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Chapter

Leading for Educational Change: How Can We Disrupt the Colonial Legacy?

Joseph Seyram Agbenyega and Emmanuel Semanu Asiam

Abstract

There are various ways school leadership is understood and practised in education systems worldwide. Any act of leadership that gives rise to something new is a creative leadership. Drawing on complex dynamical systems critical social theory perspective of Pierre Bourdieu, the chapter analyses the views of selected teachers and school leaders in five basic schools in Ghana to explicate the ways leadership is conceptualized and enacted in practice in their schools. Doing so, the chapter argues that leadership evolves from human habitus in the interaction of capital within fields of practice. This view allows us to envision the non-linearity of leadership and to move away from reproductive or colonial leadership.

Keywords: Bourdieu, education, Ghana, habitus, leadership

1. Introduction

The development of quality education is closely linked to effective leadership [1]; however, attaining effective leadership is a challenge that many schools grapple with daily. Concerns have been raised about colonial forms of leadership and management in education systems, for example, leading by domination which deprives those who are oppressed, the agency and opportunity to take risks and contribute to the development of their schools [2]. Internationally, leadership styles such as distributive, democratic and transformational, just to mention a few, have replaced colonial styles of leadership. This is allowing teachers to support headteachers in decision-making to improve school practices. In Ghana, where this study was conducted, government has implemented several education reforms, for example, a free pre-tertiary education policy to expand educational access to all citizens; however, little attention has been given to school leadership.

This chapter aims to contribute to the literature on school leadership for educational change by examining selected Ghanaian Junior High School teachers' and headteachers' experiences and perspectives of effective leadership practices in their schools. This focus is important because leadership is frequently mentioned as one of the panaceas for educational transformation, but which is at the bottom of consideration in educational policy making in Ghana. With more demands placed

on schools to make all students learn and succeed in education, there is a need for developing systems whereby headteachers and teachers can work together with less political interference to transform schools.

This chapter has three main purposes: (1) to glean the insider perspectives of teachers and headteachers about the concept of effective leaders; (2) to gain insights into the leadership practices and possibilities offered by Pierre Bourdieu's theory in analyzing those practices; and (3) to identify the challenges the teachers and headteachers face pertaining to leadership effectiveness in their schools and ways to improve existing practices. These purposes indicate the need to further explore and understand leadership issues in the context of school practice in Ghana. Understanding the perspectives of teachers and headteachers about how leadership is enacted and the opportunities and challenges that exist are crucial for improving schools. In view of this purpose, the following three qualitative research questions were formulated to lead the investigation.

- How do headteachers and teachers in the research schools understand effective school leadership?
- How is leadership practised in the research schools?
- What challenges do the teachers and headteachers described pertaining to leadership effectiveness in their schools?

In the sections that follow, the chapter introduces the literature on Pierre Bourdieu's ideas with respect to leadership, followed by the study to illustrate teachers' and headteachers' experiences in relation to the enactment of school leaders' roles. We conclude with an analysis of implications and ways to transform leadership processes in Ghanaian schools so that school leaders and their followers can work as a team to improve school performance.

2. Literature informing the study

Effective school leaders aim to develop schools as places of innovation and efficiency. There is much evidence in Bourdieu's concept to support this, and yet, we have noticed that leading for educational innovation and efficiency are difficult to implement, particularly in developing countries [2, 3]. This situation can be partially explained in ways that leaders' roles are understood, enacted as a command rather than leadership as a process of influencing and rendering service [2]. It is found that in school systems where leaders suppress teacher agency schools tend to remain traditional, and 'legitimate and institutionalise dominant beliefs and values; a process that both undermines critical thinking as a democratic educational and social practice' ([4], p. 8).

Pierre Bourdieu's work seeks to problematize and uncover the confounding effects of subjugation, exclusion and representation that perpetuate notions of superiority in educational leadership and management [5]. Bourdieuan constructions of leadership and leaders' roles offer a socio-critical space to examine and analyze discursively how capital and habitus (belief and value systems) are structured in fields (networks of relations) to create hierarchical meanings and practices of educational leadership. Therefore, through Bourdieuan analysis, the arrays of power, identity and subjective/

objective relationships that exist among leaders and leadership processes can be identified and transformed [6].

