The effects of the reward system for principals. According to Oplatka (2004), the reward system for principals favors failure avoidance over risk taking and management over leadership.

### *Principal Preparation in Educational Administration*

Comparisons between respondents whose highest degree was in educational administration and the remaining portion of the study population produced noteworthy findings. The former group felt more prepared to handle leadership-related problems than either management-related or political problems. In general, the former group felt more prepared to handle problems compared with the latter; the difference in the mean of means was substantial. This finding is congruent with research, conducted by Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass (2005); McGough (2003); and Petzko (2008) indicating that courses in educational administration equip principals with necessary tools to both lead and manage. For example, knowledge in educational administration is essential in framing and addressing most problems in schools (Hoyle et al., 2005). According to Butler (2008), most courses in educational administration focus on tasks that facilitate instructional leadership, school improvement, and student achievement amid accountability pressures to raise student achievement.

### **Recommendations**

Based on findings and conclusions reported in this document, the following recommendations for policy and future research are offered:

#### *Policy*

1. The Ghana Education Service (GES) should reconsider the academic and professional experience qualifications for the principalship. Most notably, the GES should take into account the benefits of requiring principals to complete graduate-level courses that would prepare them to be instructional leaders and

change agents. Concurrently, the GES should reduce the teaching experience requirement; in the United States; for example, it is rare for states to require more than 5 years of teaching experience to obtain a principal's license (Kowalski, 2010). In combination, requiring graduate study in educational administration and lowering the teaching experience requirement could produce two positive outcomes. First, it could improve the likelihood that principals would assume leadership roles essential to school improvement; second, by virtue of being able to enter the principalship at an earlier age, concerns regarding position stability could be lessened.

2. The GES should revamp its compensation policy for principals. Most notably, rewards should be provided for completing graduate study in educational administration and for engaging in school-improvement initiatives.

#### *Potential for Future Research*

1. This study provides limited insights into differences between principals in Ghana who have completed graduate degrees in educational administration and those who have not. This topic needs to be explored in greater depth, especially in relation to areas such as administrative style, communication, and dispositions toward school improvement.
2. Possible associations between principal perceptions of problems and personal characteristics (e.g., gender, years of teaching, years as assistant principal, years as principal) were not addressed directly in this research. Nevertheless, this topic has obvious importance, and therefore additional study is needed to determine whether such associations exist and are relevant to revising policy.

3. This study should be replicated in other GES designated regions in Ghana to determine if findings reported here are typical for the entire country.



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## APPENDIX A

### List of Schools

NO.	NAME	LOCATION	REGION
1	Abakrampa Secondary Technical	Abakrampa	Central
2	Aburaman Secondary School	Abura Dunkwa	Central
3	Academy of Christ the King	Cape Coast	Central
4	Adankwaman Secondary Commercial	Assin Darman	Central
5	Adiembra Secondary	Adiembra	Western
6	Adisadel College	Cape Coast	Central
7	Aggrey Memorial Zion Secondary School	Cape Coast	Central
8	Ahantaman Secondary School	Sekondi	Western
9	Akontombra Senior High School	Akontombra	Western
10	Amenfiman Secondary	Wassa Akropong	Western
11	Annor Adjaye Secondary	Ezilibo	Western
12	Apam Secondary School	Apam	Central
13	Archbishop Porter Girls School	Takoradi	Western
14	Asankragwa Secondary	Asankragwa	Western
15	Asankragwa Secondary Technical	Asankragwa	Western
16	Asawinso Secondary	Asawinso	Western
17	Assin Manso Secondary	Assin Manso	Central
18	Assin North Secondary Technical	Asempaneye	Central
19	Assin Nsuta Secondary	Assin Nsuta	Central
20	Baidoo Bonso Secondary Technical	Agona Nkwanta	Western
21	Benso Secondary Technical	Benso	Western
22	Besease Secondary Commercial School	Besease	Central
23	Bibiani Secondary Technical	Bibiana	Western
24	Boa-Amponsem Secondary	Dunkwa-on-Offin	Central
25	Bompeh Day Secondary Technical	Takoradi	Western
26	Bonzo-Kaku Secondary	Awiebo	Western
27	BremanAsikuma Secondary	Breman Asikuma	Central
28	Daboase Secondary Technical	Daboase	Western
29	Dadieso Secondary	Dadieso	Western
30	Debiso Essam Secondary Technical	Debiso Essiam	Western
31	Diabene Secondary Technical School	Diabene	Western
32	Diaso Secondary	Diaso	Central
33	Dunkwa Secondary Technical	Dunkwa-on-Offin	Central
34	Edinaman Day Secondary School	Elmina	Central
35	Efutu Secondary Technical School	Efutu	Central
36	Eguafo Abrem Secondary Technical School	Elmina	Central
37	Ekumfi T.I. Ahmadiya	Esakyir	Central

