

**UNCOVERING POWER DYNAMICS AND IDEOLOGIES IN HIGH SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS' DISCOURSE IN IMENTI-NORTH
SUB-COUNTY KENYA**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Fulfilment of the Requirement for
the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics of Tharaka
University**

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration:

This thesis is my own work and it has not been presented for the award of a degree in this or any other university.

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Recommendation:

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.


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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband Dr. Samuel Ng'entu for your unwavering support and to our lovely children Edmund Muthomi, Blessings Nkirote and Christian Mureri for their immense love and patience. May this work inspire you to soar great heights of academic pursuit.

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To my parents, Justus Birithia and Regina Birithia no words can exactly express my gratitude to you. Thank you for sowing the seed of academic life on me early and tenaciously acknowledging my academic success at every level. To you my brothers and sisters, thank you for always being there for me in all ways especially when the journey got so tough on me.

All those who have wished me well, enquired about my progress, or got involved in one way or other I would have mentioned you all by name for supporting me in small and big ways but for space I say, God bless you.

ABSTRACT

Language is a tool that can be used for communication purposes but it is also a means through which inequality in the distribution of power is created and perpetuated and through which this inequality can be remedied. High school principals play a central role in shaping the behavioural climate of their institutions through their speech whereby they communicate values, norms, and expectations. However, Principals do not merely communicate information; they structure interactions, assert power and regulate behaviour through language. This study sought to uncover the high school principals' power dynamics and ideological inclinations through the lens of critical discourse analysis complemented with speech act and politeness theory. The approach allowed an in-depth examination of the specific linguistic tools that are employed in high principals' speeches and also unearth the ideological underpinnings present in their discourse. Specifically, the study was guided by these objectives: to establish the linguistic features used in high school principals' of Imenti North discourse that reflect institutional power relations, to explore how language use in high school principals' of Imenti North discourse reveal underlying ideologies and to examine how discourse of high school principals of Imenti North potentially shapes students' actions and responses. The study subscribed to descriptive research design which entailed detailed descriptions and analysis of the content of high school principals' speech to unearth the power dynamics therein. Stratified random sampling coupled with purposive sampling were employed to arrive at 12 schools of Imenti North-Sub County in Meru where 20 orally delivered speeches by the principals were collected using an audio recorder. The data was then transcribed, coded and thereafter 76 texts were extracted which were discussed in line with the study's objectives then presented thematically. This study is significant for it gives insights on language use in high school principals' speeches and contributes to the growing field of educational discourse analysis. The study findings revealed that the discourse of high school principals is rich with linguistic features that assert and reproduce power. Through imperatives, modality, rhetorical tropes, surveillance metaphors, transitivity and authoritative speech acts, principals maintain institutional dominance. The study also revealed that the high school principals' discourse shape students by embedding meritocratic, neoliberalism, religious and disciplinary Ideologies in their everyday speech. Through authoritative commands, moralizing narratives, speech acts of reward and punishment and strategic use of politeness and face threatening strategies, principals construct a disciplined, achievement-oriented student identity. The study sheds light on understanding the ideological work of language in educational leadership thus contributing to the growing field of educational discourse.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

C.D.A	Critical Discourse Analysis
C.R.E	Christian Religious Education
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
F.T.A	Face Threatening Act
P.P.S	Positive Politeness Strategy
T	Text
US	United States

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a means of constructing social realities, transmitting ideologies, and exercising power (Fairclough, 2015). Through spoken and written discourse, institutions convey values, norms, and expectations that shape individual and collective behavior. In educational settings, language plays a particularly critical role in influencing students' attitudes, discipline, and self-perception (Gee, 2014). Schools thus serve as sites where linguistic practices become instruments for both learning and socialization.

Language does more than transmit information; it organizes social reality and carries ideology. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) argue that discourse "organizes social existence" by representing positions and interests. Through recurrent use, language patterns become conventions that normalize certain beliefs and power relations. For instance, dominant groups use rhetorical strategies to shape others' beliefs (Leah, 1987) and justify power (Van Dijk, 1998). Santoso (2002) further notes that conversations often reflect power imbalances: dominant speakers impose fixed linguistic patterns that reinforce professional roles. In critical discourse studies, such ideology-laden language is seen as producing consent or resistance within society.

Institutions including schools are key sites where language and ideology intersect. Gee (2001) emphasizes that language both shapes and is shaped by social context. Van Dijk (1998) observes that educational systems are "fundamentally ideological" because schools not only teach knowledge but also diffuse prevailing values. Cosin (1972) similarly argue that schools play a central role in producing and transmitting societal ideologies. In practice, everyday school practices are underpinned by common discourse conventions. For example, Fairclough (1989) notes that institutions routinely use language to establish "correct" ways of doing things, making certain behaviors seem natural. Even routine school speeches (such as assemblies and orientations) serve functions like motivation, advice, or discipline, but none of these communications is free from underlying assumptions or power dynamics.

Within this educational context, leadership relies heavily on language. High school principals occupy influential roles as the heads of schools, responsible for communicating vision and driving change. Knapp et al. (2006) contend that principals must articulate the school's goals and lead initiatives to achieve them. Effective communication is therefore a critical leadership skill; Glover (2011) asserts that principals need to inspire others by clearly conveying direction and purpose. Similarly, Khunou (2006) found that open dialogue between principals and teachers – grounded in skilled speech – is a strategic factor in school success. In short, successful school administrators (like reformers generally) are “proficient communicators”, using words to uplift, mentor, and guide the school community.

Leaders in general often harness language strategically to influence followers. For example, political speeches reveal how rhetoric can motivate or persuade a populace: Sharndama (2015) shows that President Buhari's inaugural address used careful framing to instill hope in citizens, and Michira (2014) concludes that language is a “strong weapon” in politics, relying on metaphors and symbols to wield power. Burns (1978) describes leadership as mobilizing resources and motivations in others through goals and beliefs, and Khany and Hamzelou (2014) demonstrate how even dictators have used persuasive language to legitimize their rule. In other words, across contexts leaders gather support and shape behavior through their speech. School principals, as leaders of educational institutions, operate in much the same way.

Principals' speeches are thus a focal point for language in educational leadership. These formal addresses often carry hidden influences. Maree (2007) argues that a principal's words can generate and sustain an agenda by embedding values and biases in daily routines. In schools, addresses at meetings or assemblies serve specific purposes – from welcoming newcomers to correcting behavior or reinforcing expectations – and through repetition they codify norms. Even when meant to be helpful, such speeches can maintain power hierarchies: as Fairclough (1989) notes, institutional language patterns become “correct” by repetition, which can preserve authority and inequality. In short, no school discourse is truly neutral, and principals' words function as tools of influence and ideology.

Language ideology studies in Kenya reveal the deep intersections between language use, identity, and power. Kiramba (2018) shows that the preference for English in classrooms and administrative communication reflects epistemic exclusion of indigenous knowledge systems. Similarly, Githinji (2019) argues that language choices in Kenyan educational leadership discourses index modernity, authority, and intellectual legitimacy. For school principals in Meru and other regions, this means that the very choice of linguistic code, English versus Kiswahili or local languages signals ideological alignment with national and global norms of professionalism.

Further, Kenyan studies on leadership discourse highlight the moralizing tone that pervades principals' speeches. Lopez and Rugano (2018), in a qualitative study of Kenyan principals' narratives, found that leaders frequently frame their authority in moral and religious terms, positioning themselves as custodians of societal values. This moral discourse intersects with bureaucratic and developmental ideologies, creating a hybrid form of authority that blends cultural legitimacy with institutional power.

The Meru region, and specifically Imenti North Sub- County, reflects broader national trends while possessing unique socio-cultural dynamics. Local studies like Kilaku, 2019; Mwirigi, 2021) describe educational leadership in Meru as shaped by community expectations of moral uprightness, church influence, and competition for school performance. Principals often adopt a paternalistic discourse emphasizing discipline, collective responsibility, and moral rectitude an ideological orientation that resonates with traditional authority structures. However, such discourse also aligns with state expectations of efficiency and accountability, suggesting that principals in Imenti North operate within intersecting ideological frameworks.

Despite this context, there is limited studies applying critical discourse analysis to principals' speech in the region. Most local studies focus on administrative efficiency, resource management, or teacher motivation like Thuranira, 2018), leaving unexplored how principals' actual language use constructs and communicates ideological positions. The present study therefore fills a critical gap by foregrounding the ideological dimensions of principals' discourse as both a reflection and reinforcement of social power in Imenti North. This study addressed that gap by

analyzing high school principals' speeches using Fairclough's CDA model, complemented by Politeness and Speech Act Theories, to uncover how language is used to reinforce discipline, foster national and institutional pride, construct gender roles, and promote moral, academic, and personal development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

High school principals hold a position of influence within the school community. Their communication and discourse can perform a fundamental role in shaping the student's behaviour and may have far-reaching implications on the students. Though much focus has been given to leadership styles, policy enactment and school performance, limited studies critically examine the discourse of high school principals as a site where power relations and ideological positions are constructed and negotiated. This study therefore, fills this gap by using critical discourse analysis to examine Imenti North high school principals' discourse, paying special attention to how they define their positions, exercise power, and ideologically position themselves in educational discourse. This helps to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the social context of educational institutions and ideally, enhance the various discourse analysis theories.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how language use during school assembly operates as a discursive resource through which high school principals of Imenti North exercise power by constructing subjectivities, shaping identities, and regulating the thought processes of students.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This research was guided by the following research objectives;

- i. To establish the linguistic features used in high school principals' of Imenti North discourse that reflect institutional power relations.
- ii. To explore how language use in high school principals' of Imenti North discourse reveals underlying ideological positions.

- iii. To examine how Imenti North high school principals' discourse potentially shapes students' actions and responses.

1.5 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions;

- i. Which linguistic features in Imenti North high school principals' discourse reflect institutional power relations?
- ii. How does language use in Imenti North high school principals discourse reveal underlying ideological positions?
- iii. How does Imenti North high school principals discourse potentially shape students' actions and responses?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the growing field of educational discourse analysis by offering a critical lens on how leadership is constructed through language. It is especially significant in its contribution to understanding the ideological work of language in educational leadership. This information is useful to any speaker who wishes to tailor their language in order to achieve specific communicative outcomes. Also, the research reveals details about how language reflects social norms and values in educational settings.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This research limited itself in Imenti North Sub-County in Meru County Kenya. It falls under the broad area of discourse analysis. There were many schools including primary and secondary schools in Imenti North sub-county but the data were collected only from secondary schools for manageability of data. During a school assembly many speeches are given by different administrators and teachers but for the purpose of this study only the school principal's speeches were analysed since they are the ones who carry the heaviest responsibility for a smooth running of the school programmes. This study, however, addressed the orally delivered speeches which had not been written prior to their time of delivery. Critical discourse analysis approach was the overriding guide for this study and was complimented by speech acts theory and politeness theory to fulfil the study objectives.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

This study made three assumptions;

First, that high school principals of Imenti North deliver speeches to the school community, second that they use language in a unique way in the delivery of their speeches and third, that the language used by high school principals of Imenti North in their speeches scaffold power and ideological inclinations.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Discourse	Texts/ utterances/speeches made by high school principals.
Discursive strategies	Deliberate or patterned use of language to achieve communicative goals, assert positions or manage relationships.
Face	The public self-image of a person and refers to that emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize.
Ideology	A set of belief systems including a person's values, goals, anticipation
Influence	The capacity to have an influence on the behavior of the student.
Negative politeness strategies	These are hearer-centred methods that prioritize avoiding imposing oneself on the hearer.
Positive politeness strategies	These techniques are employed to help the hearer feel better about themselves.
Speech acts	An utterance that serves a function in communication, going beyond simply conveying information.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section highlights relevant literature that aims to provide some understanding of this study. The literature is organised as follows; the first part will contain review of studies done on speech acts which is followed by review of literature on critical discourse analysis, linguistic features, Speech Acts and then studies on politeness strategies. In the second part theoretical framework on which this study will be anchored is discussed. Speech Acts and Politeness theory and Critical Discourse analysis will be explicated in detail.

2.1 Linguistic Features of Power in Institutional Discourse

Language is seldom a neutral medium; it often serves as a mechanism for exercising power. Fairclough (1995) observes that language can be used to impose obligation and authority. In educational settings, a principal's linguistic choices are especially influential in maintaining authority, setting agendas, and shaping school culture. Bourdieu (1992) argues that language functions as symbolic power, legitimizing particular social structures and hierarchies. Likewise, Gunter (2016) notes that language in schools can be wielded for oppression or liberation: principals who use collaborative and inclusive discourse tend to foster a more democratic and participatory school culture.

One way power manifest in language is through modality. Fairclough (1995) notes that modal verbs like “must,” “should,” and “have to” convey obligation and necessity, thereby reflecting the speaker's authority. Modal verbs are common in institutional discourse, signaling asymmetries between speakers and audiences. For example, in staff meetings or parent conferences, terms such as “must” and “should,” the choice of personal pronouns (e.g. “we” vs. “I”), and the use of imperatives all reinforce hierarchical relationships (Fairclough, 1995). Paul (2004) describes how “*high-modality*” statements convey authority and naturalize ideologically loaded assumptions. Similarly, Leeuwen (2008) explains that modality “*legitimizes what is said to have to happen as inevitable or natural, obscuring ideological choice.*” Mayes and Kooyman (2001) found that when principals use a directive tone in assemblies,

disciplinary meetings, or policy rollouts, they do more than communicate information they enact and legitimize institutional control. In other words, speech acts with a directive or high-modality character not only convey policies but also reinforce the authority of the institution.

Scholars have long emphasized the link between discourse and power. Kedar (1987) highlights that language use plays a critical role in acquiring and exercising power. For instance, imperatives like “Listen,” “Stop,” or “Do this” act as linguistic markers of control (Kedar, 1987). Holmes and Stubbe (2003) similarly note that in workplace discourse, imperatives are often softened among peers but remain direct in hierarchical relationships. From a critical perspective, Fairclough and Wodak (2003) argue that the specific words speakers choose reflect their attitudes and carry ideological connotations. Fairclough (2001) suggests that analyzing texts at various levels such as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, speech act types, and overall interactional structure can reveal the power relations and ideologies at play. This means that a close textual analysis of a principal’s speech can shed light on underlying power dynamics and belief systems. In related work, Coulthard and Sinclair (1975) show that classroom discourse is organized into pedagogic exchanges reflecting the teacher–student hierarchy. Chilton (2004) observes a similar phenomenon in politics: speech acts in political discourse are performative acts of power, even when they appear neutral. Together, these studies suggest that institutional discourse often encodes power through its structure and style. Chapter four of this study discusses principals’ use of language to establish norms that students internalize and conform to the school setting.

Language style and rhetoric also contribute to power dynamics. Van Dijk (1995) uses the term “*semantic rhetoric*” to describe the use of stylistic devices (similes, metaphors, anaphora, repetition, etc.) that highlight information about social groups. For example, repeated references to “women’s roles and traits” in certain media can emphasize female subordination and reinforce patriarchal ideology, while repeated portrayals of “men’s strength and power” underscore male superiority (Van Dijk, 1995). Such repetitive stylistic patterns make particular ideologies salient. In a broader sense, Coulthard and Sinclair (1975), along with Edmondson (1981) and Brown and Yule (1983), view a text as an interaction among a producer, the text

itself, and a receiver, all situated in context. Van Dijk (1977) adds that the unity of a text is determined by social factors. These perspectives remind us that to understand a principal's speech, we must consider not just its words but also how it functions within its social context and what ideological messages it conveys.

Owiti's (2005) study of television advertisements is instructive for understanding how language and ideology intertwine. The study found that ads use distinctive verbal and nonverbal styles like figurative language, repetition, claims, gestures and facial expressions for emphasis and persuasion. The elements capture viewers' attention and shape their responses, especially among adolescent girls. Owiti's findings illustrate that media discourse often reinforces dominant gender ideologies. This reinforces Van Dijk's (1995) and Fairclough's (2001) point that ideologies are communicated both verbally and nonverbally. Thus, Owiti's research illustrates that even unconscious language patterns can convey hidden assumptions, a lesson applicable to educational setting.

Understanding longer texts such as speeches requires studying cohesion. Halliday (1976) and Hasan (2013) identify several cohesive ties that link sentences: references, substitution, ellipsis, conjunctions, and lexical cohesion. Reference ties (pronouns referring back to earlier nouns) knit together different parts of discourse. Substitution (using synonyms or synonyms-like words) and ellipsis preserve coherence by avoiding unnecessary repetition. Conjunction ties (such as "and," "because," "however") explicitly link ideas (temporal, causal, adversative, additive). Lexical cohesion arises when words recur (repetition) or co-occur by theme. These cohesive devices help students follow a principal's speech by signaling how ideas relate.

Other scholars have enumerated cohesion techniques in English. Cook (1989) lists seven cohesion devices such as verb forms, conjunctions/parallelism, ellipsis, lexical repetition, collocation, reference expressions, and substitution. Beaugrande (1981) and Dressler (1983) similarly describe coherence as how text elements relate in sequence and identify devices that enhance cohesion (ellipsis, pro-forms, paraphrase, parallelism, and reiteration). Phillips and Hardy (2002) propose categories like ellipsis, synonyms, opposites, repetition, and connectives as coherence devices. Hoey (1991) extends this view, arguing that most cohesive links apart from conjunctions

involve some form of repetition. He classifies repetition into types like synonymy, paraphrase, reference, substitution, and varying degrees of lexical repetition. In essence, principles of cohesion explain how a principal's speech stays unified: through repeated ideas, pronouns referring back, and connectives that guide the listener.

Questions and requests are key in educational discourse because they shape interaction. Athanasiadou (1991) categorizes questions by function into information-seeking questions, rhetorical questions, examination questions, and indirect requests. This classification highlights that questions can serve different purposes: some aim to test knowledge or clarify information, while others (indirect questions) may politely prompt the listener to act. In practice, a teacher's question might quiz students' understanding or, phrased differently, encourage them to do something without sounding like a command.

Thimm et al. (2008) note that the type of speech act signals social dynamics. For example, "Make some coffee" (an imperative) is more forceful than "Could you make some coffee, please?" (an indirect request). Their study shows that in potentially face-threatening situations, people tend to use indirect requests rather than outright commands to avoid offending the other person. This aligns with Holmes's (1995) observation that indirect forms often serve as politeness strategies. In school settings, principals often navigate this tension: they need to give directives (which can threaten a listener's "face"), but they may soften or frame commands as requests to maintain a respectful atmosphere. This is discussed in chapter four of this study which revealed that in school settings, principals often navigate this tension: they need to give directives (which can threaten a listener's "face"), but they may soften or frame commands as requests to maintain a respectful atmosphere.

Numerous studies have applied speech act theory to analyze real discourse. For example, Omoniyi (2012) examined President Umaru Yar'Adua's speeches, identifying the frequency of different illocutionary types: assertives (statements of fact) were most common (30%), followed by directives (17%) and verdictives (20%). Similarly, Kimenye (2021) studied post-election speeches of Kenyan leaders Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga and found assertive acts to dominate. These findings

suggest that political leaders, speaking from positions of authority, often emphasize assertions.

Other research has explored speech acts in educational or specialized settings. Kago (2010) analysed the speech of mentally challenged children at a special school, classifying the types of speech acts they used. Though Kago's context differs (students with disabilities), her methodology informs the analysis of illocutionary acts; it shows how different speech acts (requests, questions,) appear in children's spoken language. Bartoo (2012) investigated gender differences in speech acts among Kenyan county assembly members, comparing how male and female legislators used speech acts during debates. While Bartoo focused on gender variation, the study's use of Austin and Searle's framework is relevant to analyzing principals' speech acts as well.

Mutunga (2023) applied speech act theory to verbal bullying among Kenyan students, identifying the speech acts used in aggressive student interactions. Though focused on bullying, this research demonstrates how speech act analysis can reveal power dynamics and aggression in school discourse. Murithi (2021) analysed church sermons to see how priests use speech acts to influence congregations. While a different context (pulpit vs. classroom), Murithi shows that authoritative figures use speech acts deliberately to persuade. Khunou (2006) examined "skillful conversations" between Zimbabwean principals and teachers, finding that such dialogue (based on experience-sharing) contributes to school success. Though not explicitly speech act analysis, it highlights the role of everyday talk in school management. This study applied speech act theory to high school principals' speeches to understand how language is used to perform actions, convey intentions and influence the audience.

Other studies examine speech acts in related domains. Hassan (2000) categorized utterances in tour guide–visitor interactions using speech act types, while Kinyua (2012) analysed editorial cartoons to see how visual and verbal "speech acts" communicate societal issues. Michira (2014) used discourse analysis on Kenyan political campaign speeches, noting that language especially rhetorical devices like metaphors and symbols are powerful tools for leaders; style and delivery often matter

more than literal content. These insights reinforce that how something is said (including the speech acts and rhetoric used) can be as important as what is said.

More specifically to education, Naidoo (2011) studied orientation speeches by principals in affluent schools, focusing on what they say and how context influences content (using invitational leadership theory). Hussein (2018) examined election slogans through speech act theory, finding that syntactic structure affects persuasion; his work is related only theoretically, but it again illustrates speech act analysis in power contexts. Hamdani (2011) looked at movie dialogue, categorizing the speech acts of film characters; he found a wide range of acts, showing that even scripted daily communication is rich in performative functions. These diverse studies indicate that analyzing speech acts whether in politics, media, or education can uncover how speakers achieve their communicative intentions.

When discussing language and power, politeness and “face” are crucial concepts. Goffman (1967) introduced *face* as the positive social value a person claims in interaction. Brown and Levinson (1987) built on this, defining two aspects of face: positive face (the desire to be appreciated and approved of) and negative face (the desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition). They argue that individuals constantly manage their own and others’ face wants during communication. For instance, a student wants to be seen as competent (positive face) and not unduly controlled (negative face); similarly, a principal wants to be respected (positive face) while retaining authority (negative face). Maintaining harmony requires speakers to consider these face needs through politeness.

Politeness involves *redressive actions* that mitigate the threat of face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Any speech act that imposes on someone like giving orders, requesting or criticizing can threaten their face. Brown and Levinson note that to preserve the hearer’s negative face, speakers may use strategies that minimize imposition (hedging, indirectness). To protect the hearer’s positive face, speakers might show solidarity (compliments, group identity) or discretion. Both are important: actions like orders or advice can threaten negative face by constraining freedom, while disagreements or criticism can threaten positive face by implying the hearer’s desires are wrong. People are motivated to avoid or soften face threats. In practice,

principals often balance these concerns: they must convey directives (which threaten face) but often precede or follow them with polite language or friendliness to maintain goodwill.

Yule (1996) observes that each culture has its own norms of courtesy: what counts as polite behavior in one setting (a church, a school, a family) might differ in another. Nevertheless, most people recognize the universal idea of politeness vs. rudeness. Leech (1993) defines politeness as “*strategic conflict avoidance*,” a conscious effort to prevent interpersonal conflict and maintain social harmony. Politeness has both a context (formality, distance) and relational (speaker–hearer roles) dimension. Watts, Ide, and Ehlich (1992) distinguish between first-order politeness (everyday social etiquette) and second-order (theoretical study of politeness). First-order politeness includes obvious markers like “please” and “thank you” (Felix & Cesar, 2008), which are *expressive* forms of politeness showing good intentions.

In educational settings, research shows that politeness matters. Cai et al. (2014) found that college instructors overwhelmingly use positive politeness strategies: they emphasize rapport with students through support, reassurance, and acknowledgment. By adopting this “positive energy,” teachers reduce social distance and lower face threats. Their use of politeness was found to support students and minimize embarrassment. This suggests that principals, too, may rely on positive politeness (inclusive language, encouragement) to strengthen relationships. Mills (2003) adds that politeness is essentially about reducing threats to others’ face, shaping the social persona we project. However, as Stephan, Liberman, and Trope (2010) note, communicators do not always succeed: urgent or aggressive messages might appear rude because the speaker prioritizes a goal over the hearer’s face needs.

Eelen (2014) reiterates that speakers routinely employ politeness strategies to preserve face and that successful communication depends on shared assumptions and cultural norms. Although Eelen examined political discourse, her ideas apply to any authority figure. In Kenya’s parliament, for instance, Ambuyo et al. (2011) found that even during combative question time, lawmakers had to use polite, sanctioned language. They were constrained by rules requiring courteous speech, which channeled dispute

into more constructive debate. This underscores how institutional context (like school policies) may similarly obligate principals to moderate their language.

Because some acts inherently risk face, politeness strategies differ by context. Brown and Levinson (1987) list speech acts like requests, warnings, or advice as threatening negative face, and disagreements or criticisms as threatening positive face. Speakers therefore weigh social distance and power: Guodong and Jing (2005) observed that Chinese students used more formal address and politeness when disagreeing with superiors compared to American students; both groups used fewer strategies when interacting with peers. These findings suggest that principals might use extra politeness when they sense greater social distance, like with new or wary students and rely more on solidarity strategies in familiar contexts.

Walya (1996) study on discourse in Kenyan banks found that effective communication depended on both grammatical skill and social awareness. Communicative competence (Purpura, 2013; Richards & Schmidt, 2013) means using language appropriately to achieve goals like expressing needs, sharing knowledge or following etiquette. Just as in banking, principals must communicate needs such as instructions, announcements, foster social bonds (motivation, encouragement), share knowledge, and uphold school etiquette. In essence, a principal's speech accomplishes multiple functions, and politeness strategies are among the tools used to fulfill these goals.

Neumann (1997) found that in German–Norwegian business negotiations, direct requests were common but Norwegians used more indirectness. Charles (1996) showed that in commercial negotiations, a participant's role (buyer vs. seller) influenced their face-saving hedges. Grindsted (1997) observed that Spaniards used humor more than Danes during negotiations; humor is a positive politeness tactic that can build rapport. These studies illustrate how politeness (positive face strategies like joking or inclusive language) varies with role and culture.

Scollon and Scollon (1980) compared communication styles of Athabaskan Indians and monolingual English speakers. They found Athabaskans tended to be taciturn and deferential (negative politeness), while English speakers were more voluble and solidarity-oriented (positive politeness). These differences in politeness style

(deference vs. camaraderie) stem from different social expectations about distance and respect. Planken (2005) similarly noted that professional negotiators used inclusive pronouns (“we”) more often than students did, suggesting they were actively building solidarity (positive politeness). These findings imply that in any intercultural or hierarchical setting (including schools), speakers calibrate their politeness strategies (address forms, tone, humor) to their audience.

In digital contexts, the media also shape politeness. Sifian (2015) found that Twitter users adapt politeness norms for brevity and public visibility, while Izadi and Zilaie (2012) observed positive politeness dominating email exchanges among friends. Tannen (1991) famously pointed out that women often use “small talk” as a politeness strategy to maintain connections; she showed that expected responses in conversation reassure the hearer, aligning with Brown and Levinson’s positive face. Nguyen (2009) compared American and Vietnamese students, finding Americans less confrontational and more careful not to embarrass others, echoing Guodong and Jing’s (2005) cross-cultural differences in politeness.

In addition, politeness strategies can significantly affect interactions. Bolkan and Holmgren (2012) study found that when students wrote polite emails to instructors, the teachers felt more positive toward the students and were more motivated to help them. This suggests that politeness in communication not only preserves face but can enhance relationships and outcomes. Luzon (2013) showed that in academic blog discussions, politeness strategies and impoliteness avoidance helped manage conflict. Chejnova (2014) and Park (2008) observed that even in impersonal media like email and online chats, participants still use politeness strategies to navigate disagreements.

On the other hand, some studies illustrate specific politeness phenomena. Pariera (2006) found that when people discuss taboo topics by email, they use more hedging and displays of intimacy to stay polite. Yanti (2017) analysed an American talk show and found that speakers often employ off-record strategies like indirect hints or irony to save face, influenced by context and intonation. These all point to the conclusion that in any communicative context, speakers choose among politeness strategies; positive, negative, indirect, direct based on their goals and the social situation.

Cutting (2008) emphasizes that situational factors (formality, size of imposition), social factors (power relations, distance), and cultural norms all shape politeness. Lin's (2005) study of Chinese sales calls, for instance, found an emphasis on positive politeness reflecting collectivist values. Though Lin looked at sales talks, the methodology of analyzing oral politeness strategies is directly applicable to principals' speeches. Even studies on persuasion (Muyuku, 2009) highlight that language choices (like mixing languages in ads) can influence an audience. Muyuku's work on lexical pragmatics in advertising suggests that identifying salient linguistic features is key to understanding how an audience is influenced—an idea the current study will apply to high school speech discourse.

In sum, prior research on language, ideology, speech acts, and politeness provides a rich framework for this study. The literature shows that language choices from modality and imperatives to rhetorical style and politeness strategies reflect and construct power relations. High school principals, as institutional authority figures, are likely to use such linguistic features strategically: they may employ strong assertions to assert control, or soften directives with politeness to maintain good relationships. The present study built on these insights by systematically analyzing the speech acts and politeness strategies in principals' speeches, aiming to reveal how these educational leaders use language to achieve their communicative goals and manage power dynamics.

2.2 Ideological Positioning in Discourse

Ideological positioning refers to the ways in which speakers and writers use language to align themselves and others with specific beliefs, values, and social roles while simultaneously constructing and reinforcing power relations. Within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), ideology is understood as the system of values and beliefs embedded in discourse that influences social practices (Fairclough, 2001). In this sense, language is never a neutral conduit; it is a medium through which ideologies are articulated, legitimized, and contested. Fairclough (1992) emphasizes that linguistic choices inherently encode values and power relations, shaping both social structures and individual perceptions. Bourdieu (1991) similarly conceptualizes language as a form of symbolic power that legitimizes and sustains social hierarchies,

while Van Dijk (1998) argues that institutional discourse maintains authority by naturalizing particular perspectives and marginalizing others.

CDA offers a comprehensive framework for uncovering these processes. Fairclough's (2001) three-dimensional model; text, discursive practice, and social practice allow researchers to link micro-level linguistic features to macro-level societal structures. Wodak and Meyer (2009) describe discursive strategies such as nomination, predication, and argumentation, which position actors ideologically and construct relationships between them. From a positioning perspective, Davies and Harré (1990) highlight how discourse allocates subject positions, casting participants in roles such as expert, subordinate, or compliant. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) further explain that dominant ideologies operate through hegemonic positioning, framing certain roles or identities as natural or inevitable. Discussion in chapter five of this study reveals that principals allocate subject position to students which helps them to assert their authority, establish their position and maintain order in the school.

The mechanisms of ideological positioning often emerge through specific lexico-grammatical choices. Leeuwen (2008) notes that modal verbs such as "must" and "should" function to morally authorize norms, presenting them as necessary and non-negotiable. Pronoun use is equally significant: inclusive pronouns like "we" foster solidarity and collectivism, while the second-person "you" can create distance or impose directives. Transitivity choices, as described by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), also play a role, with active constructions foregrounding agency and passive forms obscuring responsibility. Beyond grammar, rhetorical devices are central to ideological work. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrate that metaphors shape cognition and perception; for example, framing discipline as "the foundation" of education naturalizes the concept as an unquestionable prerequisite for success. Repetition, as observed by Tannen (1989), serves to reinforce key ideological messages, embedding them in the audience's memory. Similarly, allusions can subtly align institutional authority with moral legitimacy (Charteris-Black, 2004). This study findings as discussed in chapter five found out that repetition, modality and allusion serve to reinforce certain principals' ideological messages thus embedding these messages in the audience memory.

Empirical studies reveal how such strategies operate across political, institutional, and educational contexts. Van Dijk (2013) shows how political rhetoric often positions speakers as protectors of national identity, using “us versus them” framing to reinforce nationalist ideologies. In policy contexts, Ball (2003) demonstrates that neoliberal discourse emphasizes competition, individual initiative, and performance, thereby advancing meritocratic values. In educational discourse, Rogers (2011) finds that teachers use directive language, modals, and evaluative structures to maintain classroom norms and institutional hierarchies. Similarly, Naidoo (2011) observes that principals’ orientation speeches combine moral imperatives with performance expectations while simultaneously inviting students to identify with the school community this form of ideological integration blends authority with belonging.

Gender also emerges as a key dimension of ideological positioning. Sunderland (2004) notes that school discourse often reproduces traditional gender roles by positioning girls as nurturing and compliant and boys as assertive and leadership-oriented. Outside the school context, Owiti’s (2005) analysis of television advertising demonstrates how repetition and figurative language sustain gender stereotypes, showing that institutional and media discourses alike can shape identity formation. These findings highlight how ideological positioning is not only about explicit statements but also about implicit framing through everyday language use.

Methodologically, scholars have used a range of analytical tools to investigate ideological positioning. Transitivity analysis helps uncover the structural positioning of actors in discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), while examining modal and evaluative devices reveals how obligation and necessity are framed (Leeuwen, 2008). Metaphor analysis, informed by Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) cognitive theory, sheds light on the conceptual structures underlying ideological claims, and intertextual analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004) exposes how values are transmitted across texts. Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) reveals how utterances perform identity- and power-related actions, while Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) provides insight into how authority and solidarity are balanced to maintain compliance without overt coercion. CDA, as developed by Fairclough (2001), integrates these tools to link micro-linguistic features to broader ideological patterns.

In summary, the literature shows that ideological positioning in discourse operates through a complex interplay of grammatical choices, rhetorical devices, and pragmatic strategies. Whether through modality, pronouns, metaphors, repetition, or intertextual references, speakers construct realities that reflect and reproduce underlying belief systems. While political and policy discourse have been extensively studied, less attention has been paid to how secondary school principals through routine speeches use these strategies to shape student identity, promote obedience, and instill institutional values. This gap justified the current study's focus on high school principals' speeches, analysed through CDA, to uncover the linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms by which they position themselves and their students within specific ideological frameworks.

Dijk (2006) avers that manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the interest of the manipulator and against the best interests of the manipulate. According to van Dijk (2006), the exercise of manipulation in communication is premised on social inequality existing in society; that manipulator needs to fulfil the social and personal requirements that initially allow them to have an impact on others. (Dijk, 2006).

Kendie (2013) analysed how principals present diversity and multiculturalism in speeches -finding a tendency toward "happy talk" ideologies that emphasize celebration over structural critique which can depoliticize real inequities. Zembylas (2007) discusses how principals' emotional speech (compassion, urgency, hope) is often used to moralize and legitimize ideological positions such as school reform or discipline policies. These studies will help the current study to establish the embedded ideologies in the speeches of Imenti north high school principals. Likewise, Gameli and Angmorteh (2016) examine the rhetorical devices employed in Ghana's speech to the nation. In order to convince the audience to give him another chance as president of Ghana, the study shows that he used linguistic resources such transitivity, modality, and persuasive narratives in addition to identification with the audience and acknowledgement. Additionally, Anderson (2014) conducts a stylistic analysis of a few of John Evans Atta Mills' political speeches.

