“OLD WINE” AND “NEW WINESKINS”:
(De)Colonizing Literacy in Kenya’s Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

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Most social critics in the disciplines of Rhetoric and Composition, Education, and Feminist Studies have argued that it is impossible to divorce literacy from politics; that literacy is a hegemonic enterprise. Based on this premise, this study investigated how politics plays out in the discourse patterns in Kenyan universities. Owing to the apparent semblance between colonial and postcolonial literacy policies and acknowledging the historicity of phenomena, the study investigated the role the British colonization of Kenya has played in shaping postcolonial discourse patterns in Kenyan universities--why and how the postcolonial state reproduced the colonial literacy policies. The study concludes by exploring strategies for decolonizing Kenya’s higher education.

Based on the data I collected through multiple modes of inquiry including autoethnography; historical and library research; and interviews, it was evident the colonial establishment put in place a literacy system commensurate with its colonial agenda. And, since the agenda of postcolonial regimes was not radically different from that of the colonial establishment and subsequent neocolonial forces, the postcolonial state reproduced colonial literacy policies to entrench and perpetuate their hegemonies. Notably, these regimes suppressed discourse in higher education to curtail dissent and, therefore, ensure perpetuation of the status quo.

To decolonize literacy, the study proposes four strategies: stakeholders in Kenya’s higher education, especially educators and students must reconsider the role of the university; educators and students must embrace critical literacy paradigm in place of the
prevailing functional approach to literacy, educators and students must reconsider their stance on epistemology and ontology; and, universities must introduce comprehensive Rhetoric and Writing courses.
Unto the King Immortal

And to my wife Wambui and our children Chege and Wairimu
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CHAPTER 1. THE POLITICS OF LITERACY

1.0. Introduction

In *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, Paulo Freire asserts that “it is impossible for education to be neutral” (104). Michael Apple concurs with Freire that literacy is by nature political by stating in his article, “Between Moral Regulation and Democracy: The Cultural Contradictions of the Text,” that “it is naïve to think of the school curriculum as neutral knowledge” (195). He later adds: “education and power are terms of an indissoluble couplet” (195-196). Colin Lankshear and Moira Lawler elaborate on the political nature of literacy by stating, “schooling is a major structural setting wherein those classes whose interests are already dominant have access to greater power by which to maintain their dominance at the expense of subordinate class interests” (25). In other words, these scholars acknowledge the hegemonic nature of literacy; hegemony, as defined by Chantal Mouffe, is “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consensus of those over whom it rules” (10); in capsule: the “struggle” for “the control of the whole process of social reproduction” (5).

My study concurs with these scholars that it is hard to divorce politics from literacy. Actually, it seeks to investigate how Kenyan politics influences and determines its literacy system with a focus on the discourse patterns in Kenyan universities. In this chapter, I begin by examining works that address the role of politics in Kenyan literacy
system. And, since literacy is such a loaded concept, an examination of the various approaches to literacy will follow, concluding with the rationale of the study.

1.1. The Politics of Literacy in Kenya’s Higher Education

Several scholars have investigated the “politics of literacy,” to use Lankshear and Lawler’s phrase, in Kenya’s higher education. For instance, M.N. Amutabi has investigated what he calls “the politicization of decision making in the education sector” in postcolonial Kenya (127). Although he observes that postcolonial regimes in Kenya were authoritarian in nature, his article focuses on how these regimes interfered with the management of education in the country. As for discourse practice, Kilemi Mwiria observes that, “on the one hand, academics expect to enjoy academic freedom, often in its absolute sense. This implies their right to teach, research, and publish almost anything” (32) (Emphasis added). Ali Mazrui provides a more elaborated view of academic freedom and academic democracy that he uses to discuss literacy in Africa, Kenya included. He states that:

Academic freedom includes within it the right to hold and to express opinions, the right to teach and to be taught without external interference, the right of access to academic knowledge, and the right to participate in expanding the frontiers of knowledge. Academic democracy, on the other hand, concerns the process of decision making within an academic institution. (235)

These views on academic freedom and democracy in Kenya’s institutions of higher learning espoused by Mazrui and Mwiria are problematic. Most importantly, these
scholars perceive intellectual freedom and democracy as a preserve of university dons and in doing so they tend to sideline students. According to Mazrui:

The elements which add up to academic freedom include relative freedom for universities and similar institutions to determine for themselves what they are going to teach; who is going to do the teaching and, to some extent, who is going to be taught…then there is freedom for scholars to decide research priorities and research methods, to publish their research findings and to publicize their intellectual positions. Finally, there is general freedom of expression for teachers and students as a necessary intellectual infra-structure for mental development and intellectual creativity (260) (Emphasis added).

Although Mazrui marginally includes students in his conception of academic freedom, he is silent about how this freedom is to be expressed or experienced. That is, both Mazrui and Mwiria provide avenues through which Scholars can express themselves: by teaching what they want, the way they want, and researching and publishing on what they want. However, they remain mum on avenues through which students can express themselves. It is, therefore, not surprising that their definitions of intellectual freedom do not address the issue of classroom dynamics. In addition, although they acknowledge that academic freedom is denied, that discourse is suppressed, they downplay the historicity of that phenomenon as they do not pay attention to the issue of how and why the postcolonial regimes reproduced the colonial literacy structures. Furthermore, they do not address how change could be achieved.

There are some scholars who have traced the problems facing the Kenyan literacy system to the colonial period. For instance, Mwiria, in the same article above, argues that
what is ailing African universities, in terms of “good number of the governance related shortcomings” (32), is the relationship that these universities have maintained with those in the metropolitan, the former colonizers. Likewise, Washington Okumu and Thomas Odhiambo, writing soon after independence, argue that the problems facing African universities in the 1960’s were rooted in the fact that these institutions were heavily staffed and administered by expatriates. In their opinion, the solution was to be found in “Africanizing” the institutions. They state, “Education in East Africa (as well as in other colonial dependencies before independence) was completely unsatisfactory because it was organized on the principles and practices of the respective Suzerian powers, and ignored both needs and the environments of the indigenous peoples’ concerned” (4). In their opinion, “The universities are the center of an intellectual web which binds the past, present, and future…This cannot be achieved as long as the affairs of the university are run by expatriates whose only primary concern is to preserve the status quo and oppose any improvements or advances” (20).

Although this study concurs with these scholars that perpetuating the link between local universities and the metropolitan may have played a significant role in postcolonial literacy reproducing the colonial literacy system, I argue that the Africanization strategy, the way it was conceived and articulated, did not address the core issue--the ideological and hegemonic agenda of postcolonial literacy policy. This limitation, in my opinion, explains why Africanization did not translate into a revolution in African universities; the reason why, for instance, suppression of discourse continued even after African scholars took over management of universities.
Another study that has investigated Kenya’s postcolonial literacy system from a historical perspective is the work by Suein-Erik Rastad. Although an old source (the study was done in 1972), this MA thesis investigated university development in East Africa. It provides a vivid description of the colonial education system and, among other things, it observes that the system was structured along race lines as there were “separate educational systems” for the various races in the colony (70). Rastad cites the following as the objectives of the colonial education system: adaptation, standards, moral training, vocational training, elite education, expansion (4). However, the study does little to connect the colonial and postcolonial literacy systems. Furthermore, the study is not concerned as much as it should be with the political forces that shaped the policy he describes. For example: Why was the system segregationist? Why did the colonial system emphasize vocational or moral training? Why was the literacy system elitist in approach? These are issues that my research explores as I investigate the role of hegemony in literacy and specifically discourse patterns in Kenyan universities.

With regard to postcolonial state reproducing the colonial state in the context of discourse patterns, Macharia Munene, well within the scope of his article, looks at the political environment within which African intellectuals have had to operate. He adopts a historical perspective in his argument by asserting that what is happening in contemporary Africa has its roots in the colonization of the continent. He elucidates how the colonial system muzzled Africans’ intellectuality and discourse to facilitate domination. He quotes Jomo Kenyatta, who argues that the colonizers were “prepared to maintain their friendship [with Africa] for eternity as a sacred duty, provided that the African will continue to play the part of an ignorant savage so that they can monopolise
the office of interpreting his mind and speaking for him” (“African Intellectuals…” 4).

Munene goes on to demonstrate the political environment in which intellectuals were to operate during the three regimes in independent Kenya—that of Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel Moi, and the incumbent-Mwai Kibaki. Although Munene discusses the role of politics in Kenyan literacy system during both colonial and postcolonial periods, his focus is on the role of media in silencing African intellectualism. He does not problematize why postcolonial regimes reproduced colonial structures. Moreover, the article exposes the problem (of suppression of discourse) but does not address how social change can be attained; how suppression of discourse can be subverted. And just like those of Mwiria and Mazrui, his views about intellectuals are limited to university dons, thus marginalizing university students and classroom dynamics when it comes to addressing discourse practice in higher education in Kenya.

A more elaborate view as far as this study is concerned is the one advanced by Mutiso. As early as 1970, Mutiso observed that “The African university is colonial to date” and cites Wanyandey Songa who argues that “the colonially created university like the men who manned colonial outposts, was intended to academically colonize the mind of Africa.” Therefore, he concludes, “one does not begin to discuss the socio-historical basis of present African university manpower without some comment on colonial education” (150). He also advocates inclusion of students in the configuration of intellectual activity at the university “in such a way that university students are basically researchers” (156). This study agrees with Mutiso on the need to investigate postcolonial literacy system from a historical lens, the need to explore the influence of colonial education policy on postcolonial literacy system, and the need for an inclusive approach
to intellectual freedom (to include students). However, Mutiso does not directly address
classroom dynamics and discourse patterns within the classroom environment; neither
does he explain the forums through which students could participate as researchers.
Furthermore, his article does not address the politically motivated suppression of
discourse in the postcolonial Kenyan universities.

By contrast, my study is motivated by the following key research questions, which
have not been previously addressed:

- How does hegemony emerge in the discourse practice in Kenyan universities?
- Why does there seem to be a semblance between the colonial and postcolonial literacy systems, that is, how and why did the postcolonial government reproduce the colonial literacy policies with regard to discourse patterns in Kenya’s higher education?
- How could the literacy system in Kenya’s higher education be de-colonized?

Consequently, the study is guided by the following hypotheses:

- That higher education was colonized by the colonial system to serve its political interests and the postcolonial regimes perpetuated the same structures to serve their hegemonic purposes.
- That critical literacy paradigm grounded in dialogic pedagogy and mediated by the teaching of rhetoric and composition is imperative in order to de-colonize Kenya’s higher education system.

In view of the nature of this research, I investigate discourse patterns in postcolonial Kenyan universities from a historical lens. On the one hand, I focus on archival and library sources that document the colonial and postcolonial literacy policies and the
rhetorics and discourses used by the ruling elite to legitimize those policies. Such materials include reports of various education commissions appointed to formulate and or to review education policies and decrees and pronouncements by political leaders, obtained mainly from newspapers and government publications. On the other hand, I interviewed people who have gone through the Kenyan university system to establish their reflective views about discourse patterns in the universities. I also interviewed university lecturers to get their views on why they teach the way they do and what they think about the role of politics in Kenya’s higher education system. And, as a Kenyan who has gone through the Kenyan education system, this study also incorporated an autoethnographical component.

1.2. What is Literacy?

There is no one standard or universal definition of literacy. Knoblauch and Brannon have observed that “there is no single, or self-evident, definition of literacy since the values that surround reading and writing abilities differ from argument to argument” (15). Harvey Graff concurs with Knoblauch and Brannon, and points out that since the late 1980’s “no central theory governs expectations about the roles of literacy”; consequently, “its very nature has itself become problematic and a problematic that arouses contention and an increasing degree of critical attention” (3). What complicates the definition of literacy, in my view, is the fact that this concept is ultimately very culture-based such that what constitutes “literacy” differs greatly from one culture to another.
As Julius Nyerere observes in *Education for Self Reliance*, education systems differ from one culture to another because “the societies providing the education are different, and because education, whether it be formal or informal has a purpose [dictated by that culture]” (1). Furthermore, and most important, the concept of literacy is loaded and clouded with ideology. As Gee correctly observes, every approach to literacy, consciously or unconsciously “incorporates a tacit or overt ideological theory” (27); a view corroborated by Knoblauch and Brannon who postulate that, “the concept of ‘literacy’ is and must always be ideologically situated” (15). It is this fluidity of literacy that makes it indeed a “socially contested term” (Gee 27).

To address these denotative challenges, I will, therefore, categorize approaches to literacy as follows: The “Great Divide” or “Great Leap” approach; Functional Literacy approach; Sociology of Education approach; Literacy as Discourse approach; and Critical Literacy approach. I argue that none of these approaches by itself provides a comprehensive understanding of literacy. Instead, this study will examine and critique the appropriateness/inappropriateness of each paradigm in understanding the politics of literacy in Kenya’s higher education.

1.2.1. The “Great Leap Narrative” or “Great Divide” Approach.

According to Beth Daniell, the “Great Leap Narrative” or “Great Divide” theory is grounded on the “literacy-orality” dichotomy associated with Eric Havelock and Walter Ong (394). Other key proponents of this paradigm include Jack Goody and Ian Watt. Daniell observes that “in strong versions of the great leap narrative, literacy is seen as the origin of independent, analytical thought, and in weaker versions as a causal
factor” (396). Actually, Ong seems to endorse A.R. Luria’s view that “formal logic” was a direct product of the invention of “the technology of alphabetic writing” (Ong 52). Goody and Watt blatantly state that the magnificent administrative and technological achievements of “all ancient civilizations, the Sumerian, Egyptian, Hittite and Chinese” were a direct consequence of “the invention of the writing system” (36). Thus, this paradigm views literacy as a technology, the technology of using the alphabet to write and read—a technology that was requisite for the development of logical or complex thinking that was itself obligatory for civilization.

This approach has several flaws. First, Scribner and Cole have questioned the feasibility of the claim that literacy alone is responsible for the emergence of higher cognitive skills such as analytical and logical thinking based on their study amongst the Vai people, a community in Liberia that had its own unique literacy system before the introduction of Western literacy. In their study, Scribner and Cole observed that the Vai who were literate in the native writing system were not necessarily more cognitively capable than those who were not. Another major limitation of this approach is that literacy is individualized. Daniell quotes Bizzell who criticizes the “great divide” theory for blaming “the faulty minds of the students” for poor writing instead of the “inequitable social conditions” (396). Furthermore, by viewing literacy in purely technological terms, as merely the “ability to write and read” (Gee 27), this approach strips off literacy its tacit socio-cultural and political underpinnings. Such an approach is simplistic because as Graff declares, “to speak of literacy in the abstract is now considered hazardous, if not quite meaningless” (5). Actually, it is now generally accepted that literacy is by and large a social construct (Cook-Gumperz 1). Nevertheless, this study will employ this approach
to explore how dominant groups use this reductionist view of literacy to mask hegemony in literacy, particularly the suppression of discourse and inequalities in access to education; what is obscured when, for instance, access to education is pegged on “merit.”

1.2.2. The Functional Approach

Knoblauch and Brannon quote Hunter and Harman who define functional literacy as “the possession of skills perceived as necessary by particular persons and groups to fulfill their own self-determined objectives as family and community members, citizens, consumers, job holders, and members of social, religious, or other associations of their choosing” (77). Similarly, Sylvia Scribner, in what she refers to as “literacy as adaptation,” states that “this metaphor is designed to capture concepts of literacy that emphasize survival or pragmatic value” or the possession of “proficiency necessary for effective performance in a range of settings” (73). In essence, although the functional literacy approach acknowledges the social nature of literacy, it suffers the same limitation as the great divide approach; it is deceptive as it de-politicizes literacy, depicting literacy as “neutral,” a viewpoint that Graff argues “can no longer be tolerated” (7). In my view, this approach eludes important considerations such as: What is “effective” performance? Who sets performance indexes/proficiency levels? Does every body in the society have equal access and opportunities to attainment of these so-called proficiency levels?

Furthermore, this approach is contradictory because on one hand it depicts individuals as setting and fulfilling their own “objectives” of literacy, but, on the other hand, concedes literacy is a social construct. How does one reconcile these two opposing positions?
Nyerere also advances a functional approach in his two-prong theory of literacy in *Education for Self Reliance*. First, he perceives the role of literacy as that of acculturation. According to him, literacy functions “to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society, and to prepare the young people for their future membership of the society and their active participation in its maintenance or development” (1). Given this theoretical position, Nyerere argues that in spite of the differences in the way people from different cultures structure their education systems, universally, education has a common feature: it is meant to “prepare young people to serve the society, and to transmit the knowledge, skills, and values and attitudes of the society” (2).

This theorization of literacy is problematic. Nyerere here seems to ignore the contradictions and tensions inherent in societies (his own Tanzanian society included). For example, when it comes to literacy being a medium for transmitting “accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society,” who determines what “accumulated wisdom and knowledge” is worth transmitting? Whose knowledge and wisdom, whose values and attitudes is the literacy system supposed to transmit (are they those of the ordinary layer of society or the mainstream)? This question can best be understood in the light of the criticism leveled against a canon-driven literacy system as will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter when addressing the critical literacy paradigm. Furthermore, when he talks of literacy “preparing the youth for their future membership of the society,” Nyerere seems to imply that every member of society has equal opportunity to an education that would allow them to participate in the “maintenance or development” of that society. But is that always the case?
Besides his functional approach, Nyerere is quick to point out the hegemonic role literacy played during the colonial period in Tanzania. According to him, the colonial education system “was not designed to prepare young people for the service of their own country; instead, it was motivated by a desire to inculcate the values of the colonial society and to train individuals for the service of the colonial state…the need for local clerks and junior officials” (3). He adds: “This meant that colonial education induced attitudes of human inequality, and in practice underpinned the domination of the weak by the strong, especially in the economic field” and that “Colonial education in this country was therefore not transmitting the values and knowledge of Tanzanian society from one generation to the next; it was a deliberate attempt to change those values and to replace traditional knowledge by the knowledge from a different society” (3). In this context, Nyerere presents a lucid illustration of the political nature of literacy; how literacy served the hegemonic interests of the colonial establishment.

However, with regard to Tanzania’s postcolonial literacy policy, Nyerere argues his government was able to deal with “the three most glaring faults of the educational inheritance.” That his regime had abolished “racial distinctions” in education, had expanded educational facilities in especially higher education, and had made education more “Tanzanian in content” (4). He also reiterates what he refers to as the “values and objectives” of the Tanzanian society: “to create a socialist society which is based on three principles: equality and respect for human dignity; sharing of the resources which are produced by our efforts; work by everyone and exploitation by none” (5-6). He underscores the role of education in the realization of these aspirations. As he puts it,

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1 Nyerere was the first president of Tanzania. His regime lasted from 1964 to 1985. He experimented on a socialist system of government but when he realized it was not working he resigned as President to pave way for a leader who would introduce a capitalist system. Ali Hassan Mwinyi took over as president.
“This is what our educational system has to encourage. It has to foster the social goals of living together, and working together, for the common good” (7). What I find intriguing about Nyerere’s theory of education is how he is quick to point out how colonial education system served the ideology of the dominant group, the colonial system, yet he presents postcolonial education system as ideal, as one without contradictions, one that is transparent. In this case, he seems to downplay the role of the interests of the ruling elite and how these interests may have shaped the literacy policy he pursued.

In the Kenyan context, the Phelps-Stokes commission on education in Africa, reported by L. J. Lewis, pointed out that colonial governments in Africa emphasized what the commission characterized as literacy for “adaptability.” The commission stated that “The government officials have [during that time] naturally thought of the colonial administration and has felt the necessity for clerical help and such skilled workers as are needful for the surveying of roads and other means of transportation. Settlers have been concerned for the various needs of their special occupations” whereas the traders required clerks and the settlers laborers to work on their farms (43-44). And concerning higher education, the commission reported, “It is of course true that the present need for this stage of education [higher education] is very limited. There are now only two schools South of Egypt and the Sahara that have recognition as colleges” (103). The “Beecher Report” confirms the British colonial policy’s emphasis on functional literacy in Kenya by stating: “To state our objectives briefly, we desire to see a morally sound education based on Christian principles…which lays particular emphasis on the acquisition of practical attitudes and skills” (2). Apparently, the colonial education was pragmatic.
However, in the context of this dissertation, I am curious as to why the colonial system in Kenya adopted the functional approach.

In a surprising move, surprising because one would have expected leaders who had struggled for independence on a radical platform to implement their revolutionary ideals when they came to power, postcolonial Kenya perpetuated the functional literacy approach. According to David Macharia, “in order for the individual to improve his social economic output and hence accelerate development, Kenya decided to adopt the functional literacy approach” (26). He also cites the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965, a policy document that was meant to articulate the vision of Kenyatta’s government, which conceived education as “much more of an economic than social service…the principal means of relieving the shortage of domestic skilled manpower and equalizing economic opportunities among all citizens” (7). One of the objectives of this dissertation is to interrogate why, instead of questioning the limitations of functional literacy system as implemented by the colonial system, the postcolonial system opted to reproduce the approach; how functional literacy has served hegemonic interests of successive postcolonial regimes with a focus on discourse patterns in Kenyan universities.

1.2.3. Sociology of Education Approach

I attribute this approach to scholars like Pierre Bourdieu, Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, Thomas Popkewitz, and Louis Althusser. These intellectuals provide an in-depth analysis of the hegemonic nature of literacy. For instance, Bourdieu and Passeron view education as an *apparatus*, to use Althusser’s term, “which reproduces the dominant culture, contributing thereby to the reproduction of the structure of the power relations within a social formation in which the dominant system of
education tends to secure a monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence” (6). They introduce an important concept in their discussion—*habitus*, which they define as “the product of internalization of the principles of a cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after PA [Pedagogic Action] has ceased and thereby of perpetrating in practice the principles of the internalized arbitrary” (31). Althusser advances similar views through his hypothesis of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) and the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA). He distinguishes these two apparatuses as follows: “the Repressive State Apparatus functions ‘by violence,’ whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function ‘by ideology’” (1490). Althusser places the school system under the ISA, which just like other ISAs serves “beneath the ruling ideology, which is the ideology of ‘the ruling class’” (1491) (Emphasis in the original).

Conspicuously, although the Sociology of Education approach acknowledges the hegemonic nature of literacy, most of its proponents are skeptical about its transformative power. Bourdieu in his *Language & Symbolic Power* argues that the underprivileged position of the subordinate groups “does not tend to favor political action” (127). He quotes “Wars of Religion” which observes that, “dominated individuals are less likely to bring about symbolic revolution” because they are “dispossessed of the economic and cultural conditions necessary for their awareness of the fact that they are disposed” (131). Actually, Popkewitz dismisses “this strategy about liberation, emancipation and empowerment as a popularist agenda” (230). This skepticism can be traced back to the epistemological stance adapted by this paradigm with regard to agency. Popkewitz and Brennan claim that:
With some hesitations and some dissent, contemporary critical traditions continue a nineteenth-century view of social redemption through schooling. Intellectual work is to provide universal norms and directions for social change. It is assumed that critical interrogations of social conditions will produce a synthesis from the identified traditions. The agents of redemption in critical traditions are universalized notions of the actor who is defined as being marginalized-workers, racially discriminated groups, and, more recently, women. (7)

They contend that: “while recognizing the importance of this nineteenth-century doctrine, we also question whether the epistemological foundations of actors and progress are adequate for the politics of governing and power that circulate in contemporary societies” (7). On their part, they prefer “social epistemology” (9) or “decentering the subject” approach which seeks “to understand how the subject is constituted within a field that relates knowledge and power. It is not to eliminate subjects seeking to change their worlds but to give historical specificity to the systems of ideas that enclose and intern the “reason” and the “reasonable person” as alternatives are sought” (10-11). Accordingly,

The strategy of a social epistemology reverses the interests of the philosophy of consciousness by making the problem of study that of the knowledge that inscribes agents. The terrain of social and educational theory is with a “critical”, problematizing theory that focuses on the construction of knowledge itself and “reason” as the problems of inquiry. It makes problematic how the “objects” of the world are historically constructed and change over time. (11-12)

This approach is helpful to this study as it provides a sound theoretical framework for investigating the hegemonic nature of Kenya’s higher education system. Actually, the
habitus hypothesis is crucial in understanding why and how independent Kenya has reproduced the colonial literacy system. Also useful is the argument this approach articulates that both Structure and Superstructure, as used in Marxist theory, are historically situated. Thus, this approach provides this study a lens to investigate how hegemony plays out in the discourse patterns in Kenyan universities and how and why postcolonial regimes reproduced the colonial literacy system.

However, this study does take exception with the pessimism of this approach toward social change and the role of agency. In fact, I argue that by magnifying hegemony and diminishing agency, as do Bourdieu, Popkewitz, and Brennan, this paradigm has the potential to impede social change. As Porter succinctly points out, “the deterministic nature of these theories means that the stronger one argues for the power of the social structures, the harder it is to explain how an individual or group ever escapes their impact or, indeed, how any social change ever occurs. Human behavior is seen to be determined by powerful social forces…” (12-13). In other words, this paradigm portrays social forces or hegemony as an unbeatable monster, creating the impression that social change is unattainable--a view this study finds to be problematic. In fact, Ngugi wa Thiong’o alludes to this issue in his Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary, when he castigates Kenyan scholars who in the pretext of “conditions not yet ripe” were complacent to the pursuit of social change (xxi). In real sense, according to Ngugi, most of these intellectuals assumed a pessimistic outlook out of fear of political repercussions were they to engage in a revolutionary agenda, an attitude that definitely is an impediment to social change (xxi-xxii).
1.2.4. Literacy as Discourse Approach

The concept “discourse” is just as loaded and fluid as the concept “literacy” leading Lankshear and McLaren to conclude that discourse is a “large concept” (11). Gee defines Discourse as “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network,’ or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful “role’” (143). Michel Foucault conceptualizes discourse in a way closely related to Gee. According to Foucault, “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers…” (231). He adds, “there is I believe…group of rules serving to control discourse…it is more a question of determining the conditions under which it may be employed, of imposing a certain number of rules upon those individuals who employ it, thus denying access to every one else” (238).

Both Gee and Foucault’s definitions of discourse reveal various aspects of discourse: discourse as identity; discourse as conventions; discourse as exclusion; discourse as power; discourse as knowledge; discourse as a socially contested field. These attributes of discourse intersect with attributes of literacy, accounting for why some scholars view literacy in terms of discourse (Gee 1990, 153; 1991, 8). Lankshear and McLaren, in particular, provide an interesting spin to their definition of discourse that addresses literacy directly, including classroom dynamics. They argue that, “Educational discourses consist in so many structured, ideologically informed, and sanctioned views
about what should be done, how, and why it should be done” (12). And concerning discourse at the classroom level, they argue that:

Discourses are norm-governed practices and involvements around and within which forms of human living are constructed and identities and subjectivities shaped. Discourses of classroom learning, for instance, are by no means confined to the language of conducting lessons, in the narrower everyday sense of language…classroom discourse, then, includes the norms and processes by which authority is established and exercised, discipline maintained, and decisions made about what will be learned, via what media, and how, plus the myriad other ingredients which collectively explain why what is going on at a particular moment…Discourse, therefore, is often hidden and implicit. (11)

Lankshear and McLaren’s views are tandem with findings of Foucault’s study on how power functions in institutions. Concerning power in educational institutions, Foucault, quoted by Jennifer Gore, observes that:

The activity which answers apprenticeship and the acquisition of aptitudes or types of behavior is developed there [in educational institutions] by means of a whole ensemble of regulated communications (lessons, questions and answers, orders, exhortations, coded signs of obedience, differentiation, marks of the “value” of each person and of the levels of knowledge) and by means of a whole series of power processes (enclosures, surveillance, reward and punishment, the pyramidal hierarchy). (233-234)

Apparently, there are different layers of power inherent in classroom dynamics, what Gore refers to as “micro” and “macro” levels of power (232-233). This reality is crucial
in deconstructing the ideology that literacy can be “neutral” by exposing the subtle ways in which politics plays out not only in the larger picture of literacy but also in classroom dynamics when it comes to determining whose voice is heard and whose is silenced.

Of concern to this study is: If discourse is controlled, exclusive, and rule governed, who sets these rules? Who gets to determine who is qualified/is admitted into these discourses? How equitable is the access to these discourses? These concerns are crucial in understanding discourse patterns in Kenyan universities. First, they shed light on why both colonial and postcolonial literacy systems were characterized by inequalities--why they were segregationist and elitist. Secondly, they help reveal why both colonial and postcolonial establishments ruthlessly suppressed discourse. Thirdly, they elucidate why the both establishments were apprehensive of the use of vernacular languages as language of literacy. Fourthly, these definitions help in the investigation of the kinds of rhetoric the two establishments used to propagate and sustain their hegemonies. Fifthly, they provide a sound conceptual framework for theorizing classroom dynamics in regard to power relations between students and teachers.

However, the major limitation of the Discourse approach is that although it is not as pessimistic as the Sociology of Education paradigm, other than exposing the power struggles inherent in discourses, it does not directly address empowerment of the marginalized. But, there are some discourse theorists who allude to the liberatory nature of discourse. Norman Fairclough, for instance, on one hand argues how discourses play a role in social reproduction, how “in occupying particular subject positions, teachers and pupils reproduce [social structures]” (38), but, on the other hand, he observes how subjugation can lead to social change. He states: “Social subjects are constrained to
operate within the subject positions setup in the discourse types…and are in that sense passive; but it is only through being so constrained that they are made able to act as social agents…Being constrained is a precondition for being enabled. Social agents are active and creative” (39). In this case, Fairclough identifies the paradox of hegemony: it dominates but inversely leads to liberation. In essence, Fairclough’s view helps connect discourse theory to critical literacy paradigm.

1.2.5. Critical Literacy Approach

Like Sociology of Education and Discourse approaches to literacy, critical literacy paradigm is founded on the premise that literacy is hegemonic, that literacy is political. Lankshear and McLaren argue that “the forms taken by literacy in everyday life are shaped and defined within processes of competing social groups…We see how agents acting within established power structures and dominant ideologies effectively determine what literacy will be for others” (4). In the same token, Henry Giroux rejects the notion that school knowledge is objective by asserting that “school knowledge is a particular representation of dominant culture, a privileged discourse that is constructed through a selective process of emphases and exclusions” (xxx). Porter echoes similar sentiments by referring to Michael Young who advances the argument that “knowledge’ is socially constructed, meaning that it is a creation of particular dominant groups in a particular society at a particular time and serves to help maintain those groups in power” (9).

Granted, critical literacy provides a counter-attack to traditional perspectives of literacy. These ideologies are best represented by the “literacy crisis” discourse in the US associated with people like E.D. Hirsch, William Bennet, and Allan Bloom who purport
that this crisis “reflected not only the demise of public scholarship but also the weakening of a wider civic and public culture” (Aronowitz and Giroux 39). Bloom, for example, decries liberal education in higher education claiming that “this democracy is really an anarchy, because there are no recognized rules for citizenship and no legitimate titles to rule. In short, there is no vision, nor is there a set of competing visions, of what an educated human being is” (337). In other words, Bloom is opposed to an egalitarian education, one that does not restrict discourse to a privileged few. He abhors affirmative action for it allows illegitimate people access to higher education. And to address this apathy, he suggests reverting to the “good old Great Books approach in which a liberal education means reading certain generally recognized classic texts” (344) (Emphasis added). Hirsch prescribes a similar remedy, what he calls “cultural literacy.” Essentially, according to this ideology, a canon-based literacy, tested through SAT, would guarantee merit, a panacea (Aronowitz and Giroux 40); but in total disregard of the socio-economic forces behind the SAT scores and the politics that underpins a canon.

By problematizing the canon, social critics expose the hidden agenda of the traditional paradigm. Problematic is the fact that this ideology masks crucial issues such as: What constitutes a “good” book? Who gets to choose what is to be included in the canon? Whose voice is heard and whose is silenced? In the case of SAT scores, how are socio-economic and political forces factored when ranking students? In other words, social critics question the neutrality of literacy projected by the traditional approach. Critiquing a canon-based literacy system, Apple argues at length that no text is politically disinterested. He asserts that “texts are not simply ‘delivery systems’ of ‘facts.’ They are at once the results of political, economic and cultural activities, battles and compromises”
“Between Moral Regulation…” 195). Elsewhere, in his article “Regulating the Text: The Socio-Historical Roots of State Control,” he states: “the text is not only an economic artifact, but is through and through political as well. It is a regulated commodity...the text is cultural as well. It embodies the visions of legitimate knowledge of identifiable groups of people” (7-8). Thus, a canon-based literacy would only naturally advance the interests of a dominant group by legitimizing its knowledge and silencing subordinate groups. This way, literacy serves to perpetuate the status-quo, the hegemony of the dominant group.

However, unlike the Sociology of Education approach, critical literacy not only critiques hegemony in literacy but also aims at empowering students for social change. Thus, critical literacy acknowledges the double-edge-nature of literacy--as a tool for domination but also a tool for liberation. Porter traces the conceptualization of the double-edge nature of literacy to Antonio Gramsci in his concept of “hegemony and counter-hegemony.” According to Porter,

The concept of hegemony also defines counter-hegemony. It is not only individuals through their active consciousness but subordinate social groups as well which may struggle with dominant groups for hegemony. Thus both individuals and groups are influenced by hegemonic world views, but because they have consciousness, they can and do sometimes resist and develop counter-hegemonic ideas. (15)

In Porter’s opinion, Gramsci’s conceptualization of consciousness “explains both the ability of dominant groups to control without force and the potential source of social change” (15). Joel Spring articulates hegemony in a way similar to Porter and Gramsci.
He identifies “two dimensions to the connection between knowledge and power” whereby, “In one dimension, the distribution of knowledge (or schooling) is used to control others. In the second dimension, knowledge gives the individual the ability to gain freedom from the control of others” (56) (Emphasis in the original). Advancing the argument on the transformative nature of literacy, Joseph Kretovics, argues that critical literacy “attempts to use criticism as a conceptual tool which dialectically appropriates and negates in attempting to refashion a subject on a higher conceptual plane…critical literacy…points to providing students not merely with functional skills, but with the conceptual tools necessary to critique and engage society along with its inequalities and injustices” (50-51).

Perhaps one of the most vocal and renowned advocates of emancipatory literacy is Paulo Freire. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire argues how “oppression” “dehumanizes” human beings, how it reduces them to “objects.” He asserts that “to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it (69)” (Emphasis added). According to him, social transformation is possible because “human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection” adding that “but while to say the true word-which is work, which is praxis-is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of every one” (69) (Emphasis added). Granted, Freire envisions social change not only as possible but as a calling, and, not as a preserve of the privileged few but for all humanity. He grounds his liberatory pedagogy in praxis and agency. Concerning praxis he sates: “The insistence that the oppressed engage in reflection on their concrete situation is not a call to armchair revolution—true reflection-leads to action…an authentic praxis” (48). Freire’s position on praxis draws from
Gramsci’s view that “the philosophy of praxis” helps philosophy to “[avoid] any tendency towards solipsism, and historicizing thought in that it assumes it in the form of a conception of the world” (346).

Concerning agency, Freire, in *Education for Critical Consciousness*, contradicts the Sociology of Education approach since he asserts, “The normal role of human beings in and with the world is not a passive one. Because they are not limited to the natural… men can intervene in reality in order to change it” (4). Agency, then, is central to Freire’s theory; it is the medium through which social change can be birthed. In essence, his view of agency is grounded on what he refers to as *Conscientizacao*, which he defines in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (17); an epistemology that synthesizes Gramsci’s philosophy of consciousness and praxis. Shor agrees with Freire on the agency of students to change their material world by posing the following questions: “Can education develop students as critical thinkers, skilled workers, and active citizens? Can it promote democracy and serve all students equally?” (11). Thus, critical literacy paradigm goes beyond identifying political influences on literacy to providing tools students and teachers can use to liberate themselves from the hegemony of the dominant group and, therefore, subverts the epistemological and ontological foundations of the Sociology of Education approach.

In spite of this theoretical leap, critical literacy paradigm has its own drawbacks. For instance, some scholars have criticized this approach for adapting a monolithic viewpoint. Beth Daniell, for instance, invokes postmodernism to attack Freire, branding his theoretical position what she characterizes as “grand narratives.” She claims that “the
problem with grand narratives is the unfortunate human tendency to over generalize from them: the Freirean narrative has been used to support a discourse that sometimes seems to assume that all our students are oppressed” (400). James Gee, in *Dilemmas of Literacy*, expresses similar sentiments, although from a different perspective. He considers Freire’s pedagogy to be contradictory in that it seeks to promote freedom of learners, and teachers, yet at the same time it is prescriptive. He specifically refers to instances in Freire’s book with Macedo where Freire intimates there is a “correct” way of thinking, for instance, when he states, “When we learn to read and write, it is also almost important to learn to think correctly” (Gee 237). Gee seems to be grappling with: What is correct thinking? Who determines what is correct thinking?

This study concurs with Daniell and Gee that taken at surface level, this paradigm may appear essentialist. However, I disagree with Daniell’s theoretical position that seeks to de-politicize literacy. Owing to the fact that all approaches to literacy, as stated earlier, are laced with ideology, I concur with bell hooks’ defense of critical literacy, as espoused by Florence Namulundah, whereby she concedes critical literacy is “transgressive.” Essentially, even those approaches that claim to be objective are themselves ideologically situated since, as Patricia Sullivan points out, no epistemology is disinterested (56-57). But, acknowledging this potential weakness, this study gleans from projects done by scholars using critical literacy in their pedagogies to explore how tenets of this paradigm could be reinvented² for the Kenyan context to dislodge the predominant “banking” pedagogy and pave way for a critical and dialogic approach that would ultimately midwife a radical change in the literacy system.

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² In his article, “A Response,” Freire advocates educators apply principles of his pedagogy in a pragmatic way; a way that pays attention to the conditions educators and students operate--to reinvent his ideas rather than to implement his pedagogy in toto.
adult literacy project in UK; Sybille Grubber and Jean Boreen’s comparative study of
students’ critical reflection among middle school and college students in Arizona;
Rochelle Harris views on integration of critical literacy in writing; Ira Shor’s critical
pedagogy in his journalism class, in *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social
Change*; Van Duzer, Carol-Florez, and MaryAnn Cunningham’s critical literacy project
with adult ESL learners.

A major limitation of this paradigm as far as this study is concerned is that it
focuses mainly on class, race, and gender injustices, thus, sidelining postcolonial issues.
This is not surprising because most of the proponents of this approach are from the West.
Freire does, however, address the postcolonial phenomenon in his *Pedagogy of the
Oppressed* when he describes how revolution can be negated by turncoat liberators who
become oppressors themselves. In his characterization that suits the postcolonial regimes
in Africa, Kenya included, he states: “because of their identification with the oppressor,
they have no consciousness of themselves as members of an oppressed class…The
shadow of their former oppressor is still cast on them” (28). Freire’s argument is tandem
with Bourdieu and Passeron’s theory of habitus, and Homi Bhabha’s “colonial discourse
as an apparatus of power” (70) hypothesis which can all be applied in a general sense to
account for the postcolonial phenomenon. However, Freire does address the African
scenario in his reminiscences of the Guinea-Bissau experience in *Literacy: Reading the
Word and the World* where he blames postcolonial elites in Africa for aborting the
revolutionary vision that motivated the struggle for independence.

Nevertheless, Freire’s rendering of the African experience is problematic because
he seems to only associate the failure to de-colonize education systems in Africa to
insistence by postcolonial African elite on the use of languages of former European
colonizers for instruction in schools. Ngugi wa Thion’o, in *The Language of African
Literature*, adopts a similar view in his advocacy for African peoples to use vernacular
languages, especially in literary works, arguing that languages of the metropolitan “were
taking us [Africans] further from ourselves, from our world to other worlds [worlds of the
European colonizers]” (436). Without negating the role language policy plays in the
reproduction of the colonial system, especially given the ideological nature of language
as espoused by Volosinov, language policy, on its own, is insufficient in explaining why
postcolonial regimes in Kenya reproduced the colonial state, including the colonial
literacy policies.

But, in spite of these shortcomings, the underpinnings of critical literacy are
crucial to this study. In fact, this paradigm provides this study the theoretical framework
to not only critique other paradigms but also to interpret data I collected in this research.
Indeed, by acknowledging the hegemonic nature of literacy and, most importantly, that
social transformation is possible, through human agency and praxis, this paradigm helps
this study not only to conceptualize hegemony in Kenya’s higher education, but also to
envision how the system can be changed; how literacy and discourse patterns in Kenyan
universities could be de-colonized.

Crucial to this study is Freire’s theory of the “banking concept” of education,
which he defines in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as that form of education in which the
teacher’s task is to “fill the students with the contents of his narration-contents which are
detached from reality” (52); the kind of literacy that “turns them [students] into
“containers” into “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher” (53), in which case
education “becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is depositor” (53). Instead of the “banking concept,” Freire advocates a “dialogic” approach which, in his opinion, empowers students and faculty to “speak their word” and to “name the world” as a prerequisite to “transform the world” (69). The “banking concept” provides a vital lens to this study for understanding classroom dynamics in Kenyan universities whereas the features of a “Dialogic” classroom, combined with Ira Shor’s concept of “Desocialization,” which he defines as the “questioning [of] the social behaviors and experiences in school and daily life that makes us into the people we are…Desocialization from traditional school conditioning that interferes with critical thought” (114), avails tools for undertaking transformation, tools for praxis.

