Preparing for Transition: A Study of New College Principals’ Situation in Ghana

Caroline Aggrey-Fynn*

1Accra Institute of Technology

Abstract

The importance of leadership transition in Colleges of Education in Ghana cannot be overemphasised due to its immense impact on quality teacher education and training. This requires that newly appointed principals prepare adequately for the transition. However, there is a seeming absence of research on the concept in the Ghanaian context. This qualitative study which employed the phenomenology approach, therefore, investigates how new college of education principals in Ghana prepare for the transition into their new role. The study purposively sampled ten (10) newly appointed principals of public colleges of education for the study. Interview protocol was used to collect the data for the study. The responses from participants were analysed using Colaizzi’s phenomenological data analysis method. The result revealed that the newly appointed principals prepared for the transition by coping with the psychological, social and professional impacts of the new appointment to manage. Goal setting was also paramount for their tenure of office. The study recommended that preparation prior to assumption of duty is necessary as it helps to get oneself ready for the role and for that matter the transition.

Keywords: New, Colleges, principals, transition, leadership, knowledge

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1 INTRODUCTION

The new principal goes through transition by virtue of the new position and this is found as a significant challenge (Wolinski, 2010). In this case people appointed to new leadership positions as principals in these colleges go through a transition process. According to Hesselbein (2012) leadership transition is an integral process for all leaders of an institution and it presents an opportunity to move forward with a new understanding of challenges, complexities and changes to deal with.
The interest of this study is how new College of Education principals prepare for their transitions.

**Problem Statement:**

In a grounded theory study, Cockley (2011) established that when new principals are appointment there is a preparatory period prior to official assumption of the role. This is the period where the new principal accepts and puts in place measures and sets goal to assume the role. Alvy and Robbins’ (1998) described the first stage of the transition process as an anticipatory phase where the individuals leave their current role and prepare mentally to begin the new job as principals. Armstrong, (2009) notes that in managing the transition, there is a preparatory stage which occurs prior to assumption of the new office or role. Furthermore, the period requires mental and physical readiness for the role including goal setting. The literature reviewed shows that preparations prior to assumption of the principalship cannot be overemphasised. However, there is a seeming absence of studies on how newly appointed college of education principals prepare for their transition. It may be argued that some studies have been conducted by Aggrey-Fynn (2020; 2020, 2019) on new principals’ transition management in college of education in Ghana. Noteworthy, Aggrey-Fynn’s studies do not address preparations for transition. Thus, a significant input is missing regarding how the new principals of colleges of education in Ghana prepare for transition. Therefore, investigating this will make significant contribution to literature on the concept.

**Research Objective:**

To investigate how newly appointed principals of colleges of education prepare for assumption of office.

**Research Question:**

How do newly appointed principals of colleges of education prepare for assumption of the role?

**Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted the Theory of Transition into the Middle School Principalship proposed by Cockley (2011). The basic Theory of Transition into the Middle School Principalship indicates that transition in the educational principalship is in three stages. It begins with “Positioning self into the new role”, proceeds to “Establishing self in the new role”, and finally “Transforming self from the new principal to the principal” (Cockley, 2011, p. 84). Positioning self in the new role takes place prior to assumption of the position as principal. This is basically the preparatory stage. It considers how new leaders prepare for assumption of duty including goal setting. What happens in the context of the newly appointed College of Education principal. In listening to the key stakeholders in the college, it would help to limit obstacles and with this, preparing for transition becomes much easier.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

Transition is the psychological processes that people go through to deal with change. Transition management is guiding people through change by planning for and addressing the human, process and technological objectives to support the implementation of the vision (Barnes Management Group, 2012). Transition management is a process of implementing, planning and monitoring change in an organization (The Law Dictionary, n.d).

