



‘Mission as disciple-making’

Scripture Union’s discipleship and leadership development approaches in senior high schools in Kumasi

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Abstract

Despite Scripture Union’s (SU) significant role in fostering Christian growth and nurturing leadership qualities among students, scholarly literature on the group’s methodologies and impacts is notably sparse. This article explores SU’s leadership development and discipleship approach among senior high school students in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. This research uses data from interviews, institutional records, and participant observation, and focuses on how SU blends traditional and contemporary strategies towards meeting the discipleship and leadership development needs of young ones in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. While SU effectively engages students and fosters a nurturing environment, challenges remain in the availability of devotional materials, follow-up of new converts, and overreliance on external support and offline approaches. The study sheds light on the strengths and areas of growth within SU’s discipleship initiatives, offering valuable insights for ongoing refinement and enhancement.

Keywords: mission; discipleship; follow-up; integrity; leadership

1. Introduction

Among the vibrant tapestry of organisations responding to the call to nurture young people’s spiritual growth and leadership development, Scripture Union (SU) of Ghana stands out, especially in its engagement with senior high schools (SHS) in the Kumasi Metropolis. The group is an evangelical, autonomous, interdenominational Christian organisation that started as a school and Bible

study movement in Ghanaian schools in the early 1950s (Kuwornu-Adjaator, 2011:2).

Despite its longstanding presence, the scholarly examination of SU's distinctive approach to discipleship and leadership development within the campus context remains surprisingly sparse. For instance, Adubofour (1994), Barker and Boadi-Siaw (2003), and Kuwornu-Adjaottor (2011) have touched on the broader missional contributions of SU, but stop short of exploring its specific discipleship strategies and approaches to leadership development among SHS students, where the intersection of adolescent development, educational pressure, and spiritual growth present unique challenges and opportunities for ministry. The study aims to fill this void by offering a detailed discussion of SU's discipleship and leadership development mechanisms within the educational sector of Ghana, particularly the SHSs.

The article forms part of a broader research project with ethical clearance from Stellenbosch University (Project number: 24018, February 2022), but this article explores the discipleship and leadership development approaches used by SU in SHSs in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. It illuminates the strengths and growth areas of SU's initiatives and contributes to the broader discourse on effective youth ministry practices. For instance, Weber's (2017) *Decolonising youth ministry models? Challenges and opportunities in Africa* called for a contextualised and decolonised youth ministry, a thought-provoking invitation that finds expression in Walls and Ross' (2008:32, 44) reflection on inculturation in their *Mission in the 21st century: Exploring the five marks of global mission*. Thus, this enquiry engages in a key missiological discussion on the nature and scope of campus missions in the 21st century. It underscores the theological significance of discipleship as a dynamic construct and an ongoing journey of faith formation and leadership development, offering valuable insights for academic scholarship and practical ministry.

Thus, this article bridges a significant gap in the literature on parachurch ministry in Ghanaian SHSs and provides a foundational basis for further research and practical application in similar contexts globally. By focussing on SU's work in Kumasi, it aims to inspire a refined approach to discipleship that is deeply rooted in Christian tradition and dynamically responsive to the needs of contemporary youth.

The study begins with an account of the methodological approach used. It is followed by the conceptual position that guides it. The findings are then discussed. The study concludes with a summary of the main findings and their implications for theology and practice.

2. Methodology

The case study approach was used to investigate SU's campus discipleship and leadership development activities. Data for the article were gathered through

participant observation, institutional documents, and interviews from February to June 2022. Participant observation improved data access since one of the researchers has worked with SU as a volunteer for more than 20 years. To reduce the impact of subjectivity, he sought clarification from SU staff members and triangulated the observed data with institutional records and the results of interviews conducted during the study. Ten participants were interviewed: five current and two former SU staff members purposively sampled for their ability to provide the needed information, and three volunteers were identified by snowballing for their experiences with SU's campus ministry in Ghana. The number of participants considered for this study is justified by Creswell and Poth's (2018:218) advocacy that in studies involving narration, "individuals who are accessible, willing to provide information, and distinctive for their accomplishments and ordinariness or who shed light on a specific phenomenon or issue being explored" should be sampled.

Furthermore, since purposeful data were being sought, we were aware of a possible data saturation, which played out, especially with the last interview conducted. Apart from one of the participants interviewed by telephone, there were one-on-one face-to-face sessions that lasted an average of one hour with all the other participants. The interviews were transcribed and analysed according to the emerging themes and in alignment with the aim of the study. The thematic analysis approach was then used. The interview data gathered and analysed are italicised in the article.