Also important to this study is the role that this paradigm attaches to learners’ experience in the learning process. This study agrees with Dewey that “amid all uncertainties, there is one permanent frame of reference; namely the organic connection between education and personal experience” (330), a view that is picked up and espoused by bell hooks in her theorization of what she refers to as “engaged pedagogy.” In particular, Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner demonstrate how experience may play out in critical literacy by stating that “critical pedagogues thus face the additional task of analyzing the social historical conditions shaping one’s experience (of desire) and exploring ways of transforming those conditions and thus that experience” (266). Ostensibly, learners experience is a key ingredient of agency and praxis, and which constitutes a significant component of dialogic and critical literacy that are significant in conceptualizing a framework for decolonizing literacy in Kenya.
Another way critical literacy informs this study is through the connection it makes between writing and critical thinking. Rochelle Harris argues that “A student’s own essay is a site for critical pedagogy to be enacted and for critical consciousness and social critique to emerge” (402). Likewise, Sybille Grubber and Jean Boreen’s observe that “students in this environment [critical literacy writing class] are seen not only as receiving information indiscriminately but as constantly developing and improving their critical thinking skills” (16). Echoing the same argument, Shor, in his article, “What is Critical Literacy,” demonstrates the empowering potential of a writing class employing radical pedagogy. He states: “Because critical writing classes propose social and personal alternatives to the status quo, the stakes are high” (16), and elsewhere, he refers to Knoblauch and Brannon and also John Mayher who observe that “Writing is an act of making meaning for self and others” (17). He also quotes Marilyn Cooper and Michael Holtzman who argue that “Writing is a form of social action” (17-18). That being the case, writing that employs critical pedagogy has the potential of accomplishing several purposes. Most importantly, it provides avenues for students to exercise their intellectual freedom, to engage in critical thinking; to “name the world” (as Freire puts it), and an avenue for students and teachers to engage in critical discourse.

1.3. Rationale

As a Kenyan who has gone through the Kenyan education system, including the university level, both as an undergraduate and graduate student, I have observed that the system not only suppresses discourse but there is a semblance between the postcolonial and colonial education systems. Yet, Kenya’s political landscape after independence has undergone various political shifts as chronicled by David W. Throup and Charles
Hornsby, and also Jennifer A Widner. However, for the purposes of this study, I will ignore some of these nuances and characterize these shifts as follows:

- **1895-1963**: The colonial period--Kenya is colonized by Britain.

- **1963-1978**: Independent Kenya is under the rule of the first president, Jomo Kenyatta. During this period, Kenya is, in theory, a multiparty state. Attempts to form opposition parties are thwarted by state machinery (Throup and Hornsby 13-14). But, Throup and Hornsby observe that there was some political space during Keyatta’s reign (26), a view corroborated by Munene Macharia (“African Intellectuals...” 7).

- **1978-2001**: Keyatta dies in 1978 and Daniel Arap Moi takes over the leadership of the country. The constitution is amended in 1982 to proscribe opposition parties making Kenya a one party state (Widner 145). However, in 1991 the constitution is again amended due to pressure on Moi’s government to re-introduce multiparty democracy, resulting in a decade I would refer to as “a one-party-like-multiparty democracy” since the ruling party uses undercuts to lock out opposition parties from competitive politics.

- **2002-present**: the political landscape changes dramatically when, for the first time, the opposition under Mr. Mwai Kibaki wins elections. Most participants in this study concurred that in the new regime, democratic space has opened-up dramatically.

Conspicuously, these political shifts in the country do not seem to have produced concomitant changes in the education system. Therefore, this study investigates why political changes in the country have not led to commensurate changes in the literacy
system: Why “new wineskins” (the political shifts Kenya has undergone) have not produced “new wine” (revolutionary literacy systems that would challenge the status quo), but instead have reproduced the same “old wine” (the colonial literacy system). In other words, this dissertation is concerned with why postcolonial Establishments failed to de-colonize the literacy system after independence, but instead have continued to reproduce the colonial literacy structures. In particular, why did postcolonial regimes perpetuate suppression of discourse in higher education? Why has the postcolonial education system perpetuated the “banking concept pedagogy?” Why has the postcolonial system perpetuated inequalities and elitism in the education system? Why has postcolonial literacy system continued to emphasize functional literacy at the expense of critical literacy? Ultimately, how can the Kenyan university system be de-colonized--how can the Kenyan literacy system be changed so that the democracy prevailing in the wider society permeates into the university discourse patterns including the classroom? What role could adoption of critical literacy and the introduction of rhetoric and writing in Kenyan universities play in birthing and nurturing this change?

In this chapter, I have provided a background for the dissertation. I have discussed works that address the politics of education in Kenya and also works that have theorized on literacy, therefore, situating my study in the on-going discourse on critical literacy. As this review reveals, there seem to be only a few works that have investigated how and why hegemony plays out in Kenya’s higher education, especially from a historical perspective and the place of postcoloniality in the critical literacy paradigm. On the other hand, by problematizing the various approaches to literacy, I have argued why I am more inclined toward the critical literacy paradigm, and why I use the paradigm as a lens to
critique the other approaches and also to interpret the data I collected. However, the review has also demonstrated how each of these paradigms would help in understanding the nature of discourse patterns in Kenyan universities and how politics have influenced and shaped these patterns.

In chapter two, I will address methodology. But, before explaining the methods I used in my research, I will provide a brief discussion of the controversy that surrounds how scholars in Rhetoric and Composition conceive knowledge-making and dissemination in the field. This theoretical discussion will form the basis of my epistemic justification of the choices I made with regard to research methods and research design, which I will outline in that chapter.

In chapter three, I will embark on actual data analysis. In this chapter, I will report findings on the colonial education system in Kenya: the themes I coded after analyzing the data I collected on colonial education system in Kenya. In a similar manner, Chapter Four will focus on the postcolonial literacy system. In particular, this chapter will focus on the influence of politics in discourse patterns in both the wider society and the wider university settings during the postcolonial period, and the political rhetoric that sustained these patterns. Chapter Five will focus on discourse patterns at the classroom level--classroom dynamics. The chapter will also address what participants thought about universities offering rhetoric and writing courses, and also language policy.

In Chapter Six, I will discuss the findings of the study and the implications of those findings to the research questions and hypotheses that guided my study. In other words, it is in this chapter that I will discuss whether evidence from data collected proves or disapproves my hypotheses and whether the study addressed my research questions.
Chapter Seven will be the concluding chapter. In this final chapter, I will address praxis or strategies for decolonizing Kenya’s university education system and conclude by addressing recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY

2.0. Introduction

Knowledge making and dissemination in Rhetoric and Composition is a controversial subject. Apparently, this controversy emanates from the different, often agonistic, ideological stances scholars in the field take in regard to epistemology and ontology. Consequently, most Rhetoric and Composition scholars have ended up taxonomizing modes of inquiry in the field with some scholars posing some methods as intrinsically superior or inferior to others. I agree with scholars such as Janice Lauer, Cindy Johanek, Patricia Sullivan, and Stephen North who argue that such a reductionist viewpoint impedes knowledge making in the field. Since Rhetoric and Composition is indeed an “interdisciplinary” field, as Andrea Lunsford (9) demonstrates, diversity in research methods, what Joel Kincheloe refers to as a bricolage, a “multimethodological form of research that uses a variety of research methods and theoretical constructs to examine a phenomenon,” allowing for “benefits from a variety of social, cultural, philosophical and theoretical positions” (8), is inevitable to cater for different epistemological and ontological perspectives scholars in the field may have.

Lauer’s view that the field adopts a “multimodal” approach is convincing since, as she points out, this approach represents “a dynamic diversity of modes grounded in different points of view on the world, in diverse forms of conceptualizing the world, each characterized by its own objects, meanings, and values” (125). In her opinion, “these modes mutually supplement each other and are interrelated dialogically,” and that “Each mode intersects with the others in convergences and divergences in the social space of
study” (125). North echoes Lauer’s views by advocating “a spirit of methodological egalitarianism” (376), an attitude that regards “All methods, and all kinds of knowledge…to be assumed to be created equal” (371). Although one may question the genuineness and commitment of some of these scholars to their call, especially considering North’s polemics on modes of inquiry and research that has been done in the field, such a pluralistic approach, ideally, poses different research methods not as competing but complementary entities. Moreover, such an outlook acknowledges, as Lauer and Asher observe, “each study has made a contribution to the field’s developing understanding of writing, examining an important composition problem” (20), and that different ways of conceptualizing the world warrant different modes of inquiry.

Although the “multimodal” and the “egalitarian” approaches are welcome in a field whose members seem to “cannibalize” each other, this study adapts Cindy Johanek’s “Contextualist Paradigm Approach.” Like the scholars mentioned above, Johanek advocates a pluralistic approach asserting that “diversity within our field is necessary” since it enriches the field (87). Expounding on the Contextualist Paradigm, she argues passionately and convincingly that no methodology is intrinsically superior to others. Instead, she asserts that methodology should be guided by kairos, defined by James Kinneavy as “propriety or fitness” (82); the appropriateness or applicability of a method, based not on its perceived intrinsic value, but on the contingencies of a particular study; a pragmatic approach to research dictated by the “contexts in which our research questions arise,” as opposed to “politics” or on “personal preferences” (Johanek 111).

Congruent with the Contextualist Paradigm Approach, several factors influenced my choice of research methods. First, the nature of the study: the fact that I am studying
how hegemony plays out in the discourse patterns in Kenyan universities from a historical perspective, warranted historical/library research. Secondly, my emic ³ position in this study: the fact that I am a Kenyan who has gone through the Kenyan education system, including the university system both as an undergraduate and graduate student, warranted employing what Andrew F. Wood and Denna L. Fassett refer to as autoethnography. Thirdly, the need to get views of others on the nature of discourse patterns in Kenyan universities and the role of politics on those patterns warranted use of interviews. The rationale of this bricolage is, as Bishop puts it, to “assure triangulation, verification from multiple sources” (13), in this case triangulation of data and methodology (48). In essence, this kind of triangulation is intended to provide this research an etic ⁴ lens to countercheck my emic role and, therefore, allow for a more balanced view which would in turn increase the validity of my findings.

2.1. Autoethnography

Autoethnography, as used by Andrew F. Wood and Denna L. Fassett, is a mode of inquiry in which researchers reflect on their experiences, reminiscences, or observations from their own teaching as source of data (see also William Thelin; Richard Straub). Autoethnography differs from typical ethnography in the sense that in the latter, as Wendy Bishop explains, researchers usually “enter the scene, make contact with individuals in the culture, and elicit information” (51). In other words, in typical ethnographic research, researchers proceed from etic to emic (outsider-to-insider) roles

³ “emic”: “the perspective of the insider, the native… the view we expect from a participant within a system” (Kenneth Pike’s definition as elaborated by Bruce Edwards)

⁴ “etic”: “the perspective of the outsider… the view we expect we expect of an alien observer” (Kenneth Pike’s definition as elaborated by Bruce Edwards)
whereby, as North vividly explains, researchers usually “go into a community, [usually one they are not familiar with], observe (by whatever means) what happens there [again usually without prior knowledge of what happens there] and then reproduce an account-which they will try to verify or ground in a variety of ways-what happened” (277). In this case, therefore, it becomes hard for such researchers to form hypotheses of what they are studying because in many instances, they do not know what to expect (Bishop 19, 54). This is contrary to autoethnographic research which reverses the order by adapting emic to etic (insider-to-outsider) roles in that investigators usually study issues they are familiar with, mostly a dissonance emanating from issues related with their own experience such that their own reminiscences and experiences become source of data or a basis for formulating hypotheses and research questions. In this study, having gone through the Kenyan education system, my experience and reminiscences play a significant role in this study. First, they form the basis of my hypotheses that guided the study, and, secondly, they allow me to corroborate and interpret data collected from the other sources (interviews and library research).

### 2.2. Historical and Library Research

I have adopted a historical approach in this study based on the theoretical standpoint of historicity of phenomena. I agree with scholars who have argued that social structure and superstructure, including the materiality of literacy, can best be understood in light of their historicity, a view that is also congruent with critical literacy, the theoretical framework guiding my study. Freire, in his dialog with Macedo, refers to Marx who observed that “man makes history based on the concrete conditions that he finds.” Freire
goes on to state that “A generation inherits concrete conditions in a given society. It is from this concrete, historical situation that a generation finds it possible to continue the continuity of history” (60). Likewise, Giroux, in his introduction to Freire and Macedo’s *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, underscores the need to situate “the details of everyday life” in “the larger totalities of history and social context” such that “critical literacy suggests using history as a form of liberating memory” (16). Along these lines, I argue that discourse patterns in Kenyan universities could best be understood in light of the historical forces that produced them and here I agree with Munene, in his article, “The Relevance of History in Contemporary Society,” that “All issues in the public arena today [in Kenya] are explainable only through thorough knowledge of history. This is history as a field of interpretation of the past, to give meaning to the present, and to safeguard the future. The future, therefore, is history” (5).

Since this study in part investigates the influence of colonial literacy policy on postcolonial discourse patterns in Kenyan universities, it was necessary for me to do archival and library research on Kenya’s education policies during these two eras. Specifically, I researched government documents such as reports of educational commissions set up to formulate or review education policies; general education reports; and pronouncements and decrees by politicians and educational officials. These sources provided information on educational policies enacted by both colonial and postcolonial states and the rhetorics they both used to legitimize and sustain those policies. Most of the data touching on the colonial period was collected from the Kenya National Archives (KNA) in Nairobi whereas for the postcolonial era, I obtained government publications from university libraries (especially University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University
libraries) and the Ministry of Education Resource Center in Nairobi. I also found useful periodicals and newspapers from these two university libraries and also the KNA. I want to point out here that my study has used Kenyan newspapers as a major source of information. This has been inevitable since, as I discovered during my research process, Kenyans, including scholars, prefer to express their views by writing newspaper articles, as opposed to writing books or articles in journals. For this reason, newspapers provided a rich source of information on the issues I have been investigating in this study.

In addition, the limited time I had to complete my research in Kenya, compounded with the difficulty involved in tracing and obtaining materials at the KNA, could not allow me to do an exhaustive research on historical sources. Furthermore, from my reading on the British colonial operations in Kenya, it became evident to me my research would have benefited had I accessed material on the subject found in London. Because circumstances could not allow me to make the trip, I have supplemented information I obtained in Nairobi with secondary sources to piece together the colonial literacy policy in Kenya and to help me develop my arguments.

2.3. Interviews

I chose to use interviews to collect data on the nature of discourse patterns and discourse practice in Kenyan universities from people familiar with the Kenyan political as well as university systems. Two broad categories of participants were interviewed: faculty (university lecturers) and people who have graduated from Kenyan universities (former university students).
2.3.1. University Lecturers (Faculty)

A total of five university lecturers were interviewed. I based their selection on three main criteria. The first criterion was their experience teaching at the university and in this case, only lecturers with PhDs and who had been teaching for at least ten years were selected. This criterion was meant to ensure that the lecturers interviewed were familiar with the university system and political trends in the country and could therefore make comparisons between how things had been at different historical periods during the time they had been teaching. Experience was also used to make sure that the pedagogies lecturers employed or the way they viewed the role of politics in the education system was a reflection of their philosophical positions, perceptions, and convictions as opposed to inexperience or job insecurity.

The second criterion was that lecturers selected had to have gone through the Kenyan university system for at least one of their degrees. As it turned out, all the participants did their undergraduate in Kenyan universities; four obtained their Masters in Kenya (although one had two Masters—one from a Kenyan university and the other from an American university); all five had done their PhDs in foreign universities—four in the US and one in the UK. However, it is worth noting that there are many Kenyan professors who have obtained their PhDs from Kenyan universities, hence, it is only a coincidence that all my participants went abroad for their Doctoral programs. This criterion was based on the significance this study attaches to the role of socialization in the attitudes and perceptions lecturers form on politicization of literacy and the pedagogies they employ. Thus, I focused mainly on the lecturers’ experience during the time they were students at Kenyan universities. Even though this study did not consider
the influence of experience in foreign universities to be a significant variable, future studies could investigate the difference between how Kenyan professors who have studied abroad and those who have only gone through the Kenyan education system perceive the role of hegemony in the literacy process and the teaching methods they use.

The third criterion for selecting lecturers was that they had to be teaching in public universities. By 2004, Kenya had six public universities and fifteen private universities (Oketch 123). I chose lecturers teaching in public universities based on the assumption that political influence is bound to be more pronounced in public institutions than in private institutions for the latter are not directly answerable to the political establishment. This does not, however, rule out the fact that politics permeates private institutions for they too are part of the social milieu. But, because private institutions are outside the scope of this study, future studies could investigate how politics plays out in private universities.

Granted, gender, age, economic class, ethnicity, and nuances of individual universities lecturers taught or former university students attended were not considered to be significant variables in this study. Nevertheless, to ensure variety and inclusiveness, I recruited male and female participants and from different institutions. Of these five lecturers, three were male and two were female; three teach at Moi University (MU), one at Kenyatta University (KU), and one at Egerton University (EU).

Although most of the participants did not think the research would harm them in any way were their identities to be revealed, I will continue to use the pseudonyms I used during the interviews when referring to the participants in this dissertation in order to protect their confidentiality as declared on the Informed Consent Form participants had to
sign (see appendix A), and in accordance with my research design approved by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). In addition to using pseudonyms, I recognize there are relatively few public universities and professors in Kenya which would make it easy for one to deduce the identity of lecturers interviewed from the information I may provide in this dissertation. Therefore, to minimize the risk of revealing their identities, most details will deliberately be omitted in the profiles of participants.

Laaju

Laaju is a male and a professor in one of the Kenyan universities. He got his undergraduate and MA degrees from the University of Nairobi (UON). He graduated his undergraduate in 1971 and MA in 1973 then proceeded to the United States where he did another MA and PhD. He graduated with his PhD in 1980. Thereafter, he taught in different places before coming to start teaching in Kenyan Universities in 1987. Since then, he has taught in different universities in Kenya. Although I had not met Laaju before, I found him to be a very outgoing, cheerful, and enthusiastic person. As he explained to me, he is enthused by research and he expressed interest in the issues I was investigating. Actually, the interview session I had with him was one of the longest, lasting 60 minutes.

Chems

Chems is also a male and a professor. He joined the UON in 1975 and graduated in 1978 with a Bachelor of Education. He then joined one of the Kenyan universities as a
Teaching Assistant and rose to the level of a lecturer. Later, he went to the United Kingdom (UK) to do a Masters degree and graduated in 1986. Upon graduation, he resumed his teaching at the same institution before going back to the UK for his PhD, which he graduated in 1995. He came back to the same university and has remained there since then. I had not met Chems before but just like Laaju, he was very receptive. The interview session took 45 minutes but I presume had it not been that he was proceeding for a meeting, the interview would have taken longer because he was not only outgoing, he was very interested in the issues I am investigating.

John

John is also a male professor. He graduated from the University of Nairobi in 1975. He then went to the US where he obtained his MA and PhD. He graduated with his PhD in Anthropology in 1979. Upon graduation, he returned to Kenya and has been teaching in various public universities in Kenya. John and I were familiar with each other and so it was easy for us to connect. He is naturally outgoing and cheerful and at times we would burst into laughter during the interview. The session lasted 60 minutes.

Jane

Jane is a female participant. She did both her undergraduate and MA at the UON. She graduated her undergraduate in 1986 and MA in 1989. She then taught literature at a Kenyan university before proceeding to South Africa for her PhD. After completing her PhD, she returned to the same institution where she continues to teach Literature. I had known Jane before because she teaches in the university I attended but we had not
interacted closely when I was a student. For several reasons, this session was one of the shortest, taking 35 minutes. First, she was precise in her responding to questions, and, secondly, she had another commitment after the interview. Nonetheless, she provided very useful information for this study.

Liz

Liz was actually one of my teachers as an undergraduate and so we were familiar with each other. A female participant, Liz graduated from the UON in 1986 as a History major. She started teaching in 1988 as a GA. She went back to the UON for her MA program which she graduated in 1990. She then went to the US for her PhD and returned to resume her teaching position upon graduation in 2001. This session took the least amount of time, 30 minutes, because she had several commitments which could not permit her to spend longer than that on the interview. Most of her responses were short and time did not allow for me to probe her or follow leads from her responses. Nonetheless, she answered all the questions and provided useful information for this study.

2.3.2. Ex-University Students

I interviewed seven people in this category. Since one of the main purposes for these interviews was to investigate whether political changes in the country translated into changes in the discourse patterns in Kenyan universities, the main criterion for selecting these participants was that they had to have attended the university at certain designated periods, in line with the political landmarks outlined in Chapter One. Thus,
two participants went to the university between 2002 and 1991; two between 1991 and 1978; two between 1978 and 1963. Since I could not find anyone who went to the Royal Technical College, which was established in 1952 and later became the UON after undergoing several institutional changes (Oketch 119), or the University of East Africa (prior to 1970, Makerere University was called the University of East Africa since it served all the three East African countries with UON College and Dar es Salaam University College as its constituent colleges), I was forced to recruit somebody who is not a graduate of a Kenyan university but one that went to a prominent high school during the colonial period before proceeding to the US for his undergraduate and graduate studies. The other person I used for this category is one who doubled as a 1978-1963 ex-university participant (he went to the University of East Africa between 1963 and 1966) and pre-1963 because he attended high school during the colonial period before proceeding to the University of East Africa. I want to point out that although I utilize information obtained from these two participants’ reflections and reminiscences on their high school experience, their contribution to this research is immense. Actually, high school education during the colonial period may fit the label “higher education” because, after all, very few Africans had access to that level of education. Although gender, age, and the institution one attended (so long as it was a Kenyan university) were not considered to be significant variables, this study selected both female and male participants and people who had attended different institutions to ensure variety in the data collected. Of these seven, two were female and five were male; one attended Moi University, one Maseno University, one University of East Africa, three attended Kenyatta University College, at that time a constituent college of the University of
Nairobi, and one attended a local high school before proceeding to the US for university education.

**Willy**

A male participant, Willy went to high school in the fifties. He went to Kagumo High School for his O-level (the four-year secondary or ordinary level education) and Kangaru High School for the A-level (the two-year advanced level of high school education), both renowned schools during and after the colonial period. After high school, he worked briefly before joining the University of East Africa in 1963. He graduated in 1966 and later went abroad for his Masters and PhD. He has taught agriculture in Kenyan universities for a long time and has also held several administrative positions at the university. Although he did not go to the university during the colonial period, his experience as a high school student was helpful in helping me glean the colonial education policy. In addition, the fact that he went to the university during the transition period is important in understanding how transition politics influenced and shaped independent Kenya’s literacy policies.

**Charlie**

Although Charlie did not meet the criteria initially set for this category of participants in that he did not go to a Kenyan university, he provided useful information on the colonial education policy based on his reminiscences as a high school student. Actually, I had not intended to interview Charlie because I knew he obtained his university education in the United States of America, but I had hoped he could help me
identify people who had attended the Royal Technical College or the University of East Africa during the colonial period among his schoolmates in high school. I went to his house one early morning and as he started recollecting about the people whom he went to school with or those he knew that went to school around the time I was interested in, it turned out many have died. However, there were a few he could remember, though these were in high positions such that getting access to them within the short time I was in Kenya was not possible. An example is the current president of Kenya, Mr. Mwai Kibaki, who graduated from the University of East Africa in the early sixties. But as we started talking about his educational experience, I realized he was providing relevant and useful background information, and because I had not carried my recording equipment or any notebook, I asked him for scrap paper and that is what I used to take notes. Thus, this interview with Charlie was not planned for and was not audio-taped, but the information I obtained from him turned out to be very useful in my study.

Charlie went to Mangu High School, one of the leading high schools in Kenya before and after independence, between 1955 and 1958. He then proceeded to the US in the 1960’s and did his Bachelors and Masters in Agriculture. He then returned to Kenya and worked with the Ministry of Agriculture in different capacities.

Mzalendo

Mzalendo’s story is unique. Instead of going through the conventional education system in Kenya during his time, the 7-4-2-3 (seven years of primary education; four ears of secondary education-the O-level; two years of high school-the A-level; three years of undergraduate studies), Mzalendo dropped out after Form two (the second year of
secondary education.) He went to a Teacher Training College and became a primary school teacher. He studied privately and enrolled for O-level and A-level national examinations as a private candidate. In 1975, he joined Kenyatta University College (KUC), then a constituent college of the UON, after passing the A-level examination. He graduated in 1978 with a Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) and enrolled at the same institution for an M. Ed. which he graduated in 1980. Since then he has taught at various universities. Mzalendo actually taught me at the university and we have had a good relationship even after I graduated from the university. The interview session I had with him was one of the longest for this category of participants, lasting 45 minutes. I chose to interview Mzalendo as an ex-university student rather than a lecturer because, first, he did not have a PhD and, secondly, because I had already interviewed enough lecturers in accordance with my research design.

Kim

A male participant, Kim joined KUC in 1980, which was at that time still a constituent college of the UON, and graduated in 1984 with a B. Ed., English and Literature major. He then proceeded to the UK for his Masters after which he returned to Kenya. Kim now teaches English at a Kenyan university. I had not met Kim before and he struck me as a soft spoken person and precise in his responses.

Beatrice

I had known Beatrice before the interview. She is soft spoken and is straight to the point. Consequently, the session took 30 minutes but was, nevertheless, very useful to
this study. Beatrice went to KUC and graduated in 1983 with a B. Ed., Geography and Philosophy (Christian Religious Education) major. Since then she has taught in different high schools.

Atieno

Atieno and I were familiar with each other even before I recruited her to be a participant in this study. She went to Moi University (MU) and graduated in 1994 with a B. Ed., Geography and Christian Religious Education major. She now teaches Geography at a Kenyan high school. Atieno was straight to the point and the session with her actually took the least amount of time-25 minutes.

DRM

DRM is a male participant. I had not met him before but he struck me as a very reflective person and actually the information he provided is very useful for this study. DRM attended Maseno University College as an undergraduate between 1992 and 1996 (then it was a constituent college of MU). He graduated in 1996 with a B. Ed., English and Literature major. He then enrolled for his M. Phil. at the same institution in 1999 and graduated in 2002. He is currently pursuing his PhD in KU while at the same time teaching English and Literature in a high school. DRM’s case is unique since there not many Kenyans who teach high school with his level of education (PhD candidate).
2.4. Procedure

I initially planned to recruit participants via email while still at BGSU (prior to traveling to Kenya to do the research). However, this was not logistically possible because I could not get email addresses of the people I wanted to recruit. This problem was compounded by the fact that I had stated in my HSRB application I was going to recruit my participants directly--without involving the institutions where they teach/work. Given these constraints, I had to wait until I arrived in Kenya to recruit participants and this was the case for both categories of participants: lecturers and ex-university students.

In addition, I was in Kenya to conduct this research in the summer of 2005, and I only had five weeks to complete the research. Because of this time constraint, complicated by the fact that the universities I wanted to visit (UON, EU, MU, and KU) are located far from each other, I was not able to do random sampling of participants. Consequently, I ended up interviewing people I knew. However, five out of the twelve participants I interviewed, 46.7%, were unfamiliar to me, yet there is no significant difference in the responses to the interview questions from participants that can be attributed to familiarity/unfamiliarity. Thus, in my judgment, familiarity/unfamiliarity with participants was not a significant variable.

The interviews lasted between forty and sixty minutes for lecturers and twenty-five to forty-five minutes for former university students. This variation was caused by the fact that some participants spoke faster than others, some were direct in responding to the questions, and some responded to questions in a way that provided leads I considered important to pursue. The interviews were held at the participants’ offices/workplaces and were recorded to insure I did not miss out on any data. Actually, I did not take notes
during the interview because I wanted to concentrate on asking questions. However, I now acknowledge the danger of not taking notes or having a back-up since machines can at times fail. For instance, I missed some biographical information of some participants and some parts of the tapes are inaudible mainly because of the poor acoustics in some of the rooms I was conducting the interviews, and also because some participants were not loud enough. But overall, none of these problems is acute enough to impede the research since I was able to collect relevant and sufficient data to test the hypotheses of this study.

2.5. The Instrument

In discussing interviews, Bishop refers to David Fetterman who identifies four kinds of interviews: structured, semi-structured, informal, and retrospective (96). This study adapted the structured type to help me remain focused and to guide me in getting the information I needed to test my hypotheses. But, as noted earlier, in some cases I deviated from the script to follow leads I considered important when they emerged. This is in line with Bishop’s observation that “even structured interviews are most rewarding when we approach them flexibly” (100). Actually, I found this flexibility quite useful when interviewing Charlie and Willy, who both went to school during the colonial period because they raised issues I had not envisioned when I was developing the interview questions. I had two separate sets of questions, one for lectures and one for ex-university students.
2.5.1. Questions for Lecturers

There were a total of thirty questions for this category of participants (see Appendix C). Questions one to four sought biographical data which this study considered to be important in shaping one’s perception on the connection between literacy and politics and discourse patterns at the university. These questions also helped locate the participants in certain historical moments so as to understand the connection between prevailing political conditions and discourse patterns in universities. The next four questions asked lectures to reflect on their experiences as students at the university. There were two main reasons for doing this: First was to glean how their experience as students has influenced their own teaching methods, the role of habitus and socialization as conceived by Bourdieu and Passeron, and Shor respectively. The second reason was to compare the differences between the nature of discourse patterns when the lecturers were students and now--to understand whether changes in the wider political arena have translated into changes in the literacy system.

The next seven questions focused on teaching methods lecturers use. The purpose of asking these questions was to establish the nature of classroom dynamics in Kenyan universities or discourse patterns at the classroom level. Questions sixteen through twenty-five sought to directly address what lecturers think about the relationship between politics and literacy. These ten questions also overlap in a way with questions twelve to fifteen for they all seek information that critical literacy paradigm is concerned with, information about classroom dynamics and politicizing literacy. Question twenty-six to thirty investigated the lecturers’ views about teaching of writing at the university level.
2.5.2. Questions for Ex-university Students

There were twenty-six questions for this category of participants (refer to Appendix B). Some questions were similar to those directed toward lecturers and the purpose was to get students’ views on those issues. Just like with lecturers, the first three questions asked for biographical information--where they went to school, when they graduated, and what their majors were. These questions were meant to locate the individual within a certain historical period in an attempt to correlate their experience at the university with prevailing political climate in the country. I considered information about majors important in investigating whether classroom dynamics had anything to do with disciplines or they were driven by forces beyond the disciplines. The next nine questions asked students to reflect on their educational experience with a focus on classroom dynamics. These questions aimed at establishing students’ takes on the pedagogies their lecturers employed and the kind of socialization students were exposed to at the university.

Questions thirteen to twenty-two focused on participants’ views about the connection between education and politics and their attitudes toward politicizing literacy where lecturers and students critique socio-political issues in the classroom. Finally, questions twenty-three to twenty-six sought to find out what students thought about universities offering writing courses.

2.6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Given that this study employed different kinds of methods and collected different kinds of data, I find it pragmatic to code data I collected using a thematic approach. This
is in line with Bishop’s view that “as a researcher in search of a narrative thread, you will be working to organize, categorize, thematize, and textualize” (92). I will use guidelines that Bishop provides which she associates with Huberman and Miles; Goetz and LeCompte; and her own experience. In particular, I will use: “Noting patterns and themes;” “clustering by conceptual groupings;” “making contrasts and comparisons;” “shuttling between data and larger categories;” and “noting relationships” (117). In a nutshell, I will code and analyze data based on the patterns and common themes that cut across the three modes of inquiry employed in this study (historical/library research, autoethnography, and interviews) to achieve the objectives of the study.

In presenting data, I will use a narrative approach, which I consider to be more suitable for triangulating data from the three methods employed in this study. Furthermore, I consider the narrative mode to be convenient, for it will allow me to focus on data that is relevant to this study, rather than having to report on everything I collected (as the Question-Answer approach, for example, may sometimes demand). However, I acknowledge that being selective can create the downside that researchers will be biased on the data they choose to report, but, I argue that all research designs entail selection of some sort; that selection is integral to any research.

Evidently, interpretation of data is a contentious issue in Rhetoric and Composition. On one hand, there are those scholars who advocate neutrality and, on the other hand, there are those who dismiss claims of objectivity in research. In characterizing these viewpoints, Johanek, defines “objective theories” as being “based on a positivistic epistemology that locates truth in the external, measurable world” contrary to “subjective theories” that view truth as “residing within the individual.” She identifies
a third view, the “transanctional theories” that perceive truth as “arising from the interaction of the elements of the rhetorical situation” (93).

I believe that perception of reality is relative; that we perceive reality differently based on our experiences and ideological inclinations, and here I mean ideology in its broadest sense. I, therefore, agree with feminist scholars such as Patricia Bizzell and Patricia Sullivan in their argument that all epistemologies are laced with ideology, however disguised it might be. Sullivan, for example, asserts: “the concept of dispassionate, disinterested inquiry has itself arisen from patriarchal ideology” (55). Similarly, Bishop states, “all research is rhetorically situated and all research reports rhetorically structured that researchers … make arguments from their structured observations as well as from their philosophical beliefs” (5). In light of this position, I acknowledge my critical literacy viewpoint and my emic position in the subject I am studying will influence my interpretation of data, that is, the way I perceive reality presented by the data I collected. However, triangulating the various research methods I used and the data obtained through these methods is meant to provide a more balanced account, but not necessarily to eliminate subjectivity for, as I noted earlier, I believe pursuit of objectivity is a mirage. As Bishop correctly observes, “researcher’s values permeate and shape research questions, observations, and conclusions, and that there can be no value-neutral research methodology” (158).

Given my epistemological stance, that perception of reality is relative, and the fact that this study incorporates diverse voices owing to the multiple research methods I used and the several participants involved, this study will employ a dialectic method as envisioned by North to interpret data. According to North, the dialectic method entails
“the seeking of knowledge via the deliberate confrontation of opposing points of view” (60). This approach befits this study because, first, I will be analyzing and interpreting different points of view concerning discourse patterns in Kenya’s higher education, thus, the need to critically engage these perspectives. Secondly, I use critical literacy as my theoretical framework, a theory that is grounded on dialectic epistemology. Hence, data collected will be interpreted dialectically using a critical literacy lens.

Acknowledging the subjective nature of research and adapting a humanistic and postmodern approach, contemporary scholars in the field of Rhetoric and Composition have stressed the need for researchers to collaborate with their participants at all stages of the research process, including data analysis and interpretation. Bishop, for example, states that “sharing our work with our informants as often as feasible and as interactively as possible will not only enrich our cultural understanding, involve us in triangulation as process, but also allow our readers to know what we did and why it worked out that way” (123). I agree with Bishop on the need for a researcher to collaborate with their informants throughout the research process. As an illustration, in my Research Methods class, the professor had each one of us describe a teaching moment; a moment in our teaching that we felt was a flop. We then formed pairs and interviewed the other person about their teaching moments. We were then required to formulate possible research questions based on the information gathered from the interview and to do a write up of the interview. As we did the assignment, we collaborated at every stage. My partner is also my officemate and so we asked each other questions whenever each one of us felt they needed to have something clarified. I learnt several things from this experience. First, I learnt that it is very easy to unintentionally misrepresent an informant. When I
read what my partner had construed of my teaching moment, I felt there were some things she conceived or interpreted differently from what I had meant or intended. She also felt the same about some of the interpretations I had made about her own experience. Secondly, I learnt that collaboration does not necessarily distort or compromise research since it does not negate the role of the researcher. In essence, researchers retain their role and responsibility as researchers, the difference being that collaboration promotes inclusion of the participants’ voice which, besides narrowing the gap of misrepresentation, grants them agency in the research process.

Although it is ideal to collaborate with participants in data analysis and interpretation, it is not logistically possible for this study given its exigencies. To begin with, all my participants are in Kenya and therefore distance is a major constraint. Secondly, most of my participants do not have easy access to the internet, and actually many rarely use it, and so online collaboration may not be possible. Thirdly, regular mail, which would have been an option, would take too long yet the time I have to complete the dissertation would not allow this kind of delay. In spite of this limitation, the fact that I will be triangulating methods and data will help narrow the gap of misinterpretation. Secondly, I will strive to be ethical when it comes to interpretation of data from my informants, but acknowledging my responsibility as a researcher to analyze and interpret data I collected within the scope of the research and in view of the research questions and hypotheses.
2.7. The Themes

Patterns emerging from the data will be coded into themes. These themes will be reported in Chapter Three, which discusses the colonial education policy in Kenya and chapter Four and Chapter Five, which address the postcolonial education policy in Kenya. Implications of these findings to the research questions and hypotheses will be the focus of Chapters Six and Chapter Seven.
CHAPTER 3. THE BRITISH COLONIAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN KENYA

3.0. Introduction

After analyzing the data I collected from the participants I interviewed for this section, that is, Charlie and Willy, and government documents including reports of the various commissions and working parties set-up by the colonial government to formulate or review education policies and objectives, I was able to code six themes to characterize the British colonial literacy policy in Kenya. These themes are: The missionary factor; Access; Functional literacy; Discourse; Colonial rhetoric; Language policy. This categorization of themes is based on the patterns I discerned in the information I obtained from my primary sources (the two participants and government documents). I only used secondary sources to corroborate, develop, or amplify ideas obtained from primary sources in my bid to reconstruct the colonial education policy in Kenya.

However, before delving into the themes on British education policy in Kenya, it is important to begin this chapter by briefly discussing the factors that motivated the British colonization of Kenya. This is because, as will be explored later in this dissertation, there is a viable correlation between the motivation for the British colonization of Kenya and the education policies the colonial government enacted.

3.1. The British Colonization of Kenya

Kenya was a British colony between 1895 and 1963. Historians have advanced a plethora of theories to account for the European scramble and eventual partitioning of Africa, Kenya included. But, as Thomas Pakenham observes, “there is no general
explanation acceptable to historians—nor even the agreement whether they should be
expected to find one” (xxii). One of these theories is what is often referred to as the
philanthropic motive. Proponents of this theory argue that European powers colonized
Africa out of the need to civilize the “backward” Africans, the so-called “savages.” For
instance, in his famous poem, “The White Man’s Burden,” Rudyard Kipling, a renowned
Nineteenth Century English poet, urges Europeans to:

Take up the white man’s burden-
Send forth the best ye breed-
Go bind your sons to exile,
To serve your captive’s need. (193-194)

And in their commentary about Kipling’s poem, David Bradshaw and Suzanne Ozment
observe: “That it was immensely popular in its own time and remained so throughout
much of the twentieth century may indicate how completely Kipling gave a popular
sentimental expression to an idealized understanding of the responsibilities of a
guardianship over colonized peoples” (192). In other words, many Europeans identified
with the ideology of European patronization of Africans.

However, the philanthropic theory is problematic in many ways. First, its agenda
is suspicious considering the attitude the “philanthropists” demonstrated toward the
Africans. For instance, in the same poem, Kipling describes Africans as follows:

On fluttered folk and wild-
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child. (193-194)
This kind of attitude, one that would lead Kipling to portray Africans as “sullen peoples, half-devil and half-children,” makes the real intentions of the “civilizing mission” questionable. It negates the spirit of philanthropy, especially considering that the colonial system replicated this argument and attitude to justify imposition of its oppressive hegemony on Africans. That is why Caroline Elkins, commenting about the civilizing mission theory, sarcastically states:

For the British, imperialism was not solely about exploitation; in fact, if one believed the official rhetoric of the time, exploitation was hardly a factor at all in motivating Britain’s global conquests. With their superior race, Christian values, and economic know how, the British instead had a duty, a moral obligation, to redeem the ‘backward heathens’ of the world. In Africa, the British were going to bring light to the Dark Continent by transforming the so-called natives into progressive citizens, ready to take their place in the modern World. (5)

Embedded in Elkins’ irony, and a position I support, is that philanthropy was a mask for the real intentions behind European colonization of Africa. That philanthropy was a rhetorical trope colonizers used to justify colonization and the oppression that went with it. Otherwise, how would one reconcile philanthropy with the oppression and abuse of human rights that characterized the colonial system? For example, describing the British response to the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, Elkins states:

An integral reading of all the sources—written, oral, and visual—yields an astonishing portrait of destruction. I’ve come to believe that during the Mau Mau war British forces wielded their authority with a savagery that betrayed a perverse colonial logic: only by detaining nearly the entire Kikuyu population of 1.5
Corroborating Elkins’ observation, Josiah Kariuki, himself a Mau Mau detainee narrates a chilling account of how the colonial government tortured detainees in their interrogation process about the Mau Mau. He recounts how a Mr. Marlow shot at him and:

As if hypnotized I stood up and faced him and we went through the rigmarole all over again. I refused and he shot again; again I fell into the abyss and knew emptiness and smelt death…He fired again and this time I felt something sear through the base of the thumb on my right hand…When I saw the blood, which stained all my sweat so that wherever I felt was blood and still more blood, I rushed at him and clasped him round the waist… (76-77)

Is it conceivable such gross injustices and abuse of human rights was motivated by philanthropy?

The strategic factor is another theory advanced to account for the European colonization of Africa. Those advancing this line of thought argue that the colonization of Africa was driven by European powers’ desire to secure and protect territories that were of strategic importance to them. Although this theory accounts for the colonization of what Elkins refers to as “strategic seaports on the West and East African coasts and colonies in South Africa and Egypt” (4), it does not explain satisfactorily the colonization of territories in the African hinterland, areas that one would argue had limited strategic value to the European powers. In fact, Oliver and Atmore demonstrate convincingly that
the strategic factor was economically driven, since “what each [European] power feared was that its rivals would keep the trade of their new colonies to themselves by enclosing them with high tariff (or customs) barriers” (108).

The third theory, which in my opinion is the most feasible, is the economic factor. Proponents of this theory argue that colonization of Africa was mainly driven by capitalistic and imperialistic motives; that European countries scrambled for colonies mainly to acquire sources of raw materials and monopolies of markets for manufactured goods following the success of the industrial revolution in Europe by the nineteenth century. Expounding on this theory, Walter Rodney quotes Bishop Maury of France who was against the idea of France ending slave trade or giving freedom to its slave colonies on the grounds that:

If you were to lose each year more than 200 million livres [sic] that you now get from your colonies: if you had not the exclusive trade with your colonies to feed your manufactures [sic], to maintain your navy, to keep your agriculture going, to repay for your imports, to provide for your luxury needs, to advantageously balance your trade with Europe and Asia, then I say it clearly, the kingdom would be irretrievably lost. (75)

Thus, according to Rodney, European powers colonized Africa for economic reasons. In his view,

Colonialism was not merely a system of exploitation, but one whose essential purpose was to repatriate the profits to the so-called mother country. From an African viewpoint, that amounted to consistent expatriation of surplus produced
by African labor out of African resources. It meant the development of Europe as part of the same dialectical process in which Africa was underdeveloped. (149)

Rodney’s argument coincides with Oliver and Atmore’s for the latter argue that European powers scrambled for colonies out of fear; that fearing being locked out of markets in the colonies, “each [European] power felt compelled to enter the scramble for territory, in order to reserve the largest possible sphere for its own future activities” (108). Oliver and Atmore also quote King Leopold II of Belgium whose statement epitomizes the imperialistic drive in the acquisition of colonies. He states: “The sea bathes our coast, the world lies before us. Steam and electricity have annihilated distance. All the non-appropriated lands on the surface of the globe (mostly in Africa) can become the field of our operations and success” (109). And, regarding the British colonization of Kenya, Elkins echoes Rodney and Oliver’s views since she points out that the British colonial government’s campaign to attract settlers to the Kenya colony specifically targeted “people who could capitalize on the territory’s potential and provide cash crops for the world market. Settlers were urged to come to East Africa, where there was plenty of cheap land, abundant labor, and large potential profits” (3).