According to Anderson (2014), John Evans Atta Mills uses stylistic devices like codeswitching, biblical allusion, historical imagery, repetition, and so on to convey his thoughts to his audience. He suggests that the speaker's mental state, perspective, and remnants of his upbringing were all ingrained in John Evans Atta Mills' stylistic elements. Similar to this, Djabetey (2013) makes an effort to critically analyse the ideologies, power dynamics, and language-based persuasive strategies used in a few campaign speeches given by John Dramani Mahama and Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo, two presidential candidates in Ghana's 2012 general elections.

The researcher takes into account the sociocultural contexts that affect the speeches as well as the linguistic and textual characteristics of the chosen utterances. With the addition of other relevant frameworks, the analysis primarily uses critical analytical frameworks in the critical discourse analysis (CDA) domain. In order to uncover the covert means by which the speakers aimed to convince their audience to support their pursuit of power, it breaks them down into three subtopics: descriptive, interpretive, and explanatory. The results show that when presenting their ideas to their audience, the chosen candidates employ ideologically driven tactics and project power dynamics. The ultimate goal of these tactics is to convince the audience to support their presidential campaign. Both openly and implicitly, the speakers' relationships and views are interlaced throughout their statements.

2.3 Language as a Tool of Behavioural Regulation in Educational Contexts

The role of discourse in shaping students' behaviour has been a recurring focus within educational linguistics, sociolinguistics, and critical discourse studies. Discourse, in this context, refers not only to the spoken or written words exchanged in classrooms or assemblies but also to the broader semiotic practices through which educational institutions communicate values, norms, and expectations. Fairclough (2001) argues that institutional discourse functions as a site where ideology is embedded and enacted, influencing both the overt behavior and the internalized attitudes of learners. This process is not limited to the delivery of explicit rules; rather, it is achieved through the subtle framing of identities, obligations, and moral positions.

The relationship between discourse and behavioural regulation is feasibly most evident in the ways school leaders and teachers employ language to set expectations and maintain order. Bernstein's (1990) theory of pedagogic discourse suggests that schools operate through visible and invisible regulatory mechanisms. While visible controls include rules and sanctions, invisible controls are embedded in everyday interactions, classroom routines, and institutional speeches. Language acts as the key medium for both, providing a socially sanctioned framework for what constitutes "acceptable" behaviour. This aligns with Foucault's (1977) concept of disciplinary power, wherein surveillance and normalization are maintained through constant communicative cues, making students regulate themselves even in the absence of overt enforcement.

Linguistic strategies such as modality, pronoun use, and evaluative adjectives play a significant role in constructing behavioural expectations. Leeuwen (2008) notes that modal verbs like "must," "should," and "have to" signal obligation and necessity, thereby legitimizing institutional authority. In school discourse, such modals often accompany behavioural directives: "*You must be in class by 7:30,*" "You should respect your teachers," or "We have to maintain order." Pronouns further manipulate alignment and distance; the inclusive "we" aligns the speaker with the audience in shared responsibility, while the directive "you" isolates the student as the target of compliance. Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) work on transitivity also shows how behavioural responsibility is framed through agentive structures, making students the active doers of good behaviour or, conversely, the agents responsible for misbehaviour. Chapter six of this study has discussed how principals use of pronouns, transitivity and modal verbs shape the students' behaviour.

Empirical studies also confirm the behavioural impact of institutional discourse. Rogers (2011), analysis of classroom talk, found that teachers' use of evaluative language and framing questions was instrumental in reinforcing behavioural norms without direct confrontation. Similarly, Christie (2002) study demonstrates that institutional discourse during school assemblies operates as a ritualized practice of socialization, where leaders articulate a moral order that students are expected to embody. Naidoo (2011) observes that principals' speeches often blend motivational

appeals with moral injunctions, encouraging self-regulation by framing good behaviour as a personal choice that aligns with broader school and societal values.

The use of rhetorical devices further deepens behavioural influence. Repetition, as described by Tannen (1989), reinforces norms by embedding them in collective memory such as the constant reiteration of phrases like “discipline is the key to success”. Metaphors, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain, structure understanding by mapping behavioural expectations onto familiar concepts: comparing the school to a “family” positions misbehaviour as a betrayal of kinship, while framing students as “ambassadors” invokes responsibility towards the school’s reputation. Intertextual references, particularly religious or cultural allusions, can lend moral legitimacy to behavioural rules, making them appear natural or divinely sanctioned (Charteris-Black, 2004).

Indirectly, discourse also regulates behaviour through identity construction. Davies and Harré (1990) argue that discourse positions individuals into subject roles with associated expectations. In schools, students may be positioned as “responsible citizens,” “future leaders,” or “model pupils,” each carrying implicit behavioural scripts. These identities, when consistently reinforced through institutional language, create powerful incentives for conformity.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) suggest that school leadership directly affects school climate and through climate student behaviour is also transformed. Principals who articulate clear values and consistent expectations in their speech tend to cultivate environment where students exhibit more respectful and self-regulated behaviour. Deal and Peterson (1999) emphasize the symbolic role of principals in shaping school culture. Their speeches especially during ceremonies serve to model moral behaviour, establish norms and celebrate desirable conduct which in turn influences how students behave.

Drawing on speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), principals’ utterances often function as directives, commissives or expressives that set behavioural expectations. For instance, a principal saying, ‘we are a respectful community performs more than an assertion – it invites identification and conformity to that behavioural norm. Halliday’s (1978) systemic functional linguistics also frames language as action. In

this view, the interpersonal function of principals' speech like praise, reprimands and encouragement helps to build relationships and position students in specific social roles, influencing their conduct.

Bernstein's (1990) theory of pedagogic discourse is also relevant in this study as he asserts that speech in schools frame and classify acceptable and unacceptable actions thus guiding student behaviour in alignment with institutional goals. Bandura's (1986) social learning Theory is crucial as it brings psychological dimension of speech. It asserts that individuals learn behaviours through observation and imitation. Principals model certain verbal behaviours. Positive reinforcement through speech can encourage desirable behaviours while negative reinforcement may curb undesirable behaviours.

This perspective is predicated on the notion that manipulation takes advantage of certain types of social asymmetry and the resulting imbalance in power and dominance dynamics in order to benefit the manipulator. Van Dijk (2006) claims on manipulation are in line with the dimensions underlying this study; that school principals' utterances as a discourse can be approached within Critical Discourse Analysis which studies language use as an expression of power relations in society. The study therefore assumes that use of manipulation of context in communication is intended by the speaker to maintain ideological control over the hearer by twisted the hearer's perception to look at issues of concern from the viewpoint of the speaker.

The leadership discourse of politicians was investigated in (Bayram, 2010). According to the researcher, politicians skilfully use language to assert power and persuade their audience. The research entitled 'Ideology and Political Discourse' aimed to analyse the politicians' skilful use of language to persuade or influence others. Purposing to explore and identify how political leaders can represent ideology through mindful use of language, Khalil et al. (2013) attempted to interpret 'Imran Khan's speech' using Fairclough's 3-dimensional model of CDA. The study found that political leaders use certain linguistic and rhetoric strategies so that they can sway people to follow their hidden agendas and ideologies. This study will guide the current study in the application of Fairclough model of CDA to explore how high school principals package their language in the speeches that they deliver.

Sipra & Rashid (2013) study analysed the first part of ‘Martin Luther King’ speech, “I Have a Dream” based on Fairclough’s model of Critical Discourse Analysis. The research attempted to analyse “Martin Luther King’s speech” in a socio-political context. The researchers concluded that certain stylistic, as well as textual devices, have been used during a speech to fulfil specific purpose. While this study focused on political context the current study will focus on educational context and endeavour to find out the techniques that help the school principals during their speech to fulfil the purpose of the speech. The researchers (Rahman 2021), used Norman Fairclough’s discourse analysis model to qualitatively investigate ‘Bintang Emon’s’ discourse humorous video entitle “Accidently. The idea was to analyse this text using Fairclough’s 3-dimensional model of CDA to investigate whether Bintang Emon used rhetorical figures or not. The researchers concluded that Bintang Emon skilfully used rhetoric figures to present his thought in a humorous style. Similarly, the current study will use Fairclough’s model of CDA but to examine the intention behind the high school principals’ speeches unlike the rhetorical figures examined in Rahman (2021). Similarly, the current study used Fairclough’s model of CDA but to examine the intention behind the high school principals’ speeches unlike the rhetorical figures examined in Rahman (2021).

Imran Khan’s the 19th prime minister of Pakistan first speech in Parliament was critically analysed in (Dehkordi, 2017). The researcher applied the three-dimensional model of Fairclough on Imran Khan’s speech, in order to determine how Imran Khan has used language to indicate his social and political group and to express his attitudes towards politics. He also used many Islamic references during his speech to convey his vision towards his country as a Prime Minister. Similarly, the current study included Fairclough three-dimensional model of CDA in the data analysis to ascertain how high school principals employ language in a school setting and it was revealed that high school principals use language skilfully to communicate their vision for the school community.

An examination of Critical Discourse on former U.S president Barak Obama’s speech was done in (Wang 2010). The researcher chose the framework using critical discourse analysis in addition to systemic functional linguistics in order to examine the processes used in Barak Obama’s speech. The main concern of studying political discourse is to have a better insight of political purposes of these speeches. Also,

Sharndama (2015) did a critical discourse study of Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari's inaugural speech, which was given soon after he took office, utilising Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Analytical Models. In accordance with the model, the speech was put through description, interpretation, and explanation. The analysis's outcome demonstrated that Buhari used the inaugural speech to reveal his plans to the people and to instil in them hope in the new government. The speech under analysis specifically exposed the philosophies that President Muhammadu Buhari's new administration plans to follow. The above studies aided this study in the description, interpretation and explanation of the intention in the selected school principal's speech using Fairclough's three-dimensional analytical model although they differed in context because the current study was done in a school context not a political context.

Khany and Hamzelou (2014) studied the political speeches of Stalin, Gadhafi, and Hitler using a Systemic Functional Grammar approach. Twenty speeches were rhetorically analysed. To reveal their disguised intention and disclose their style and structure, their study attempted to decipher generic patterns of the speech. The study revealed that the dictators owed their states to words they used to legalize their misdeeds. Unlike this study which has used systemic functional grammar, the proposed study will employ Fairclough's three-dimensional analytical model in the data analysis to determine the disguised intention in the high school principals' discourse.

Gathumbi (1995) examined discourse occurrences in multilingual schools. Her theoretical approach differed from the current study's linguistic approach because it was pedagogical. To gather information, though, she recorded audio, video, and notes. The primary technique of data gathering for this project will be audio recording. Hirsch (1998) investigated how language is used in divorce procedures in Kenyan coastal Kadhi Courts to define gender identity. Her anthropological research concentrated on the tactics used by women to file for divorce from their husbands because doing so was perceived as going against prevailing cultural norms. Since our research is based on Critical Discourse Analysis, it is unavoidably a study on language ideology since it aimed to determine "why they do what they do" by describing the linguistic tactics used by discourse participants (Conley & O'Barr, 2005). The current study focused primarily on the non-referential functions of language and,

consequently, an ideological orientation by examining the power dynamics amongst participants in the courtroom.

Gitonga (2003) sought to explain specific linguistic ways in which language is used to represent an instrument of control and manifest symbolic power in the Kenya's Building Bridges initiative speeches. The study developed and proposed various strategies of (de) legitimization employed by political leaders in Kenya to justify their course of action regarding the Building Bridges initiative.

Abokoma and Alofa (2015) analysed the rhetorical functions in the well-known Independence address delivered by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana, the day Ghana gained independence from British domination. They contend that the speech uses rhetorical devices to enlighten, uplift, and influence its listeners. Muyiera (2002) asserts that the type and style of communication employed in a particular school will influence how individuals interact and the overall ambiance of the institution, which will influence the overall caliber of instruction that students receive. Teachers, students, and non-teaching staff can all behave better when they communicate with one another.

In a school setting, communication affects how parents, teachers, non-teaching personnel, and students behave. As the head of the school, the principal is responsible for informing everyone in the school system of the rules and regulations. Everyday school administration activities involve meaningful interactions made possible by efficient communication systems. Students' discipline is a result of these interactions (Brigman and Campbell, 2003). During school assemblies, students receive information and a continual reminder of their responsibilities (Brigman and Campbell, 2003). Through the available lines of communication, fellow students-typically school prefects, on-duty instructors, senior teachers, deputy principals, and the principal-explain the consequences of misbehavior mostly verbally. This strengthens the schools' culture of excellent discipline. The head of the school and the teachers educate the kids about appropriate behaviour and clearly explain the daily procedures and expectations of the school. This kind of communication during assemblies promotes positive attitudes towards teaching, learning, and the entire educational process and systems inside the school.

Kindiki (2009) found that school administrators used poor communication channels and that undemocratic school administration did not view meetings and assemblies as crucial communication strategies in his study on the impact of principals' communication on students' discipline. Since meetings and assemblies enhanced the administration-student relationship and fostered unity throughout the school, the study promoted their use as communication tools.

In sum, the discussed literature underscores that discourse is not a passive reflection of school policy but an active instrument of behavioral governance. Through grammar, rhetoric, and strategic framing, educational discourse enforces behavioural norms, fosters self-discipline, and integrates students into the moral and social fabric of the institution. This dual function overt rule-giving and covert value inculcation makes institutional discourse a powerful determinant of student behaviour. The present study built on this understanding, examining how principals' speeches serve as vehicles for behavioural regulation by embedding discipline, moral codes, and self-accountability into the daily communicative life of the school.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Fairclough's 3-dimensional model of CDA complemented with Speech Act Theory Austin's & Searle (1962), Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness theory. CDA was used to uncover the underlying power structures and ideologies shaping high school principals language use, while politeness theory reviewed how principals manage face and relationships through language. Speech act theory analysed the intended meaning and effects of principals' utterances, highlighting their communicative goals and strategies.

2.4.1 Fairclough's 3-Dimensional Model of CDA

CDA is an interdisciplinary theory and approach that examines how people and organisations utilise language. It is based on the idea that the relationship between the producer and the consumer of a communication determines how meanings of texts and utterances are interpreted. The premise is that true meanings are concealed behind words and that, rather than merely interpreting texts as they are, deeper explanations of why the discourse is the way it is are needed. According to Van Dijk (1993), discourse analysis is both interpretative and explanatory.

This study was mainly guided by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach as propounded by Norman Fairclough (1992). In CDA texts are a part of social events in which they are uttered. Thus, social and cultural dimensions are significant as part of texts. These dimensions are used to build and maintain relations of power between groups (Fairclough, 2000, 2001, 2003; Van Dijk, 2001). CDA takes a critical stance towards social issues in its endeavor to reveal power dynamics that are concealed in speech and writing by examining how language and speech are used in social and political situations to enact, reproduce, and oppose elements of social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality.

CDA highlights issues of power asymmetries, manipulation, exploitation and structural inequities that exist in text. In simpler terms, it tries to show the methods by which the prevailing powers in a community create perceptions of reality that favour their interest. When the power dynamics in society include enacted and agreed through discourse, ideologies of discourse are produced.

According to Fairclough (1989), every communicative event has three dimensions that should be focused in order to completely understand the hidden meaning that reside in that text or discourse and to discover the ideological and rhetorical structures that are concealed in the language or discourse within a social, cultural or political context. Fairclough (1992) takes a three-dimensional approach to verbal interaction analysis. Discourse-as-text, the first, focusses on the decisions interlocutors make on coherent devices, grammar, and vocabulary.

Discourse as Discursive Practice, the second dimension, examines how a verbal exchange is grounded in a specific social context through the use of coherent devices, syntax, and vocabulary choices. Discourse-as-social-practice, the third dimension, also referred to as the explanation stage, focusses on the interaction between discourse and society. It sees ideology as both a product and a determinant of discourse.

This theory was significant to the present analysis because it supports the view that discourse and language can contribute to unbalanced power relations within a social institution. The unbalanced power relations could be manifested in prejudice, injustice and inequalities to the oppressed in a society. Therefore, high school principals being in a more privileged position in the school context may use words to intimidate, misdirect, control and manipulate students and even teachers. There was thus need to

analyse the messages transmitted in the school linguistic environment, and see whether power imbalance does exist in the language used by principals in their speeches.

2.4.2 Speech Act Theory

To identify the kind of speech acts a speaker performs in their utterances, Austin's three tenets of the speech act theory were used (Austin, 1962). They are as follows:

Locutionary act which is simply the act of saying something. It contains the actual meanings of the utterances (Searle, 1969). In addition, cutting (2002) says that, locutionary acts "show what is said by the speaker, containing the form of the words which are uttered". Searle (1969), in trying to expound on locutions, says that, locutionary acts describe the literal meaning of something. He further explains that, when a speaker says something, he or she is conveying the meaning literary. For example, "it is getting dark," the sentence means that the speaker thinks of the situation in the room which is getting dark because the day will be over. They mean what they say literally (Searle, 1969).

Illocutionary act which presumes that an utterance made carries with it a certain force or intention such as informing the hearer on something, giving an order, giving a warning, or giving a threat. A statement's illocutionary force conveys the speaker's intentions regarding the particular utterance. Hence, the force determines what type of illocutionary act the utterance is meant to perform. Conferring to the theory, it presupposes that the illocutionary force is an aspect of meaning that cannot be captured in truth conditioned semantic theory, Osisanwo (2003). One has to consider other factors contributing to the meaning like social factors and the intents of the utterer. Searle (1969) further classified the act of illocutionary into five classes including; Assertives which are actions of speech that bind a speaker to the veracity of the statement. They include acts of stating, suggesting, boasting or complaining. (Leech,1983). For example, when a speaker says "I feel grateful" the speaker wants to report to the hearer(s) that he or she is grateful. The utterance is merely reporting (Austin, 1962).

Directives which are verbal acts intended to elicit a specific response from the listener such as requesting, ordering, warning, threatening, questioning, commanding, advising and so forth (Searle, 1969). In addition, Searle gives an example, when a speaker says “please pass the salt”, by the request the speaker gives the request to the hearer and makes the hearer pass the salt (Searle, 1969)

Commissives which are acts that commit the hearer to some future action such as promising, threatening, offering, challenging, offering etc. for example, in the utterance, “I shall do my best”. The utterance shows that the speaker makes a commitment by acting as posited by Austin (1962)

Expressives, are actions of speech that convey the speaker’s attitudes and emotions towards the propositions. Stated differently, they highlight the feelings of the speakers towards their subjects’ using words. They include acts such as complimenting, apologizing, scolding, greeting, thanking, complaining and congratulating among others, for instance when a speaker says, “I am willing to apologize”, and “I am sorry to have said...” the utterance shows the act of apologizing (Austin, 1962).

Declaratives are acts that change the reality in accordance with the proposition of the declaration such as baptizing, pronouncing someone guilt, pronouncing someone husband and wife, or appointing, resigning, ex-communicating, naming (Searle, 1969).

Searle (1969) further asserted that speaker’s illocutionary acts can also be said to be direct or indirect. In trying to differentiate the two, Yule (2006), said that direct speech acts are straightforward and often contain performative verbs while indirect speech acts require inferences on the part of the hearer or reader. Searle (ibid) describes the indirect speech acts as “a situation where the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background.

Perlocutionary act is the effect or the consequence the utterance has on the hearer such as convincing the hearer about something, persuading the hearer, arousing anger or anxiety, creating fear, worry, distress, annoyance, threatening, intimidating, embarrassing or amusing (Searle. 1969). For example, the utterance, take a look of

yourself. You are the most beautiful woman I have ever met.” The function of this utterance is to give effect of amusing to the hearer (Searle, 1969).

Austin continues to argue that such effects are determined by illocutionary force of the utterance as well as the particular circumstances in which the utterance is produced (Austin, 1962). Speech Act Theory came in handy in this study when analysing speech acts performed in principals’ speech to reveal intentions and social positioning. The acts revealed how power is exercised and which ideologies are normally promoted or challenged in a school discourse.

2.4.3 Politeness Theory

This study used Politeness Theory propounded by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) to analyze politeness strategies used by high school principals in their speeches to students. The theory is based on Goffman’s (1967) notion of ‘Face’. Brown and Levinson define “ Face” as the public self-image that every adult tries to protect. People around the world communicate in different ways, the choice of words, phrases and reactions differ from person to person and from culture to culture; and yet all have certain basic things in common. Brown & Levinson (1987) claims that people of every culture have two fundamental needs: every human being wants to be accepted and liked and at the same time strives to preserve the control over his or her actions and freedom not to be constantly impinged on by others.

Tannen (1992) believes that these two needs reflect the human nature: we are individuals as well as social creatures and we all keep balancing the needs for involvement and independence. Brown & Levinson (1987) calls the two fundamental needs for involvement and independence as: positive face and negative face. Negative face is the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction that is freedom of action and freedom from imposition while Positive face is the positive consistent self-image or personality claimed by interactants. This is characterized by the desire to be loved, admired, ratified and related to positively.

In Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory, communication is seen as being potentially dangerous and antagonistic. The rational actions people take to preserve both kinds of face for themselves and the people they interact with add up to

politeness. Brown and Levinson also argue that in human communication, whether spoken or written; people tend to maintain one another's face continuously.

They outline four main types of politeness strategies which include bald- on- record which is performing Face Threatening Acts without redressive action. The strategy is employed when the speaker wants to communicate in an indirect and in an ambiguous way. An example is 'what is the time?'. Second strategy is off- record strategy which is a direct strategy done by taking some of the pressure off speakers when the cost of imposition becomes very high. The third strategy is Positive politeness that is oriented towards positive Face of the hearer.

Positive politeness strategies (PPS) seek to minimize the threat to the hearer's positive Face. These strategies are used to make the hearer feel good about himself, his interests or possessions. P.P.S is usually used in situations where members of an audience know each other fairly well. FTA is performed with redressive action. These strategies seek a common ground or co-operation. Fourth strategy is negative politeness through which the speaker creates an 'out' for the listener by employing various strategies such as, being conventionally indirect, using questions and hedging, being pessimistic, by apologizing and through the use of the passive Applying this theory to the discourse of high school principals can reveal how they use language to navigate authority, maintain relationships and manage conflicts in school settings.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature demonstrated that the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis, Speech Act Theory, and Politeness Theory provides a robust framework for uncovering the subtle ways in which principals' speeches construct, legitimize, and sustain power and ideological positions within educational contexts. CDA exposes the broader socio-political structures embedded in discourse, Speech Act Theory highlights the performative force of principals' utterances in shaping behavior and institutional norms, while Politeness Theory reveals how authority is negotiated and reinforced through strategies of respect, face-saving, and control. Together, these approaches illuminated the intricate interplay between language, power, and ideology, showing that principals' speeches are not neutral acts of communication but deliberate tools for reproducing institutional authority, social order, and dominant values in schools.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The following is discussed in this chapter; research design, population, sampling procedures and sample size, data collection procedures, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Location of the study

The study was carried out in Imenti North Sub-County in Meru County, which provided a rich sociolinguistic and institutional environment suitable for examining how power and ideology are manifested in high school principals' discourse. It hosts a variety of public and private secondary schools across urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, reflecting Kenya's broader educational landscape and hierarchical leadership structures. The researcher's familiarity with the linguistic and cultural context enhanced accessibility, credibility, and depth of interpretation. Consequently, Imenti North offers a representative and contextually rich setting for uncovering how language functions as a tool for authority, ideology transmission, and social control within educational leadership.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. Descriptive research design was deemed appropriate because the nature of the study will involve describing the linguistic features, speech Acts and politeness strategies in the high school principals' speeches that reveal power imbalance and ideological inclination.

3.3 Population

The population for this study comprised all speeches given during assembly by high school principals serving in secondary schools in Imenti North Sub- County in Meru Kenya.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

To capture diversity across different institutional contexts, stratified random sampling was used. The Kenyan secondary school system is stratified into national,

extra-county, county, and sub-county schools. Within each stratum, purposive sampling was then applied to choose schools for data collection since not all schools went for assemblies. Kothari (2017) avers 30 % of the total population can be appropriate data for a qualitative study. Therefore, a target sample of 12 schools out of 42 schools in Imenti North sub-county were selected for data collection. One national school, two extra-county, four county and five sub-county schools were selected. The sample size was 20 speeches determined by the principle of data saturation.

3.5 Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was observation. An audio recorder was used to record the speeches as they were delivered by the principals of the selected schools during school assemblies.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection began after obtaining research clearance from relevant educational authorities. The researcher ensured early arrival in the selected schools before the start of the assembly in order to seek approval from the principals to attend the assembly event and audio record the speech. The recordings were copied to the computer every day after collection then transcribed verbatim, ensuring that pauses, emphases, and repetitions were preserved in the transcripts. Texts were extracted from the transcribed speeches, coded and organized to prepare for analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis

The study utilized qualitative methods of data analysis. The analysis of data followed a multi-theoretical framework combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Politeness Theory, and Speech Act Theory. Seventy-six texts were extracted from the transcriptions coded and analysed through Fairclough's three-dimensional model. At the textual level, attention was given to linguistic features such as vocabulary, modality, pronouns, and rhetorical devices. At the level of discursive practice, the study examined how principals' speeches were produced, distributed, and consumed within the school community. At the social practice level, the focus was on how the

discourse reflected or reinforced broader social ideologies such as discipline, meritocracy, and national identity.

Using Brown and Levinson's framework, the texts were analysed for face-threatening acts and face-saving strategies. This analysis illuminated how principals managed the tension between asserting authority and maintaining interpersonal harmony with students and teachers. Then the texts were categorized into speech acts such as directives, commissives, expressives, representatives, and declarations. This enabled an examination of how principals' language functioned not merely as communication but as institutional action shaping student behavior and responses.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained an introduction letter from ethical team of Tharaka University allowing her to carry out the research. The researcher then applied from National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI) for a research licence.

The research was carried out under strict measures of integrity since potentially sensitive matters were addressed in high school principals' speeches. Precaution was taken in an attempt to preserve anonymity and confidentiality of data.

In addition, a consent form was availed to the principals before the speeches were recorded. The researcher ensured that the audio recordings of the speeches and any notes were accessible only to the researcher and the university appointed supervisors. Finally, during transcription the names of the principals and their schools were described anonymously to conceal their identity.

CHAPTER FOUR

LINGUISTIC FEATURES THAT REFLECT POWER RELATIONS IN IMENTI-NORTH HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' DISCOURSE.

4.0 Introduction.

This chapter presents and discusses findings on objective one. It examines how high school principals use language to construct and maintain power relations within school settings. Language is a central site through which power and ideology are enacted in educational settings. In school assemblies and official addresses, principals' speeches are not mere information-sharing events but carefully constructed discourses that shape student behavior, identity, and institutional loyalty. As Fairclough (2001) argues, discourse both reflects and constructs social relations of power, and in the schooling context, it serves to naturalize discipline, accountability, and institutional authority. The speeches under analysis revealed a wide range of linguistic strategies that collectively reinforce hierarchical relations while also motivating students toward academic and moral goals.

4.1 Modality as a Reflection of Power Hierarchies in School Discourse

Modality is a powerful discursive resource through which principals project authority, expectations, and institutional norms. Fairclough (2001) observes that modality expresses "the speaker's degree of commitment to truth or obligation," thereby constructing relations of power and responsibility. In the analysed data, modality frequently appears in the form of deontic expressions, which impose obligations on students, and epistemic expressions, which assert certainty about outcomes like discussed in T1.

T1

You need to re-read your notes. Use your exams past papers... Make good use of your morning, make good use of your breaks, and make good use of your evening preps so that you can get ready for the exam.

In this text, the principal employs deontic modality ("need to," "make good use of") to express obligation and necessity. Such modal verbs frame the students' behavior as non-negotiable, aligning with Fairclough's (1989) idea that modality is a key site

where authority and control are enacted. The repetition of “make good use” intensifies the directive force, turning the principal’s advice into an institutional requirement.

According to Palmer (2001), deontic modality reflects the speaker’s authority to impose obligations, which in this case reinforces the hierarchical teacher–student relationship.

T2

I want to start by talking about time management in this school. You must be in class by 7:00 a.m. also you should adhere to bells. I want to really say that parents will not read on your behalf, it is your business. The ball is in your court; it is expected that you give your academics your best

In addition, use of “must” in text 2 conveys deontic modality, expressing obligation and rules that are non-negotiable. This reflects institutional authority, where principals impose behavioral norms through strong modal verbs. The phrase “it is expected” uses implicit deontic modality (Fairclough, 2001), presenting compliance not as optional but as an institutional norm. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), modality encodes the speaker’s degree of obligation and judgment, and in this case, the principal frames punctuality and responsibility as moral imperatives rather than mere guidelines. The use of the metaphor “the ball is in your court” reinforces individual accountability, which ties to neoliberal discourses of self-management in education (Rose, 1999).

Coates (1983) notes, “must” represents a high degree of obligation, often carrying authoritarian undercurrents. In educational discourse, this type of modality is frequently used to legitimize institutional demands under the guise of discipline and collective identity.

T3

It is not an option to participate in music; I want to make myself very clear. It is compulsory that we must participate in music, we must give it our best.

In T3 the principal indirectly aims to force the students to participate in music competition but makes it a collective activity so that the students don’t feel the force.

According to van Dijk (2008), repetition of strong modals functions as a discursive strategy of power, closing down resistance and enforcing compliance. This excerpt demonstrates reinforced deontic modality through the phrases “not an option” and “it is compulsory.” The repeated use of “must” highlights absolute obligation, eliminating any possibility of negotiation from the students. The insistence on music as compulsory also shows how principals use language to impose institutional priorities beyond academics, shaping students’ identities as holistic performers.

The use of the modal “will” in speeches carries a commissive force, projecting certainty and determination about future enforcement. Commissive modality, as described by Lyons (1977), is used to commit the speaker to a future course of action. Consider T4 below,

T4

I will make sure that discipline is maintained and school rules followed to the latter because without discipline you will not go far.

In T4 the principal’s use of “I will” underscores institutional surveillance and control, signaling a promise (or threat) that discipline will be upheld regardless of students’ choices. This reflects van Dijk’s (2008) argument that modality in authoritative speech often operates as a mechanism of power to legitimize disciplinary structures. In addition, the analysed data certain modality construction was seen to convey a strong advisory directive that borders on a warning. Consider the modal construction “had better” in T5.

T5

So, you had better take your studies seriously, you have the potential but you don’t want to use it. Tangu lini? (since when) When did xxxx boys school start beating us in anything? But they are going to do it, you are taking too long to study even when we have given...

According to Coates (1983), “had better” expresses obligation with implied negative consequences if the advice is not followed. The modality here blends advice and coercion, showing how principals use subtle linguistic force to maintain authority. It

reflects what Simpson (1993) calls the “ideological loading” of modality, where seemingly neutral advice becomes a tool of institutional power and discipline.

Overall, modality in these speeches is a linguistic mechanism for balancing authority, discipline, and encouragement. Through modal verbs like *must*, *should*, *can*, *might*, and *will*, principals simultaneously construct institutional power, impose obligations, and shape student subjectivities toward responsibility and compliance.

4.2 Power Structures Reflected Through Transitivity in School Speech

Transitivity is a central element in Critical Discourse Analysis because it reveals how actions, responsibilities, and experiences are linguistically represented. Halliday (1994) defines transitivity as the system through which language encodes processes (material, mental, relational, verbal), their participants, and circumstances. In the principals’ speeches, transitivity choices reveal power relations by attributing agency, constructing responsibility, and legitimizing authority. The analysed data showed that verbal processes are employed to foreground the authority of the principals like in T6.

T6

I want to announce now and here that I have demoted the school deputy captain. You cannot lead people when you are blind because you will all fall in a ditch. I want to challenge any other student council member to shape up.....we cannot pull in different directions and make it; we must work as a team. Secretaries are the eyes of the teachers, some of you have stopped seeing.

The process *announce* enacts institutional power through language, reminding students that principals’ words have direct material consequences. The principal’s words cannot be reversed.

Mental processes are also revealed in the analysis of principals’ speeches where they are used to regulate attitudes and internalize discipline as illustrated below.

T7

Don’t allow anything, anybody to destroy your school because this school will shape your future it is going to define who you become many years from today. I believe you will all pass the

exams if you prepare well. A prepared student becomes successful.

As Simpson (1993) notes, mental processes in educational discourse frequently serve ideological functions by framing desirable ways of thinking. The process *believe* reflects the principal's cognitive stance while simultaneously shaping students' mindset.

Similarly, in T8 the clause "there is some correlation" sets up a relational process framing behaviour as causally linked to academic results. The verbs "change" and "work hard" are material processes, placing students as agents of transformation. Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) argue that such constructions ideologically load responsibility onto students, while the speaker (principal) adopts the role of evaluator thus maintaining their authority above the student.

T8

I was thinking about pride, I was thinking about pride, and I said pride comes before a fall our behavior and those results there is some correlation between the two, our behavior and the results they are not biased, there is some correlation between the two, and we need to change, we need to change our mindset and know that aaa this is a national school and not a village school .You must work hard and be determined

Correspondingly, the principals also employ material processes ("make sure," "followed," "uphold") to emphasize enforcement of discipline within the school. This is illustrated in the following text.

T9

So, let's take care of our school, even if we are not making it in academics get out of this school with discipline. I will make sure that discipline is maintained and school rules followed to latter because without discipline you will not go far – there was another young man called XXX Wanjiru who died at a young age because of indiscipline. I call upon all of you to uphold discipline.

The passive construction "discipline is maintained" background's the administrators as agent of discipline and foregrounds the outcome. According to Simpson (1993),

this is a common strategy in institutional discourse, where responsibility is obscured to make rules appear natural and inevitable, rather than imposed.

Overall, transitivity choices in the speeches reflect a pedagogical ideology where students are positioned as responsible agents for academic success, but simultaneously regulated subjects within a hierarchical system. Material processes enforce obligations, mental processes encourage compliance, relational processes construct institutional and moral identities, and verbal processes legitimate authority. Thus, transitivity not only conveys action but also encodes power in the principals' discourse.

4.3 Pronouns as Linguistic Tools for Reinforcing School Power Dynamics

Pronoun use across the principals' speeches is central in shaping power relations and identities within the school community. As Wilson (1990) notes, pronouns are "indexical markers of inclusion, exclusion, and authority," and their distribution can reveal how speakers construct relationships between themselves and their audience. The analysed speeches demonstrate shifting patterns of "I," "we," "you," and "they" that negotiate control, solidarity, and discipline. Pronouns are among the most significant linguistic resources through which principals construct social relations, authority, and institutional identity. Fairclough (1989) emphasizes that pronouns play a key role in shaping inclusivity or exclusivity, thereby enacting power and solidarity. In the analysed speeches, pronouns are strategically deployed to establish institutional authority, assign responsibility, and create collective identity.