2.1 Bourdieu's view of leadership

Pierre Bourdieu's theory has had great influence on reflexive practice, inequality and injustices in education. His theory helps researchers and practitioners to interrogate and disrupt how education systems produce and reproduce existing orthodoxies of leadership as a process of domination [6, 7]. The purpose for using Bourdieu's theory is to create transformative spaces for developing education to serve the interest of all. However, little of his work has been applied to educational leadership.

In this chapter, we focus on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field to explicate how leadership can be enacted as a dynamic and collaborative process to counter inequality and create efficient education systems. Contemporary research emphasized that shared decision-making, where leadership processes are distributed, can have powerful effect on educational effectiveness [1]. Thus, taking a social critical perspective highlights the need to examine leadership through habitus, capital and field – the complex and interrelated theoretical lenses of Pierre Bourdieu.

2.2 Habitus and leadership

Bourdieu defines habitus as 'internalized embodied social structures' ([8], p. 18). Habitus includes our beliefs, values, norms and attitudes and dispositions, which reflect our sociocultural contexts in which they are developed. Habitus is

a kind of transforming machine that leads us to reproduce the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products ([9], p. 87).

Bourdieu explains that through the habitus individuals can generate a wide range of actions linked to their values, beliefs and dispositions. These actions can either be a transformation of dominant practices or the reproduction of the status quo. Ritzer for example argues that 'habitus is a structuring structure; that is, it is a structure that structures the social world. On the other hand, it is a structured structure; that is, it is a structure which is structured by the social world' ([10], p. 541).

Arguably, leadership practices emanate from leaders' habitus which involves the deployment of their beliefs, values and dispositions. Effective school leaders shift away from a set of rigid pre-programmed ideologies and embrace rather generative and transformative approaches that value multiple voices within their school community. This means, headteachers or school leaders must be critically aware of how their own dispositions can produce practices to structure teachers or offer them opportunities to be valued players within the school leadership process. If habitus shapes the ways individuals understand and relate to others in the social world, then it is inevitable that it can be developed to promote distributive leadership by dismantling structured powers of domination. Bourdieu argues that habitus is embodied in everyone which is nurtured through historical and institutional socialization and the embodiment of habitus is visible through practice [9]. In this sense, the enacted leadership practices of school leaders can be argued to emanate from their embodied habitus.

Arguably, the inclusion or exclusion of teachers in decision-making by headteachers or policy-makers depends on the values and dispositions that those who wield power have towards others. Viewing teachers as objects to be manipulated, which also draws from the human habitus, often leads to imposing predetermined structures or decisions on them. However, it is argued that a positive image of school community members often creates respectful spaces for all members of the school community to contribute to and share in the leadership of the school [8].

2.3 Capital and leadership

Leadership in schools involves the use of multiplicities of capital. Bourdieu defines capital in various forms – economic, cultural, social and symbolic [11]. Economic capital functions as wealth or resources with monetary values. For example, school leaders draw on funding and other resources in their schools to help the school function to its maximum. Bourdieu explains cultural capital as a person's or an institution's recognized wealth, expertise, experience and wisdom to lead others [11]. Added to this is social capital, which can be explained as social relations that exist in schools between and among the members of the school community. Symbolic capital on the other hand describes individual status, honor or prestige within the existing relationships within schools [11]. Capital in its various forms can determine the nature of leadership and school management relationships that exist in the ecology of schools. By implication, school leaders that position themselves as having superior knowledge to other members of the school community are likely to engage in dictatorial leadership practice than leaders who view others as valued colleagues who are equally knowledgeable and worthy of consulting before important decisions are made in the school [12]. Indeed, recognizing the capital that others in the school community bring can help develop strong and effective leadership in schools.