2.1 'Mission as disciple-making': Meaning and theological foundation

The term mission has often taken a nuanced meaning. In Bosch's (2011:402) view, God, the Father, sends the Son. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit. And the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit send the church into the world. Thus, mission is God's activity in which the church is privileged to participate. The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation, convened in Cape Town, South Africa, in October 2010, supports this view, describing mission as:

Participating in the purpose of God, who has been calling out from the world a people for Himself and sending His people back into the world to be His servants and witnesses, for the extension of His kingdom, the building up of Christ's body, and the glory of His name (Shreiter, 2011:89).

Mission, whose scope and authority are derived from God, is thus God's initiative, based on His instructions and inspiration, and only successful through His continuous involvement.

One task that is linked to the Christian mission is discipleship, which the Anglican Consultative Council describes as the call "to teach, baptize, and nurture new believers" (Anglican Communion, 2025). This is the second of their 'Five Marks of Mission.' Nel (2009:100) opines that discipleship reflects apprenticeship, which requires an "intellectual bond between teacher and pupil," as well as holistic

obedience to the will of God. This is expected to be seen not merely in personal religiosity or resulting in church membership, but producing a “missionary character” of participating in the mission of God (Jukko & Keum, 2019:10). In this vein, Hull’s (2006:36-40) view of discipleship as a journey for both existing believers and new ones is crucial. Existing believers are therefore seen as teachers or disciple-makers, facilitating the learning process and, at the same time, students or apprentices to God, listening to His instructions, participating in what he is doing, and nurturing a ‘missionary character’ in themselves and new ones.

One agency of discipleship is teaching—behaviour that facilitates learning (the behavioural modification tendency of a person when exposed to changes in their environment)—which is expected to produce a nurturing effect in believers (Eshchar & Fragaszy, 2015:1; Wright, 2012:1-4; De Houwer, Barnes-Holmes & Moors, 2013:631-642). Walls and Ross (2008:25) thus refer to “teaching them to obey all that I have taught you” (Matthew 28:20) as ‘divine priority.’ In this way, the believer’s obedience to Jesus’ instruction in Matthew 28:20 signifies their interest in the importance God places on discipleship.

The expression “mission as disciple-making,” as used in this article, was used by Bosch (2011:viii, 66-67) to highlight the emphasis of the Matthean gospel on discipleship. Although the authors agree with Bosch (2011:viii, 66-67) and Walls and Ross (2008:25) regarding the significance of discipleship (and teaching) in mission, we maintain that it should be seen as integral to the other marks of mission as Wright (2012) contends.

In this article, discipleship is viewed as an essential aspect of mission, embodying a perpetual nurturing journey where new believers embark on a lifelong path of faith formation while, together with existing ones, engaging in ongoing reflection and transformation, all in alignment with the mission of God, as an expression of obedience to ‘The Great Commission.’ It revolves around more experienced believers who facilitate the process. It involves teaching, learning, mentoring, fellowship, service, and the personal resolve of both the disciple-maker and the newly disciplined to live out the teachings of Jesus. Thus, campus discipleship is not supposed to be a set of dos and don’ts, but a process that leads to the transformation of believing students on campus to the extent of impacting other students and staff.

In discussing discipleship, Walls and Ross (2008:32-26) identify a robust Christology, inculturation, and a consideration of the nurture of young converts as necessary catechetical components. Other factors include the availability of devotional materials, social concern, clarifying the nature of the supernatural, and leadership development. In the following section, we identify and discuss SU’s campus discipleship approaches used in its mission activities.

2.2 SU's campus discipleship and leadership development approaches

In this section, we are guided by the themes that emerged from the interviews in the study to discuss SU's discipleship and leadership development approaches. Although the Anglican Consultative Council's second mark of mission includes the baptism of new converts, SU distances itself from this sacrament, which Walls and Ross (2008:29) refer to as an "initiatory rite." In the following sub-sections, we explore SU's teaching and nurturing steps to address the youth's discipleship and leadership development needs in the SHS campuses in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana.

