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## EDITORIAL

The Ghana Association of University Administrators (GAUA) as part of its mission to promote the advancement of higher education in Ghana and around the world provides policy alternatives for national development. This is done through research reports, policy analysis, reflective practice among others. Mindful of this, the National Executives adopted this Journal from GAUA University of Education, Winneba branch in 2019 to advance this cause. The sixth edition of the journal is thus, the “first” edition since the adoption and it also serves as a special edition to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of GAUA (1980-2020).

In this edition, Kwame Boakye, Joshua Addo, Eric Awotwe and Joyce Anastasia Sam did a comparative study of pension benefits between Ghana Universities’ Staff Superannuation (GUSSS) and Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) Schemes. The writers advocated for the boards of GUSSS to educate their members on the superior financial retirement benefits offered by the scheme as compared to SSNIT and to review the pension rights under the GUSSS.

Again, George Kwadwo Anane, Elijah Ofori-Badu and Kwame Asante also examined ‘cut-off aggregates’ and academic performance of students in a public university in Ghana. The paper recommends that university managers must develop or review their admission policies and factor in more inclusive parameters for admitting students into universities, especially applicants from less-endowed schools.

The issue of work-life balance among Senior Female Administrators was examined by Rebecca Asiedu Owusu. She recommends for Ghanaian women in public career spaces to be provided with conducive working environments like flexible working hours, extended paid maternity leave, paid paternity leave and further stressed for Early Childhood Centres to be sited close to office environment.

In examining cleaners’ perspective of littering behaviour of students in a Ghanaian university context, Fidelis Z. Tang urged university management and student leaders to provide adequate waste bins on university campuses, especially at vantage points with notes to encourage cleanliness. This, he believes, will encourage the culture of cleanliness and shared responsibility in safeguarding the environment.

In promoting peace among student religious groups in public universities in Ghana, Samuel Marfo, Musah Halidu and John Yaw Akparep recommend that periodic education on religious tolerance should be carried out by amalgamated religious bodies and university managements to help deepen the understanding and knowledge of students about religious pluralism and the need for peaceful coexistence.

Investigating into communication challenges in a multi-campus university system in Ghana, Amatus Dinye, Emmanuel K. Boon and Job Asante advocated for the deployment of modern communication technologies to enable satellite campus administrators to communicate in real-time with their main campus and this should be part of a well-developed communication policy.



In a research into the assessment of governance challenges in higher education institutions, Charles Obeng-Sarpong, Daniel Buor and Paul Kwadwo Addo found out that external issues such as: funding, quality assurance, getting requisite academics, and internationalisation among others militate against Ghanaian universities. They therefore advanced an argument for the need to build the capacity of management and council members on quality assurance systems, effective governance and leadership.

Examining service delivery and satisfaction of students and its implications for educational administration, Regina Nuako, Kweku Appiah-Badu, Benjamin Boampong Owusu and Abraham Adusei observed that suggestions about areas of service delivery improvement provided by students to university management are often not addressed to their satisfaction. The writers recommend for the need for university management to work with students and design service improvement strategies to bring about student satisfaction.

Lastly, Samuel Marfo, Joshua Akpade and Halidu Musah investigated crash helmet and safety implications for student motorcyclists and postulate that relatively low patronage of the full-face helmets observed among students in their study requires periodic educational campaigns.

We are extremely grateful to all our contributors and to our dedicated reviewers.

Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to GAUA!

Dr. Paul Kwadwo Addo  
**National Editor/Editor-in-Chief**  
**August 2020**



## Promoting Peace among Student Religious Groups in Public Universities in Ghana: UDS, Wa Campus in Perspective.

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### **Abstract**

*In Ghana, religion is important to many students and their inclinations toward faith, spirituality, and peaceful coexistence, have manifested in the development of religious organizations on school campuses of all types. Recent studies, have identified a number of interreligious conflicts in some educational institutions in the country. Against this background, the University for Development Studies (UDS), Wa Campus, which hosts 13 student religious-based groups was selected with the objective of examining the mechanisms employed by these groups to foster peace among students regardless of their doctrinal differences. Primary data were gathered through interviews in a case study design involving 28 student leaders from ten religious groups and three key informants who were purposely selected. The study revealed that the mechanisms employed by these campus-based religious groups in promoting peace include the following: preaching and teaching of peace, organisation of interfaith dinner and games, exchange of pulpit and periodic intercessory fasting and prayers for followers and the masses. This paper recommends that periodic education on religious tolerance should be carried out by amalgamated religious bodies and university managements to help deepen the understanding and knowledge of students about religious pluralism and the need for peaceful coexistence.*