T10

we are saying make good use of your morning, make good use of your breaks, and make good use of your evening preps so that you can get ready for the exam. Remember we can achieve the highest mean score if we work together. There is nothing impossible.

The repeated use of the inclusive pronoun "we" in the phrases "we can achieve" "if we work together" emphasizes collective responsibility while also positioning the principal as part of the school community. Yet, in discourse, "we" often functions as a persuasive strategy to align the audience with the speaker's goals (Fairclough, 2001).

By use of the pronoun “we” the principal blurs hierarchical distance by invoking solidarity, but the underlying philosophy reinforces institutional authority; That success is only possible if students follow instructions given by the principals. As Wilson (1990) notes, pronouns can “construct in-groups and out-groups” that shape compliance. Here, “we” constructs a shared identity but also imposes institutional expectations.

It was also realized that principals’ discourse can shift from use of “we” to “you” so that the principal can isolate the students from the school community. This is illustrated in T11.

T11

.... Pride comes before a fall, our behaviour and those results there is some correlation between the two, our behaviour and the results they are not biased, there is some correlation between the two, and we need to change, we need to change our mindset and know that aaa this is a national school and not a village school. You must work hard and be determined...

In T11 the alternation between “we” (collective responsibility) and “you” (direct accountability) reflects a common rhetorical shift in institutional discourse. “We” frames the school community as unified, while “You” isolates students as the ones who must act. As Fairclough (1989) explains, pronouns often reveal power asymmetries: “we” projects authority as shared, but “you” individualizes blame. This duality conveys both solidarity and surveillance. Sometimes the principals alleviate their authoritarian tones while still underpinning their power like discussed in T12.

T12

Let’s work together to keep our school orderly, let’s make our environment conducive for ourselves, don’t see the next person and see the trouble maker...

In T12 the contracted form “let’s” (let us) signals directive inclusivity. While appearing cooperative, the principal disguises command as collaboration (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In the speech wher T12 was derived the principal urges students to adopt school values by framing discipline as a collective project. According to Hyland

(2001), such inclusive pronouns mitigate authoritarian tones while still underpinning the speaker's power to set norms.

Disorder is framed as a threat to communal identity, so compliance with the given directive becomes a shared moral duty. According to van Dijk (1997), direct pronouns function as a means of power enactment by personalizing control and leaving no room for collective negotiation. consider T13 below,

T13

...they are not anywhere near our curriculum. Let me tell the teachers, that kindly don't let any student address you in mixed languages, it looks queer and awkward. Can you be one among those who are always prepared? You must obey the school rules, yes you must obey the school rules otherwise you are on your own.

The repeated use of direct address with "you" emphasizes authority and discipline. Unlike "we," which suggests shared goals, "you" in this case marks students as the monitored subjects of institutional regulation. The conceptual stance is controlling, enforcing obedience through individual accountability. The students are left no room for a different view point rather than obeying the school rules.

Correspondingly, the principals use the pronoun "I" in a reflective, autobiographical mode. This personal narrative allows the principal to claim experiential authority thus positioning themselves as a moral guide. According to Fairclough (1995), the use of personal pronouns can construct an authoritative persona by linking institutional messages with individual authenticity. As illustrated in T14.

T14

I was asking myself, I have never since I was born so many years, I have never witnessed salt that is tasteless... I might be the problem and that is why I may feel that the salt is tasteless.

By embedding moral lessons in "I"-based anecdotes, the principal legitimizes his warnings against indiscipline. As Bucholtz & Hall (2005) argue, identity is

constructed through language; the “I” here constructs the principal as both elder and moral custodian.

In text 15, the principal uses “I” to underscore their centrality as decision makers.

T15

I want to announce now and here that I have demoted the school deputy captain. You are demoted with effect now. You cannot lead people when you are blind because you will all fall in a ditch. I want to challenge any other student council member to shape up.

“I” functions explicitly as an enactment of institutional power. The principal personalizes the disciplinary action, emphasizing their individual authority to enforce sanctions. As van Dijk (2008) notes, pronoun use in institutional contexts often reflects asymmetry: “I” signals the principals control and the power to make unilateral decisions, while “you” signals subjection. By repeating “I”, the principal accentuates their centrality as decision-makers, reinforcing authoritarian philosophy. This aligns with Weber’s (1978) concept of bureaucratic authority, where power is embodied in officeholders who exercise control in the name of the institution.

Overall, pronoun use in principals’ discourse functions ideologically to position students within relations of authority, discipline, and collective identity. “*We*” masks asymmetry under a rhetoric of unity, “*you*” personalize accountability, *I* assert authority while occasionally humanizing it, and “*they*” constructs deviance. Through these shifts, pronouns become tools of control and persuasion, central to the reproduction of institutional power.

4.4 Repetition as Indicators of Authority in School Communication

Repetition is a salient rhetorical device in principals’ discourse, used to emphasize key messages, reinforce authority, and instill institutional values. As Tannen (1989) argues, repetition is not redundancy but “a resource for creating coherence and persuasion.” In educational contexts, repetition strengthens directives and makes disciplinary ideologies resonate with students. The analysed data demonstrated how principals strategically deploy repetition to ensure compliance, build urgency, and moralize behavior. For instance, in the text below the principal uses prohibition to control students’ behaviour.

T16

Stop being comfortable, it is not easy that you can just move from a C into an A, there should be some efforts. Stop saying your father has money that is his own earned money if you work hard there are so many people waiting for you to be able to reward and recognize you

The repetition of the imperative “stop” in T16 above highlights prohibition. Imperative repetition is a classic form of directive control (Brown & Levinson, 1987), framing students’ behavior as unacceptable. It emphasizes the rejection of complacency and reliance on parental privilege. Through reiteration, the principal enforces their power to show direction within the school set up. They direct the student to the thinking that success must stem from students’ personal effort rather than inherited advantage.

As Tannen (2007) argues, repetition is a “meaning-making strategy” that intensifies urgency and engraves messages into memory, in text 17 below the principal uses reiteration to stress both collective failure (the “tail”) and individual accountability (results as “personal”).

T 17

I want to say this, that you can change these results the effort which you are putting in maths in geography and other subjects you can also translate it to physics. Subjects in form three that did no manage a 50 and above are quiet a number about seven or so and we are saying you can turn around these results, aam , the tail is wanting, the tail is wanting but i want to say results are very very personal, very very personal.

The repetition of “the tail is wanting” and “very very personal” dramatizes the seriousness of underperformance. This interplay reflects the ideological stance that while schooling is collective, ultimate responsibility is individualized. The analysed transcripts also showed that the principals employed repetition to moralize academic performance by ridiculing pride. Consider T18.

T18

I was thinking about pride, I was thinking about pride, and I said pride comes before a fall our behaviour and those results there is some correlation between the two, our behaviour and the results they are not biased, there is some correlation between the two, and we need to change,

By repeating “*I was thinking about pride*”, the principal foregrounds a moral lesson. The redundancy is purposeful: it aligns with what Fairclough (1989) calls “emphatic reiteration,” where repetition creates evaluative emphasis. The phrase builds rhythm and dramatization, portraying pride as a dangerous trait that must be eradicated. The ideological goal is to regulate student behaviour by moralizing academic performance.

In the following text, the principal frames repetition itself as a teaching tool: modelling the very words that students are expected to internalize. Politeness becomes institutional ideology, reinforcing hierarchical respect between teachers, parents, and students.

T19

Do we know how to say thank you... do we say thank you or we have to be asked to say? Let's listen to ourselves, are we people who have gratitude in our hearts...?

The phrase “*thank you*” is repeated in various forms to highlight politeness and respect. This echoes Tannen’s (2007) observation that repetition can create “semantic cohesion,” linking moral lessons to concrete linguistic practices. Use of repetition in the principals’ discourse also functions to naturalize discourse in order to reinforce dominance. As illustrated in T20.

T20

kiborana and kimeru...they are not anywhere near our curriculum. Let me tell the teachers, that kindly don't let any student address you in mixed languages, it looks queer and awkward. Can you be one among those who are always prepared. You must obey the school rules, yes you must obey the school rules otherwise you are on your own.

The repetition of “*you must obey*” in text 20 highlights authority. Repetition of obligation phrases, as van Dijk (1997) observes, functions to “acclimatize dominance

by presenting rules as inevitable truths.” The structure reinforces obedience as a non-negotiable norm. The rules are not to be questioned, only reiterated and obeyed.

Repetition thus bridges pedagogy and power: it functions both as a mnemonic tool and a coercive strategy. As Fairclough (2001) notes, discourse reproduces ideology when patterns of language naturalize certain power relations. By repeating directives, warnings, and moral lessons, principals shape students’ consciousness toward compliance with institutional norms.

In these speeches, repetition is not mere redundancy but a deliberate discursive strategy. It amplifies authority, dramatizes moral lessons, and embeds ideological messages about discipline, responsibility, and obedience. The effect is cumulative: through repeated phrases, students are positioned not only as learners but also as moral and institutional subjects. As Tannen (2007) reminds us, “repetition is the central means by which language creates involvement.” In the principals’ discourse, involvement is synonymous with control — and repetition is the linguistic vehicle by which that control is sustained

4.5 The Role of Speech Act in Shaping Power Relations in Schools

Speech Act Theory, introduced by Austin (1962) and extended by Searle (1969), argues that language is not merely descriptive but performative: to speak is to act. Utterances can command, promise, threaten, praise, warn, or encourage, depending on the context. In institutional discourse such as school leadership, speech acts function as instruments of authority, shaping behavior and constructing power relations. Fairclough (2001) notes that speech acts in institutional contexts often lean toward directives (telling others what to do) and commissives (making promises or threats), both of which enforce hierarchy. In the principals’ speeches, speech acts are used strategically to discipline, motivate, and control students as discussed below.

T21

It is good to have a good finish; it is good to finish well. Form twos those who don't finish well we are not promoting you to the next class, we are tired of stories of girls who have not read C.R.E notes and they are expected to pass.

In the above discourse the principal uses a directive speech act combined with an

implicit threat. The principal declares a conditional consequence that failure results in withheld promotion. As Searle (1969) notes, directives aim to get the hearer to do something, often reinforced with threats. Basically, this act enforces compliance by linking academic discipline to progression thus naturalizing obedience as the path forward.

In addition, the analysis revealed that principals employ expressive speech acts in their speeches as shown in T22.

T 22

I still believe if we sit down and refocus, we can get back to our position it is important as a student you ask yourself, yes these are our results, xxxxx results what about the personal results where are you? Yourself, where are you?

The principal in T22 uses an expressive speech act to express disappointment and concern. However, it also works coercively as a directive, pushing students to reflect critically on their performance. According to Austin (1962), speech acts are rarely pure; this utterance blends emotional expression with institutional command. Ideologically, it enforces self-surveillance, compelling students to internalize responsibility for performance.

Similarly, T23 shows principals use directive speech act cloaked in solidarity language to soften imposition.

T23

Another thing I want to share is that we are a growing school run by the ministry of education. we are a family one big family; we must all work together to make this family succeed

The principal employs a directive speech act shrouded in solidarity language. The modal verb “*must*” enforces obligation, while the family metaphor softens the imposition. Brown and Levinson (1987) describe such acts as politeness strategies, where coercion is masked by appeals to unity. Ideologically, this naturalizes hierarchy within the school, cooperation is framed as love, but disobedience is betrayal.

The analysed data also revealed that the principals combine assertive speech act with a commissive threat to coerce the student to some course of action.

T 24

*Parents are spending so much on you, are you worth a project?
Parents are spending as much as 50,000 shillings in a term? If
you waste a term is like wasting their sweat. Can your parents
say my daughter has brought home a good grade.*

In T24 the principal combines an assertive (stating the fact of school fees) with a commissive threat that failure in academics by the students equals betrayal of parents' sacrifice. As Fairclough (2001) notes, commissives in power discourse often function coercively by binding the hearer to a course of action. philosophically, this act enforces filial duty, making diligence a moral obligation beyond the school context.

Correspondingly, Assertives present descriptions as facts, even when metaphorical (Searle, 1969). T25 text agrees with this assertion.

T25

*I have never since I was born so many years, I have never
witnessed Salt that is tasteless, salt that is tasteless I was just
imagining, how can salt be tasteless? Salt that has no taste is
useless, completely useless.*

The statement 'salt that has no taste is useless' is an assertive speech act. The principal asserts a value judgment, equating underperformance with uselessness. Here, the evaluation is not neutral as it stigmatizes students who fail, reinforcing the principal's moral authority over the students.

In sum, speech acts in the principals' speeches function as linguistic instruments of authority. They include directives: ordering action (*don't oversleep, you must give your best*), Commissives: promising consequences (*no promotion, wasting parents' blood*), Expressives: dramatizing disappointment (*where are you?*) and Assertives: moral judgments (*useless salt*). As Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Fairclough (2001) argue, speech acts in institutional discourse are rarely neutral: they construct authority, regulate behavior, and enforce ideology. In these speeches, speech acts discipline both external actions (studying, waking up, working hard) and internal attitudes (self-reflection, guilt, obedience). They position principals as moral and institutional authorities whose words do not just describe reality but actively create it.

4.6 Invoking Religion and Culture to Reinforce Power in Educational Setting

Biblical and cultural allusions are potent rhetorical devices in the principals' discourse serving to anchor authority in shared moral, religious, and cultural frameworks. According to Chilton (2004), allusions to religion and culture "lend legitimacy to institutional power by appealing to higher moral orders." In the examined speeches, principals use such references to reinforce discipline, inspire hard work, and naturalize obedience as discussed under.

T25

I was thinking about pride, I was thinking about pride, and I said pride comes before a fall our behaviour and those results there is some correlation between the two

This allusion is directly biblical, from Proverbs 16:18 ("*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall*"). The principal uses it to frame academic underperformance as divine punishment for arrogance. By invoking scripture, the authority of discipline is strengthened with moral inevitability. As Chilton (2004) argues, biblical allusions often function as ideological shorthand: they carry authority because they are widely recognized and unquestionable within cultural context. Here, disobedience is framed as a sin leading to downfall. Likewise in T 26 below the principal uses another allusion biblical allusion.

T26

I was trying to reflect on the word of the day and I hope you have done the same, I was asking myself, I have never since I was born so many years, I have never witnessed Salt that is tasteless, salt that is tasteless I was just imagining, how can salt be tasteless? salt that has no taste is useless, completely useless.

This is an allusion to Matthew 5:13, where Jesus says believers are the "salt of the earth." The principal applies this to students, suggesting that losing "taste" is equivalent to losing moral and academic value. The allusion transforms academic indiscipline into a spiritual problem. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980), religious metaphors carry deep cultural schemas; here, tasteless salt signals loss of divine purpose. The ideology is clear: obedience preserves one's worth before God and

society thus the students must obey the principals so that they remain useful. Biblical allusion is also employed to emphasis unity and resilience as in T27.

T27

So please, let's listen to what we are being advised as the bible says, a house divided cannot stand and let us also grow let's mature and it is said, even Rome was not built in one day. You can't start a house today and complete it tomorrow, even a toilet, you can't start it today and tomorrow it is complete even behaviour change is gradual but don't take too long to grow.

In T27 the phrase “*a house divided cannot stand*” is biblical (Mark 3:25) and often quoted in political discourse. The principal deploys it to stress unity among students, linking disobedience with collapse. It is paired with the cultural allusion “*Rome not built in one day*”, to underscore resilience and handwork. The speech intertwines Christian teaching with historical wisdom. This mix legitimizes patience, unity, and perseverance as both divine and cultural obligations. Ideologically, it presents school success as dependent on collective faithfulness and gradual growth. The analysed data also showed that principals delegitimize students' complaints through cultural allusion as shown in T28.

T28

We know those who break the rules even when you think no one is seeing. There are schools that have suffered serious diseases including our neighbors here... over half of them had red eyes but none went home, they were treated.

The above text is a cultural allusion to communal resilience whereby the principal indirectly communicates that suffering together is normal and individuals must endure. In many African contexts, illness and hardship are framed as communal tests of strength. The principal draws on this cultural logic to delegitimize individual complaints about sickness. Ideologically, the allusion minimizes personal suffering and valorises collective endurance, reinforcing school discipline. In another discourse the principal alludes to gender norms so as to reclaim discipline. Consider T29.

T29

Remember a disciplined student is a good citizen... we are saying make good use of your break time. Some girls have

taken advantage of their gender... I am a woman and a woman has her own issues.

This excerpt contains cultural allusion to gender norms. The principal invokes the idea that women have “issues” (linked to menstruation or emotionality) but critiques students for abusing this cultural belief to gain privilege. By alluding to cultural gender scripts, the principal regulates behaviour and reclaims discipline over female students. The ideology intertwines cultural constructions of femininity with institutional expectations of discipline. Nevertheless, consider T30 in which the principal ties academic success to spiritual effort.

T30

Faith without action is dead. You are in school, you want to pass, unless you work hard that faith won't help you. This allusion to James 2:17 (“faith without works is dead”) ties academic success to spiritual effort. The principal recontextualizes scripture into education: just as faith requires deeds, prayer requires study. According to Fairclough (2001), recontextualization is a discursive strategy that moves ideas across domains. Ideologically, this allusion delegitimizes laziness cloaked in religiosity and frames schoolwork as an extension of Christian duty.

Biblical and cultural allusions in the principals’ speeches serve as discursive bridges between school authority and shared moral frameworks. As Charteris-Black (2004) argues, allusions are persuasive because they “borrow the authority of tradition” to legitimize new directives. In these speeches, principals skillfully weave biblical and cultural references to naturalize obedience, discipline, and loyalty. The effect is powerful as students are positioned not only as learners but also as moral subjects, whose academic duties are framed as spiritual obligations and cultural responsibilities.

4.7 Use of Rhetorical Questions in Discourse

Within the school environment, the discourse of principals plays a crucial role in shaping students’ conduct, values, and sense of accountability. Among the many linguistic strategies employed, rhetorical questions stand out as particularly powerful tools. While rhetorical questions are structurally posed as inquiries, their pragmatic

function is rarely to solicit answers. Instead, they function to guide thought, foreclose debate, and pressure listeners into accepting the authority of the speaker.

According to Fairclough (1992, 2001), rhetorical questions exemplify how dialogic appearance masks monologic authority. They simulate dialogue by inviting a response, yet the response is predetermined, rendering them mechanisms of control rather than genuine participation. In educational settings, rhetorical questions frequently serve as devices of discipline, moralization, accountability, and surveillance. As van Dijk (2006) observes, they often operate as persuasive strategies that normalize ideological positions, presenting power-laden assumptions as commonsense.

Rhetorical questions refer to the questions which a speaker poses only to gain an effect as opposed to expecting an answer. Such questions indicate the speaker's line of thoughts and are used to provoke the hearers to see the speaker's stand and they are important in revealing a speaker's viewpoint (Mutz (1996). They serve as strategic discourse tools for asserting authority, evoking reflection, reinforcing norms and shaping ideologies without directly commanding (Frank (1990).

In the principals' speeches rhetorical questions serve as powerful linguistic tools for asserting authority, shaping student behaviour, and reinforcing institutional discipline. According to Fairclough (2001), rhetorical questions in institutional discourse often function less as inquiries and more as assertions of control, compelling the audience to reflect while simultaneously limiting their response. In these speeches, the principals employ rhetorical questions not merely to seek answers but to emphasize expectations and to remind students of their obligations, thus reflecting underlying power dynamics.

T31

We can celebrate Brigit as much as we can, it is ok, we can clap. When shall we clap for you? You have the same opportunity, the same time, the teachers maximize on your time.

This excerpt demonstrates the use of rhetorical questions as mechanisms of public shaming and moral pressure. The principal contrasts Brigit's achievement with the silence surrounding others, thereby establishing a public hierarchy of recognition. The repeated rhetorical question is not a genuine query but an accusation framed as an

inquiry. Its force lies in its implicit judgment: students who have not yet received applause are positioned as failures.

From a CDA perspective, this aligns with Fairclough's (1992) view that rhetorical questions exemplify synthetic personalization, a technique by which institutional authority addresses individuals directly, creating the illusion of personal dialogue while enforcing collective discipline. The principal's words simulate engagement, but the intended meaning is clear: students are expected to perform or remain unworthy of recognition.

Foucault's (1977) concept of disciplinary power further illuminates the dynamics at play. The act of clapping for Brigit functions as a public ritual of reward, while the unanswered rhetorical question becomes a mechanism of surveillance. Students are compelled to internalize the expectation of recognition, disciplining themselves in pursuit of future applause. Thus, the rhetorical question simultaneously shames the present underperformance and projects a future-oriented demand for conformity.

T32
*.... tomorrow we will have board of management meeting here,
and this one scares me because I don't know, how do we
present those results to them?*

Building on the previous use of rhetorical questions to shame individuals, this excerpt shifts the focus toward collective accountability within broader institutional hierarchies. The principal's rhetorical question externalizes authority by invoking the Board of Management and the Ministry of Education. Students are reminded that their performance is not only a personal matter but a public record that the principal must defend before external evaluators.

Here, the rhetorical question operates as a form of pressure transfer. The principal positions themselves as the one who must answer to the board of managers, yet simultaneously places the burden on students: the poor results are theirs, and they have jeopardized the school's reputation. The question "how do we present those results?" is not a real inquiry but it is a device of guilt that ties student performance to the school's institutional standing.

Fairclough (2001) argues that such rhetorical strategies recontextualize micro-level failures (poor grades) within macro-level power structures (educational governance). The principal effectively constructs a chain of accountability running from students to principal to the Board of Management and ministry of education. This mirrors Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic power, where language mediates hierarchies, compelling subordinates to act in ways that protect the legitimacy of the institution.

Thus, the rhetorical question enacts a double move: it acknowledges the principal's fear of external accountability while coercing students into internalizing the institutional anxiety. The power of the question lies in its ability to make students complicit in protecting the school's image. In contrast to the institutional focus of T32 rhetorical question emphasizes moral judgment and religious discourse. Consider the text under.

T33

....I was trying to reflect on the word of the day and I hope you have done the same, I was asking myself, I have never since I was born so many years, I have never witnessed Salt that is tasteless, salt that is tasteless I was just imagining, how can salt be tasteless? salt that has no taste is useless, completely useless.

Drawing directly from the biblical metaphor of Matthew 5:13, the principal in T33 equates student indiscipline or poor performance with "tasteless salt." The rhetorical question "how can salt be tasteless?" functions as a moral paradox: since salt is naturally salty, tastelessness represents deviance and uselessness. This is not a genuine question but a moral verdict disguised as inquiry. Van Dijk (2006) notes that rhetorical questions often work as strategies of ideological persuasion, presenting moralized positions as self-evident. Here, the ideology being reinforced is that of Christian morality as a standard of worth within the school. Students who fail academically or behaviorally are implicitly positioned as morally corrupt, not merely unsuccessful.

Foucault's (1980) concept of pastoral power helps explain this dynamic. The principal, like a shepherd, uses moral discourse to guide and discipline the flock. By invoking religious imagery, the principal extends their authority beyond academic

performance to encompass the ethical and spiritual domains of student life. This creates a form of totalizing power, where failure is not just a lack of knowledge but a moral and spiritual deficiency. In this way, the rhetorical question is used to discipline the soul as well as the intellect, embedding institutional control within cultural and religious values. Correspondingly, rhetorical questions function as tools of surveillance and academic discipline. This is illustrated in T34 below.

T34

...they are books you are interacting with every day, why? So that you can be able to transfer the content that you have from what you have read into the questions that teachers are presenting to you, are you doing it honestly or you are still copying?

The principal's rhetorical "are you doing it honestly or still copying?" presupposes dishonesty and places students under suspicion. Fairclough (1995) observes that rhetorical questions in institutional discourse often create the illusion of dialogue while enforcing compliance. The principal here sets honesty as the unquestionable standard, implying that deviation is already observed. The rhetorical form strengthens the illusion of omnipresence. This resonates strongly with Foucault's (1977) notion of the panopticon, where subjects regulate themselves because they believe they are being watched. The rhetorical question acts as a linguistic panopticon, compelling students to internalize surveillance by imagining the principal's awareness of their behaviour.

Rhetorical questions in the principals' speeches function less as inquiries and more as discursive instruments of authority. As Ilie (1994) emphasizes, rhetorical questions in institutional discourse "appear dialogic but serve monologic ends." In these speeches, principals use rhetorical questions to dramatize authority, moralize discipline, and enforce compliance. They simulate dialogue but leave no space for negotiation, compelling students to internalize school values, making rhetorical questions one of the most subtle yet effective instruments of power in educational discourse.

4.8 Politeness Strategies as a Tool of Power in School Discourse

Politeness is often understood as a linguistic means of softening face-threatening acts and maintaining social harmony (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, in institutional contexts such as schools, politeness does not merely serve interpersonal courtesy; it frequently becomes a tool of authority and control. Principals, as institutional leaders, use politeness strategically: to command obedience, to mitigate discipline, or to embed authority in seemingly respectful language. Holmes (1995) argues that politeness in workplace discourse often masks asymmetrical power relations, making directives appear consensual. Similarly, Watts (2003) highlights that politeness is not neutral but socially situated, operating as a legitimizing discourse of authority. In schools, where hierarchical relations are explicit, politeness strategies allow principals to exercise power indirectly, creating the illusion of choice while reinforcing discipline.

T35 explores texts from principals' speeches in which politeness strategies are evident. While they may appear as tokens of respect, they function as mechanisms of institutional power.

T35

...You should respect your parent who are paying your school fees and respect each other because if they respect each other, you will not hear that students are fighting. ... values to say thank you, are we together? Do we know how to say thank you when someone does something good to us? do we say thank you or we have to be asked to say?

In this excerpt, the principal couches disciplinary directives within a politeness framework. Rather than explicitly commanding students to show gratitude, the principal employs positive politeness strategies by framing it as collective knowledge ("*are we together?*"). Brown and Levinson (1987) note that positive politeness appeals to solidarity, yet in institutional contexts it simultaneously masks hierarchy. Here, the principal's rhetorical politeness questions make the expectation of gratitude appear consensual rather than imposed. However, the underlying power dynamic is clear: failure to comply is implicitly constructed as deviance, disrespect to parents, and disruption of school harmony. The politeness strategy thus functions to naturalize obedience while avoiding the harshness of direct commands.

Holmes (2001) reminds us that such “inclusive politeness” in leadership discourse often disguises asymmetry. The principal appears collaborative, but the language compels conformity, exercising power through subtle moral persuasion. The following text illustrates how principals use politeness to legitimize authority through apparent consensus. The principal frames decisions as collective agreements (“did we agree...?”) even though the power to decide rests solely with the administration.

T36

...aaaa did we agree madam deputy on eeeh that we teach first before we go for supper? (chorus; yeeees from students), we agreed that at between 5 & 6 we go in class for a lesson then supper between 6&7 so that preps start at what time? (seven...from students) seven fifteen?

The strategy in T36 aligns with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) negative politeness, which mitigates imposition by presenting directives as student-endorsed. However, the ritualized call-and-response ensures that students publicly affirm the principal’s authority, transforming “agreement” into a display of obedience. Fairclough (1992) describes this as synthetic personalization: the illusion of individualized respect is created in a context of structural inequality. Power is exercised here by embedding administrative control within a veneer of politeness, thereby silencing resistance while fostering compliance.

Similarly, in T37 politeness appears in the complimenting strategy (“you are very smart today”). According to Holmes (1995), compliments function as positive politeness, reinforcing solidarity and rapport. Yet, in this institutional setting, the compliment is immediately followed by disciplinary expectation: students must “reciprocate” by working hard.

T37

God is good, all the time. Let me say you are very smart today, that smartness has cost the school some coins and so we expect you to reciprocate and do what is expected of you. ... Up to this time, the community and your family has already written some chapters on your life but you can delete to fit it the way you want to be. It is your responsibility to work hard and ensure you become what you want to be, it is doable it is not rocket science many have done it around. Aspire to achieve that which you have targeted. Some of you are targetless, woe unto them.”

T37 is a classic example of politeness as a sandwich strategy: soften the face-threatening act (warning of laziness) with a compliment at the beginning. The exercise of power is subtle: students are praised not for intrinsic worth but as a means of heightening obligation. By linking appearance to financial cost (“that smartness has cost the school some coins”), the principal invokes economic accountability.

Thus, politeness here is not mere courtesy but a disciplinary tool. It frames compliance as the natural response to generosity, placing students under moral obligation to the institution. Power is exercised through the reciprocity norm, where politeness becomes a vehicle for demanding responsibility.

Brown and Levinson (1987) note that leaders sometimes combine politeness with threats to reinforce authority. T38 below agrees with this assertion whereby the “soft entry” creates the illusion of fairness, but the sudden withdrawal of politeness dramatizes the principal’s ultimate control.

T38

“...Some of you are coming to school late, if you come late on Monday, you will not like it utaenda nyumbani (you will go home), I will send you home without any discussion. ... So, I want to challenge you here before these others to work smart. Remember you are here to perform; you are in 8.4.4 system you must perform.”

The above text demonstrates the limits of politeness. The principal begins with an almost neutral framing (“*some of you are coming late*”), which softens the critique through generalization. However, this politeness is quickly withdrawn as the speech turns to a bald on-record threat (“I will send you home without any discussion”). Here, politeness is conditional: it is extended only to students who conform. For non-conformers, power is exercised directly through threats of expulsion. Thus, politeness is revealed as a strategic mask of authority, deployed when useful but abandoned when the assertion of institutional dominance is necessary.

As Holmes (1995) and Watts (2003) argue, politeness in hierarchical contexts is always ideological: it conceals power while reproducing it. In these speeches, politeness strategies do not equalize relations but reinforce asymmetry, embedding

compliance within respect, gratitude, and obligation. Thus, politeness in principals' discourse is best understood as a linguistic mask of authority. It enables principals to exercise power indirectly, making commands appear consensual, discipline appear fair, and economic demands appear reasonable. In reality, the asymmetry remains intact: students are disciplined, surveyed, and held accountable, all through the seemingly courteous medium of politeness.

4.9 Discourse Markers as Instruments of Power in Principals' Speeches

Discourse markers are small linguistic items such as *so, now, well, you see, therefore, let me tell you*, which help speakers manage the flow of talk, signal relationships between ideas, and guide the listener's interpretation (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1999). While they may appear minor or merely connective, discourse markers are deeply implicated in power relations. They allow speakers to assert control over the organization of discourse, highlight priorities, and frame students' responsibilities in ways that reinforce institutional hierarchies.

Fairclough (2001) emphasizes that the micro-linguistic features of institutional talk, including connectors and markers, play crucial roles in structuring authority. By directing the flow of reasoning and interaction, principals exercise not just pedagogical but also disciplinary power. The following discussion confirms that discourse markers are central to the construction of meaning and power in principals' speeches.

T39

...God is good, all the time. Let me say you are very smart today, that smartness has cost the school some coins and so we expect you to reciprocate and do what is expected of you.

The principal in T39 employs the marker "so" to signal a logical consequence, linking appearance ("very smart") with obligation ("reciprocate"). This marker functions as an inferential connector (Fraser, 1999), guiding students to interpret the compliment as a debt to be repaid through discipline. Power is exercised through framing. "So" naturalizes the principal's reasoning, making the demand appear inevitable rather than optional. As van Dijk (2006) argues, such markers subtly embed authority by controlling the interpretive frame.

The analysed data also revealed that discourse markers are used to intensify discipline through ridicule as illustrated in T40.

T40

...Some of you walk sluggishly as if they are dying the next minute. This shows how your mind is. It is still asleep. Now, I want you to be serious."

The marker "now" operates as a frame-shifter (Schiffrin 1987), moving the discourse from description (sluggishness) to directive (be serious). This shift asserts the principal's authority to redefine the moment and direct student behavior.

The exercise of power here lies in control of interactional sequencing. By using *now*, the principal closes the space for negotiation, demanding immediate attention and seriousness. This reflects Foucault's (1977) view of disciplinary talk as a form of temporal regulation controlling not only what is said but when it must be acted upon. In addition, discourse markers are used to reinforce institutional authority by moralizing effort as revealed in T41 whereby power is exercised through epistemic authority.

T41

...Form fours you cannot plant maize and harvest beans, you cannot plant oranges and harvest lemons, therefore you will harvest exactly what you plant.

The marker "therefore" functions as a conclusion marker, presenting the principal's moralizing analogy as a logical deduction. This device removes space for doubt and the farming analogy becomes an unchallengeable law. By using *therefore*, the principal positions themselves as a rational voice of truth, disguising ideological expectations (hard work equals success) as natural logic. As Fairclough (1992) emphasizes, such markers help institutional speakers mask coercion as reasoning.

The analysis of discourse markers in principals' speeches shows that these small linguistic items play a large role in constructing institutional power. As Schiffrin (1987) and Fraser (1999) argue, discourse markers are central to the management of interaction and meaning. In principals' speeches, these markers are not filler words but instruments of power. They guide interpretation, control sequencing, intensify evaluation, and naturalize moral judgments. Ultimately, by structuring discourse

through markers, principals exercise authority subtly but forcefully, embedding discipline and institutional priorities within the flow of everyday talk.

4.10 Conclusion

The synthesis of the discursive strategies across the principals' speeches reveals that these are not casual addresses but complex performances of power. Through rhetorical questions, students are drawn into pseudo-dialogues where the only acceptable answers affirm institutional authority. Through politeness, coercion is masked as care. Through irony and sarcasm, shame is mobilized as a disciplinary force. Through hyperbole, obligations are dramatized into life-or-death stakes. Through metaphors and analogies, discipline is naturalized as common sense. Through evaluative language, moral worth is defined and controlled. Through discourse markers, reasoning is structured as logical inevitability. And through code-switching, authority is grounded both institutionally and culturally.

Together, these features construct a comprehensive discursive system that disciplines students' bodies, regulates their time, moralizes their choices, and shapes their identities. The speeches embed broader ideologies: neoliberal accountability (you harvest what you plant), authoritarian discipline (without discipline you are nothing), religious morality (a house divided cannot stand), and cultural legitimacy (fahari yetu).

As Fairclough (2001) emphasizes, language is not just representation but social action. In these speeches, principals act upon students shaping their subjectivities, guiding their behavior, and legitimizing institutional hierarchies. The ordinary linguistic features such as questions, compliments, jokes, exaggerations, metaphors and switches become extraordinary technologies of power.

Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates that principals' discourse functions as a comprehensive system of symbolic power. By layering rhetorical strategies, principals secure obedience, minimize resistance, and reproduce institutional ideologies in ways that appear ordinary, logical, or even caring. Yet beneath this ordinariness lies profound power: the power to define reality, regulate morality, and naturalize authority in the everyday lives of students.