NO.	NAME	LOCATION	REGION
38	Enyan Denkyira Secondary	Denkyira	Central
39	Esiama Secondary Technical	Esiama	Western
40	Fiaseman Secondary	Benkyim Tarkwa	Western
41	Fijai Secondary School	Sekondi	Western
42	Ghana National College	Cape Coast	Central
43	Ghana Secondary Technical School	Takoradi	Western
44	Gomoa Secondary Technical School	Dawurampon	Central
45	Half Assini Secondary	Half Assini	Western
46	Holy Child School	Cape Coast	Central
47	Huni Valley Secondary	Huni Valley	Western
48	Juabeso Bia Secondary	Juabeso	Western
49	Jukwa Secondary	Jukwa	Central
50	Komenda Secondary Technical School	Komenda	Central
51	Kwanyako Secondary	Kwanyako	Central
52	Kwegyir Aggrey Secondary School	Anomabo	Central
53	Mando Secondary	Mando	Central
54	Mankesim Secondary Technical School	Mankesim	Central
55	Methodist Secondary Vocational School	Sekondi	Western
56	Mfantsiman Girls School	Saltpond	Central
57	Mfantsipim School	Cape Coast	Central
58	Mozano Commercial Secondary School	Mozano	Central
59	Nana Brentu Secondary Technical	Enchi	Western
60	Nkroful Agric Secondary	Nkroful	Western
61	Nsaba Presby Secondary School	Nsaba	Central
62	Nsein Secondary	Nsein	Western
63	Nyakrom Day Secondary	Nyakrom	Central
64	Nyankumase Ahenkro Secondary	Nyankumase	Central
65	Obiri Yeboah Secondary	Assin Fosu	Central
66	Obrakyere Secondary Technical School	Obrakyere	Central
67	Odoben Secondary	Odoben	Central
68	Oguaa Secondary Technical School	Cape Coast	Central
69	Potsin T.I. Ahmaddiya Secondary School	Potsin	Central
70	Prestea Secondary Technical	Prestea	Western
71	Saltpond Methodist Secondary School	Saltpond	Central
72	Sefwi Bekwai Secondary	Sefwi Bekwai	Western
73	Sefwi-Wiawso Secondary	Sefwi-Wiawso	Western
74	Sefwi-Wiawso Secondary Technical	Sefwi-Wiawso	Western
75	Sekondi College	Sekondi	Western
76	Senya Secondary	Senya	Central
77	Shama Secondary	Shama	Western
78	St. Augustine's College	Cape Coast	Central
79	St. Augustine's Secondary	Bogoso	Western
80	St. John's Secondary School	Sekondi	Western

NO.	NAME	LOCATION	REGION
81	St. Mary's Boys Secondary	Apowa	Western
82	Swedru School of Business	Swedru	Central
83	Swedru Secondary School	Swedru	Central
84	Takoradi Secondary	Tanokrom	Western
85	Tarkwa Secondary	Tarkwa	Western
86	Twifo Praso Secondary	Twifo Praso	Central
87	University Practice Senior High School	Cape Coast	Central
88	Wesley Girls' High School	Cape Coast	Central
89	Winneba Secondary School	Winneba	Central



## APPENDIX B

### Informed Consent of Research Subjects

You are being asked to participate in a doctoral research project, *High School Principals in South West Ghana: Profiles and Perceptions Regarding Problems of Practice*. The researcher is Bro. Michael Amakyi, a doctoral student at The University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio. If you have questions or concerns regarding this research, please contact me at [mamakyi@yahoo.com](mailto:mamakyi@yahoo.com). The purpose of this research is to determine the credentials of high school principals in South West Ghana, to describe and quantify the frequency and severity of problems of practice they encounter, and to ascertain their preparedness to address the problems.

You are invited to complete a survey to share your perceptions of problems heads encounter as they discharge their duties and also provide a brief personal information. This survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

Your participation in the survey will provide data for future policy analysis and development concerning administrator qualifications and preparation in Ghana. The data provided will also constitute an important addition to the professional knowledge base regarding educational administration. This study carries a negligible risk to participants.

The researcher assures participants of confidentiality and anonymity. No records of your participation will be disclosed to others. Your data will be pooled with data from other research participants and only summary results will be made public. Your name will not be revealed in any document resulting from this research. Your data will be recorded anonymously.

Completion and return of the attached survey implies your consent to participate in this research project. Please read the following carefully and direct any questions to the investigator.

*By returning the survey, I acknowledge that I have voluntarily decided to participate in this research project. The investigator has adequately answered all questions that I have about this research. I understand the investigator will be available to answer questions throughout this research. I also understand that I may refuse to participate, may terminate my participation in this research at any time, or refuse to respond to parts of the survey without penalty. In addition, I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.*

## APPENDIX C

### Research Instrument

#### *Section One: Measuring Perceptions of Problems of Practice*

A problem of practice is defined as perceived difficulty in performing professional responsibility regardless of its cause (Woodruff, 2008).

*Frequency* – This indicates the number of times a principal encounters a problem in a term. This is measured on an ordinal scale of *never (has not occurred before)*, *sometimes (occurs once in a while)*, *often (almost all the time)*.

*Severity* - This indicates how serious the problem is in relation to the school and to the principal. This is measured on an ordinal scale of *not serious (has minimal impact)*, *moderately serious (has some impact)*, and *serious (great impact)*.