The management aspect of transition is to help persons involved in the transitioning to contain the process so that the best could be derived from it. Transition management is a new steering concept that relies on the processes of variation and selection (Kemp, 2015). Also, transition management is seen as a theoretical and methodological framework that offers operational guidance on how to set up dialectic/engagement processes for change-oriented interventions in complex adaptive societal (sub-) systems (Franzeskaki et al., 2015).
Bridges’ Model (1991) outlines three-phase of the transition process with ‘ending, neutral zone and new beginning’. People enter this initial stage of transition ‘Ending, Losing and Letting Go’ and getting ready for a new situation when they are presented with change. Bridges indicates that at this stage people let go of what made them successful in the past which they consider as their whole world of experience and sense of identity (influence, attachment, meaning, structure, security and directions). This makes the period characterized by resistance and emotional disturbance such as fear, denial, anger, sadness, disorientation, frustration, uncertainty and a sense of loss as people are made to leave their comfort zone.

Cockley (2011) found that on appointment there is a preparatory period prior to official start date. During the preparatory stage the new principal must accept, understand the transition, retreat and reflect on decisions to take and increase personal knowledge by learning about the school and administrative roles as a new leader. Possibly, they have a familiarization visit and introduce or get introduced to staff members and consider decisions that meet students’ academic and social needs (Cockley, 2011). In effect during the preparatory stage, new leaders prepare and set adequate goals and priorities including relationship building. Apparently, this enables the new principal to be in control on assumption of the position.

Alvy and Robbins’ (1998) describe the first stage of the transition process as an anticipatory phase where the individuals move out of their current role and prepare mentally to begin the new job as principals. Gallos, (2008) posited that leadership change creates excitement for the new leader as well as the workers, but the new leader’s anxiety is higher as attempts are made to be a part of a new culture.

The transition should be considered as a process rather than a single event as those involved in the transition require an adjustment period (Petch, 2009). The transitional process is not simple and straightforward. Experiencing a transition may create anxiety and stress due to the unknown (Petch, 2009). Armstrong (2009) explained transition as a complex psychological passage that extends beyond a change in physical locations and duties. She described the transition as a social, emotional, cognitive journey that impacts people personally and professionally. The transition experienced by the new administrators is a public event due to the number of stakeholders involved.

Transition could literally be a process in which a phenomenon changes its place of orientation perhaps to a place of uncertainty. Transition as a concept in education has been seen to be multifaceted and has been described as a critical and complex period, characterized by the influence of social and institutional factors which can result in either a positive or negative experience and in this case for new principals (Galton, Gray & Ruddock, 1999; West & Schwerdt, 2012). In the words of Ganeson and Ehrich (2009), transition is defined as a process of moving from the known to the unknown. Research posits that understanding the transition process is a requirement for almost all senior executives (Bridges & Mitchell, 2000). People working in professional roles require purpose and goals. Without purpose educational leaders are not focused and will be tossed about by special interest groups to achieve their self-interest (Lumby, Crow & Pashiardis, 2008).

The concept and definition of transition point to the fact that as a person transitions there could be situations that would call for adaptation and adjustment. In the case of new principals, their assumption into new office is characterized with new responsibilities, with the need for adjustment and re-aligning of situations. In view of the fact that new principals do not know exactly what situations they would meet calls for preparation and adaptation into the new situation. Preparing for transition is very important in view of assertion that everyone involved in a transition requires training, preparation and different approaches (Bagi, 2016; Bagi, 2015; Dewey’s, 2012) owing to the chaotic, disruptive, and uncertainties associated with transitions (Dewey, 2012) and periods of destabilization particularly in leadership transitions at the highest level (Gilmore, 1988, p. 24 cited in Dewey, 2012). Tebbe (2008) asserts that each institution has its own unique environment related to transition and each requires a different approach for the new leader and should be factored into entry plans.
Dewey (2012) continued to say that training and preparation are necessary as transition periods are usually seen as chaotic, disruptive, and burdened with uncertainties. Thus, though transitions take place in different situations one cannot dispute the fact that they present challenges and for that matter require the needed preparation to effectively manage the situation. It is asserted that knowledge and skills gained through the preparation for transition give the principals a strong start, encourage and support them throughout their tenure (Bagi, 2016). Armstrong, (2009), Bridges (2003) and Cockley’s (2011) note that in managing the transition, there is a preparatory stage which occurs prior to assumption of the new office. The period requires mental and physical readiness for the role including goal setting.