It can be argued that the destabilizing experience of many school leaders emerges from the lack of respect for the capital of those they work with in their schools. According to Bourdieu, the struggles within education fields of any form are by far the result of the ways some leaders act towards their members of the school as if their capital is not worthy of utilization [13].

Bourdieu's ideas thus offer deeper understandings of how the positioning of a school leader can either engineer crisis or collaboration within schools. In addition, hierarchical leadership behaviours always induce issues of equity, social justice and human rights within schools [11]. This is because the lack of recognition for teachers' individual cultural capital and recognized knowledge may create perceptions and actions that perpetuate inequality and injustices against those who are considered inferior in the school community [11, 13]. To counter this, Bourdieu suggests that educators must move away from positioning people in deficits views by recognizing their various forms of cultural, symbolic and economic capital [12, 14]. By assigning important roles, or distributing leadership, leaders are signaling that they value and respect the capitals of others and that they recognize and authorize their collective contributions to the leadership and development of the school [13].

2.4 Field and leadership

Bourdieu explains field in terms of spatial relations that people form in spaces of social and institutional practice. In his view, 'fields are hierarchical and contain dominant voices and powerful agents' ([5], p. 156). Within a field, 'constant,

permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field' [7]. Mills and Gale claimed that the concept of field helps us to analyze the complexities of social lived experience in schools [14]. The role of school leaders is interactively complex because it deals with a variety of human habitus and different forms of capital in fields. Field as a social arena of participation according to Bourdieu [12] creates opportunities as well as challenges when people interact, engage and fight for recognition in pursuit of efficiency [12]. Leaders' practices and decision-making in schools are often influenced by doxa or taken-for-granted beliefs. It is argued that habitus is, 'utterly taken-for-granted beliefs about the world and existence ... sustained by shared beliefs and orientations' ([15], p. 340). School leaders and every action taken by them occur in social fields.

Arguably, since fields are spaces of the acquisition of knowledge, capital and credentials tensions exist, thus making it challenging for leaders in varying degrees to work inclusively and please everyone. Yet, school leaders have the responsibility to develop dispositions that could minimize tensions in schools between the leadership team and the rest of the school's community. This means, leaders must take a critical attitude to embrace distributive leadership practices that create opportunity for honest collaboration as a way of life in the school [16]. It is argued that distributive leadership 'takes as one of its central projects an attempt to be discerning and attentive to those places and practices where social agency has been denied and produced' ([17], p. 3). Bourdieu also added his voice that when educators become conscious of their positioning relative to others in fields, it is then that collective knowledge can be brought together to enhance the efficiency of leadership in schools [13].

3. The study context

The study reported in this chapter took place in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Ghana is a west African nation with a population of 31 million distributed over 16 regions. Ghana was a former colony of the British Empire but got her independence in 1957 and became a republic in 1960. Schooling in Ghana is free from primary to secondary level, and students are supported through a school feeding programme. The Ministry of Education is the policy formulation agency for education whilst the Ghana Education Service is a government agency under the Ministry of Education responsible for implementing government policies that ensure Ghanaians of school-going age irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, disability, religious and political dispositions receive quality formal education.

Pre-tertiary education is divided into difference phases as listed:

- Phase 1 [Foundation level comprising Kindergarten 1 and 2],
- Phase 2 [Lower primary level made up of B1–B3],
- Phase 3 [Upper primary level of B4–B6],
- Phase 4 [Junior high school level of B7–B9], and
- Phase 5 [Senior high school level comprising SHS1–SHS3].

This study took place at the Junior high school level. The purpose is to find out from teachers and school leaders (headteachers) their understanding of effective leadership and how leaders lead in their schools.