**Key words:** *Religion, Religious Groups, Religious Conflict, Peace Promotion, Co-existence*

### **Introduction**

Religion is very important to many students (Small & Bowman, 2011) and it has a significant influence on the lives of many people across the globe (Nonterah, 2016).

Grubbs (2006) submits that the last fifty years have seen the greatest development of religious organizations on campuses. Groups that devote considerable effort to recruitment and evangelism, and interfaith dialogue have become obvious on campuses (Bryant, 2005). It is in this regard that Smock (2006) and Silvestri and Mayall (2015) assert that humans are fundamentally religious in that they all have cultural systems of designated behaviours and practices, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, ethics, or organizations that relate to the supernatural or transcended. Harper (2014) noted that that an estimated 84 percent of the world's population is affiliated with one of the five largest religious faiths, namely Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or forms of Traditional religion. Lagho and Bonaya (2016) express that leaders of churches, mosques and temples play critical roles in shaping attitudes, opinions and behaviours of people in various communities.

Ostensibly, religion is viewed as a double-edged sword, in that it has the capacity to foment conflict and at the same time promote peacebuilding and reconciliation (Lagho & Bonaya, 2016; Silvestri, & Mayall, 2015; Jeffrey, 2009). Jeffrey (2009) expresses that religious adherents provided a crucial foundation for progress in enhancing human development and reconciliation as previously warring communities as demonstrated in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia. Contrary, Pew Research Centre (2014) reported that religious conflicts still persist in many parts of the world. The report indicated that violence and discrimination against religious groups (minority faiths), states imposition of legal limits on worship and preaching, as well as restrictions on religious wear, have reached new highs in many parts of the world.

In Ghana, the quest of many students toward faith, spirituality and peaceful coexistence have manifested in the development of campus-based religious organisations, and their memberships have swelled in number (Bryant, 2005). Knoope and Chauzal (2016) have described Ghana's educational system as a major formula for stability in the country because of the positive coexistence among various religious groups on campuses. Islam, Christianity and the African Traditional Religions are all practiced (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012) and taught on campuses, most especially, in public institutions in Ghana. This way, students have a better understanding of the faiths of others and find a way of living together in peace and harmony (Abdul-Hamid, 2011). The prevailing peaceful coexistence in the religious realm has been reinforced by conflict management systems (peace promoting bodies) which include the National Peace Council (NPC), Christian Council of Ghana, Federation of Muslim Council, and Islamic Council for Development (Knoope & Chauzal, 2016). Notwithstanding Ghana's success in the religious front, recent studies have revealed intra and inter-religious clashes across the country and in some educational institutions as witnessed in Wenchi and Atebubu in the Brong Ahafo Region, Sekondi-Takoradi in the Western Region, Cape Coast in the Central Region, Kumasi in the Ashanti Region and Anyako in the Volta Region among others, on the grounds of doctrinal differences (Marfo, Taayina & Musah, 2018; National Peace Council, 2017; Ghana News Agency, 2015; Tosu, 2007; Samwini, 2006), though not on

the high scale as it is in other West African countries such as Nigeria and Mali (Bagnya 2016).

Against this background, the researchers purposely selected University for Development Studies (UDS), Wa Campus, which hosts 13 religious-based groups (UDS, Wa Campus Students Representative Council (SRC) Amalgamated Club Report, 2018) with the objective of examining the mechanisms employed by these groups which had fostered peaceful co-existence among adherents regardless of their doctrinal differences. It is envisaged that the findings would help religious leaders and university management to fashion out a more pragmatic policy towards religious diversity, peaceful cooperation and co-existence on university campuses which in present times have witnessed the influx of student religious-based activities.