CHAPTER FIVE

IDEOLOGICAL INCLINATIONS OF IMENTI- NORTH HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' DISCOURSE

5.0 Introduction

The discourse of high school principals is a key site for the construction and reproduction of educational ideologies. Beyond administrative functions, principals' speeches are imbued with values and assumptions that shape how students perceive themselves, their institution, and their role in society. Schools act not merely as places of learning but as ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971), where language is used strategically to instill discipline, foster loyalty, promote national unity, and align learners with broader socio-political agendas. Principals' discourse thus provides fertile ground for examining how power, authority, and identity are enacted in educational spaces.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers the means to uncover how principals reproduce ideologies such as nationalism and institutional prestige, where schools are framed as elite spaces whose reputations must be guarded, and as symbols of national pride. Through CDA, it becomes clear how principals also advance neoliberal and meritocratic ideologies, urging students to embrace competition, self-reliance, and performance as markers of success. Similarly, ideologies of discipline and moral order are reinforced through discourses of surveillance, regulation, and obedience, where students are reminded that their behaviour reflects both personal and institutional identity. In other contexts, principals' discourse integrates religious and inclusion ideologies, invoking spirituality, moral uprightness, and equity to construct a sense of communal belonging. At the same time, traces of authoritarianism and surveillance reveal how language sustains hierarchical authority, while gender ideology emerges in the ways principals speak about roles, responsibilities, and expectations across male and female students.

5.1 Discourse of Meritocracy in Schools

The ideology of meritocracy, broadly understood as the belief that success is determined by individual effort, talent, and discipline rather than social background, permeates contemporary educational discourse. Meritocracy is often presented as a

fair and just principle that motivates students to achieve excellence. Yet, as scholars such as Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), Young (1958), and Littler (2018) argue, the rhetoric of meritocracy also obscures structural inequalities, naturalizes competition, and legitimizes existing social hierarchies. Within the school context, principals' speeches to students play a crucial role in shaping the ways in which meritocratic ideals are internalized, contested, and reproduced.

The transcripts of principals' speeches in Kenyan secondary schools reveal recurring meritocratic themes. Success is framed as the outcome of personal responsibility, discipline, and hard work, while failure is individualized as lack of effort or poor attitude. Recognition, rewards, and mobility are presented as accessible to all who are determined enough to pursue them, while broader socio-economic constraints are often minimized or erased. This chapter analyses texts from the principals' speeches to demonstrate how the ideology of meritocracy is linguistically and rhetorically constructed.

In T42, the principal personalises the results by emphasizing that examination outcomes are “very very personal.” The repetition underscores the notion that achievement is wholly individualized, detached from collective conditions. By stating that all students have “the same opportunity” and “the same time,” the principal constructs the school environment as an equal playing field.

T42

I want to say this, that you can change these results the effort which you are putting in maths in geog and other subjects you can also translate it to physics... ..results are very very personal, very very personal we can celebrate Brigit as much as we can, it is ok, we can clap, when shall we clap for you? When shall we clap for you? You have the same opportunity, the same time, the teachers maximise on your time ...

From a critical discourse perspective, this framing obscures structural inequalities such as differences in socio-economic background, access to resources, or even psychological well-being. Instead, failure is attributed solely to individual shortcomings. This aligns with what Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) describe as the “misrecognition” of structural inequality through the ideology of meritocracy. By

individualizing responsibility, the discourse legitimizes educational outcomes as natural reflections of personal merit rather than products of social stratification.

The rhetorical question “*when shall we clap for you?*” operates simultaneously as a motivational challenge and a subtle reprimand. From a speech act perspective, it functions as both an indirect directive urging students to work harder so they too can be celebrated and as a commissive, implicitly promising recognition if they succeed (Searle, 1976). This demonstrates the dual performative force of the utterance: it directs students toward greater effort while committing the institution to reward achievement.

Politeness theory illuminates how this directive is strategically mitigated. Public recognition through clapping acts as a positive politeness strategy, reinforcing group solidarity and affirming the efforts of high achievers (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, this collective act simultaneously constitutes a face-threatening act (FTA) toward low achievers, implicitly highlighting their lack of recognition. Thus, while the principal frames the celebration as inclusive, the discourse creates an exclusionary hierarchy where meritocratic success is rewarded with public validation, and failure is marked by silence.

Moreover, the principal emphasizes equal opportunity “*you have the same opportunity, the same time*” which aligns with the core assumption of meritocracy: that all students compete on a level playing field. Yet, as critical scholars argue, this assumption ignores disparities in prior preparation, social capital, and economic privilege (McNamee & Miller, 2009). By glossing over these inequalities, the principal’s speech constructs a narrative where underachievement is a product of laziness or lack of effort, further entrenching the meritocratic myth.

Similarly, high school principals discourse creates meritocratic ideology by linking hard work to elite status as in the discourse below.

T43

...you must work hard and be determined. Gentlemen you need to know that eeeeh in ten years’ time, fifteen years’ time you are the people who should be occupying those prestigious positions in government and unless you realize that, then you will have it wrong ...

This text explicitly links present academic effort with future occupational prestige, revealing how principals invoke meritocracy ideology to project educational success as a pathway to elite societal roles. The reference to “prestigious positions in government” aligns with the neoliberal discourse that positions schooling as a competitive ladder to upward mobility (Ball, 2017). CDA highlights the interdiscursive blending of education with governance, suggesting that only those who excel academically are entitled to positions of national leadership. This naturalizes inequality by implying that social elites are those who ‘deserve’ it due to their diligence and merit (Littler, 2017).

From a speech act perspective, the utterance contains both directives (“you must work hard and be determined”) and commissives (a promise of future prestige if the directive is obeyed). Such speech acts are not merely descriptive but performative, shaping students’ aspirations and aligning them with institutional values (Austin, 1962). The use of futurity “*in ten years’ time*” serves as a perlocutionary act, motivating immediate compliance through the allure of long-term reward.

Politeness strategies are almost absent here, replaced by bald on-record imperatives “*you must work hard*”, which intensify the principal’s authority (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The speech is face-threatening, particularly in its explicit gender hierarchy: “*girls cannot be ahead of us.*” This not only undermines meritocracy’s claim of equality but also reveals how gender ideology intersects with meritocracy, reinforcing patriarchal norms where male students are positioned as naturally destined for leadership while females’ success is framed as a threat.

In T44 the principal paints education as an individual enterprise whereby personal responsibility is foregrounded. By asserting “*parents will not read on your behalf,*” the principal minimizes the role of family support and transfers all responsibility to the student. The phrase “*the ball is in your court*” employs the metaphor of a competitive game, underscoring autonomy and self-reliance.

T44

...parents will not read on your behalf; it is your business. The ball is in your court; it is expected that you give your academics your best. we have produced the best student in the

region, na hiyo ni Fahari yetu zote (and that is our pride). We must remain on the track.

The utterances are primarily assertives (statements of fact about responsibility) and directives (urging students to give their best). The code-switching into Kiswahili “*na hiyo ni Fahari yetu zote*” (that is our pride) functions as a positive politeness strategy, reinforcing communal identity and pride (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Yet, this solidarity is conditional: only high achievers bring “pride” to the community.

Recognition of “the best student in the region” is used as evidence of meritocracy at work: success is celebrated as a product of individual effort and is positioned as the collective pride of the institution (“*Fahari yetu zote*”). The logic of competition and individual responsibility reflects neoliberal discourses of education where learners are treated as self-managing agents. Bowles and Gintis (1976) critique this framing as part of the “correspondence principle,” where schools prepare individuals to internalize discipline and responsibility in ways that mirror capitalist labour relations. Thus, meritocracy here is not only a principle of fairness but also a mechanism of socialization, shaping students into self-regulating subjects who see success and failure as entirely their own doing.

Correspondingly, T45 captures the relentless demand for performance within the meritocratic framework.

T45

Remember you are here to perform; you are in 8.4.4 system you must perform. We don't encourage people mark timing in one place because of performance. Do your best every day by working hard. Always keep a step ahead. Have a target to propel you ahead. Your targets are achievable but you must work very hard.

The repetition of “must” constructs obligation as absolute, presenting performance as non-negotiable. Through CDA, this normalizes the reduction of students to performers in a system where value is measured by output, echoing critiques that education under neoliberalism mirrors corporate performance metrics (Littler, 2017).

The phrase “mark timing in one place” metaphorically frames non-performance as stagnation, delegitimizing students who fail to progress as failures of merit. The

imperatives “do your best,” “keep a step ahead,” and “have a target” constitute directive speech acts designed to instill a forward-looking, goal-oriented mentality. These directives also function as perlocutionary acts, aiming to motivate students into relentless striving and self-discipline (Searle, 1976).

Politeness strategies are minimal here; instead, the principal employs bald on-record commands to assert institutional authority. This starkly face-threatening style reflects the urgency and high stakes associated with the meritocratic ideology in exam-oriented contexts like the 8.4.4 system.

Ultimately, the discourse positions education as a perpetual competition, where only those who continuously “keep a step ahead” are deemed worthy. By framing targets as “achievable” through hard work, the principal reiterates the central myth of meritocracy: that effort alone guarantees success, regardless of systemic inequities (McNamee & Miller, 2009).

The heart of meritocratic ideology is encapsulated in T46 below by erasure of background inequalities. By insisting that “it does not matter where you come from,” the principal erases the influence of socio-economic background, gender, or other structural factors in shaping educational outcomes. Success is redefined as a matter of personal qualities “what is inside you” and effort “just give it your best.”

T46

...I want to tell you that it does not matter where you come from. What is inside you is enough to make you fly. whatever you want to do, just give it your best.

While empowering at face value, such discourse conceals the uneven playing field faced by students from different socio-economic realities. Littler (2018) critiques this as the “meritocracy myth,” where inequality is denied through narratives of individual determination. The metaphor “make you fly” glamorizes the possibility of upward mobility, reinforcing the belief that success is universally accessible despite evidence to the contrary.

The analysis of the above texts demonstrates how the ideology of meritocracy is linguistically and rhetorically embedded in principals' speeches. Through personalization of results, projection into elite futures, emphasis on self-reliance, metaphors of battle, and erasure of background inequalities, the discourse constructs education as a fair contest where success depends solely on effort and discipline.

This ideological framing motivates students to work harder by presenting rewards as attainable, instils values of discipline and accountability, and legitimizes recognition of top performers. However, it also masks structural inequities such as socio-economic disparities, gendered constraints, and unequal access to resources. By presenting opportunities as equal and outcomes as natural consequences of individual effort, the speeches reinforce a system that normalizes both success and failure as deserved.

From a critical discourse analysis perspective, meritocracy here functions as a powerful ideological tool: it shapes how students understand themselves, their peers, and their futures, while simultaneously reproducing social hierarchies under the guise of fairness. In doing so, it highlights the dual nature of meritocratic discourse in education—both empowering and constraining, both motivating and mystifying

5.2 Neoliberal Perspective in Principals' Discourse

Rooted in economic rationality and market-based principles, neoliberal ideology emphasizes individual responsibility, efficiency, competition, accountability, and the commodification of knowledge (Harvey, 2005; Ball, 2003). In education, this manifests in the framing of students as self-managing entrepreneurs of the self, schools as competitive enterprises, and learning as an investment in human capital. Critical discourse analysis of principals' speeches provides a rich entry point into the ways neoliberalism is articulated and reproduced in everyday school life. By examining principals' language, we can uncover how students are encouraged to internalize market logics by optimizing their time, treating themselves as projects of investment, and competing against peers and other schools. Drawing on the transcripts of Kenyan secondary school principals' speeches, this chapter identifies texts where neoliberal ideology is evident and critically analyses how it is linguistically constructed.

T 47 reflects a neoliberal logic of efficiency and optimization. Students are instructed to “make good use” of every available moment; morning, breaks, and evening preparation. Time is treated as a scarce resource that must be maximized for productivity. The emphasis on achieving the “highest mean score” frames learning outcomes in measurable, quantifiable terms.

T47

...make good use of your morning, make good use of your breaks, and make good use of your evening preps so that you can get ready for the exam. Remember we can achieve the highest mean score if we work together. There is nothing impossible.

Neoliberal discourse often redefines education as a site of performance measurement, where efficiency, targets, and rankings are paramount. Here, the notion that “nothing is impossible” aligns with neoliberal optimism, suggesting that effort and discipline can always generate better outcomes if time is managed effectively. This framing individualizes responsibility for success, while also embedding a collective competitive goal—the school’s mean score. As Ball (2003) observes, neoliberal performativity transforms schools into data-driven organizations where success is evidenced through measurable outputs.

As Fairclough (2010) argues, neoliberal discourse colonizes education by infusing it with business-like concepts of branding, targets, and market competition. The text below the neoliberal notion of self-responsibilities and institutional branding is evident.

T48

...parents will not read on your behalf; it is your business. The ball is in your court; it is expected that you give your academics your best. we have produced the best student in the region, na hiyo ni Fahari yetu zote. We must remain on the track.

In the declaration that “parents will not read on your behalf; it is your business.” Responsibility for educational outcomes is entirely individualized, reflecting the neoliberal principle of the self-managing subject. Students are constructed as

entrepreneurs of their own learning, tasked with monitoring and maximizing their own performance.

At the same time, the school positions itself as a brand competing within the educational marketplace: “we have produced the best student in the region, na hiyo ni Fahari yetu zote.” (that is our pride). The code -switching serves as a positive politeness strategy invoking collective identity. Yet, this collective pride depends on individual students’ ability to compete and win, reflecting neoliberal commodification of achievement. The discourse of “remaining on track” reinforces the idea that both students and the school must maintain competitiveness.

Correspondingly, the principals frame education explicitly in financial terms as illustrated in T49 below. Assessment is described not primarily as a pedagogical tool but as a costly commodity that must justify its expense. The language of “value for money” echoes neoliberal managerial discourse, where education is subjected to cost-benefit analysis and efficiency audits (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

T49

...continuous assessment test, those tests are very costly. Right now, our machine requires a lot of money because of production of those papers, it requires more than 40,000 kshs to repair... on financial management there must be value for money.

This commodification of education positions students and their performance as investments. By invoking the financial burden of assessment, the principal transfers responsibility onto students to make those costs worthwhile by working hard and producing results. The economic rationality embedded in this discourse exemplifies neoliberal governance in education, where accountability is framed in terms of financial sustainability and return on investment.

The conditional promise of a goat operates as a commissive (rewarding performance) but is undercut by the threat to withdraw the reward if failures occur. This duality of reward and punishment functions as a perlocutionary act designed to regulate

behaviour through incentive structures, mirroring neoliberal performance management systems.

The tone is coercive, using bald on-record threats (“we are going to punish”). Such speech highlights the disciplinary underside of neoliberalism, where accountability is enforced through market-like sanctions and rewards.

Also, neoliberal ideology was revealed through principals’ language of competition and target setting. Consider the text below,

T50

“...we are concerned about our targets and every subject counts. If we have to get to 9.0, we need every subject. We need to score well in every subject. We have been known of being mathematics champions around. We want to maintain the same. Others are competing with us. So, the moment we relax, others may overtake us. We are not ready to be overtaken because we are the best in this region.”

This text epitomizes neoliberal competitive logic in education. Students are positioned within a target-driven regime, with the school’s goal quantified as a “9.0” mean score. Every subject is instrumentalized as a contributor to this aggregate score, illustrating how neoliberalism prioritizes measurable outcomes over holistic learning (Ball, 2012).

The school is also framed as a competitor in a wider educational marketplace: it has been “mathematics champions” and must defend that position against rivals. The fear of being “overtaken” reflects the neoliberal anxiety of competition, where institutions and individuals must constantly strive to outperform others. Such discourse aligns with what Harvey (2005) identifies as the neoliberal valorisation of competition as the natural state of human relations. Through this language, education becomes less about intrinsic learning and more about producing competitive results that secure the school’s market position.

Phrases like “*we need every subject*” and “*we need to score well*” are directive acts pushing students and teachers toward specific actions. These implicitly assign responsibility to all members of the school community. Such directives reflect neoliberalism’s emphasis on accountability and performance measurement

(Fairclough, 2010). Commissive acts “*we want to maintain the same*” commit the institution to future excellence, mirroring the neoliberal idea of continuous competition and improvement. The Assertive acts “*We are the best in this region*” asserts a competitive identity, reinforcing benchmarking and rivalry with other schools—central features of neoliberal ideology.

On Politeness Strategies the inclusive pronouns (“we”) function as a positive politeness strategy, creating solidarity between principal, teachers, and students. This softens the authoritarian directive (“we need to score well”) by framing it as a collective mission rather than a top-down order (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The principal uses Indirect imposition instead of commanding directly “You must work harder”, the principal says “*the moment we relax, others may overtake us.*” This indirect form mitigates face-threat, but still achieves the persuasive goal. It reflects a neoliberal discourse where competitiveness is framed as natural and unavoidable.

Similarly, T51 below reveals how the principals frame students as investments made by their parents, asking whether they are “worth a project.” The metaphor of students as projects to be managed and optimized reflects the neoliberal discourse of human capital theory (Becker, 1993). Education is depicted as a costly input requiring returns in the form of academic success.

T51

...Parents are spending so much on you, are you worth a project? Parents are spending as much as 50,000 shillings in a term? If you waste a term, it is like wasting their sweat.

By quantifying parental expenditure “50,000 shillings in a term” the principal reinforces the commodification of education. Students are urged to justify this investment by working hard and producing results, or else risk being seen as wasting their parents’ “sweat.” This discourse aligns with neoliberal logics of cost efficiency, productivity, and return on investment, where education is no longer a social good but a personal and familial economic gamble.

The texts analysed above demonstrate how neoliberal ideology is deeply embedded in principals’ speeches. Neoliberal discourses are constructed through emphasis on efficiency (time management and optimization), responsabilization (the ball is in your

court), commodification (value for money), competitive performativity (targets and champions), and human capital framing (students as parental projects).

This discourse has several implications. First, it motivates students by presenting education as a pathway to measurable success and competitive advantage. Second, it disciplines them into self-managing subjects who internalize responsibility for outcomes, reducing reliance on structural or institutional explanations for failure. Third, it positions schools as competitive enterprises, accountable to stakeholders through quantifiable results and financial efficiency.

However, such framing also has critical consequences. By privileging efficiency, competition, and financial rationality, neoliberal discourse marginalizes alternative values of education such as critical thinking, creativity, or holistic development. It commodifies learning, reduces students to projects of investment, and sustains inequalities by ignoring structural barriers.

From a critical discourse analysis perspective, principals' speeches function as sites where neoliberal ideology is normalized and reproduced. Through everyday language, students are taught to perceive themselves not simply as learners, but as entrepreneurial agents responsible for optimizing their own productivity, competing with others, and justifying investments. In this way, neoliberalism not only shapes educational policy but penetrates the very subjectivities of students, reinforcing the global hegemony of market-oriented logics in education.

5.3 Ideology of Authoritarianism and Surveillance

Schools have long been understood as institutions of both knowledge transmission and social control. While they provide education, they also discipline students into conformity through rules, routines, and hierarchies. The ideology of authoritarianism in education emphasizes obedience, discipline, and top-down authority, while surveillance mechanisms reinforce compliance through constant monitoring (Giroux, 1983; Apple, 2004). These ideologies intersect in the school context, where principals, as authority figures, exercise both symbolic and material power over students.

Drawing on Michel Foucault's (1977) notion of the panopticon, surveillance in schools ensures that students internalize discipline even in the absence of direct supervision. Authoritarianism, in turn, normalizes rigid hierarchies, where students must obey without question and punishment follows any disobedience. In the transcripts of Kenyan high school principals' speeches, these ideological elements are highly visible. Through their language, principals construct schools as controlled spaces where discipline, obedience, and constant monitoring are essential for educational success and social order.

This section analyses texts from principals' speeches that reveal authoritarianism and surveillance. It demonstrates how linguistic choices naturalize strict discipline, justify constant monitoring, and legitimize exclusion of deviant individuals.

Consider T52 in which the principal explicitly illustrates surveillance ideology through CCTV and panoptic gaze. The text enacts multiple speech acts: a directive ("you must tell me who spoilt the camera"), a commissive (obligating students to pay for damages), and a threatening expressive (implying surveillance will be inescapable) (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969).

T52

...That CCTV is placed there for your own good. Form fours you must tell me who spoilt the camera... The cameras and the cables are very expensive each camera costs more than nine thousand. Form fours you are going to meet the cost of repairing them... We are going to buy cameras that are smaller than your eye, which you can't know where they are. They will be monitoring your actions closely.

The phrase "for your own good" is a positive politeness strategy, softening the coercion by presenting surveillance as benevolent (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, hidden cameras represent a bald-on-record face-threatening act, stripping students of privacy. CDA shows how surveillance is normalized, the utterances are both assertives (stating the existence of cameras) and threatening directives (ordering students to reveal who spoiled them). The commitment to install hidden cameras is a commissive, binding the institution to future surveillance. while Speech Act Theory reveals how principals perform control through directives and threats, and Politeness Theory uncovers the veneer of care masking authoritarian discipline.

In the text, the installation of CCTV cameras is justified “for your own good,” reflecting Foucault’s (1977) notion of disciplinary power that disguises surveillance as benevolent. The emphasis on hidden cameras “smaller than your eye” evokes the panoptic principle, where students are never sure when they are being watched and must therefore regulate themselves continuously.

By insisting that students pay for damaged cameras, the principal also enforces financial responsibility for surveillance, embedding it as part of the institutional culture. The authoritarian aspect lies in coercion: students “must tell” who destroyed the equipment, and punishment is tied to collective responsibility. Surveillance thus becomes both a physical reality and an internalized gaze that enforces conformity.

Giroux (1983) argues that authoritarian schooling cultivates docility, where compliance is valued over critical thinking. In this case, discipline is framed not as a collaborative norm but as a rule enforced by threat. The emphasis on punishment rather than dialogue reinforces authoritarian control and positions students as subjects to be regulated as illustrated beneath.

T53

...let us do the right thing because any form of indiscipline will not be tolerated.

This statement embodies authoritarian ideology by positioning obedience as non-negotiable. The phrase “will not be tolerated” removes any possibility of negotiation or dialogue, instead asserting absolute authority. The collective directive “let us do the right thing” superficially suggests inclusivity but immediately collapses into unilateral command, producing a face-threatening act that undermines students’ autonomy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). From a critical discourse perspective, such language reflects hierarchical relations of power where the principal’s authority is unquestionable.

In the same way, the principals extend their authoritarian control to students by regulation of interactions and threats of suspension. In T54 interaction of students with parents within school grounds is prohibited.

T54

We are expecting form three parents on Friday, aaa an habit is growing, a bad one, you see a parent walk into the school and you must see how you can send that parent to send a distress message to your parent---a number of you did that last week--- unless you are permitted you must not talk to a parent. that will attract a penalty, a parent is a stranger, it will attract suspension, that will not be compromised. If you do it then expect consequences.

By framing a parent as “a stranger,” the principal redefines family relationships in institutional terms, where the authority of the school supersedes familial ties. The warning that violation “will attract suspension” reinforces disciplinary power through threat of exclusion.

The language of “not be compromised” further signals rigidity and zero tolerance. Authoritarian discourse relies on the erasure of negotiation, presenting rules as absolute. Fairclough (2010) emphasizes that modality in discourse (“will attract suspension”) functions as a mechanism of control, establishing inevitability. Surveillance is implicit in the idea that students’ interactions are monitored and policed, ensuring that unauthorized contact is punishable.

T55 reflects authoritarian discourse in its purest form: rules must be obeyed “unconditionally.” The use of code-switching “lazima mufuate sheria” (you must follow the law) emphasizes the binding and compulsory nature of obedience. The denial of argument (“don’t argue with the gate man”) negates any space for student agency or dialogue

T55

...The support staff normally give you instructions, these instructions are normally given from the office not the loos. You (must follow the rules), lazima mufuate sheria. Don’t argue with the gate man, instructions should be followed to the latter, I have said again school rules should be followed unconditionally. The following will be punished for disobeying school rules.

From a speech act perspective, these are directives strengthened by explicit threats (“the following will be punished”). The act of pre-empting argument (“don’t argue with the gate man”) functions as a directive that suppresses dissent, consolidating authoritarian power. The bald imperatives are maximally face-threatening, asserting hierarchical control over students and even extending to interactions with lower-ranked staff (gate man, support staff). This reinforces the institutional surveillance apparatus, where students are monitored and controlled across all domains of school life.

In this discourse the principal constructs the school as a mini-state with rigid authority structures. The invocation of “punishment” for disobedience reinforces the disciplinary function of schooling. Apple (2004) critiques such authoritarian schooling for privileging order over inquiry, producing compliant subjects rather than critical citizens. Surveillance complements this authoritarianism when students are expected to self-monitor to avoid punishment, internalizing obedience as the safest mode of existence. Contemplate the following text whereby authoritarian control is coupled with surveillance and exclusion.

T56

...Tomorrow we are doing a routine fire drill for the teachers, students and workers. It is a direct directive from the ministry for education you ought to learn how to use fire extinguishers... It is now official that some of you have been advised by the board to seek a change of learning environment to another school since their opinions, actions and way of thinking do not rhyme with this school.

The principal emphasizes that the drill is a “direct directive from the ministry,” positioning compliance as mandatory and external to student choice. The phrase “you ought to learn” places responsibility on students to conform to state-mandated routines of safety and order. The utterances are directives (“you ought to learn”) backed by institutional authority. The warning that peers could be arsonists functions as a threat and perlocutionary act, intended to instil fear and vigilance.

Politeness strategies are limited and instead, fear and suspicion are deployed as disciplinary tools. This illustrates how authoritarianism and surveillance intertwine:

external control is reinforced by cultivating internal suspicion, ensuring compliance through both institutional and peer monitoring.

The authoritarian aspect is most visible in the exclusionary stance: students whose “opinions, actions and way of thinking” do not align with the school are advised to leave. This reflects what Foucault (1977) describes as the disciplinary mechanism of normalization—those who deviate from institutional norms are cast out. Surveillance ensures that such deviations are detected, and authoritarianism enforces their removal. This dual operation secures institutional conformity at the expense of diversity or dissent.

The analysis of the above excerpts demonstrates how principals’ speeches reproduce authoritarian and surveillance ideologies. Authoritarianism is constructed through rigid insistence on obedience (“will not be tolerated,” “unconditionally”), threats of punishment (“expect consequences,” “suspension”), and exclusion of non-conformists. Surveillance operates both technologically, through CCTV and hidden cameras, and socially, through constant monitoring of interactions and behaviours.

From a critical discourse perspective, this language does more than enforce order; it also shapes student subjectivities. By normalizing surveillance as “for your own good” and presenting rules as absolute, principals encourage students to internalize authority and self-regulation.

5.4 Gender Philosophy in Discourse

Education is often presented as a neutral and meritocratic space; however, the language used within schools frequently reflects and reproduces broader gender ideologies. Gender ideology refers to the set of beliefs, norms, and discourses that naturalize differences between males and females, assigning them distinct social roles and expectations (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2002). In patriarchal contexts, this typically positions men as leaders and decision-makers while framing women as moral guardians, nurturers, or dependents.

Schools, as social institutions, play a significant role in transmitting these ideologies. The discourse of principals is particularly powerful because it carries institutional authority and directs student behavior. By analyzing principals’ speeches, one can

observe how gender stereotypes, double standards, and role expectations are embedded in everyday educational practices. This section critically analyzes the following texts from Kenyan principals' speeches to show how gender ideology is reproduced in school discourse.

In T57 the principal naturalizes male dominance in public leadership by presupposing that "prestigious positions" belong to boys. It invokes a competitive gender binary ("girls cannot be ahead of us"), indexing hegemonic masculinity that legitimates men's dominance and a hierarchy over girls' achievement (Connell, 2005).

T57

Gentlemen... you need to know that... in ten years' time... you are the people who should be occupying those prestigious positions in government... Girls cannot be ahead of us, we need to sit down and ask ourselves a number of questions.

This text functions as both an assertive speech act (claiming boys' entitlement) and a directive (imposing responsibility) (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Through positive politeness, the collective "you" appeals to boys' group identity, reinforcing solidarity (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, the phrase "girls cannot be ahead of us" constitutes an unmitigated face-threatening act, denying girls' positive face needs by devaluing their competence.

The deictic "us" vs. "girls" enacts othering, while the modal "must" in "you must work hard" locates responsibility for restoring male superiority within boys' self-discipline.

In T58 below, a principal frames care needs as moral failure to discipline girls.

T58

Some girls have taken advantage of their gender... I am a woman and a woman has her own issues and you call them emergencies even when they are not. Don't get out of class before the designated time.

In T58, "girl" and "woman" are mobilized to discipline female bodies, casting menstrual/health needs as suspect "excuses." The stance denies embodied difference and places surveillance over girls' movements, aligning with Foucault's (1977)

disciplinary power. By construing girls' requests as illegitimate "advantage," the speaker frames care needs as moral failure, reproducing stigma around menstruation and female health that contributes to exclusionary learning environments (Kirk & Sommer, 2006). Linguistically, the genericized "some girls" plus the categorical "even when they are not" erases individual cases, constructing a deficit identity for girls as rule-benders.

Equally, T59 below consists primarily of directive speech acts prescribing gendered responsibilities (Austin, 1962). For boys, leadership is imposed; for girls, morality is demanded. The compliment "role models" operates as a positive politeness strategy, masking coercive expectations with flattery (Brown & Levinson, 1987). By urging boys to "be strong leaders," the principal assigns them authority and decision-making power. Conversely, girls are tasked with discipline and morality, suggesting that their primary role is to regulate behavior rather than lead.

T59

...boys, you need to be strong leaders in this school; do not be swayed easily.... Girls, we expect you to maintain discipline and show good morals, you are the role models of our school.

Connell's (2002) concept of hegemonic masculinity is visible in T59, where boys are encouraged to embody strength and leadership, aligning with societal ideals of male dominance. Meanwhile, girls are confined to the moral domain, echoing traditional expectations of women as custodians of virtue (Acker, 1994). This division reproduces a binary hierarchy where men dominate the public sphere, and women safeguard values in the background.

Butler (1990) argues that gender is performatively constructed through discourse, and T60 below enforces femininity through motherhood. The statement uttered functions as a declarative speech act, positioning girls as future mothers, and a commissive, committing them to a reproductive destiny (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). The appeal to parental pride is a positive politeness strategy, seeking approval from girls' families and invoking shared values (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Yet the conditional warning creates a negative face threat, restricting individual freedom. Girls are told that their

value lies in nurturing and respectability, which aligns with patriarchal ideals of women as reproducers of both biological life and social morality.

T60

...you girls, you are our mothers of tomorrow; if you waste time in indiscipline, you are wasting your future families. You must behave in a way that makes your parents proud.

Here, girls' identities are reduced to their future roles as mothers and wives. Academic success is subordinated to reproductive responsibility, suggesting that their ultimate purpose is to sustain families. The ideology ties female discipline to safeguarding "future families," not individual development or professional aspirations. This also reflects the "hidden curriculum" (Apple, 2004), where schools implicitly prepare students for gendered futures: boys for leadership and employment, girls for domesticity and caregiving.

The analysed data also revealed that Foucault's (1978) concept of biopower is relevant in the following text whereby female sexuality is policed more strictly, reflecting broader societal anxieties about women's morality and reputation.

T61

...in this school we don't allow relationships between boys and girls. You must remain focused, otherwise you will spoil your future, especially you girls; you carry the bigger shame.

T61 demonstrates the gendered double standard in regulating sexuality. The discourse is delivered bald-on-record, with no politeness strategies to soften the imposition. While relationships are prohibited for all students, the burden of shame is placed disproportionately on girls. The claim that "you girls... carry the bigger shame" reflects patriarchal ideologies of female sexuality as dangerous and morally consequential which is a face-threatening act

Gender ideology positions girls as bearers of family honour, whose misconduct dishonours not only themselves but also their families and communities. Boys, by contrast, are relatively absolved of consequences. This double standard perpetuates unequal gender relations, reinforcing control over women's bodies and behaviour.

The analysis of the above texts demonstrates how principals' speeches reproduce and reinforce gender ideology within the school setting. Boys are constructed as leaders, courageous, and destined for technical and scientific fields. Girls, by contrast, are positioned as moral custodians, future mothers, obedient followers, and bearers of shame for sexual misconduct.

High school discourse reflects and perpetuates patriarchal structures in education. By naturalizing gender differences, principals' language legitimizes unequal power relations and prepares students for gendered futures. The framing of boys as leaders and girls as moral guardians reduces female agency and perpetuates stereotypes that hinder women's participation in leadership, science, and public life.

From a critical discourse perspective, such language reveals how schools transmit the "hidden curriculum" of gender (Apple, 2004), shaping subjectivities and reinforcing broader societal inequalities. Gender ideology in education is thus not simply descriptive but constitutive: it creates the very roles it claims to reflect. Principals' speeches play a crucial role in this process, embedding patriarchal norms into the daily life of schools.

5.5 Discourse of Nationalization and Institutional Prestige

Educational institutions are not only sites of learning; they are also symbolic spaces where national identity and institutional prestige are produced, performed, and reproduced. Principals, as authoritative figures, frequently articulate discourses that tie individual student achievement to the collective reputation of the school and, by extension, the nation. Such discourses align with what scholars describe as the ideologies of nationalization and institutional prestige (Ball, 2003).

Nationalization refers to the framing of schools as central to the building of national identity, unity, and pride. Through this lens, student success is not seen as individual but as part of the broader project of national development and cohesion (Durkheim, 2008; Green, 1997). Institutional prestige, meanwhile, emphasizes reputation, excellence, and recognition, both regionally and nationally. Schools are portrayed as brands, and students as ambassadors of that brand, whose behavior and performance determine collective status. In the following section, texts from principals' speeches

are analysed to demonstrate how discourses of nationalization and institutional prestige are constructed.

Durkheim (2008) argues that schools are “moral communities” where individual achievement is subsumed under collective values. Consider the text below which demonstrates how institutional prestige is tied to collective pride.

T62

...we have produced the best student in the region, na hiyo ni Fahari yetu zote. We must remain on the track.

The phrase “Fahari yetu zote” (our collective pride) is used as a positive politeness strategy that builds solidarity and motivates students to align personal effort with institutional goals. Also, it reflects the ideological construction of student achievement as belonging not only to the individual but also to the school community and, implicitly, the nation. The collective “we” situates success within a shared identity, linking personal accomplishments to institutional and communal recognition.

In this discourse the principal naturalizes the notion that producing top students elevates the status of the whole institution. This aligns with Bourdieu’s (1991) concept of symbolic power, where prestige is accumulated and celebrated as collective wealth. The imperative “remain on the track” underscores the ongoing obligation to safeguard this prestige, revealing the ideological weight placed upon students to maintain reputational excellence.

Correspondingly, the principals enforce the ideology of institutional prestige through language of competition as illustrated in the following excerpt.