4. Methods

A qualitative interpretive research approach with in-depth individual semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers and five headteachers was adopted for this study. The participants were from five Junior High schools (one headteacher and two teachers) from each school making a total of 15 participants. **Table 1** shows the first names and related demographic details of the participants. The interviews were conducted by the first author and recorded for later transcription and analysis. Each interview, which lasted on an average of 45 minutes, was conducted in each school after the participants have completed their daily work. We used a six-stage thematic approach developed by Braun and Clarke to analyze the corpus of interview data [18]. The approaches involved data familiarization, generation of initial codes for comparison, developing themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the final report [18]. However, our analysis was not independent of theory; rather, we reflexively applied Bourdieu's theory to shift through the corpus of data to identify if the participants' views referred to habitus, capital or field mechanisms. By so doing, we brought deeper interpretations to the data set.

4.1 Ethical considerations

This research received ethical permission from Emirates College for Advanced Education. Additionally, permission was sought from the respective school heads

Pseudonym	Age in yrs.	Position	Qualification	Experience in yrs.
Amanda	49	Class teacher	B.Ed.	23
Clara	52	Headteacher	M.Ed.	23
Dorothy	49	Headteacher	M.Ed.	17
Evelyn	47	Class teacher	B.Ed.	19
Favor	28	Class teacher	B.Ed.	3
Jack	44	Class teacher	B.Ed.	14
Jessica	35	Class teacher	B.Ed.	9
John	45	Headteacher	B.Ed.	18
Kate	36	Class teacher	B.Ed.	8
Kevin	36	Class teacher	B.Ed.	9
Maxwell	56	Headteacher	B.Ed.	26
Michael	51	Class teacher	B.Ed.	27
Peter	50	Headteacher	B.Ed.	22
Terri	26	Class teacher	B.Ed.	2
Tom	48	Class teacher	B.Ed.	17

Table 1. *Research participants in alphabetical order and demographics.*

after the research was clearly explained to them. Invitation and consent forms were sent to potential participants, and those who returned the signed consent forms were included as participants in the study. Interview transcripts were sent to the participants for confirmation before analysis started.

5. Findings and discussion

Generally, the purpose of this study was to analyze the views of Junior high school level teachers and headteachers about their understanding of effective leadership, how leadership is practised in their respective schools and the leadership challenges that the teachers and headteachers face in the management of their schools. The data interpretation process adopted interpretive approach using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field and focused upon three important themes. The definitions, explanations, overlaps and tensions between the different understandings of leadership by headteachers and teachers provide some interesting knowledge with important implications for transforming school leadership. The views shared by the participants collectively, although demonstrate minimal variations, exemplified understanding of leading as a mutual responsibility, but practices as given, command and directive often leading to tensions.

5.1 Leading is a mutual responsibility

The views came from participants with varying ages (26–56 years) and professional experiences (2–27 years). Collectively, the five headteachers and 10 teachers interviewed had almost similar views about leadership to making schools effective. However, further discussions indicate that the leadership practices experienced in the various schools are different from what they understood and defined as good leadership practices. Some of the participants explained leaders as 'having the capability to lead' (Clara, headteacher), 'develop directions for the school' (Amanda, teacher) and 'coordinate the activities of others so that the school can achieve its goals and objectives' (John, headteacher).

Other views claimed that leadership is about 'setting standards' (Kevin, teacher), 'having the ability to engage in difficult conversations even when you are dealing with superiors' (Dorothy, headteacher) and 'taking critical decisions even if this is not possible because everything is decided at the political level and handed to us' (Maxwell, headteacher).

Similarly, participants expressed that 'leadership is not about one person directing others, it is about bringing everybody on board since we all have something to contribute' (Michael, teacher). Others were explicit about what they understood and want from leadership by saying:

the moment I think about leadership, motivation, collaboration and support is what comes to my mind because no single person can lead the school...it is collective responsibility that can only work with motivation and sharing of knowledge (Jack, teacher).

Despite having understood leadership as a collective responsibility, another participant was of the view that 'everybody cannot lead at the same time...one person must be in charge and draw others to support...if everybody is leading in their own ways that could bring chaos' (Clara, headteacher).