### **Religious Groups and Peace Promotion**

According to Barash and Webel (2009), peace is an indispensable element in every human endeavour. However, peace is difficult to define. In this study, peace is construed as the absence of violence together with the presence of many desirable states of mind in society such as harmony, justice and equity among others, as espoused by Barash and Webel (2009).

Smock (2006) has indicated that the contributions of religious faiths in the sphere of mediation, peacemaking, diplomacy and inter-faith dialogue have been well documented. He stated that religious leaders and faith-based organisations in Kashmir, Iraq, Southern Sudan, Macedonia and Nigeria have played critical roles in the resolution of conflicts through peace negotiation and promotion. He noted that different religious approaches or methodologies are employed to promote and build peace among pluralistic communities in different countries. Philpott (2007) also writes that in both East Germany and in former Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, Christians played key roles as peace advocates and negotiators in the political processes, transition and development. Greene (2017) and Rockenbach, Mayhew and Bowman (2015), have expressed how religious actors through inter-faith gathering have helped in building community peace and religious tolerance in communities strained by conflict. Religion, thus, strengthens the bond of friendship that exists between people of the same faith, and at the same time, it bridges the gap that subsists between groups with different religious orientation (Park & Bowman, 2015).

The discussions above illustrates how religious groups and institutions could play creative roles in promoting peace in divided communities. It could also be inferred that in promoting peace, various mechanisms are employed by religious groups.

### **Theoretical Consideration**

This article has adopted Deutsch's (1973) Theory of Cooperation to explain why in spite of the differences that exist among the various campus-based religious groups, such differences have not translated into violent confrontation on the Wa Campus of UDS.

Deutsch Theory of Cooperation posits that by emphasizing cooperative goals in conflict, parties pursue mutually beneficial solution and this creates high quality relationship and thereby bridging the gaps that exist among them. Thus, the theory admits the presence of conflict or differences that exist among people which by themselves do not make conflicts none-existent.

Olureme, Ayoko, Ashkanasy and Kareem (2014) in support of Deutsch (1973) Theory of Cooperation argue that cooperation exists when individuals link the achievement of their goals to that of their opponents. In applying the theory to this study, it could be suggested that diversity, in terms of religious doctrines, for instance, may not necessarily translate into clashes. Thus, instead of the various religious groups emphasizing on their differences and creating a widening gap of misunderstanding and mistrust, they should rather pursue a common goal of peaceful co-existence which would enable them to achieve their respective ontological religious needs and aspirations. As reported by World Faiths Development Dialogue (2017), the recognition of common values and goals among people, helps in bridging deep social and political divides and binds people together. In this regard, the commitment of different religious groups on educational campuses may ensure that each group can contribute to a common cause of peaceful cohabitation.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

We employed qualitative case study design. A case study design enables researchers to explore the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). The case study design enabled the researchers to interrogate the mechanisms employed by the various religious groups on Wa Campus of UDS to promote peace notwithstanding their theological Differences.

Wa Campus is one of the four campuses of UDS. Wa is the Regional Capital of the Upper West Region and is located at the north western part of Ghana. UDS was established by the PNDC Law 279 (1992) that mandates her to integrate academic work with community services in order to provide constructive interaction and the total development of communities in northern Ghana in particular (UDS Diary, 2016). Wa Campus of UDS houses students with at least 13 different religious traditions (UDS, Wa Campus SRC Amalgamated Club, 2018) yet the Campus for some time now has not witnessed any interreligious clashes notwithstanding the doctrinal differences that exist among adherents. These religious groups are community of believers in God/Allah and other supernatural entities and theory belong to different denominations or traditions. A field study (2018) revealed that all three dominant forms of religious traditions in Ghana, namely, Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (GSS, 2012) are practiced on the Wa Campus of UDS.