Zimmerman (2007), describing the transition experiences of selected school leaders, posited that the tenure of leaders is often short, necessitating job changes with resulting transitions, when new leaders must learn about the new position and school, establish relationships, gain support and initiate changes to improve schools. It may be argued that the trait theory where the leaders depend on inbuilt capabilities to lead applies in their contest. However, behavioral theorists believe that the most excellent leadership styles could be taught (Allen, 1998).

The National College for School Leadership (2001) noted that effective school leaders provide a clear vision and sense of direction for the school. They prioritize activities, stay focused, build on the strengths and reduce weaknesses based on needs assessment (Day & Sammons, 2014, p.13). In the same vein, the national standards for school leaders also noted that key areas a school leader should consider for shaping the future include creating a shared vision and strategic plan for the school, improving organizational structures and staff capacity building among others (Department for Education and Skills, 2004, pp.13-14).

Schein (2010) stated that culture exists prior to the arrival of the new campus leader and leadership, and culture are inseparable and interactive in the social setting of a public school (p.18). Cockley (2011) recommended that during the preparatory stage the new principals should have familiarization visits, spend the time to observe, learn about the school culture to enable them plan how to address the needs. Relationship building is part of the goals for the preparatory process. Neff and Citrin (2005) also theorized that in transition a leader first learns about the organization, and then makes decisions about the organization for smooth transition. The literature reviewed shows that preparations prior to assumption of the principalship cannot be overemphasised. However, there is a seeming absence of studies on how newly appointed college of education principals prepare for their transition. Therefore, investigating this will make significant contribution to literature on college principals’ transitions.

3 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

The qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it has the ability to employ instrument such as interview to collect information about personal experiences (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, the phenomenological method was used for the study. Phenomenological research design also known as educational qualitative research design (Ponce, 2014; Creswell, 2013, Marshall & Rossman, 2010) is a design of inquiry derived from psychology and philosophy. In this method, lived experiences of respondents about a phenomenon as reported are described by the researcher (Creswell, 2014). Thus, phenomenology gives evidence of multiple realities through verbatim quotes of respondents and presents their different perspectives (Creswell, 2014) as desired in this study. The flexibility of the design allows more freedom in the interview process to explore real meaning of the experiences of others (Jacobs & Furgerson, 2012; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Furthermore, during the process revisions can be made with the emergence of new experiences thereby giving room to construct themes and patterns that participants can review (Miles et al., 2014) as in member checking. The nature of the study made it appropriate to use the phenomenological method because it concerned the phenomenon of the College of Education principals. The study focused on process, meaning and understanding based on holistic and
comprehensive description of the principals’ lived experiences in relation to preparations for transition.

Participants for the Study:

Purposive sampling technique was used to sample ten (10) principals for the study. As regards the criteria for the sample selection, the purposeful sample included College of Education principals who had spent one to four (1 – 4) years in their respective offices. The lower limit of the parameters (1 year) was to ensure that the individual principals had been in office for at least one full year to confirm that they had spent the targeted length of transition experience and qualified to be part of the sample. The upper limit of the parameters (4 years) was set because per the harmonised statutes for colleges of education, the tenure of office for a principal is four (4) years (NCTE, 2015). Again, studied group in phenomenology should consist of 3 to 15 members who should be able to articulate their lived experiences (Creswell, 1998 cited in Padilla-Díaz, 2015). These considerations and criteria for the sample selection provided a sample that was particularly informative (Phillips, 2009), quite current and could “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomena in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p.125).

