

When the Church Ordains the Classroom: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Language and Power in Anglican School Leadership Rites in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the critical role of how the Anglican Church in Kenya exercises power over educational institutions that it sponsors. It is a detailed and in-depth study of the significance of ritual and how this is intertwined with language. Language, it must be noted is the vehicle used to carry ideology. In this study, the researcher has considered a number of aspects in an Induction Service presided over by the Diocesan Bishop. They include: vows, declarations and blessings; participants subject positions that are constructed through discourse to make them subordinates; the legitimization of power through rituals and the significance of historical continuities of church-state relations in Kenya's education system. This study employs the Foucauldian Discourse theory. It focuses on power relationships in society as expressed through language and practices or rituals.

Keywords: Ritual, Legitimization, Power, Allegiance, Governmentality.

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Introduction

Studies on Power

Foucault (1982) notes that the practice of power should not be regarded with simplicity and be seen to be a relationship between partners, individual or collective: rather, it must be seen as a practice through which a number of acts have an influence on subsequent ones and that power and authority only exist when they are practiced.

Importance of Ritual

Rituals hold a significance by fostering a sense of meaning, community and stability while promoting emotional and spiritual wellbeing through shared tradition, structured routines and symbolic actions that connect individuals to their culture, belief and history. They also provide a framework for important life events and transitions such as graduations, inaugurations or funerals. Rituals are also a source of emotional wellbeing. By choosing to have an

induction service in which prayers feature prominently, any attending anxieties and stresses are tempered. In religious settings such as those presided over by the clergy, they offer a chance for spiritual growth because the divine word is shared, there is meditation and the making of prayers. Other scholars also aver that rituals offer a feeling of groundedness. This is a reassuring factor especially in the context of the induction service as the principal gets a feeling of getting the much-needed moral support needed in a new school.

Rituals also foster a communal sense. All the participants in a ritual such as a school induction setting have a feeling of a common bond; a common objective in which all partake of. Values of loyalty, community, affection, giving and such others are also reinforced and transmitted. As such, an induction service such as the one studied in this paper has a tendency to 'bind' all into one. And for this reason, participants would be found to say 'Amen,' in unison. Such

proclamations are also binding in law. Rituals help groups of people connect to one another, Rituals also define and mark time. An induction ritual indicates the time when the leadership of the principal and the school chaplain start. They are landmarks that will always be emulated by subsequent office holders for validation of their power and authority; they are also a means by which school sponsors such as the church remind stakeholders of their interests in the school. They also mark a change of guard.

It must also be remembered that for rituals to become legitimate, certain felicity conditions have to be met. In the context of the school induction setting, the following have to be in place: it must be done within the school compound; it must be presided over by the diocesan bishop; the resident clergy and other clergy have to be in attendance; a key attendee in such a function is the Diocesan Education secretary; all the stakeholders in the school setting must be in attendance; it must have prayers, readings of the holy scriptures, have song, prayers, recitations or chants; the setting must have the necessary apparatus, equipment and adornments such as colored apparel, vestments, etc. at such a Christian ceremony, offertory is part of the routine. The holy communion may also be shared. For Christians, rituals carry profound spiritual significance; they are not just symbolic acts; they are a means of grace through which believers experience God's grace, power, presence and love.

Theoretical significance

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a specialized approach that is used to study and analyze emerging critical semiotics, critical linguistics, talk and text; it is a socio-politically deliberate and differentiated manner to be used to analyze and investigate practices used in communication and discourse (Van Dijk, 1995).

Fairclough (1995) and Wodak (1997) additionally state that a crucial analysis goes beyond hermeneutics. To them, CDA is targeted towards demystifying discourses ideologically shaped by relations of power; it pays focus to the obscure relationship between discourse and the structures in society by ways of candid interpretations and explanations. CDA relies on methodical systematic steps, that is, by effecting distance from the data and applying them to the context.

CDA might also consider all dimensions and of discourse- those of style, speech acts, style pragmatic organization and grammar including interactive ones among several others. CDA is an intervention meant at grounding critical discourse in social theory and articulate the relationship that exists between discourses and the social practices in

which they are embedded. According to Van Dijk (1995), in the process of studying the role played by discourse in a society, CDA pays particular attention to relationships within the group with regards to the balance of power, inequality and dominance and how they are enacted, displayed or opposed by members of a social group by means of talk and text. CDA seeks to give explanations as to the reason why texts appear as they do, and why they change in particular ways; and in adopting the Hallidayan approach, seek for responses to these queries in the political, economic and social spheres. Discourse embodies a triangular communicative event that includes body language, written texts, oral interactions and semiotic signifiers that may include pictures.

The Foucauldian Discourse theory developed by Michel Foucault centers on the intricate relationship between power and knowledge and that both are inseparable and mutually constitutive. Foucault's attention is focused towards schools, prisons, asylums and places where he argues power dynamics can be clearly demonstrated. And that this power is exacted over subjects in a rigid structuring of activities. In this manner, the individual is conditioned to respond to the particular mode of authority. Accordingly, Foucault (2002) for instance sees the Catholic confessional as a means of control. The Anglican church ritual of Induction of school principal and Chaplain, in similar manner, as elaborated in this study, is a means of total control over the school.