These views resonate with Bourdieu's ideas which give power to the consideration of viewing leadership as a recursive relationship between agency and habitus and field within the social contexts in which practice takes place [1]. In this way, we cannot focus only on the leader's habitus and capital but also the specific socio-cultural constructions from which embodied dispositions are formed [11]. Again, the views espoused by the participants in this study concerning their understanding of leadership brings into consideration how the concept of field enables us to reflect on the social and political contexts in which leaders enact power relations [12].

5.2 Leading by colonizing others

In general, the findings indicate dominant leadership practices in the various school which can be described as colonization. The participants expressed that school leaders adopted dictatorial top-down approaches where they give orders and manage teachers based on directives, they received from their superiors from the Ghana Education Service.

I understand that effective school leadership must be consultative...we must be caring and reflective of the actions we take but the fact is that even as head teachers policy makers do not consult us on important matters. Our job is to receive directives and then communicate this to our teachers (Clara, headteacher).

Similar views were expressed by another teacher who claimed that headteachers in the Ghanaian school system are treated as 'policy conveyer belts in production lines' without any human dimension.

In fact, I am just viewed a tool... there is no high premium on my personal values and capabilities. I can't change anything as a leader and all I can do is to manage the school and my teachers within the existing directive framework. In fact, whatever they tell me from above, I do (Maxwell, headteacher).

Other headteachers mentioned the politicization of school leadership to the extent that they were afraid of losing their job if they voice out issues related to how they were being manipulated by policy-makers.

Leadership has moved into politics. It is a serious matter, a narrow and irrational managerial view of leading others. Counterviews from school headteachers are viewed as standing in the way of policy makers. If you are not afraid of losing your job then you can talk, even as school leaders sometimes we do not know when our children will go on vacation or resume school. Everything is a mess, but can you talk about it? (Peter, headteacher).

Teachers also described the leadership processes in their schools are exclusive lacking effective consultation on important matters affecting their schools. They described leadership as imposing views and making decisions before communicating to them these decisions.

My experience is that the school has no unique direction apart from what the Ghana Education Service wants us to do. We the teachers are at the receiving end. We are not

*part of any tough decisions-making that can make the schools unique and effective.
We act on what we are told from headteachers (Kate, teacher)*

Importantly, the teachers' views reflected leadership of domination entrenched in dispositions that communicate the status quo. While all teachers are tasked with the responsibility to make their schools effective in terms of teaching and learning, their views do not necessarily matter. This does not mean there were no staff meetings held in the schools.

We do have staff meetings as our operational practices demand but these meetings held to stamp the decisions from policy makers communicated through the headteachers. Our view doesn't have any influence as teachers (Amanda, teacher).

It is interesting to note that despite head teachers being approachable and compassionate, their hands are tied in how much the consultative opinions of the teachers can be utilized in any decision-making process.

Our head teachers encourage and motivating us to be involved in school matters and decision making but how can you be motivated to do anything if you know that you are just wasting your time and energy, realizing that you, have been doing these things all along, but your ideas are not implemented in any decision-making? (Michael, teacher). It is not the headteachers' fault, I would say because they are also in the same challenges with us because they are dictated to by policy makers and if they fail to do what they are told, they will be severely sanctioned or demoted (Favour, teacher).

While the teachers and headteachers agreed that leadership is about vision and mission of schools, they were of the view that the directives from the Ghana Education Service under which school functions in Ghana do not make this possible.

In fact, leadership practice in our schools appeared to be the sole responsibility of who is in charge from GES. The headteachers are just figureheads on whom to impose decisions from above. We are just spectators and have nothing to do with real contribution to new ideas to lead the schools. (Evelyn, teacher).