### **Target Population and Sampling Techniques**

The study targeted student religious groups on Wa Campus of UDS, namely, students leaders of the various religious traditions as they are the spokespersons for their respective groups. Information gathered from the office of the UDS, Wa Campus SRC Amalgamated Club (2018), indicated that there were 13 registered religious groups on Wa Campus. However, purposive sampling was employed in selecting 28 available and willing student leaders from 10 selected religious traditions, comprising 24 males and four females in addition to three key informants. These respondents were purposely selected because of their deep involvement in the activities of student religious groups. The study thus, made use of a combined sample size of 31 respondents comprising 28 student religious leaders drawn from three religious traditions, namely

Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion. In addition to three other key informants as shown by Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Summary of Selected Respondents**

<b>Identity</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Total</b>
National Union of Anglican Students (NUAS)	3	0	3
Ghana Methodist Students Union (GHASU)	2	1	3
Pentecost Students Association (PENSA)	3	1	4
African Traditional Religion Students Union (ATRSU)	1	0	1
Catholic Students Union (CASU)	2	1	3
Ghana Muslim Students Association (GMSA)	3	0	3
Apostolic Students Association (APOSA)	3	0	3
Students Christian Council (SCC)	2	0	2
National Union of Presbyterian Students-Ghana (NUPS-G)	3	1	4
Christ Apostolic Students Association (CASA)	2	0	2
UDS, Wa SRC Amalgamated Club	1	0	1
UDS Management	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>31</b>

**Source: Field Study, March, 15, 2018**

### **Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

Given the objective and the nature of the study, the researchers employed interviews as the main primary data collection method. In order to arrive at the relevant data, 31 separate interviewing sections were held at different times for the selected respondents on Wa Campus of UDS, each lasting averagely 15 minutes. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, all the data collected were analysed descriptively by thematising them. The field notes were typed while interviews recorded with audio device were transcribed. This study was conducted between January, 2018 and April 2018.

### **Results and Discussions**

#### **Mechanisms for Promoting Peace**

Deutsch's (1973) Theory of Cooperation posits that peaceful co-existence is possible if people with diverse interests pursue a mutually constructive solution, thereby spanning the cavities that exist among them. Given this theoretical background, the researchers

first sought the respondents' perceptions of peace. All of them (28) associated peace with the absence of violence or war. Further 22 linked peace with mutual respect and harmonious co-existence. In response to the question as to the mechanisms that are employed by the various religious groups in ensuring peaceful co-existence on UDS, Wa Campus, seven interrelated responses were given as captured in Table 2 as following

**Table 2. Mechanisms for Promoting Peace (multiple response)**

Peace Promotion Mechanisms	Respondents
Preaching of peace and harmonious co-existence	28
Teaching of peaceful co-existence and mutual respect	22
Periodic visitation and encouragement of members in the faith and academic progress	13
Organization of Interfaith gathering/dinner	11
Mass worship, communal use of worship gadgets, and exchange of pulpit among the Christian fraternity	13
Fasting and prayers for members and the community	23
Inter-faith games	15

**Source: Field Study, March, 2018**

#### ***Preaching of peace and harmonious co-existence***

Preaching or proclamation of peace and harmonious co-existence was found to be a major tool used in promoting peace on UDS, Wa Campus. All the 28 student leaders alluded to this fact. All the respondents indicated that God/Allah is peaceful and expects those who believe in Him to be peaceful. The key informants supported the assertion given by the respondents. This is what one key informant said:

*'Periodically, we meet to discuss about the need for religious leaders to impress upon their members in their preaching to be peaceful and avoid sentimental arguments bordering on religious matters. To me, I can say our meetings have been successful as we all enjoy religious freedom amidst religious pluralism on campus. If God is peaceful, why should professed worshippers destroy themselves due to doctrinal differences? (A Key Informant Interview, April, 2, 2018).*

The finding from the study indicates that the very presence of peace in itself is an enabler for student religious groups to achieve their religious aspirations on Campus. Peaceful co-existence among religious groups is critical for effective teaching and learning on university campuses.