Based on this discussion, it is safe to conclude that economic imperialism was the overarching motive behind the British colonization of Kenya. As this discussion has revealed, even the other two theories, the philanthropic and strategic motives, both have underlying economic impetus. The philanthropic motive was, as will be explored further later in this chapter when addressing colonial rhetoric, imperialism in disguise, whereas the strategic motive operated within mostly an economic realm--the need to secure and protect economically viable spheres of influence. Besides providing a plausible account
for the scramble and partitioning of Africa, the economic motive also provides a rationale for the kind of literacy policies the British colonial government enacted in Kenya. Based on the data I obtained, it is evident that the colonial government pursued literacy policies that facilitated the realization of the British imperialistic interests, which is in line with the main premise of this study that literacy is hegemonic.

3.2. Themes

I would like to point out that the six themes I coded to characterize colonial literacy policy in Kenya carry different weight depending on how frequently they appeared in the data and, most importantly, how they relate to the overarching objective of the study—the investigation of discourse patterns in Kenyan universities and how hegemony influences and shapes these patterns. But, overall, I consider these six themes to be representative of the data I collected. The order in which I present the themes is determined by how, in my view, the themes build on each other to culminate in the analysis of discourse patterns in Kenyan universities.

3.2.1. The Missionary Factor

This theme cuts across both kinds of sources—participants and government documents. Besides its recurrence, it is important to this study because it provides a background that is necessary in understanding the genesis and evolution of western literacy in Kenya. All the sources I consulted underscore the role Christian missionaries played in the Kenyan literacy system. In the “Memorandum on Education in Kenya” prepared by the Ministry of Education and presented at the Princeton Conference on
Education in East Africa in 1960 (hereafter the “Memorandum on Education”), the colonial government acknowledged that Christian missionaries laid down “the foundation of African Education in Kenya.” It states that “in this period [1895-1911] the missions carried unaided the whole burden of African Education, but with the establishment of the Kenya Education Department in 1911, the Kenya Government increasingly subsidized approved mission schools and started to build up its own system of Government schools for Africans” (2). The Phelps Stokes Report confirms the extent and significance of missionaries in the expansion of education by stating: “the group most concerned in the development of the Native Peoples is the missionaries…Everywhere they have been the founders of education” (16).

Actually, Christian missionaries were involved in the literacy of Africans even before Kenya was declared a British protectorate in 1895. According to Sorobea Bogonko, a renowned Kenyan educationist, missionaries were responsible for the introduction of “Western education” in Kenya and he observes that although by 1920 the colonial government and Africans were assuming a role, “the role of the latter two agents were by far less effective than that of the missionaries” (18). He points out that “Christian missionaries preceded the establishment of European colonial rule and settlerdom from about 1895” (18). Many historians, including Bogonko, have associated pioneering Western literacy work in Kenya to John Krapf and Johan Rebmann, two missionary workers of the Church Missionary Society who arrived in Kenya in 1844 and 1846 respectively. They “translated the Bible into Kiswahili and started boarding schools for the sons of chiefs at Rabai Mpya in Mombasa among the Rabai people” (18).
The establishment of the Kenya colony in 1895 and the consequent completion of the Kenya-Uganda railway that cut across the colony from the South East to the West, from Mombasa to Kisumu, in 1901, accelerated missionary activity in Kenya. As a result, many European and American mission centers were opened in the interior of the colony with some spreading to the Western region. According to Bogonko, “By 1910 the three main centers of Kenya’s population—the coastal, central, and western regions had been occupied by missionaries of various Christian leanings” and “with the establishment of mission stations came mission schools to teach the boarders. Out-schools or village schools were also established as feeders to the central ones as missionaries went about dividing the country into spheres of [denominational] influence” (19).

Throughout the colonial period, missionaries remained a crucial stakeholder in matters of literacy in the colony. According to a government document, titled “Education of Africans,” “The policy of the government [was] that so far as possible education should be developed through the agency of Christian missions” (1). “The Beecher Report” supported this position by recommending “The teaching of Christian principles in the schools and training colleges” (2). In regard to teacher training colleges, it recommended that “Christian churches and missionary societies be encouraged to take a full share in the training of teachers, and be afforded the necessary grants-in-aid to enable them to do so” (13).

Although it is indisputable the fact that missionaries played a leading role in the provision of literacy to indigenous Kenyans, there are varying opinions about the standing of missionaries in the political matrix in the colony and the underlying motives for their involvement. On one hand, the colonial government perceived missionaries as
agents of the so-called civilization mission and partners in expanding literacy among the
local people. Responding to some of the issues raised by “The Beecher Report,” an
Assistant Director of Education stated:

We have brought to Africa what we may call western civilisation. How that
civilisation is built up entirely on the Christian tradition…we believe that if the
African is to take his place in that western civilisation, his whole conduct too
must be based on Christian principles and for that reason we believe that the
schools must be Christian schools and we believe that we cannot achieve that
unless we work through the missions. (“Questions and Answers on the Beecher
Report” 1)

To the contrary, there were those who viewed missionaries as collaborators with
the colonial establishment in the furtherance of European imperialism. In my interview
with Charlie, one of the participants and who attended high school during the colonial
period before proceeding to the US for his undergraduate and graduate studies in the
early to mid 1960s, he stated that Africans distrusted missionaries, for they saw no
difference between them (the missionaries), the settlers and colonial administrators. He
reiterated a common saying among the Kikuyu, that “güüti Mûthûngû kana múbia
(There is no difference between a priest and a European Settler or colonial government
agent). Sheffield corroborates Charlie’s observation and underscores the role missionaries
played in the perpetuation of the colonial establishment. He argues that not only were
missionaries instrumental in preparing Africans for colonization by “‘softening’

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5 As Gatheru demonstrates, the Kikuyu suffered immensely under the colonial rule through, among other
things the alienation of most of their land to create the white highlands, settlement farms comprising the
most fertile land that was set aside for British settlers. The Kikuyu also provided a source of cheap labor for
Europeans in those farms. And, of course, the effects of the brutal British response to the Mau Mau
uprising that Elkins describes vividly in her book
traditional societies, which removed impediments to the extension of [colonial] administration” (10), but that they also helped the colonial establishment in quelling agitation. To illustrate his claim, he states that when the Young Kikuyu Central Association, a political movement formed by some educated and politically conscious Kikuyu to demand, among other things, the restoration of the community’s land, started making in-roads to other communities, “it was suppressed by a combination of government action and missionary intervention. By interposing themselves between different tribes the missionaries were able to divert the political movements into what they considered moderate channels, arrogating to themselves the role of spokesmen for African interests” (154). It is no wonder, then, that like Charlie, he reiterates the Kikuyu saying that there was no difference between a colonial agent and a missionary (11). Similarly, Gatheru states that Archdeacon Owen “neutralized, or rather diluted” the “aggressive tendencies” of the Young Kavirondo Association founded by Rev. Ezekiel Apindi and his colleagues at the same time that Harry Thuku was founding the Young Kikuyu Association (42).

Tom Mboya captures vividly the mixed reactions among Africans toward missionaries— that of appreciation but also suspicion. Mboya was himself a leading figure in the Kenyan political landscape having used the labor movement as his platform for agitation during the struggle for independence and on independence became a powerful cabinet minister in Kenyatta’s government and also the Secretary General of Kenya African National Union (KANU), the ruling party. Ali Mazrui describes him as “the most prominent leading African nationalist of Kenya” (43), whereas David Throup and Charles Hornsby describe him as “a young, Western-backed, charismatic politician who had
emerged from the trade union movement to be Kenyatta’s political fixer” (13). According to Mboya,

Every African politician will recognize that missionaries have done a lot in Africa and left an impact all over the countryside, with churches in the wildest parts of the jungle, mission hospitals and schools; in some places they have even introduced trade. But Africans have doubts about the work of missionaries when they see in many parts of Africa how the missionaries have in the past conformed very easily to the type of colonial regime in which they found themselves. Nationalists have been very critical of the missionaries who condone segregated schools and hospitals, segregated social facilities and even residential areas. Missionary social life has often reflected the behavior of European settlers and colonial administrators, and disenchantment has come when nationalists see in the missionary world itself the same system and attitudes which prevail among the settlers…they were among those who constantly told the African he was not ready for various advances, that he must be patient and believe in God…They were among those who spread fear and feelings of inferiority among Africans, through the schoolchildren and through the Christians in their parishes. (10)

Evidently, this theme, the missionary factor, is crucial to this study in many ways. In addition to shedding light on the history of western literacy in Kenya as well as the structure and management of education during the colonial period, the theme helps to illustrate Althusser’s argument that religion functions as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Based on their role in the management of education, it is evident that missionaries worked hand in hand with government agents in the education department to propagate
and perpetuate the interests of the Europeans. Thus, as Althusser asserts with regard to ISA, the missionaries played a role in “the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation” (1494). Of course, there may have been missionaries whose intentions were not to consciously further the exploitative intentions of the colonial establishment, but as the data attests, most indigenous people felt the missionaries were just another arm of the Establishment, an observation that helps solidify the theoretical underpinning of this research, that literacy is hegemonic.

3.2.2. Access

Another theme emerging from the data I collected is the unequal access to education. Several factors were responsible for this phenomenon, the most important being race.

3.2.2.1. Racial Segregation

Race factor played a significant role in determining socio-political and economic relations in the colony. It is for this reason that the colonial government established separate schools, curriculums, budgetary provisions, and educational administrative structures for Europeans, Asians, and Africans. In my interview with Willy, who like Charlie attended high school in the late 1950s before proceeding to the University of East Africa (Makerere) at the time Kenya was attaining independence, in 1963, I asked him how he would characterize the colonial education system. His response was: “In the colonial period, there was a policy of separation of races so Europeans could not mix with Asians nor could they mix with Africans. So for that reason, they went to different
schools.” Incidentally, as Willy points out, African schools were staffed with European teachers and some Indians with African teachers trickling in “rather late towards the end of the colonial era.”

The “Ominde Report,” released in 1964 by a commission set-up by Mr. Kenyatta to look into the education of the new nation corroborates Willy’s observation. It begins by describing itself as “The first national report on education in Kenya” since “previous reports have dealt with ‘African Education’, or ‘European Education,’ or ‘Asian Education’ as though they were separate social activities. That is what, indeed, they were, for in colonial days education, like society, was stratified on racial lines” (21). Actually, the “TIQET: The Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training for unity, equity, and development report” (hereafter TIQET), a report released in 1999 by a commission set-up by Mr. Moi’s government 6 “To prepare the Kenyan society to face the challenges of the 21st Century and the 3rd Millennium through education and training” (xix) makes similar observations as it characterizes the colonial education system as being “restrictive and discriminatory” as “reflected in the racially segregated schools for Europeans, Asians and Africans” (2).

Segregating the education system had far reaching ramifications. First, it meant different budgetary provisions for the education of each race. According to the “Ominde Report,” “the treatment of ‘African Education’ as a separate entity has led to certain historical consequences. ‘African Education’ has always been the residuary legatee of the nation’s wealth. During the ten years before independence, more capital was invested in

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6 Daniel Arap Moi was the second president of Kenya, after Kenyatta. His regime lasted between 1978 and 2002.
European and Asian education, representing 3% of the population, than in the education of African 97%” (21).

The “Education Department Annual Report, 1938” also reveals this imbalance in the funding of literacy among the various races in the colony for it reports the following funding patterns.

Table 1 Funding of education in Kenya, 1936-1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>European and Goan</th>
<th>Arab</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Extraordinary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>£11,244</td>
<td>£46,529</td>
<td>£37,341</td>
<td>£5,194</td>
<td>£70,154</td>
<td>£50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>£11,395</td>
<td>£49,255</td>
<td>£39,140</td>
<td>£5,251</td>
<td>£77,193</td>
<td>£2,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>£12,900</td>
<td>£49,003</td>
<td>£43,861</td>
<td>£6,711</td>
<td>£80,130</td>
<td>£338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: “Education Department Annual Report, 1938.”

Although the gross expenditure on African education in general is higher than that of other races (Table 1), the gross expenditure on individual students reveals a different reality. According to the same report, the gross amount spent on a European student for secondary tuition in 1938 was £40/13 for boys and £34/1 for girls; £10/10 for an Indian boy and £6/5 for an Indian girl; £4/10 for an African student (22-23).

Secondly, and related to the issue of funding, segregating the education system meant that Europeans went to the best schools such as the European School (later Kenya High School), the Prince of Wales, Duke of York, and the Eldoret School. Asians went to
fairly good schools in terms of facilities, curriculum, and the quality of teachers. Examples of colonial Asian schools include Alidina Visram in Mombasa, the Government Secondary School in Nairobi, and the Government school in Kisumu. By contrast, Africans went to mainly technical schools such as the Native Industrial Training Depot, the Jeanes School, and later Alliance High School (“Education Department Annual Report, 1938” 1-4). Some of the African schools were so poorly funded and neglected that the “Education of Africans” report refers to them as “bush” schools (3). Confirming the disparity of institutions for the various races, the “Ominde Report” observes,

The Asian communities were always less well provided for, but nevertheless, for them, an attempt was made, with some deference to their social and religious practices, to create a separate Asian school system worthy of an urban commercial and professional population, supplemented out of a lively instinct of self-help. The African majority were left with educational prospects which, despite popular pressure, were limited by sheer numbers, the modest means placed at their disposal and the social and occupational role to which they were restricted. (21)

3.2.2.2. Political and Religious Affiliation

Besides race, another factor that determined access to education during the colonial era was political affiliation. In my interview with Charlie, he stated that most of those who were lucky to obtain higher education were those whose fathers had an association with “Whites,” those who served in the colonial government such as senior
chief. Willy corroborates Charlie’s observation by stating, during my interview session with him, that those who were admitted to educational institutions during the colonial era were people whom school administrators perceived to be “first of all of good conduct;” or they were not agitators. In other words, according to Charlie and Willy, political correctness was a major criterion for being admitted into an educational institution. The reason why political correctness was such an important factor will be explored further when I address discourse patterns during the colonial period later in this chapter.

Religious affiliation was another important factor which went hand in hand with political correctness. As I noted earlier when addressing the missionary factor, missionaries and religion played a significant role in the structure and management of education during the colonial era. As a result, religious affiliation had a bearing on who got admitted in educational institutions. Based on their reflections, both Willy and Charlie concurred that natives perceived to be religious by the political system and education administrators had an upper hand in getting access to education, especially because, as Willy points out, religion was perceived to be requisite for good conduct. It is for this reason that the “Beecher Report” supported the entrenchment of the “Christian tradition” and “Christian principles” in the colonial education system (1). Accordingly, Charlie observed that a close connection with missionaries opened doors for many Africans to obtain higher education. He gave an example of Charles Kabetu who went to Makerere University and his brother to Fort Hare in South Africa because of the connection their father, Kabetu, had with Dr. Leakey, a missionary from England. In fact, Charlie described Kabetu as a “protégé” of Dr. Leakey.

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7 I use this term to represent a socio-political system where people can only think or speak in the manner dictated by the political establishment, akin to the kind of censorship George Orwell illustrates in his novel, 1984.
3.2.2.3. Economic Class

Although race and political correctness played a significant role in influencing African access to education, economic class was also an important factor. It is worth noting that the emergence of an economic class, in the capitalistic sense, was as a result of colonization, since pre-colonial African systems were usually communal-based. As the “Ominde Report” observed, “In our traditional life, the idea of competition, in the sense of every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost, was virtually unknown.” It quotes Kenyatta who, writing about the Kikuyu community states, “there is no really individual affair, for everything has a moral and social reference. The habit of corporate effort is but the other side of corporate ownership” (23). Elsewhere, in *Facing Mount Kenya*, Kenyatta states, “The spirit of collectivism was so much ingrained in the mind of the people that even eating, drinking, working and sleeping were done collectively” (195).

It is safe to extrapolate from the sources I have used in this dissertation that the genesis of the native economic elite was the need for Europeans to create not only a source of cheap labor but also a class of people who could act as a bridge between the local people and the colonial establishment, in accordance with the British policy of indirect rule. According to the “Higher Education in East Africa Report,” “if the concept of Trusteeship, if the method of Indirect Rule, are to be anything more than glib evasions of responsibility they must assert that the African shall in due course reach full maturity and take his place among the peoples of the world” (7); thus, “The European officer in Africa is expensive and if his numbers were multiplied beyond a certain point, the burden of his remuneration would weigh too heavily upon the population. Only from African
races can sufficient qualified men be obtained at an economic cost” (15). Those who served as agents of the establishments, the loyalists such as senior chief Waruhiu, “became enormously wealthy and powerful at the expense of their fellow Kikuyu [or Africans]” (Elkins 29). These people, for example, Waruhiu, Koinange, Karuga, Njiri, used their political and economic power to access education for their children.

3.2.2.4. Gender

Another factor that influenced access to education, especially among the Africans, was gender. Although Africans in general had limited access to education, the situation seems to have been worse for women. According to TIQET, “The colonial government neglected girls’ education as most of African Government schools that were set up such as Kagumo, Machakos and Kakamega catered for boys only” (2). This imbalance is further illustrated by the “Memorandum on Education,” which estimated that in 1959, 397,929 boys had been enrolled in primary schools, representing 97% “of the total available” whereas the enrollment of girls was 181,261, which represented about 45% “as there [was] still a measure of resistance to the idea of education for girls, particularly in the pastoral areas” (3). Gender imbalance in literacy appears to have been more severe in higher levels since the same report observed that in 1949, 61 boys sat the School Certificate examination and all but one passed the exam. However, there was no female candidate that year. The trend seem to have changed in 1959 since that year, 746 boys and 53 girls sat the same examination and 605 and 49 passed respectively (4). Even though these statistics reveal that girls were now pursuing higher level education, it is still evident that the population of girls in those educational institutions was far lower
than that of boys, in the ratio of about 1:14. At the university level, the same imbalance is evident since according to the “Memorandum on Education,” in 1949 there were only 9 female students compared to 213 male students enrolled at Makerere University (25).

3.2.2.5. Elitism

In regard to Africans’ access to education during the colonial period, it is evident that only a few secured places in the limited number of educational institutions that were available. This was mainly because several variables determined those who got admitted into those institutions, variables that included: race, religious and political correctness, economic class, and gender. All these bottlenecks, and the fact that there were very few schools compared to the population of Africans, meant that a selected few obtained education, especially higher education. TIQET adds another dimension to the access factor by observing that “upward mobility was restricted for the Africans through the rigorous examination system” (2). Actually, according to the “Ominde Report,” “The door leading into the modern world was indeed not quite closed, but it was only ajar and very few Africans ever passed through it” (22). Granted, it can be argued that the colonial education was elitist. In this case, I use the term elite as defined by Ali Mazrui, “a class assuming critical areas of influence and prestige because it had acquired the skills of modern education” (197). But, besides modern education, I include in my definition of elitism people who had political and economic power by virtue of their positions in the colonial system such as chiefs, as was the case with Waruhiu wa Kungu, Njiri wa Karanja, and Josiah Njonjo.
This theme, access to literacy, illuminates several things that are crucial to this study. First, by segregating the education system, the colonial establishment used literacy to entrench a caste system that justified European domination of Africans, thus, furthering colonial interests. Secondly, by denying Africans access to education, the colonial government was out to ensure that Africans did not develop the capacity to resist colonial domination. In other words, the move was meant to ensure the masses remained ignorant and, therefore, an easy prey. Thirdly, the insistence on political correctness allowed the colonial system to create a *loyal* intelligentsia that served the role Gramsci refers to as “organic intellectuals;” “the thinking and organising element of [that] particular social class” (3); in this case the colonial establishment. The role of these elite will be addressed in greater detail later in this chapter when addressing colonial rhetoric. Furthermore, this theme illustrates Foucault and Gee’s theories of discourse in the sense that by denying Africans access to education, the colonial government was cutting-off Africans from participating in discourse, marginalizing them. It is no wonder that Africans were represented in decision-making organs, such as the Legislative Council, by Europeans. Thus, overall, this theme helps to demonstrate how literacy serves the interests of the dominant group, in this context the colonial establishment, a finding that solidifies the theoretical underpinning of this study that literacy is by nature hegemonic.

3.2.3. Functional Literacy

As noted earlier, there was a separate system of education for every race in the colony. This policy was based on what the Phelps-Stokes Commission called adaptation; “adaptation of education to the needs of the individual and the community” (23). The
commission argued that “The wholesale transfer of the educational conventions of Europe and America to the peoples of Africa has certainly not been an act of wisdom, however justly it may be defined as a proof of genuine interest in the Native people” (23). According to the “Ominde Report,” providing separate education for the different races was based on the assumption that “these were separate communities and would remain separate in perpetuity, or for a long time to come. Consequently, the education provided for each respectively had as far as possible to ‘suit’ the normal requirements of each.” As the report puts it, “In a ‘white man’s country’ [or the colonial establishment], education for responsibility was largely irrelevant to ‘African Education’” (22). This was because, according to the commission, “the context and purpose of ‘African Education’ was set by an occupational limitation.” Essentially, as the report observes,

It was no use educating Africans to become modern farmers, because no African could ever become a modern farmer in his homeland. Furthermore, there was a social and political limitation. Only five years later [after 1949] were the first African elected members to appear on the floor of the Legislative Council….In the professions, other than teaching (and then only teaching Africans), an African voice was seldom heard….The administrative and senior clerical echelons of banking, industry and commerce were European and Asian preserves. In brief, nearly all the significant activities of the modern world were beyond the reach of Africans. (22)

Granted, the colonial education system was meant to prepare Europeans for senior positions in the government, Asians for clerical jobs, and Africans for menial/industrial work (with a few assuming junior clerical positions). Consequently, African education
emphasized vocational and industrial skills. According to the “Beecher Report,”
education for Africans was supposed to lay “particular emphasis on the acquisition of
practical attitudes and skills” (2), whereas the purpose of European, “and to some extent
of Asian primary education,” as Albert Maleche observes, was “to lay a foundation for
secondary schooling which in turn would lead to further training or the university. Higher
educational qualifications and the top positions in business and the civil service were the
monopoly of the European settlers, in addition to their control of the high-potential
farmland” (2).

Thus, even in the African elite schools, the curriculum was exclusively
vocational. According to “Education of Africans,” the Alliance High School, the leading
African elite school, was

established and maintained to provide a good secondary education for Africans: it
provides the highest type of education at present available in Kenya and should at
present be the actual goal of those pupils who complete the primary school course
and wish to continue their general education with a view to becoming clerks, or
teachers in the higher grades in Kenya African schools or to proceed to Makerere
or to take technical courses on higher level than is predictable for those who have
only had the advantage of a primary education. (2)

The role the Alliance High School played in the education of Africans is
amplified by the Education Department Annual Report of 1926 which, quoted by
Sheffield, describes the school as the training ground for “a more highly educated class of
individuals [Africans] who can take their place as leaders among the Africans or within
the ranks of the community as thinkers and professional workers” (24). Yet, according to
the same report, again quoted by Sheffield, “the first two years of study at Alliance High School consisted of a ‘literary’ curriculum, including English, arithmetic, and general science, the emphasis after the third year was distinctly vocational, in keeping with the general European belief in the African’s limited intellectual capacity” (24).

Willy addressed the rationale behind separate curriculums for the different races in a very candid way during my interview with him. He stated:

Right from the beginning, the policy was that Africans should really work for the Europeans and the great majority of Africans were employed to work on European Farms. The colonial administration needed clerks and people like that and therefore some Africans were allowed some education but they were not supposed to go beyond being clerks. That meant a few went up-to Form Four; very few went beyond that. I think allowing Africans to go for higher education mainly was [for those who] really wanted to become teachers.

The Phelps-Stokes Commission report corroborates Willy’s views as it observed that:

The government officials have naturally thought of the colonial administration and have felt the necessity for clerical help and such skilled workers as are needful for the surveying of roads and other means of transportation. Settlers and traders have been concerned for the various needs of their special occupations. The traders have joined with Government in a demand for clerks. The settlers’ demand has been primarily for laborers to till the soil and to carry on the varied activities of the farms. (43-44)
In other words, education for Africans was aimed at ensuring a majority of them remained as menial or vocational workers; a mechanism that locked out Africans from top positions in the political system.

To instill in the Africans the “right” attitude towards industrial and menial work, education for Africans emphasized agriculture. According to the “Beecher Report,” “agriculture should play a large part in all teacher-training, and that all teachers should be in a position to teach this subject where necessary; and to encourage in their pupils the right attitude towards the soil” (13). The “Higher Education Report in East Africa, 1937” had made similar recommendations for it had claimed, “The main purpose of the East African Governments, in education as in all other matters, must therefore, for the present be the improvement of agriculture, animal husbandry and health” adding that:

On the educational side, this means that primary schools must have a rural background and atmosphere, and that secondary and higher institutions must be conducted in such a way that the men and women whom they produce will be fitted to take their part, whether on the land or in offices or professions, in a community which is mainly agricultural and entirely dependent upon the produce of the soil. (14)

Evidently, colonial education was rural-focused. Actually, the same report recommended that “In a predominantly rural Africa the education of the child must be based upon the facts of that rural life in which he will participate” (11). The Phelps-Stokes Report has similar views for it recommended that “Every part of the school curriculum may be made to contribute an increased respect for an interest in the rural environment of the school” (30). In emphasizing a rural approach to education, The
Phelps-Stokes Commission drew parallels between the African case with the African-American experience in the US. The report quotes General Armstrong, founder of Hampton Institute,\(^8\) who stated: “The temporal salvation of Negroes for some time to come is to be won out of the ground. Teaching and farming go well together in the present condition of things. The teacher-farmer is the man for the times. He is essentially an educator throughout the year” (29).

It is clear by now that higher education for Africans was not a priority during the colonial period. According to the *Phelps-Stokes Report*, “It is, of course, true that the present need for this stage of education (higher education) [was] very limited” adding that “only two schools south of Egypt and the Sahara...have any claim to recognition as colleges” (103). And regarding East Africa, it states “Indeed there are no schools for Natives in East Africa which in relation to Western standards can be properly described as secondary schools...While a small number of schools offer agricultural training, the real agricultural schools may be counted on the fingers of one hand, and these are elementary schools” (103).

Indeed, very few African Kenyans were able to obtain higher education during the colonial period. According to the “Memorandum on Education,” “The first secondary school for Africans was established in 1926 and the number of these schools increased until a total of eleven was reached in 1949” (2). But the commission also observed that in 1959 “more than 28% of the children completing the primary course went on to

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\(^8\) According to *Hampton Institute and Booker T. Washington*, this institute was founded in 1868 by General Samuel Armstrong but was later to be headed by Booker T. Washington. The institute trained “an army of black educators” and Washington, an African American, is reported to have considered “immediate agitation for social equality to be “the extremist folly”, accepting, just as did Armstrong, “segregation as the natural inclination of both races.” The school “emphasized self-improvement and job training to enable black students to become gainfully employed and self-supporting as craftsmen or industrial workers.”
Intermediate schools for further four years of education” (3). And, “At the beginning of 1960 about 13% of the children completing the Intermediate course went on to four years secondary education” (14). Confirming the fact that only a few Africans had access to higher education, TIQET observes that “During the Colonial era…on the other hand, African education was deliberately restricted, especially at secondary and tertiary levels” (3). That by the time Kenya became independent, in 1963, there were “only” 151 secondary schools (3).

The situation was even worse at the university level. According to the “Memorandum on Education,” in 1949, Makerere had “222 students (213 men and 9 women, mostly Africans) and drawn from all three territories [Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania]” (25), whereas in 1960, the student population at the university had risen to 909 “most of whom [were] Africans” (26). The same report observes that since the Royal Technical College (that later became the University of Nairobi) was commissioned in 1956, “its student body [had] risen to a total of 333 (including a large proportion of Africans)” (27). Besides those who went to school in East Africa, 384 Africans went for higher education abroad compared to 1, 100 Asians, 18 Arabs, and 267 Europeans (28).

The following table represents the composition of the student body at the Royal Technical College of East Africa in the 1957/1958 Academic Year.
This table reveals a number of things. In particular, it confirms that only a small population of Africans had access to higher education, especially if the student population is to be compared with the entire African population in the colony. In fact, the fact that there were more Asians admitted in the college, considering their ratio with that of Africans in the colony confirms the disadvantaged position of the local people in terms of access to higher education. However, the figures could mislead one to conclude that Asians and Africans had more access to higher education than Europeans. This was not the case because most Europeans went abroad for higher education ("Memorandum on Education" 28).
Need for some sort of higher education for Africans continued to rise with time. For example in 1937, “Higher Education in East Africa Report” observed that “The African demands education as a right…There are those indeed who believe that steps should be taken to curb this passion for education and to dispel the African’s pathetic belief that learning is the panacea for all ills” (7). To counter this notion, the report made a surprising observation: “Yet it is not by restrictive or reactionary measures that a saner sense of proportion can be induced; that sense of proportion can be acquired only through those habits of reason and comparison which are created by a sound educational system.” Consequently, the report asserts that “The education of the African is … inevitable” (7).

Elsewhere, the report observes that:

The work that has to be done in Africa cannot be done by Europeans unless they have adequate staffs…The European officer in Africa is expensive, and if his numbers were multiplied beyond a certain point, the burden of his remuneration would weigh too heavily upon the population. Only from the African races can sufficient qualified men be obtained at an economic cost. (15)

Likewise, the “Beecher Report” recommended that “the facilities for secondary education be expanded as rapidly as possible in order to provide more pupils with higher academic qualifications to take posts of responsibility in the development of the economy and social life of the colony” (9) and that “the Government seek to secure the immediate expansion of facilities for higher education at Makerere College so that the annual intake from Kenya is not less than 50” (10).

Although the exigencies on the ground warranted expansion of higher education for Africans, it appears the colonial government was not enthusiastic about the idea.
According to G.C. Turner, Principal of Makerere College in the mid 1940s, “Africans often claim that their opportunity for good education is unduly restricted, and particularly that too few of them have the chance to further education of higher quality than any which is yet supplied in East Africa” (1). Although he acknowledges that the African claim was “natural” and “just,” he argues that the claim was “Often made by men who do not rightly understand the nature of university education, its cost, or the way in which war-time restrictions have affected British universities. Nor do they always know what qualities a student needs if he is to get real benefit for others as well as for himself from any course of higher education overseas” (1). To diffuse the African quest for higher education, he argued that, “A man is commonly respected for what he is and not for the ‘qualifications’ which he posses” (2). He adds: “In my view, very few of them [Africans] are ready, when they leave the College, for advanced education overseas. I have known five or six who were, and I wish they might have had that chance” (92).

Turner’s argument not only typifies the colonial government’s attitude toward Africans clamor for higher education but also demonstrates how the ideology of the political establishment permeated the educational sector. It also sheds light on the kind of justification the colonial system used to justify denying Africans access to higher education and ultimately economic and political mobility, an issue that will be explored later in this chapter. To illustrate the fact that the political establishment was not enthusiastic about Africans obtaining higher education or assuming senior positions in the government, Sheffield quotes the Education Department Budget of 1919 which documents that the Director of Education, of course a European, earned £500; Head Clerk, an African £32; Assistant Clerk (Indian) £72; Assistant Clerk, African, £32 (17-
18). As these figures reflect, Africans were not only paid less than the other races but it is clear their qualifications and positions did not matter, confirming that qualification was not significant in regard to African personnel matters (the 1958 “Complement and Manpower Return” of the Department of Education in the Ministry of Education, Labour and Lands demonstrates further the disparities in employment among the different races).

The correspondence between the Personal Assistant to the Chief Native Commissioner (PACNC) and the District Commissioner (DC) of North Nyanza further illustrates the European disregard for African higher education. The correspondence was about Ibrahim Wabuti, a native who had gone to South Africa to study for a Bachelor of Commerce for four years. According to the PACNC, Wabuti had been working for the Railways Administration “and the report on his work made by the Expenditure Accountant was complementary” and that “He has also had very favorable reports from the Educational Authorities in Johannesburg.” Wabuti was about to complete his studies and was “asking for a Government post on his return to the colony.” But in his recommendation to the DC, the PACNC stated:

As a graduate, if employed by the Government, he would be entitled to a salary scale rising from £300 to a maximum of £600 per annum. It is possible, however, that if you could find him a job locally he would accept a considerably lower rate of pay. It is not suggested that his commercial qualifications are likely to be of much assistance in the Reserve, but you may know of a suitable post for him in view of his good general education.

In response, the DC stated: “While I am not fully conversant with the qualifications attached to a Bachelor of Commerce degree, it would appear that the above
might be educationally fitted to be appointed Market and Trade Executive Officer of the Local Native Council.”

The post of Market and Trade Executive Officer of the Local Native Council was to be created for Wabuti and the duties would entail “the supervision and organization of markets, the collection of market revenue and the giving of assistance to African traders both as regards instruction in simple Book-keeping and for putting them in touch with the best sources for the supply of trade goods.” It appears from this exchange both officers were not thrilled with Wabuti’s qualification in spite of the fact that he was among the very few Africans who at that time had a university degree. Another surprising, if not hypocritical, thing is that the DC was purporting not to know what a Bachelor of Commerce (B. Com) entailed. One is left to wonder whether he had a university degree himself. Furthermore, it is strange that the establishment would be creating a position for a B. Com holder yet it would be assumed that given the small number of people with a college degree at that time, Wabuti would have been destined for a very high position in the government. Furthermore, besides his academic qualification, he had strong recommendations.

The functional literacy theme reveals a number of things that are significant to this study. To begin with, by denying Africans academic/intellectual education or access to higher education, the Establishment was out to ensure Africans did not develop the capacity to resist colonization. Thus, functional education was aimed at creating a docile population, by searing off what Freire in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed refers to as Conscientizacao, the “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (17). Furthermore, by
ensuring Africans remained illiterate, the establishment was able to justify its dominance on Africans on the grounds that there were no Africans qualified to take up high positions in the government. As a matter of fact, one of the “organic intellectuals” of the regime whom I will cite in greater detail when addressing colonial rhetoric justified Europeans holding onto high positions in government because only Europeans were qualified for those positions (Anonymous source). In addition, I have cited the case of Wabuti at length to illustrate that the inequalities that characterized the colonial system were not just a question of merit. Here was a person who was by all means qualified: he had a university degree, a Bachelor of Commerce for that matter, and credibility too. In spite of his qualifications, the colonial government was not ready to offer him a high position in the government as he did not meet the “rules” of the dominant discourse. He was an African. Therefore, this theme not only illustrates Foucault’s theory that discourse is controlled; it also exposes the ideological forces and contradictions inherent in the functional approach to literacy. Ultimately, this theme demonstrates quite well how literacy serves the interests of the dominant group. I argued earlier in this chapter that capitalism and imperialism were the main driving force behind the British colonization of Kenya. The findings in this theme, therefore, help to illustrate how functional literacy served those interests by ensuring Africans remained exploitable.

3.2.4. Discourse Patterns

My analysis of discourse practice in the context of literacy during the colonial era is guided by Foucault and Lankshear and McLaren’s views on discourse. As I pointed out in Chapter One, Foucault views discourse as a field governed by conventions:
conventions and rules that insure it is restricted to only those who meet the set conditions. Above all, he demonstrates how discourse is a political field (231; 238). On the other hand, Lankshear and MCLaren capture classroom dynamics in a way that furthers Foucault’s definition of discourse. Again, as noted in Chapter One, they argue that classroom discourse constitutes power relations with regard to decision-making on matters affecting activities and operations of the classroom (11). In line with these views of discourse, the information I obtained from my participants and government documents reveal the following discourse patterns in the Kenyan literacy system during the colonial period.

3.2.4.1. Morality and Discipline

The colonial education system emphasized discipline and morality. Actually, it appears “character” formation was the most important tenet of colonial education. When I asked Willy how he would characterize the colonial education system in my interview with him, his response was: “one of the biggest attributes of education during the colonial era was discipline-a very high level of discipline and this discipline was emphasized not only [among] students but to a very large extent also to teachers.” The *Phelps-Stokes Report* confirms Willy’s observation for it reported that “Government, missions and settlers were ready to agree that the development of character is a vital requisite in all educational activities” (44). The “Beecher Report” made similar recommendations: “To state our objectives briefly, we desire to see a morally sound education based on Christian principles” (92).
Thus, discipline was a crucial criterion for admission into schools. For instance, the “Beecher Report” recommended “there be instituted a system of interview by the European school manager and the inspector of schools, which coupled with the applicants report from his primary school as to his character, shall be decisive in selecting pupils for entry to intermediate schools from amongst that group of applicant” (15). Willy affirmed this recommendation during the interview for he observed that because of the stiff competition for places in the very few schools that were available for Africans, “I think those who were given the opportunity were those who were seen by the school leaders, headmasters, or principals as they were used to be called, as first of all of good conduct— you had to be of good conduct.”

When I asked Willy to elaborate on what he meant by “good conduct,” his response was: “Good conduct, for example, they were not argumentative, they were not quarrelling the authorities, particularly school authorities, and they had an inclination towards being religious—in other words, the principals could see those as Christians or at least they seem to follow the church to some extent. That was really the criteria [sic] that was used.” In other words, it is clear the colonial government, as well as the colonial education system, did not encourage criticism.

3.2.4.2. Attitude Toward Criticism and Agitation

The Phelps-Stokes Report corroborates Willy’s observation above that the colonial establishment did not allow for criticism but instead favored “good conduct” among the Africans. It states, “Thoughtful Africans” were those who were “increasingly realizing not only the importance but the necessity of the co-operation of the white
group” (15). Elsewhere, it states, “The only cure for the so-called ‘rising tide of color,’ and ‘the revolt against civilization,’ heralded abroad with such anxiety by some alarmists of the present time, is the development of genuine and sincere co-operation of peoples of all races based upon an education of the Native masses and Native leaders in the common essentials of life” (19-20). The commission further observed that “Already unwise and ignorant leaders are teaching false doctrines that cause dissension, irritation, and unrest” claiming that “There is a crying need for wise leaders who both understand their own Native people and apprehend somewhat of the real meaning of civilization and Christianity. Such an understanding is by no means easy to obtain. It is a quality of statesmanship that requires the best that education has to impart” (104).

On a similar note, Sheffield quotes the colonial District Commissioner of Machakos who remarked that “Chiefs who stand by the government get left by their people who are unable to see ahead like their chiefs” (26). In other words, in the eyes of the colonial establishment, loyal Africans were wise and intuitive and literacy was meant to produce this kind of people. To illustrate this point, Elkins gives a detailed example of Senior Chief Waruhiu whom according to Elkins, “had embraced Western values, having become a devout Christian, an advocate of British law and order, and one of the most outspoken critics of Mau Mau—earning him the epitaph in the British press of ‘Africa’s Churchill’” (35). Actually, because of his standing in the political system, his assassination played a role in Governor Baring’s declaration of the state of emergency in the colony (Elkins 35).

Essentially, any political agitation or dissidence by Africans was ruthlessly crushed. Mugo Gatheru, a Kenyan historian, for instance, narrates political initiatives of
some of the politically conscious Africans during the colonial period and how the colonial government responded. He gives an example of Harry Thuku who, together with his colleagues, founded the Young Kikuyu Association. According to Gatheru, “Thuku toured the country, making political speeches against forced labor, the color bar, the kipande system, and reduction in African wages and salaries, as well as land alienation….” (43). As Gatheru puts it, the colonial government was not happy with Thuku’s agenda, especially his desire to “unite all Africans in Kenya and to spread ‘Thukuism’ into Uganda, perhaps even to Tanganyika [now Tanzania]” (43). Consequently, “the colonial government intervened swiftly and, in the night of 15 March 1922, Harry Thuku and other leaders of the East African Association were arrested and taken to a police station in Nairobi” (45). Gatheru adds that a big crowd came the following day to the police station to demand the release of Thuku and his colleagues but the police inspector dispersed the crowd by firing at them, an incident that left 200 Africans dead. Thuku himself was “deported to the Northern Frontier District of Kenya, having been given no fair trial…Intelligent and forward-looking Thuku was to remain alone in a remote place called Kismayu for the next decade” (46).

The same terror, even of greater magnitude, was exerted to quash the Mau Mau uprising. As Elkins narrates, following the declaration of the state of emergency in 1952, Jomo Kenyatta along with five other luminaries in the Kenyan political scene and who were considered by the political establishment to be his deputies--Bildad Kaggia, Fred Kubai, Paul Ngei, Achieng Oneko, and Kung’u Karumba--were, like Thuku, tried and

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9 Kipande: An identification document that “every male African ‘apparently above the age of sixteen years’ had to carry following the enactment of the Native Registration Ordinance No. 56 of 1921. This system was meant to curtail African movement and therefore insure regular supply of African labor to the Europeans (Gatheru 117).
detained in a very remote part of the colony--Kapenguria (38-39). They were sentenced “to the maximum seven years imprisonment with hard labor, to be followed by a life-time of restriction. In other words, they were to live in isolation for the rest of their lives” (46).