T63

...we have been known of being mathematics champions around. We want to maintain the same. Others are competing with us. So, the moment we relax, others may overtake us. We are not ready to be overtaken because we are the best in this region.

The metaphor of “champions” positions the school within a competitive marketplace of academic performance. The fear of being “overtaken” underscores the fragility of

prestige, which must be continually defended against rivals. This reflects neoliberal logics of performativity (Ball, 2003), where institutional success is measured in terms of rankings, competitions, and outcomes.

However, the discourse simultaneously constructs institutional prestige as regional pride, contributing to a sense of collective identity. Foucault's (1977) notion of normalization is also relevant, as competition compels constant self-surveillance to ensure performance does not decline. Ideologically, the school is positioned as a prestigious champion whose identity is defined by continuous excellence. Similarly, the following discourse underscores nationalization by aligning the institution with broader ideals of national status, thereby positioning students as representatives of a national elite.

T64

...our behaviour and the results they are not biased, there is some correlation between the two, and we need to change, we need to change our mindset and know that aaa this is a national school and not a village school. You must work hard and be determined.

Through Fairclough's CDA lens, this discursive move creates a hierarchy between "village" and "national" identities, elevating the institutional status of the school as a symbol of national pride and modernity. The dichotomy between "national" and "village" is not neutral; it ideologically positions the school as superior, demanding higher behavioural and academic standards. From the perspective of Politeness Theory, the imperative "*you must work hard and be determined*" constitutes a face-threatening act (FTA) to students' negative face (their desire for autonomy). However, the face threat is mitigated through inclusive pronouns ("*we need to change our mindset*"), which soften the directive by framing it as a collective obligation rather than an individual imposition. From a Speech Act perspective, this utterance functions primarily as a directive act, compelling behavioral change, while also operating as a commissive act, binding the institution to uphold the values of a national school.

T65 reflects what Wodak et al. (2009) call the discourse of collective identity, where individual conduct is tied to the honor of the institution. The principal calls upon the students to safeguard the name of the school.

T65

I want you to note that as you idle around here and there remember we are watching how you behave in class and outside. we must protect the name of our school. We know those who break the rules even when you think no one is seeing.

The statement “*we must protect the name of our school*” exemplifies institutional prestige as a collective responsibility. CDA reveals that the institutional identity is discursively constructed around surveillance and moral accountability, evident in “*we are watching how you behave in class and outside.*” This enforces a disciplinary gaze, echoing Foucault’s concept where power is exercised through constant monitoring. The use of “*we*” projects unity between administration and students, but simultaneously reinforces institutional authority by controlling student conduct.

The warning “*we know those who break the rules*” threatens students’ positive face (their desire to be accepted and respected), but it is indirectly phrased and generalized rather than targeting individuals, thereby reducing the bluntness of the reprimand. From a Speech Act perspective, the utterances perform both assertive acts (stating that rule-breaking is noticed) and directive acts (implicitly warning students to conform). The preservation of the school’s “name” is thus framed as a speech act of institutional self-legitimation.

The emphasis on surveillance and accountability situates pride not merely in achievement but in the maintenance of institutional image before external audiences. Consider T66 below.

T66

Remember when you go out after education most of the people and organizations that will employ you use English in their communication... You need to equip yourself so that you can compete with others favorably without embarrassing yourself. Life is a battle which you must fight for yourself, your children and your country.

This passage links individual student success to national representation. By stressing English as a global and national requirement, the principal frames education as preparation not only for personal achievement but for service to “your country.” This reflects discourses of nationalization in which students are positioned as future ambassadors of the nation (Fairclough, 1992). The metaphor of life as a “battle” further ties individual educational effort to collective national struggles, reinforcing patriotic commitment. The principal also employs politeness strategy as advisory form “you need to equip yourself” which is less threatening than direct command. The use of this strategy appeals to students’ desire for competence and success.

The above discussion demonstrates that principals’ speeches frequently invoke nationalization and institutional pride as mechanisms of motivation and control. Nationalization is constructed through discourses that emphasize the school’s elite status within a national framework, the role of education in serving the country, and the adoption of nationally valued skills such as English. Institutional pride is reinforced through metaphors of ambassadorship, calls to protect the school’s name, and collective celebration of academic success. These discourses situate students not only as individual learners but also as custodians of the school’s and nation’s reputation. In line with Fairclough (1992), these findings illustrate how language in educational contexts contributes to the reproduction of ideological values, ensuring alignment of student identity with institutional and national agendas.

5.6 Religious Perspective in Principals Discourse

Religious discourse has historically occupied a central place in education, shaping institutional values, disciplinary structures, and students’ moral orientations. In many African contexts, particularly in Kenya, where education is heavily influenced by Christianity and missionary traditions, principals frequently mobilize religious language to legitimize authority, regulate student conduct, and align institutional goals with broader social and spiritual ideals (Anderson, 2017; Sifuna, 2010). The speeches under analysis demonstrate this continuity by embedding biblical metaphors, religious references, and moralistic appeals into everyday school governance. Far from being neutral, these utterances reveal how ideology is reproduced in micro-interactions,

framing obedience, discipline, humility, and respect as not only institutional expectations but also spiritual imperatives sanctioned by God.

To interrogate this phenomenon, this section draws on Fairclough's (1995, 2001) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, and Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). These frameworks allow for a multi-layered reading of principals' discourse: CDA unpacks the ideological dimensions of religious references and their role in reproducing institutional power; Politeness Theory highlights how principals mitigate face-threatening acts while still reinforcing authority; and Speech Act Theory shows the illocutionary force of religious utterances, where principals' statements simultaneously inform, command, and morally obligate students. Taken together, these approaches illustrate how religious ideology is discursively constructed and naturalized within the school environment.

Religious ideology refers to the use of religious principles, narratives, or metaphors to structure social relations and institutional expectations (Eagleton, 1991). In schools, this often manifests through the incorporation of biblical values into discipline, academic motivation, and moral education. Kenyan schools, especially those with missionary origins, continue to employ religious discourse as a tool for governance, where principals' speeches frequently blur the boundary between spiritual formation and academic performance (Gumo, 2013). In the transcripts analysed, students are constantly reminded that humility, obedience, and respect for authority are not merely institutional requirements but divine expectations, thereby sacralising institutional control.

For instance, when a principal tells students, "*When you respect teachers, you honour God*", respect for institutional authority is constructed as a form of religious devotion. This collapses the boundary between secular and sacred authority, ensuring compliance through moral rather than merely disciplinary grounds. As Fairclough (1992) argues, such discursive strategies function ideologically by "naturalizing" power relations—making them appear common-sense, moral, and unquestionable. By invoking religion, principals embed obedience within a broader spiritual framework, delegitimizing resistance as not only disobedient but also sinful.

Moreover, CDA reveals how religious discourse contributes to the construction of student subjectivities. Students are not just learners; they are positioned as moral beings accountable to God, their parents, and the community. This triple accountability intensifies discipline because disobedience ceases to be a mere infraction against school rules; it becomes a violation of divine law. As van Dijk (2006) notes, ideology functions to organize the beliefs of a group in ways that justify dominance. Here, the dominance of school authority is justified through religious frameworks, ensuring students' internalization of obedience as a virtue.

While religious discourse functions as a tool of power, it is often packaged through politeness strategies that mitigate its coercive force. Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory posits that speakers manage "face" (the public self-image that individuals seek to maintain) through strategies that soften imposition or threat. Principals, in demanding obedience, often employ inclusive pronouns ("let us"), softeners ("please"), and appeals to shared religious values to protect students' positive face. For example, the phrase *"So please, let's listen to what we are being advised as the Bible says, a house divided cannot stand"* in one of the speeches combines a biblical imperative with a politeness marker ("please") and inclusive language ("let's"), making the directive appear as a collective moral responsibility rather than a unilateral order.

Combining power with politeness illustrates what Holmes (2000) calls "strategic politeness," where authority figures temper directiveness with relational cues to foster compliance without overt resistance. By embedding biblical references within polite appeals, principals present themselves not only as institutional heads but also as spiritual guides, thereby strengthening their authority through moral alignment rather than sheer coercion.

Speech Act Theory provides yet another lens for analysing the religious ideology in principals' speeches. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) distinguish between locutionary (literal), illocutionary (intended), and perlocutionary (effect) acts. Principals' utterances often perform multiple acts simultaneously. For example, when one principal says, *"Be humble all the time... If you don't, God is going to teach you"* the locutionary act is a statement about humility, the illocutionary act is a directive

demanding humility, and the perlocutionary effect is the instillation of fear and compliance among students.

More importantly, religious utterances often serve as commissive acts, binding both principal and students to a moral covenant. For instance, the reminder that “faith without action is dead” commits students to hard work as an expression of faith, while simultaneously committing the principal to uphold discipline as part of spiritual stewardship. This creates a shared moral horizon, where academic diligence and obedience are constructed as acts of faith rather than mere institutional requirements.

The following text in which the principal reflects on the biblical metaphor of salt illustrates the intricate ways in which religious ideology is woven into school discourse.

T67

“...I was trying to reflect on the word of the day and I hope you have done the same, I was asking myself, I have never since I was born so many years, I have never witnessed Salt that is tasteless, salt that is tasteless I was just imagining, how can salt be tasteless? salt that has no taste is useless, completely useless... The salt in ourselves should continue to be salty.”

At the surface level, this may appear as a simple moral reflection, but when read critically it reveals a sophisticated deployment of discourse strategies that combine religious ideology with institutional authority. The metaphor of salt directly echoes the biblical verse in Matthew 5:13, “*You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its saltiness, it is no longer good for anything.*” By borrowing from scripture, the principal draws legitimacy from a religious source that resonates deeply within Kenyan educational and cultural contexts.

Fairclough (1995) reminds us that such intertextuality is rarely neutral; rather, it embeds institutional requirements in a moral and spiritual frame, thereby making obedience appear as divinely sanctioned. Students are positioned not just as learners but as moral beings whose worth is measured by their ability to remain “salty,” which in this context signifies disciplined, respectful, and purposeful.

What is striking here is the subtle balance between admonition and politeness. Instead of directly accusing students of being indisciplined or “useless,” the principal couches the rebuke in a metaphor that allows for reflection without overt face-threatening. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) notion of positive politeness is evident in the inclusive phrasing “*the salt in ourselves*,” which constructs the issue as a collective responsibility rather than a personal failure. At the same time, the rhetorical question “*how can salt be tasteless?*” functions as an indirect critique that invites students to self-assess rather than feel attacked. This shows how institutional authority can be exercised firmly while still respecting students’ social face, creating what Holmes (2000) terms “strategic politeness.”

Yet beneath this politeness lies a powerful illocutionary force. According to Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), the utterance does more than describe; it performs. The declaration that tasteless salt is “useless, completely useless” is not merely a descriptive statement but a directive urging students to avoid moral decay, an expressive act showing the principal’s disappointment, and an implicit threat that those who lose their “taste” will be discarded. The perlocutionary effect intended is clear: students are to internalize discipline as a spiritual obligation lest they risk being “thrown out” both metaphorically in school and spiritually before God. This blending of directive, expressive, and threatening acts underscores the performative power of religious discourse in shaping behavior.

Religious ideology thus operates here as a form of moral governance. By equating discipline with saltiness, the principal reframes obedience not as a bureaucratic demand of the school but as a divine imperative tied to personal worth. Students are encouraged to police themselves, fearing the possibility of becoming “useless salt.” This resonates with Foucault’s (1977) concept of governmentality, where power works most effectively not through overt coercion but through the internalization of norms. The biblical metaphor serves as a discursive resource that naturalizes compliance and makes resistance appear not only deviant but sinful. The moral lesson is therefore inseparable from the institutional demand for order and academic diligence.

In sum, the salt metaphor exemplifies how principals' speeches mobilize religious discourse to reinforce discipline in ways that are rhetorically polite yet ideologically potent. The authority of scripture lends weight to the message, politeness strategies ensure its acceptance without overt resistance, and the performative nature of the utterance binds students to a moral obligation that transcends the classroom. What emerges is a powerful instance of how religious ideology functions discursively to secure institutional control while appearing as moral guidance, thereby demonstrating the complementarity of CDA, Politeness Theory, and Speech Act Theory in the analysis of school discourse.

In T68 the principal fuses religious ideology with institutional authority, showing how spiritual principles are employed to enforce obedience, discipline, and respect for hierarchical relations within the school.

T68

We said last week that we need to bring up preachers and leaders who are going to be responsible and respectful people of the community. When you respect teachers, you honour God. ... Faith without action is dead... God rewards those who work hard and stay disciplined.

The most striking feature in this text is the equation of respect for teachers with honouring God which is a powerful ideological move because it merges religious and institutional domain authority into one seamless frame. Fairclough (1995) explains that discourse often functions ideologically by naturalizing power relations, making them appear as common sense. By claiming that respecting teachers equates to respecting God, the principal elevates institutional compliance to a divine mandate. Disrespect toward a teacher thus becomes not merely insubordination but sacrilege. In van Dijk's (2006) terms, this is an "ideological square," where obedience and respect are cast as righteous, while disobedience and defiance are constructed as morally corrupt. The ideological effect is profound: students are made to see discipline not only as an academic necessity but as a sacred duty.

This religious framing is further reinforced by the reference to James 2:26, "*faith without works is dead.*" By invoking this scripture, the principal ties spiritual faith to tangible actions—studying diligently, obeying teachers, and practicing discipline. The

implication is that piety without effort is hollow. This aligns with what Bernstein (2000) describes as symbolic control: schools function as sites where moral and social values are transmitted through language. Here, the discourse positions students as agents whose spiritual authenticity is measured through academic diligence and behavioral compliance. In essence, the school becomes a moral community where religion underpins every institutional demand.

The way this message is delivered also demonstrates a calculated use of politeness strategies. The statement begins inclusively “*we need to bring up preachers and leaders*” which constructs the principal and students as part of a shared project of moral development. This appeals to students’ positive face, presenting them as future leaders who are capable of embodying community virtues. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model shows that such inclusive framing reduces the face-threatening force of subsequent demands, making the directive to respect teachers appear less as an imposition and more as a shared moral journey. At the same time, the phrase “*When you respect teachers, you honour God*” is framed positively rather than negatively, it does not threaten students by saying “*if you disrespect teachers, you dishonour God,*” but instead emphasizes the benefits of compliance. This mitigates resistance while still embedding the obligation within a divine frame.

From a performative perspective, the utterance accomplishes several speech acts simultaneously. The claim that “*respecting teachers honours God*” functions as an assertive act, stating a moral truth. It is also a directive act, instructing students to respect teachers. The reference to “*faith without action*” serves as both an expressive act, showing the principal’s conviction, and a commissive act, binding students to demonstrate their faith through obedience and diligence. Finally, the statement “*God rewards those who work hard and stay disciplined*” carries an implicit promise, suggesting that compliance will result in divine blessing. The perlocutionary effect is to encourage self-regulation: students are persuaded that academic and behavioural effort are not only beneficial for school performance but spiritually rewarded. By tying respect and discipline directly to divine expectations, the principal ensures that institutional rules are not viewed as arbitrary but as sacred obligations.

Similarly, T69 reflects van Dijk's (2006) observation that ideologies operate by framing particular values, in this case, obedience and harmony as natural, moral and unquestionable. The text demonstrates how biblical intertextuality, politeness strategies, and illocutionary force combine to embed religious values into institutional governance.

T69

So please, let's listen to what we are being advised as the bible says, a house divided cannot stand and let us also grow let's mature and it is said, even Rome was not built in one day.

The use of the phrase "*a house divided cannot stand*" is a direct citation of Mark 3:25, which in Christian teaching warns against division within a community. By drawing from scripture, the principal constructs unity and discipline as divine imperatives rather than optional institutional rules. Critical Discourse Analysis highlights how such intertextual borrowing legitimizes the principal's authority by grounding it in a higher, sacred source (Fairclough, 1995). Students are not simply being told to cooperate for the sake of academic performance; they are urged to maintain unity as a spiritual duty, with disobedience reframed as a threat to the moral fabric of the school community.

At the same time, the delivery of this directive is strategically softened through politeness. The principal introduces the appeal with "*So please, let's listen,*" which functions as a positive politeness marker. Rather than a blunt order, it appears as an invitation to cooperate. The use of "*let's*" also constructs inclusivity, presenting the effort toward unity as a shared responsibility of both staff and students. Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework reminds us that even within hierarchical relationships, authority figures often employ politeness to preserve students' positive face and avoid unnecessary resistance. Here, the speech blends moral authority with collegial solidarity, showing how politeness can enhance the effectiveness of ideological control.

By citing scripture, the principal performs an assertive act, presenting unity as a divine truth. The phrase "*a house divided cannot stand*" simultaneously functions as a directive act, warning students to avoid behaviours that fragment the community.

The addition of proverbial wisdom “*Rome was not built in a day*” serves as an expressive act, conveying the principal’s belief in gradual growth and perseverance. These overlapping acts create a powerful illocutionary force: students are instructed, encouraged, and morally obligated at once. The perlocutionary effect intended is that students will equate school discipline with spiritual unity, internalizing the idea that division is both socially destructive and spiritually condemned.

Unity within the school is not merely an administrative expectation but a spiritual mandate, transforming compliance into an act of faith. The ideological effect is that resistance to school rules becomes synonymous with resisting God’s will, thereby delegitimizing dissent. This demonstrates how, as Bernstein (2000) argues, schools function as sites of symbolic control, transmitting values through discourse that shape students’ moral and social identities.

Correspondingly, T70 vividly demonstrates how religious ideology is invoked to regulate behaviour, how rhetorical strategies soften and intensify the directive simultaneously, and how the utterance functions performatively to shape students’ conduct.

T70

Humility. Be humble all the time. Be humble all the time. I'll repeat for one time. Be humble all the time. Even when you're in power, be humble. ... Take it, leave it. If you don't, God is going to teach you.

At the ideological level, humility is positioned as a core Christian virtue, one that aligns with biblical teaching such as James 4:6: “*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*” By embedding this value into school discourse, the principal constructs humility not just as a personal quality but as a non-negotiable requirement of student identity. Fairclough (2001) notes that ideologies work by naturalizing particular values so that they appear as common sense. Here, humility is framed as a universal truth, reinforced through repetition that renders the directive unavoidable. The statement “*even when you’re in power, be humble*” implicitly warns future leaders that authority without humility is illegitimate, thereby reinforcing the moral hierarchy of the school as a training ground for societal leadership.

The way this directive is delivered also shows a careful balance between politeness and face-threatening intensity. The repetition of “*be humble all the time*” functions both as emphasis and as mitigation: instead of directly accusing students of arrogance, the principal issues a repeated injunction that allows for self-reflection. Yet the phrase “*take it, leave it*” introduces a blunt, uncompromising tone that strips away negotiation, reminding students that humility is not optional. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory helps explain this duality: while the principal initially employs strategies that appeal to students’ positive face by framing humility as a shared moral value, the subsequent ultimatum shifts toward negative politeness erosion, highlighting the institutional authority behind the demand.

This discursive scheme is reinforced by the invocation of divine sanction: “*If you don’t, God is going to teach you.*” The power here is not merely institutional but transcendent. According to van Dijk (2006), ideologies are most effective when they appeal to higher moral orders that cannot be contested. By attributing consequences to God, the principal positions humility as beyond debate. Students who resist are not simply defying school rules; they are defying God, which magnifies the weight of compliance. This religious framing ensures that discipline is internalized as a spiritual necessity rather than just an external imposition.

The repetitive call to “be humble” is a directive act, compelling students to adopt humility as a code of conduct. The principal’s reference to personal conviction “I’ll repeat for one time” functions as an expressive act, signaling personal commitment and urgency. The ultimatum “take it, leave it” transforms the speech into a commissive act, binding the speaker to enforce humility as a non-negotiable expectation. Finally, the warning that “God is going to teach you” carries the illocutionary force of an implicit threat, suggesting that failure to comply will invite divine correction. The perlocutionary effect intended is fear, obedience, and internalization of humility as both a moral and spiritual duty.

In this discourse humility is not presented as an abstract virtue but as a lived requirement, policed through both social and divine authority. The repetition ensures memorability, the politeness strategies reduce resistance, and the religious framing elevates the directive into an unquestionable truth. This resonates with Foucault’s

(1977) notion of disciplinary power, where individuals internalize norms and regulate themselves. Students are compelled to self-discipline, fearing not just institutional punishment but divine correction, which makes the regulation of behaviour more effective and enduring.

In addition, T71 encapsulates how principals' religious discourse frames institutional expectations within a sacred order, transforming everyday school routines into spiritually meaningful practices.

T71

Good morning, let us thank God for this day and the opportunity to gather here. I am here to tell you that you can start again. ... Remember a disciplined student is a good citizen.

Beginning with *"let us thank God for this day,"* the principal immediately grounds the school assembly within a religious register. This sacralised opening does more than express gratitude as it sets the tone of the entire interaction as one rooted in divine providence. Fairclough (1995) reminds us that discourse constructs social reality, and here the reality constructed is that school life is inseparable from religious practice. The gathering of students is not only an educational necessity but also a spiritual one. By embedding God at the start of the speech, the principal ensures that all subsequent directives about diligence, discipline, and behavior are heard through a moral and religious lens.

This religious framing is particularly significant when it is tied to discipline and citizenship. The claim *"a disciplined student is a good citizen"* collapses spiritual, institutional, and national responsibilities into a single identity. Discipline is not presented merely as an academic requirement but as the foundation of moral personhood and social belonging. Van Dijk (2006) notes that ideologies often function by linking micro-level practices (like obeying school rules) with macro-level identities (like being a good citizen). In this case, students are persuaded that failing to be disciplined jeopardizes not only their academic success but also their moral worth before God and their legitimacy as members of the nation.

The speech also demonstrates how politeness strategies help make this framing persuasive. The phrase “*let us thank God*” uses inclusive language, presenting the act of gratitude as a collective endeavour rather than an imposed ritual. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) concept of positive politeness is evident here, as the principal appeals to a shared identity as believers and members of the school community. Similarly, the reassurance “*you can start again*” mitigates the potentially face-threatening act of reminding students of past failures. Rather than condemning them outright, the principal offers a redemptive frame that aligns with Christian notions of forgiveness and renewal. This softens the disciplinary message while still emphasizing the need for transformation.

At the performative level, the utterances accomplish several overlapping speech acts. The thanksgiving at the start is an expressive act, communicating gratitude and establishing a spiritual tone. The reassurance “*you can start again*” operates as both an assertive act, affirming the possibility of renewal, and a directive act, urging students to take action toward self-improvement. Finally, the declaration “*a disciplined student is a good citizen*” functions as a commissive act, binding students to the institutional expectation of discipline by presenting it as the only path to legitimate citizenship. The perlocutionary effect intended is that students internalize discipline as a permanent moral obligation, one that extends beyond school into adulthood and civic life.

The integration of religion into this message intensifies its ideological effect. By grounding discipline in divine gratitude, the principal ensures that obedience cannot be viewed as arbitrary or negotiable; it is framed as a moral duty to God. At the same time, the promise of renewal “*you can start again*” positions the institution as both a site of correction and grace, echoing Christian theology of repentance and transformation. This combination of firmness and forgiveness is a powerful form of symbolic control (Bernstein, 2000), as it persuades students to self-discipline not only out of fear of punishment but also out of hope for redemption.

Ultimately, the speech demonstrates how principals strategically merge religious ideology with institutional expectations to produce yielding, morally upright, and civically responsible students. The religious opening elevates everyday routines into

sacred acts. politeness strategies soften the disciplinary demand; and layered speech acts ensure that the message is both persuasive and binding. Students are thus encouraged to see discipline not as an external imposition but as an intrinsic part of their spiritual, moral, and civic identity.

The analysed texts reveal the central role that religious ideology plays in shaping discourse within the school environment. Across the data, principals consistently mobilize biblical references, Christian virtues, and theological metaphors to naturalize institutional demands for discipline, respect, humility, and unity. These speeches are not merely administrative communications; they are moral performances that sacralise everyday routines and embed school authority within a divine order.

From the metaphor of salt in Speech 3 to the invocation of unity in Speech 5, the injunction to humility in Speech 11, the call to respect teachers as honouring God in Speech 14, and the opening thanksgiving in Speech 20, a clear pattern emerges: institutional authority is legitimized by linking it to spiritual obligation. Fairclough's (1995, 2001) Critical Discourse Analysis shows that this interdiscursivity between religion and education works ideologically by making obedience and discipline appear as natural and unquestionable truths. Resistance is not simply framed as defiance of school rules but as a betrayal of divine expectation and moral responsibility.

What makes these speeches particularly effective, however, is the way they combine authority with politeness. Principals rarely deliver blunt accusations; instead, they employ strategies that soften directives through inclusive pronouns ("let us"), appeals to shared identity, and redemptive frames that emphasize forgiveness and renewal. Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory helps us see how such strategies protect students' positive face, presenting discipline as a collective moral journey rather than a unilateral imposition. This strategic politeness ensures that students accept authority without perceiving it as oppressive, thereby making compliance more sustainable.

At the same time, the utterances function performatively, as Speech Act Theory demonstrates. Thanksgiving to God operates as expressive acts, biblical references as assertive acts, injunctions to discipline as directive acts, promises of divine reward as

commissive acts, and warnings of divine punishment as implicit threats. These overlapping speech acts create powerful illocutionary force, ensuring that the speeches do not simply describe values but enact them, binding students to moral obligations with both institutional and spiritual weight (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969).

Together, these analytical perspectives reveal the complementarity of CDA, Politeness, and Speech Act Theory in understanding how religious ideology works in school discourse. CDA illuminates the macro-level ideological functions of embedding religion in education; Politeness Theory shows the micro-level interactional strategies that make such discourse acceptable; and Speech Act Theory uncovers the performative dimension that transforms religious references into binding moral obligations. When combined, these approaches highlight how religious ideology operates as both persuasion and coercion, shaping student subjectivities in ways that extend beyond the classroom into their moral and civic identities.

The broader implication is that Kenyan schools just like many postcolonial educational institutions influenced by missionary legacies remain deeply embedded in religious frameworks that are integral to governance. Principals do not simply manage schools; they shepherd moral communities where academic performance, discipline, and civic responsibility are all interpreted through the lens of Christian values. As Bernstein (2000) argues, schools are sites of symbolic control, transmitting ideologies that shape future citizens. In this context, religious ideology ensures that students learn to see themselves as obedient, disciplined, humble, and respectful individuals, not only because these traits serve the institution but because they are framed as divine expectations and pathways to legitimate citizenship.

In conclusion, the principals' speeches analysed here demonstrate the enduring power of religious discourse in educational settings. By blending biblical authority with politeness strategies and performative speech acts, principals construct a discourse that is persuasive, binding, and difficult to contest. Religious ideology functions as a powerful tool of governance, ensuring that students internalize discipline as not just a school requirement but as a spiritual and civic virtue. The analysis underscores the importance of examining school discourse not merely as administrative talk but as a

site where ideology, power, and identity are continuously produced and reproduced through language.

5.7 Inclusion Ideology in Principals' Speeches

Inclusion ideology in education emphasizes fairness, equal participation, and the recognition of every learner as a valued member of the school community. It is concerned not only with access to education but also with the creation of discursive and institutional spaces where no student feels marginalized on the basis of gender, ability, social class, or personal differences (Booth & Ainscow, 2016). Within the Kenyan secondary school context, inclusion is often articulated through principals' speeches, where students are reminded of their shared responsibility to belong, respect one another, and contribute collectively to the school's vision. The uploaded speeches demonstrate how inclusion is discursively constructed through appeals to unity, recognition of diversity, and the celebration of collective effort. As with religious ideology, inclusion here is not neutral; it is mobilized to sustain discipline, encourage cooperation, and reinforce institutional authority.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) helps reveal how principals embed inclusion into everyday discourse by framing it as common sense and morally necessary. Fairclough (1995) argues that such strategies naturalize ideological positions, making inclusion appear as an unquestionable value rather than a negotiable choice. Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) shows how principals manage face when addressing sensitive issues of exclusion by using strategies such as inclusivity ("let us"), positive reinforcement, and appeals to solidarity. Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) illustrates how principals' statements are not mere descriptions of inclusion but performative acts that instruct, encourage, and obligate students to treat one another as equals. Together, these approaches illuminate the ways inclusion ideology is constructed and reproduced in the schooling process.

Consider T71 Where inclusion is linked to academic excellence, with unity positioned as the foundation for success. Rather than celebrating only individual achievers, the speech underscores the collective effort of a class, demonstrating how the school values every student's contribution.

The culture of reading emanates from a class and classes that are doing well what I have noted is that there is a lot of unity in those classes. That girls sit back to study and so we are calling upon subject coordinators and girls of good will that we can have classes where there is order...

The principal constructs a direct link between inclusion as manifested in class unity and academic performance. By stating that “classes that are doing well” are those that exhibit unity, the principal naturalizes the idea that inclusion is not just a social virtue but a prerequisite for excellence. Fairclough (1995) reminds us that discourse often works ideologically by making certain relationships appear “common sense.” In this case, the “common sense” being promoted is that solidarity among students produces academic success, while disunity or exclusion hinders it. The ideology of inclusion is thereby aligned with the institutional priority of high performance, ensuring that students see cooperation and mutual support as both morally and academically necessary.

The way the message is delivered also demonstrates careful use of politeness strategies. The principal does not issue a direct command but frames the appeal inclusively: “*we are calling upon subject coordinators and girls of good will.*” This phrasing mitigates the face-threatening nature of demanding compliance by presenting the call as a collective invitation rather than an imposition. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory highlights such inclusive pronouns (“we”) and positive appeals (“girls of good will”) as strategies that foster solidarity and reduce resistance. By appealing to goodwill rather than coercion, the principal frames inclusion as a voluntary moral contribution, thereby softening the directive while still ensuring its binding effect.

At the same time, the speech functions as a layered performative act. On one level, the principal makes an assertive act, stating as a fact that successful classes are united. This positions unity not as a subjective observation but as an objective truth. On another level, the utterance enacts a directive act, urging students and subject coordinators to maintain order and solidarity. It also carries an expressive act, as the principal expresses admiration for the classes already displaying unity, thereby motivating others to emulate them. The perlocutionary effect intended is that students

internalize inclusion as both a moral duty and a practical strategy for success, encouraging them to study collectively and regulate each other's behaviour.

The ideological function of this discourse is evident in the way it frames academic achievement as a collective rather than an individual accomplishment. By praising unity, the principal discourages exclusionary practices that might isolate weaker students or celebrate only the top performers. Instead, the entire class is positioned as responsible for the success of each member. This reflects Booth and Ainscow's (2016) view of inclusion as a community project in which every learner's contribution is valued. It also resonates with Bernstein's (2000) notion of symbolic control, where schools transmit not just academic knowledge but moral and social norms and, in this case, the norm of collective responsibility.

The appeal to "girls of good will" is particularly revealing, as it introduces a moral dimension to inclusion. Goodwill here is constructed as both a virtue and a duty: those who participate in sustaining class unity are morally good, while those who refuse implicitly position themselves outside the circle of virtue. This binary between the included and the excluded illustrates van Dijk's (2006) concept of the ideological square, where the in-group (cooperative, disciplined, united students) is positively evaluated, while the out-group (disruptive, selfish, or divisive students) is negatively evaluated. Through this framing, inclusion ideology operates as a subtle form of discipline, ensuring that students regulate one another to maintain the "order" that the principal valorizes.

In conclusion, T71 demonstrates how inclusion is constructed as both an academic necessity and a moral responsibility. The principal links unity directly to performance, frames the call to order in polite and inclusive terms, and performs multiple speech acts that direct, encourage, and bind students to collective effort. CDA shows how inclusion is naturalized as essential to success, politeness strategies soften the imposition, and the illocutionary force of the utterance ensures compliance. The result is that students are discursively positioned not just as individuals pursuing personal achievement but as members of a moral and academic collective whose success depends on inclusion and solidarity.

In T72 the principal outlines the process of leadership selection. This text highlights inclusion ideology by promoting fairness, transparency, and student participation in leadership, ensuring that opportunities are open to all rather than reserved for a privileged few.

T72

We will have the class prefect aam take charge and with their class members give proposals of the new prefect body, for all the categories. ... so, when giving the proposal for one to qualify as a prefect you must be disciplined... you may also apply directly to the principal, if you want to be a prefect you can also apply.

Critical Discourse Analysis demonstrates how the principal frames the prefectship as a collective and democratic exercise. Rather than simply appointing leaders, the responsibility is delegated to class members, who are invited to submit proposals. This process makes leadership appear participatory, transparent, and inclusive. Fairclough (2001) notes that discourses of participation often function ideologically to legitimize institutional decisions by presenting them as the will of the community rather than unilateral impositions. Here, the discourse presents inclusion in governance as both democratic and necessary, making the selection of prefects seem credible because it emerges from a collective voice.

The statement that students may also apply directly to the principal adds another dimension to the ideology of inclusion. It removes barriers that might prevent shy or marginalized students from being recognized by their peers, giving them an alternative channel to access leadership opportunities. This resonates with Booth and Ainscow's (2016) conception of inclusive education, which emphasizes the removal of systemic barriers to participation. By explicitly saying "*you may also apply*," the principal acknowledges diversity among students and ensures that the process accommodates different personalities and social positions. CDA reveals that this move delegitimizes exclusionary practices where leadership might otherwise be monopolized by the most outspoken or popular students.

The delivery of this message is framed through politeness strategies that emphasize openness and fairness. The use of "*we will have*" and "*with their class members*"

constructs the principal's authority as collaborative rather than authoritarian. Brown and Levinson's (1987) model shows how inclusive pronouns and mitigated directives reduce face-threatening force, making the directive feel like an invitation rather than an imposition. Similarly, the phrase "*you may also apply*" is phrased in a way that preserves students' sense of autonomy by framing participation as voluntary, even though the institutional framework ensures discipline remains a prerequisite. The politeness strategies here present inclusion not as a burden but as a right available to all, which strengthens students' identification with the process.

The declaration that prefects will be proposed by classes is an assertive act, presenting the democratic process as an institutional truth. At the same time, it is a directive act, instructing students to participate actively in the nomination process. The allowance that "*you may also apply directly to the principal*" serves as a commissive act, binding the principal to fairness by guaranteeing that all applications will be considered. Finally, the condition that prefects "must be disciplined" functions as both a directive and a boundary-setting act, ensuring that inclusion in leadership does not undermine institutional priorities of discipline and order. The perlocutionary effect intended is that students internalize the idea that inclusion in governance is real, but it is conditional on aligning with school values.

The ideological effect of this discourse is that inclusion is made to appear both fair and merit-based. On the one hand, every student is given an equal chance to aspire to leadership; on the other hand, the requirement of discipline ensures that the school retains control over who is ultimately deemed suitable. This is what van Dijk (2006) describes as the ideological square: the discourse celebrates fairness and transparency for the disciplined, while implicitly excluding those deemed unruly or unfit. In this way, inclusion ideology works hand-in-hand with institutional discipline, showing students that participation is a right but also a responsibility.