These views reflect Bourdieu's ideas of how some education systems are constructed to reproduce dominant practices [1]. The leadership practices described by the participants denote actions that communicate superior-inferior tendencies. This dominant discourse is a form of colonizing others into complete compliance to political domination. Indeed, school leaders and teachers that formulated alternative options to how their schools should be led to improve the efficiency of teaching and learning are often disparaged as reactionaries against government policies. But leaders must be critical to challenge existing orthodoxies to bring about school transformation [10]. The leadership practice situations described by the participants demonstrate a struggle within leadership standardization in the Ghanaian education field [4]. This resonates with Helen Gunter's statement that:

The struggle is about legitimacy and there are vested interests in a field. This is illustrated by those who classify in the field, and those who are classified products of the field. Reputation and status fluctuate, and there can be a process of misrecognition in

which power relations are not seen for what they are but are interpreted in a way that is seen as legitimate [6].

5.3 Challenges to effective leadership

Headteachers and teachers acknowledge the complex challenges of leadership in their schools when they referred to the centralized directives and lack of recognition for teacher identify and voice which are creating tensions and dilemmas for school leaders in Ghanaian schools. Despite having the knowledge and capabilities of leading their school, transforming teaching and learning becomes a difficult or even an impossible task because of lack of freedom to make contributions to decision-making.

Some participants claimed that ‘many schools are failing in Ghana, student performance is low and teachers’ capacity to turn things around is ignored’ (*Favor, teacher*). Another headteacher claimed:

school leadership is now a political game. If you present a counterview to what is handed down to you from above, they view you as an opposition trying to destabilise government policy. (Peter, headteacher).

The participants also referred to the lack of infrastructure, resources such as textbooks electricity and furniture as serious challenges to school leadership in Ghana. ‘Let me give you example, our schools were supposed to teach IT skills, but schools do not have electricity, how do you operate computers even if you have one?’ (*Kate, teacher*). Similarly, other said:

our students do not have adequate textbooks and classroom furniture is not conducive to learning. Even some of our students have to sit on molded blocks...as a leader of the school, you are stressed every day because things are not working but you cannot talk about it because you are afraid of political reprisal (Clara, headteacher).

Despite school leaders being highly regarded among the teachers and headteachers, it appears policy-makers often distance themselves from the teachers and headteachers. This means that policy actors make all decisions without considering the opinions of members of the schools’ community. This does not mean the policy-makers are not aware of the critical role of teachers and headteachers in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Ghana. The entrenched master-servant relationship established through colonial legacy keeps influencing current operations of the education system at large [3].

Additional challenge to school leadership in Ghana espoused by the participants pertains to the excessive interference of politics in school leadership. Two participants claimed:

the Ghanaian education system is seriously influenced by cultural and political affinity (Terri, teacher)...In fact all decisions are political decisions even if things are not working well the same agenda continues to be pushed through which affect the effective school development, teaching and learning (Maxwell, headteacher).

This sentiment was identified in a previous study which claimed that the Ghanaian political structure of the country is deeply rooted in its culture, and there is no simple way to distinguish between culture and politics, which makes it difficult to

address the two forces of influence separately [3]. The political climate in the country is a direct reflection of educational leadership that governs learning reforms and programmes.

It is claimed that the Ghanaian education system functions through political interference and ruling parties creating inconsistencies and ineffectiveness [3]. Suggestions were made to disentangle educational leadership from excessive political interference by 'developing a country vision for education whereby school leaders are consulted to share in that vision (Peter, headteacher). They argued that 'leadership is about development, vision, progress and efficiency which cannot materialize if politics is mingled with education' (Tom, teacher). This means having difficult conversations at all levels of leadership, critically interrogating our habitus and our collective and individual practices to create transformative opportunities for leading education in Ghana.

Having critical conversations also means challenges ideologies of domination by people who have colonizing tendencies such as policy-makers who view themselves as superior to others and therefore must overpower them by dictating how they should lead their schools [7]. In education systems where a leader or policy-making group deemed itself as superior to teachers, ascribed excessive power to carry out domination behavior to self-proclaim and to benefit through legitimation of the status quo, schools are bound to fail. Ideologies emanate from the habitus; therefore, to counter ideologies of supremacy, we must start by interrogating our individual and collective habitus [8]. It is through conscious interrogation of the habitus that we can challenge dominant discourses and give voice to formerly marginalized teachers and headteachers to be involved in strategic decisions that relate to their contexts of practice.