#### ***Teaching of peaceful co-existence and mutual respect***

Another mechanism identified in the study was teaching peaceful co-existence and mutual respect for one another and authority and showing kindness among members and to others. This attracted 22 responses. Two respondents remarked as follows:

*'Christ our master lived and taught peace and expects His followers to do same. Christianity is about respect to God and that of humanity. We teach our members to be respectful to members of other faiths as*



*well as that of authority. The golden rule is that 'do unto others what you want them to do unto you'. If we all teach our members about the need for mutual respect, we will co-exist peacefully, even though we may have our differences in terms of beliefs and worship (An Interviewee Remark, March, 24, 2018).*

*'Long before Christianity and Islam came to Ghana and Africa as a whole, our fore-fathers knew about the need for a peaceful living with others. Any bad practice from any person attracted punishment from the Supreme Being and the ancestors. So, if you want to live in peace and enjoy the blessing of God, then you need to be peaceful. This is what we believe and this is what we practice. If you practice peace, and I practice peace, then, all of us will live in peace' (An Interviewee Remark, March, 30, 2018).*

The findings show that the religious bodies are not only mindful of the welfare and dignity of their members alone but also, the interests of members of other faiths. Teaching of peaceful coexistence by religious bodies implies that peaceful living requires some form of training or conscious efforts. It follows that learning to live and respect members of other faiths is crucial for any harmonious and peaceful living. Given the fact that different religious faiths will ever coexist as expressed by Samwini and reported by Kuorsoh (2017), then the best way is for religious groups to see themselves as community of faith and respect one another. As the researchers gathered from the respondents, teaching of peace does not only facilitate the spiritual growth of members, but also more importantly, it strengthens the relationship of their members with other members of the community.

### ***Visitation***

Peace demands a certain level of fellowship that is cemented through periodic visitation. Periodic visitation of members to encourage one another in faith and to pursue their academic goal was also found in this study as one major tool employed in promoting peace on Wa Campus as indicated by 13 of the respondents. A respondent said:

*'We do not only meet on Sundays to worship God, but from time to time, we enquire about and visit our members in their respective domiciles. We encourage them in the faith and impress upon them to take their studies seriously. After all, we are all here to study. Religious excellence without academic excellence for students to me is unacceptable. We have to develop both spiritually and academically. Once you know why you are a student, you will not waste your time on vain things that may result in violence and even ruin your career' (A Respondent Explanation, March 24, 2018).*

The foregoing is indicative that the pursuance of religious aspirations is in harmony with the pursuit of earthly desires. Religious adherents who concern themselves solely

with metaphysical things to the denial or neglect of daily economic, social and political activities may be doing so due to ignorance. Religious adherents should, therefore, be encouraged to work as they practice their faith.

### ***Interfaith gathering/dinner***

It was also gathered that a major tool used in promoting peace among the religious traditions on campus is the act of interfaith gathering/dinner as expressed by 11 respondents. A respondent gave the following comment:

*'Coming together as people from different religious backgrounds and making merry strengthen the bond of relationship that exists among us. In such occasions, we have the opportunity to share ideas on issues affecting us as students. It does not matter as to the church or faith you belong to, matters bordering on education affect every student and such occasions enable us to know much about one another and discuss how we can achieve our career aspirations'* (A Respondent's Interview, March, 17, 2018).

This finding was in line with the Greene (2017), who expresses that inter-faith gatherings in the form of small discussion groups and unity celebrations help in building community peace and promoting religious tolerance among diverse groups of people.

### ***Mass worship (interdenominational worship) and communal use of worship gadgets***

Worship, the art of singing praises to God, responsive reading of scripture, and personal testimonies among others, feature prominently in the lives of religious adherents on campuses. The study revealed that mass worship and communal use of worship gadgets such as the exchange of pulpit and the lending and borrowing of musical instruments among the Christian fraternity were also another mechanism employed to promote peace on UDS, Wa Campus. This view was expressed by 13 respondents all of whom were Christians. A respondent remarked:

*'Occasional mass worship enables us to meet together, worship and serve God, our creator and sustenance of our lives as a larger community of believers. This promotes unity and harmonious coexistence among us not only as believers but also as students of the same University. The beauty is that during such occasions members from different churches are arrayed to lead the service as one religious body'* (An interviewee Remark, March, 17, 2018).