3.2.4.3. Discourse Patterns in the School Environment

Just like the colonial political establishment, the colonial literacy system did not allow for criticism. As Willy pointed out during the interview, “The great majority of teachers preferred not to discuss politics [to criticize what was happening within the education system and the wider society]” because they considered that---politics was seen as something that was really---is like complaining. And I think the general attitude of most of the leaders of schools was that God had given you very good opportunity, for example, to study; had given you life-you had nothing to complain about-and if you are complaining then there must be something wrong with you- and since politicians were raising issues, they were not seen as people who can be satisfied. They are complainers and, therefore, teachers, even though they did not necessarily discuss politics a lot, they did not have a very high opinion of politicians.

And he qualified his statement by adding, “Now, when I say teachers, they were mainly Europeans because there were very few African teachers and the few African teachers that were there taught lower classes: Form one to Form Four. Form five to six were mainly taught by Europeans.”

I then asked Willy whether African students criticized the colonial education system and the colonial establishment for what appears to be explicit oppression of the
natives. He responded with a resounding: “No!” He gave the explanation that “The students did not criticize” because, in his opinion, “when the students went to schools, the teaching was fairly impartial. The only area you can say there was bias was when it came to religion…” I am intrigued by the reasons Willy gave for what I consider to be students’ complacent attitude, but this will be addressed in Chapter Six when addressing Bourdieu and Passeron’s concept of *habitus*. Charlie concurs with Willy that the colonial education system did not entertain any kind of criticism. During the interview, he stated that teachers and students “could not be allowed to have political views.” African teachers in particular, he added, “were afraid of losing their positions” although he singled out one of his African teachers, Namwamba, whom he said “was sharp” and expressed his views in class, “but in a muted manner--He could not be very vocal,” as “he was afraid of influencing students’ minds which could land him into trouble.” According to Charlie, “Teachers were very much afraid since there was to be no agitation in schools. It was highly suppressed.”

When I asked Charlie whether he experienced any trouble with the school authority for being critical of the system, he recounted to me how in 1956, when he was in Form Two, there was a “serious strike” in the school because a new priest whom students considered to be a “strict disciplinarian” and was using excessive caning had been brought to the school. Following the strike, students were sent home and the headmaster dispatched letters demanding students be “screened” by local administration “to find out whether we had taken an oath or had any political influence.” Following the strike, the students had to go through a very rigorous readmission process and one had to
produce a recommendation from the local administration ascertaining they had been screened to be re-admitted.

3.2.4.4. Classroom Dynamics.

Going by Willy and Charlie’s observations, it is evident that neither the colonial political establishment nor the colonial education system allowed for criticism. Furthermore, it is palpable that the suppression of discourse prevailing in the wider society and the school set-up permeated into classrooms. In fact, according to Willy, teachers during the colonial era “did not in many cases countenance questioning.” Granted, it is safe to characterize classroom dynamics during the colonial period as leaning heavily toward the banking concept of education, an argument that will be explored further in Chapter Seven when addressing strategies for change. But, Charlie brought up an intriguing observation during the interview; that there was a significant difference between the kind of education and learning atmosphere experienced in government and mission schools on one hand and independent schools on the other hand.

3.2.4.5. The Independent School Movement

The independent school movement and its counterpart, the independent church movement, are widely covered subjects in Kenyan history. The root cause of these movements is the socio-political and cultural tension that existed between the Africans and the Europeans with Africans resisting colonial domination but the Europeans working to perpetuate their hegemony on the Africans. This tension resulted in a clash which gave rise to these two movements which, given the close association between
religion and literacy during this time, (see “Missionary Factor” earlier in this chapter), were linked to each other. The Independent Church Movement sought to establish churches where indigenous people could worship but at the same time continue with some of their traditional practices they cherished, but to which the missionaries were opposed (Elkins 25). Furthermore, Africans were opposed to the fact that the missionaries required them, according to Kenyatta, “to take wholeheartedly all religious dogmas of the white man and keep them sacred and unchallenged, no matter how alien to the African mode of life” (269). Essentially, politically conscious Africans were suspicious of the missionaries for they saw them as an extension of the colonial establishment. As Elkins puts it, they “viewed these men of the cloth as working hand in glove with the colonial government” to the extent that they blamed the missionaries for their predicament (172). These factors culminated in the Africans breaking away from mainstream missionary-based churches to establish their own independent churches, independent of the Western missionaries.

The same tension that resulted in the founding of independent churches also led to the establishment of independent schools. When I interviewed Charlie, he pointed out that the prohibition of agitation in government and missionary schools led to the founding of independent schools--“to teach politics,” which included issues to do with “land rights.” In such schools, according to Charlie, teachers were critical of the political system and even discussed politics in class. Moreover, as TIQET observes, Africans resented vocational training. It states that as early as between 1924 and 1944, Africans were opposed to technical education and “One of the main reasons for this attitude was because this brand of education was only offered in African schools, giving the
impression that it was for the lower classes” (2). Consequently, it adds, Africans “responded to the colonial denial of good education by starting their own independent education systems” (3).

Bogonko has discussed in relatively greater detail the independent school movement. He corroborates Charlie’s views and those of TIQET for he states: “Independent schools in Kenya began in the first decade of missionary education because Africans wanted to control and run their own education rather than depend on missionary ones. That desire was intensified by the politics of the young associations and the government sloth in granting Africans secular literary schools” (52). He further observes that in spite of the problems that faced independent schools such as “lack of sufficiently trained teachers and inexperience in running schools, many children ran away from mission schools to join the independent schools” (53).

Thus, the independent school movement was not just a social movement; it was a political one too. As Charlie observed during the interview, the movement provided Africans a platform for agitation, the reason why discourse patterns in these schools were different from those observable in government or missionary schools. Actually, Sheffield quotes Welbourn, author of East African Rebels: A Study of Some Independent Churches, who points out that in the independent schools, “Every effort was made to build education upon the new African attitudes of independent thought; for this purpose a teacher training college was established at Githunguri, which rejected the government syllabus and examinations and substituted its own” (28).

The colonial government was not comfortable with these new developments, given the establishment’s need to suppress discourse and political agitation. But, instead
of using force to curtail these movements, it sought to appease the Africans.

Consequently, as Sheffield’s point out, the colonial government enacted a “New Education Ordinance” in 1931 that “gave much greater representation to Africans on the Local Native Councils.” Also, the government started making “every effort to cooperate with the independent schools while attempting to exercise some form of control by financial grants-in-aid through Local Native Councils” (29). In addition, District Education Boards were created (in 1934) which incorporated Africans “nominated by the local councils, representatives of district school managers (usually missionaries), and Government officials” (29). These boards “were empowered to allocate funds from local and central Government sources to primary schools, subject to approval by the Director of Education” (29).

However, it appears that including Africans in the management of education, in Local Native Councils and District Education Boards, was a ploy to contain them politically. This is because the decisions made by these boards were subject to approval by higher authorities who were Europeans. This arrangement insured the interests of the establishment prevailed. To illustrate this point, according to the resolutions of the North Kavirondo Local Native Council, Resolution No. 3/44, the council had resolved to support higher education in its area of jurisdiction but the resolution was thwarted by the Inspector of Schools. In its resolution, the council had stated:

this council affirms its readiness to support financially any qualified and deserving students who belong to this District to complete their education at universities outside East Africa in addition to, or in place of, Government funds, as may be necessary; and wishes to point out that it has ample reserve funds for
this purpose, which funds by the operation of the “Quarter of Free Revenue”
Rule, it cannot devote to Elementary Education. (1)

The council also resolved “to make financial provision for sending 5 local natives
annually to universities outside East Africa” (1). This resolution had been proposed by
Rev. Jeremiah Awuor (presumably a cleric of one of the independent churches in
Nyanza), seconded by Chief Paulo Agoi, and had received unanimous support.

But, in responding to these deliberations, the Inspector of Schools not only
challenged the rationale of sending indigenous students for higher education overseas
insisting that “the Makerere education was of a high order and that it would attain to the
full status of a university in due course,” but also questioned “if members (of the council)
thought it right that council should spend large sums of money on education of only a
very few young men who might not be prepared to take employment in the District or
perhaps even in the colony when there was a crying need for education of the masses
(including the female population)” (1). These contradictory positions reveal some of the
issues inherent in the colonial education policy. First, they confirm the fact that the
colonial system was not interested in Africans acquiring higher education. Secondly, they
reveal the conflicting interests between the Europeans and Africans in matters of
education. Thirdly, they reveal the powerlessness of the Local Native Councils and
District Education Boards, making the African voice in the management of education
insignificant.

Overall, it is evident from this analysis that the colonial system censored
discourse not only within the literacy system but also in the wider society to insulate the
system from criticism. Furthermore, this theme demonstrates that the three layers of
discourse addressed in this research: the wider society, the wider university, and the classroom settings overlap. This finding is important since it exposes how politics permeate all spheres of life, including literacy. Thus, this finding illustrates a major theoretical underpinning of this study--that politics shape and influence discourse patterns. In addition, this theme is crucial in testing whether postcolonial literacy system reproduced the colonial literacy structures and if so, why and how.

3.2.5. Colonial Rhetoric

Besides implementing education policies that favored Europeans at the expense of Africans, the colonial establishment employed rhetoric that was choreographed to advance colonial interests-the maintenance of the status quo. The following list of tropes represents my characterization of this rhetoric based on the information I obtained from my research.

3.2.5.1. Colonization as a Noble Cause to the Africans

As I pointed out while discussing the philanthropic theory in the scramble and partitioning of Africa earlier in this chapter, one strategy the colonial government used to legitimize colonization of Africa, Kenya included, was to mask the real motives of colonization--to pose colonization as a noble thing. According to this rhetoric, colonization was meant to benefit the Africans. For example, the Phelps-Stokes Report observes that, “The record of government service in Africa is a mingling of the good and the bad, the effective and the ineffective, the wise and the unwise. Despite the failures and injustices of the governments in handling the Natives, the advantages to the native
life provided by the colonial governments have on the whole overshadowed the disadvantages” (17). And responding to this line of thinking, Walter Rodney sates, “many bourgeois writers” felt the benefits of colonization outweighed the demerits (205). That “On that balance sheet, they place both the credits and the debits, and quite often conclude that the good outweighed the bad” (205).

In her book, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*, Michelle Wright demonstrates that the hypothesis that Africans are an inferior race has had a long history. Wright attributes this hypothesis to the pioneering dialectic of Friedrich Hegel. She quotes Hegel’s proposition that: “In Negro life the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realization of any substantial objective existence” (35). Thus, as Wright puts it, “Because Hegel has already made clear that this progression has not occurred in Africa, only one option remains: the African will attain subjectivity through the European” (35), since in his opinion, as Wright observes, “Negroes will only come to understand freedom by serving as slaves to Europeans” (36).

On a similar note, Daniel Sifuna, a prominent Kenyan educationist, provides an in-depth discussion on views that Europeans held about the intellectual capability of Africans and the “research” used to back-up these views. According to Sifuna, the British scientists were convinced that “the size of the brain had profound relationship to human intelligence” (1). Based on their research, they concluded that Africans had a smaller brain which made them primitive, the inferior race (4). The colonial system in Kenya based its segregation policy on this premise. This attitude is reflected in a memorandum by a European settler quoted by Sifuna, “in dealing with the African savage tribes, we are dealing with a people who are practically at the genesis of things and we cannot expect to
lift them in a few years from this present state to that of a highly civilized European people… The evolution of races, it was added must necessarily take centuries to accomplish satisfactorily” (4). This proposition formed the rationale for ruling out unequivocally any equality between Africans and Europeans (5). Sifuna further quotes a statement attributed to the Colonists Association that “there can be no equality for a few years… It will take many generations before the native is sufficiently educated both morally and mentally to meet the white man as an equal, and never in the present policy of encouraging savagery and idleness is persisted in [sic]” (5).

This Eurocentric ideology about the primitive nature of the natives had far reaching ramifications:

- It masked the real motives of colonization and provided the colonial establishment a justification to propagate and perpetuate its interests in the colony by emphasizing the benefits of colonization rather than the demerits, for example, as does The Phelps-Stokes Report above.

- It made Africans believe they were indeed inferior to the Europeans making them accept the status quo without question, as a given. In fact, according to Charles Eliot, one of the colonial governors in Kenya, quoted by Sifuna, “The average Englishman tolerates a blackman who admits his inferiority and even those who show a good fight and give in; but cannot tolerate dark colour combined with intelligence in anyway equal to his own” (5).

- It justified the denial of intellectual education to the Africans on the pretext that they were intellectually incapable. As TIQET observes, “in the 1920’s, a request was made by the Kenya colonial authorities to establish, on a supposedly
scientific basis the capacity of the African for educational and other forms of advancement…But then the study undertaken was based more on racial assumptions than on any scientific merit” yet, apparently, the policy to provide technical training for Africans was partially premised on this study (2).

- It led many “educated” Africans to despise their own cultures and ape western culture. In other words, literacy became synonymous with westernization. The Higher Education in East Africa Report observed that: “The African has been taught that European ways of life are superior to his.” Consequently, he “is not impressed by those who now disparage western standards and extol the indigenous culture which existed before the advent of the European” (7).

Kenyatta corroborates this view through his observation that, “being educated during the colonial period was synonymous to being uprooted from the African heritage and being planted onto western values-a process of westernization” (127). This rhetoric facilitated the recruitment of loyal Africans who championed Western culture.

3.2.5.2. Using African Elite to Propagate Colonial Interests

Closely related with justifying colonization and Westernizing the African elite was the use of the same elite to propagate the interests of the establishment. For example, in his speech, Fred Kago, an agent of the government, attacked Africans who viewed the “Beecher Report” as failing to address the literacy needs of the Africans. In defense of the colonial government, he stated: “You should realise the fact that all that Government wants to do is for our benefit and for the benefit of our children and we should unite
together to build up a very good foundation right from the beginning and I am sure Government is ready to give us all the assistance we require” (Emphasis added). In another address (the speaker is anonymous but was accompanying Kago)\(^\text{10}\), the speaker also attacked critics of the “Beecher Report,” even more harshly than Kago. According to this official, (in Kiswahili): “Wanataka ninyi kuamini kwamba serikali haifanyi lolote kuwasaidia ninyi-inataka tu kuwafanya Waafrika wabaki nyuma. Mkifikiri vizuri, mtafahamu huu ni upuzi” (Some want you to believe that the government is not doing anything to help you-that it wants you Africans to lag behind. If you think correctly, you will understand this is nonsense). He continued,

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\text{Ulalamishi mwingine ulioko ni ya kuwa hakuna kazi za cheo kikubwa zaidi kwa Waafrika katika kazi tunazokusudia kuzifanya, na kwamba tunategemea zaidi watumishi wa Kizungu. Kwa sasa, watu walio na elimu ya kutosha kwa kazi hii ni Wazungu tu….Natuarcheni kukinzana juu ya Taarifa ya Beecher. Tusiwasikize watu wapuzi wanaosema Taarifa ya Beecher ni mbaya. Badala ya kufany hivyo natushirikiane kama tuwezavyo na kuimaliza kwa upesi kama iwezekanavyo. (Another complaint is that there are no big positions for Africans in the kind of jobs we would like to do and that we are relying so much on European administrators. For now, the only people with the kind of education required for these positions are the Europeans…Let us stop contentiousness over the Beecher Report. Let us not listen to nonsensical people who are saying the Beecher Report is bad. Instead, let us cooperate as much as we can and complete it as quickly as possible)} \]

\(^{10}\) Speech can be accessed in Kenya National Archives, Nairobi. File AV/1/153
He assured the audience that himself, Kago, and Adagala, who were with him, would answer the questions they may have had. But, TIQET and the “Ominde Report” contradict the views held by Kago and his colleagues about the “Beecher Report.”

According to TIQET, one of the recommendations of the “Beecher Report” was “That at all levels of education, and as a condition of entry to the next level, considerable emphasis be placed on character and on the acquisition of practical skills” (2). But commenting on this recommendation, TIQET observed:

Although Beecher was himself a missionary, this recommendation was received with considerable resentment by Africans…These two requirements were seen as serious steps aimed at barring Africans from acquiring normal academic western education. They were seen as confirmation of the earlier erroneous pronouncement by the colonial authorities that the African brain was too immature to benefit from western education. (2-3)

Actually, TIQET reported that many members of the public had expressed to it this resentment about the “Beecher Report.” That “Vocational training was used by the colonialists as a repressive means to development of the African’s capacity to think critically” (3). The “Ominde Report” had made similar observations as TIQET. It pointed out that the colonial government did not pay much attention to “African Education” which had “always been the residuary legatee of the nation’s wealth,” a policy that was endorsed by the “Beecher Report” (21). Thus, it is safe to conclude that Kago and his colleagues hailed the “Beecher Report” not because it was actually beneficial to their fellow Africans but because they were agents of the colonial system.
3.2.5.3. Discrediting African Political Movements

Another rhetorical strategy the colonial government used was to discredit African political movements. According to Elkins, “Mau Mau was portrayed as a barbaric, anti-European, and anti-Christian sect that had reverted to tactics of primitive terror to interrupt the British civilizing mission in Kenya” (xi). She adds that “while the Mau Mau insurgents claimed they were fighting for *ithaka na wiyathi*, or land and freedom, few people in the western world took seriously the demands of these so-called savages. The Mau Mau were said to be criminals or gangsters bent on terrorizing the local European population, and certainly not freedom fighters” (xi). Thus, the British government not only targeted its rhetoric toward the colonized to mask its interests and operations but also the international audience. Consequently, when it unleashed its terror to quell the uprising, the Western world was unaware of the facts on the ground. By discrediting the Mau Mau as terrorists, the British colonial government was able to escape the castigation of the Western world in spite of the gross mistreatment not only of the Mau Mau freedom fighters but the Kikuyu community in general (Elkins xv).

As this research demonstrates, the colonial system was not popular among the masses. However, by employing Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses, the colonial government managed to survive for almost seven decades. This is because the system was able to justify its unpopular policies through ISAs and to crush resistance through RSAs where ISAs failed. Therefore, not only does this theme shed light on the rhetoric the colonial system used to justify and sustain the status quo, it also helps illustrate Althusser’s hypothesis about ISA and RSA, which is an important theoretical component of this study.
3.2.6. Language Policy

Language policy was a contested field during the British colonial rule in Kenya. On one hand, there were those who supported exposing Africans to the English language but, on the other hand, there were those who were opposed to Africans learning English. According to the “Memorandum on Education,” the primary school course was aimed “to achieve literacy in the children’s vernacular” (3). The “Education Department Annual Report, 1938” confirmed this observation for it states, “The vernacular is normally employed as the medium of instruction [in elementary schools-the first five years of school, sometimes six]. Handwork, Physical training and nature study are taught in all classes. In the third year of the course, Kiswahili, Geography, and school gardening are added. In selected schools simple English is taught in the fifth and sixth years” (6). It adds, “The medium of instruction in primary schools is Kiswahili, but a school may apply to the Director for permission to change to the English medium” (8). The “Beecher Report” made similar recommendations: that “The language policy in schools is that English shall be adopted as soon as possible in the post-primary classes” (16).

Thus, the colonial government was in favor of using vernacular languages at the lower levels of education and exposing Africans to English at the upper levels. However, most Africans favored literacy in English. According to findings of some officers who conducted literacy experiments on adult literacy, “The literacy which is desired is literacy in English.” In the opinion of these researchers, “while it is true that this cannot always be acquired direct, it should be the ultimate aim of every scheme” (‘Notes on Adult
Literacy Experiments in Kenya [1954-1956]). Congruent with the findings of this study, Rev J. Awuor, mentioned earlier, expressed that:

The English-speaking qualification necessary for a native to become eligible for nomination to legislative council had impressed itself on the minds of members-and submitted that a language could only be properly learnt in the country of its origin. Thus, speaking for himself, he was in favour of granting financial assistance to enable local natives to proceed to England and acquire the language thoroughly. (“North Kavirondo Local Native Council” 2).

However, there were Europeans who were opposed to Africans learning English. For instance, Sifuna quotes Rev. J. Bergmans, a Roman Catholic priest in Kisumu and who was in charge of missions who stated:

I believe in education for natives to certain extent; writing and reading. I do not believe in natives for clerkship for sometime to come. The native by himself cannot do anything… They have no initiative…. I am not in favour of teaching English. It spoils natives. It gives them swollen head and they become a disfavour to you. You cannot expect a teacher to be on the same road with his pupils and others. But education creates wants which have to be supplied. I think the educated native works just as freely as ordinary shenzies as labourers. I expect the educated boy would ask for more pay. A little education develops the brain to a certain extent he does better work. (7)

Bergman’s position not only contradicts the colonial government’s policy but also Sir Harry Johnston’s, one of the key players in the colonization of East and Central Africa, who, as quoted by Oliver, urged the British government to support the missionary
efforts in Africa for they advanced the government’s interests. For example, he argued, “They strengthen our hold over the country, they spread the use of the English language, they induct natives into the best kind of civilization” (10). In this context, spreading the use of English is perceived to facilitate the spread of the western culture which would in turn facilitate economic imperialism. Hence, these conflicting views about the place of the English language in the colony both in the literacy system and the wider society demonstrate that the language issue had deeper political and ideological implications. In essence, the debate exposes the political nature of discourse as it reveals how discourse functions to include and seclude certain sections of society to the mainstream as articulated by Foucault and Gee.

In conclusion, I have in this chapter offered an analysis of the colonial education system. Based on the patterns that emerged from the data I collected, and in line with the objectives of this study, I was able to code six themes that characterize the colonial literacy policy: The missionary factor, Access, Functional literacy, discourse patterns, colonial rhetoric, and Language policy. All these themes are relevant to this study for they contribute differently in illuminating how hegemony played out in the colonial education system. Furthermore, they provide a basis for testing one of my hypothesis—whether the postcolonial establishments reproduced the colonial education system and if so, how and why. In the next two chapters--Chapter Four and Chapter Five, I will address discourse patterns during the postcolonial period and in Chapter Six, I will discuss findings of the study, which will include examining these three chapters to test this hypothesis.
CHAPTER 4. DISCOURSE PATTERNS DURING THE POSTCOLONIAL PERIOD: THE WIDER SOCIETY AND THE WIDER UNIVERSITY LEVELS.

4.0. Introduction

To establish the nature of discourse patterns in Kenyan universities during the postcolonial period and the rhetoric that sustained these patterns, I interviewed five lecturers (Laaju, Jane, John, Liz, and Chems) who are all PhD holders and have been teaching in Kenyan universities for more than ten years. I also interviewed six former university students (Willy, Mzalendo, Beatrice, Kim, Atieno, and DRM), who attended Kenyan universities at different times, so as to establish the connection between prevailing political atmosphere and discourse patterns, and the role of politics in discourse patterns in Kenyan universities. I also used other sources, especially relevant newspaper reports, to supplement and corroborate data collected from participants.

After analyzing the data I collected, I coded five themes: (1). The role of the university; (2). Discourse patterns; (3). Rhetoric used to justify those patterns; (4). Teaching of writing; and (5). Language policy. I arrived at these five themes as the data I collected coalesced around these five concepts (themes). For adequate coverage of these themes, this chapter will focus on the first three categories: the role of the university; discourse patterns (within the wider society and the wider university settings); and the political rhetoric that shaped and sustained these discourses. Discourse patterns predominant at the classroom level; Teaching of Writing; and language policy will be
addressed in the next chapter, Chapter Five, which focuses mainly on classroom dynamics.

4.1. The Role of the University

This theme is important to this study because, among other things, it sheds light on the approach to literacy postcolonial regimes have adopted in relation to the five approaches to literacy discussed in Chapter One. As I pointed out in Chapter One, each of these approaches would have a different bearing on discourse patterns. Secondly, addressing the role of the university is meant to establish the structural and policy context within which discourse patterns at the university have been operating—the policy framework behind, for example, how professors teach, why they teach the way they teach, what they teach, and, overall, how these stakeholders perceive discourse practice at the university. In addressing the role of the university, I focused on the views of policy makers, lecturers, and students. I focused on these three categories because they struck me as the most immediate stakeholders in university education, especially with regard to discourse practice in Kenyan universities.

To establish what policy makers consider to be the role of the university, I analyzed reports of the various education commissions and task forces formed by the postcolonial regimes. This is because postcolonial regimes, just like the colonial system, entrusted the responsibility to formulate and review educational policy to these commissions and task forces. Thus, these reports are supposed to represent government policy on education. On the other hand, to get the views of lecturers on the role of the university, I analyzed their responses to the research question I had on my structured
interview that asked them what they considered to be their role as lecturers. On the part of former university students, I analyzed their responses to the question that asked them what they thought about the education they received.

4.1.1. Policy Makers’ Viewpoint

On December 12, 1963, Kenya became independent after almost seven decades of British colonial rule. According to the Ominde commission, the first education commission to be set-up in independent Kenya (“Ominde Report” 21), one of the major tasks that faced the new government headed by Jomo Kenyatta was to chart out the destiny of the new nation. In particular, the government pledged to eradicate “poverty, ignorance and disease from Kenya” (24). Kenyatta and subsequent regimes, including the currently incumbent regime of Mwai Kibaki, continued to give the education sector priority as is demonstrated by the many educational commissions and task forces that have been formed over the years. Indeed, the “Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies” observed that “The people of independent Kenya have made it quite clear that among the social services, they want education to have high priority” (29). However, this study did not review reports of all commissions and task forces set-up in postcolonial Kenya because of their massive number and replication in their recommendations. I, therefore, chose a few to exemplify government literacy policy. I chose the Ominde Report, the Gachathi Report, the Kamunge Report, the Mackay Report, and TIQET specifically because of their comprehensiveness and also because of their attention to university education.
The Ominde Commission, the first to be appointed to look into the matters of education in independent Kenya and which released its report in 1964, recommended the following as the objectives of education in Kenya:

a) Education is a function of the Kenyan nation; it must foster a sense of nationhood and promote national unity
b) Education in Kenya must serve the people of Kenya and the needs of Kenya without discrimination
c) Our public schools are an instrument of the secular state, in which no religion is privileged, but they must respect the religious convictions of all people
d) The schools of Kenya must respect the cultural traditions of the peoples of Kenya, both as expressed in social institutions and relationships
e) An excessively competitive spirit in our schools is incompatible with our traditional beliefs and must be restrained. Every young person coming from our schools must be made to realize that he has a valuable part to play in the national life
f) Education must be regarded, and used, as an instrument for the conscious change of attitudes and relationships, preparing children for those changes of outlook required by modern methods of productive organization. At the same time, education must foster respect for human personality
g) A most urgent objective of education is to subserve [sic] the needs of national development
h) Education must promote social equality and remove divisions of race, tribe and religion. It must pay special attention to training in social obligation and responsibility.

i) An outcome of our educational provision at all levels must be adaptability to change. (25)

With regard to higher education, the “Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies,” (hereafter the “Gachathi Report”) of 1976, observed that “the university exists in order to develop manpower who have the motivation, the skills and knowledge to serve the nation,” and that, “the university has been expected to direct its efforts into advancing technological independence, which will facilitate social and economic development of the country. The university is also expected to make continuing and critical analysis of the objectives and programmes of economic development based on knowledge of the realities of the country” (83).

Given this theoretical framework, it outlined the following as the objectives of university education in Kenya:

a) to develop, advance, preserve and disseminate knowledge and to stimulate intellectual life;

b) to train and prepare high level manpower needed for development;

c) to promote cultural development and the highest ideals and values of society;

d) to provide, through research and consultancy, knowledge, skills and services to the community by helping solve problems facing the society and

e) to assist the government in achieving its planned development of higher education. (69)
The “Second University in Kenya: Report of the Presidential Working Party” of 1981, popularly known as the “Mackay Report,” on the other hand, cites the University of Nairobi Act of 1970 which outlines the objectives and functions of the university as follows:

1. To provide facilities for University education including technological and professional education and to offer facilities for research
2. To assist in the preservation, transmission and increase of knowledge while at the same time helping in the stimulation of the intellectual life and cultural development in Kenya
3. To co-operate with the Government in planning for the development of higher education. (13)

The Mackay commission used the following “philosophical framework and concept” (32) to rationalize the establishment of a second university in Kenya.\textsuperscript{11} According to the commission, universally, the “motivating force behind scholarship in universities has always been the search for truth relating to major problems of concern to the human society as well as the search for solutions to these problems” (32). It goes on to state that:

A university must also be viewed as a place where intellectualism is cultivated, a place where the training of rational men and women of good character, with creative minds and strong convictions, as well as critical reasoning abilities, is pursued, and an institution where the general culture of human society including ideas concerning the world, the universe and man is developed. It must also pay attention to those activities which makes claim on the intellectual life of society.

\textsuperscript{11} Moi University was established following the recommendations of the Mackay Report (Oketch 120)
and cultivate public awareness of its role in society. It should give the individual student a clear and conscious view of his own opinions and eloquence in expressing them. In summary then, an educated person coming out of the university should be one who has mastered specialized skills and who also seeks to know the significance of what he does… Another major function of a university is to provide professional training of the highest quality in those areas in which it is engaged… (32)

More recently, TIQET, released in 1999, identified the following to be the objectives of university education in Kenya:

a) To develop in students and scholars the ability to think independently, critically and creatively.

b) To adapt, develop, advance, preserve and disseminate knowledge and desirable values, and to stimulate intellectual life.

c) To educate and train the high level human capital needed for accelerated development through industrialization of the economy.

d) To nurture the internalization of universal knowledge, including key technological advances, with a view to harnessing these for national development.

e) To provide, through basic and applied research, knowledge, skills and services that help solve the problems facing the society.

f) To help create a society in which both merit, based on diverse talents, and equity in development are recognized and nurtured.

g) To inculcate entrepreneurial skills among the graduates, thereby enabling them create employment for themselves and for others. (174)
4.1.2. The Lecturers’ Viewpoint

To establish what Kenyan lecturers consider to be the role of university education, I asked those I interviewed the following question: *What do you consider to be your role as a teacher: to prepare students for work when they graduate, to just impart knowledge to them, to be critical thinkers, any other?* I framed the question this way, as opposed to asking them directly what they considered to be the role of university education, in order to have them relate their views on the role of the university with what they practiced. In other words, my question focused not only on how lecturers theorize the role of the university, but also how they perceive and execute their role, on praxis. I included options to the question for the purposes of clarity, otherwise, the question was meant to be open-ended.

Although the lecturers had different takes on what they considered to be their role, all of them identified teaching students to be critical thinkers as their main role. Laaju, who has been teaching Sociology in various Kenyan universities since 1987, for instance, stated that his job is “to get students acquire a culture of learning; students to be critical thinkers--to expose them to existing body of knowledge. To look critically at what they have been exposed--to always read between the lines--who wrote this? Why? The social political context--so immerse them to the knowledge but more important, apply that knowledge to solving problems.” He said he does not teach students “simply for the labor market, because it fluctuates.” However, he was quick to add: “That does not mean we don’t teach them to be relevant to the labor market. That we also teach. But, we teach beyond the labor market.”
Chems, on his part, saw his role as a teacher as incorporating all the aspects mentioned in the question. As one who teaches students training to become teachers on how to use instructional media, he felt it is his duty to produce “effective teachers who are also knowledgeable, who have the knowledge, who are able to gather more information...So in my teaching, I ensure that I give them the knowledge, but I also guide them and counsel them on how to be a good teacher.” Like Chems, John, who has been teaching Anthropology at the university since 1979, saw his role as a teacher as including all the aspects included in the question. According to him, as a teacher, “You provide facts...to lead the way, that this is the way we academics argue our points out. You then expect that the students will read more, will see more. So the role of the lecturer or the teacher is to provide the facts as a guide. He should then encourage the students to respond to those facts in a way of criticism.” Elaborating on what he meant by criticism, he stated, “But you see, sometimes criticism is misconstrued as saying something against. It is not so. Criticism can simply mean seeing more and therefore giving more examples or giving more analogies of the same thing which means that information is more generalizeable over a broader spectrum of views.” According to him, “what you do is guide them [students] into an area where they can then use that information [for themselves and] to assist other people.” Similarly, Liz, who teaches history, saw her role as that of “imparting knowledge, for them to be critical, for them to understand the environment, and for the job market.”

Unlike her colleagues who saw their role as incorporating all the three elements I included in the question--to prepare students for work, impart knowledge, and prepare
students to become critical thinkers--Jane, who teaches literature, felt her role was primarily to prepare students to become critical thinkers. As she explained:

I train people to think. I train them to stay away from dogma. I train them to think through how they have arrived at certain issues; the process of deduction. This is basically what I am doing. I always tell students that as students of literature, what the discipline is interested in half the time is character formation. It shouldn’t remain a textual experience. They should be able to fall back on their experiences as students of Literature.

4.1.3. Ex-University Students’ Viewpoint

Like I did with lecturers, I asked the former university students I interviewed what they thought about the education they received at the university; whether the focus was to prepare them for work, to impart knowledge, or to make them critical thinkers. Although most of them felt the education they received aimed at achieving all the three objectives, they had different opinions on the emphasis attached to each objective. Kim, who graduated in 1984 from Kenyatta University College, a constituent college of the University of Nairobi at that time, for example, felt that the education he received included, “a little of all that (to prepare for work, impart knowledge, critical thinker).” In his opinion, “It did trigger us to think about issues that there before were just taken for granted.” He gave the example of Philosophy of Education which encouraged critical thinking and “questioning issues.” He also noted that “There was also quite a direct emphasis on orientation towards the work situation we were being prepared for. Education was the in-thing for us registered for B. Ed--being prepared to be effective
teachers.” And, in his opinion, “Being grounded in the subjects we were to handle, for example, Literature, Linguistics, all these had to do with the knowledge aspect.”

Mzalendo, who also attended Kenyatta University College and graduated his undergraduate in 1978 and Masters from the same school in 1980, on the other hand, thought education did two things:

It prepared me to be a good worker while at the same time it prepared us to be critical thinkers because we had public lectures from people like Professor [the name is not audible on the tape] who was a philosopher, who would tell us that religion is opium of the people--Karl Marx and what have you and we liked it because we could criticize what was taken from high school to be the norm. So, I think those of us who were prepared that time--most students were critical thinkers.

On her part, Atieno, who graduated from Moi University in 1994, felt the education she received “was rather geared towards my work as a teacher.” It took me some effort to explain to her what I meant by critical thinking and eventually she expressed that remotely, some of the education she received, citing the example of Psychology, may have been directed toward making her a critical thinker. To the contrary, Beatrice, who graduated from Kenyatta University College in 1983, felt that in regard to preparing her for work, “it was a bit minimal because the only time we had what we call microteaching--that one came around Third Year and I think it was once after a while.” She felt the education she received focused more on learning: “We were taught a lot so there was a lot of imparting of knowledge.”
DRM, who graduated with a B. Ed. and Master of Philosophy from Maseno University in 1996 and 2002 respectively, made interesting observations. On one hand, he stated that the education he received had been geared toward critical thinking. But, he wondered “whether that was a conscious policy at undergraduate level.” As he pointed out,

At the undergraduate level, in some courses in Literature, it was possible for some lecturers to invite you to critically respond to some of the material they were giving you. But in most, say in education and so on, the emphasis was hey, this is how you are supposed to teach and this is how it’s done. No invitation for creativity. No time to reflect really on what you are doing. So, you receive knowledge and hopefully through one or two teaching practices go and teach that knowledge.

In a follow-up question, I asked him what he thought about that kind of education he had received to which he replied:

Real university education should aim at--and if you think that one of them is to create learners with an ability to critically think, to solve problems, all of those objectives … I don’t think they were achieved consciously. For me, there was no indication that the programs and the interactions had that deliberate and conscious effort to match the goal of a critical thinker.

4.1.4. Summary

After analyzing the data collected from these three stakeholders, I made several observations. But, for the purposes of this dissertation, I will emphasize four themes that
recur in most of these sources. These are: functional literacy, dissemination of knowledge/ intellectualism, critical thinking/creativity, and equity. Not only do these four themes recur in the data I collected, they also have a bearing on discourse patterns in the universities, which is the focus of this dissertation.

4.1.4.1. Functional Literacy

It is evident from the objectives of education the various commissions and task forces recommended that the policy makers emphasized the role of higher education to prepare manpower for national development. Actually, the “Gachathi Report” underscores this objective by stating, “The development of the skills and knowledge of the people of a nation constitutes one of the highest social factors in relation to national development. It is the human resources of a nation which determine the character and pace of its social and economic development” (13). And in pursuit of this goal, David Macharia observes that on independence, “Kenya decided to adopt the functional literacy approach” (26).

That Kenya adopted a functional approach to literacy can be justified by the fact that few Kenyans had attained higher education by the time the country attained independence, as I pointed out in Chapter Three. Actually, the “Gachathi Report” states, “At independence there were severe shortages of skilled manpower.” But, the same report is quick to point out that, “these were largely met by the early 1970s through a major expansion of education” (13). I agree with the Mackay Report’s proposition that universally, higher education is expected to supply manpower requirements for all sectors of life in any given society--be they social, political, or economic. However, as I pointed
out in Chapter One, emphasis on functional literacy can as well be politically motivated to mask hegemonic forces in literacy and also to impede other paradigms of literacy, especially critical literacy which advocates empowerment of students to counter hegemonies of dominant groups. I will explore further the political agenda behind emphasis on functional literacy in postcolonial Kenya in Chapter Six as I discuss my findings.

4.1.4.2. Dissemination of Knowledge

From the data I collected, it is evident that policy makers, lecturers, and former university students coincide that dissemination of knowledge is a major objective of university education. At the policy level, the commissions and task forces have emphasized the need for universities to produce intellectuals. In fact, Daniel Arap Moi himself, the second president of Kenya whose regime lasted 24 years (between 1978 and 2002) articulates in his book, *Kenya African Nationalism: Nyayo Philosophy and Principles* the need for universities to produce intellectuals. He argues that “intellectuals are one of the country’s major resources. Their contribution to society should never be squandered” (127).

However, there seem to be a disconnect between policy and practice; between theory and praxis. On one hand, as Moi puts it, “a true and constructive intellectual is one who is critically aware of the characteristics of his environment, of the needs of his fellow-man, and of the necessity for resolving the issues which influence human relations in all ways, including the economy and public administration, peace and stability” (126). Moi decries what he calls “Ostrichism and intellectual cowardice” whereby, “for reasons
of survival, both the academic and administrative staff are apt to develop a self protective mechanism--the safety of silence, a consuming ostrichism.” Consequently, as he puts it, “the professors, especially, become recluses, buried in their books, libraries or laboratories, instead of providing the academic and intellectual leadership for which they were employed” (132). The “Mackay Report” also underscores the role of the university as a “place where intellectualism is cultivated, a place where the training of rational men and women of good character, with creative minds and strong convictions, as well as critical reasoning abilities, is pursued…” (32). Yet, as will be addressed in greater detail later in this chapter when I address discourse patterns and rhetorics used by the ruling elite to sustain those patterns, the Establishment worked in concert with university administration to stifle the same creativity and “critical reasoning” that universities are supposed to promote. As Ochuoga otunje observes, in a newspaper article, “The current state of state universities is anything but academic friendly. They kill intellectual enthusiasm and breed disillusionment. They numb creativity and resourcefulness” (5). Likewise, it is questionable that the pedagogies lecturers employed and the resulting classroom dynamics, as will be addressed later in this chapter, would produce the kind of intellectuals the lecturers envisioned in the description of their role as university teachers.

4.1.4.3. Critical Thinking

All the participants--lecturers and former students, and also the commissions, especially the TIQET and Mackay reports, envisioned universities as places where students are trained to be critical thinkers, to be creative, and to be problem solvers. However, I was surprised by the different ways the participants conceived critical
thinking; the divergent views on what it means to be a critical thinker or what critical thinking entails. Overall, it appears to me that most of these participants and policy makers view critical thinking from a purely academic perspective; the idea of students deciphering different viewpoints on academic issues, an approach that de-links intellectualism and critical thinking from socio-political issues. Consequently, as will be made clear in the next section, attempts by lecturers and students to engage in political discourse has been countered with repressive measures. Definitely, this view of critical thinking, one that depoliticizes or decontextualizes literacy, is different from the position I have adopted in this dissertation; a critical literacy approach that empowers teachers and learners to liberate themselves from the “oppression” of the ruling class. Thus, as will be explored further in Chapter Seven, efforts to decolonize literacy would have to re-define ideologically what constitutes critical thinking and critical literacy.

4.1.4.4. Equity

This theme was more recurrent among the commissions and task forces’ reports. However, one of the participants, Laaju, observed that one way of viewing the connection between education and politics, one of the questions for lecturers on the structured interview, is by examining who gets access to education. He stated that “Education is meant to allocate people into social levels,” and that “You have to ask yourself who comes to the university.” He said he had done a study and found out that “in the mid 60s and early 70s, peasants had access to university education,” but that by 1996 trend analysis revealed those who joined the university were mainly from the middle and upper class. The difference between Laaju’s take on inequalities in education and that of policy
makers is that the former attributes inequalities in education to economic and political reasons whereas the latter attribute the same to gender and geographical factors.

TIQET, for example, noted that Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL) have fewer schools, especially secondary schools, compared to other regions (74). With regard to university education, the commission observed that female students were disadvantaged when it came to accessing higher education. According to the commission, on the average, the gender ratio is 30:70 in favor of male students. Similarly, of the small number of female students in the local universities the number of women from the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) is even smaller… A further major problem is that there are markedly lower proportions of women in such highly competitive courses as medicine, engineering and architecture, as compared to humanities and social sciences. (184)

To remedy the situation, the commission recommended “some affirmative actions towards improving accessibility of university education for these two groups” be initiated by universities (184).

I grew up in a rural neighborhood in Kenya and went to a local primary school. The school had minimum facilities yet some of us made it to prominent high schools. Actually, although some of my schoolmates at St. Patrick’s high school, Iten came from prestigious boarding primary schools, and these were very few by then, most of us came from ordinary public primary schools. Even at the university, most of my schoolmates came from ordinary public high schools. In fact, most of the participants I interviewed went to this kind of schools, the ordinary high schools.
However, the situation had changed by the time I went to teach, in the mid-nineties. I taught in one of the most prestigious schools in Kenya, Mangu High School, and in my seven years teaching experience I observed that a large proportion of the students who joined the school came from private primary schools, the academies, mostly from well-off families. As a matter of fact, access to education has become a hotly debated issue in Kenya of late. On one hand, there are those who argue that the emergence of private academies, with better facilities compared with public schools, gives students in these academies an edge over their counterparts in public schools. Since selection to top high schools in the country is pegged on the score a child gets in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE), the argument has always been that selection to these prestigious schools is never done on a level-playground.