Research Instrument:

This study employed the standardized open-ended interview protocol. The interview protocol was designed to elicit information on the principal’s preparation prior to assumption of the role as a newly appointed principal. This was in line with the objective and research question to provide valuable and comprehensive information about the study. The designed protocol for data collection was in two (2) sections. The first part was on demographics of the participants. The second part elicited information on how the new principals prepared for the role. There were probes for clarification and more information.

Data Collection Procedure:

Primary data was collected for the study because of its ability to give first-hand and comprehensive information (Creswell, 2014). Regarding the data collection process, permission was first sought from the president of the Principals’ Conference (PrinCoF) to meet with the principals. Through face-to face and telephone conversations, rapport was established with the participants. I personally administered the instrument. The data collection lasted a week. I interviewed each of the 10 respondents respectively noting Creswell’s (2007) guidelines and ethics of data collection. During the interview process, the emergent shifting yielded more data (Choy, 2014; Creswell, 2014) required to determine the nature of the phenomenon.

Data Analysis:

In line with the general rule in qualitative data analysis, all the field notes and audio tapes were transcribed to give a full picture of what transpired. Colaizzi’s (1978 cited in Morrow, Rodriguez & King, 2015) phenomenological analysis method was then used to analyse the data. The transcripts of data gathered on the principals’ transition management practices were first read several times to be familiar with the data. Significant statements were identified after examining the raw qualitative data transcripts. An emergent coding strategy as noted by Waters (2015) was used to allow the analysis method to follow the nature of the data itself as it was. The focus was to understand what the description meant. Formulated meanings were derived from the significant statements. Meanings relied on linguistic and socio-cultural contexts extending beyond just the words to the context observed in the narrative. Specific elements which made any important contribution to the meaning of the concept were translated. The interpretation was based explicitly on the respondents’ meaning and understanding of the phenomenon. The meanings of the participant’s descriptions were then matched and clustered into themes. This paved way for the emergence of themes that were common to all the participants’ transcripts. The results were then integrated into detailed exhaustive description of the new principals’ preparation for transition. The participants were approached a second time to verify and validate the findings. Computer software, Excel for Windows was then used to compute the frequency of codes/significant statements made by respondents. Value was then assigned to each comment based on its frequency. The higher the frequency, the more such issues prevailed (Creswell, 2007). All through the analysis, there was bracketing of the researcher’s position to minimize biases in the analysis (Creswell,
As proposed by Creswell (2003) member-checking and peer-debriefing were also employed all through the data analysis process to ensure the accuracy of the data and research findings. Considering the views of Creswell (2009) anonymity of informants, confidentiality and informed consent were factored into the research. Biases were controlled.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Basically, the results revealed two (2) themes. They comprised coping with the perceptions of the new appointment and setting goals before official assumption of the role.

Coping with the perceptions of the New Appointment:

From the respondents’ perspectives, coping with the perceptions of the new appointment concerned the mental, emotional, social and professional impressions they managed individually owing to the appointment as principals. The dominant codes with their corresponding responses in parentheses were: coping with the honourable social status (10), anticipated professional workload (9), managing psychological anxiety of meeting expectations (8), and dealing with apathy if any (3).

Per all the 10 respondents the principalship being socially honourable meant the position was a reputable one with respect, admiration and a feeling of elevation with more power and experience to gain. The following are quotes from the code:

“The position was perceived as one that was honourable owing to the elevation, respect, dignity and the experience I was heading for.” (Roke)

“I was really honoured. I looked at the elevation and experience that I was going to gain as a principal. That was an honour.” (Kum)

“It was a gallant elevation. It was a period of real joy with inner satisfaction and professional fulfillment. I felt my dreams had been realized.” (Mom)

Psychologically, anxiety was obvious on appointment for nine respondents. Two (2) respondents anticipated fear of opposition and rejection due to a change in personality that was necessary to commensurate the new role. Quotes from the respondents are:

“To lead my colleagues required a change in attitude to commend the position and schedules which was going to face some kind of rejection/opposition.” (Mom)

“I also considered opposition. I feared” (Soko)

There again was the fear of the unknown, fear of not meeting standards and worry about limited knowledge of the college system for eight of the principals. This state of mind created anxiety in them yet they psyched themselves to cope. Here are sample quotes:

“I didn’t know much about the position. That put some kind of fear in me. Was I going to succeed?” (Bec)

“There was so much anxiety regarding how I could meet expectations, but I psyched myself up to take the mantle.” (Roke)

Some principals were apathetic towards the position owing to the enormous responsibilities and lack of enthusiasm. However, they saw the appointment as an opportunity to manage the college for improvement. They were determined to make a difference and to bring on board their expertise. Quotes are as follows:

“Personally, I was not too enthusiastic anyway. The responsibilities were many. But psychologically, I was determined to make a difference since I had an opportunity to improve the college and myself.” (Sle)

Professionally, nine principals knew they had enormous and sophisticated and professional workload to manage concurrently. They managed academics, finances, human resource and discipline but they also saw it experiential and growth in the profession. Here are quotes:

“The responsibilities were enormous, and sophisticated in terms of academic, administrative, social, moral issues and professional knowledge.” (Soko)

“Well I knew that the responsibilities were huge, that you will be the chief administrative officer. I knew all that.” (Sle)

The results from the theme showed that when the principals were appointed to their new roles, they had to cope with psycho-social and professional perceptions of the position to accept the appointment.
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4.4.2 Setting Goals for the New Principal Role

Generally, the opinion of the principals was that one could not assume the position without considering goals to achieve. The new principals set adequate goals and organised themselves for the role. They prepared handing over notes, updated personal knowledge, made familiarization and needs assessment visits, and developed a vision/strategic plan for a successful transition.

All the 10 respondents motioned that they prepared comprehensive handing over notes in their previous offices to enable them hand over successfully. By this the respondents meant that they prepared clear, understandable and complete handing over notes to save them being called to and fro to answer queries in their previous offices. Auditing was done in previous and new offices. They completed all work, had auditing and handed over before assuming the new office. Here is a sample quote:

“When I received the appointment, I prepared very comprehensive handing over notes for my successor so I was never called to answer queries.” (Kum)

All the respondents did personal learning. This was described as updating their knowledge on leadership and management strategies through consultations and wide reading. They studied educational policies and frameworks in Ghana as well as communications and history of their respective colleges to be abreast with the trend of events in the college system. The principals consulted incumbent and past principals on how best the college system was managed. Also, they planned to learn a lot from the universities when they officially assumed duty. Sample quotes are:

“I needed to posses leadership skills and abilities to lead the institution so I read the Statutes of Colleges of Education in Ghana, the Scheme of Service and the Conditions of Service, as well as GES and NAB documents. I also consulted older colleagues for information.” (Mom)

“I studied and consulted to get the necessary knowledge and support to be effective in the position.” (Buri)

All the respondents noted that in order to make an impact strategic planning was imperative in the transition process. Included in the strategic plan were staff capacity building, relationships building, adequate provision of logistics, and effective data management.

The respondents planned to build relationship to promote rapport, bridge factions among staff and curb tribalism. Sample quotes are:

“I drew an action plan to bring down tribal links and work as a team.” (Ace)

“Good relationship makes you bridge gaps, earn respect and. I got myself ready for it.” (Pon)

All the respondents noted staff capacity building as part of the vision. This was to ensure that staff updated and upgraded themselves to meet College of Education status through further studies relevant to the teaching areas, workshops, conferences, and seminars. The objective was to improve teaching and learning. Sample quotes are:

“I had the vision to encouraging staff to upgrade themselves in order to have quality staff to train our students.” (Buri)

“Staff upgrading was one focus because we needed to meet the tertiary status.” (Roke)