5.4 Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for practice. The realization that leadership evolves from human habitus (identity) and interacts with capital to produce actions within fields serves to deepen understandings of practice as taking place in social fields, relationships, personal positionings and interactions. In Ref. to this, social spaces must be taken seriously when thinking about school leadership. In this view, we can envision the non-linearity of leadership and that the concept of leadership itself is a relational concept that warrants valuing the contribution of everyone within the school. On the contrary, we identified in this study that the Ghanaian school leaders do not appear to have voice in constructing their own leadership because the process of leadership in schools is dictated through politics of control and subjugation [5, 6, 19]. It is argued that designing leadership for others [20] is an act of leading without others; therefore, to lead with others, it is important for leadership to move away from reproductive or colonial leadership which replicates acts of domination and exclusion. Leadership practices that

are lodged and validated in the doxa of the times, they only will remain viable if schools and the larger social-economic social space in which they remain also stay fixed. They will not challenge the conservative political ideology and social inequalities which are at the root of ineffective school leadership and school achievement decline ([5], p. 169).

By implication, this calls for policy-makers to interrogate their own habitus and generate actions that invite and reward teachers to be part of the leadership process.

Bourdieu places emphasis on the interrogation of one's habitus as well as the analysis of various forms of capital that individuals possess to bring their values to interactions in social spaces. Analyzing and critically reflecting on the value of the capital that others bring to the leadership process can create valuable leadership opportunities within the school to collectively improve teaching and learning. ...

Researchers [1] argued that 'school leaders are important agents in schools, they can interpret, envision, verbalize, and, as such, create the social world' ([1], p. 297).

The implication of our study resonates with what previous leadership researchers profess that:

education should be centred not first and foremost on what is expected and imagined of them (by politicians, experts, bureaucrats, etc.), but on who they are, what they do, and why they do it. In other words, the education should be depoliticized and adapted more to local, specific and democratic meaning making ([1], p. 308).

School leadership is a growing arena of professional identity formation. Leaders shape the profession, school development and effectiveness. But leadership is not an individual practice. Understanding the importance of Bourdieu's three concepts of habitus, capital and field and applying these to leadership practices can help us disrupt the colonial legacy of leading by domination.

6. Conclusion

This chapter is informed by data collected from headteachers and teachers in five Junior High schools in one region of Ghana to understand their views of leadership and enacted practices and challenges. The findings suggest that the participants understood leadership as a collective responsibility; however, they felt that leadership practices in their schools are exclusive, replicating colonization of others within the school system. Their comments, by large, indicate that leadership is marred in political excesses, which serve as serious challenges to an effective leadership in schools. It is based on these findings that we found Bourdieu's concepts useful in helping us understand, interrogate and disrupt the reproduction of colonial orthodoxies in school leadership practice so that schools can become spaces of freedom for collective thinking and decision-making to enhance teaching and learning, particularly in Ghanaian schools. Arguably, understanding and conceptualizing leadership as a social practice that values multiple voices can help schools move away from colonial leadership and pedagogical approaches that exclude students and teachers from fully participating in the educational process. This means, leadership must enact practices that offer opportunities for the whole school community to share in the leadership process.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

A. Appendix

Interview protocol

B. References

Interview protocol.

Demographic questions

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?
2. What is your highest level of qualification?
3. How long have you been teaching?
4. What is your numerical age?

Leadership questions

1. How would you define effective leadership?
2. What do you expect from leadership?
3. How is leadership practised in your schools?
4. How are major decisions regarding the running of your schools made?
5. What major challenges do you face as leader?
6. How would you want leadership practices to be in your school?
7. Any other comments?

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Author details


Joseph Seyram Agbenyega^{1*} and Emmanuel Semanu Asiam²

1 Emirates College for Advanced Education, Abu Dhabi, UAE

2 Ashifla Basic School, Ghana

*Address all correspondence to: joseph.agbenyega@ecae.ac.ae

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