Spearheading this argument is Kilemi Mwiria, an educationist who formerly taught at Kenyatta University before going to exile for his association with the University Academic Staff Union (UASU) which Moi’s government refused to register. Mwiria returned to the country when the political atmosphere in the country changed, in the late nineties, and is now a Member of Parliament and Assistant Minister for Education. Mwiria has written several newspaper articles and his overarching argument has been that although academies lead in national examinations, those who are enrolled in them represent a minority of the Kenyan population--children of a few rich Kenyans. Furthermore, he is of the view that students from these schools score highly in examinations not because they are academically better than those in public schools but because they have better facilities.
In view of these two factors, Mwiria argues that private schools should be given a quota when it comes to selection of students to join National Schools so that students from public schools, who are the majority, are not disadvantaged simply because they come from a poor background. For instance, he states that although in the 1960s, “many poor children could, through merit, make the leap from a rural primary school to a top national school and eventually to a university” (“Our Education System Favors the Rich”), “a tradition has now been set that the greater majority of the top performing students in the Kenya Certificate Primary of Education examination come from private academies. Of the top 100 schools in last year’s KCPE [2003], for instance, 43 were private schools. In fact, private schools took the top 31 slots.” He adds, “The disadvantaged position of public schools can best be appreciated if one recognizes that private primary schools do not enroll more than 10 percent of the total national primary school population.” He claims that “over all, then, it could be argued and in fact demonstrated, that KCPE results are deceptive. The problem is compounded by the fact that schools whose students are judged to be some of the best in the country become more expensive with every announcement of such results, and of course more elitist and exclusive” (“Results from Academies are Deceptive”). In his opinion, “Children in private schools perform so well in KCPE mainly because they can buy expensive education. They have the best teachers and learning and teaching facilities…The examination is far from a level playing field” (“School System to blame…”). Advocating the quota system, he argues that private schools should compete for available places among themselves because, as he puts it, “Oranges can only be compared with oranges not bananas” (“Secondary School Admissions…”).
On the other hand, there is a camp that counters calls to introduce quotas for students from private schools. Daniel Gachukia, the Chairman of the Kenya Private Schools Owners Association and who also owns private schools, contends that Mwiria’s argument to introduce a quota system “was guided by populism” and that “Fortunately, nobody has been able to convince the policy makers why the Government should discriminate against citizens who are tax-payers when it comes to admitting their children to public schools.” According to Gachukia, “Admission to public high schools and other institutions of learning must continue to be based on the stated qualifications [read merit], which should apply to all citizens without discrimination.” To underscore his displeasure with Mwiria’s position, he states: “with this kind of logic, many of us are surprised that Dr. Mwiria continues to hold the position of assistant minister in the ministry of education” (Emphasis added).

Also opposed to the quota system is Simon Gicharu, the Board Chairman of the Thika Institute of Technology. According to Gicharu, “If Education Assistant Minister Kilemi Mwiria had his way, most bright candidates who sit the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examinations from private schools would not merit places in national schools. He wants them locked out by a segregative quota system” [Emphasis added]. Although Gicharu acknowledges the differences in facilities between public and private schools, he argues, “those who afford the fees should not be punished by restricting the admission of their high performing children to national schools.”

This exchange is telling in many ways. To begin with it validates Gee’s argument that every approach to literacy “incorporates a tacit or overt ideological theory” (27). Evidently, both camps are addressing the issue of equity but they have contradicting
views on the concept; views that are predetermined by their ideological stances.
Secondly, it is also interesting to note that in rejoicing because policy makers have no
problem with the status quo, Gachukia seems to downplay Mwiria’s role in government.
If Mwiria, the Assistant Minister of Education, is not part of the policy makers Gachukia
is referring to, then who are the policy makers? Thirdly, the exchange reveals the
ideology behind the whole notion of merit. This ideology is premised on the proposition
that literacy is neutral and, therefore, can transparently be measured through test scores,
an ideology that masks the actual political forces behind those scores. Thus, according to
Gachukia and Gicharu, introducing a quota system would discriminate against children
from rich families yet, to them, blocking admission to children who could not score high
marks because their parents could not afford exorbitant fees charged by academies is not
discrimination; it is merit. The two cannot accommodate the argument that, as Mwiria
puts it and a position I support, “Merit and privilege are two very different things”
(“Secondary School Admissions…”)

Thus, even though equity does not seem directly connected with discourse
patterns in higher education, it is relevant to this dissertation at the theoretical level since
it illustrates the overarching premise of this dissertation--that literacy is hegemonic.
Secondly, it reveals how discourses perpetuate themselves. The trend Mwiria and others
in his camp fear is the emergence of a new elite class; a class constituting the upper and
middle classes who can afford to buy education at the expense of the poor. Such a trend
would perpetuate the marginalization of the poor by ensuring they are locked out of what
Gee refers to as “secondary Discourses” which to him constitute literacy (Gee 1990 153;
1991 8). As Mwiria points out, “This social class advantage will be reproduced for
generations to come, making education a catalyst for class differences. If you are from a poor family or a remote region of the country, your fate is determined even before you are born” (“School System to Blame…”). Thus, the objective of achieving equity in the provision of literacy and making literacy an equalizer as perceived by the educational commissions and task forces will remain a mirage so long as the literacy system continues to marginalize the poor and disadvantaged geographical regions.

I have dwelt more on the political and economic factor with regard to equity because, as I pointed out earlier, gender and geographical inequalities have been addressed by various commissions and task forces and, in fact, some affirmative action has been introduced at the university. According to Peter Mwaura, “Over the last five years hundreds of girls have been admitted to public universities through affirmative action. The Joint Admissions Board (JAB) publicly articulated the policy in December 2000 when it admitted 300 more girls, after lowering the cut-off point for women” (“Affirmative Action…”). I am not in any way suggesting that the affirmative initiative has solved gender disparities in the provision of higher education. But, owing to the scope of this study, I leave the issue for future researchers to investigate.

Thus far, it is evident that although there is some consensus among policy makers, lecturers, and students on the role of the university, there are differences too. Furthermore, there is an inherent contradiction between theory and praxis, especially when it comes to the issue of intellectualism, creativity, and critical thinking. These contradictions, as the next section will reveal, are significant for they have a bearing on the discourse patterns experienced in universities and the rhetorics that sustained these patterns.
4.2. Discourse Patterns in the Wider Society and Wider University Settings.

To investigate discourse patterns in postcolonial Kenyan universities, I used Foucault and Lankshear and McLaren’s theories of discourse, similar to what I did in Chapter Three when investigating discourse patterns in Kenya’s higher education during the colonial period. Within this theoretical framework, I was interested with not only the nature of discourse patterns in Kenyan universities, but also how politics influenced and shaped these patterns. As I was analyzing the data I collected, it became clear to me there is a close connection between discourse practice in the universities and what was happening outside the university, in the wider society. Consequently, as I did in Chapter Three, I analyzed discourse patterns in the postcolonial Kenyan universities in three levels: wider society, the larger university setting, and the classroom level. However, I would like to point out that although I address discourse patterns in these three layers, it is hard to demarcate where one begins and ends. Nevertheless, this overlap is significant for it demonstrates how politics permeate all the three layers to shape and influence discourse patterns in Kenyan universities. As I pointed out earlier in this chapter, I will address the first two layers: the wider society and the wider university settings in this chapter, and classroom dynamics in the next.

4.2.1. The Wider Society

Although the interview questions (see appendix A and B) focused mainly on discourse patterns in universities, based on the responses I obtained from the participants,
which I supplemented with information I gathered from other sources, I was able to extrapolate discourse patterns within the wider society.

4.2.1.1. Kenyatta’s Regime (1963-1978)

Most of the participants who went to the university in the 1970s observed there was more political tolerance during Kenyatta’s regime than during Moi’s. Laaju, for instance, stated that “Soon after independence, there was a huge atmosphere of tolerance by the political establishment.” But he noted that things started to change between 1969 and 1970 following the assassination of Tom Mboya. That after the incident, the country drifted into “one-party state.” As he put it,

the regime is trying to survive and we begin to get a bit of intolerance. But it gets worse particularly towards the end of Kenyatta’s regime and so there is the second republic of president Moi--Moi gets in so the intolerance continues even in a faster pace…The regime worrying how to survive, we begin to get intolerance and therefore the academic atmosphere within the universities begin to change--all the way to 1991 when now we have Section 2A of the constitution changed so that we can now be a multi-party state… The coup of 1982 led to greater intolerance for the next 10 years.

Laaju’s observation that Kenyatta’s regime was more tolerant to dissenting views compared with Moi’s is corroborated by historians and political scientists. For instance, Macharia Munene, a political scientist, states in “African Intellectuals in Hostile Media Environment” that “Under Kenyatta, intellectuals were relatively free from government
restrictions but the situation changed in the 1970s as Kenyatta’s autocracy intensified” (7). Similarly, David Throup and Charles Hornsby have observed that,

Although Kenyatta’s Kenya was undoubtedly an authoritarian single-party state, political life remained remarkably open and its press comparatively free by African standards…The single-party state under Kenyatta remained relatively willing to incorporate dissent, responsive to criticism and capable of dealing with local discontent and the rise of new leaders…Academics at the University of Nairobi [University of Nairobi was the only university in Kenya during Kenyatta’s regime] enjoyed a false freedom to criticise the regime in lectures and in the national press, so long as they expressed their doubts in English rather than in one of Kenya’s vernacular languages. (15)

Another important revelation from Laaju’s reflections is that even though Kenyatta’s regime has been characterized as being relatively tolerant, that does not mean his government did not suppress discourse. As Laaju points out, the assassination of Mboya and the widespread discontent it sparked led Kenyatta to silence dissent. In line with Laaju’s observation, Throup and Hornsby recount the effects of the assassination of J. M. Kariuki 12 on the political atmosphere and discourse patterns in the country. According to these authors,

the murder shattered the relatively benign image that the government had fostered for the past six years [following the assassination of Mboya]. Nairobi University students rioted in the streets of the capital and the regime’s reputation was

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12 J.M. Kariuki was one of the prominent politicians in Kenya. An ex-Mau Mau leader, Kenyatta appointed him as Assistant Minister after independence but he soon fell out with the government for identifying with the poor. He was assassinated in mysterious circumstances in 1975 and his death sparked national uproar with fingers pointing to the government of Kenyatta (Throup and Hornsby 19).
severely damaged….Kariuki’s murder and the protests it provoked also brought about a dramatic change in the regime’s treatment of its critics. The media, academics and dissident backbenchers suddenly found that they had much less freedom to manoeuvre as the regime clamped down on criticism…In Kenyatta’s own words, MPs would toe the line, or he would crush them ‘like a hawk among the chickens…Within two years of Kariuki’s death, Martin Shikuku, Seroney and George Anyona were detained without trial for criticising the ruling party… (20)

In fact, according to Amutabi, the “fairly democratic political and socio-economic structure” the KANU government had inherited in 1963 when the country became independent began to erode as KANU embarked on a policy to annihilate opposition parties, beginning with KADU that dissolved itself soon after independence. This was followed by KPU, formed in 1966 by Oginga Odinga who resigned as Vice-President following a fall-out between him and Kenyatta. The party was immediately “proscribed and its leaders summarily detained, including Odinga himself” (128). As Amutabi, quoting Karimi and Ochieng’, puts it:

Many political killings, detentions and incarceration of many government critics followed. Kenyatta’s nemesis and fellow freedom fighter Kung’u Karumba disappeared without trace. Cabinet Ministers Tom Mboya, Ronald Ngala, Pio Gama Pinto, Bruce Mackenzie, and Nyandarua North Member of Parliament Josiah Mwangi Kariuki (popularly known as JM) were killed in suspicious circumstances. (129)

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13 Oginga Odinga was a veteran freedom fighter. Kenyatta appointed him as his first Vice-President but he resigned and formed his own party, KPU, which was aligned with the left. He remained steadfast in his campaign for multiparty politics even during Moi’s regime (Throup and Hornsby 12, 13, 69-71).
He adds, “Many coercive structures were created including the ‘Special Branch’ of the Kenya Police to spy on government critics; and the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU) to quash riots and demonstrations” (129).

Finally, Laaju’s reflections, reinforced by those of scholars cited above, reveal the connection between the prevailing political atmosphere and discourse patterns. Evidently, Kenyatta condoned criticism only to a certain level. When he felt vulnerable, such as the political tension that followed the assassination of Mboya and JM, and earlier in his regime the formation of a left wing political party by Odinga, his regime resorted to silencing critics to ensure political survival.


All the participants I interviewed were unanimous that political intolerance was most pronounced during Moi’s regime. In addition, most of them attributed Moi’s crackdown on critics to the attempted coup of 198214, again underscoring the connection between discourse practice and the political atmosphere in the country. To illustrate the impact of the attempted coup on discourse patterns in the country, I remember following the coup, the local Assistant Chief came to arrest my father claiming there were people who had gathered in his small shop to celebrate the coup. The claim was funny because my father had been in Church and the shop closed when the alleged gathering was supposed to have taken place; furthermore he had nothing to do with the coup or any political agenda. All the same, he recorded a statement at a local police station and the charge was later dropped.

14 A section of the Air Force attempted to overthrow Moi’s government on 1 August 1982. However, the coup d’état was thwarted by loyal solders (Throup and Hornsby 31).
According to Throup and Hornsby, “The coup attempt transformed Kenya’s political scene” (31). These authors describe in great details how Moi re-organized his government, cracking down on anybody perceived to be an enemy of the regime. Alongside re-organizing the government, many people were jailed or detained after being accused of belonging to clandestine and subversive movements, especially Mwakenya, or possessing seditious publications, mainly Mpatanishi and Pambana. According to “Jail and Detentions on Security Matters,” a newspaper article, by April 11, 1986, “seven people [had] been jailed in connection with the organization, while one of the two people detained recently [had] also been implicated in court” (4). More other people were later arrested and detained for allegedly associating with the movement or possession of seditious materials. Although most of those detained were university lecturers, such as Mukaru Ng’ang’a, Willy Mutunga, Maina wa Kinyatti, Katama Mkangi, Kamonji Wachira, Edward Oyugi, Amin Mazrui and university students such as C.A Onyango, Gacheche wa Miano, Morris Adongo, the victims included people from other spheres of life–politicians such as George Anyona and Koigi Wamwere, and lawyers such as John Khaminwa (“Jail and Detentions…”; “Moi Hits Again…,”; “Gethi in Custody…”).

4.2.2. The Wider University Setting

In this section, my focus is on discourse practice in the precincts of the university. It addresses intellectual freedom among the university community within the university, and how ideologies of the various postcolonial regimes impacted and shaped these discourse patterns.
4.2.2.1. Kenyatta’s Regime

One of the questions I had for all participants--lecturers and former university students was to describe their experience as students at the university. Laaju described his experience at the University of Nairobi in the early 1970’s (he graduated as an undergraduate in 1971 and MA in 1973), as “an exciting period--a lot of vibrancy in academia--a lot of public lectures from eminent scholars.” He went on to say, “so you find an atmosphere that was very academically charged, very academically inspiring.” Mzalendo concurred with Laaju there was relatively more space during Kenyatta’s regime for the university community to exercise their intellectual freedom. He stated, “There was academic freedom in as far as you didn’t go direct to criticize the government of the day.” And when I asked him (Mzalendo) to compare the state of academic freedom over the years, he stated: “I think in the 80’s it became worse because students would not be allowed to riot. If you went on riot the police were called. The goodness of the system in the 1970’s and the Kenyatta regime was that Kenyatta would give students time to express and to release their tension through riot….” Furthermore, he observed that lecturers could criticize the system; for example they criticized the death of Tom Mboya and J.M. Kariuki on the basis that “it was not good to go for people and take lives just because they are thinking differently from what the government wanted.” But, he qualified that this tolerance was limited, as much as it did not threaten the status quo.

Although Kenyatta’s regime was relatively tolerant, it does not mean his government did not suppress discourse. His government detained several intellectuals such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Abdilatif Abdalla. And according to an article that appeared in The Kenya Teacher journal, titled, “Student Demand Curriculum and

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15 Abdilatif Abdalla was detained by Kenyatta for alleged political activities (‘Abdilatif Abdalla…”)
Examination Reform-But Kenya Government Bans Nairobi University Students’ Union

Until Students “Grow Up,” Kenyatta’s government banned the students’ organization, the Student Union of Nairobi University (SUNU) on the grounds that “the student organization represented a danger to the government.” According to the article, the ban was occasioned by a call from “SUNU activists” who urged students to “support the union in its efforts to gain more academic freedom and fight for the students’ interests.” The organization led a campus demonstration where students shouted their demands for curriculum and examination reforms, participation in all decisions affecting student welfare, and improved living conditions on campus. Police were called in to ‘restore order,’” and following the incident, “the editors of SUNU weekly, University Platform, were expelled from the university because of articles which the authorities claimed were highly critical of both the Government and university administration” (12).

4.2.2.2. Moi’s Regime

In reference to intellectual freedom during Moi’s regime, Chems observed that there was a lot of victimization of university lecturers. According to him, “If you held views that were contrary to the regime, then, a lot of university lecturers found themselves either in cells, or they had to seek asylum outside the country.” He cited Maina wa Kinyatti, Edward Oyugi (who were his lecturers), and Micere Mugo and Ngugi Wa Thiong’o as examples of lecturers who were victimized for criticizing the government. Jane had similar views, that it was difficult for one to express dissent views during Moi’s regime. She gave the following illustration: “I remember like when Robert Ouko died, in February 1990. We couldn’t even as colleagues discuss it in an office like
Jane’s observation reveals pertinent issues with regard to discourse patterns in postcolonial Kenya. Most important, it reveals the magnitude of suppression of discourse and the fear and intimidation that the university community had to endure during Moi’s regime. Furthermore, her observation demonstrates vividly how suppression of discourse permeated the three layers: the wider society, the university setting, and the classroom. She illustrates how difficult it has been for lecturers to engage in critical discourse in the classroom, the same way it was difficult in the corridors of the university, or on a street in the wider society. In addition, her observation exposes how difficult it has been for Kenyan teachers to implement critical pedagogy since engaging in critical discourse would land lecturers and students into trouble with the establishment.

Like Laaju, Jane’s observation also illustrates how discourse patterns in Kenya have been shaped by the prevailing political atmosphere. In this case, Moi’s regime was vulnerable following Ouko’s assassination and the national protests it generated, thus, the need to crack down on critics to ensure political survival. This is the same strategy he had employed in 1982 after the attempted coup, as well as Kenyatta after the assassinations of Mboya and JM.

Jane’s ordeal in her role as an official of the University Academic Staff Union (UASU) is another example of how politics interfered with freedom of expression at the university. She stated that in 1993, when they “mooted,” to use her term, the idea of UASU, “the university administration acted very harshly. I personally was sacked but it
wasn’t because of anything I had said in a lecture but because of things I had expressed in staff meetings and because I was an official of what we were going to form as UASU.” Even after being reinstated, there were still other ramifications. For instance, as she explained, the university administration would be reluctant to give her research funding or opportunities for promotion owing to her role in UASU. When I asked her whether it was the university administration or the government that was cracking down on those who supported UASU, she replied:

   Both, of course. The local administration was, of course, very threatened by the idea of UASU and they were not going to tolerate it. And they necessarily reported it to the authorities e.g. the Ministry of Education as a bad thing that should be contained and, of course, the position of the government was that we were going to form a political party using the excuse of an academic staff union. So, yes, it was a tool. At the end of the day, the directive to sack the officials came from the PS [Permanent Secretary], Ministry of Education.

Actually, as Jane had observed, the forces behind the killing of UASU transcended university administration. According to “Moi Says no to Varsity Union,” a newspaper article, Moi intervened directly and ruled out the formation of UASU. Instead, he directed the Vice-Chancellors to allow lecturers to form “staff welfare associations” arguing that “formation of trade unions to cater for academic staff would result in lowering esteem of the country’s universities.” He also invoked the issue of discipline, that a “high degree of discipline must be maintained in the country’s institutions and regulations governing such institutions must be strictly observed” (3). Consequently, as Othello Gruduah reports in “Varsities’ Union Officials Released,” a newspaper article, the union leaders--Adar
Korwa of the University of Nairobi, Kilemi Mwiria of Kenyatta University, J. N. Odhiambo of Moi University, and Airo Akodhe of Egerton University--were arrested. Gruduah quotes Onyango, the Deputy Secretary General of UASU, who stated that Adar, Mwiria, and Odhiambo were charged with “being in a restricted area illegally,” while Akodhe was charged with “incitement to violence” (3). Thus, in the context of this relationship between the university administration and the state that Jane described, those perceived to be enemies of the state automatically became enemies of the university and probably vice versa.

Kenyatta and Moi’s purge of critics at the university level did not just target lectures but also students. Most ex-university students I interviewed explained that they did not have avenues to express themselves except through student organizations and through student leaders. I concur with these sentiments because I remember during my days as a student at the university, students met in what were referred to as Kamukunjis. These were meetings called by student leaders where the leaders addressed students’ grievances or government policies students’ were opposed to. Although other students were free to express their views on issues during these meetings, it was mainly the student leaders who were at the forefront. As a result, many of them ended up in jail for the radical stances they took on socio-political issues and matters affecting students at the university.

To further illustrate how university administrations played a role in censoring discourse among students, Andrew Teyie reports in a newspaper article, “Eshiwani Under Fire from Students Forum,” how student leaders from all Kenyan universities who had gathered to launch the Kenya Universities Students Forum in 2000 used the forum to criticize Professor George Eshiwani, then Vice-Chancellor of Kenyatta University, for
turning the university to what they referred to as a “police state.” In their press statement, they stated: “As we speak now, there are 13 students whose fate hangs into the balance. They have been expelled from the campus. It is here that intimidation runs deep and suspicion is high.” They also accused him of interfering with the elections of student leaders at the university by issuing regulations they described as being “draconian” (3). Thus, it was not just the political establishment that suppressed discourse; university administrators had their own machinations. Furthermore, the suppression of discourse at the university level was not targeted lecturers only but also students. This reality is important because it justifies the need to include students when addressing intellectual freedom at the university, something most Kenyan scholars have overlooked.

Sheila Wambui, in her newspaper article, “The Purge of Critical Academics Continues,” highlights a Human Rights report on academic freedom that demonstrates vividly how both Kenyatta and Moi’s governments suppressed discourse in Kenyan universities. Some of the incidents the report highlights include:

- 1972: The University of Nairobi students Newspaper, the *University Platform*, is banned after “criticizing the ruling party Kanu and police brutalities.” The editors were arrested.

- 1978: Detention of Ngugi wa Thiong’o “after establishing a theatre group that performed a play attacking the Government policies in his village at Kamirithu, Kiambu District.”

- “Harassment of students and staff increased and all public speeches were censored and police informers flooded the university.”
• 1987: The Nairobi University Student Organisation (SONU) was banned and Buke, the chairman, jailed for five years after a confrontation between SONU officials and the government following the government’s refusal to issue them with passports “to participate in an international students conference in Cuba.”

• In 1980, the Academic Staff Union was banned and senior government officials called for “screening” of organizations.

• 1982: Several staff members were arrested and detained without trial for allegedly “teaching subversive literature aimed at creating disorder in the country.” They included Willy Mutunga, Edward Oyugi, Alamin Mazrui, Kamonji Wachira, and Mukaru Nga’ng’a.

• After the 1982 coup attempt, “Tito Adungosi, the Chairman of the Students Organisation of Nairobi University (SONU), was jailed for 10 years after a sedition charge… He died in prison in December 1988 under mysterious circumstances…Other 67 students were held in custody between August 1982 and early 1983 while six others were jailed for sedition.”

• 1985: “19 students were arrested, tortured and jailed in connection with a peaceful protest over the unexplained expulsions of several students…These included past SONU chairman, Mr Mwandawiro Mghanga, Gupta Ng’a ng’a Thiong’o, Gacheche Wa Miano, Philip Tirop arap Kitur, Karimi Nduthu, Odera Okumu and Atanasio Ondieki.”

• Armed riot police beat up students at a prayer meeting. One student died and 65 others were injured.
• “The Mwakenya saga of 1986 to 1988, resulted in the detention or jailing of many students like Gacheche wa Miano, Gupta Ng’ang’a Thiong’o, James Opiata, Mwandawiro Mghanga…Other jailed students were Wanderi Muthigani, Philip Tirop, Karimi Nduthu,, George Oduor Ogwen, David Njuguna Mutonyi, and David Murathe.

• “Critical lecturers like Ngotho Kariuki, Kariuki Gathitu, Katama Makangi, and Gibson Kamau Kuria were persecuted and later detained.” (15)

Another way that Moi’s regime interfered with intellectual freedom at the university was by influencing what was taught. Jane observed that as far as she was concerned the “mess” in the education system is partly because of political interference with the curriculum. For example, she stated that somebody (the president) “would stand on a platform and wonder why you are not teaching Shakespeare and you see Shakespeare coming back to the syllabus regardless the kind of structures that have been put in place by the relevant authorities.” To corroborate the fact that the establishment interfered with what was taught at the university, members of the ruling elite discouraged teaching of Marxism in Kenyan institutions. According to Moi, “ideologies like Marxism were evolved due to conditions prevailing at that time and at the places where they were hatched.” In his view, “our country does not need such ideologies…” (“Our Priority...”) In his opinion, “Kenya’s ideology must be based on African traditions and not be confused with theories which were not compatible with the people’s aspirations.”

Elsewhere, in an article that appeared in the Weekly Review titled “Take Over Order: Govt. to Select Textbooks,” the president is quoted criticizing the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) for not “discharging its secondary school textbook selection function
properly” and because of that loophole, the government was going to take over KIE’s role. In response to the presidential decree, John Kamotho, who was the Minister of Education at that time, declared that in future, his ministry would “exercise all the power at (its) disposal” to control the content of literature taught in Kenyan schools so as “to control and curb any ideologies which may find their way into the secondary education system” (7-9).

Evidently, both regimes targeted the university community and university education as a strategy to silence critics and, thus, maintain the status quo. The crackdown on critical lecturers and students, especially during Moi’s regime, had far reaching consequences on the discourse patterns at all levels. To begin with, most radical scholars such as Ngugi wa Thion’go, Micere Mugo, Alamin Mazrui, and Ali Mazrui went to exile and most of them are currently teaching in the US or Britain. Another effect was that most scholars who remained were forced to toe the line. As a result, a culture of sycophancy was entrenched among intellectuals as they sought to appease the establishment, or just to be safe.

In essence, the atmosphere at the universities and the society in general was akin to the “Big Brother” society George Orwell depicts in his novel, 1984. In this satire of a totalitarian political establishment, Orwell describes the level of discourse censorship as follows: “On each landing, opposite the lift shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran” (5). The imagery of the Big Brother captures quite well the way Moi’s system worked because with Special Branch informers infiltrating every possible sphere
of life, people felt they were always being watched—be it in classrooms, in the corridors of the university, or in the wider society. Consequently, as Laaju put it, “people [everywhere] mistrusted even their own shadows.”

4.2.2.3. Kibaki’s Regime (2002 To-date)

Although I did not include in my interviews people who have attended the university during Kibaki’s regime, as I pointed out in Chapter Two, I was able to extrapolate useful information about discourse practice during the current regime from the lecturers’ responses to the question that asked them to compare the level of intellectual freedom currently with what they had experienced before.

Almost all the participants I interviewed were unanimous that there is more democratic space now in the universities than ever before. According to Laaju, “since the elections of 2002, the Kibaki regime, one of its biggest profits is that people can now talk, talk freely which is experienced even at the university.” John, Chems, and Liz expressed similar views; that the NARC government has opened up democratic space in universities. On the same subject, Jane expressed her view as follows: “I think we have so much freedom of expression right now, one may say too much. So it doesn’t matter whether you said it in a lecture theater or you say it in a newspaper, or you say it in a radio. The fact is that you have the space to say it.” Thus, as Jane observes, the opening up of democratic space during Kibaki’s regime cuts across the three layers: the wider society (radio or newspapers), the wider university setting, and the classroom (Lecture Theater). This finding is important because it illustrates the interwoven nature of the three layers of discourse and how politics plays out in shaping discourse patterns.
Although all the lecturers expressed that democratic space has opened dramatically in the country during Kibaki’s regime, I was intrigued by Laaju’s observation that lecturers have not seized the opportunity to engage in critical discourse within the university and the classroom settings. As he pointed out, “some lecturers are still haunted by the past.” Based on what I observed while I was in Kenya doing my research and also through my daily reading of Kenyan newspapers on the Internet, mainly the *Daily Nation* and the *East African Standard*, there are positive things happening in the Kenyan Universities as part of the reforms implemented by the new regime. For example, universities now have Chancellors other than the president (during Kenyatta and Moi’s regimes the president was the Chancellor of public universities); Vice-chancellors being hired through an open and competitive process—a process that paved way for the hiring of the first woman Vice-Chancellor of a public university, Professor Olive Mugenda of Kenyan university; senior administrative positions such as Deans being filled through open elections. Actually, I had difficulty scheduling interview appointments with lecturers at Moi University because they were busy electing Deans. All the same, I was enthralled by their excitement and joy of having a say in who becomes their leader.

In spite of these reforms, what troubles me is that whereas other sectors such as the media, the clergy, politicians, and the civil society have seized the moment and are engaged in critical discourse, the university community does not seem to be doing the same. Discourse practice in the university has not changed much. The university is yet to become “vibrant,” to use Laaju’s term, in spite of the democratic space now available. Indeed, this is what prompted me to do this research: To address why the new political
order, the *new wineskin*, has not produced a new order in the realm of literacy and how this *new wine*, a new order in the realm of literacy, could be achieved. These are issues I will explore further in Chapter Seven as I address strategies to decolonize literacy.

4.3. Rhetoric

This section addresses the kinds of rhetoric the ruling elite employed to propagate, justify, and perpetuate the discourse patterns I have already highlighted in the preceding section. Newspapers and Daniel Moi’s book, *Kenya African Nationalism: Nyayo Philosophy and Principles*, were my main sources of data for this theme.

In his book, Moi argues that an intellectual “acts as a catalyst for changes, some of which (if not controlled) can lead to chaos and disorder. In other words, an intellectual is a resource, and intellectualism is a force. However, like all other resources and forces, without proper control and management, intellectuals and intellectualism can take the country astray” (126). He adds:

Realising, therefore, the significance of intellectualism to national life, we should aim to guide the intellectual growth of the youth, because they are developing toward attainment of academic adulthood, through which some will become *true (or false) intellectuals*. They should appreciate what a true intellectual is, and his role in our society. This way, they should be able to distinguish between *a subversive self-seeker and a constructive nation-builder*” (127) (Emphasis added).

In addition, Moi despises intellectuals who “may decide to acquire leadership by violence. They forget the art and power of speech and dialogue. They even ignore the fact that in every facet of life in Kenya there is leadership, which may only be changed
democratically, by power of reason and persuasion or by laid-down and known machinery and process…” (128). He admonishes university students to “identify the true and evolving intellectuals; differentiate the true from the false, the constructive from the perverse; and evolve with the time, in order to remain realistic and positive intellectual resource for our people” (129). As a matter of fact, he blamed student unrests that had rocked Kenyan universities in the eighties to manipulation of students by subversive lecturers. Referring to the students’ state of “intellectual and philosophic maturation” as “depressed,” he states:

This type of ignorance is prone and subject to devastating political manipulation by forces of opposition and disorder, that is, the forces which are out to undermine the existing regime. There are innumerable instances where the unsuspecting mass of students has been ‘roped’ into mass demonstrations for causes they hardly comprehend or ostensibly for a good cause, whereas the real intention of the manipulators is very different from the stated cause. (131)

Moi’s position represented in this rhetoric reveals several things that underpin his ideology of ruthless suppression of discourse in universities. In particular, the binaries he sets-up in his dialectic exposes his agenda for suppressing discourse in universities. Embedded in these binaries: subversive self-seeker Vs. constructive nation-builder intellectuals; true Vs. false intellectuals; constructive Vs. perverse intellectuals, is the ideology that there are “good” and “bad” intellectuals and that the state has the responsibility to rid off the country the bad intellectuals so they do not threaten the security of the state through their subversive activities or “manipulate” the students to become subversive like them.
In fact, the whole idea of the need to protect the state against subversive intellectuals became a common place among the ruling elite and a justification for suppressing discourse at the university. Essentially, a majority of those who were detained, jailed, or harassed by state machinery, including the university administration, were victimized on the pretext of state security. Thus, the rhetoric used to perpetuate the status quo in independent Kenya can be perceived in two ways: the need to justify the crackdown on the “bad” intellectuals on the pretext of state security and the need to create loyal intellectuals, the “good” intellectuals.

4.3.1. The Rhetoric of Loyalty

Daniel Moi was not the first to propagate the rhetoric of loyalty. As I pointed out in Chapter Three, even the colonial establishment pursued a policy of literacy that aimed at producing local “organic intellectuals” of that hegemony. Jomo Kenyatta too pursued a similar policy, a policy aimed at producing what Ngugi wa Thiong’o, in *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary*, refers to as “petty–bourgeois intellectuals” (xxi). These are the kind of lecturers that Ngugi claims “could sit down and advance beautifully balanced arguments--footnotes, weighty phrases and all that--justifying my detention” (xxii).

However, the difference between Moi and Kenyatta is that Moi was explicit and forthright in his agenda. For instance, underscoring the need to root out student unrests in the country, he states:

> Whether the unrest is the result of political sabotage or not, there is only one final cure for the endemic and cancerous erosion of intellectual resources. This is the re-education of staff. They must effect the intellectual growth and progressive
maturation of the students to enable the students, on their own, always to weigh issues in order to reach sober and informed conclusions. Thus, well prepared, the students will evolve into intellectual *homeguards* against intellectual *terrorism*, political agitation and subversion in the universities. (131)

It is surprising that Moi uses the term *homeguard* in his rhetoric, a term that has a negative connotation among many Kenyans. According to Gatheru, the home guards or the “Kikuyu Loyalists,” were the people who “[sided] with the colonial government to oppose Mau Mau” (144). Because the home guards served the interests of the colonial government at the expense of their kinsmen, many Africans viewed them as traitors. It appears Moi is invoking this image, the need to produce *loyal* students and lecturers who would support his government even when it was not in the interest of the masses. Another surprising thing about his rhetoric is that although he talks of re-training lecturers, he does not specify how they would be trained. However, one can infer that he is not referring to academic training, but an ideological re-alignment. This is in line with Althusser’s hypothesis that a dominant group would strive to use Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) to propagate and perpetuate its ideology, a process that in the Kenyan context produced intellectuals who were sycophants of the regime, lecturers who succumbed to “re-education” by the ruling elite. Where ISA or rhetoric failed the state resorted to Repressive State Apparatus (RSA), the state machinery, to silence dissent. This is typical of what Kenyatta and Moi regimes did: using all arms of government to silence those who resisted the “re-education” strategy. Thus, the intention of these regimes was to create loyal intellectuals who would serve the interests of the ruling class and also produce loyal students.
To illustrate the effectiveness of the rhetoric of loyalty, after Section 2A of the Kenyan Constitution that had proscribed opposition parties was repealed and multiparty politics reintroduced, in the early 1990s, a crop of professors emerged who wrote articles praising KANU, the ruling party, and Moi’s leadership at the same time criticizing opposition parties and opposition leaders. According to Lusumukha, in his newspaper article, “Dons Peddling Falsehoods,” “for sometime now since the advent of political pluralism there has emerged a group of intellectuals [Professor Henry Mwanzi, Dr. E. Aseka, Professor Arthur Eshiwani, Professor Chris Wanjala and Professor William Ochieng] aligned to the political establishment who have treated Kenyans to outrageous falsehoods.” In his opinion, these intellectuals “are engaged in a massive disinformation campaign backed by all the official resources at their disposal that may eventually be harmful to this country’s history” (14).

Lusumukha is not alone in castigating sycophant intellectuals. In another newspaper article, “Varsity Don’s Critique a Sham,” Odegi-Awuondo, a don at the University of Nairobi, responds to Mwanzi and Aseka’s critique of “Blue-print for a new Kenya: Post-Election Action Programme,” a document that outlined the agenda of the opposition. According to Odegi-Awuondo:

To say the least, and with all fairness to the learned historians, that was not a critique. The two merely vented their anger in an attempt to discredit the opposition as they glorify Kanu, a job best left to charlatans and quacks. Their piece reminds one of the unsigned Press statement by the so-called 140 dons from the four state universities exactly a year ago, professing that Kenyans were not
ready and incapable of managing the intricacies of pluralism. History quickly proved them incompetent in political analysis to their chagrin. (7)

Odegi-Awuondo accused Kanu of “hiring the ugliest calibre of academic opportunists to spread cheap propaganda to hoodwink the electorate.” He concluded his article by arguing that:

The role of scholars is not to use their pens and privileged positions to spread and instill fear and despondency in the people…Instead, the role of the intelligentsia at this particular point in Kenya’s political history is to educate the masses—the toiling peasants and workers, the teeming ‘wretched of the earth’, students, the famished and harassed underprivileged who have suffered 30 years of Kanu’s tyranny—on how best to exercise their democratic rights so as to get them peacefully out of the present quagmire into a better future. Prof Mwanzi and Dr. Aseka’s propaganda pieces poison the mind… (7).

To further demonstrate how KANU successfully used ISA to create its organic intellectuals, sycophants of the regime, some university professors served as key officials of the Youth for Kanu-92 organization, popularly known as Y-K92. This was a campaign outfit formed by KANU elites to ensure the party won the 1992 first multiparty elections. Decrying the role the intelligentsia played during the KANU regime, Mwiria states: “In the Kanu days, university professors were enlisted to the youth for Kanu (YK) because sycophants do not age! Never mind their advanced ages.” He adds: “These academics openly defended a system that a majority of Kenyans were uncomfortable with. Others either shut up in the face of the obvious excesses of the Moi regime, or were used to entrench dictatorship and corruption.” According to him, “In the Kanu days, it was
difficult to differentiate between the highly-educated and their semi-literate counterparts; all plundered the economy and sang songs of praise very shamelessly and determinedly!” (“A Little Education…”).

But not everybody would agree with Mwiria, Ogedi-Awuondo, and Lusumukha. For instance, Etende Embeywa, a lecturer at Kenyatta University, in a newspaper article, “Varsity Dons Have Done us Proud,” scolds those critical of Mwanzi and Aseka claiming that “It is not…up to people who have failed to make a mark in the world of ideas to assign themselves the right to define the role of a university don, given that they failed to qualify for it.” According to Embeywa, Mwanzi and Aseka are “some of brilliant sons of this land…who are committed to educating Kenyans on the prospects and problems of policy alternatives in this era of multi-partyism.” In his opinion, the pro-establishment scholars--Prof Ochieng’, Prof Ogot, Dr. Anangwe, Dr. Mulindi, Dr. Rashid, and, of course Mwanzi and Aseka, are “perceptive scholars.” And using a commonplace of the ruling elite, Embeywa described the antiestablishment as having accepted “to be used as cogs in the wheel of imperialism and political blackmail” (7).

These attacks and counterattacks reveal several things. Most important, they validate Gramsci’s argument about hegemony and counter-hegemony. Here are two hegemonies opposed to each other, the hegemony of the ruling class championed by the dominant group and its organic intellectuals on the one hand and the counter-hegemony of the “oppressed” and its organic intellectuals, the antiestablishment, on the other. They also illustrate Althusser’s ISA and RSA hypothesis and how the postcolonial regimes employed the two strategies to maintain the status quo.
4.3.2. The Rhetoric of Subversion and National Security

Indeed, as Althusser argues, where ISA failed, the ruling elite in Kenya resorted to RSA. In most cases, Kenyatta and Moi justified the arrest and detention of lecturers and students by alleging they were engaged in subversive activities. For instance, Ngugi reproduces a copy of his Detention Order in his book, *Detained: A Writer’s Prison Diary*. According to the order, Moi who was at the time (Kenyatta’s regime) the Vice-President and Minister for Home Affairs invoked his authority as Minister for Home Affairs to detain Ngugi, “being satisfied that it is necessary for the preservation of public security to exercise control beyond that offered by restriction order” (ii). Ngugi also reproduces the statement delivered to him outlining grounds for his detention. It read: “you have engaged yourself in activities and utterances which are dangerous to the good Government of Kenya and its institutions. In order to thwart your intentions and in the interests of the preservation of public security, your detention has become necessary” (204).

Essentially, most of those who were arrested or detained during Moi’s era were mostly accused of either belonging to a clandestine movement, mainly *Mwakenya*, acronym for *Muungano wa Wazalendo wa Kukomboa Kenya* (loosely translated as organization of patriots to deliver Kenya), or being in possession of seditious materials such as *Mpatanishi* or *Pambana* (“Jail and Detentions on Security Matters” 4). According to “Six More Jailed: Government Continues Crackdown Against Mwakenya,” another newspaper article, there were by that time “at least 16 people in Kenyan jails serving jail terms of various lengths in connection with the clandestine activities of Mwakenya” (9). Most of them were former Nairobi University lecturers and students. The arrested or
detained lecturers included: Willy Mutunga, Maina wa Kinyatti, Mukaru Ng’ang’a, Katama Mkangi, Edward Oyugi, and Atieno Odhiambo and some of the students were Gacheche wa Miano and C.A. Onyango (“One Confession: Author Wanjau Implicates Academics”). Justifying this crackdown on university lecturers and students, Moi claimed that the victims had wanted to bring about “anarchy and totalitarianism” in the country. According to Moi, the “alleged militancy” of the lecturers was “sheer idle talk.” He declared: “There is no room for such militancy in Kenya,” and that, “from now on, people must realize there is a government determined to deal ruthlessly with anybody who attempts to cause disorder” (“Moi Hits Again at University lecturers” 4) (Emphasis added).