Foucault explores the manner in which power is practiced in social institutions and the manner in which discourse is used to shape the way in which individuals understand the world around them. This theory advances that power is a dynamic a capillary force that is to be found throughout society and that it operates at all levels and in virtually all relationships. Further, that power produces knowledge and shapes individual behavior and social structures. To this end, Foucault identifies three kinds of power: sovereign power derived from the authority to a king or similar figure. In this context, the diocesan bishop is a sovereign. He exercises absolute power over the congregation in the diocese. He has absolute control and determines the fate of those under him. In most cases, because of the spiritual authority bestowed upon the bishop, his actions and words are usually regarded as binding and are rarely appealed. Disciplinary power views its subjects as being fit for exploitation for economic reasons. This is done by hierarchical surveillance among others. In this, the subject feels that he or she is being watched. This aspect is significant because in the induction service, a school chaplain is also inducted- is also given "spiritual power and control" over the school and all its stakeholders.

Demonstration of Power

Mills (2003) also emphasizes that it is during linguistic interaction that power can be appropriated. She notes that during interaction, speakers are simultaneously setting out for themselves vantage positions with regard to the relations of power within their communities of practice and society in general.

Thornborrow (2002) notes that if a speaker has more turns than others, or is capable of stopping other people talking, and the longer and more chances they have to take the floor, then the particular participant has more power to create influence in the discourse.

The school exercises power by taking charge of all spiritual and mentorship programs for conformity. In fact, the chaplain is meant to kneel in front of the bishop who proclaims

Bishop

The Reverend (Name....) Receive this Bible as a symbol of spiritual authority over this institution. May this scripture always inform the values and practices in this school.

Congregation

Amen, lead and guide the whole community of this institution in the faith of one true and living God.

By this utterance, the entire school community and its stakeholders are seen to submit to the church; submission in his case could be seen to lead to unquestioning loyalty. This must be seen not only in the context of the spiritual realm but also in the physical aspects of the congregants and school community.

Bishop

The Reverend (Name....) Receive this hymnal to help you with the community of this institution to sing praises to the Lord.

Congregation

Amen, lead and guide the whole community of this institution in the faith of one true and living God.

Bishop

The Reverend (Name...) Receive this prayer book to help you bring orderly worship in this institution.

Congregation

Amen, lead and guide the whole community of this institution in the faith of one true and living God.

It must be understood that that the ritual handing over of these documents is not only symbolic of the faith but also

of the control and submission of all to the church hierarchy from the least level to the highest.

Biopower, as Foucault sees it, is a means of control over individuals by scientific knowledge, good health and sexuality.

During the induction of the school principal, the following are observed: the principal kneels in front of the bishop. This must be understood as a subordinate to a superordinate, respectively. It is at this point that a prayer of blessing is followed closely by transfer and delegation of power.

Bishop

...Bless him and his family with good health...May his stay in this school be truly joyful and his work thorough... God of knowledge and wisdom, bless the work of this school, that in this institution the right knowledge, skill and values may be taught and truth be upheld under the leadership of this principal.

This is followed closely by the following speech act, by which power is delivered.

Bishop

Mr. (Name...) receive this Anglican Education policy document; to be a symbol of your spiritual authority over this motion. May this document always inform the values and practices in this school and remind you of the spirit of the founders of this school.

The "...spirit of the founders of this school." can only refer to submission and being in conformity with the interests of the Anglican church, the founders. It goes on to mean that nothing that deviates from the interests of the Anglican church will be accepted. And the congregation quickly responds.

Congregation

Amen, lead us and guide us in the way of truth.

This is a multiplier effect: the principal has been given the power; he now assumes power over others. Because the principal is usually a nominee of the sponsor, the church, it can only mean that all other stakeholders in the school setting now become subordinate to the principal by design.

And to further cement the interests of the church, as sponsor in the school, the bishop proclaims.

Bishop

Mr (Name...) receive this Anglican order of induction service; to remind you of the commitment we both have in this institution....

Congregation

Amen

The last act in the induction service is seen where the bishop, through the sponsor, the local church priest, presents to the school community the principal as if he, the principal, were a gift. The following speech act is observed:

Sponsor: Dear friends, because we are aware of your leadership needs and we are confident of Mr. (Name...) qualifications for the office of the principal; we now commend him to you as your principal.

This speech act is followed by a round of applause from the congregation after which, in order, the following groups in the school system are expected to show their support: the teaching and nonteaching staff; the students council; the parents association and the Board of management.

The teaching and nonteaching staff utter the following words in unison.

“Our new Principal Mr, (Name...) welcome to ... Secondary School to be our leader.... This must be seen in the context of total submission to the office bearer. The three other groups also make a proclamation- one after the other- to show willingness to assist and give support.

It is significant to note that all four groups mentioned above each take turns to make the proclamation to the principal in the presence of the bishop and other clergy. This is done in a formal setting that is highly ritualistic.

Conclusion

One factor that stands out at an induction service is that in this context, the principal has a duty to defend, uphold and advance Anglican church ethos and values. On this, the principal is closely supported and strongly relies on the Chaplain for guidance. It is also significant that a superordinate delegates power to a subordinate; this subordinate significantly becomes a superordinate in the school system and all other office bearers are by design his/ her subordinates. The principal and the chaplain exercise

dominion within the school set up. It is also significant that the church as sponsor has a strong footprint in the education system since it has to be consulted on who to work with as Principal. This in turn means that the principal has to keep close contact with the church as sponsor; has to continually keep abreast of the church as sponsor's interests; has a duty to promote guided spirituality despite this not being his/ her employer's assignment or in the job description. Ultimately, it is about loyalty. Serve the sponsor's interests or lose the position. The induction service for Anglican Church sponsored schools is a significant event without which the school principal does not have a mandate. It is from this that the principal draws legitimacy to act.

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