In sum, the text demonstrates how principals use discourse to democratize leadership while still preserving institutional authority. The process of nominating prefects is framed as inclusive and participatory, politeness strategies soften directives into invitations, and layered speech acts ensure that the procedure is both binding and credible. The overall effect is that leadership becomes accessible to all students, but

only those who embody discipline can fully participate. Inclusion here is not merely symbolic; it is constructed as a moral and institutional necessity that sustains fairness, order, and legitimacy within the school community.

Correspondingly, T72 below may appear as a simple lesson in manners on the surface, but it actually represents a deep discursive practice of inclusion where linguistic habits are tied to values of mutual respect, belonging, and social harmony within the school.

T72

Do we know how to say thank you when someone does something good to us? ... Sorry is another will of living peaceably with others... Another word is please; do you know how to use the word please?

Critical Discourse Analysis of the above discourse reveals how the principal positions inclusion as a linguistic practice that sustains social cohesion. By foregrounding “thank you,” “sorry,” and “please,” the speech links politeness markers with peaceful coexistence, showing that inclusion is not only about structural fairness (such as access to resources or leadership) but also about everyday interpersonal practices that make all members feel valued. Fairclough (2001) explains that ideology often operates in such mundane forms of language, where ordinary expressions are given elevated significance as carriers of social norms. Here, the ordinary act of saying “thank you” is constructed as a symbolic act of inclusion, ensuring that no one’s effort or presence is overlooked.

The delivery of this message itself is a politeness strategy. The principal does not accuse students of being rude or ungrateful but instead frames the utterances as reflective questions: “*Do we know how to say thank you?*” and “*Do you know how to use the word please?*” This indirect approach avoids threatening students’ positive face while still drawing attention to a potential lack of respectful behavior. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model highlights such strategies as key in maintaining solidarity, especially in hierarchical contexts where authority figures must correct without alienating. By using rhetorical questions rather than blunt commands, the principal

makes the lesson appear like a self-discovery exercise rather than a reprimand, thereby fostering acceptance.

Speech Act Theory helps illuminate the performative dimension of these utterances. On one level, they are directive acts, instructing students to use politeness markers in their interactions. At the same time, they function as expressive acts, revealing the principal's value system and commitment to peaceful living. The rhetorical form of the questions also carries an implicit assertive act, suggesting that the absence of such words leads to conflict or exclusion. The perlocutionary effect intended is clear: students are encouraged to see politeness not as optional courtesy but as a moral obligation tied to inclusion, one that helps sustain harmony in the school community.

The ideological significance lies in how politeness is framed as central to inclusion. Saying "please" acknowledges the dignity of the person being addressed; saying "thank you" recognizes contributions; saying "sorry" restores relationships after conflict. These small linguistic practices prevent the marginalization of individuals by ensuring that respect circulates through everyday interactions. Booth and Ainscow (2016) emphasize that inclusion is not only about structural access but also about the micro-practices that make individuals feel they belong. In this light, the principal's emphasis on polite speech is a strategy of fostering inclusion at the interpersonal level, ensuring that no student feels invisible or disrespected.

Moreover, this discourse demonstrates how inclusion ideology is tied to discipline. Students who fail to use these politeness markers are implicitly positioned as disruptive or exclusionary, threatening the peace of the community. This binary framing reflects van Dijk's (2006) ideological square, where those who use respectful language are cast as morally good and cooperative, while those who fail to do so are framed as lacking discipline and undermining inclusion. In this sense, politeness becomes more than a matter of etiquette, it becomes a moral marker of belonging to the school community.

T72 shows how inclusion ideology operates at the micro-level of everyday language. By urging students to use politeness markers, the principal constructs inclusion as an ongoing interpersonal practice that values each person's dignity. CDA reveals how these linguistic practices are elevated into moral obligations; politeness strategies

soften the directive into reflective questions that protect students' face; and Speech Act Theory shows how the utterances simultaneously instruct, affirm, and bind students to respectful behavior. Inclusion here is constructed as a discursive habit that maintains harmony, ensures mutual recognition, and prevents the marginalization of any member of the school community.

Consider T73 below in which the principal stresses humility as a core value:

T73

A school is a training ground. ... Humility. Be humble all the time. Be humble all the time. I'll repeat for one time. Be humble all the time. Even when you're in power, be humble.

While humility has strong religious undertones, in this context it also functions as a discourse of inclusion, positioning leadership and authority as responsibilities that must be exercised with respect for others rather than exclusion or arrogance. Critical Discourse Analysis highlights how humility is framed as a prerequisite for leadership that sustains inclusive communities.

By reminding students that “even when you’re in power, be humble,” the principal constructs authority as relational and service-oriented rather than hierarchical. This challenges exclusionary forms of leadership where power is used to dominate or marginalize others. Fairclough (1995) emphasizes that discourse reproduces social relations, and here the principal reproduces a vision of leadership in which all members of the school are treated with dignity, regardless of rank. Humility becomes a discursive tool that prevents the creation of insider–outsider divisions and ensures that authority figures remain accountable to the collective.

The way the speech is delivered reinforces its inclusive intent. The principal repeats the phrase “be humble all the time,” which has the dual effect of emphasizing the importance of the directive and softening its delivery. Instead of accusing students of arrogance, the principal invites reflection by framing humility as a continuous practice for everyone. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory helps explain this strategy: the repetition creates space for students to absorb the message without perceiving it as a personal attack. The reference to “even when you’re in power” is

also framed politely, acknowledging the possibility that students will one day occupy leadership roles, which affirms their potential and protects their positive face. Through this politeness strategy, humility is promoted not as a punitive demand but as a value that dignifies both leaders and followers.

The repeated injunction to “be humble” is a directive act, urging students to adopt humility as a way of life. The phrase “I’ll repeat for one time” functions as an expressive act, conveying the principal’s conviction and seriousness. The conditional “even when you’re in power” can be read as a commissive act, binding future leaders to humility by setting expectations before they assume authority. Taken together, these acts generate a strong illocutionary force that positions humility as a binding moral and social obligation. The perlocutionary effect intended is that students will not only comply in the moment but internalize humility as a lifelong practice, carrying it into their leadership roles both inside and outside school.

The ideological significance of this passage lies in how humility is framed as the antidote to exclusion. Without humility, power risks creating divisions between the privileged and the marginalized; with humility, power is exercised inclusively, ensuring that all voices are respected. Booth and Ainscow (2016) stress that inclusive communities are built when leaders model respect and openness rather than superiority. By embedding humility into the discourse of leadership, the principal ensures that authority is tied to service, thereby sustaining inclusion within the institutional culture.

Furthermore, this framing reinforces discipline by aligning inclusion with moral worth. Those who practice humility are positioned as virtuous and inclusive, while those who exhibit arrogance or exclusionary behavior are implicitly positioned as deviant. This reflects van Dijk’s (2006) ideological square, where in-groups (humble, inclusive leaders) are positively valued and out-groups (arrogant, divisive leaders) are negatively evaluated. Thus, inclusion ideology here functions not just as a moral encouragement but also as a disciplinary mechanism that regulates how authority should be exercised. The above text illustrates how humility is discursively constructed as an inclusive value essential for leadership.

At first glance, the following text seems to be a purely disciplinary measure aimed at controlling students' behaviour, yet the way it is framed shows how surveillance is discursively constructed as a practice of inclusion and fairness, ensuring that no student undermines the community or wastes collective resources.

T74

That CCTV is placed there for your own good. ... You will only incur expenses because we can't continue wasting parents' money. ... We are going to buy cameras that are smaller than your eye, which you can't know where they are. They will be monitoring your actions closely.

Critical Discourse Analysis of the above text reveals how the principal frames surveillance as an inclusionary mechanism that protects the interests of all rather than as a tool of oppression. By stating that CCTV is “for your own good,” the discourse presents monitoring as a safeguard rather than a threat. This aligns with Fairclough's (2001) observation that institutional discourse often disguises coercion by framing it as care or protection. The appeal to parents' money is particularly ideological, as it links surveillance to economic fairness: students who damage property or waste resources are positioned as threatening the collective welfare of their peers and families. Thus, the installation of cameras is not only about discipline but about protecting the school as a shared space where resources must be preserved for all.

Politeness strategies soften the potentially face-threatening act of warning students about surveillance. The phrase “for your own good” mitigates the harshness of being monitored, recasting surveillance as a benevolent act of protection. Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework helps explain how such framing preserves students' positive face, presenting them as beneficiaries of institutional care rather than mere subjects of control. By shifting the focus from punishment to protection, the principal makes surveillance appear as a collective good, thereby fostering acceptance. The reference to parents' sacrifices further appeals to students' sense of belonging and responsibility, strengthening the inclusionary framing.

From a performative perspective, the utterance accomplishes multiple speech acts. The assurance that cameras are “for your own good” is an assertive act, presenting surveillance as a fact tied to student welfare. The warning that students will incur

expenses if they waste resources is a directive act, instructing them to avoid misconduct. The promise of buying “cameras smaller than your eye” functions as both a threatening act and a commissive act, committing the institution to tighter surveillance if misbehaviour continues. The perlocutionary effect is that students regulate themselves, not merely out of fear of detection but because they internalize the idea that surveillance protects everyone equally.

By presenting surveillance as a mechanism of fairness, the principal discourages students from seeing it as a violation of trust. Instead, it becomes a tool that ensures inclusion by preventing a few disruptive individuals from compromising the well-being of the entire community. This reflects van Dijk’s (2006) notion of the ideological square: cooperative students who respect resources are positively valued as responsible and inclusive, while those who engage in vandalism or misconduct are negatively cast as selfish and exclusionary. Through this binary, surveillance is legitimized as a moral and collective necessity rather than a top-down imposition.

What is particularly striking is how surveillance, which might traditionally be associated with authoritarian control, is discursively rebranded as part of the school’s inclusive culture. By embedding CCTV in a narrative of fairness, care, and protection, the principal ensures that students internalize the practice as beneficial. This resonates with Foucault’s (1977) notion of governmentality, where individuals regulate themselves because they perceive institutional control as serving their own interests. Here, students are invited to accept monitoring not as coercion but as a safeguard for their inclusion in a well-functioning community.

The extracts analysed from the principals’ speeches show that inclusion ideology is deeply embedded in the language of school leadership, functioning both as a moral framework and as a mechanism of institutional governance. Across the data, inclusion is discursively constructed not only as access to opportunities but also as a set of practices unity, fairness, humility, politeness, and accountability that ensure all students belong to and contribute meaningfully within the school community.

Critical Discourse Analysis reveals how principals naturalize inclusion by linking it directly to academic success, leadership legitimacy, interpersonal respect, and collective fairness. Politeness Theory helps explain how principals soften potentially

face-threatening directives by appealing to students' goodwill, framing inclusion as a shared responsibility, and using rhetorical questions or inclusive pronouns ("we," "let us"). Such strategies transform disciplinary messages into cooperative invitations, ensuring that students accept inclusion ideology without perceiving it as coercion.

Speech Act Theory further illuminates how inclusion ideology is performatively enacted. Across the speeches, principals' utterances function simultaneously as assertives (stating truths about unity, fairness, or humility), directives (instructing students to act inclusively), expressives (revealing commitment to shared values), commissives (promising fairness in leadership or closer monitoring), and implicit threats (warning of consequences for exclusionary or disruptive behaviour). These overlapping speech acts bind students to the ideology of inclusion, not only persuading them to comply but also obligating them to internalize inclusive practices as moral duties. The perlocutionary effects are evident: students are positioned to see themselves as responsible not just for their own behavior but for sustaining the collective well-being of the school.

Taken together, CDA, Politeness Theory, and Speech Act Theory show how inclusion ideology operates at multiple levels. At the macro-level, discourse legitimizes institutional authority by presenting inclusion as essential for academic and social success. At the micro-level, politeness strategies and performative acts make inclusion persuasive and binding in everyday interactions. The result is that inclusion is not left as an abstract policy goal but is embedded in the lived realities of students through language that both invites and obligates them to participate in an inclusive community.

The implication is that principals' speeches do more than transmit rules; they cultivate a culture where inclusion becomes a defining characteristic of student identity. By aligning inclusion with values such as discipline, humility, and fairness, principals ensure that students internalize it as a virtue that extends beyond the school into society. This reflects Bernstein's (2000) notion of schools as sites of symbolic control, where ideology is transmitted through discourse that shapes future citizens. In this case, students are socialized to see inclusion not only as a school requirement but as a moral and civic responsibility that legitimizes their place in the wider community.

In conclusion, the principals' speeches demonstrate that inclusion ideology in education is both persuasive and coercive, constructed through a careful interplay of religiously inflected values, polite framing, and performative acts. Students are encouraged to see inclusion as natural, moral, and beneficial, while exclusion is cast as selfish, undisciplined, or destructive. The analysis confirms that principals use discourse strategically to embed inclusion in ways that are difficult to contest, ensuring that all students are bound to a vision of school life where unity, fairness, humility, and collective accountability are central.

5.8 Discipline and Moral Order Creed in Principals' Speeches

In Kenyan secondary schools, principals' speeches often foreground discipline and moral order as central to the identity of the school community. Discipline is not only framed as an administrative expectation but also as a moral compass that regulates students' character, guiding them toward obedience, respect, and responsible citizenship. This aligns with Durkheim's (2008) argument that education is fundamentally a moral enterprise, tasked with socializing young people into shared values and norms. The uploaded speeches reveal how discipline and moral order are discursively constructed through biblical metaphors, appeals to unity, injunctions to humility, respect for authority, and the linking of discipline to good citizenship.

Critical Discourse Analysis shows that discipline is consistently presented as common sense, natural, and indispensable to academic and social success (Fairclough, 1995). It is not left as an abstract principle but embedded in metaphors such as "salt that is tasteless is useless" and "a house divided cannot stand," which tie indiscipline to disorder, failure, and moral decay. Van Dijk's (2006) notion of the ideological square is also relevant here: disciplined students are positively valorised as good, moral, and valuable, while in disciplined students are negatively constructed as useless, divisive, and deviant.

At the micro-level, Politeness Theory helps explain how principals manage the delivery of disciplinary messages. Rather than issuing blunt reprimands, they often frame directives inclusively ("let us"), employ rhetorical questions ("how can salt be tasteless?"), or appeal to goodwill and shared responsibility. These strategies mitigate

the face-threatening nature of discipline, ensuring students accept correction without resistance (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Speech Act Theory further illuminates how these utterances function performatively. They are not mere descriptions of discipline but acts that command, warn, encourage, and obligate. For example, when a principal asserts that “a disciplined student is a good citizen,” the utterance simultaneously performs an assertive act (stating a moral truth), a directive act (instructing students to be disciplined), and a commissive act (binding the institution to reward discipline). Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) remind us that such speech acts carry illocutionary force, making them binding and difficult to contest.

Taken together, CDA, Politeness, and Speech Act Theory reveal that discipline and moral order ideology in principals’ speeches operates on multiple levels: it legitimizes authority by linking discipline to divine and civic values; it softens directives through politeness strategies that foster solidarity; and it binds students through performative utterances that transform discipline into a moral, spiritual, and civic obligation. The following texts illustrate how this ideology is discursively constructed and sustained in the school setting.

T75

...I was trying to reflect on the word of the day and I hope you have done the same, I was asking myself, I have never since I was born so many years, I have never witnessed salt that is tasteless, salt that is tasteless I was just imagining, how can salt be tasteless? salt that has no taste is useless, completely useless... The salt in ourselves should continue to be salty.

At the surface level, this text appears to be a metaphorical reflection, yet it is a potent articulation of discipline and moral order ideology, linking student conduct to notions of worth and usefulness. The metaphor of salt functions ideologically to naturalize discipline as a moral imperative. By equating “salt that is tasteless” with uselessness, the principal constructs a binary where disciplined students embody value, order, and meaning, while undisciplined students are reduced to waste and moral failure.

Fairclough (1995) observes that such binary constructions are a hallmark of ideological discourse, embedding institutional values in metaphors that resonate with cultural and religious traditions. This binary also echoes van Dijk's (2006) ideological square: the in-group (obedient, disciplined students) is positively framed, while the out-group (indisciplined students) is negatively depicted as valueless.

The principal's use of rhetorical questions "*how can salt be tasteless?*" illustrates how discipline is communicated through politeness strategies. Rather than directly accusing students of being indisciplined, the principal invites them to reflect, thereby reducing the face-threatening nature of correction. Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory explains that such strategies allow authority figures to maintain students' positive face by positioning the message as a shared reflection rather than a direct rebuke. The inclusive phrasing "*the salt in ourselves*" reinforces this by constructing discipline as a collective responsibility rather than an individual deficiency, softening the imposition while still conveying the seriousness of the message.

At the same time, the utterance carries strong illocutionary force. The declaration that tasteless salt is "useless, completely useless" functions as an assertive act, presented as a truth that cannot be disputed. The injunction that "the salt in ourselves should continue to be salty" functions as a directive act, implicitly commanding students to remain disciplined and morally upright. The rhetorical style "expressing astonishment that tasteless salt could exist" serves as an expressive act, revealing the principal's disapproval of disorderly conduct. There is also an implicit threatening act, suggesting that students who lose their "saltiness" will be discarded or rendered irrelevant. Searle (1969) reminds us that such overlapping speech acts create binding obligations for listeners, making it difficult for students to contest the authority behind the utterance.

The ideological effect of this discourse is that discipline is not framed merely as an administrative rule but as a moral order that defines students' worth. Indiscipline is equated with uselessness, a condition that undermines both the individual and the collective. This reflects Bernstein's (2000) view of schools as sites of symbolic control, where values such as obedience and responsibility are transmitted through discursive resources that resonate with cultural and spiritual frameworks. By

borrowing a biblical metaphor, the principal ensures that discipline appears as natural, inevitable, and sacred, making compliance an unquestionable obligation. In sum, T74 illustrates how principals construct discipline and moral order through metaphor, politeness, and performative utterances.

Similarly, the ideology of discipline and moral order is found in T75 when the principal exhorts students. On the surface, this appears to be a motivational statement, yet it is a deeply ideological appeal that frames discipline and obedience as essential to moral order and collective survival.

T75

So please, let's listen to what we are being advised as the Bible says, a house divided cannot stand and let us also grow let's mature and it is said, even Rome was not built in one day.

The reference to “a house divided cannot stand” is strategically intertextual, borrowing from a biblical teaching (Mark 3:25) that condemns disunity. By linking school unity to divine wisdom, the principal naturalizes obedience and discipline as unquestionable truths rather than negotiable choices. Fairclough (1995) argues that such interdiscursivity legitimizes institutional power by embedding it in moral and cultural frameworks. Here, students are positioned as part of a “house” whose survival depends on their collective discipline. Disorder, indiscipline, and disobedience are not presented as minor issues but as existential threats to the stability of the community.

The utterance is delivered with politeness markers that soften its disciplinary force. The opening phrase “*So please, let's listen*” frames the admonition as a cooperative request rather than an authoritarian command. The use of the inclusive pronoun “let's” constructs solidarity between principal and students, presenting discipline as a shared journey rather than a unilateral imposition. Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory explains how such positive politeness strategies protect students' face, making it easier for them to accept correction without perceiving it as coercion. By framing obedience as a collective endeavour “*let us also grow, let's mature*” the principal situates discipline as mutual growth rather than top-down control, thereby enhancing compliance.

The citation of scripture functions as an assertive act, presenting unity as a divine truth. The directive “*let’s listen*” operates as a directive act, urging students to obey authority and embrace discipline. The statement “*Rome was not built in one day*” is an expressive act, signalling the principal’s belief in gradual progress and patience, which frames discipline as a long-term commitment. The illocutionary force of these combined acts is strong: students are not only encouraged but bound to see obedience as essential for their community’s survival and personal growth. The perlocutionary effect intended is compliance, with students internalizing discipline as both a spiritual and practical necessity.

The ideological significance is that discipline here is constructed as the glue that holds the school together. Indiscipline is equated with division, which threatens the collective moral order, while obedience is presented as unity, growth, and maturity. Bernstein (2000) reminds us that schools are key sites of symbolic control, where values of order and respect are reproduced as part of students’ socialization. In this speech, the principal achieves that reproduction by drawing on familiar cultural and religious discourses, ensuring that students see their compliance not merely as institutional duty but as participation in a moral community whose survival depends on discipline.

The above discussion demonstrates how unity and obedience are discursively linked to discipline and moral order. CDA uncovers how biblical allusion naturalizes obedience as essential; politeness strategies soften the directive through inclusive and respectful framing; and Speech Act Theory shows how the utterance functions as assertion, directive, and expression simultaneously. The outcome is that students are persuaded to regulate themselves, accepting discipline not as arbitrary control but as a moral and collective necessity for sustaining the life of the school.

In addition, the analysed data revealed that discipline ideology is reinforced when the principal emphasizes respect for authority as found in the text below;

T76

We said last week that we need to bring up preachers and leaders who are going to be responsible and respectful people of the community. When you respect teachers, you honour God.

... Faith without action is dead... God rewards those who work hard and stay disciplined.

This text ties discipline to moral order, linking respect for teachers with divine authority and presenting obedience as the foundation of both spiritual and institutional legitimacy. Critical Discourse Analysis highlights how the principal constructs respect for teachers as a non-negotiable moral principle. By asserting that “respecting teachers” is equivalent to “honouring God,” the speech elevates the act of obedience from a school rule to a sacred duty.

Fairclough (1995) reminds us that ideological discourse works by naturalizing power relations, and here the hierarchical relationship between teachers and students is presented as not only institutional but also spiritual. This removes the possibility of resistance, as disobedience toward teachers is framed as sacrilegious. At the same time, the linkage between “faith without action” and “discipline” positions obedience and hard work as the visible proof of moral integrity, ensuring that moral order is reproduced through daily conduct.

The way the speech is delivered reveals politeness strategies that soften its disciplinary force while still embedding authority. The principal begins inclusively “*we need to bring up preachers and leaders*” which constructs students as future leaders and dignifies their potential. This positive politeness frames respect not as submission but as a pathway to honour and responsibility. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory helps explain how this mitigates the face-threatening nature of demanding obedience: students are not being told they are disrespectful, but rather invited to align themselves with the identity of responsible leaders who respect authority. By framing respect as a virtue that honours both God and the community, the principal ensures that compliance is perceived as empowering rather than oppressive.

The statement “*when you respect teachers, you honour God*” functions as an assertive act, presenting a moral truth, but also as a directive act, instructing students to respect teachers. The invocation of “faith without action is dead” is both an expressive act, reflecting the principal’s belief in visible obedience, and a commissive act, binding students to prove their faith through discipline. Finally, the declaration

“God rewards those who work hard and stay disciplined” functions as a promissory act, assuring students that compliance leads to divine blessing. These overlapping speech acts ensure that respect and discipline are not optional but obligatory, tied to both institutional order and divine justice. Teachers are positioned as moral figures whose authority derives from God, while students are constructed as moral agents who must demonstrate respect and discipline to prove their faith and belonging.

The examined texts demonstrate that discipline and moral order ideology is central to the principals’ discourse, functioning not only as a school rule but as a moral, spiritual, and civic obligation. Across the speeches, discipline is consistently constructed as the foundation of student worth, community harmony, and responsible citizenship. The principals achieve this by weaving together metaphors, biblical references, politeness strategies, and performative utterances that legitimize authority and encourage compliance.

Critical Discourse Analysis shows that discipline is naturalized as common sense through symbolic metaphors and moral binaries. The discussed examples confirm Fairclough’s (1995) claim that ideology operates discursively by presenting power relations as natural and inevitable, while van Dijk’s (2006) ideological square highlights how disciplined students are valorized as good and undisciplined ones are stigmatized as deviant.

Politeness Theory helps to explain how principals manage the face-threatening nature of discipline by framing their directives in ways that preserve students’ dignity. These politeness strategies ensure that disciplinary messages are accepted without resistance, fostering solidarity while reinforcing authority (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Speech Act Theory further demonstrates that the principals’ utterances are not passive reflections but active performances of discipline. They operate simultaneously as assertives (stating truths about discipline and order), directives (commanding obedience and humility), expressives (signaling conviction and disapproval), commissives (binding students to respect and discipline as conditions of legitimacy), and threats or promises (linking obedience to divine or civic reward and disobedience to exclusion or punishment).

Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) remind us that such layered illocutionary force makes speech acts binding, difficult to contest, and powerful in shaping behaviour. Taken together, these findings illustrate how discipline and moral order ideology operates on multiple levels in principals' speeches. At the macro-level, discourse legitimizes authority by embedding discipline in religious, moral, and civic frameworks. At the meso-level, politeness strategies ensure that these directives are palatable and face-saving, fostering compliance without open confrontation. At the micro-level, speech acts transform these utterances into binding obligations that compel students to self-regulate. The result is that discipline is not presented as arbitrary or negotiable but as the very foundation of student identity, moral worth, and legitimate citizenship.

The broader implication is that schools function as sites of moral regulation where discipline is sacralized and civic responsibility is internalized. Bernstein's (2000) notion of symbolic control helps us see how schools transmit not only knowledge but also values, reproducing a disciplined citizenry that sustains social order. By tying discipline to worth, respect, humility, and citizenship, principals ensure that students regulate themselves, perceiving obedience as a moral virtue rather than mere institutional compliance. This resonates with Foucault's (1977) concept of governmentality, where power operates most effectively when individuals internalize norms and regulate themselves.

In conclusion, the principals' speeches demonstrate how discipline and moral order ideology is discursively constructed through metaphor, biblical reference, politeness, and performative utterances. Students are persuaded, obligated, and bound to discipline as a condition of their value, belonging, and legitimacy. Discipline emerges not only as a school rule but as the foundation of moral order, shaping students into respectful, humble, and responsible citizens who embody the values of the school, the community, and the nation.

CHAPTER SIX

POTENTIAL INFLUENCE OF IMENTI NORTH PRINCIPALS' DISCOURSE ON STUDENTS' ACTIONS AND RESPONSES

6.0 Introduction

This chapter examines how high school principals, through their public speeches, construct and reinforce dominant ideologies that shape students' behaviour, self-concepts, and institutional belonging. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Politeness Theory, and Speech Act Theory, the analysis explores how principals deploy language as a tool of governance, motivation, and identity formation. The principals' utterances are treated not as neutral expressions but as discursive practices embedded in wider social, cultural, and institutional frameworks that serve to reproduce power relations and values within the school context.

By analyzing principals' speeches across various ideological dimensions, this chapter demonstrates how language is used to regulate behavior, instill values, and shape identities within the educational domain. The analysis shows that the school is not merely a site of learning but also a space where discourse functions as an instrument of socialization, embedding students within broader systems of power and ideology.

6.1 Reinforcing Discipline and Obedience

Discipline and obedience emerge as some of the most recurring and forcefully articulated themes in the principals' discourse. Students are consistently reminded that without discipline, their academic efforts, moral integrity, and institutional loyalty are meaningless. Obedience is framed as the bedrock upon which all other virtues are built, positioning it as the central marker of the "good student." From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, such discourses demonstrate how institutions reproduce power relations by naturalising authority and compliance (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2001). Speech Act Theory reveals that principals achieve this reinforcement through directives, warnings, and commissives, while Politeness Theory explains how obedience is framed not only as a command but also as a moral and relational obligation.

In several instances, discipline is foregrounded as non-negotiable. For example, one principal declares:

T4.

“I will make sure that discipline is maintained and school rules followed to the latter because without discipline you will not go far”

This statement functions as a directive speech act (Searle, 1976), aimed at compelling compliance. While the use of “I will make sure” positions the principal as an enforcer of rules, the justification “because without discipline you will not go far” constitutes a strategy of positive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987), framing discipline as beneficial to the students’ futures. CDA highlights here that institutional power is legitimized by linking obedience to academic and life success (Fairclough, 1995).

The enforcement of discipline is further reinforced through explicit warnings and threats of sanctions. In one instance, students are cautioned:

T54.

“...unless you are permitted you must not talk to a parent... that will attract a penalty, a parent is a stranger, it will attract suspension, that will not be compromised”

The statement exemplifies a perlocutionary act intended to instil fear of consequences. The construction of parents as “strangers” reveals a discourse of institutional dominance over familial authority. CDA exposes how such framing redefines students’ relational loyalties—obedience is due to the institution above all else (Fairclough, 2001).

Surveillance also emerges as a central strategy for enforcing obedience. As one principal announces:

T5.

“That CCTV is placed there for your own good... We are going to buy cameras that are smaller than your eye... They will be monitoring your actions closely”

Although the phrase “for your own good” functions as a mitigation strategy within politeness theory, the underlying illocutionary act is coercive, expanding surveillance to enforce conformity.

In other cases, obedience is couched in moral and religious terms, naturalizing compliance as a civic and spiritual duty. One principal assert *“Remember a disciplined student is a good citizen”* T71. This utterance is a declarative speech act, redefining discipline as synonymous with good citizenship. Such moral framing legitimizes rules not only as school requirements but as reflections of societal and divine order (Chilton, 2004). By embedding discipline in broader moral and civic discourses, principals employ positive politeness strategies, appealing to students’ desire for social approval.

The rhetoric also dramatizes the consequences of indiscipline. In one speech, the principal warns:

T9.

“...even if we are not making it in academics get out of this school with discipline... there was another young man... who died at a young age because of indiscipline”

This is an expressive speech act that employs narrative as a warning, associating disobedience with personal tragedy. CDA reveals the ideological function of fear in normalizing control, while politeness strategies frame the cautionary tale as an act of care for students’ welfare rather than pure institutional coercion.

Finally, the institutional expectation of unconditional obedience is reinforced in statements such as:

T55.

“You must follow the rules, lazima mufuate sheria (You must follow school rules). Don’t argue with the gate man, instructions should be followed to the latter”

The shift to Kiswahili serves to intensify the directive, drawing on cultural familiarity to enhance authority. Here, the speech act is explicitly directive, while CDA highlights the hierarchical construction of authority that extends even to non-teaching staff.

The principals’ discourse demonstrates discipline and obedience are reinforced through an interplay of linguistic strategies that both command and persuade. Directive speech acts convey explicit orders, while commissive and perlocutionary acts threaten punishment or promise rewards for compliance. Politeness strategies balance coercion with appeals to solidarity, moral values, and students’ future success. CDA reveals the underlying ideologies at work: discipline is naturalized as a prerequisite for academic achievement, moral integrity, and citizenship, while surveillance and punishment are legitimized as necessary tools of governance. Ultimately, the principals’ speeches construct an institutional order where obedience is both a moral duty and a condition for belonging, ensuring that students internalize discipline as a central value in their educational and social identity.

6.2 Constructing Academic Identity and Self-Worth

The principals’ speeches also work to construct students’ academic identity and self-worth, positioning academic performance as the central measure of value, legitimacy, and future success. Within this discursive framework, students are defined not only by their behaviour but also by their ability to embody discipline, excellence, and achievement in academic terms. Academic identity thus becomes the primary axis along which self-worth is evaluated, both individually and collectively. From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, such constructions reflect broader

educational ideologies that equate learning outcomes with personal value (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2001).

Through directives, metaphors, and narratives, principals construct academic identity as an inseparable part of students' sense of self, while Speech Act Theory shows how these identities are enacted performatively. One principal tells students:

T 42.

I want to say this, that you can change these results... we can celebrate Brigit as much as we can, it is ok, we can clap, when shall we clap for you?

The rhetorical question “when shall we clap for you?” is both a directive and expressive speech act. It directs students toward personal improvement while simultaneously expressing disappointment. CDA shows that success is individualized, with recognition (“clap for you”) functioning as symbolic capital that constitutes academic identity (Bourdieu, 1991). Politeness emerges through the collective framing (“we can clap”), which creates solidarity while reinforcing competition.

Similarly, academic identity is constructed as a personal responsibility as illustrated in T44.

T44.

“...parents will not read on your behalf; it is your business. The ball is in your court; it is expected that you give your academics your best”

The phrase “your business” is a directive speech act that transfers full accountability to students. CDA reveals the neoliberal undertones of individual responsibility, aligning personal worth with academic success (Fairclough, 2001). The use of metaphor (“ball is in your court”) softens the imposition and reflects positive politeness by motivating students rather than directly reprimanding them.

High school principals' discourses also, emphasizes constant effort and performance benchmarks. One principal declares,

T45.

Remember you are here to perform; you are in 8.4.4 system you must perform. ...Have a target to propel you ahead. Your targets are achievable but you must work very hard

This is a combination of directive and commissive speech acts, instructing students to set goals while committing that such goals are "achievable." CDA reveals that identity is tied to systemic pressures of the 8.4.4 curriculum, with academic worth constructed as measurable, target-driven output. The motivational tone is a politeness strategy that mitigates the coercive undertone of "you must perform."

Also, T48 frames Self-worth through institutional pride and collective achievement.

T48

"We have produced the best student in the region, na hiyo ni Fahari yetu zote. We must remain on the track"

This is a declarative act that associates individual achievement with communal pride. CDA uncovers the ideology of institutional prestige, where academic success becomes a collective identity marker. Politeness strategies are evident in the inclusive "we," which creates a sense of shared responsibility for maintaining excellence, reinforcing that individual identity is inseparable from institutional performance.

The link between academic achievement and future social positioning was also foregrounded in the analysed data. As one principal tells students:

T43.

"...you must work hard and be determined. Gentlemen you need to know that... in ten years time... you are the people who should be occupying those prestigious positions in government"

This is a commissive act, promising social mobility through academic effort. CDA reveals how identity is shaped around nationalistic ideals, constructing education as the gateway to elite positions. Politeness emerges in the respectful address “Gentlemen,” which elevates students’ sense of worthwhile imposing high expectations.

Finally, principals often employ metaphors and moral appeals to construct students’ academic identity. One principal reflects:

T66.

“Life is a battle which you must fight for yourself, your children and your country”

The metaphor of “life as a battle” positions students’ academic journey as heroic, framing perseverance as integral to self-worth. As a directive speech act, it commands resilience, while the moralistic tone appeals to shared values of family and patriotism. CDA here uncovers the ideological intertwining of personal achievement with national duty.

From the above discussion it is evident that principals construct academic identity and self-worth by presenting education as both an individual responsibility and a collective institutional achievement. Through directive speech acts, students are instructed to work hard, set targets, and remain focused. Commissives promise future success, while expressives recognize or critique performance. on the other hand, politeness strategies balance the coercive force of commands with encouragement, inclusive pronouns, and motivational metaphors. CDA reveals the underlying ideologies of neoliberalism, meritocracy, and institutional nationalism, which frame academic performance as the basis of self-worth and future legitimacy. In this discourse, students’ identities are constructed not only as learners but as future leaders and symbols of institutional and national pride.