Recognizing that Ghana needs disciplined teachers with passion for professionalism, discipline and empowerment were not marginalized in the vision and strategic plan. This was explained as emphasizing obedience and order through commitment to hardwork, dedication and availability of students’ handbook and code of ethics to get students and staff. Plans were in place to give students all the resources to get them empowered. Here are quotes:

“I planned to reinforce discipline among students and staff, establish rapport and empower the Students’ Representative Council and involve them in college development plans and extracurricular activities.” (Soko)

“The agenda was to emphasize the discipline through the use of the students’ handbook.” (Buri)

Effective data management was planned for in order to improve the filing system. That was described as data organization and adequacy in storage and retrieval. Eight respondents acknowledged this. The agenda was to ensure data accuracy and security. Sample quotes are:
“I planned to ensure data security and accuracy and easy retrieval.” (Soko)

“I planned to have an adequate database and data security for the college.” (Buri)

All 10 respondents planned for adequate logistics to promote teaching and learning. They planned to continue stalled projects, renovate, repair and manage them well. Those actions were meant to make their respective colleges attractive. Here are sample quotes:

“I planned to provide the needed logistics for teaching and learning”. (Ace)

“I planned to ensure that furniture adequate computer facilities and transport were available.” (Mom)

“My agenda was to get all logistics for effective job execution.” (Pon)

Six (6) respondents made familiarization visits to their respective colleges. This was expressed as visits made to the new college to acquaint themselves to the environment and do needs assessment through observations and discussions with the outgoing principals. This was to structure strategic plans to suit the system. Quotes are:

“I had a strategic plan. Now I had to relate those things to the issues on the ground. So, I went to the school for familiarization and to gather information. Then I went through my strategic plan, repackaged it and made it relevant to the things which I think were relevant.” (Pon)

“As part of the preparation too, before I took over, I came around to try to do my own needs assessment. I went round and familiarized myself with the environment and everything. So, I had a fair idea of where to start immediately I took over.” (Buri)

Per the findings, prior to official assumption of the new role, the newly appointed principals had to cope with the perceptions/expectations of the principalship which were basically psycho-social and professional impacts of the position to inform acceptance of the appointment. The next step was to set goals for the role. Comprehensive handing over notes, capacity building and strategic planning strongly dominated the goals in preparations for assumption of duty. Thus, the importance of coping with the perceptions/expectations of the principalship and setting goals for the new role could not be overemphasized in preparing for the college principals’ role.

5 | Discussion

There seems to be limited literature specifically on the period of coping with the perceptions of the new appointment which is the first phase of the principals’ transition management process as identified in this study. However, analyzing the findings, the preparation aspect is well situated in Alvy and Robbins’ (1998) description of anticipatory phase of transition where the individuals prepare mentally to begin the new job as principals. This part of the college principal’s transition could also be partially situated in the ending phase of Bridges’ (2003) Transition Model which is characterized by resistance and emotional disturbance such as fear, denial, anger, sadness, disorientation, frustration, uncertainty and a sense of loss outside one’s comfort zone. Similarly, Armstrong’s (2009) anticipatory and Cockley’s (2011) transition phase of positioning oneself into the new role where mental and physical preparations are necessary for role assumption also support this part of coping with the perceptions/expectations of the appointment in this study though unique.

Also, literature indicates that transition is a process of moving from the known to the unknown (Ganeson & Ehrich, 2009). It involves change, adaptation, adjustment and alteration (Oxford English Dictionary, 2010). It presents psychological processes to deal with the change (Barnes Management Group, 2012). Transition in education is described as a multifaceted, critical and complex period influenced by social and institutional factors which can result in a positive or negative experience (Galton et al., 1999; West & Schwerdt, 2012). These assertions obviously indicate that in transition, people have psychological, social and professional impacts to manage as identified by the study in terms of coping with the perceptions and expectations of the appointment as principal.