*Preparedness* – This indicates the extent of professional knowledge, skills, and disposition acquired through theory and artistry. This has three levels of low, medium, and high. Level of preparedness is measured on an ordinal scale of low level representing *not at all prepared (do not have the requisite knowledge, skill, and disposition)*, medium level representing *somewhat prepared (have basic knowledge, skill, and disposition)*, and high level representing *well prepared (have sufficient knowledge, skill, and disposition)*.

Reflecting on your experience as principal, please indicate by checking the appropriate box, how frequently and severely each of the items was a problem for you and also indicate your preparedness to address the problem.

Experiences as a principal	FREQUENCY			SEVERITY			PREPAREDNESS		
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Not Serious	Moderately Serious	Serious	Not at all Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Well Prepared
1. Developing a vision focused on high learning for all students									
2. Dealing with the effects of job responsibilities on personal life									
3. Dealing with teacher absenteeism									
4. Ensuring a safe environment for the school community									
5. Practicing two-way communication with parents about student issues									
6. Supervising staff									
7. Evaluating staff									
8. Finding the headship rewarding and satisfying									
9. Communicating effectively with school staff									
10. Communicating effectively with students									
11. Communicating effectively with external stakeholders									
12. Dealing with conflict between and among school employees									
13. Dealing with low staff morale									

Experiences as a principal	FREQUENCY			SEVERITY			PREPAREDNESS		
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Not Serious	Moderately Serious	Serious	Not at all Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Well Prepared
14. Sharing administrative responsibilities with staff									
15. Dealing with effects of job responsibilities on family									
16. Having sufficient funds to operate the school									
17. Managing the budget									
18. Complying with the Ghana Education Service mandates									
19. Managing student discipline									
20. Facilitating effective instructional program									
21. Seeking input from stakeholder groups (e.g., staff, parents, students, and community members)									
22. Applying goals that promote high levels of achievement for all									
23. Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with staff									
24. Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with students									
25. Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with external stakeholders									

Experiences as a principal	FREQUENCY			SEVERITY			PREPAREDNESS		
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Not Serious	Moderately Serious	Serious	Not at all Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Well Prepared
26. Employing competent teachers									
27. Conducting formal observations in the classrooms									
28. Managing extra-curricular activities									
29. Scheduling class time-table for teachers									
30. Selecting in-service activities that are consistent with the school goals									
31. Having a school philosophy (principles or values) to guide decision making									
32. Dealing with school accountants									
33. Dealing with non-payment of school fees									
34. Providing quality meals for students									

## Section Two: Measuring Individual Profiles

35. Gender

Male [ ]

Female [ ]

36. Age

39 years or Less [ ] 40-44 years [ ] 45-49 years [ ] 50-54 years [ ]

55-59 years [ ]

37. Level of Formal Education Completed

Bachelors [ ] Masters [ ] Masters + [ ]

38. Is Your Highest Academic Degree in Education?

Yes, in Educational Administration [ ]

Yes, in an area of Education other than Administration [ ]

No [ ] List major...

39. Years of Teaching Experience

14 years or less [ ] 15 -19 years [ ] 20 -24years [ ] More than 24 years  
[ ]

40. Years as Assistant Principal Experience

0 year [ ] 1-5 years [ ] 6-10 years [ ] More than 10 years [ ]

41. Years as Principal Experience as at August 2009

1 year [ ] 2-6 years [ ] 7-11 years [ ] More than 11 years [ ]

## APPENDIX D

### Leadership-Management-Political Typology and Problems of Practice

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#### Leadership-related problems

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1. Developing a vision focused on high learning for all students
4. Ensuring a safe environment for the school community
9. Communicating effectively with school staff
10. Communicating effectively with students
11. Communicating effectively with external stakeholders
14. Sharing administrative responsibilities with staff
20. Facilitating effective instructional program
22. Applying goals that promote high levels of achievement for all
30. Selecting in-service activities that are consistent with the school goals
31. Having a school philosophy (principles or values) to guide decision making

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#### Management-related problems

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2. Dealing with the effects of job responsibilities on personal life
3. Dealing with teacher absenteeism
6. Supervising staff



- 7. Evaluating staff
- 13. Dealing with low staff morale
- 15. Dealing with effects of job responsibilities on family
- 17. Managing the budget
- 19. Managing student discipline
- 26. Employing competent teachers
- 27. Conducting formal observations in the classrooms
- 28. Managing extra-curricular activities
- 29. Scheduling class time-table for teachers
- 32. Dealing with school accountants
- 33. Dealing with non-payment of school fees
- 34. Providing quality meals for students

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Political problems

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- 5. Practicing two-way communication with parents about student issues
- 8. Finding the headship rewarding and satisfying
- 12. Dealing with conflict between and among school employees

- 16. Having sufficient funds to operate the school
  - 18. Complying with the Ghana Education Service mandates
  - 21. Seeking input from stakeholder groups (e.g., staff, parents, students, and community members)
  - 23. Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with staff
  - 24. Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with students
  - 25. Fostering positive interpersonal relationships with stakeholders
-

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