Probing as to why the respondents occasionally hold mass (interdenominational) worship, the researchers learned that such worship and fellowship transform them to love one another through the interaction and understanding that is facilitated by these intergroup worship opportunities. The following is what one respondent said during an interview held in March, 2018:

*'As we fellowship together, it enables us to foster a close relationship among ourselves. It enables us to narrow the gap about the things that*

*divide us. This transforms our perception and helps us to develop positive image about other faiths'* (An interviewee Remark, March, 17, 2018).

The researchers gathered from the respondents that mass (inter-denominational) worship as adopted by the religious groups helps in bridging the gap among the various Christian denominations. This finding supports Park and Bowman's (2015) who revealed that multi-faith worship binds students with the same religious tradition and also bridges the gaps that exist among groups with different worldviews. This, however, does not suggest that all the Christian denominations should be integrated together as one religious faith before peace can be achieved.

### ***Inter-faith game***

Interfaith game were also identified as one mechanism used by religious groups in promoting peace on campus as indicated by 15 respondents. The respondents sharing similar view expressed that occasional interfaith games organised on campus bring members of diverse religious faiths together to participate in football competition. As indicated by the respondents, the primary goal is to enable people to see themselves as children of a larger family, develop a positive attitude towards one another, but not as to which religious group wins the game. In the course of the interview in February, 2018, the following is what one respondent said:

*'Through interfaith games we are able to discuss matters that transcend religious dogmas such as career development and academic challenges which are beneficial to us as students. This type of game is for fun and unity but not for fame or gain'.* (A Respondent Interview, February, 24, 2018).

### ***Intercessory fasting and prayer for peace from God/Allah***

Fasting and prayers play critical roles in the spiritual lives of religious bodies. It was revealed that frequent intercessory fasting and prayer for peace from God/Allah for the University has been an instrumental tool used by religious groups on campus to promote peace. This assertion came from 23 respondents. Three of the respondents remarked as follows

*'We don't only pray for the physical and spiritual growth of our members. We frequently pray for the peace of the University and the country as a whole. We can only practice our religion if there is peace in the country and peace on Campus. What can we do amidst violence and confusion? We always need the intervention of God. This, we believe, has sustained the peace we breathe on Campus and in Ghana as a whole'* (A Respondent's Remark, March, 17, 2018).

*'Christianity demands that we should do unto others what we want them to do for us. We as Christians need God's intervention in our daily lives*

*so as to overcome the numerous live challenges. So, as we pray for ourselves, we also pray for others. If there is no peace on Campus and in the country as a whole, I don't think that any believer will be able to practice his/her faith meaningfully. There is, therefore, the need to seek the peace of the University and Ghana' (A Respondent Interview, March, 17, 2018).*

*'Allah is peaceful and merciful and expects us to be peaceful. We can only enjoy the peace of Allah when we talk to Him in fasting and prayers. We as Moslems pray daily for our families and the country. Annually and periodically, we fast for the peace of our families and the country in general' (A Respondent Remark, February, 23, 2018).*

Intercessory fasting and prayer as a tool of promoting peace by religious groups as gathered in this study is an indication that religious practices transcend the physical world. It also suggests that in seeking for God's/Allah's intervention in the lives of adherents and the society at large, religious groups acknowledge the need for collaboration between God/Allah and humans in promoting and maintaining peace in every social setting. This suggests that peace should not be viewed as a passive term; rather adherents of various religious groups should put what they teach in practice.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study has revealed that the peace that prevails on UDS, Wa Campus, is largely attributed to the instrumental role played by the various campus-based religious groups. Their focus on preaching and teaching of peace and mutual respect for other faith among others, have created in them a sense of beauty of tolerance and religious diversity. These religious groups have seen the need to cooperate to pursue a mutually beneficial goal of tolerance and positive coexistence instead of projecting their differences to widen the gap of misunderstanding and suspicion as espoused by Deutsch Theory of Cooperation. This, has promoted cooperative interaction and harmonious relationship among the student practitioners of the various religious traditions on the Wa Campus of the University of Development Studies .

To further strengthen the bond of friendship that exists among the various religious groups on Wa Campus, and also deepen the understanding and knowledge of students about religious pluralism and the need for peaceful coexistence, this paper recommends periodic education on religious tolerance to be championed by amalgamated religious bodies and University management.

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