6.3 Gender and Social Roles

The principals' speeches also reveal how educational discourse functions to reinforce gender norms and social roles. While ostensibly directed at academic and behavioural regulation, many utterances contain underlying assumptions about what constitutes appropriate male and female behaviour, positioning students within gendered frameworks that reproduce societal hierarchies. From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, this reflects how institutions operate as ideological state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971), embedding gendered ideologies into everyday practices and speech. Speech Act Theory demonstrates how principals perform gender through directives and evaluatives, while Politeness Theory explains how these constructions are framed as moral obligations rather than mere institutional preferences as discussed below.

Principals repeatedly ascribe leadership to boys and caregiving/domestic roles to girls. For instance, one utterance addresses boys and girls separately:

T59.

"...boys, you need to be strong leaders in this school; do not be swayed easily.... Girls, we expect you to maintain discipline and show good morals, you are the role models of our school"

This bifurcation is enacted through directive illocutions ("you need to be...", "we expect you to...") that performatively locate boys in a leadership register and girls in a moral or domestic register. From a CDA perspective this reproduces hegemonic gender hierarchies by discursively linking masculinity with agency and public authority and femininity with moral labour (Connell, 2005).

The metaphorical framing of girls as "mothers of tomorrow" further naturalizes reproductive and caregiving futures:

T60

"...you girls, you are our mothers of tomorrow; if you waste time in indiscipline, you are wasting your future families".

This declarative couples individual conduct with future domestic roles.

In addition, the principals' speeches enact gendered double standards around relationships and sexual behaviour. A directive banning pupil romantic relations is announced with a marked emphasis on girls' responsibility and shame:

T61 *"...in this school we don't allow relationships between boys and girls. You must remain focused, otherwise you will spoil your future, especially you girls; you carry the bigger shame"*.

In the speech from which T61 was derived the principal aims to deter romantic involvement and to produce a gendered effect (shame) primarily targeted at girls. CDA shows this as a moralizing discourse that polices female sexuality more strictly than male sexuality, thereby reproducing patriarchal norms that stigmatize women for transgressions that men are less harshly judged for (Fairclough, 1995).

The principals also frame girls' expressed needs as suspect or prone to "abuse":

T58.

"Some girls have taken advantage of their gender... I am a woman and a woman has her own issues and you call them emergencies even when they are not. Don't get out of class before the designated time"

This statement uses an epistemic stance "have taken advantage" to undermine legitimate claims like menstrual or personal emergencies, thereby constraining the space in which female embodied needs can be acknowledged. From a politeness-theoretic angle, the principal presents this as a candid admission (face-threat minimizer via shared identity: "I am a woman"), but the illocution functions ultimately to delegitimize and discipline female claims to exception.

Correspondingly, the form of address and evaluative language differ by gender and perform important pragmatic work. For boys the address is often honorific,

T5.

“Gentlemen... you need to know that... in ten years time... you are the people who should be occupying those prestigious positions in government”

For girls, exhortations link comportment to family reputation and shame see T60–T61, thereby indexing a narrower set of socially valued futures. This asymmetric pragmatics produces different kinds of face wants: men are offered positive face (esteem, future prestige), while women are threatened with negative face outcomes (shame, reputational loss) should they deviate.

Thus, high school principals’ speeches actively construct and reproduce gendered social roles through a combination of performative speech acts, moralizing verdictives, and polished politeness strategies. Boys are discursively situated toward public leadership and future prestige; girls are oriented toward caregiving, moral guardianship, and reputational vulnerability. CDA reveals that these linguistic patterns are not incidental but ideological since they reproduce hegemonic gender relations within the school and thus contribute to the formation of gendered academic and social identities.

6.4 Cultivating Institutional Loyalty and School Identity

One of the most prominent ideological effects of the principals’ speeches is the cultivation of institutional loyalty and the construction of school identity. Students are consistently reminded that they are not just individuals pursuing personal academic goals but also representatives of their school, entrusted with the responsibility of embodying and preserving its reputation. This emphasis situates students’ identities within a collective framework, where self-worth and belonging are tied to institutional loyalty. As Fairclough (1995) notes, discourse constructs social identities by binding individuals into broader structures of power and value. Principals’ speeches enact this process by presenting loyalty to the school as integral to being a good student, thereby fusing institutional interests with personal identity.

The metaphor of family is frequently invoked to reinforce loyalty. For instance, one principal state:

T23.

“...we are a growing school run by the ministry of education. We are a family, one big family; we must all work together to make this family succeed”

This is a declarative speech act, equating the school with a family and thereby reconfiguring the students’ identities as members of an intimate, supportive, but also hierarchical structure. This metaphor normalizes obedience and shared responsibility, as disloyalty is implicitly recast as betrayal of “family.” The phrase “we must all work together” functions as a directive softened through positive politeness, emphasizing solidarity rather than coercion (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Also, high school principals reinforce institutional loyalty through pride in academic performance. One principal proclaims:

T62.

“...we have produced the best student in the region, na hiyo ni Fahari yetu zote. We must remain on the track”

The use of Kiswahili (“Fahari yetu zote” (our collective pride) indexes cultural intimacy and reinforces institutional solidarity. It is a declarative speech act that binds individual achievement to institutional prestige. CDA highlights how such discourse positions students as custodians of the school’s reputation, with their success framed as inseparable from the school’s identity (Fairclough, 2001).

Similarly, another principal insists:

T63.

“...we have been known of being mathematics champions around. We want to maintain the same. Others are competing with us. So, the moment we relax, others may overtake us. We

are not ready to be overtaken because we are the best in this region”

The repeated “we” constructs a collective identity around excellence. The commissive element “we are not ready to be overtaken” functions as both a promise and a challenge. Politeness is visible in the appeal to group loyalty, but the perlocutionary effect is pressure to perform so as not to tarnish the school’s identity.

The principals also link loyalty to surveillance and reputation management. One asserts:

T65.

“I want you to note that as you idle around here and there remember we are watching how you behave in class and outside. We must protect the name of our school. We know those who break the rules even when you think no one is seeing”

This utterance combines directive speech acts (reminding students of expected behaviour) with a verdictive act (implying judgment will be passed on offenders). CDA reveals the construction of institutional loyalty as inseparable from protecting “the name of our school.” Surveillance is framed as a mechanism not only for discipline but for safeguarding collective identity (Foucault, 1977).

At times, institutional loyalty is discursively connected to broader nationalist discourses. A principal reminds students:

T64.

“...our behaviour and the results they are not biased, there is some correlation between the two, and we need to change our mindset and know that aaa this is a national school and not a village school”

Here, being part of a “national school” elevates institutional identity beyond the local level, tying student loyalty to national prestige. This is a declarative speech act, assigning students an identity as representatives of national excellence. CDA reveals how the discourse merges institutional and national pride, reinforcing loyalty by situating the school within broader narratives of social mobility and progress (Chilton, 2004).

Ultimately, Principals cultivate institutional loyalty and school identity by discursively positioning the school as a family, a source of collective pride, and a moral community. Through directive and declarative speech acts, students are tasked with upholding the school’s name, preserving its reputation, and striving for academic excellence. Politeness strategies such as inclusive pronouns, appeals to solidarity, and cultural-linguistic switches into Kiswahili mitigate the coercive nature of directives and reframe them as shared commitments. CDA reveals that these strategies are ideological: loyalty is tied to academic performance, surveillance, and even national pride, ensuring that students internalize institutional belonging as part of their personal identity.

6.5 Moral and Religious Framing

Another central discursive effect of the principals’ speeches is the integration of moral and religious framing into their communication with students. Beyond academic performance and discipline, principals invoke religious metaphors, moral lessons, and spiritual obligations to regulate student behaviour and construct identity. This strategy reinforces the authority of principals by situating obedience and responsibility not only as institutional requirements but also as moral and divine duties. Fairclough (2001) explains that interdiscursivity is a key feature of ideological discourse. In this case, the intersection of educational discourse with religious and moral registers strengthens the legitimacy of institutional authority and makes compliance appear as a moral obligation rather than a mere institutional demand.

One principal explicitly links student behaviour with divine approval;

T68.

“When you respect teachers, you honour God. ... Faith without action is dead... God rewards those who work hard and stay disciplined”

This is a declarative speech act, constructing obedience as simultaneously a school rule and a religious command. CDA reveals how institutional discipline is naturalized through moral discourse: disobedience is not just rule-breaking but sin. The phrase “God rewards” employs positive politeness, presenting discipline as a path to divine favour rather than coercion. Such alignment reflects Chilton’s (2004) argument that discourse often invokes transcendent values to legitimize power.

Principals also employ biblical metaphors to frame student identity. For instance, one principal reflects:

T67

“...I have never witnessed salt that is tasteless... salt that has no taste is useless, completely useless... The salt in ourselves should continue to be salty”

This expressive speech act frames students’ moral integrity as analogous to “salt” retaining its purpose. CDA shows how metaphor constructs moral worth, with failure to remain “salty” equated to being useless. This biblical imagery functions as a face-enhancing politeness strategy, motivating students to see discipline as part of their spiritual identity (Charteris-Black, 2004).

Further, Principals frequently moralize obedience through appeals to virtues such as humility. One principal proclaim:

T70.

“Humility. Be humble all the time. Be humble all the time. I'll repeat for one time. Be humble all the time. Even when you're in power, be humble. ... Take it, leave it. If you don't, God is going to teach you”

The repetition of “be humble” constitutes a directive speech act, reinforced by a divine sanction (“God is going to teach you”). CDA shows that humility is constructed as an institutional virtue demanded of students, ensuring submission to authority. Politeness surfaces in the moral appeal, but the embedded threat (“God is going to teach you”) acts as a perlocutionary act designed to instil fear of divine punishment.

Biblical authority is further invoked to encourage unity and institutional harmony:

T69.

“...as the bible says, a house divided cannot stand and let us also grow let’s mature and it is said, even Rome was not built in one day”

This utterance blends biblical authority with secular proverb, creating a moral framework for patience and cooperation. CDA reveals that institutional unity is discursively moralized; division is equated to sin and destruction. The appeal is a positive politeness, invoking shared cultural knowledge and faith traditions to align students with institutional goals.

Through their discourse, principals cultivate moral and religious framing to reinforce discipline, obedience, and institutional loyalty. Using declarative and expressive speech acts, they redefine school rules as moral obligations and divine commands. Biblical metaphors and moral virtues like salt, humility and good citizenship construct students’ academic and personal identities as fundamentally spiritual. Politeness strategies particularly appeal to shared religious values and cultural proverbs mitigate the imposition of authority, making compliance appear voluntary and morally righteous. CDA exposes the underlying ideology: by moralizing school conduct, principals transform obedience into a marker of spiritual worth and civic identity, thereby ensuring deep internalization of institutional norms.

6.6 Time Management and Goal Orientation

Another central effect of principals’ speeches is the emphasis on time management and goal orientation as essential determinants of student behaviour and success. Time

is consistently framed as a scarce and valuable resource that must be used productively, while goal orientation is constructed as a marker of seriousness and commitment to academic excellence. Through repeated directives and cautionary examples, principals construct student identity around the efficient use of time and the setting of clear academic targets. This emphasis reflects what Foucault (1977) describes as the disciplinary logic of institutions, where regulation of time becomes a means of producing docile, productive bodies. In the school context, time management and goal orientation are positioned as the foundations of both academic achievement and moral worth.

The analysed data revealed that Principals repeatedly stress the need for strict adherence to time. One asserts:

T2.

“I want to start by talking about time management in this school. You must be in class by 7:00 a.m. also you should adhere to bells. I want to really say that parents will not read on your behalf, it is your business. The ball is in your court; it is expected that you give your academics your best”

This is a directive speech act, instructing punctuality and responsibility. Time is constructed as both a disciplinary mechanism and a personal responsibility, resonating with Foucault’s (1977) argument that time regulation produces disciplined subjects. Politeness is evident in the metaphor “the ball is in your court,” which softens the imposition by presenting time management as a matter of personal empowerment.

Time management is also framed as maximizing every available moment. One principal insists: *“...make good use of your morning, make good use of your breaks, and make good use of your evening preps so that you can get ready for the exam”*

T47. The repetition of “make good use” functions as a directive speech act, urging students to exploit every time opening for study. An ideology of efficiency is revealed where idle time is delegitimized and Politeness surfaces in the positive framing “make good use” rather than negative prohibition “don’t waste”, which mitigates the coercive tone by appealing to shared values of productivity.

In addition, goal setting is presented as central to academic identity. One principal emphasizes:

T45.

*“Always keep a step ahead. Have a target to propel you ahead.
Your targets are achievable but you must work very hard”*

This statement is a mix of directive and commissive acts directing students to set goals while committing that those goals are achievable. CDA uncovers neoliberal undertones: identity and worth are tied to goal-driven productivity, where measurable outcomes become markers of success (Fairclough, 2001). Politeness is visible in the reassurance “your targets are achievable,” which boosts confidence while reinforcing the duty to work hard.

Principals also link individual time discipline to collective institutional outcomes. One principal affirms:

T10.

*“Remember we can achieve the highest mean score if we work
together. There is nothing impossible”*

This commissive speech act, promises success through shared effort. CDA shows how institutional loyalty is tied to time management, making individual discipline a contribution to collective identity. The inclusive “we” is a positive politeness, constructing time management as a communal responsibility rather than an imposed duty.

In sum, the emphasis on time management and goal orientation in principals’ speeches functions as a powerful discursive strategy for shaping student behaviour and identity. Time is constructed as a scarce resource that must be managed with precision, while goals are positioned as both personal and collective obligations. Through directives, metaphors, narratives, and future projections, principals compel students to internalize efficiency, productivity, and discipline as core aspects of their identity. Speech acts function to bind students to both personal and institutional goals, while politeness strategies present these obligations as empowering rather than coercive. From a CDA perspective, these discourses reproduce institutional authority

and broader neoliberal ideologies, making students responsible for their own futures while simultaneously aligning them with institutional success. The result is a construction of the ideal student as a goal-oriented, time-disciplined individual whose value is measured by their ability to convert disciplined effort into personal and institutional achievement as discussed below.

6.7 Encouraging Individual Accountability

Another major discursive effect of the principals' speeches is the encouragement of individual accountability, where students are consistently reminded that their behaviour, performance, and life outcomes depend primarily on their personal responsibility. Accountability is constructed as both an academic and moral duty, positioning students as self-regulating subjects who must internalise responsibility for their actions. This emphasis reflects broader neoliberal discourses in education that foreground self-responsibility and meritocracy, shifting the burden of success or failure onto individuals (Fairclough, 1995). From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, these speeches reveal how institutional discourse individualizes responsibility and minimizes structural considerations. Through Speech Act Theory, accountability is seen as enacted performatively via directives, assertives, and commissives, while Politeness Theory highlights how such demands are framed as empowering rather than coercive.

A recurring theme is that academic success depends on personal effort rather than external support. One principal asserts:

T44.

"...parents will not read on your behalf; it is your business. The ball is in your court; it is expected that you give your academics your best"

This is a directive speech act that shifts responsibility squarely onto the student. The metaphor "the ball is in your court" exemplifies positive politeness, framing accountability as empowerment rather than mere obligation. The ideological function is that students are positioned as autonomous agents responsible for their own success.

Principals also equate accountability with effort and performance:

T45.

“Remember you are here to perform; you are in 8.4.4 system you must perform. ...Have a target to propel you ahead. Your targets are achievable but you must work very hard”

This mixes directives (students “must perform”) with commissives (targets are “achievable”), producing a motivational structure that both demands and promises. CDA uncovers the meritocratic ideology that accountability is measured by performance against systemic benchmarks politeness surfaces in the reassurance that targets are “achievable,” mitigating the coercive force of “you must perform.”

At times, accountability is framed through the financial sacrifices of parents. A principal challenges students:

T51.

“Parents are spending so much on you, are you worth a project? Parents are spending as much as 50,000 shillings in a term? If you waste a term, it is like wasting their sweat”

This is both a directive and expressive act, urging responsibility while expressing disapproval. CDA shows that accountability is externalized to family obligations, making failure a moral breach against parents’ sacrifices. The rhetorical question “are you worth a project?” is a face-threatening act, but framed through negative politeness, it appeals to guilt and moral duty rather than outright command.

Individual accountability is also reinforced through threat of consequences and institutional monitoring. A principal warns:

T55.

“...you must follow the rules, lazima mufuate sheria. Don’t argue with the gate man, instructions should be followed to the latter”

This is a directive act, where accountability is enforced through compliance with institutional rules. CDA highlights how accountability is framed as unconditional, extending even to interactions with support staff.

The code-switch into Kiswahili (“lazima mufuate sheria”) intensifies the imposition by grounding accountability in shared cultural norms.

Finally, principals frame accountability in moral and existential terms. In one speech the principal insists:

T9.

“...even if we are not making it in academics get out of this school with discipline. ...there was another young man ... who died at a young age because of indiscipline”

This expressive act dramatizes the consequences of failing to take responsibility, linking indiscipline to death. CDA reveals that accountability is not optional but tied to survival and moral identity. By narrating tragedy, the principal reinforces accountability through fear, while politeness softens the imposition by framing it as a cautionary tale for students’ own good.

In sum, the principals’ speeches construct accountability as the defining feature of student identity, positioning students as self-responsible, disciplined, and morally bound individuals. Accountability is framed through metaphors of productivity, narratives of failure, religious discourse, and institutional representation, ensuring that students internalise responsibility for both their academic outcomes and their school’s reputation. From a CDA perspective, this emphasis reflects neoliberal ideologies of individualisation, obscuring structural inequalities while legitimising institutional authority. From a Speech Act perspective, accountability is enacted through directives, assertives, and commissives, while Politeness Theory shows how these demands are masked as empowerment. Ultimately, the effect of this discourse is the production of students who regulate themselves, measure their self-worth by their accountability, and align their identities with institutional expectations

6.8 Constructing the Ideal Student

High school principals consistently describe, prescribe, and reinforce particular attributes that students must embody to be considered successful, respectable, and worthy of both institutional recognition and future opportunities. This construction operates through evaluative language, narratives, warnings, and directives, situating the student within a framework of discipline, humility, academic focus, loyalty, and

moral integrity. As Fairclough (1995) argues, discourse creates subject positions that individuals are expected to inhabit, and the principals' speeches clearly delineate the boundaries between the "ideal student" and the "deviant student." The effect is the production of normative identities that students are compelled to internalize and perform in their daily conduct.

From a CDA perspective, this construction reveals the broader function of schooling as an ideological apparatus (Althusser, 1971), where students are not only educated but also shaped into particular kinds of subjects. The speeches delineate what counts as acceptable and desirable identity, ensuring that students regulate themselves in line with institutional norms. From the perspective of Speech Act Theory, these constructions are achieved through a combination of directives (commands), commissives (binding students to goals), and assertives (presenting truths about discipline and success). Politeness strategies mitigate the coercive force of these speech acts, presenting the qualities of the ideal student as empowering and desirable rather than imposed.

The ideal student is portrayed as highly motivated and goal-oriented. One principal insists:

T45.

*"Always keep a step ahead. Have a target to propel you ahead.
Your targets are achievable but you must work very hard"*

This combines directives (to set goals) with commissives (promising that targets are achievable). CDA reveals a neoliberal ideology where students' worth is tied to measurable outcomes and productivity (Fairclough, 2001). Politeness surfaces in the motivational assurance that goals are "achievable," which balances the heavy burden of responsibility. The ideal student here is imagined as a self-regulating, goal-oriented learner who constantly strives for improvement.

Individual accountability is another defining feature of the ideal student. As t44 stresses:

T44.

“...parents will not read on your behalf; it is your business. The ball is in your court; it is expected that you give your academics your best”

This directive act emphasizes personal responsibility, while the metaphor “ball is in your court” functions as positive politeness, presenting responsibility as empowerment. CDA shows that the ideal student is positioned as an autonomous subject responsible for both their own success and the sacrifices of others (Ball, 2003).

Moral uprightness and religious faith are also key attributes of an ideal student. For example,

T68.

“When you respect teachers, you honour God. ... God rewards those who work hard and stay disciplined”

This declarative act ties institutional obedience to divine approval. CDA reveals the ideological strategy of embedding school discipline in religious morality, thereby naturalizing it as both a spiritual and educational duty. Politeness operates through the appeal to shared faith, which makes the directive appear less authoritarian. The ideal student here is a morally disciplined believer whose behaviour aligns with both school and divine authority.

Principals also construct the ideal student through gendered expectations. In one speech the principal claims:

T59.

“...boys, you need to be strong leaders in this school... Girls, we expect you to maintain discipline and show good morals, you are the role models of our school”

This directive act assigns leadership to boys and morality to girls, producing a gendered template of the ideal. Gender ideologies intersect with institutional expectations, ensuring that ideal students embody not only discipline and performance but also culturally constructed gender roles (Connell, 2005).

The principals' speeches construct the ideal student as a disciplined respectful, humble, hardworking, and loyal individual who aligns personal goals with institutional priorities. The non-ideal student is defined in contrast as disrespectful, undisciplined, lazy, or ungrateful, with narratives of failure serving as cautionary boundaries. Through this construction, principals reproduce institutional authority while shaping students into subjects who embody the values and ambitions of the school. The result is a normative framework where student worth is measured against institutional expectations, and success is defined by the extent to which individuals embody the discourse of the ideal student.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the principals' speeches are not neutral acts of communication but powerful sites where ideologies are reproduced, identities are constructed, and institutional authority is legitimized. Through the lenses of Critical Discourse Analysis, Politeness Theory, and Speech Act Theory, it has been shown that principals rely on a blend of directive, declarative, commissive, and expressive speech acts to enforce compliance, inspire effort, and shape students' perceptions of themselves and their roles within the school and society.

The analysis revealed that discipline and obedience are positioned as the cornerstone of student success and institutional order. By framing obedience as both a survival strategy and a moral duty, principals normalize surveillance, punishment, and rule adherence as essential aspects of schooling. Closely linked to this is the cultivation of academic identity and self-worth, where success is constructed as a product of hard work, goal orientation, and accountability. Through motivational metaphors, promises of achievable targets, and appeals to parental sacrifice, students are interpellated as responsible agents of their own performance.

The chapter also highlighted how principals' discourse is deeply entangled with gender ideologies and social role assignment. Boys are discursively positioned as future leaders and public actors, while girls are constructed as moral guardians and "mothers of tomorrow," with heavier moral and reputational burdens placed upon them. Such speech acts reinforce patriarchal norms and delimit the range of

acceptable futures available to male and female students. Similarly, the cultivation of institutional loyalty and school identity relies on metaphors of family, appeals to collective pride, and warnings about protecting the school's reputation. Here, students' individual performance is discursively tied to the prestige of the school and even to national pride, thereby encouraging them to see themselves as representatives of institutional and national excellence.

Moral and religious framing further strengthens these ideologies, with principals invoking biblical metaphors, divine authority, and moral virtues such as humility to naturalize obedience and effort as spiritual obligations. Time management and goal orientation are also framed as markers of the ideal student, with every moment constructed as a resource to be maximized for both individual success and institutional performance. The insistence on individual accountability reinforces neoliberal discourses of self-responsibility, urging students to see themselves as fully responsible for their own outcomes, even while embedded in broader structural conditions.

Ultimately, the principals' discourse constructs an ideal student, a disciplined, goal-oriented, accountable, morally upright, gender-role compliant, and institutionally loyal figure who embodies not only academic excellence but also the values of family, religion, and the nation. This construction is achieved through a careful interplay of authority and solidarity, where face-threatening acts are softened through politeness strategies, and coercion is reframed as care, pride, or moral duty.

The chapter has shown that principals' speeches are a form of ideological work that goes beyond motivating students to succeed academically. They are discursive tools that shape the moral, social, and institutional identities of students, ensuring that the school reproduces not only knowledge but also discipline, hierarchy, and societal values. The analysis underscores the central role of language in sustaining power relations in education and in crafting the subjectivities of students as compliant, ambitious, and loyal members of both the school and the wider society.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Introduction

This chapter highlights the major observations made in this study and makes suggestions for further inquiry. The study analysed high school principals' discourse to reveal the power dynamics and ideologies that take place as they address the students during assembly. The study used oral speeches given by the high school principals during assembly days. The study looked into the linguistic features inherent in the speeches which reveal power relations, the ideological inclinations of the principals revealed in their discourse and how the principals' speeches potentially shape students' actions and responses. The findings for Chapter four to six are summarized. Conclusions are drawn based on the findings and then suggestions for further research are presented last.

7.1 Linguistic Features that Reflect Power Relations in the Discourse of Imenti North High School Principals

Using frameworks from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Politeness Theory, and Speech Act Theory, it is evident that various linguistic features serve to construct, maintain, and legitimize institutional authority over students.

One prominent feature is the use of imperatives and direct address. Statements such as "*Stop being comfortable,*" "*Go to class,*" "*Bring your files*" function as unmitigated commands that establish clear hierarchies between speaker and audience. This bald-on-record style of communication, as described in Politeness Theory, is typical of institutional settings where power differences are accepted and reinforced through speech.

Another key marker is the repetition of modal verbs particularly *must*, *should*, *need to*, and *have to*, which encode obligation and authority. For instance, students are told, "*You must work hard,*" "*You should not talk to parents,*" or "*We have to score well*". These modals impose institutional expectations as mandates, thus naturalizing control.

The strategic use of pronouns also reflects power dynamics. While “we” is used inclusively to foster unity and shared goals (“*We want the best for you*”), it often masks asymmetrical power by positioning the principal as a benevolent authority figure. In contrast, the use of “you” in admonitions (“*You are not serious,*” “*You have become small eggs*”) clearly singles out students as the objects of regulation, reinforcing a top-down communicative structure.

Additionally, the speeches contain metaphors that construct norms and marginalize deviance. Phrases like “*this is not a village school,*” “*backward attitudes,*” and “*discipline is the backbone of any society*” signal not just disapproval, but encode ideological standards of behaviour and performance. Students are classified as either conforming or failing through this evaluative discourse, which wields symbolic power.

Humor and sarcasm such as “*You run to school half-dressed and expect respect,*” “*Do you want to be taught by a tall teacher with spectacles?*”) further illustrate the uncontested authority of the speaker, where informal language is used not to equalize but to criticize from a position of superiority.

The linguistic features in the principals’ speeches like commands, modality, pronoun shifts, evaluative metaphors, and rhetorical questions serve as discursive mechanisms through which power is exercised and accepted. These features not only direct student behaviour but also reinforce the legitimacy of the principal’s authority and the institutional order they represent.

7.2 Ideologies in Imenti North High School Principals Discourse

The analysis of principals’ speeches reveals a rich tapestry of underlying ideologies that shape the educational landscape and student subjectivities. Through the combined lens of CDA, Politeness Theory, and Speech Act Theory, it is evident that school principals utilize discourse not only to communicate but to construct social order, reinforce norms, and assert institutional authority.

Discipline ideology emerges prominently, with repeated emphasis on obedience, self-control, and rule-following. Students are frequently reminded that academic success is tied to personal behaviour and that “discipline is the backbone of any society.” This

framing constructs students as morally responsible agents whose worth is measured not just academically, but behaviorally.

Meritocratic ideology is embedded in the valorisation of effort, performance, and improvement. Success is depicted as attainable through individual hard work “you will harvest exactly what you plant” implying that failure stems from personal laziness or poor choices. Such discourse obscures structural inequalities and reinforces neoliberal ideals of self-reliance and individual accountability.

The speeches also reflect an ideology of nationalism and institutional pride, frequently invoking the school’s reputation, comparison with other schools, and the nation’s future. Students are cast as “warriors of excellence” destined for “prestigious positions,” aligning personal success with national progress and portraying schooling as a patriotic duty.

Gender ideology surfaces in the comparison between boys and girls, with occasional reinforcement of traditional gender roles and expectations, such as suggesting that “girls should not be ahead of us,” subtly perpetuating gendered hierarchies in achievement and leadership. The surveillance ideology is evident in references to CCTV cameras, unauthorized interactions, and rules governing movement, speech, and appearance. Students are positioned as subjects under constant observation, expected to internalize regulation, reinforcing Foucauldian notions of disciplinary power.

Furthermore, appeals to religious and moral ideologies are woven throughout the discourse, using biblical metaphors and religious references to moralize behaviour and reinforce authority. The notion of the school as a moral training ground elevates obedience and humility as virtues essential for success.

In conclusion, principals’ discourse is a site of ideological reproduction, where power is enacted and sustained through language that normalizes discipline, meritocracy, obedience, nationalism, and moral conformity. The strategic use of speech acts such as directives, commissives, politeness strategies like mitigated threats, solidarity markers), and intertextual references frames students not just as learners, but as docile, patriotic, and disciplined future citizens.

7.3 Potential Shaping of Students Actions and Responses Through Discourse of Imenti North High School Principals

The analysis of principals' speeches through the lenses of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Speech Act Theory, and Politeness Theory has revealed how everyday institutional discourse functions as a powerful mechanism for shaping student identity, behaviour, and worldview. Across the identified themes; cultivating institutional loyalty and school identity, moral and religious framing, time management and goal orientation, constructing the ideal student, reinforcing discipline and obedience, gender and social roles, constructing academic identity and self-worth, and encouraging individual accountability the findings demonstrate that principals' speeches are far more than simple administrative communication. Instead, they are discursive practices that reproduce power, embed ideology, and naturalize authority within educational settings. In synthesizing these themes, this study underscores the central role of language in constructing compliant, disciplined, and accountable student subjects who align their personal goals and moral values with institutional expectations.

7.4 Conclusions

Based on the analysis and findings of this study, the following conclusions were made; First, that principals' discourse relies heavily on directive, declarative, and commissive speech acts, alongside rhetorical questions, metaphors, repetition, analogies, rhetorical questions and code-switching to establish and maintain institutional authority. Secondly that principals' language reveals and reinforces multiple ideologies, including discipline and obedience, meritocracy, neoliberalism, accountability, gendered social roles, institutional loyalty, religious morality, and national pride. Third, that the principals' speeches shape students' behaviour by motivating compliance, instilling accountability, and aligning academic performance with institutional reputation and moral worth. Through a mix of authority and solidarity often softened by politeness strategies students are encouraged to internalize discipline, regulate their own conduct, and embrace the identity of the "ideal student," thereby influencing not only immediate actions but also long-term self-concepts.

7.5 Suggestions for Further Studies

On the basis of the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that future research could explore how linguistic features that reflect power relations differ between public and private schools, urban and rural settings, or single-sex and co-educational schools in order to determine whether the patterns of authority, control, and institutional hierarchy observed in principals' speeches are context-specific or broadly institutionalized across the education system.

While this study reveals the potential of discourse to shape student behaviour, future research could employ longitudinal ethnographic methods to track how students internalize, resist, or reproduce the ideologies and instructions embedded in school leadership discourse over time, offering deeper insights into how language influences identity formation, academic motivation, and moral development. Given the presence of gendered ideologies in the data, future research could specifically examine how gendered language constructs male and female students differently, and how such discourse shapes expectations, participation, and self-perceptions in academic and leadership roles, as well as exploring the intersection of language, gender, and institutional power in school leadership.

Also, to complement the current top-down analysis, future studies could adopt a bottom-up approach by investigating how students perceive and interpret the language used by principals, revealing areas of acceptance, resistance, or negotiation, and assessing how effectively power and ideology are transmitted or contested in student discourse. Further studies could also include multimodal discourse analysis by examining visual, gestural, and spatial modes of communication such as tone, posture, setting, and audience arrangement during assemblies to understand how principals' authority is reinforced through non-verbal discourse strategies that complement verbal cues. Expanding the scope beyond one national or regional context, cross-cultural research could reveal how principals in different countries use language to construct authority, manage behaviour, and transmit ideology, shedding light on cultural variations in educational discourse and discipline ideologies. Finally, future studies could extend the analysis to teachers and student leaders, exploring how they also use

speech acts to reflect or resist institutional power, thereby offering a broader picture of language as a networked system of authority and compliance within schools.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Speech 1

Aa am I want to start by remarking that exams ought to be taken seriously any other time you are subjected to an exam it is for your own good and we want to appreciate those who are working very hard, amm, am excited that students have started scoring even eighty and above, to comment on form 3 results I note that there is such aaa an improvement on maths there are girls here I want to recognise I don't know whether there is something remaining... but i have noted that in maths all the top ten all of them had an A minus, can we appreciate the form threes?(claps).

aam all those who took Maths and it is compulsory you managed to give us an A , actually there was an 89,87,86, 85 all the way to 80, and generally when you look at the results , we have only 61 students with ES, the least number of Es, in maths and science combined so we are saying form threes the effort that you are putting in maths also let us have it elsewhere, geography you have also done well that we are having 9,yes yes... they are 9, 9As and A minus that is good

I want to say this, that you can change these results the effort which you are putting in Maths, in Geog and other subjects you can also translate it to physics. Subjects in form three that did no manage a 50 and above are quiet a number about seven or so and we are saying you can turn around these results, aam , the tail is wanting, the tail is wanting but i want to say results are very very personal, very very personal we can celebrate Brigit as much as we can, it is ok , we can clap, when shall we clap for you? When shall we clap for you?

You have the same opportunity, the same time, the teachers maximize on your time, the form threes with those remarks we are giving you Thursday that you may be able to prepare for your exams make sure that by the time you get ready for your exam go through your notes go through your functional skills, areas, go through your revision properly. You need to re-read your notes. use your exams past papers to be able to help you remember what kind of questions can be set from that area and get ready for the exam during the exam period there are spaces where you are free, we are saying make good of your morning, make good use of your breaks, and make good use of

your evening preps so that you can get ready for the exam. Remember we can achieve the highest mean score if we work together. There is nothing impossible.

The form threes you can leave because your classes have started, I want to make the following remarks about the form twos, we are noting with a lot of concern, note books are back the personal you keeping in your desks are dirty and filthy, you are spending a lot of time in art work, you have memorable moments that all accumulates wastage of time, if you have such a note book go and throw it away before we take it away, unhealthy relationships are starting, people have started regrouping themselves. They have started offering gifts to others they can forego your bread so that you can become someone's friend a piece of meat(murmurs) before you can accept such an offer ask that person, what are you up to? (Pause)

It is time to prepare form twos, between now and exams today being first, we only have 13 days. You might want to review your notes before the exams. Have you read your notes topic by topic have you looked up for your exam papers? your papers are stuck in your exercise books, today is when form two? (Response.... Tuesday) Tuesday we have an assembly on Friday bring your files form twos and threes, well filed, all papers, we want to see those files a maximum of four files is what we asked for...it is good to have a good finish, it is good to finish well. Form twos those who don't finish well we are not promoting you to the next class, we are tired of stories of girls who have not read C.R.E notes and they are expected to pass.