The study established that in preparing for the principalship, goal setting was also paramount. This af-
firms Cockley’s (2011) findings that new principals prepare by setting goals to achieve in transition as noted in this study. Lumby, Crow and Pashiardis (2008) also, emphasise that people working in professional roles require purpose and goals to stay focused.

Preparing for transition is very important in view of assertion that everyone involved in a transition requires training, preparation and different approaches (Bagi, 2016; Dewey’s, 2012) owing to the uncertainties, disruptions and chaos associated with transitions (Dewey, 2012) destabilization mainly in leadership transitions at the highest level (Gilmore, 1988, p. 24 cited in Dewey, 2012). It is asserted that knowledge and skills gained through the preparation for transition give the principals a strong start, encourage and support them throughout their tenure (Aggrey-Fynn, 2019; Bagi, 2016). This most probably explains the strong quest for knowledge update (capacity building) by the new principals at the preparatory stage. Clearly, capacity building was necessary to support their transition since possessing adequate knowledge about a new role promotes effective leadership.

The National College for School Leadership (2001) noted that effective school leaders provide a clear vision and sense of direction for the school. They prioritize activities, stay focused, build on the strengths and reduce weaknesses based on needs assessment (Day & Sammons, 2014, p.13). In the same vein, the national standards for school leaders also noted that key areas a school leader should consider for shaping the future include creating a shared vision and strategic plan for the school, improving organizational structures and staff capacity building among others (Department for Education and Skills, 2004, pp.13-14) as noted in this study. These statements give a strong backing for the vision bearing and strategic planning identified as part of preparation strategy for the principals’ transition.

Schein (2010) stated that culture exists prior to the arrival of the new campus leader, and leadership and culture are inseparable and interactive in the social setting of a public school (p.18). Aggrey-Fynn (2020), Cockley (2011) and Neff and Citrin (2005) found that in transition a leader first learns about the organization, then makes decisions about the organization for smooth transition. This certainly explains why during the preparatory stage the new principals made familiarization visits, observed and learned about the school culture to enable them plan how to address the needs. This was a boaster for a strategic plan as it aided actions that influenced the organization’s employees, customers, culture, and vision for the future. Hence, new principals need to prepare adequately for assumption of duty.

6 | CONCLUSION

The results indicated that newly appointed college principals prepare themselves prior to assumption of the new role. Specifically, they coped with the perceptions/expections of the appointment as a first stage and then set goals for their tenure of office. In coping with the perceptions of the appointment they managed the psychological, social and professional impacts of the new appointment. This was a critical point in the principals’ transition as it concerned decisions to position the self in the role, think through critically considering the pros and cons in order to accept or reject the appointment. Obviously, the new principals psyched themselves to accept the position and to endeavor to meet expectations. Furthermore, the principals set goal to support their transition. These included preparation of comprehensive handing over notes, knowledge update/capacity building, vision bearing/strategic planning and familiarization and needs assessment visits which were paramount for the start of the role. Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that preparation prior to assumption of duty is necessary as it helps to get oneself ready for the role and for that matter the transition. Therefore, newly appointed principals should manage the perceived psycho-social and professional demands and set realistic goals for the new role.

7 | LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limiting factor of this study was that the purposive sampling technique applied in the study is an inherently biased method and the sample may possess certain characteristics which differ from the
characteristics of the population. Therefore, interpretation of results cannot be applied beyond the sampled population. To avoid ambiguity, the scope of the study was limited to only principals of public colleges of education. This limits the generalization of the study results to be true for all principals of Colleges of Education and other educational institutions. Also, with a purely qualitative nature of the approach, any vital information concealed by participants was considered ethically personal and not included in the findings. In terms of instrumentation for the study, important information concealed and researcher biases during the interview were controlled through rapport and assurance of confidentiality and anonymity as research ethics demands. The existence of researcher bias in data collection due to the researchers’ background was controlled through peer debriefing, self-reflection, memo writing and member checking (Creswell, 2014; Phillips, 2009).

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