Moi used the same rhetoric, the rhetoric of subversion, to justify censorship of books. Essentially, the government take-over of regulating books from the Kenya Institute of Education, noted earlier, was justified on the basis that some books were “teaching politics,” that some books were “teaching violence” merely because they were authored by antiestablishment scholars especially Micere Mugo, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Maina wa Kinyatti (“Take over order…” 8).

Another commonplace used by the ruling elite in both Kenyatta and Moi’s regime was that radical intellectuals were emissaries of foreign powers keen on undermining the government. For instance, Mukaru Ng’ang’a was detained on the pretext that “the institution [University of Nairobi] was colluding with a neighbouring country to cause instability in the country.” Elsewhere, Moi claimed that lecturers were out to “acquire guns from outside sources, “especially neighbouring countries,” to bring down his government (“Spotlight on Lecturers…” 7). Joining this rhetoric was Oloo Aringo, a
cabinet minister in Moi’s government, who claimed, “certain rich Kenyans were colluding with unnamed foreigners to obtain financial assistance for the purpose of funding subversive activities in the country” (“Six More Jailed…” 9). And justifying the government’s decision not to register UASU, Aseka, a don himself, argued, in “Uasu ‘an Instrument of Subversion,” a newspaper article, that “since UASU is the nucleus of US treasury, it has called for foreign bodies to come to its aid and is receiving external finances to bolster its activities, it is likely that it will be used as a conduit for secret funds aimed at realizing a multiplicity of external agenda in Kenya.” And speaking with the clout of one in government, he asserted that “The government is firm in its rejection of a body whose objects clearly indicate a resolve to subvert the Kenyan society” (18).

As this analysis has revealed, it is evident that both Moi and Kenyatta’s regimes employed rhetorics aimed at creating a loyal intelligentsia to serve as their organic intellectuals. Although the regimes preferred to use ideological conversion, they were ready to use any means—including the police force, the judiciary, and the public administration service, to ensure the intelligentsia remained loyal to the state. This way, the postcolonial regimes were able to muzzle discourse in Kenyan universities and also the wider society.
CHAPTER 5. CLASSROOM DYNAMICS

5.0. Introduction

This chapter deals with discourse patterns within the classroom setting. To establish these patterns, I asked both lecturers and former students several questions that were meant to shed light on the power relations between teachers and students, pedagogies lecturers employ, the nature of classroom interaction, and what participants thought about critical pedagogy (see Appendices B and C). It is important to mention here that although these aspects of classroom dynamics overlap, I separated them so as to allow for an in-depth and multifaceted analysis of their role in colonizing literacy in Kenyan universities.

5.1. Pedagogies Lecturers Employ

One of the questions I had for lecturers concerned the kind of teaching methods they employ and their teaching philosophies. Based on the data I collected, these participants had a lot in common with regard to their teaching methods. In particular, they all said they prefer using “interactive” approaches, but because of logistical constraints, they predominantly use the lecture method. Laaju, for instance, stated that he lectures when he has to, “particularly when the topic is new but by and large my method is that of interaction where I throw a disturbing question then I let students chew it up. I step in particularly when I feel the debate is sort of going off target.” However, although he prefers the interactive approach, he identified two limitations. On one hand, he observed
that it is very difficult to implement the interactive approach at the undergraduate level “because you are dealing with large numbers.”

On the other hand, he observed that although as a lecturer he was committed to adopt an interactive approach, “unfortunately, at the undergraduate level, only a few students will pick up the challenge. Most of them still have the high school mentality of just listening and absorbing what the teacher says.” However, the situation is different at the graduate level because, as he explained, “that is where it is exciting. It is a workshop/seminar approach. They get shocked about this change. Students do the work--the professors guide them--a lot of student–lecturer interaction. So that is where real learning is taking place.” He laments this reality because, “People who come for postgraduate are very small numbers so a lot of our undergraduates are missing what we got. The tutorial was the heart of the university--but today the tutorial is far unfitting unless in places where you have fewer students.”

Like Laaju, John explained that he would prefer an interactive approach, but “because of the large numbers and the circumstances [which includes the volume of marking], it is mainly lectures.” He also lamented that it is not practical to use tutorials. Similarly, Liz laments that tutorials are no longer officially used at the university, adding that she has tried to implement them in her elective courses. In fact, she said they are pushing to re-introduce them (although she did not specify who else is included in the pursuit).

Jane’s views on pedagogy in a way coincide with her colleague’s but she also introduces different dimensions to the subject. To begin with, she thought my question was “difficult” because in her opinion, when it comes to what teaching methods she uses,
“it has everything to do with what teaching aids I can avail myself completely outside of the institutional support.” She explained that she prefers to use film and music in her teaching but the school does not have the necessary equipment. Consequently, she has to make her own arrangements with students. She also regretted that she could not use tutorials because of space constraints. With a sense of desperation and frustration, like her colleagues, she stated, “So by and large, we are teaching within lectures.” But, to counteract these limitations, she explained that, “Now you have to find a way as a lecturer of breaking some of those lectures so that some of them become discussions; although you still have the difficulty of conducting discussions with two hundred students.” However, she still lamented that even when lecturers improvise and create interactive forums, “you find it is the same characters that are forthcoming and it becomes very difficult to make the lazy ones talk. So, you tend to use couple learners a lot which means that you have to be ingenious a lecturer.”

Jane’s observation about improvising is significant to this study because, as I will explore further in Chapter Seven when addressing recommendations for change, it demonstrates that in view of the constraints that confront teachers out to implement interactive approaches, innovation and determination are crucial in order to transform classroom dynamics. Furthermore, she also brings up the issue of facilities and motivation among teachers and students, all necessary ingredients when considering strategies for changing classroom dynamics.

As these responses reveal, all the lecturers would prefer to use interactive pedagogies such as tutorials and class and group discussions. However, they are unable to use such pedagogies because of several constraints:
• The classes they teach are too large to have class or group discussions or even tutorials.

• Students are prone to regurgitation of ideas hence their resistance to participate in class or to engage in any critical discourse.

• Lack of facilities e.g. rooms to hold tutorials.

• The curriculum is overloaded, thus, there is hardly any time for discussion as lecturers focus on completing the syllabus.

On the same issue of pedagogies lecturers use, all former students confirmed that lecturers used predominantly the lecture method. However, they had differing perceptions on the lecturers’ initiative to create interactive classrooms. For instance, responding to the question whether lecturers allowed students to express their views in class, Atieno replied “No!” Kim, on the other hand, explained that “in the classroom situation, essentially because of the lecture approach, it would end-up just coming from--just listening to--their points of view with very little time for discussion.” However, he pointed out that they had some tutorials where they could express themselves. But, as far as regular classes were concerned, “it was just the lecture and then after that assignments and it is perhaps in assignments that may be you could express your stance, your viewpoints.” Beatrice’s observation concurs with Kim since she stated that it was only during the tutorials that lecturers gave students the opportunity to express themselves, otherwise, during regular classes, “teachers would talk and the students take notes.” Mzalendo expressed a similar view for he stated: “I think it was more of the lecturer delivering his lecture and the students listening and taking major points rather than a discussion. The discussions were there but there was one period within a week which
they used to call tutorials where now you would ask the lecturer where you didn’t
understand.”

DRM, on his part, observed that “in some courses where the numbers were fairly
small, there was some sort of interaction--like in Literature and English, you would be
invited to make a response of say a text or a poem,” but in large classes, especially
education courses, “the source of authority came from the lecturer--the teacher-centered
approach so no student participation was allowed.” He also introduced an interesting
dimension to this subject, interesting because it seemed to support, but at the same time
contradict the views of the other former students and also lecturers. As to whether
lecturers allowed students to participate in class, to express their views, he explained that
“May be on a scale, in most cases I would say rarely did they allow.” However, when I
asked him whether he personally had opportunities to express himself in class, he replied
that he did so “frequently.” But, he also explained that participating or expressing one-
self in class was “based on an eager student--somebody who wanted to benefit from the
course--one overzealous to learn.” Actually, he said his zeal may have landed him into
problems “because you get to be noted by lecturers not because you wanted anything
from them--and actually I became a class President of the English and Literature
Education class for 1996.”

Because of the contradictions I was finding in DRM’s response, I probed him
further by asking him whether lecturers actually did invite students to express themselves
in class. He responded as follows:

Indeed they were. I think one of the things I noticed was that for them, they would
assume the students want to come and get their grades…May be they are not
interested in what we [lecturers] are doing so I will come spew them notes and go home and so on. But if they got the impression that the students had an interest in what they were doing, or what they are teaching and may be raise questions and so on, they did invite participation.

For clarification, I asked him whether he implied students were to blame for the teacher-centered approach he had said earlier was prevalent. Interestingly, he responded to the affirmative. According to him,

The passive culture of learning--where you just want to take notes and so on--may be demonstrates over and above that you don’t take time to go and may be look at the references, think through some of those things, because may be you have a different utilization of time. So once you come to class, there is no perception from the side of the lecturer that the students appear to be interested so, I think to a very significant extent we were to blame for the teacher-centered approach.

I found DRM’s response to be intriguing in many ways. First, it confirms what most lecturers had considered to be one of the hindrances to implementing interactive pedagogies--student resistance. Secondly, it reveals that it is not students alone who are to blame for the teacher-centered approach since he points out that some lecturers are reluctant to allow student-participation; that some lecturers lack the initiative. Thirdly, he brings up the issue of motivation on the part of lecturers and students and how it dictates classroom dynamics. Overall, DRM’s reflections demonstrate how complex the issue of classroom dynamics is and elements that need to be factored in when considering strategies for change.
5.2. Teacher-Student Authority

Although I asked participants directly what they thought about teacher authority in relation to student authority in the classroom, I had great difficulty explaining to most of them what I exactly meant by this question. The problem was aggravated when I explained to participants that the question was asking them to describe power relations between lecturers and students in the classroom. But, in one way or the other, we were able to negotiate meaning.

5.2.1. Lecturers’ Viewpoint

On his part, John felt that “If the lecturer is delivering, the students will listen and internalize things. If the teacher or lecturer imposes power and authority on students it may boomerang. The students know whether you are delivering or not. If you are delivering, they will respect you for it.” In other words, according to him, teachers’ authority is based on their competence, their capacity to “give facts, give advice, and so on.” And for Chems, teacher authority in the classroom “should be one of guiding students--helping students to discover, to inquire, to find out other than being an authority.”

Liz, on the other hand, explained she did not have a problem with student authority, “as long as the students’ authority also relates to their work, but not student authority over-stepping the academic level. When they over-step I have a problem and I caution them. But, if their authority is in relation to academics, I don’t have any problem.” She also stated that:

Most time I try to tell my students that learning is a democratic process like when I discuss my Course Outline, I don’t make it so rigid in the sense that I can swap
times of CATS (Coursework Assessment Tests/Continuous Assessment Tests). I
give students freedom to vote when they think they would be ready to hand in a
certain CAT. But, as long as we have decided it in class, that is it and you have to
live by it. So to me, its part of participating in the learning process and even when
I have discussion groups, I tell them to open up themselves.

To further explore the nature of lecturer-student authority in classrooms, I asked
lecturers whether they allowed students to criticize their teaching methods and content.
Again, all the lecturers I interviewed were unanimous they allowed students to criticize
them. Laaju, for instance, stated: “That I do. But that has to be looked at from various
perspectives. I would encourage them to critique by asking them what they think about
what I have said. At KU [Kenyatta University], they wanted students to evaluate
professors but the staff has been extremely timid about students evaluating them.” He
personally supports this kind of evaluation for he argues that “evaluation need not be
punitive. It is supposed to be diagnostic and informative so that you can correct a
weakness.”

Jane’s response was similar to Laaju’s in several ways. First, she expressed that
she also allows students to critique her teaching methods and content. Secondly, she also
identified two ways students could express their criticism: “One is the structured kind of
thing” and the other “is a more informal approach.” To distinguish these two kinds of
critiques, she explained: “The structured one would be to have, for example, at the end of
every semester or academic year a formal review from the students using prepared forms.
To have that kind of assessment would be a good thing.” Like Laaju, she lamented that
this kind of evaluation is not in place in Kenyan universities, “even now as they are
talking about performance-based contracts. I would advocate factoring students as one of the points of review.” However, she explained that lecturers have to find a way of getting students’ views: “For instance, when you have your first lecture and you are explaining the rationale for the texts you have chosen for the course, you ask them if they have any issue in particular books you have included or if there is one they wanted to be included.” Again she lamented that even though she invites critiques, students are not always forthcoming. As she put it, “You know you will have a few bold people. What you have is people following you after the lecture to say Mwalimu [teacher], I thought you could have, you know. So you have to be very accessible in terms of giving students a chance to talk to you outside the regular hours. That is the only way you can get their feedback.”

In fact, Jane emphasized that she allows students to disagree with her. She explained that in the absence of tutorials, she tells students to reserve their questions, for example, until the end of the lecture or end of a unit/text. As she put it, “sometimes some students would come up with a perspective you had never thought of which is very refreshing.” She explained she has no problem with student critiques “Because one thing we are training students to do is to think through things for a number of perspectives, a number of theoretical concepts, or using certain concepts of framework, you really want to open them up to the idea of multiple interpretation.” However, she noted that experience is important when it comes to handling students’ critiques. As she pointed out, initially, as a young lecturer you would be very defensive about the view you hold but over the years you become more flexible. There are times when students ask you something and you just have to tell them, and I have told students, I had never
thought of that. I would have to go and think through or I need to look this and this up so I can give you an answer.

John too allows students to critique his teaching methods and content. As he explained, “I do encourage them not only to raise issues with facts but also how the facts are given and so on.” But as Jane had pointed out, John observed that most times students are quiet to which he posed the following question: “What is the interpretation of that? That is the authority that we were talking about--that they can’t think anything outside what you gave them.” In spite of this observation, he said he allows for criticism from students:

Because that is when we are interacting with the students and it is partly the nature of the discipline. It is one where the lecturer cannot lay claim on truth--absolute truth. So, I usually remind them of the dictum of Max Weber that whatever you are doing is only a segment of the universe. In that case, you can only provide a segment of the truth… The rest has to come from reading--has to come from people’s experiences, even experiences of others.

I find John’s response to be contradictory because on one hand he advocates interactive pedagogy and even invokes the dictum of Max Weber--that truth is not absolute, but, on the other hand, he points out that students are unwilling to participate in class discussions. The question I am grappling with is: Under these circumstances, how is the interactive approach realized? The implications of this contradiction are significant since it demonstrates the challenges and frustrations faculty face in their attempts to implement interactive classroom atmosphere.
Similarly, Chems observed that students in his classes “Generally have room to criticize. But at the campus level there is no room to criticize because of the nature of the time table.” According to him, constraints to teacher-student interaction are institutional: “the lack of facilities that would encourage student-teacher interaction--other problems other than pedagogical. There is very little time that students will have to be able to criticize other than to simply copy, learn what they are supposed to learn within a certain period so that they are through with their course.” But, he also observed that most students are prone to regurgitation of ideas.

5.2.2. Ex-University Students’ Viewpoint

Although lecturers gave the impression they shared authority with students, all the former students I interviewed concurred that authority in the classroom belonged to the teacher. Atieno, for instance, explained that when she was a student, “the field was left for them [lecturers] and they were not really interacting so much. They were on the open floor giving us what they had for us.” And concerning students’ authority, the response was a resounding “Not really! Not really!” Furthermore, according to her, lecturers did not demonstrate any willingness to learn from students.

On her part, Beatrice observed that lecturers “were quite serious at that time. So they had good control of the lesson, of the class environment.” Regarding student authority, she pointed out that it was “during tutorials that students would come in to express their views but during the normal lectures, it was only the lecturer who had the authority.” As to whether lecturers demonstrated willingness to learn from students, she observed that lecturers “were the authority and so they did not accept so much from the students even during tutorials.” Actually, she observed that even during tutorials, “they
[lecturers] were still the people giving us most of the things not really taking so much from the students’ side.”

I find Beatrice’s view to be interesting because the lecturers I interviewed portrayed tutorials as sort of panacea, yet she presents the view that the banking concept prevailing in regular classes (through lecturer method) permeated tutorials. This finding is important when it comes to addressing strategies for decolonizing literacy for it implies that re-introducing tutorials may not necessarily lead to de-centering power in classrooms or what Freire refers to as dialogic literacy, which according to this study is necessary in the process of decolonizing literacy.

Like Beatrice, Kim observed that “The lecturers’ authority was quite strong. It was evident. They were in control of the class. Most of the classes were a bit large but, they had a good control of the sessions.” To probe him further on the subject, I asked him what he thought about the power relations between students and lecturers. His response was:

At the end of the day, the lecturers had more power. It was like whatever they said was authoritative and we tended to take it that way although there was always that invitation to read more to test whatever insights that were being given. But there was that disparity. The student was still at the receiving end because we were dealing with somebody who is knowledgeable, with papers which we didn’t have, and most of them showed mastery of the subject that they were handling and, therefore, we would take it from an authority.
And as to whether lecturers allowed students to challenge them, to express different viewpoints on ideas and issues, Kim replied: “No! There wasn’t that room for challenge. There was no much provision for challenging.”

With regard to lecturers demonstrating a willingness to learn from students, Kim responded to the affirmative. However, he limited this to the field of Oral Literature. As he put it, “in view of the fact that it was relatively then not very well grounded, it was like a new discipline--a lot of it had to come from the communities which were represented in the classroom.” Kim’s view coincides with what Mzalendo and Beatrice expressed. The two felt that most lecturers did not express a willingness to learn from students, except for religion where lecturers asked students to research on African traditional religions and religious practices for the same reasons Kim cited for Oral Literature; the fact that the classes comprised students from diverse backgrounds whose cultural practices, such as belief system, had not been documented. Thus, it appears lecturers valued students’ contributions in young academic fields without documented facts.

With regard to Teacher-student authority during his days as a college student, in the early 1960s, Willy, distinguished two categories of lecturers: “I think we had one lecturer who was very very authoritarian. If you disagreed with him on any reason, he simply expelled you from class. The others were strict but though strict were not punitive.” As to whether lecturers allowed students to criticize their teaching methods or content, he responded with a resounding “No! They did not.” Elaborating on his response, he explained, “But, I think you should bear in mind that was towards the end of the colonial era and, therefore, the attitude was that the lecturers knew best and students
were there to listen to the lecturers and if they want to raise questions they could raise questions about the content of the subject but not the teaching method.”

Overall, it is evident from these responses that to a large extent, lecturers exercise full authority in the classroom. Although the lecturers I interviewed attributed this skewed power distribution to student-resistance and institutional constraints such as class size, bloated curriculums, and lack of facilities, the former students’ responses present a different dimension to the issue. They expose the fact that even when lecturers could have implemented interactive approaches, where they had small classes, some lecturers insisted on the lecture method. In fact, I remember when I was a student at the university we had lecturers who dictated notes in elective classes where we were quite few. As a matter of fact, some of my lecturers as a graduate student still lectured or even dictated notes, whereas we were only nine in the class or even less in case of elective courses. Furthermore, the metaphors participants used in their responses reveal an ingrained conceptualization of teacher-student authority that has more to do with socialization than institutional constraints or student resistance. These metaphors include:

**Guru**

When I asked Chems to describe teacher-authority in relation to student-authority when he was a student at the university, he stated that “the lecturers were the gurus. They knew everything and ours was to learn from them. Ours was to take notes from what they were telling us. A kind of banking information in us.” DRM recasts this metaphor by describing lecturers as “content specialists; the bulk of the source of knowledge” (Emphasis added). Kim too alludes to this metaphor for he refers to a lecturer as “somebody who is knowledgeable, with papers which we don’t have.” According to The
American Heritage College Dictionary, one of the definitions of guru is “A spiritual teacher and leader, considered by disciples to have absolute authority” (Emphasis added). A close look at Chems’ comparison of a lecturer with a guru portrays lecturers as having absolute authority, something that, I argue is not as a result of large class sizes or student resistance to participate in class discussions. It has more to do with socialization, which attempts to decolonize literacy has to deconstruct.

Preacher

John, on the other hand, invoked the metaphor of a preacher to describe teacher-student authority in the classroom. In his opinion, the authority of a lecturer is based on his/her “capacity to deliver, your capacity to give facts, give advice” such that “when you look at the sociology of it, you look like you are preaching.” A preacher is to Christians what a guru is to the Hindus, thus, invoking the same concept of the teacher as the source of authority. Usually, when preachers are preaching, hardly would the congregation engage in give and take. It is the preacher “delivering” the sermon.

Father

John also used the metaphor of a father to describe his relationship with students. When I asked him how he would characterize his relationship with students, he responded: “cordial. Fatherly, if anything. A lot of them look at me as a father.” The metaphor of the father, the way John invokes it in this response, would have the same connotation as guru and preacher--the sole source of authority.

All these metaphors point to the same thing: that the teacher is the center of authority in the classroom. This finding is crucial when it comes to recommending strategies to de-colonize literacy and discourse patterns in Kenyan universities because it
implies that power relations between teachers and students have to be addressed as a
requisite for transforming discourse patterns in the classroom. This is because, as most
participants have observed, even when teachers try to implement interactive approaches,
for instance the tutorial system, power relations are still skewed in favor of lecturers.
Thus, as I will explore further in Chapter Seven when tackling strategies for decolonizing
literacy, reforming classroom dynamics would call upon Kenyan teachers and students to
re-examine power relations in the classroom. I argue that addressing the issue of power
relations would pave way for other concerns such as pedagogies that lecturers use and
class interactions. However, this re-examination of power relations, as Ira Shor has
argued, calls for de-socializing teachers and students from the teacher-centered approach
they are sued to.

5.3. Critical Pedagogy

Although the aspects of classroom dynamics discussed in this chapter could all fit
under critical pedagogy since they all relate to empowering learners, which, as I pointed
out in Chapter One, is the overarching agenda of critical literacy, I use this term in this
section with an abbreviated meaning. I use it to represent data I obtained pertaining to
lecturers and students’ attitude toward politicizing literacy; using literacy to critique
socio-political issues.

5.3.1. Lecturers’ Attitude Toward Critical Pedagogy

All the five lecturers I interviewed said they criticized policies and practices they
did not approve in society as they teach. Laaju, for instance, said he does it “Everyday”
adding that “I have never minced my words. When I can back-up what I am talking about with facts, I will talk about it. I do critique.” He cited what he called “the emerging political dynasty” as an example of the things he had been criticizing. In his view, the issue of some families “perpetuating themselves in politics” and dominating the political field “by manipulating public euphoria and susceptibility does not augur well with our body politic.” As a follow-up to his response, I asked him how students react to his critiques and he responded, “I think students welcome that. They find there is something they couldn’t say themselves but someone has the audacity to expound on it…sometimes they had not thought about that as a problem and now they begin to see.”

Like Laaju, John explained that he criticizes some of the policies propagated by the ruling class and positions some people take on socio-political issues that he does not approve as he teaches. He said that due to the nature of his subject (Anthropology), “there is no way you can remain on the fence. There is no way. Social science is about human beings and human beings are not angles.” Chems too said he criticizes socio-political issues he disapproves as he teaches. In fact, he stated that he uses “real examples out there” in his teaching.

Similarly, Jane said she criticizes social issues and policies she does not approve in her teaching because, as she explained, “When you teach Literature, one thing you have to do is look for relevant examples.” Actually, she said that from experience she has realized, “nothing works better with students than the things they can relate with.” Consequently, she “cites parallels of the issues addressed in literary works discussed in class with the Kenyan society.”
In addition, all the lecturers indicated they not only critique social issues in class but that they also invite students to do the same. For example, Jane explained that when she raises what she thinks is a pertinent contemporary example, she would like to hear students’ view on the issue. As a follow-up question, I asked her how students usually respond to her invitation to be critical. To this she responded: “Depending on what issue it is, sometimes there would be a lot of enthusiasm. Sometimes you may take a view that is precisely so radical that it leaves them completely dumbfounded because they hadn’t seen it that way and it would take two to three lectures before you hear them go back to it.”

However, with limited student participation in the classroom, I was curious about how lecturers expected students to express their critiques. To this effect, John, for example, stated that “One would like to see in their essays…you see you bring it in as an argument and you expect that since it is an argument, you look at pros and cons…” Laaju had similar views as he explained that besides the short papers students write in class, they usually have a “longer paper in which they will have an opportunity to apply criticism.” In other words, what these lecturers are implying in their responses is that the avenue available for students to express what they think about social issues is usually the papers they write and not during regular class period. This finding is important since it not only justifies the need for re-examining classroom dynamics but also reinforces the role of writing at the university level.
5.3.2. Ex-University Students’ Attitude

All the former university students I interviewed confirmed that most lecturers criticized policies they did not approve in the course of their teaching. But, they also identified lecturers they considered to have been radical for the stand they took on topical issues, for example, as Mzalendo observed, the assassination of Tom Mboya and J.M. Kariuki. They also expressed that most students liked the radical lecturers because, according to Mzalendo, they “opened up our thinking and we looked at what is wrong, and what is correct. We were able to use them as models to be able to judge society and to judge the political system.” Like Mzalendo, Kim and Atieno felt that students liked radical lecturers because they saw them as identifying with them rather than the establishment. But, they also expressed that because of the radical positions they took on issues, these radical lecturers often had trouble with the university administration and the government.

Whether they felt they had been allowed to criticize issues in class, all the former university students felt they had not. Atieno, for instance, stated that they could not critique social issues in the classroom because “we did not have a voice in the classroom as such.” DRM concurred with Atieno that students did not have the opportunity to express their critiques for he felt that “because of the political environment of the day where people who taught or survived in universities were very cautious about what you have to say, rarely did you see lecturers or the university administration consciously inviting or considering worthy taking seriously a lot of comments from the students.” However, they all noted that students used student organizations as their platform to critique issues they disapproved and usually this was done through student leaders who
ended-up, like the radical lecturers, being at logger-heads with university administrators and sometimes the government. Kim and Beatrice cited the example of Mwandawiro Mghanga and Tito Adungosi as some of the student leaders who landed into trouble with the establishment for speaking against university and government policies. Furthermore, this kind of expression did not take place within classrooms since, as I noted earlier when addressing discourse patterns at the wider university level, students expressed themselves through Kamukunjis.

Thus far, it has emerged that:

- Most lecturers in Kenyan universities use the lecture method.
- Many lecturers would have preferred more interactive approaches such as class discussions, group work, and tutorials but these are not logistically possible because of constraints such as large class sizes, students’ resistance (students unwillingness to participate in class and their tendency to regurgitate facts), space, bloated curriculum.
- Although most lecturers felt that students resisted participation in class, most former students felt lecturers did not create the forum for them to participate.
- Classrooms were more interactive before late eighties when tutorials were widely used in universities.
- Lecturers are the sole source of authority in the classroom
- Most Lecturers criticized social-political policies and practices they did not approve in class as they taught, but this had to be done with caution for fear of political victimization.
• Students did not have avenues to express their criticism on socio-political issues besides their writing, which was also limited because many of them relied on regurgitation of ideas.

5.4. Teaching of Writing

One of the objectives of this dissertation was to investigate the role that rhetoric and writing courses could play in the bid to decolonize literacy in Kenyan universities. Since no public university in Kenya offers rhetoric and writing courses per se, I was curious about what lecturers and students thought about public universities offering these courses. I used different questions for lecturers and former students mainly to establish how they learnt to write (the kind of writing required at the university), what they thought about public universities offering writing courses, and how they felt writing at the university should be taught.

All the participants (lecturers and students) had several things in common. One of the findings was that most of them had not taken writing courses at the university because the universities did not offer such courses. Most of them expressed that they had experienced many challenges with writing as students since nobody taught them how to write, yet they were required to write research papers or term papers. Actually, it took me a long time to explain to some of the participants, especially Beatrice and Atieno, what I meant by universities offering writing courses, because such a concept was novel to them. I can identify with the reflections and responses of these participants since I remember during my days as student at the university, nobody taught us how to write. Consequently, most students relied on modeling what those ahead of us had done and for some of us, it was
trial and error. But as most participants observed, those of us who went through the 7-6-3 system of education had an advantage over those who went through the 8-4-4 system of education because in A-level we wrote long papers and although nobody taught us how to write them, the practice and experience we got proved vital when we joined the university.

Actually, some lecturers blamed the 8-4-4 system of education for what they considered to be deplorable writing proficiency of the students they teach. According to Laaju, although during his time as a student writing was not taught at the university, they wrote essays in high school. He also said they had a writing club, a forum they used to write essays such that “by the time we came to university, our grammar was polished.” He also explained that at the university, they were encouraged to read widely, for example, journals which are not currently available in universities. Reading widely, according to Laaju, exposed them “on how to critique others, how to be polemical.” In addition, he observed that their writing skills were “polished by doing a lot of eclectic pieces of work and critiques.” In fact, Chems pointed out that the university system anticipated students joining the university in the new system of education, the 8-4-4, would have writing problems, and explains the reason “the government introduced the communication skills course.”

Another finding is that all participants supported the idea of universities offering writing courses. Most former students recalled how they had struggled with writing and felt this could have been avoided had universities offered writing courses. According to DRM, the idea of universities offering writing courses is long overdue, whereas Atieno

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16 The current formal education in Kenya has three levels: 8 years of primary education; four years of secondary education; and four years of undergraduate education. This system was adopted in 1985. The earlier system had four levels: seven years of primary education; four years of secondary, or Ordinary level, education; two years of high school, or Advanced level, education; and three years of undergraduate education.
observed that there were some students who left the university without knowing how to structure a letter. Lecturers, on the other hand, lamented that the writing proficiency of most of their students was very low. John, for example, expressed a lot of frustration because according to him, “There is a major problem. Enh! There is a major problem!” His concern was aggravated by the fact that the problem is not just limited to undergraduates. He narrated an example of a student he was “struggling with who is trying to come up with a dissertation [thesis] and I am spending a lot of time doing editorial work, the grammar, which bogs you down so that you are not now looking for ideas but the construction of sentences and so on.” Liz, like John, was concerned that even postgraduate students have trouble with writing. In fact, all lecturers were unanimous that their students had trouble with writing, with Jane describing the situation at both levels (undergraduate and graduate) as “problematic.”

Although lately universities are offering some sort of writing courses, most participants expressed dissatisfaction with the way it is being taught. According to Chems, “The Communication Skills course, if you look at the course content, is talking about reading skills and they [students] are never given time because the class has 100 or more students. So, when does the student have time to practice reading? They are also taught writing skills, but they are not given enough time to write.” DRM, who went to the university when Communication Skills course was being offered and had actually taken the course, confirms Chems concerns for he stated that the course “taught you how to write bibliography--not necessarily how to organize your paper and so on.” He described the course as “just a general course” which, “because of the numbers didn’t go into the details of how to write well.” According to DRM, writing was taught through lecture
method. They took notes and then at the end of the semester did an examination, just like they did in other subjects. Thus, they learnt the theory of writing but how to write an “expansive essay,” the real intricacies of writing, DRM said he learnt on his own.

Actually, Jane described the Communication Skills course as a “disaster” in the sense that its approach is theoretical and so, in her opinion, does not address the writing needs of students.

In regard to how writing should be taught, the participants had different views. Laaju saw the implementation of writing programs to be tricky because already there are so many compulsory courses students have to take. He wondered whether it would make sense to have students take a writing course or other courses such as African/Kenyan history. He made a joke that many students do not even know African/Kenyan freedom fighters. However, he was of the opinion that the English Department could come up with a writing course (he suggested calling it “Improving Your Writing Skills”), which should focus on teaching students basic structures of language for he observed it would be difficult for some departments such as Sciences to start teaching writing.

Chems had a different approach. According to him, “something has to be done right from primary school level. The teaching of writing must be improved because if they [students] do not acquire a certain level of English in secondary school, even when they come to the university they will not improve.” Furthermore, it was his view that since the Communication Skills course does not allow students to practice writing, most of the practice could be done in secondary schools where “they could be given a lot of assignments to write compositions, responding to comprehensive questions,” since there is no time for that at the university. Chems here seems to be ignoring the fact that primary
school and secondary school teachers are also overloaded which would make the kind of practice he is recommending impossible. I personally taught language in high school and I usually had four classes averaging fifty students each. With a population of about two hundred students and teaching all the language skills: Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing, with grammar taking center-stage, it would be hard for a teacher to implement the kind of practice Chems is recommending.

Although Chems recommends more work to be done in primary and secondary schools, he also recommended “university students be taught an English course--starting with grammar from the word go.” He recommended students take a compulsory English course every year and that teachers of English be prepared adequately to avoid the vicious cycle he sees currently happening in the education system where poorly trained English teachers produce students who are poor in English.

Like Chems, DRM suggests a series of writing courses be offered, “not just a one year course to make amends for what may not have been taught at secondary school level.” He suggests “having components of writing across the four year undergraduate program.” In addition, DRM suggests that since writing requirements for all departments are not homogeneous, in the first year, students could be taught the “rudimentaries of writing, what it takes [to write], but slowly as people veer off into scientific writing, [for science students for instance], its possible to have again a center for interdisciplinary service (CIS) to continually in-service students, or one would be expected to take up a non-core course on writing related to one’s discipline.” In other words, DRM envisions a basic general writing program complemented with a Writing Across the Disciplines program.
Liz is another advocate of Writing Across the Disciplines approach. In her opinion, because the Communication Skills approach has proved ineffective, “each Faculty or School at Moi University is thinking of having their own component of the writing skills when they meet the university common courses.” This way, “writing will be placed in a School so that they can meet the needs of each discipline.” Liz supports the idea because in her opinion, the general writing course offered under Communication Skills is “too general and it is not meeting the specific needs of disciplines so when it comes to the School level then we can have specific needs of disciplines and programs being taken care of.” Mzalendo also supported a Writing Across the Disciplines approach. He was of the opinion that every Faculty should offer a series of writing courses which students take as they advance. He does not support the idea of language teachers teaching writing, “because language teachers would teach writing as they see it in their subject area. Perhaps they should encourage History, Geography, and others which don’t deal with writing skills to come up with how they write their own books.”

On his part, Kim suggested that students joining the university should be pre-tested to assess the writing proficiency of each student. Writing classes should then be provided based on the level of students. But, he recommended writing be taught in smaller groups noting that: “The idea of small groups would help. The way it is done now is in large groups which I don’t think is really making a big impact.” Beatrice had no idea how writing should be taught at the university, but Atieno felt writing should be taught by language teachers.

It is evident from these responses that participants felt the need for Kenyan universities to offer full-fledged writing courses as opposed to the remedial programs
now in place under the Communication Skills program. The views presented by these participants remind me of the evolution of the field of Rhetoric and Writing in North America: the feeling among university faculty that teaching of writing should be done in high school, the perception that writing is a remedial course, the focus on language structure, and the politics driving the debate about which department should house the writing program (James Berlin, John Brereton, Susan Miller). However, in line with the scope of my dissertation, my focus in this dissertation is limited to how introduction of rhetoric and writing could play a role in the decolonization of literacy in Kenyan universities, an issue I will explore in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

5.5. Language Policy

Although language policy was not a recurrent theme among the data I collected, I have been prompted to consider it here mainly because most of my sources, including participants, have cited Ngugi wa Thiong’o as one of the intellectuals who landed into trouble with the political system and university administration for his intellectual position; yet the main reason cited for his detention and later exile is the theater he started in his rural home, Kamiriithu, that acted a vernacular play. According to Ngugi himself in *Women in Cultural Work: The Fate of Kamiriithu People’s Theatre in Kenya*,

The real reason for my political imprisonment was, of course, my having been involved with ordinary working people in a community theatre that reflected their history of anti-colonial struggles and those against contemporary social conditions in the post-colonial era. *The real crime was not simply the fact that our village*
theatre raised issues, but more importantly, in a language the people could understand. (80) (Emphasis added)

As Ngugi explains, “The play, [Ngaahika Ndeenda] was performed by members of Kamiriithu Community Education and Culture Centre, Limuru, Kenya, in 1997” and that “Over two-thirds of the members were women, ranging from children to those in their seventies… to celebrate the fact that Kenyan women had played a heroic role in the fighting in the forests and mountains, and in prisons and detention camps, and in the homes. They were everywhere.” Besides the women, the cast included “mostly poor peasants and unemployed school leavers.” He adds, “Although the script was drafted by Ngugi wa Mirii [his colleague at the University of Nairobi] and me, the peasants and workers added to it, making the end product a far cry from the original draft” (133). He adds: “Before long the centre received delegations from other peasant communities who wanted similar cultural ventures in their areas. A peasant/worker theatre movement was about to start” (134). Elsewhere, Throup and Hornsby state that Kenyatta allowed academicians some intellectual space, “so long as they expressed their doubts in English rather than in one of Kenya’s vernacular languages” (15).

This finding is relevant to this dissertation because it raises a pertinent issue: Why would the establishment allow dissent in English but not in vernacular? On one hand, this finding confirms Foucault’s theory that discourse is always controlled; that not everybody is admitted to a given discourse, a proposition upon which my analysis of discourse patterns in Kenyan universities is anchored. In this case, it is evident the Establishment viewed political discourse as a reserve of the literate elite, those able to use English, the language of literacy. Consequently, attempts to include the uneducated
peasants, the “other,” had to be resisted vehemently “to avert its powers and its dangers” as Foucault puts it (231); the threat to the status quo that empowering the marginalized, the peasants and women, would pose.

Language policy in postcolonial Kenya is just as murky as it was during the colonial era. According to Musau, “Kenya does not seem to have a clearly stated democratic language policy that recognises and promotes all the languages used in the country…language policy in many sectors, including education and mass media, is not clear” (161). Addressing the same issue of language policy in postcolonial Kenya, Wa Njogu Kiarie states, “In Kenya, as in many multilingual African states, language policy remains a thorny issue.” He describes language use in Kenya as follows: “In theory and on paper, Kiswahili is Kenya’s national language, but English is the official language. In some spheres, these languages operate at par; but in most cases, English is given priority and greater prestige” (69-70). In literacy circles, Kiarie states that in policy, mother tongue is supposed to be used the first three years of school in homogeneous communities. However, he observes that this is not usually the case since many parents, especially those in urban areas, favor sending their children to private schools “where instruction in English begins on the first day of formal schooling” because of the “prestige accorded to English” (70).

The issue of using vernacular languages has attracted a hot debate among African scholars. Focusing on the Kenyan context, on one hand is a camp represented by Ngugi wa Thiong’o that argues against use of English, the language of former colonizers, since according to this school of thought, English was used by the colonizers as a tool for imperialism, cultural imperialism. Furthermore, they argue that because language is the
embodiment of culture and that people can best express themselves using their mother-tongues, African languages should be used in literacy, especially literary works. For instance, in *Writer’s in Politics: A Re-engagement With Issues of Literature and Society*, Ngugi argues that language represents a “memory bank” of the “collective struggles” of a community such that “to annihilate a language is tantamount to destroying that people’s collective memory bank of their past achievements and failures, say their experience over time, which forms the basis of their identity as a people. It is like uprooting that people from history” (1997 57). Advancing the same argument Kimani Njogu, a professor of Kiswahili, asserts that “The promotion and development of African languages is a necessary prerequisite to political, economic, social and cultural emancipation. We link language with the decolonisation of the African continent in all domains of life” (“Give Swahili…”)

Mwangi Ndirangu, a senior lecturer at Egerton University introduces an interesting dimension to the debate for he associates the falling writing proficiency of university students and their incapability to express themselves to the fact that literacy is conducted in English, a foreign language. He states:

The appalling standards of spoken and written English, even among university graduates, calls to question the wisdom of using this language in our schools and offices. Lack of mastery of a language robs us of our self-confidence due to the fear that we may speak or write it incorrectly, resulting in a loss of face, especially when dealing with native speakers…Lack of mastery of the language of instruction forces students to accept half-digested ideas, leading to a poor
conceptualisation and inability to utilise these ideas to bring about change. (“Let’s Review Our Language Policy).

On the other hand of the divide is Aswani Buliba, also a lecturer at Egerton University, who submits that “There are myriad forces pitted against indigenous languages, some of which are almost insurmountable…One of the hurdles on the way today is Globalization and the socio-economic order that has come with it…There is the question of visibility, immediacy, availability. And this is the sense in which David Crystal refers to English as a global language. He actually falls short of declaring English the language of the world …” (“Professor Ngugi and the Issue of Language”).

The language policy debate and what should be the “right” policy is outside the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, it is evident, especially considering Ngugi’s case, that politics have a lot to do with the language situation in Kenya. Furthermore, since this dissertation is investigating discourse patterns in Kenyan universities, which brings to play the interconnection between language, politics, and literacy, it is inevitable to address the hegemonic forces behind the stance the postcolonial establishments took with regard to language policy. In particular, this dissertation is interested in why the ruling elite would be uncomfortable with the use of vernacular in literacy circles.

To conclude this chapter, it is evident that discourse patterns at the classroom level replicated discourse patterns in the wider society and the wider university settings. Furthermore, the findings expose how deeply entrenched the teacher-centered approach is in Kenya’s literacy system to the extent that even when teachers seek to implement interactive approaches, such as the tutorial pedagogy, they still resort to banking pedagogy, warranting the need to address power relations between teachers and students.
as a requisite to decolonizing literacy. I will discuss this issue in greater detail in Chapter Seven. But, in the next chapter, Chapter Six, I will apply findings of my research to test my hypotheses.
CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.0. Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of the study with regard to the research questions and hypotheses that prompted and guided the study. In particular, I will test my hypotheses based on the findings of the research and address the implications of the findings to the research questions.

My study was prompted and guided by the following research questions:

- How does hegemony play out in the discourse practice in Kenyan universities?
- Why does there seem to be a semblance between the colonial and postcolonial literacy systems, that is, how and why did the postcolonial literacy system reproduce the colonial literacy with regard to discourse patterns in Kenya’s higher education?
- How could the literacy system in Kenya’s higher education be de-colonized?