We are tired of girls telling us they cannot remember the topics they learnt in maths, then what exam are you waiting for? I have guided you properly list down topics of your course work and put a tick that you have read. We are talking to you like this, and you know in November when we call you with your parents because we cannot promote you to the next class don't tell us that you did not hear (pauses). Unless you are a member of st. Johns ambulance or the rangers then have nothing to do with the sick, we are also aware that some of you are pretending that at one time during the assembly or during the class just hold my hand so that we go out in the pretense that we are not okay.as you write your functional skills and inshas (composition) peruse through and get misemos and methali (proverbs) to spice up your writing. Can you be creative even in your writing?

Now, the results for dormitory and class that did well...the best dormitory is Thangatha, and you are likely to be promoted to the new dorm because you are doing very well and the cleanest class is 3 @. you have about 20 minutes to settle in your classes we don't want to see people out.

Speech 2

(Claps)Thankyou, goood morning,

It is 8:48am we have spent almost an hour and twenty minutes, aaa discussing the results but that is okay because that is the core business of us being in school but I want to summarise this by saying those results are not good, form twos the results are not okay, form threes the results are not okay, we may be happy with abdalla Daracha but those are personal results but aaaa looking at the way we behave.

I was thinking about pride, I was thinking about pride , and i said pride comes before a fall our behaviour and those results there is some correlation between the two , our behaviour and the results they are not biased, there is some correlation between the two, and we need to change, we need to change our mindset and know that aaa this is a national school and not a village school ,gentlemen you need to know that eeeeh in ten years' time, fifteen years time you are the people who should be occupying those prestigious positions in government and unless you realize that, then you will have it wrong(pause)you must work hard and be determined. Girls cannot be ahead of us, we need to sit down and ask ourselves a number of questions (pause) we are losing it and it is important that we sit down discuss those results, we are saying there are indicators that we are not doing the right thing but I still believe if we sit down and refocus we can get back to our position it is important as a student you ask yourself, yes these are our results, xxxxx results what about the personal results where am I again I have said, am taking example of form threes as you get position three you still have the two best students where are you, yourself, where are you.? It is important that we sit down and think about those results as classes with class teachers and then come up with ways of improving those results. let me say tomorrow we are having so many visitors ,the entire county, all the principals of Meru county will be in this school in the mult-purpose hall and of course the county director ministry of education , the county director TSC it is important for us to avoid that area when going for meals and still tomorrow we will have board of management meeting here,

and this one scares me because I don't know, how do we present those results to them? Again, we need to think about that. let us do the right thing because any form of indiscipline will not be tolerated. lastly, I announce we have the day and night toilets, those who are murmuring fidgeting kindly listen to me, those who have been using them for the whole of this week I think you know what is happening. I want to say even prayers lets do them in the open place I don't need to find student behind the new lab, I want to say that place is out of bounds I also want to say that the night toilet should be used only when we are in the hostels. Still, a few form twos are leaving these toilets and moves to the others form fours have not encountered any and even the form threes. Otherwise go back to class and think about those results.

Speech 3

...I was trying to reflect on the word of the day and I hope you have done the same, i was asking myself, I have never since I was born so many years, I have never witnessed Salt that is tasteless, salt that is tasteless I was just imagining, how can salt be tasteless? salt that has no taste is useless.

If I woke up one day and found that the salt in my house is tasteless, I think the first thing that may happen, I would book myself in a hospital for medical checkup because it is either I am the problem not the salt. I am not saying the preacher has not expounded the word well, to preacher thankyou you have given us very powerful message. Now, why will I book myself in a hospital? Because since time immemorial I have not seen salt that is tasteless, meaning I might be the problem and that is why I may feel that the salt is tasteless.

During corona period-i know you were all there, one symptom that you had corona is when you lost the taste of food and I know salt is one thing that makes us know the taste of food so when salt is tasteless it means you have an issue so am calling upon all of you to ensure that you have taste. The salt in ourselves should continue to be salty. we continue being salty iIwas just asking myself, which are the many things that can make me to kufananishwa na chumvi ambayo haina taste (pause) ama ladha? (I be likened to tasteless salt)

I was saying if I was a student I would say one, is indiscipline, indiscipline because when you are without any taste no one will recognise you in the community,

indiscipline is one way of losing taste, number two is my attitude, how do I look at things – can make me lose my taste I was thinking that some of us have such negative attitude such that even when I come to the assembly kwanini hawataki kuniona na hakuna kitu nimewafanyia,(why don't want to see me and i have done nothing against them) attitude.

Let's work together to keep our school orderly, let's make our environment conducive for ourselves, don't see the next person and see the trouble maker may be that day that person has got a good message for you. Salt can lose its taste because of our attitude. You might want to check your attitude then change it.

Away from that, I would like to commend all of you for the continued support towards our school programme and our school in general , I know when we come in school we say our school my choice and when it is your choice you take good care of it, don't allow anything ,anybody to destroy your school because this school will shape your future it is going to define who you become many years from today. I believe you will all pass the exams if you prepare well. A prepared student becomes successful.

When I came here in the year 2021, I found a class that was in form four and they were doing their KCSE in the month of March and they left so another day a young man comes in my office and I told him you look familiar and he told me, Mwalimu (teacher) I was a student here in 2021 and I completed in March.

I remembered, that the same class when they cleared form four, they went to the gate and tore their shirts and left them at the gate. So, I was asking him now that you tore the shirts and left them at the gate, how are you fairing on? Let us take care of our school, our school will make us great people, our school will make us what we want to be in future, so let's take care of our school, even if we are not making it in academics get out of this school with discipline. I will make sure that discipline is maintained and school rules followed to latter because without discipline you will not go far – there was another young man called Samuel Wanjiru who died at a young age because of indiscipline. I call upon all of you to uphold discipline. Good day.

Speech 4

Good morning,

Stop being comfortable, it is not easy that you can just move from a C into an A, there should be some efforts. Stop saying your father has money that is his own earned money if you work hard there are so many people waiting for you to be able to reward and recognise you. Form fours you have a lot of potential but that potential if you don't maximise on it then it will not come out. Form fours, once again you must avoid the company you are keeping even during this time of exam, mind about the girl you are walking with, divide your day into hours, divide your hours into minutes and assign task that you are able to do. If you don't work for your future now, is it going to be obvious? you must complete your assignments on time girls.

Another thing I want to share is that we are a growing school run by the ministry of education. we are a family one big family and eeee all the staff you find in this school are qualified, we are having some growing habit, habit that are not found in this school and the standards of this school does not allow such. where a group of girls can sit down and decide teacher so and so is not good enough for me to be taught by her or him and so let us say no ,we don't want teacher x we want teacher y , I want the tall brown one, I want the one with spectacles, attitude; getting judgmental, I want to say those are backward attitude they are not attitudes of civilized students and the growing attitude I cannot be taught by a certain teacher , you must respect teachers at all times because that is the right thing to do. I will ask you to get your own teacher, you are rich enough you can go get your own teacher to teach you.

Speech 5

.....I want you to imagine whether those teachers feel like tomorrow will be a good thing for them to come again, so when we all start doing the right thing then I mean everything is going to improve even results will improve because students who pass are those who are disciplined.

So please, let's listen to what we are being advised as the bible says , a house divided cannot stand and let us also grow let's mature and it is said, even Rome was not built in one day. You can't start a house today and complete it tomorrow, even a toilet, you

can't start it today and tomorrow it is complete even behaviour change is gradual but don't take too long to grow.

So please I want to commend those who are listening and who are acting on what they hear or those who actually show respect that they respect the people who are advising them. You should respect your parent who are paying your school fees and respect each other because if they respect each other, you will not hear that students are fighting.

Even our preacher talked about humility and you know it is lack of humility that make us not to respect each other if we are humble, we shall be able to respect one another. There is a very nice comprehension in book one, English book one that talks about the five wills of living life without friction and those five wills the key is respect and it is where we are polite to one another and we have taught ourselves certain values, values to say thank you, are we together? Do we know how to say thank you when someone does something good to us? do we say thank you or we have to be asked to say? Let's listen to ourselves, are we people who have gratitude in our hearts you don't have someone pushing you to tell you why ain't you saying thank you.

Sorry is another will of living peaceably with others and we need this so that we can live peaceably with each other, yourselves with members of your family, with teachers and even with the community. Then another will be of saying excuse me, you want to talk to speak to someone, you want to borrow a pen from someone you don't just grab from your neighbours' desk, you say excuse me, may I have a pen. Another word is please; do you know how to use the word please?

This is a word that we need to use so that we can make the environment where we are conducive that we can operate at a peaceable level. And that is what xxx was telling us so let us learn to live peaceably with each other here at school , home within our community and everywhere we are, and as i keep reminding you, may be one day you will remember this, you will get employed your bosses will expect all these things even if you are working in somebody's home, by the way, even when you are living with your parents they want you to respect them. So, respect your parents. they want you to tell them sorry, when you have done something wrong they want you to thank them, when they have done something good for you . they want you to be respectful

and learn words like please you dont go demanding I want money, I want school fees no.... and supposing you want and I dont give you? Say please, excuse me i have this and this problem. And then open channels of communication. If there is something you want to say, even if you have a problem you want to be understood, don't communicate by doing the wrong thing so that somebody can understand you have a problem, go tell even a teacher for advice.

Speech 6

Good morning,

I want to start by talking about time management in this school. You must be in class by 7:00 a.m. also you should adhere to bells. I want to really say that parents will not read on your behalf, it is your business. The ball is in your court; it is expected that you give your academics your best. we have produced the best student in the region, na hiyo ni Fahari yetu zote. We must remain on the track.

Today we are launching the tuck club members it is my hope this will motivate you, that you can also be among the best. we have introduced more prizes whenever we are doing exams, remember in your class we shall recognise you if you are top three, we shall recognise you if you have improved other areas that we shall be recognising as the term comes to an end matter of discipline, matters of personal hygiene matters to do with just students who are doing well. we are saying this term just do your best.

I want to wish you well as you prepare for midterm exams. Have a good day.

Speech 7

We have made a few changes and I want to make them official that we shall be having prayer days in the evening for different forms, we are saying be in the hall at exactly seven so that by 7:15pm you are out. We have also adjusted the school programme so that classes end at four that that one hour make good use of it because time wasted in never recovered, so be punctual,.....aaaa did we agree madam deputy on eeeh that we teach first before we go for supper? (chorus; yeeees from students) , we agreed that at between 5 & 6 we go in class for a lesson then supper between 6&7 so that preps start

at what time? (seven...from students) seven fifteen? (yees) Ok. No loitering in the compound during class hours.

It is not an option to participate in music; I want to make myself very clear. It is compulsory that we must participate in music, we must give it our best. This year you have seen me sit down in that hall to watch and organise for so many articles ...why? because i have also been summoned that I should be among the competitors aaaa if you have realised, I have gone a notch higher and we have new directors to the dances, and each and every other thing because we must win.

We are expecting form three parents on Friday, aaa an habit is growing, a bad one, you see a parent walk into the school and you must see how you can send that parent to send a distress message to your parent---a number of you did that last week--- unless you are permitted you must not talk to a parent. that will attract a penalty, a parent is a stranger, it will attract suspension, that will not be compromised. If you do it then expect consequences.

Speech 8

Good morning, I want to say maths and the sciences is something you are supposed to interact with on daily basis and the teachers are on the forefront, they have asked you to bring the topnotch maths, chemistry, physics, biology, they are books you are interacting with every day, why? So that you can be able to transfer the content that you have from what you have read into the questions that teachers are presenting to you are you doing it honestly or you are still copying? The culture of reading emanates from a class and classes that are doing well what I have noted is that there is a lot of unity in those classes. That girls sit back to study and so we are calling upon subject coordinators and girls of good will that we can have classes where there is order, there is a lot of idle talk in class, negative idle talk, can you remain positive as a student and if you want success and you want us to bring good news, then can it start even in your classes. You could achieve a lot if you work together.

The quality office is very keen on how you are performing and we have started small meetings of students to give academic counselling and I hope you will be able to benefit from it, we are also saying when you come to school set academic targets,

what do you want to achieve this term? To me that is very very important, matters academic are serious and is what brings us here, if that is not ticking in your mind, it does not bother you, then you are in the wrong place.

So, you had better take your studies seriously, you have the potential but you dont want to use it. Tangu lini? (since when) When did xxxx boys school start beating us in anything? But they are going to do it , you are taking too long to study even when we have given you extra personnel to help you in the insha to help you in functional writing, you dont want to write, you want to write half pages, you are not serious, it is like the efforts we are making to help you prepare for the exam you dont see the sense , it is very unfortunate.

I want you to note that as you idle around here and there remember we are watching how you behave in class and outside. we must protect the name of our school. We know those who break the rules even when you think no one is seeing. There are students who wake up and their agenda is, how can I better my grades, you had better make up your mind. The cleanest class is xxx, can we appreciate them, (claps) you can come for your biscuits. It is already class time. Go to class and clear very fast.

Speech 9

Good morning,

I want to start by appreciating the team that went to yyyy let us appreciate them (claps) just a question, if you were the one that went there, would you have brought us success? Yes? (response;weak yees) that tells me there are those who are prepared and those who are not prepared. can you be one among those who are always prepared. The form threes well, the form fours with short notice, that is also well done.

We sent a word through the class prefect that we shall be selecting prefects for next year and this is the procedure; we will have the class prefect aam take charge and with their class members give proposals of the new prefect body, for all the categories. all captains must be in form three so when giving the proposal for one to qualify as a prefect you must be disciplined, number two you must also be ready to lead, you must be that one girl who is not want to give up just because a class has not been cleaned and now you want to down your tools. You will be such a disappointment. A leader

must be patient; you must persevere things do not always work right as we expect but that does not mean that you give up. the other qualification is your academic, you must lead by example and we are giving a C+, so that is one method we are going to use, you may also apply directly to the principal, if you want to be a prefect you can also apply.

Just to emphasis on the language, there is a new language that has come you want to speak in your mother tongue, kiborana and kimeru...they are not anywhere near our curriculum. Let me tell the teachers, that kindly dont let any student address you in mixed languages, it looks queer and awkward. You must obey the school rules, yes you must obey the school rules otherwise you are on your own.

I want to say that the cold weather is here with us and we are freeze even me am freezed, my legs are also freezing but I am trying to walk some of you are not walking you want to be given drugs now and get well now you need to be a little bit more patient with yourself. Some of you are forcing us to call your parents and your parents are telling us “I won’t come”, they are telling us on the face. when you are under treatment, can you exercise a lot of patience can you persevere if you are having high fever, you can be given some medicine to calm you down. we are going to accept to take drugs and get well. keep warm make sure that you take your meals. I want you to realise there are schools that have suffered serious diseases including our neighbours here over half of them had red eyes, a very serious infection but non went home they were treated and didn’t go home, they are recovering and going on. This business of always wanting attention girls, you have become small eggs I wonder at home whether that is what you get. Avoid a lot of drama.

Speech 10

.....what was the reading about Christopher? You have not heard, now, that thing of volunteering yourself keep it up but now project your voice so that we can hear that is good because some can’t stand here, secondly Mwalimu has talked about those who are working in the compound, for example those who are working here i expect it to be neat enough, I think that one is clear.

Then on the side of continuous assessment test, those tests are very costly. Right now, our machine requires a lot of money because of production of those papers, it requires

more than 40 000 kshs to repair. and we are saying this so that the continuity of cats will be there preparing you to score well in your exam.

Let no one try to ignore that fact. That's why we are saying we are going to punish those we see are refusing to understand and give the correct answer. So, there is nothing that is difficult, I promised the form threes a goat, I want to know whether it should have the horns and legs but I want to give the whole lakini (but) if anyone scored x , if anyone scored an E and, in that class, they get a bite...then I will get back my money. Is it clear?

Form threes I said the goat will be for those who contributed to that grade you got if the class had 3 points ...it was pulled back by those who scored E and because our objective is to eliminate Es how do I reward you now that you scored E?, how will I reward you now that you never did the exam, how will I reward you now that you were absent? That's why i will request the teachers to make sure that those who celebrate will be those who scored D- and above and they did the exam. So, if you are scoring Ds you are pulling the class down and they are complaining about you. we have to be serious, I cannot use all the money given by this one and that one and you waste, on financial management there must be value for money.

Lastly i am still having a backlog of the 500ksh and am avoiding telling you to go for it, am avoiding. But on Monday because am unable to honour some pledges, that is the money I use that is money for motivation and remedials, the programe has to ran. I am happy some students are telling the parents mimi siendi na siendi kama sinA (I am not going and I am not going if I don't have) thank you for that. Because some parents come complaining.mtoto amekatalia nyumbani hawataki kuja kame hawajalipa (the child has refused to come to school if i have not paid) but namwambia enda umwambie akae kae kidogo kwa sababu anakuja kukula nini,hiyo asubuhi anakuja kusoma atasoma na pesa ya nani.(but i tell them the student should remain at home because whose money will they be coming to useand they have not paid) Hujalipa any cent na tukipiga kengele unakimbia na plate na kijiko.(when we ring the bell you ran with a plate and a spoon,) Unakula ya nani? (whose are you eating) Who is a slave of the other? the 500 must be paid. The little money that came over the weekend i can use it to reward those who scored well in the cat, can i have the class

rep come to the front, class secretary na kam aliscore E hasikuje(if he scored an E he should not come) (crowd, laughter eeiish)

Speech 11

We are improving the environment to make it conducive for learning, we are not doing it for the sake of music festivals we fitted the first boiler so that you can have hot water then I fitted the second boiler so that we can frequently take a shower, again it wasn't for the music. That notion should not be there. And on the same note, again, I wanted to talk about water installation. Yesterday, the painter, the guys who are doing the painting, the lady and the gentleman,

They told me, mwalimu tell these boys, wasitharau kazi yetu (not to take our work lightly) because amongst us maybe two, I will not call them mad, but abnormal, they are not mad, but abnormal, decided to go where he had painted black and stepped on it. You are the ones spoiling our good name.

Boys, I want to tell you this. A school is a training ground. Boys of our level really should not go down to that particular stage. When you just want to make the other one feel he is doing nothing.

I'll say it again and I want to repeat. Humility. Be humble all the time. Be humble all the time. I'll repeat for one time. Be humble all the time. Even when you're in power, be humble. So what I wanted to say is let us always portray that aspect of humility.

I've got people who serve me in my office. But every time I eat, I want to be honest with you. I carry my plate to the right place. I've witnessed teachers in the staff room, and we've got people who are supposed to pick them. After eating, I find teachers carrying their plate from their offices and put them in the right place. That is the way to go. And that is the right human being.

Take it, leave it. If you don't, God is going to teach you. Now, I wanted to thank you for bringing golden bells. The singing today was better. I want, again, to lead with you. Let us encourage them because it makes singing better. Quickly, I want to repeat what Mr. Mwenda said about the bags. Last time when we had thieves here, they took

advantage of these bags. We are aiding them to make away with our things. Therefore, I am declaring these bags illegal in our school. It is important for you to take it seriously. It is very, very important to take it seriously.

God is good. God is good. And all the time, I want to say on Sunday, we have a joint service here. Of course, we should be clad in our school uniform. It is good for us to get together and chart our ways. So let us be prepared, various teams, various choirs, those who present various items here be prepared. Again, before I introduce my co-teachers, I want to thank you for what you are doing chini ya maji (secretly), it is good to live to the soul of one of us. you know what I'm talking about. Occasionally we have been called to help and we've done it well. Let us continue having that good heart. Let's leave for one another.

Speech 12

God is good, all the time. Let me say you are very smart today, that smartness has cost the school some coins and so we expect you to reciprocate and do what is expected of you. you are supposed to help in school administration, discipline and to ensure all is running well. Secondly, we have some of you that went home and am sure you have brought something or you have come with your parent to tell us what we are going to do.

We have not received any money from the government we are living on your parents' pockets. So, let your parent understand that I have to feed you. Just the way at home you can't go hungry, so the same way you don't expect me to go around shops asking for debts to keep you in school.

As the deputy said this is not time to party but it is time to be serious and reflect on your academic performance to see where you are going wrong so that you can make an about turn and do the right thing. Girls it is you that begins writing chapters of your life. Up to this time, the community and your family has already written some chapters on your life but you can delete to fit it the way you want to be. It is your responsibility to work hard and ensure you become what you want to be, it is doable it is not rocket science many have done it around. Aspire to achieve that which you have targeted. Some of you are targetless, woe unto them.

Tomorrow the form fours you will go to xxxxx girls and we expect you to be as disciplined as you look so that you don't spoil our name. You are the ambassadors of this school. Prepare yourself early. Have a nice day.

Speech 13

Practice makes perfect, you ought to balance the two languages. You run away from English and that's why you perform poorly in English language, remember when you go out after education most of the people and organizations that will employ you use English in their communication. You will be dismissed if you can't communicate.

You need to equip yourself well so that you can compete with others favourably without embarrassing yourself. Life is a battle which you must fight for yourself, your children and your country. Do you understand? Make hay while the sun shines. Remember there is no better school than our school.

I want to commend those who came to school well dressed. Some of you dress on the way as they ran to school? It is bad behaviour, dress well before you leave home. Organise yourself by waking up early. I am thrice your age and I wake up very early. Also, your teachers wake up early in order to come and teach you. Don't oversleep since you are not a sick person. Some of you walk sluggishly as if they are dying the next minute. This shows how your mind is. It is still a sleep. I told you to run and you refused. Therefore, I will punish you for sluggishness. Are you competing with the dead? It is the dead who have no vision, no plans for tomorrow.

Form two I would like to have you remain after others leave and even form fours. That CCTV is placed there for your own good. Form fours you must tell me who spoilt the camera. you will only incur expenses because we can't continue wasting parents' money. If you don't tell me who tilted the camera you will all suffer. The cameras and the cables are very expensive each camera costs more than nine thousand. Form fours you are going to meet the cost of repairing them because you are spoiling them deliberately.

I have never seen a school where students destroy the cameras. It is only thieves and murders who interfere with cameras, like those who killed Were. Why don't you want to be casted by the camera? Are you stealing in class? that is a lot of primitivity, stone age person someone who has not caught up with technology. We are going to buy

cameras that are smaller than your eye, which you can't know where they are. They will be monitoring your actions closely. We will fix them all over the compound and they will be your monitor. Thankyou.

Speech 14

We said last week that we need to bring up preachers and leaders who are going to be responsible and respectful people of the community. When you respect teachers, you honour God. Let me say that leaders are not born but are natured and this is the place to nature you. Our school is good in naturing please any time we don't have a preacher from outside we are many preachers who are here.

Xxx has talked about asking our father who is in heaven anything we want and he will give us but he has stressed on faith and faith without action is dead. Faith without action is what? (Response) dead. you are in school you want to pass, unless you work hard that faith won't help you, you have to work hard so that God can help you to pass that exam.

T.O.D has talked about successful people, she has said successful people manage time well. Most of us admire successful people but they don't embrace the process, let us try to embrace the process not the results. Results will come after you have embraced the process. If you go down to them and ask how they succeeded you will realise success is not a walk in the park. Embrace the process of obedience, self denial and sacrifice. obedience is the key. God rewards those who work hard and stay disciplined. Discipline it is the backbone of any society.

The support staff normally give you instructions, these instructions are normally given from the office not the loos. You must follow the rules, lazima mufuate sheria. Don't argue with the gate man, instructions should be followed to the latter, I have said again school rules should be followed unconditionally. The following will be punished for disobeying school rules. Have a good day.

Speech 15

You will have nobody to blame because in this school we have got enough teachers, actually more than enough. make sure that you utilise the teachers well for your

academic success. some of you are coming to school late, if you come late on Monday, you will not like it utaenda nyumbani, I will send you home without any discussion.

So, make sure you wake up early because you are young, strong and energetic. these teachers wake up early and they walk for many kilometres. Some of you are lazy and that is why they are coming to school late. God hates lazy people.

I want to announce now and here that I have demoted the school deputy captain. You are demoted with effect now. You cannot lead people when you are blind because you will all fall in a ditch. I want to challenge any other student council member to shape up.

Some of you are coming to school late, some are making noise in class some are not performing. We chose you because you were performers but a few of you have decided to slid back. We will not carry a heavy burden of trying to push people ahead who are pushing us behind.

we cannot pull in different directions and make it; we must work as a team. Secretaries are the eyes of the teachers, some of you have stopped seeing and the moment you stop seeing your bodies become full of darkness and if the body is full of darkness we can not go a smooth journey. So, I want to challenge you here before these others to work smart.

Remember you are here to perform; you are in 8.4.4 system you must perform. We don't encourage people mark timing in one place because of performance. Do your best every day by working hard. Always keep a step ahead. Have a target to propel you ahead.

Your targets are achievable but you must work very hard. You must have a focus and vision and must not look elsewhere. When you are playing football or any other game, your eyes must stay focused on the ball wherever corner of the pitch it is so that you can beat your enemy. If your eyes are away from your dreams and vision, you will not meet your target. Pray and trust God to enable you meet your target.

Form fours you cannot plant maize and harvest beans, you cannot plant oranges and harvest lemons, you will harvest exactly what you plant. I am worried of form fours that are not taking studies seriously. There is no room for people to behave like mad

people here. Let me be left with form fours we agree to agree or disagree on academic performance. Good day.

Speech 16

We expect parents to come to our school for what we call academic consultations and the commissioning of our students 2025 excellent warriors, or the warriors of excellence, so that they begin a tough journey of winning this war. Definitely they are going to win.

We have equipped them with the necessary apparatus and we expect them to move very swiftly and we get the school that target of 9.0. For that reason, most of the form for teachers may not be available to attend your classes. And therefore, if a class has no teacher, the class prefect should ensure that there is order and that some good work should be done during that particular period. But where the classes will have free teachers, we expect the lessons to be taught normally. So let us cooperate. Number two, we are concerned about our targets and every subject counts. If we have to get to 9.0, we need every subject. We need to score well in every subject. We have been known of being mathematics champions around. We want to maintain the same. Others are competing with us. So, the moment we relax, others may overtake us. We are not ready to be overtaken because we are the best in this region.

And I therefore want to announce that on Saturday, On Saturday there will be the mathematics contest. We are asking you to prepare well so that you give us a true picture of where we stand as far as mathematics is concerned. And the other one, we are reminding you to use the facilities that we have provided to you very well and also very carefully so that they are suitable for use by any other person who may be in need.

And especially the facilities of convenience the toilets let us use our toilets well let us not abuse these facilities the toilets down here have been abused by a few students who have turned the place to be a smoking zone

Because there is always smoke from the burning of the waste there, so you have always gone there so that the smoke may hide the smell of whatever you want to smoke. Having realized that, we are now declaring this facility out of bounds to all students as from Monday, either day or night. No uniformed student should be seen

using that facility as from Monday. It is also out of bounds to you. No, not today. Today we expect you to use this one so that you leave the upper one.

These class meetings are very costly in terms of planning, in terms of time and even in terms of energy that teachers are putting to talk to you, to give you direction to correct you. I hope that you are going to take up those corrections so that it does not just become any other activity. Yesterday from four you spent a whole day at olives and I believe you are now directed as candidates and now you know what you ought to do. Friday we will meet your parents but allow me to remark that parents will not read for you, the ball is in your court.

Give your academics your best. You have already been given the midterm exam dates, do that exam with some passion, prepare for the exam. There are so many activities but all said and done you ought to do very well in your exam. Today we are launching the TUC club members, it's my hope that this will motivate you that you can also be the best. we have introduced more prizes whenever we are doing an exam remember we will recognise you if you have improved, and also, we will look at matters to do with discipline, matters with personal hygiene. We will always appreciate you when you do well.

I wish you well in your studies today and make sure you prepare for the exam

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You have made us proud by winning the regional contest. We pray that you continue with the same spirit, Give your academics your best. You have already been given the midterm exam dates, do that exam with some passion, prepare for the exam and no one should question the timetable; it is final. There are so many activities but all said and done you ought to do very well in your exam. Today we are launching the TUC club members, it's my hope that this will motivate you that you can also be the best. we have introduced more prizes whenever we are doing an exam remember we will recognize you if you have improved, and also, we will look at matters to do with discipline, matters with personal hygiene. We will always appreciate you when you do well. I wish you well in your studies today and make sure you prepare for the exam.

Speech 18

Good morning,

I have some remarks, first, you must attend all assemblies without fail. Secondly, some students are walking around knocking each and every other door waking up uncles in order to get hot water, we cannot allow that. Get your hot water during super time. Be advised. Aaaaam The 6:30 pm class is not being attended on time. We are saying the 6:30 pm class must be attended on time and not just the 6;30 class but every other class.

How can I invest on language monitors and they are not being worn? Who does that? It is like being bought a dress and you don't wear it. The teacher on duty talked of

courtesy, respect and the use of polite language, some of us forget themselves and forget that they are growing we don't even care how we address others. I want to say that behaviour is acquired and you are not allowed to be disrespectful. Today we are doing fumigations in the dorms and we cannot ignore things that affect others we will also be affected.

Tomorrow we are doing a routine fire drill for the teachers, students and workers. It is a direct directive from the ministry for education you ought to learn how to use fire extinguishers. Those red jerricans you see on walls should be known their use. I want to take you back in some years when we had terrorist attacks in Kenya when bombs would erupt anywhere and people would die. In 2020 we stopped going to school for a whole year because of covid 19 virus therefore when we hear of school fires we get scared. Fires do not light themselves, the person who is just next to you could be your arsonist. I want us to sober up.

It is now official that some of you have been advised by the board to seek a change of learning environment to another school since their opinions, actions and way of thinking do not rhyme with this school. I want you to know we are going to take further action. It looks easy when you conspire as a group before reality dawns on you individually.

Have a good week. God bless you.

Speech 19

Continuous learning is not really there. You only read when you are alerted of an exam somewhere. The business of reading only when there is an exam we need to put it to an end. The more you read the more you understand. I want to ask you, are you honest with yourself? When you look around before you take any action, ask yourself if it will hurt anyone? If it is going to hurt anyone then forget it. Some of you are not true to themselves, they are keeping small secrets like having a boyfriend, like wanting to be a musician, why don't you share with someone instead of having your small world to disturb you?

There are things we cannot change girls; there are things we cannot change. If you want to live well you have to accept yourself for who you are, you have to accept your family status because the world will judge you by what you are able to produce or

become. Your strained relationship with your parents a number of you have become a problem to your parent, straining the relationships that you cannot be corrected. Take care of your relationship so that you can be helped. Build your relationship with your teachers for better academic results.

Make your hair so that you maintain that good look. Don't let anyone make practicals on your head. The team that went to xxxx I sent you there because the speaker is well known to me. I taught that girl in xxxxxx. She came from a simple poor village but she rose to the position of a head girl and scored a very high grade. I want to tell you that it does not matter where you come from. What is inside you is enough to make you fly. whatever you want to do, just give it your best. Good day.

Speech 20

Good morning, let us thank God for this day and the opportunity to gather here. I am here to tell you that you can start again. We are saying come back to school. we have come back not just to complete the term but to cover course work. Besides the form fours you are preparing for your end of course exams. Let us not lie that all is well at home. Kenyans are hard hit with harsh economic times. It is not Parents back at home are straining, personally I am also straining if I have to share my salary among all my children very little will come to my pocket. Every other parent is struggling. how do you perceive the effort your parents are putting to keep you here? Parents are spending so much on you, are you worth a project? Parents are spending as much as 50000 shillings in a term? Can your parents say my daughter has brought home a good grade, why don't change that tradition this time round.

We are saying make good use of your break time. This is one very disturbing thing, some girls have taken advantage of their gender, that you are special when it comes to issues of healthy brakes, we are special, and so I can very quickly without any care disrupt the lesson after 10 minutes. Because I am a special person, I am a woman and a woman has her own issues and you call them emergencies even when they are not. Don't get out of class before the designated time. It is habit we are trying to uproot. Remember a disciplined student is a good citizen, if you are caught outside you will suffer the consequences alone. In three weeks', time, you will be going home and I know when it is about going home you get excited but what are you taking home? Have a good week.

Appendix 2

Consent Form

Research Title: Uncovering Power Dynamics and Ideologies in High School Principals' Discourse.

I understand the objectives of the study being undertaken by Betty Mwende Birithia. I have read the information provided about this study and I understand that I can ask any question in regard to this study. I further understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw my participation at any time without providing an explanation.

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential and anonymity will be ensured and that the information will not be used against me.

Appendix 3

Introductory Letter

THARAKA

P.O BOX 193-60215,
MARIMANTI, KENYA



UNIVERSITY

Website: <https://tharaka.ac.ke>
Social Media: [tharakauni](#)
Email: info@tharaka.ac.ke
Phone : +254745 838 353

**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

REF: TUN/BPGS/PL/07/25

7th July, 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: BETTY MWENDE BIRITHIA ADMISSION NUMBER ADT13/03102/20

Ms. Betty Mwende BIRTHIA is a postgraduate student at Tharaka University undertaking a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Linguistics. The student has completed her coursework and is expected to proceed for collection of data after successfully defending her proposal at faculty level. The title of the study is "*Uncovering Power Dynamics and Ideologies in High School Principals' Discourse: A Case of Imenti-North Sub-County Kenya.*"

Any assistance accorded to her will be highly appreciated.

Thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully,


THARAKA UNIVERSITY
DIRECTOR BOARD OF POST
GRADUATE STUDIES
07 JUL 2025
P. O. Box 193-60215,
MARIMANTI, KENYA

Dr. Ambrose Vengi, Ph.D.

Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies.

TUN is ISO 9001:2015 Certified...



Education for Freedom/Eliya ni Uhuru

Appendix 4

Ethics Approval

THARAKA

P.O BOX 193 60215,
MARIMANTIL KENYA



UNIVERSITY

Telephone: +(254)-0202008549
Website: <https://tharaka.ac.ke>
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Email: info@tharaka.ac.ke

INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

2nd July 2025

REF: TUNISERC/NSEC/ D020

Dear, BETTY MWENDE BIRTHIA

RE: UNCOVERING POWER DYNAMICS AND IDEOLOGIES IN HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' DISCOURSE: A CASE OF IMENTI-NORTH SUB-COUNTY KENYA.

This is to inform you that *Tharaka University ISERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *ISERC04023*. The approval period is

2nd July 2025 to 2nd July 2026.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Tharaka University ISERC*.
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Tharaka University ISERC* within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Tharaka University ISERC* within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Tharaka University ISERC*.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI)

<https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Fidelis Ngugi
Chair, ISERC Tharaka University

Appendix 5

NACOSTI Research Permit

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 302943	Date of Issue: 08/August/2025
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Ms.. Betty betty mwende Mwende of Tharaka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Meru on the topic: UNCOVERING POWER DYNAMICS AND IDEOLOGIES IN HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS DISCOURSE: A CASE OF IMENTI-NORTH SUB-COUNTY KENYA for the period ending : 08/August/2026.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/25/4177948	
302943	
Applicant Identification Number	Ag. Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
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