In line with these research questions, my hypotheses were:

- That the colonial system in Kenya colonized higher education to serve its political and economic interests and that the postcolonial regimes reproduced the same structures to serve their hegemonic interests.
- That critical literacy paradigm grounded in dialogic pedagogy and mediated by the teaching of Rhetoric and Composition is imperative in order to decolonize Kenya’s higher education system.
6.1. Hypothesis 1

6.1.1. The Colonial Hegemony and the Colonization of Literacy

I started Chapter Three by discussing the motivation behind the British colonization of Kenya. In light of the major competing theories advanced by historians to account for this phenomenon: the philanthropic, strategic, and economic factors, I argued the economic factor is the most feasible; that the British colonized Kenya mainly for capitalistic and imperialistic reasons. In other words, the driving force behind colonial hegemony was economic exploitation of Africans and their resources. The question is: How did the colonial establishment succeed to perpetuate its exploitative and oppressive hegemony for almost eight decades considering the dominant group, the colonial administration and settlers, were such a small minority? As Josiah Kariuki (JM) puts it in his autobiography,

The Europeans tried to entrench their power politically and to hold back the legitimate advance of our people on every possible pretext. They were never more than 60,000 in a population of 7,000,000, but none of those 7,000,000 had any say in the government of the country until the 1950s. The Africans of Kenya were controlled and directed with the prime objective of serving the needs of the European settlers’ farm economy. Labour laws, taxes, education, everything was done in the way the Europeans wanted. (15)

How did this European minority succeed in imposing and perpetuating its hegemony?

I reported in Chapter Three that the colonial system propagated its hegemony mainly through use of the two apparatuses Althusser outlines in his hypothesis: the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) and the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). I
detailed in that chapter how the colonial government used terror to suppress any kind of African resistance; how the colonial government used its machinery, especially the police force (which included British soldiers, African soldiers, and home guards) and the public service (European colonial administrators and their collaborating African agents such as colonial chiefs) to ruthlessly suppress any kind of agitation by Africans. Thus, through use of RSAs the colonial system was able to somehow suppress and curtail political action and critical discourse among Africans.

Besides using force, the RSAs, the colonial government used ISAs to propagate its hegemony. I also reported in great detail in Chapter Three how the colonial system used a choreographed rhetoric not only to justify its exploitative and oppressive operations but also to indoctrinate Africans into believing its ideology. This rhetoric, which centered on “racial fetish,” justified colonization by propagating the ideology that Africans were inertly an inferior race which required European intervention, through colonization, to be able to attain civilization--the so-called civilizing mission. In addition, the dominant group used the same premise to justify marginalization of Africans in terms of appointments to government positions, utilization of economic resources, and provision of services and amenities.

Homi Bhabha pushes this argument, the role of colonial rhetoric, a notch higher through what he calls “colonial discourse as an apparatus of power.” Bhabha argues that this apparatus “seeks authorization for its strategies by the production of knowledges of colonizer and colonized which are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated. The objective of colonial discourse is to constitute the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of
administration and instruction” (70-71). He adds, “The subjects of the discourse are constructed within an apparatus of power which contains, in both senses of the word, an ‘other’ knowledge” fore-grounded in what he calls “stereotype.” And, to underscore the role of the “stereotype” in this discourse, he argues for “the reading of the stereotype in terms of fetishism--the myth of historical origination--racial purity, cultural priority” (74). According to him, “The stereotype, then, [is] the primary point of subjectification in colonial discourse, for both colonizer and colonized, is the scene of a similar fantasy and defence” (75). Bhabha’s theorization of colonial discourse is tandem with the findings of this study-that the colonial hegemony thrived on colonial discourse or colonial rhetoric which was built around a racially-based caste system. Of concern to this dissertation is the role literacy played in the imposition and perpetuation of this hegemony; the connection between literacy and politics (the mainstream racial ideology).

All the six themes that represent my findings on postcolonial literacy system confirm that the colonial government used literacy to achieve its interests. First, the Establishment denied many Africans access to education, especially higher education. This move was aimed at ensuring Africans remained ignorant and, therefore, incapable of challenging and resisting colonial hegemony. Secondly, even for the few who got access to education, the colonial government adopted the functional literacy approach. Through this approach, Africans were mainly exposed to vocational and industrial training, as opposed to intellectual and academic education. Again, this was to ensure Africans did not develop consciousness, what Freire refers to as $\textit{Conscientizacao}$, which would lead them to resist oppression and injustices that characterized the colonial hegemony. Thirdly, the very few who got access to some kind of education came mainly from
backgrounds that were politically correct, for instance, sons of colonial chiefs (such as Waruhiu wa Kungu, Josiah Njonjo, Njiri wa Karanja). The missionary factor also played a big role in propagating political correctness by emphasizing discipline and morality, which as Willy, one of the people I interviewed observed, entailed no “complaining” or “agitation.” In other words, religion and literacy intersected in producing docile Africans who were susceptible to colonial ideology. Moreover, by discrediting most African cultural practices and promoting European culture, missionaries played a role in propagating cultural imperialism that facilitated economic imperialism. Therefore, it is no wonder most of the African elite were not only organic intellectuals of the colonial government, they were religious allies too, members of the “Christian aristocracy” (Anderson 11). Again, the emphasis on political correctness as a criterion for accessing literacy was meant to ensure those who attained education did not use it against the colonial system.

By adopting these policies, the colonial government aimed at achieving two things. On one hand, the colonial system denied Africans access to quality and meaningful education fully aware that an educated population would be hard to dominate and provide cheap means of labor for European farms. On the other hand, the colonial government was out to use literacy to propagate its ideology. This way, literacy became an apparatus for advancing the interests of the colonial system. Thus, the colonial system recognized the double-edge nature of literacy--the potential to serve as a tool for propagating the hegemony of the dominant group, but also a potential tool for empowering the oppressed. In this case, these six themes illustrate how the colonial government colonized literacy to serve its interests; how the colonial system put in place
a literacy system that was commensurate to the colonial social order, one that reproduced the social order.

This finding is in line with Bourdieu and Passeron’s solid argument about the hegemonic nature of literacy. According to these scholars, “[literacy] reproduces the dominant culture contributing thereby to the reproduction of the structure of the power relations within a social formation in which the dominant system of education tends to secure a monopoly of legitimate violence” (6). Furthermore, they argue that hegemonies employ literacy “to legitimate the culture arbitrary [social order] that it inculcates; only within the limits laid down by that cultural arbitrary….It reproduces the fundamental principles of the cultural arbitrary that a group or class produces as worthy of reproduction” (26). This is probably the best way to explain the hegemonic nature of literacy. That literacy does not operate in a vacuum, but as part and parcel of the social milieu. And that the dominant group appropriates and fashions literacy in a way that advances and protects its interests by propagating mainstream values and ideologies. The colonial order produced a caste system by embracing the racial fetish and, sure enough, the literacy policy the colonial government implemented reproduced that kind of social order. That is why the “Ominde Report” observes that the colonial ideology was “largely self-perpetuating.” That:

A European child, brought up in that station in life to which it had pleased a colonial destiny to call him, was effectively trained [socialized] for a corresponding social role…still less did the idea of an African ‘boss’ appear either possible or appropriate. These assumptions were to a large extent reflected on the African side. Except for nationalists and other idealists, the horizon for practical
educational purposes, was for long limited by the occupations of a rural semi-tribal society and the lowest levels of the public administration. (21-22)

Thus, as Bourdieu and Passeron’s argue, literacy becomes a “process of inculcation which must last long enough to produce a durable training.” Essentially, the colonial system used literacy as an apparatus to propagate “colonial discourse” with the sole aim of socializing Africans into the colonial hegemony. Literacy, therefore, was a tool to reproduce the colonial social structure (the caste society) and to ensure that this socialization is permanent. This socialization is what Bourdieu and Passeron refer to as *habitus*; “The product of internalization of the principles of a cultural arbitrary capable of perpetuating itself after PA [Pedagogic Action, or literacy] has ceased and thereby of perpetuating in practices the principles of the internalized arbitrary” (31). In other words, according to Bourdieu and Passeron, literacy becomes “the process through which a cultural arbitrary is historically reproduced through the medium of the production of the habitus productive of practices conforming with that cultural arbitrary…[,]” a process they argue “is the equivalent, in the cultural order of the transmission of genetic capital in the biological order” (31).

To further illustrate how *habitus* functioned in the perpetuation of colonial hegemony, in Chapter Three I reported how the colonial government used literacy to socialize local elite who functioned as organic intellectuals of the Establishment. I cited the example of Fred Kago who lobbied the Africans not to criticize or agitate against the “Beecher Report.” Although politically conscious Africans were opposed to the recommendations of this report, Kago and his colleagues purported the recommendations
were going to benefit the masses. As I pointed out in that chapter, these recommendations were meant to advance the European cause and were, therefore, anti-African.

L. S. B. Leakey, a son of English Missionaries in Kikuyu land, in Kenya, and who became a prominent archaeologist and author of several books on Kenyan history (“Biographies: Louis Leakey”), provides another example that helps illustrate the working of *habitus*. According to Leakey, a group of “twenty-three Kikuyu leaders” (or loyalists) met in Nairobi to scheme on how to quash the Mau Mau uprising. According to Leakey, this group comprised of “Government Chiefs who have been in the forefront of the physical fight against the *gangsters*, two Kikuyu members of Legislative Council, five African Ministers of Religion, (who have played a great part in leading the Christians in their resistance to the *wickedness* of Mau Mau), and a number of Kikuyu political leaders of moderate and progressive views” (14). To restore peace, the “leaders” advised those who had gone to the forest to fight for independence to “here and now, come out and surrender to Government before you are utterly destroyed, for assuredly if you do not surrender you will, without doubt, be killed” (17). They also urged the community to stop protecting “these *evil people*” who “mutilate people and have been drinking the blood and eating the meat of those whom they have slaughtered” (16). The Mau Mau must have been really evil. These imposters beseeched the people to collaborate with the colonial government “in order that our Government may again start upon the path of progress, for assuredly it has been put backwards very seriously….that this country of Kenya may once more become a land of peace and wealth and of progress” (18). Addressing the Mau Mau, they said: “Because of your *wickedness* and your many *sins* Government has rightly declared that those who are the real leaders of
Mau Mau will never be allowed to return to Kikuyu country again” (18). (Emphasis added in these quotes).

This narrative illustrates clearly how the colonial discourse produced a habitus commensurate with colonial hegemony. For instance, these elites viewed Mau Mau from the dominant group’s viewpoint. They referred to the Mau Mau as *evil doers, gangsters, wicked, and sinful people* yet they referred to themselves as “leaders.” Furthermore these loyalists viewed the Mau Mau as a hindrance to prosperity--yet the Kikuyu had no source of livelihood, having lost their land to the colonial grabbers and the so-called “leaders.” In other words, like Fred Kago and his colleagues whom I cited earlier, these “leaders” viewed themselves as part of the mainstream and the Mau Mau as “other.” Thinly veiled in their rhetoric, though, is the reality that the Mau Mau were indeed a threat to them, in the same way they were a threat to the Europeans, since these loyalists were grabbers and exploiters too. Thus, these “leaders” were masking the reality that the masses they were addressing belonged to the “other” class whose cause the Mau Mau were championing. In essence, the Mau Mau were not a threat to the ordinary Kikuyu for they were championing a cause aimed at ending oppression and exploitation.

Also embedded in this rhetoric, was the notion that the Mau Mau would never win against the colonizers. This was in line with the “colonial discourse” that Africans would never prevail against Europeans; that African cause would inevitably fail owing to their racial inferiority. Therefore, the discourse called upon Africans to cooperate with the Europeans as the only logical thing to do: If you cannot beat them, join them. I come from Kigumo, which used to be in the larger Murang’a District and Njiiri wa Karanja; one of the most prominent and influential colonial chiefs, was the local chief. Actually, to
this day, the area is referred to as “Kwa Njiiri wa Karanja” (the territory under the jurisdiction of Njiiri wa Karanja). It is alleged that he smashed his radio (and radios were extremely rare and precious those days) when it announced the release of Jomo Kenyatta for the same radio had announced that Kenyatta would never be released, illustrating how indoctrinated the loyalists were by the “colonial discourse.” In fact, the examples I have cited illustrate how the colonial literacy system, through the functioning of *habitus*, functioned to serve the interests of the colonial system, and, therefore, confirming the premise underlying this research that literacy is hegemonic--that literacy cannot be divorced from politics. Thus, the examples confirm one of the aspects of my first hypothesis, that the colonial government colonized literacy to serve its own interests.

6.1.2. Jomo Kenyatta’s Hegemony and the Reproduction of Colonial Literacy System

In the epilogue of her book, Caroline Elkins narrates a very interesting story. In 1965, Sir Evelyn Baring, former colonial governor in Kenya, visited Kenyatta, the man he had detained in 1952, but now having become the president of the country. According to Elkins, “Baring was uncharacteristically nervous as he visited his old office [State House], especially because Kenyatta was standing just opposite him…the man whose trial [he] had rigged and who, because of [his] signature, spent years of his life banished to a desert Wasteland” (354). In that tense atmosphere, Baring said to Kenyatta, “By the way, I was sitting at that desk when I signed your detention order twenty years ago” to which Kenyatta replied, “I know,” adding, “If I had been in your shoes at the time I would have done exactly the same.” Kenyatta even admitted he had himself “signed a number of detention orders sitting right there too” (354-355).
An analysis of Kenyatta’s political career and the policies he pursued confirms the message contained in the story above: that change of regime did not translate into socio-political transformation of the Kenyan society. Sir Baring detained Kenyatta and other freedom fighters to protect European interests in colonial Kenya, whereas Kenyatta detained his opponents to entrench his own interests and those of his ruling elite. But, why would Kenyatta’s regime reproduce colonial policy and structures?

To understand why Kenyatta reproduced the colonial state, it is imperative to understand who he was and the political forces he represented. According to David Anderson, by 1958, there were three different political blocks among the Africans, each with different interests. The first, which he calls the conservative block consisted of “chiefs, headmen and senior Christian elders of Kikuyu society [although there were collaborators from other communities who would fit this description], whose authority had been built upon and greatly consolidated through association with the colonial project.” These were big land owners and prominent businessmen and they included people like Waruhiu wa Kungu, Josiah Njonjo, and Njiiri wa Karanja. According to Anderson, “these were the gatekeepers of the colonial state” and they supported the colonial system essentially to consolidate their power, wealth, and land. Because theirs’ was an exclusive club, “they inevitably made enemies” (11).

The second block is what Anderson refers to as “moderate nationalists.” As he explains, these were products of mission schools and had, through education, been westernized. According to Anderson, the conservative and moderate blocks “were essentially from the same class and background, typically coming from relatively prosperous families. However, the moderate nationalists “saw the old conservative chiefs
as a barrier to progress,” which resulted in a “materialist rivalry.” In this rivalry, “The moderates wanted to replace the conservatives in positions of political leadership, and although they criticized the actions and motives of conservative chiefs, it is not at all clear that their own agenda of political leadership was really very different.” In Anderson’s view, Kenyatta “epitomized this group” (11).

The final block is what Anderson calls the militant nationalists. Most of them had limited missionary education, came from “less well-established families,” but they were the force behind Mau Mau. This block attacked the conservatives “whom they characterized as corrupt betrayers of Kikuyu values and social norms.” They also attacked the moderate nationalists “whose programme of reform failed to address their basic concerns over the distribution of land and the level of African wages.” This block included people like Fred Kubai, Bildad Kaggia and James Beauttah (12-13). JM Kariuki, Oginga Odinga, and Ochieng Oneko would also fit into this category.

That Kenyatta’s agenda in the struggle for independence was to create an economic and political empire for himself and the class he represented is demonstrated by his attitude toward freedom fighters and the policies he pursued after independence. First, in a surprising move, he denounced the Mau Mau when he became president. It is surprising because it is the same Mau Mau that had paved way for his ascension to power since, as Odinga, in his autobiography puts it, “Without the forest fighters in the so-called ‘Mau Mau’ period, Kenya’s independence would still be a dream in the minds of a few visionary politicians…” (254-255), and without independence, there would have been no prospects of an African president. Anderson recounts the incident when soon after independence Kenyatta went to Nyeri to welcome the Mau Mau who were returning from
the forest from where they had fought the colonial government. According to Anderson, “Nearly a thousand ‘rebels’ walked out of the forest…These men thought of themselves as victors, and did not feel defeated. They had refused to come out of the forests until the colonialists had gone; and they now expected to be rewarded for their victory— with land, and property, and the freedom they had fought for” (335). But none of their expectations was ever granted. In fact, Anderson states that earlier, Kennyatta had been asked about the Mau Mau issue and his response had been: “We shall not allow hooligans to rule Kenya. Mau Mau was a disease which has been eradicated and must never be remembered again” (336).

True to his word, Kenyatta ignored the plight of freedom fighters throughout his regime. Chege Gachamba, a veteran Kenyan journalist, laments the neglect of those who put their lives on the line in the struggle for independence by both Kenyatta and Moi’s regimes. In his newspaper article, “Yesterday’s Heroes Bemoan Neglect,” Gachamba states: “But just as the road to independence was littered with many casualties of the colonial rule, many who fought for uhuru [independence] today bemoan neglect by a system and people who hardly recognize their efforts in freeing this land from British rule.” He describes the miserable lives of prominent freedom fighters such as Paul Ngei, Bildad Kaggia, Kung’u Karumba, Fred Kubai, Ochieng’ Oneko—who incidentally were Kenyatta’s jail-mates in detention. According to Gachamba, these freedom fighters “feel cheated as many are living in squalor with some not knowing where their next meal will come from…many of them lead and live in abject poverty and wonder why they sacrificed their all to fight for uhuru which they say did not bring any change for the better of the governed.” Also addressing the neglect of Mau Mau veterans, “Let us Never
Forget the Fallen,” a newspaper article, laments there is only one memorial for the Mau Mau: Mau Mau Secondary School which Kenyatta ordered be changed from Hola Secondary School in memory of the Hola Massacre of 1959 in which many Mau Mau detained in that camp were butchered by the colonial government. According to the article, “These people [the Mau Mau] still long for the day the Government will erect Mau Mau Memorial Halls in all major cities and towns of our nation, in eternal commemoration of the nationalists struggle for independence” (21).

It is surprising that Kenyatta, as President of Kenya, would share the same attitude about the Mau Mau with those who had collaborated with the colonial regime, for instance, the “twenty-three Kikuyu leaders” I cited earlier. But, as contradictory as this change of heart initially appears, indeed the Mau Mau was going to be a disease, a threat, to Kenyatta and his ruling elite because his agenda was to perpetuate the greed and exploitation the freedom fighters had sacrificed so hard to overthrow. Apparently, Kenyatta’s agenda was not to pursue the kind of revolution the Mau Mau and the militant nationalists had fought for, but an agenda akin to that of his predecessor which was accumulation of wealth and capital through exploitation. Thus, Kenyatta and the militant freedom fighters were not birds of the same feather. Kenyatta perceived these “radicals,” the likes of Kaggia, Kungu Karumba, Kubai, Oginga Odinga, Oneko, as a threat to his hegemony and it is no wonder they became his first victims. The militant freedom fighters had been a bridge for the new ruling class to cross the social divide and now the bridge had to be destroyed; they had to be silenced and their role in the struggle for independence diminished lest a backlash occurred--lest they revolted and overthrew the new oppressors. This irony explains Odinga’s bitterness when he states:
Kenyatta’s own speech [on the day Kenya became independent] inexplicably made no mention of the people who had laid down their lives in the struggle, the fighters of the forests and the camps who have been in the danger in Kenya of becoming the forgotten men of the freedom fight because it suits the ambitions of the self-seeking politicians to divert our people from the real freedom aims of our people. (253)

Besides his attitude toward freedom fighters, Kenyatta’s economic and political policy illustrate that he inherited and reproduced the colonial structures to serve the interests of his hegemony. During his regime, Kenyatta and his henchmen annexed huge chunks of land in most parts of the country--in Central Province, the Rift Valley, the Coast, even perhaps more than Lord Delamere, the quintessence of colonial exploitation, had grabbed. According to Ababau Namwamba, an Advocate of the High Court in Kenya, Kenyatta’s family is “reputed to own land the size of Nyanza Province.”\(^{17}\) In fact, the reason why leftist politicians such as Oginga Odinga, Kaggia, Oneko, and JM clashed with Kenyatta is because they stood for the ideals they had championed during the struggle for independence, whereas for Kenyatta and his henchmen, as Odinga puts it, “independence and ‘African Socialism’ [the philosophy they coined] is that they should move into the jobs and privileges previously held by the settlers” (302). Actually, Odinga observed that “Not only are many European settlers still sitting on big farms, but we are getting a new class of Blundells, Delameres, and Briggs, deliberately created” (303). This is a sentiment that Ngugi wa Thion’o shares and castigates in his works, especially *Petals of Blood* and the *Devil on the Cross*.

\(^{17}\) Kenya is divided into eight administrative provinces (which includes Nairobi). Nyanza is one of these provinces and actually one of the largest.
That Kenyatta was pursuing a different agenda from the militant nationalists is further demonstrated by his mockery of Kaggia before a crowd: “What have you done for yourself” (Oginga 310). In this incident, Kenyatta was mocking Kaggia for refusing to use his position as a government minister and official of the ruling party, KANU, to enrich himself. Because Kaggia had refused to join the class of pigs, as George Orwell characterizes greedy and turncoat “liberators” in his novel, Animal Farm, he had to be excommunicated, the reason he was rigged out as the Vice-President of KANU in Central province and the post given to James Gichuru, a fellow pig, although the delegates had voted for Kaggia. It is for the same reason he was dropped as Assistant Minister. Actually, in his resignation as Parliamentary Secretary in 1964, Kaggia declared he could not betray the people who elected him to parliament “or to forget the freedom fighters who gave all they had, including their land, for the independence we are enjoying” (Odinga 267). In a like manner, JM parted ways with the regime, the same Kenyatta he explains in his autobiography he and other in-mates had been thoroughly flogged as Mau Mau detainees for refusing to denounce and curse (59). Unlike Kenyatta, he had refused to be corrupted by power and wealth and instead had chosen to be consistent in pursuit of the vision he had outlined as early as 1963:

Our leaders must realize that we have put them where they are not to satisfy their ambitions nor so that they can strut about in fine clothes and huge Cadillacs as ambassadors and ministers, but to create a new Kenya in which every one will have an opportunity to educate himself to his fullest capabilities, in which no one will die or suffer through lack of medical facilities and in which each person will earn enough to eat for himself and his family. This will require responsible
leadership, hard work, unity, honesty and sincere love of our country in all our hearts. (181)

And true to his word, before he was murdered in a plot that has always been associated with the ruling elite in Kenyatta’s administration (Amutabi 129; Throup and Hornsby 19), JM made the famous outcry that came to embody the frustration of many who had envisioned freedom as liberation from the shackles of exploitation and greed— that Kenya had become a nation of “ten millionaires and ten million beggars.” (Githinji and Cullenberg 8).

Thus, as this research demonstrates, Kenyatta’s political agenda was not radically different from that of the colonial government. Both regimes pursued an agenda of economically exploiting the masses and the resources of the country. And just as he reproduced the colonial economic and political agenda, Kenyatta reproduced the apparatuses the colonial system had put in place to push and perpetuate his own agenda. As Mutua observes, Kenyatta “created a highly centralized, authoritarian republic, reminiscent of the colonial state” (“Justice Under Siege…”). After all, these apparatuses had served well the colonial establishment.

So far, this argument has demonstrated how Kenyatta aborted the ideals that had been the driving force of the struggle for independence in exchange for power and wealth accumulation. But, in addition to these internal or personal factors, the desire to amass wealth and capital, there were external forces that contributed to Kenyatta’s new leaning. The most significant of these factors was neocolonialism--the reincarnation of colonialism proper.
With regard to how neocolonialism drove Kenyatta to reproduce the colonial state, Odinga provides a very well articulated and convincing argument. According to Odinga, although Britain granted her former colonies independence, “she was by no means prepared to withdraw her influence completely.” Therefore, “the strategy was to place in power in Kenya those elements that would be favourably inclined to Britain, and would safeguard her economic and military interests” (256). This is because, as Odinga explains,

Neo-colonialism, after all, is not centred in a vacuum. It is built on to the previous colonial history of the country in which it operates, from foundations that the colonial regime lays before its ostensible departure. The object of neo-colonialism is to ensure that power is handed to men who are moderate and easily controlled, political stooges. Everything is done to ensure that the accredited heirs of colonial interests capture power. (256)

Anderson corroborates Odinga’s view in his argument that “the British negotiated and bargained their way to peaceful and mutually beneficial settlements” (5), with the moderates who would be facilitators of neo-colonialism.

Thus, the colonial government bequeathed the reins of power people it was confident would continue to support its interests. In other words, by the time the British “vacated” Kenya, they left in place a network that would guarantee their interests were well taken care of. It is, therefore, not surprising that Kenyatta’s hegemony would reproduce colonial structures considering that the ruling elite included people like Charles Njonjo, son of colonial chief Josiah Njonjo, and who would become the powerful Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs during both Kenyatta and Moi’s regime.
Writing about him, Macharia Gaitho, Editor of the Sunday Nation, a publication of the Daily Nation, refers to him as “Sir Charles,” the “Duke of Kabeteshire” (Njonjo hails from Kabete in Kenya). Gaitho reminisces how Njonjo struck many in “The effected style and mannerisms of English aristocracy that so defined him.” That, “In his desperate attempts to be more English than the English, Mr. Njonjo openly looked down at everything African” (“Njonjo is Living in a Time-Warp”). Thus, by bequeathing reins of power to people who were products of colonial habitus, the elite schooled in colonial ideology, the colonial system was assured the net-work it was leaving behind would continue to take care of its interests.

Kenyatta’s regime pursued a literacy policy that was representative of its ideology, a system meant to reproduce the “cultural arbitrary” to use Bourdieu and Passeron’s term. Consequently, the Establishment did not undertake any revolutionary measures to purge the literacy system of colonial elements. For instance, as I pointed in Chapter Four, Kenyatta’s regime perpetuated a functional approach to literacy at the expense of critical literacy since it functioned to deny teachers and students room to engage in critical discourse that would threaten the status quo. In addition to perpetuating the functional approach to literacy, the regime reproduced the same Repressive State Apparatuses, including police force, the public service, and the judicial system to suppress discourse. As a result, discourse at all levels was censored and suppressed to curtail critical discourse that would threaten the status quo. And just like during the colonial period, as I pointed out in Chapter Four, critics of the Establishment, including university teachers and students, were rounded up and detained, usually without trial.
6.1.3. Daniel Arap Moi’s Hegemony and the Reproduction of the Colonial Literacy System

Daniel Moi’s background differs significantly from that of Kenyatta. Kenyatta came from a well-off background; had a sound education (he had obtained university education, including graduate education, in London); had national appeal owing to his role in the struggle for independence and subsequent detention which made Kenyans to revere him as “the father of independence” (Throup and Hornsby 27); came from a populous and economically well situated tribe (the Kikuyu). By contrast, Moi did not have much to boost his ethos. His family was not well-off; he had only attained modest education (he had trained as a teacher); he came from a small tribe, Tugen, which is a sub-tribe of the Kalenjin community; he had not “articulated a strong nationalist position” in the struggle for independence (Widner 135) except that he visited Kenyatta when he was in detention, an incident that was given a lot of prominence during his presidency.

In spite of these obstacles, Moi rose to become Jomo Kenyatta’s Vice-President and Minister for Home Affairs from 1966 to 1978 and eventually the second president following Kenyatta’s death in 1978. Besides his disadvantaged background, Moi’s ascension to power faced hurdles from another quarter: Kenyatta’s inner circle. As Korwa Adar and Isaac Munyae observe, “Although Moi was loyal to Kenyatta, he was never accepted into Kenyatta’s inner circle.” In fact, towards the end of Kenyatta’s regime, as he was advancing in age, the ruling elite was already scheming on a succession plan that would ensure one of them succeed Kenyatta. They orchestrated the famous “Change the Constitution” movement which sought to amend the Constitution to remove the Constitutional provision that a Vice-President automatically becomes acting
President for ninety days following the death or incapacitation of an incumbent president. This move was meant to block Moi from becoming president and to pave way for one of the “Kiambu clique” to succeeded Kenyatta (Throup and Hornsby 20-21). Although the movement did not succeed, it exposed the kind of resistance the Moi presidency had to contend with. In fact, when he ascended to power, as Nga’ng’a Mbugua reports, this clique dismissed him as a passing cloud.

Given this background, it is not surprising that Moi’s first agenda when he came to power was to legitimize his hegemony. According to Korwa and Munyae, “His grand design turned out to be a strategy geared toward the achievement of specific objectives, namely the control of the state, the consolidation of power, the legitimization of his leadership, and the broadening of his political base and popular support.” But, how was he going to achieve this goal?

In spite of the challenges Moi was faced with by the time he assumed power, many factors worked to his favor. To begin with, Moi had been a beneficiary of Kenyatta’s grand plan of eliminating opposition because when KADU was pressurized to dissolve itself and join KANU, Kenyatta appointed him, then Chairman of KADU, Minister for Home Affairs, a post he retained even after his appointment as Vice-President in 1967. National security, which became the pretext for silencing critics, and the police force that implemented the orders to crack down on dissidents were in his docket. In fact, as I pointed out in Chapter Four, it is actually Moi who signed the detention order of Ngugi wa Thiong’o in 1977, in his capacity as Minister for Home Affairs, invoking the need to protect the security of the people of Kenya and the Government. Prior to that, according to Adar and Munayae, when he detained Odinga
and the other leaders of KPU, he justified the action by stating, “any government worth its salt must put the preservation of public security above the convenience of a handful of persons who are doing their utmost to undermine it.”

In other words, Moi came to power already schooled on how to suppress opposition to his regime after fourteen years overseeing and operating the apparatuses that Kenyatta had used against his critics. Owing to this background, it is not surprising that when he came to power, as Korwa argues, he kicked off his agenda by making several constitutional amendments that would give him latitude to entrench his hegemony. For instance, in 1982 he pushed for Constitutional amendments to include Section 2 (A) that “transformed the country into a de jure one-party state.” In addition, he ordered Parliament to “[reinstate] detention laws which had been suspended in 1978.” In the same amendment, “Colonial era laws, like the Chief’s Authority Act, the Public Order Act, the Preservation of Public Security Act, the Public Order Act, and the Penal Codes, gave the president the right to suspend individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution” (Emphasis added). Eventually, “Parliament [actually all the arms of government], became subordinated to the presidency and the ruling KANU party.” A dictatorship was budding since, as Adar and Munyae observe, “patronage and loyalty to the president became mandatory for one’s political survival.” Moi had a clear-cut agenda, which according to Adar and Munyae was “to silence the intelligent, perceived to be critical of his authoritarian rule.” Granted, Moi’s systemic use of state power and state machinery to suppress discourse by cracking down on critics, as I detailed in Chapter Four, was not coincidental but execution of a system he had mastered through his exposure and experience as Minister for Home Affairs in Kenyatta’s government.
Another factor that worked in Moi’s favor was his exposure to the colonial system. Odinga describes how KADU, under the chairmanship of Moi had been used by the settlers and the colonial government as an instrument to derail the independence process to the point that KADU would collaborate with New Kenya Party, a party of the European settlers formed to advocate settler interests in a postcolonial dispensation (210, 211). This means that, like Kenyatta and other members of the conservative and moderate nationalist blocks described by Anderson, Moi was also schooled and socialized in the capitalistic culture of exploitation and use of state machinery for the purposes of entrenching a hegemony. That Moi’s hegemony was characterized by wanton suppression of discourse and grabbing of national resources is not a surprise given his background. After all, he had promised when he became president he would follow the Nyayo (footsteps) of President Kenyatta (and I would include those of the colonial government) for that is exactly what he did. And since he reproduced the state bequeathed him by Kenyatta, which was the colonial state re-packaged, and given the kairos of his presidency, his hegemony would take the shape described by Makau Mutua: “Insecure at first, President Moi quickly took a number of important measures to consolidate personal rule. The net effect of these measures was to heighten repression and dramatically curtail all freedoms.” And according to Korwa and Munyae: “Detentions and political trials, torture, arbitrary arrests and police brutality reminiscent of the colonial era [became] common during Moi’s tenure.”

It is in this backdrop that Moi formulated his literacy policy. Indeed, his literacy policy was commensurate with his political ideology. As I reported in Chapter Four, like his predecessors, Moi’s government continued to favor a functional approach to literacy,
an approach that I have argued consistently in this dissertation was intended to block empowerment of learners that would lead students to challenge the status quo. Furthermore, his regime heavily censored discourse to curtail any kind of opposition to his hegemony, a policy that led to the detention of many university academic staff and students perceived to be critical of his government. Another consequence of this policy is that discourse patterns and the quality of teaching and learning at the university were affected as lecturers and students strived to be politically correct for fear of antagonizing the Establishment. In other words, like his predecessor, Moi did not purge the literacy system of its colonial elements. In stead, he perpetuated the same structures he had inherited from Kenyatta, even perfecting them, for the purposes of propagating and perpetuating his hegemony.

6.1.4. The NARC “Revolution” and Kibaki’s Hegemony

The National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) victory in the 2002 elections was a monumental landmark in Kenya’s history. To many it was the turning point for which they had yearned for a lifetime. The victory marked the defeat of Moi and KANU as well, the party that had been the vehicle of oppression and exploitation for about forty years having served the hegemonies of both Kenyatta and Moi. It was a culmination of the efforts of many politicians, academicians, civil society, religious leaders, lawyers that had sacrificed to the point of shedding blood to defeat Moi’s twenty four years of dictatorship. The campaign started with the clamor for reviewing the constitution to pave way for a new order, a democratic state that guaranteed human rights and freedom, the rule of law, and competitive multiparty politics. Although Moi had succumbed to both internal and external pressure in 1991 and repealed Section 2A of the Constitution that
had made Kenya a de jure one party state, he went ahead to win the first two multiparty elections (1992 and 1997) mainly because the opposition was polarized as there were so many political parties fielding presidential candidates. Furthermore, Moi was able to exploit his incumbency, such as use of the public service, to manipulate the outcome of the elections. However, with opposition unity in 2002 through the formation of NARC; Moi’s constitutional disqualification following a constitutional stipulation that one could not occupy presidency for two terms; and the fragmentation of his party following his imposition of Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of Jomo Kenyatta, the first President, as the KANU presidential candidate, NARC won the election with a landslide and Mwai Kibaki became the president.

Although I pointed out in Chapter Two that my research was not going to focus too much on NARC since it was still young by the time I started this project, some recent developments in Kenya have forced me to pay a little more attention to the regime since they have a big bearing on the objectives of this study. These developments include: The stalemate in the Constitution review process, the Angloleasing scandal, and the government raid on the East African Standard media house. First, these developments help to validate most claims I am making in this dissertation with regard to the postcolonial regimes reproducing the colonial state. Secondly, they relate to my investigation of the nature of discourse patterns in Kenya’s higher education. In fact, they justify my call for transforming discourse patterns in Kenya’s higher education, my call for decolonizing literacy. Furthermore, the transformation I envision would have to take place within the prevailing socio-political environment hence the need to understand the operations of the incumbent hegemony.
6.1.4.1. The Constitution Review Process

The clamor for multiparty democracy in Kenya went hand in hand with the demand for a review of the Constitution. Many Kenyans felt the current constitution, which was negotiated and written in London shortly before Kenya became independent, was incapable of birthing the new socio-political order Kenyans were yearning for. Having been written during the colonial period, compounded with the fact that Kenyatta and Moi’s governments introduced despicable amendments to facilitate their dictatorships, many people felt the Constitution needed an overhaul. I have already discussed in Chapter Four how Kenyatta and Moi regimes invoked the Constitution to detain government critics without due process. The clamor for Constitution review, therefore, was aimed at purging the constitution of the colonial hangover to midwife a democratic and just society. Moi’s regime vehemently opposed the idea of reviewing the constitution, but the pressure was insurmountable and he reluctantly gave in. The review process began towards the end of his regime and NARC campaigned on the platform of, among other things, delivering a new and democratic constitution within the first hundred days of its being in power if elected. However, almost four years down the line, Kibaki’s government has not delivered a new constitution.

6.1.4.2. The Angloleasing Scandal

In the recent past, news on a scandal going by the name Angloleasing has dominated Kenya’s media, appearing also in international media. The scandal is about the government entering into procurement contracts and paying large amounts of money
to what the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the parliamentary select committee that scrutinizes government spending, called “non-existent finance companies.” According to the committee, “most of these financing companies have been awarded security contracts which make it difficult for Kenyans to establish because of the secrecy that surrounds security aspects of our country” (“What Uhuru’s Probe Team Dug Up”). What stunned many people was that a government that campaigned on a reform agenda, promising zero-tolerance on corruption, could engage in corrupt deals to rip off the country billions of shillings. Furthermore, the scandal was hatched during Moi’s regime, yet instead of the “revolutionary” government exposing and ending corruption of yester years, it jumped right into the shoes of its predecessor and continued “eating” from where Moi’s administration had left.

6.1.4.3. The Government Raid on the East African Standard Media House

Perhaps even more surprising than the Angloleasing scandal was the government raid on the East African Standard media house on March 2, 2006. During the raid “an estimated 30 policemen armed with AK-47 and G3 assault rifles first stormed The Standard’s headquarters at the I & M building…before another squad swooped on the company’s printing plant in Likoni Road…and burnt the day’s newspapers, which were just rolling off the press” (“Fury as Cabinet Split…”). When pressed, the minister in charge of internal security, Mr. John Michuki, claimed that the raid was done “to collect evidence of an intended act whose perpetuation would have posed a major threat to national security;” that intelligence sources indicated the media house had the “intention of inciting ethnic hatred and animosity leading to a breach of the peace” (“Raids: Now
Following the incident, there was a national protest and mammoth demonstrations in most parts of the country.

These three episodes are telling in many ways. First, it is true, as the participants I interviewed expressed, Kibaki’s regime has dramatically opened democratic space. It is gratifying to note that none of those who took to the streets to express their outrage about the government’s raid on the Standard media house was arrested or harassed by the police whereas had it been Moi’s time, the government would have unleashed the police force to stop the protests. Secondly, people have been criticizing the government over the Angloleasing scandal and nobody has been victimized for taking a dissent position. In fact, the public outcry led to the resignation of Kibaki’s key allies such as Mr. David Mwiraria, a long time confidante of the President, as Minister for Finance; Kiraitu Muriungi, also a confidante of President Kibaki, as Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs; Chris Murunguru, who comes from the President’s Nyeri home turf, as Minister for Roads and Transport; and Professor George Saitoti as Minister for Education. The latter, though, resigned on a different corruption charge, the Goldenberg scandal, that took place during Moi’s regime, which Professor Saitoti served as Vice-President and Minister for Finance for more than a decade. Never in the history of the country had cabinet ministers or civil servants, especially those with connections with the ruling elite, resigned over corruption or abuse of office charges.

But, what intrigued me most is the fact that the Minister for Internal Security, Mr. Michuki, would invoke the same pretext, the same rule the colonial system and the other two postcolonial regimes had used to suppress dissent--the pretext of protecting peace and national security. Incidentally, Michuki, had served as a District Officer during the
colonial period, and, therefore, was part of the colonial RSAs. He had also served in
different senior capacities in both Kenyatta and Moi’s governments (“Minister’s ‘Hard
Man’ Attitude…”). So, was it a coincidence that he would command the police to raid the
media house to protect “national security?”

Overall, as this discussion reveals, none of the postcolonial leaders--Kenyatta,
Moi, and I would say to some extent, Kibaki--was willing to decolonize the socio-
political and economic system. Thus, although Kenyatta urged the Mau Mau he was
addressing in Nyeri to support his government because it was a government of their own,
an African government, (Anderson 336), findings of this research prove otherwise. Yes,
postcolonial governments have been headed by Africans, but they have not been for all
Africans. These leaders reproduced the colonial state, the colonial Structure and
Superstructure to advance their own agenda. I agree with Makau Mutua that “the post-
colonial state…wholly inherited the laws, culture, and practices of the colonial state.”

Rok Ajulu provides a very compelling argument to explain why postcolonial
regimes reproduced the colonial state. He argues that “Quite clearly, the Kenyan ruling
elite have either been unable or unwilling to democratise the post-colonial state.”
Although one may argue that there is no way postcolonial regimes would have managed
to decolonize the postcolonial system given their socialization in the colonial system, I
argue the adamancy to pursue revolutionary agenda demonstrated by postcolonial
regimes was intentional. I base my argument on the fact that Kenyatta, for example, had
campaigned on a revolutionary platform only to change his mind when opportunity “to
eat” availed itself. Thus, I concur with Ajulu that the postcolonial state chose to
reproduce the old order, because it “[facilitated] the process of primitive accumulation,”
which was not possible under a revolutionary agenda. The old order was ideal and worth reproducing because in that order, as he puts it, “There were no provisions for democratic institutions and most naturally, it was not only a very powerful instrument with an array of apparatuses for dispensing that power, it was equally central to the whole process of primitive accumulation.”

Therefore, I argue that failure by postcolonial regimes to decolonize the social order is an issue of hypocrisy, a deliberate move, rather than incapacity. This was a calculated move by the new ruling elite and also endorsed by the neocolonial powers since, as Ajulu accurately observes, “The new elites’ economic fortunes rested heavily on access to state-power. Any attempts to democratise the post-colonial state would obviously threaten the new political class’ access to the state and the privileges that accrued from such control.” And, therefore, “The politics of brutality and violence continues precisely because economic mobility and expansion of the new ruling class is largely tied to continued control of state-power. The control of the state therefore is so crucial that it has to be retained at all costs.” Had Kenyatta wanted to pursue a revolutionary agenda, he would have aligned himself with the likes of Odinga, Kaggia, JM, Oneko, and Pio Gama Pinto whom he chose to shun in favor of the moderate or conservative block, the likes of Mbiyu Koinange, Njoroge Mungai, James Gichuru. Moi could have worked with revolutionary voices like Kenneth Matiba, James Orengo, Willy Mutunga, but instead he detained them and so could be said of Mwai Kibaki. He could have worked closely with the revolutionary forces in NARC, but instead he chose to listen to the counsel of the likes of Michuki and what is commonly referred to in Kenyan local politics as his “Muthaiga club.”
The literacy policies the postcolonial regimes pursued were commensurate with the economic and political agenda they pursued. The same autocratic and authoritarian approach that characterized their ideology permeated into literacy, especially higher education where authoritarianism is manifest in the ruthlessness with which discourse was censored and suppressed at the universities leading to the detention, jailing, or exiling of many radical scholars and students. In addition, Policies including adopting a functional approach to literacy were implemented to curtail critical discourse for its conceived threat to the status quo.

In short, these findings proof the other aspect of my first hypothesis that postcolonial regimes reproduced the colonial literacy system to serve their own interests. After all, the colonial literacy system and the discourse patterns it produced had served well the interests of the colonial system and since the postcolonial state was reproducing the colonial state, the old wine, the old education system, would and actually has been ideal in serving the interests of the postcolonial state. Thus, although these regimes formed numerous commissions and task forces to formulate and review educational policies, most reforms were cosmetic. I agree with Amutabi’s argument that the numerous education commissions “appear to be appointed as responses to certain pressure and crises to wade off public concern. The commissions’ reports are usually put aside after the crises or pressures are over…” (141). It is not surprising, therefore, that no radical changes in educational policy have come out of these commissions. Thus, over all, the findings of this research validate the overarching premise of this dissertation that it is impossible to divorce politics from literacy, that literacy is hegemonic. The findings also proof my first hypothesis that the colonial system in Kenya colonized higher
education to serve its political and economic interests and that the postcolonial regimes reproduced the same structures to serve their hegemonic interests. The colonial and postcolonial regimes belonged to the same species, exploiters, and as a cow begets a cow, a pest would definitely beget a pest, the reason the postcolonial regimes reproduced the colonial state and its literacy policies.

6.2. Hypothesis 2: Decolonizing Kenya’s Higher Education.

The findings of this research have confirmed that the postcolonial state reproduced colonial literacy system, the colonized literacy system or the old wine. The issue is: How does Kenya decolonize its literacy system; how does Kenya purge off traits of the old wine in her literacy system so as to produce new wine, a revolutionary literacy system? My second hypothesis: that critical literacy paradigm grounded in dialogic pedagogy and mediated by the teaching of Rhetoric and Composition is imperative in order to decolonize Kenya’s higher education addresses this question and, therefore, has more to do with praxis. It entails recommending strategies that could be used to decolonize literacy. It is a projection. For this reason, I am unable to test this hypothesis based on the findings of the study. However, its validity and the feasibility of the praxis I am advocating will be adduced in the next chapter as I discuss recommendations for change based on the conditions on the ground as revealed by the findings of the study.

In conclusion, the findings of this research have confirmed my hypothesis that the colonial system implemented a literacy system that would serve to propagate its hegemony. A literacy system that functioned to propagate colonial ideology; a literacy system that allowed for suppression of discourse at all levels; and a literacy system that
ensured Africans were marginalized from the discourse of the mainstream by focusing on functional literacy. As the findings of this study attest, the postcolonial regimes had no radical political and economic agenda. In fact, their agenda reproduced colonial state and it is not surprising they reproduced colonial structures, including colonial literacy policies. Postcolonial regimes emphasized functional literacy, were elitist, and most importantly, suppressed discourse in Kenyan universities for the same reason the colonial system had pursued those policies: preservation of their hegemonies. Having established that postcolonial regimes, indeed, reproduced colonial literacy policies, in the next chapter I address strategies for decolonizing literacy in Kenyan universities.
CHAPTER 7. DECOLONIZING LITERACY IN KENYA’S HIGHER EDUCATION.

7.0. Introduction

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the postcolonial state inherited and perpetuated a colonized literacy system. This study found out that the functional approach adopted by postcolonial regimes, and more importantly the suppression of discourse prevalent in Kenyan institutions of higher education and the society in general, is a colonial carry-over. This chapter explores how Kenya’s higher education could be decolonized; how to purge literacy of colonial ingredients to pave way for a revolutionary literacy system, an education system that seeks to empower students to engage in critical discourse whose focus is not just the intellectual development of students but also social change.

7.1. Recommendations for Change

When I was conducting this research, some of the participants I interviewed alluded to strategies they felt would bring changes in the Kenyan university education system. One of the strategies they mentioned is the re-introduction of the tutorial pedagogy. I reported in Chapter Five that most of the lecturers I interviewed lamented they could not use tutorials in their teaching. To most of them, tutorials provided the best avenue for employing interactive teaching approaches which most of them favored. In fact, Liz, one of the lecturers, pointed out that “they” are working toward reviving the tutorial system. However, as noble as the idea of reviving tutorial pedagogy sounds, it has several limitations.
First, the prevailing conditions at the university are not conducive for tutorial pedagogy. To begin with, the main reason lecturers gave for not using this pedagogy is the large classes they teach. Although they cited other reasons such as student resistance, lack of space, and bloated curriculums, my view is that the prevailing teacher-student ratio cannot allow for a tutorial pedagogy to succeed.

Secondly, and most importantly, the way the tutorial system had been implemented in the past is problematic. I reported in Chapter Five that a number of those who had gone through the university system when tutorials were still in place, such as Chems, Mzalendo, Kim, and Beatrice, had observed that lecturers still dominated tutorial sessions. In other words, although the lecturers portrayed tutorials as panacea, it is unlikely their re-introduction, were it going to succeed, would guarantee opening up space and empowering students to fully engage in critical discourse.

Another suggestion one of the participants put across is to train all lecturers in teaching methods. Chems argued that lecturers outside the field of education fail to use interactive pedagogies because they are not trained in teaching methods. He cited the example of the University of Dar-es-salaam in Tanzania which he said has implemented a program called University Teaching and Learning Improvement Program (UTLIP). He also stated that at the University of Nairobi, “It is mandatory for a lecturer to take a course in teaching methodology before one is promoted.” According to Chems, all universities should require lecturers to take such a course.

Unfortunately, without undermining the need to train teachers on teaching methodology, the data I collected and my own experience with the Kenyan university education system do not support Chems argument. Actually, Chems himself, one trained
and training students in the field of education and one who has also participated in UTLIP admitted he does not use interactive approaches because he said the curriculum is bloated and students are not interested in participating in class discussions; that students are prone to regurgitation of ideas they are taught as opposed to being creative. Furthermore, DRM, one of the former university students I interviewed and whose major was education, observed that education courses were notorious for employing the teacher-centered approach. He stated that he had opportunities to express himself in some of his Literature and English courses, but never in education courses. Although he observed education classes were usually large, the fact is his observation disqualifies Chems suggestion.

Without negating the suggestions of these scholars, the findings of this study lead me to conclude that discourse patterns in the university, especially in classrooms, are the way they are not just because the classes are large, or that lecturers are not trained in teaching methods; and neither is it because it is impossible to use tutorials, or because students are resistant to participate in class. I argue there are deeper underlying reasons which must be addressed as a requisite for decolonizing literacy; that re-introducing tutorials or training lecturers may not be plausible solutions because they do not address the root cause of the problem. It is analogous to suppressing pain by using pain relievers instead of diagnosing and treating the actual disease. That is why for a more comprehensive approach, I recommend the following four but related strategies:

1. Stakeholders in university education must reconsider the role of the university.
2. Educators and students must embrace critical literacy paradigm.
3. Educators and students must reconsider their stance on epistemology and ontology.

4. Comprehensive rhetoric and writing courses must be introduced in Universities.

7.1.1. Stakeholders in University Education Must Reconsider the Role of the University.

I reported in Chapter Four that higher education in Kenya is grounded on the functional approach. My conclusion is based on the reports of the various education commissions and task forces I reviewed and also the observations of the participants I interviewed. Both sources emphasized the university’s role in preparing skilled manpower to move the economy. Related to the need to prepare a workforce is the emphasis placed on transmission of knowledge, knowledge on purely an academic standpoint; a viewpoint that divorces knowledge from real life.

I have no problem with universities being centers for equipping people with skills for work. In fact, universities universally have the role of producing graduates equipped with skills and knowledge to take up roles in the different sectors of a society. However, my biggest concern is that by focusing primarily on the functional approach, universities produce graduates who are “knowledgeable” or “skilled” in the different fields they have been prepared for, but incapable of engaging socio-political issues that face them. Furthermore, by depoliticizing literacy, the approach lends itself as an ideological tool for the dominant group to mask hegemony. In other words, by projecting literacy as a neutral process and emphasizing acquisition of skills necessary for work and abstract knowledge, the approach impedes critical discourse that is requisite for social change. It is for this reason I argue that functional approach to literacy is not an appropriate mid-wife for the
radical change in discourse patterns in universities this dissertation is advocating. Instead, I recommend that stakeholders of university education, especially lecturers and students, pay more attention to the role of the university to produce critical thinkers if radical change is to be realized. I emphasize here students and lecturers rather than policy makers, the other major stakeholder in university education, because usually, policy makers are either part of the ruling elite or are under pressure from the ruling elite to formulate or enact policies that advance the interests of the dominant group. Therefore, it would be naïve to expect them to play any significant role in the pursuit of a radical literacy system. It is tantamount to asking them to commit suicide. In fact, radical teachers and students should anticipate resistance from policy makers for they would prefer the status quo.

In other words, I am not arguing against universities producing engineers, doctors, teachers, lawyers, business administrators etc. Rather, my argument is that university teachers and students should see the role of the university as transcending this basic call. I agree with J. F. A. Ajayi, who as early as 1972 when leading African scholars met in Ghana in a workshop to chart out the direction of universities in independent Africa (Yesufu 3), observed that “the university is at once an ally of government in the production of skilled manpower and, at the same time, a critic of the status quo in the search for a better society and the greater approximation of truth. Particularly in a developing situation, the universities are expected to be innovative and, perhaps, radical if not revolutionary.” (14). This is also in line with Nyerere’s argument, in “The University’s Role in the Development of the New Countries,” that although “One of the very important traditional functions of a university has been this pursuit of pure
knowledge--knowledge about things which exist, or happen, just for the sake of finding out more about them,” there is also the need for the university to “[co-operate] with Government and the people” for the achievement of “national goals--basic objectives of society”, “A university does not deserve the name if it does not promote thinking” (2, 3) (Emphasis added).

I acknowledge some education commissions in the postcolonial state have mentioned the role of universities to prepare students to be “creative,” to be “critical,” and to be “problem solvers.” For example, I cited the “Mackay Report” in Chapter Four which saw the university as a “a place where the training of rational men and women of good character, with creative minds and strong convictions, as well as critical reasoning abilities, is pursued…” (32). However, as I pointed out in that chapter, apparently these policy statements are not matched up with action. In fact, the actions of the state, especially in its censorship of discourse, negate this policy. University lecturers also viewed their primary role as that of preparing students to be critical thinkers, yet the praxis I reported in Chapter Five does not match their claims. That is why I argue that in order to decolonize literacy, lecturers and students would need to conceive the university not only as a place where professionals are produced, but also as a place where teachers and students are empowered to be agents of social change; a place where teachers and students pursue knowledge not only for knowledge sake or professional training, but most importantly, for application in problem-solving, including socio-political issues that plague society. If universities were to assume this role, students and teachers would begin to problematize colonial carry-overs not only in the literacy system but in all other sectors
of society. And by countering the hegemony of the dominant group, literacy will become an apparatus for change, not just a tool for perpetuating the status quo.

7.1.2. Educators and Students Must Embrace Critical Literacy Paradigm

For universities to play the role of empowering students and teachers to become agents of change, universities have no choice but to shift to critical pedagogies. I agree with scholars such as Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, James Giroux, Joseph Krestovics, and Knoblauch and Brannon, among others, that empowering education can only thrive within a critical pedagogy context. According to Krestovics, critical literacy aims at “providing students not merely with functional skills, but with the conceptual tools necessary to critique and engage society along with its inequalities and injustices” (51). In other words, not only does critical literacy acknowledge the functional role of literacy, it goes a step further to equip students with tools necessary to make them agents of social change. In fact, he asserts that “A critical pedagogy can challenge the limiting and conformist nature of mainstream educational theory” (51).

Krestovics’ argument is congruent with Freire’s position in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed on the power of critical literacy to develop conscientizacao among students, the capacity to “perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of society” (17). Considering that Kenya has reproduced the colonial Structure and Superstructure for over forty years, a powerful and radical paradigm is required to decolonize the system, one capable of purging the system of the colonial hangovers. An entrenched stain requires a strong detergent and critical literacy, because of its radicalism and capacity to offer conscientizacao, and the “conceptual tools
to critique and engage society” as Krestovics envisions, is apparently the most appropriate paradigm for Kenyan institutions of education.

Another strategic reason for adopting the critical literacy paradigm is because of its capability to address classroom dynamics. I reported in Chapter Five that the teacher-centered approach prevails in Kenyan universities. To the contrary, critical literacy advocates a democratic classroom set-up where power is shared between teachers and students. Freire, in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, for instance, decries pedagogies that reduce students into mere “objects,” “containers,” or “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher (69); what he calls the *banking concept* pedagogy. Instead, he advocates a *dialogic* education, a pedagogy that allows for a classroom environment in which the teacher and students are free to “speak their word,” to “name the world,” which to him is requisite to transforming the world (69, 148). That is, Freire perceives a classroom as a forum for students and teachers to engage in critical discourse (reading and naming the world entails critical discourse), in an equal footing, in the spirit of give and take, a democratic atmosphere, where learners become teachers and teachers become learners (53-54). Kenyan scholars and students ought to embrace this revolutionary idea as a necessary step toward transforming classroom dynamics which are heavily skewed in favor of teachers. I argue that decolonizing discourse patterns at the classroom level would be untenable unless power in the classroom is de-centered by adopting a dialogic approach.

Another reason that makes the critical literacy paradigm vital in decolonizing Kenya’s literacy system is the epistemological and ontological framework upon which the paradigm is grounded. In Chapter One, I argued that although the Sociology of
Education and to some extent the Literacy as Discourse approaches identify the hegemonic nature of literacy, only the critical approach ideologically believes in the capacity of humans, in this case, students and teachers to change the status quo. This theoretical underpinning is crucial in decolonizing Kenya’s literacy system in many ways. First, it provides a theoretical justification for dialogic education for it positions students as co-agents with teachers in their endeavor to liberate society from the hegemony of the dominant group. Secondly, it provides hope in the backdrop of the pessimism associated with the Sociology of Education approach, as I detailed in Chapter One. It provides hope that although colonial legacy is deeply entrenched in the postcolonial state, that although changing the status quo is a monumental and daunting task, it is possible through praxis and human agency.

In fact, another merit of adopting critical pedagogy is the fact that the paradigm is conceived with the awareness of obstacles to change. Almost all the lecturers I interviewed that have attempted to implement interactive pedagogies expressed they had to contend with challenges. This is not surprising because other scholars and theorists who have initiated critical literacy projects elsewhere have reported they have had to overcome hurdles some of which are similar to those Kenyan educators cited. For example student resistance (Thelin; Ira Shor; Allaman), institutional resistance (Mike Rose; Allaman). By adopting this paradigm, lecturers and students will learn to develop the resilience and innovation they require to pursue their agenda which is to engage in critical discourse aimed at transforming not only the literacy system, but society in general.
Thus, critical literacy is necessary in the decolonization of Kenya’s literacy system as the only viable tool capable of dealing with the *habitus*, to use Bourdieu and Passeron’s concept, ingrained in Kenyan educators and students. These educators and students need to be de-socialized from the status quo. Articulating the concept he calls *Desocialization*, Ira Shor argues how traditional education naturally socializes teachers and students into a mental-set, a *habitus*, predetermined by the dominant group (114). All the participants I interviewed, even those who went to school in the seventies, viewed teachers as the only source of authority. In fact some former university students I interviewed, such as Beatrice, Kim, and Atieno thought it was a good thing that lecturers “were in [total] control” or exercised (full) authority in the classroom. The fact that lecturers were the gurus did not seem to disturb them since that is how they were socialized.

For literacy to be decolonized, that is, for dialogic literacy to take root; for power in the classroom to be de-centered; for students to assume the role of co-agents in the pursuit of change; for critical discourse to take place in the classroom, the Kenyan society and more crucially lecturers and students have to undergo what Shor calls *Desocialization*. That is, they must be prepared to “question the social behaviors and experiences in school and daily life that makes us into the people we are…Desocialization from traditional school conditioning that interferes with critical thought” (Shor 114). In other words, the students and teachers, and the society at large, must brace themselves to confront the *habitus* that has conditioned them to be what they are; the ideological and hegemonic forces behind, for instance, suppression of discourse in society and institutions of higher learning. We must do now what was supposed to be
done the first decade of independence: confront colonial leftovers in the postcolonial state and education system and critical literacy paradigm provides the appropriate tools for this pursuit.

However, at the theoretical level, some critics of critical pedagogy, as explained by Schugurensky, have argued that de-centering authority in the classroom would be a recipe for chaos; that embracing dialogic approach in classrooms would lead to laissez faire classroom atmosphere since teachers will no longer be in control. However, this fear is uncalled for. My conception of dialogic pedagogy, as espoused by Freire, entails de-centering authority so that teachers cease to dominate students; deconstructing the notion of teacher authority to eliminate authoritarianism that lecturers exercise. This does not mean that teachers are stripped off authority which often is cited as a downside of critical pedagogy. Freire addresses this controversy in a very compelling way and that is the position I am advocating Kenyan educators and students embrace. In *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, Freire distinguishes between teachers having “authority” and being “authoritative.” And contrary to the notion that his pedagogy negates the role of the teacher, he argues, “the teacher has to teach, to experience, to *demonstrate* authority and the student has to experience freedom in relation to the teacher’s authority” (61). He recognizes that “the authority of the teacher is absolutely necessary for the development of the freedom of the students” (61). What Freire is opposed to, and what Kenyan students and educators should pay attention to, is authoritarianism. As he puts it, “if the authority of the teacher goes beyond the limits authority has to have in relation to the students’ freedom, then we no longer have authority. We no longer have freedom. We have authoritarianism” (61-62). It is this
authoritarianism that hinder interactive approaches the lecturers I interviewed are yearning for.

Thus, the criticism that critical pedagogy would lead to laissez faire classrooms is based on fallacious grounds. What the pedagogy calls for is the inclusion and engagement of students in classroom discourse, inclusion in deciding “the norms and processes by which authority is established and exercised, discipline maintained, and decisions made about what will be learned, via what media, and how, plus the myriad other ingredients which collectively explain why what is going on at a particular moment” (Lankshear and McLaren 11). I argue that confronting authoritarianism would help ease the tension between educators and students that could be responsible for the resistance the lecturers I interviewed reported as being prevalent among most of their students. That is, as students and teachers become empowered and engaged in critical discourse, learning will become meaningful and this would in turn boost learning and teaching motivation among students and teachers. Such an atmosphere is requisite for decolonizing the literacy system.

7.1.3. Educators and students Must Reconsider their Stance on Epistemology and Ontology

In order for a critical literacy paradigm, the dialogic pedagogy, to take root, Kenyan educators and students must reconsider their position on epistemology and ontology.  

Based on the findings of this study, most participants viewed truth as something that exists out there and within reach of “competent” lecturers; truth in terms

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18 Epistemology: defined by James Berlin as “the nature of the known, and the knower”, “the nature of reality” (3, 4). Ontology: defined by Kincheloe as “the nature of being” (7).
of “facts” and that it is the responsibility of lecturers to harvest that truth and then “deliver” it to students. Given this epistemological viewpoint, it is no wonder lecture method is the predominant pedagogy.

Evidently, these participants have adopted a predominantly Platonic view of epistemology. According to Bizzell and Herzberg, “Plato believed that transcendent truth exists and is accessible to human beings” through dialectic (81). Another characteristic of Plato’s epistemology is that it adopts a metaphysical approach to truth (Jarratt xvi). Although I agree absolute truth exists in certain realms, for instance, the truth contained in the Bible, I argue that Platonic epistemology prevalent in Kenyan learning institutions is an impediment to decolonizing literacy; actually it promotes the status quo. Certainly, by construing knowledge in terms of “facts,” as some participants expressed, the epistemology paves way for the notion of educators as gurus, hence legitimizing authoritarianism. In fact, although Plato positions a teacher, a philosopher, as a midwife “who aids the other mind to bring forth those true ideas hidden in the mind’s secret places” (Bizzell and Herzberg 81), the way he portrays the relationship between the teacher and the student in Phaedrus denotes an authoritarian teacher. In the Phaedrus, Socrates, the philosopher or teacher, is portrayed as one with monopoly over knowledge whereas Phaedrus, the student, is reduced to a naïve cheerer, a novice whose knowledge, after all, does not matter. I agree with Phyllis Mentzell Ryder et al, who problematizes the issue of teachers assuming the role of an expert, which they argue impedes learning since the approach fosters teacher-centeredness. That is, instead of teachers working with students in the generation of knowledge, teachers generate knowledge for students, the banking concept (34-37). In other words, in this context, Platonic epistemology impedes
dialogic approach that I am arguing is necessary in order to decolonize discourse inside and outside classrooms.

Instead of this quasi-Platonic approach, I recommend that Kenyan educators and students adopt a sophist epistemology. Contrary to the Platonic view, the sophistic epistemology rejects the notion of absolute truth. McComiskey quotes Gorgias, one of the influential sophists (Swartz 5), who asserted that “all knowledge is opinion” [or doxa] (209). His position is informed by what McComiskey refers to as Gorgias trilemma, that “1) nothing exists, 2) even if anything were to exist, it would be unknowable and 3) even if anything were to be knowable, it would be impossible to communicate” (209). As controversial as the trilemma may be conceived, an important contribution of this epistemology toward decolonizing Kenya’s higher education is that by placing knowledge in the realm of opinion, it rationalizes de-centering teacher authority. The epistemology provides the rationale for deconstructing the notion that teachers “know everything” as Chems, one of the lecturers I interviewed, had observed or as Plato projects in the relationship between Socrates and Phaedrus. By viewing knowledge as opinion, teachers would be compelled to accommodate students “opinions” and by so doing allow for dialogic classrooms.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the relativity or contingency of knowledge, (McComiskey 209, Kinneavy 81), and that truth exists in the realm of probability as opposed to absolute truth (Dissoi Logoi, Mccomiskey 209) in sophistic epistemology provides a rationale for my call for students and educators to engage in critical discourse as they pursue “truth.” In other words, this epistemology disqualifies the banking
concept of education or the teacher-centered approach, making it a crucial tool in
decolonizing literacy.

Another feature of the sophist epistemology that makes it more appropriate in the
bid to decolonize Kenya’s higher education is it accords humans agency, in the context of
this dissertation students and teachers. My rationale for recommending the strategies I am
making in this chapter is the understanding that the Kenyan society is capable of
changing the status quo. Like critical literacy paradigm that believes in the capability of
human beings to liberate themselves from the oppression of the dominant group, the
sophistic epistemology underscores the sovereignty of human agency. This position is
premised on Protagoras’ dictum that “Man is the measure of all things” (“Protagoras…”).
Although I disagree with the atheistic undertone of this statement, I argue that by
promoting humanism, Protagoras, and the sophistic epistemology in general, provides a
context for dialogic pedagogy to thrive, a context for the implementation of a critical
pedagogy that is requisite in decolonizing literacy.

7.1.4. Comprehensive Rhetoric and Writing Courses Should be Introduced in Universities

Introducing comprehensive rhetoric and writing courses in Kenyan universities is
crucial to decolonizing literacy in the country for many reasons. First, and most
importantly, is the recognition of the power of language, the power of discourse. I
reported in Chapter Three and Chapter Five that language policy has always been a
contentious issue in Kenya owing to the political nature of language as Foucault and Gee
have accurately articulated in their theories (see Chapter One). As Rochelle Harris puts it,
“Naming is a political act taking place within language and involves a choice of how and why to name, thus making it rhetorical” (405).

Rhetoricians of all ages have expressed the power of language. In the *Encomium of Helen*, Gorgias argues that “speech [discourse] is a powerful lord, which by means of the finest and most invisible body effects the divinest works” (45). He continues to say “the effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies” (46). I argue that the kind of transformation I am advocating in this dissertation is not going to be achieved by the use of machine guns or missiles, but by what Jasper Neel refers to as “strong discourse;” the kind of discourse that is capable of confronting and countering the discourse of the dominant group, which is deeply ingrained in Kenyan educators and students. Yet, according to Neel, if well honed, the teaching of writing would allow students appropriate this kind of discourse. As he puts it, by adopting writing pedagogies where the teacher plays the role of “discourse facilitator more and more, we have moved toward the time when strong discourse can actually occur in the writing classroom” (210). In fact, he declares that “the teaching of writing should help students learn to seek strong discourse” (210).

Another factor that makes teaching of rhetoric and writing crucial in decolonizing literacy is the epistemic nature of rhetoric. James Berlin quotes Leff who argues that “rhetoric is a serious philosophical subject that involves not only the transmission, but also the generation of knowledge” and, according to Berlin, “rhetoric exists not merely so that truth may be communicated: rhetoric exists so that truth may be discovered” (165). Also advancing the argument that rhetoric is epistemic, Maxine Hairston asserts: “people who believe that rhetoric is epistemic believe that our way of knowing is fundamentally
bound up in our ability to exchange and debate ideas, thus making them meaningful.” Consequently, she views writing “as an act of discovery” (8).

Elsewhere in this chapter, I agreed with Ajayi that universities ought to be a place where teachers and students critique “the status quo in the search for a better society and the greater appropriation of truth” (14). Furthermore, I have explained decolonization of literacy as the purging of the literacy system the traits of colonial education policy that linger on in postcolonial state; purging literacy of any element that holds society captive of the status quo, those elements that colonize the minds of the people and make them prey to the hegemony of the dominant group, those features that make literacy an apparatus for the perpetuation of the oppressive status quo. This process entails equipping students with critical discourse skills that would allow them to problematize, to question the status quo and explore answers, alternatives. Rhetoric and writing would facilitate this pursuit because as Harris puts it, “the texts we choose to write are important sites to understand the self, the world, and culture” (402). In other words, students would be using writing to problematize issues that face them in society and to seek for solutions to those issues.

Furthermore, rhetoric is action driven as opposed to abstraction, a characteristic that positions rhetoric strategically as a tool for change. As Neel points out, the strength of sophistry [I would argue rhetoric in general, including Aristotelian rhetoric] lies first in the sophists [or rhetoricians] awareness of how rhetoric and writing create belief and action; second in the sophists’ willingness to hold all belief permanently in question (without disbelieving); and third in the sophist’s ability to take action only when that action can support itself with a strong
discourse, a discourse whose history of general persuasiveness is long and whose opposite has been given every opportunity to be heard. (210)

Thus, rhetoric and writing will not only allow for students to problematize issues they are faced with, it will also propel them to pursue answers and solutions to those issues and by so doing provide a fertile ground for strong discourses aimed at decolonization of literacy and liberation of society in general.

In other words, the way I am positioning rhetoric and writing courses in this dissertation is different from the traditional role assigned rhetoric, which according to Andrea Lunsford is to empower students in discourse as a “requisite to participation in the intellectual and economic life of the republic” (6). The kind of empowerment Lunsford is talking about is more to acculturate students, whereas what I envision is rhetorical training that equips students with “strong discourse” skills that position them to engage the oppressive discourse of the dominant group; rhetoric and writing programs that employ critical pedagogies in the sense conceived by Harris when he argues that “A student’s own essay is a site for critical pedagogy to be enacted and for critical consciousness and social critique to emerge.” Harris continues, “critical work emerges from students’ processes of composing texts on topics of interest and importance to them,” and that, “critical writing pedagogy with a primary goal of having students claim their own agency and become active participants in critiquing and transforming unjust social institutions happens at the intersections of the personal-critical-rhetorical” (402).

In other words, I perceive rhetoric and writing programs that employ critical pedagogies as an avenue through which students can be equipped with “strong discourse” that engage and critique the status quo with the ultimate goal of achieving social change.
As I pointed out in Chapter Five, public universities in Kenya are now offering some sort of writing courses. However, I also pointed out in that chapter all the participants I interviewed were dissatisfied with the way writing is being taught. In essence, the way writing is currently being taught makes it incapable of facilitating the changes I am advocating in this dissertation:

- Since the banking concept prevails, the writing course does not provide a forum for students and teachers to critically engage issues. This writing is, therefore, incapable of equipping students with the kind of “strong discourse” that would lead to literacy being an apparatus for change.

- The current approach to writing emphasizes grammatical correctness, or language structure, as opposed to students’ ideas. A writing approach that focuses on grammar will not bring about the empowering of students I am recommending in this dissertation.

- The current approach emphasizes product as opposed to the process of writing. In fact, in many instances students are required to produce an error-free essay in one sitting. Such an approach does not allow students to think through ideas. Furthermore, by ignoring collaboration, the approach is not conducive for a dialogic approach.

- The current writing approach is structured as a remedial program. I argue that this notion of writing negates the full potential of rhetoric and writing course-- as a tool to equip students with rhetorical skills relevant for engaging issues that affect the students and the society at large.
It is because of these theoretical and pragmatic considerations that I recommend a paradigm shift in the writing instruction in Kenyan universities. I use the concept of paradigm shift as expounded by Hairston. Borrowing heavily from Kuhn’s hypothesis of paradigm shift, Hairston defines a paradigm as “a stable period” in a scientific field, a period when “most practitioners in the discipline hold a common body of beliefs and assumptions.” However, “when several people working in a field begin to encounter anomalies or phenomena that cannot be explained by the established model, the paradigm begins to show signs of instability” (76). Given this context, she defines a paradigm shift as the “replacement of one conceptual model by another one” (77). In line with this theorization, the paradigm shift I am recommending should incorporate the following features:

- An acknowledgement by Kenyan educators and students that students joining the university need writing course(s) to help them cope with writing requirements of the university--view that does not conceptualize writing as a remedial program but a necessity for all students. Here I am informed by James Berlin’s argument that “the rhetorical training [students joining the university] bring with them inevitably proves--regardless of their intelligence or training--unequal to the task of dealing with their new intellectual experience” (3). David Bartholomae supports this view by arguing that students need to learn and master writing skills necessary to allow them fit into the discourse communities of their disciplines.

- Introduction of First Year Writing Programs as a full-fledged academic program offering writing courses to first year students and subsequent levels as need arises. I recommend this program be moved from the Communication Skills program to
the English Department, which by virtue of being a language-based department makes it institutionally convenient to teach Rhetoric and Writing courses.

- Since there may be no faculty trained in the teaching of rhetoric and writing, all teachers in the English Department, including Literature, should receive in-service training to teach the course. Swahili Departments should also adopt the rhetorical approach to teaching writing so as to equip their students with rhetorical skills necessary to engage in critical discourse.

- Writing classes should adopt critical pedagogy. One way of employing critical pedagogy in writing classrooms is for teachers and students to adopt the concept of “generative themes” as a technique for coming up with writing topics. These themes should focus on socio-political issues affecting students or the society as opposed to abstract topics. The teacher and students should engage these issues critically and dialogically. (See Shor, Allman, Freire and Macedo for models of critical pedagogy projects).

- Other departments should also encourage critical writing among students. As Knoblauch and Brannon demonstrate, critical pedagogy can be employed in other disciplines (52-54); it is not a preserve of rhetoric and composition. Granted, teachers in all programs ought to promote critical writing among students as opposed to focusing on regurgitated ideas and grammar.

- A Shift from “current traditional” approach to “process” approach. The kind of approach employed by Kenyan educators, the one I have described above, fits what in rhetoric and composition theory is referred to as “current traditional” approach--one that emphasizes product and language structure (Miller 106-107,
“Writing process,” on the other hand, emphasizes the entire process through which writing is produced. The merits of the process approach are enormous. Most importantly, it addresses the “natural process” through which writers write. According to Hairston, “most writers have only a partial notion of what they want to say when they begin to write, and their ideas develop in the process of writing.” She adds: “Another truth is that usually the writing process is not linear, moving smoothly in one direction from start to finish. It is messy, recursive, convoluted, and uneven. Writers write, plan, revise, anticipate, and review throughout the writing process, moving back and forth among the different operations involved in writing without any apparent plan” (85). The “current traditional” approach is theoretically incapable of capturing this reality about writing. Rationalizing the paradigm shift from the “current traditional” approach to the process approach, Lad Tobin states that what those teachers who pioneered the process approach detested was the feeling that this traditional approach produces “canned, dull, lifeless student essay that seemed the logical outcome of a rules-driven, teacher-centered curriculum that ignored student interests, needs, and talents…Bad, boring, uninspired writing process that, in turn, was a symptom of bad, boring, uninspired pedagogy” (4-5). I agree with Tobin that the traditional approach to writing is incapable of empowering students with the “strong discourse” as I am recommending in this dissertation.

- The process approach has several competing sub-theories: the cognitive view, the Expressive view, and the social view (Lester Faigley). I argue that because of its emphasis on the social construction nature of knowledge and “how the individual
is a constituent of a culture” (Faigley 535), the social view would be instrumental in promoting the dialogic pedagogy and critical discourse I am recommending Kenyan writing classes adopt. However, by paying a lot of attention to audience at the expense of the writer, the student, I argue that employing this approach alone would negate one of the objectives of the writing programs I am rooting for, the empowerment of students to “name their world,” to have their voice heard. But, I also acknowledge the downsides of the expressive view, the fact that it overemphasizes the writer (Burnham 19) at the expense of other equally important aspects of writing such as audience and social context. Since I am advocating for dialogic classrooms, modeled in a sophistic epistemology where different positions to an issue are considered and critiqued, then I recommend meshing together the social approach and the expressive approach. Meshed together, the two would produce a pedagogy that is compatible with critical pedagogy.

- Teacher-student ratio is likely to be a big hindrance to the implementation of the kind of writing programs I am recommending in this dissertation. However, I suggest graduate students in English programs and Literature be utilized in the teaching of writing. An arrangement should be made to train them on how to teach writing and here I recommend use of workshops.

- With regard to space, writing classes should not be confined to English and Literature buildings alone. Instead, every available class space on campus should be utilized. After all, the writing program transcends these two fields; it is meant to “serve” all academic programs on campus.

19 Graduate students in Kenyan universities usually are not involved in teaching.
7.2. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate how hegemony plays out in the discourse patterns in Kenyan universities; why postcolonial regimes reproduced the colonial literacy policies, especially suppression of discourse in Kenya’s higher education and how the literacy system in Kenya’s higher education could be de-colonized. The findings of this study addressed my research questions for they revealed that the colonial system did actually colonize literacy so that it could serve as an apparatus for propagating and perpetuating the interests of the colonial state. The study also revealed that the postcolonial state reproduced colonial structures it inherited because its agenda was not radically different from that of the colonial system. That having been schooled in the colonial system, postcolonial regimes opted to reproduce the same apparatuses put in place by the colonial system for political survival.

These findings warrant the need to decolonize literacy, to purge literacy of ingredients of the old wine so that a revolutionary literacy system, new wine, capable of birthing social change could be produced. The framework is already in place, the ground has been broken since the NARC regime has opened up democratic space. What is now required is for teachers and students to stop “looking behind their shoulders,” as Laaju remarked, and start perceiving themselves as agents of social change. A time to engage in critical discourse aimed at questioning why society is the way it has been; why discourse patterns are the way they have been; and how change can be achieved. It is high time universities reconsidered their role with a view of shifting from conformity to agents of change, embracing a view of epistemology that allows for critical and pragmatic
engagement of knowledge and social issues, one where critical discourse is pursued, and where teachers and students engage in a dialogic approach to teaching and learning.

7.3. **Recommendations for Future Research**

Owing to the scope of this study, there are some areas which, although related to my research, I was unable to tackle but which I recommend future researchers to consider:

1. I stated in Chapter Six that the findings of this study could not allow me to test my second hypothesis: the success of critical literacy paradigm and the introduction of rhetoric and writing programs in decolonizing literacy. In this chapter I have included two other strategies to be incorporated in the bid to decolonize literacy, the need for stakeholders in higher education to reconsider the role of the university and for Kenyan educators and students to re-examine their view on epistemology and ontology. I recommend future researchers do an ethnographic study to evaluate the success of the praxis I have recommended in this dissertation in decolonizing Kenya’s higher education.

2. In this study I have focused mainly on higher education. I suggest future researchers replicate the study, but this time focus on other levels of education. For example, what is the nature of discourse patterns in primary and high schools? Why are they the way they are? How can they be changed?

3. Future researchers could also investigate the role of literacy in African countries and other parts of the world where democracy is beginning to take root; how these countries are reconciling the budding democracy with the suppression of discourse that has been deeply entrenched in those countries. In the Kenyan
context, for example, one could investigate the role literacy is playing in NARC’s hegemony given that the regime has opened up democratic space considerably.
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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

By signing this document, you are granting consent for the information gained in this interview to be used as part of a research project that I am conducting for my dissertation as a graduate student in the Rhetoric and Writing Ph. D Program, English Department, at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. My purpose in this study is to investigate the nature of teacher-student and student-student interactions in the classroom setting in Kenyan universities and the kinds of teaching methods professors use in those institutions. The results of the study, I hope, will benefit the entire education system in Kenya. You are being asked to be one of the people who will be interviewed. This audio-recorded interview will take one hour and will be face-to-face.

I do understand that some of the questions to be asked may have some political implications but your decision to participate or not participate will have no impact on your relationship to your school or education ministry. To ensure your safety, I guarantee to honor your right to confidentiality.

As the researcher, I will protect your confidentiality by: first, making sure nobody else will have access to the recorded tapes but me. My dissertation advisor, Professor Bruce Edwards, may also listen to the audiotapes but they will be in my custody. Secondly, once I am through with writing the dissertation, I will destroy the tapes. Thirdly, I will not disclose your identity but will refer to you by a pseudonym during the interview and in the dissertation. Fourthly, you will be allowed the option of not answering any question you may not be comfortable with during the interview. Also, you will be free to withdraw at any time during the interview. Fifthly, you will be free to ask questions about the study before making your decision whether or not to participate in the study, during the interview, and after the interview. Finally, although I would really appreciate your participation, participating in this study is fully voluntary. I will supply you with a copy of the results of this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me or my advisor and if you have any question or concern about your rights as a participant, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) at Bowling Green State University, Ohio.

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By signing this document, you are declaring that you have read the document, your questions have been answered, and that you agree to participate in the study.

Sign__________________________________________ Date________________________
Appendix B

Interview Questions: Ex-University Students.

1. Where did you go to school?
   - High school
   - Undergraduate
   - Masters
   - Ph.D.
2. When did you graduate?
3. What was your Major at the university?
4. What were your own educational experiences like?
5. From your experience in school, how would you describe the lectures’ authority in the classrooms?
6. What about students’ authority?
7. Did your lecturers give students the opportunity to express themselves in the classroom?
8. Did you have avenues to express your views within and without the classroom?
9. Did your lecturers demonstrate willingness to learn from the students?
10. What do you think about the kind of education you received? Was the focus to prepare you for work/career, to impart knowledge to you, or to make you a critical thinker?
11. What did you like about your educational experience?
12. What didn’t you like about your educational experience?
13. Did your lectures criticize any aspects of the educational system?
14. Did your lectures criticize in class some things they considered wrong in the society?
15. Did you have the freedom to criticize the bad things that were happening in school and in the wider society?
16. Do you think there was pressure from the school’s administration or the government upon the university community not to criticize the bad things that were happening in school and the wider society?
17. Were there lecturers students considered to be radical?
18. If you answered yes to 20 above, what made students to view such lecturers as radical? What were students’ attitudes towards such lecturers?
19. Did you ever have problems with your teachers, or school authorities, or government for expressing your views?
20. If yes, how was the problem resolved?
21. If you answered yes to 22, how did that incident affect your attitude toward how you subsequently reacted or responded to issues you did not approve in the education system and the wider society?
22. In other words, what would you say about intellectual freedom at the university when you were a student in regard to lecturers and students?
23. How did you learn writing? Were writing courses offered at the university you attended?
24. What writing challenges did you face at the university?
25. What do you think about universities offering writing courses?
26. How should these courses be taught?
Appendix C

Interview Questions: Lecturers

1. Where did you go to school?
   - High school
   - Undergraduate
   - Masters
   - Ph.D.
2. When did you graduate?
3. What do you teach?
4. When did you start teaching?
5. What were your own educational experiences like?
6. How would you describe the teacher-student authority/relationship during your university days as a student?
7. How would you describe student involvement and opportunity to express themselves in the classroom during your days as a student at the university?
8. What kinds of teaching methods did your professors use?
9. What teaching methods do you use?
10. What is your teaching philosophy?
11. How has your experience as a student influenced your own teaching philosophy and methods?
12. What is your relationship with students like?
13. What is your opinion about teacher authority in the classroom?
14. Do you allow students to criticize your teaching methods or the content of what you teach?
15. What do you consider to be your role as a teacher: To prepare students for work when they graduate, to just impart knowledge to them, to be critical thinkers, any other?
16. As a university lecturer, do you see any connection between education and politics?
17. Have you had any problems with the university authorities or the government for your intellectual position or teaching philosophy?
18. Do you criticize the bad things you see in society in class as you teach?
19. Are there aspects of the education system you don’t approve? If so what are they? Have you expressed these opinions in public?
20. Do you allow students to criticize in class the things they don’t approve about the education system and the wider society?
21. Do you consider there to be political interference with academic freedom in the university?
22. Do you feel you have freedom to express your ideas in class, with other professors, and outside of the university?
23. How would you compare the level of intellectual freedom between now and in the past (for example when you started teaching)
24. Has politics affected your teaching philosophy or teaching methods?
25. In your opinion, what is the relationship between intellectual freedom for lecturers and for students?
26. Did you take any writing courses when you were a student at the university?
27. How did students learn to write?
28. How would you describe students’ writing proficiency in the courses you teach?
29. What do you think about public universities offering writing courses?
30. How should these courses be taught?