2.3 Follow-up as a campus discipleship tool

Follow-up can be a crucial discipleship tool for nurturing new believers. Sagala (2017:87) argues that the immediate challenge after the church has received new believers is creating a platform of nurturing and support in diverse ways. This is because deciding to follow Jesus should not be taken as the totality of being a Christian (Nel, 2009:99). The charge in 'The Great Commission' was not just to go and preach, but to make disciples of Christ. The goal of the disciple-making activity is to bring the new members to a point where they are like Christ (Walls & Ross, 2008:25). Following up is crucial for establishing a rapport, creating a bridge, and building a strong foundation in the new member's journey with Christ. For this reason, we agree with Sagala (2017:87) in supporting Caslow's (1982:10) proposal for an immediate programme to "nurture, assimilate, and disciple" new members. This calls for a close collaboration between missionaries and new believers, which the World Council of Churches describes as a gift and calling to collaborate with God toward world transformation (Jukko & Keum, 2019:188).

The data from this study showed SU's consideration of the nurture of young converts through four key approaches to follow-up in missions:

Firstly, there is an immediate post-altar call follow-up. Altar calls are made after the preaching of the gospel, presentations on the youths' access to and use of media, and talks related to the youth and sex. Students, therefore, give their lives to Jesus, rededicate to Him, or seek spiritual guidance from the missionaries. According to the Area Programmes Officer of Kumasi, "these moments are seen as opportunities to reiterate the core of the message presented so that they would have a reinforced understanding and a basis for walking to the front" (Akuoko, 2022). He added that "the new converts are again assured of their salvation and given foundational steps to walk with Jesus." This approach confirms Wright's (2012:7) observation that such moments are opportunities for new converts to receive assurance of their inclusion in the biblical narrative of God's redemptive plan for the world so that they can "enjoy a right relationship with God now and eternally."

Secondly, SU undertakes a post-missions follow-up and discipleship programme in the schools. A six-week follow-up plan is executed using audiovisual materials produced by the Great Commission Movement of Ghana. This programme also serves as an opportunity for post-mission counselling. Unfortunately, as Akuoko noted, “these post-mission follow-up activities are only possible in schools where the management of the SHS approves them” (Akuoko, 2022). During the 2022 missions, it was also observed that many students were not adequately catered for due to this situation. The task of post-mission follow-up is, therefore, left in the hands of one or two patrons at a school. For instance, in one school with one patron and a school counsellor, data gathered by SU showed that 361 students requested further assistance. The impact of this might not be too far from Adu Boakye’s¹ description of new believers who are not disciplined as “orphans—newborn babies without parents” (Boakye, 2022). Walls and Ross (2008:25) describe them as “abandoned babies,” adding that “the neglect of thorough follow-up to conserve the fruits of evangelism has been the major factor for the prevalence of untaught Christians whose ideas about Christianity are a travesty of biblical discipleship.” Additionally, Walls and Ross (2008:26) assert that when there is a discipleship gap, the result is that many profess Christianity, but few grow to be like Christ to impact society. Considering the significance of follow-up in missionary endeavours, SU and other missionaries involved in campus ministries must keep track of students who respond to the altar calls for assistance and are followed up.

Thirdly, the new converts are connected to the school group fellowship and some denominational leaders so that they can be further nurtured. A detailed discussion of this approach will be provided in the following sub-heading.

Finally, the SU’s Kumasi SHS campus ministry takes steps to reach out to the converts when they are out of school. For instance, the SU staff also does additional off-campus follow-ups with new converts during holidays. This is what Isaac Kyere and Akosua call “Phone-in Day” (Kyere, 2022; Akosua, 2022).

SU’s four-step follow-up approach may be a suitable link for students on campus. However, four concerns pop up in response. Firstly, campus missionaries must explore a back-up plan in schools where educational authorities do not permit the second phase of the follow-up system. This includes consciously designing a peer mentoring programme on campus, collaborating with parents, partnering with community organisations with access to students after school, and creating online resources. In its current approach of physical meetings, SU’s campus discipleship approach needs a second look. Considering the mission advantage that can be gleaned from the online ministry, Asamoah-Gyedu (2007:225) instructs, “Get on the Internet!” says the Lord.” There is an urgent need for SU to respond positively to this call because today’s youth are fond of being online. Secondly, they should also have additional systems to empower existing Christian students in whose care the new converts are left, other than the evangelism and

1 SU’s immediate past national manager for schools and camps

discipleship training for student Christian leaders during campus missions and camps. There is also a need to explore the involvement of Christian teachers and patrons of all denominations on campus in the follow-up programme. Finally, there must be a way to evaluate the effectiveness of the follow-up programme, such as comparing the number of students who responded to altar calls with those who received assistance beyond the first step. This will influence decisions that are made towards subsequent missions.

2.4 Christian Campus Fellowship as a Forum for Youth Discipleship

Christian Campus Fellowship is an official assembly of students who come together for religious purposes within a university or college setting (Ugwu & Chukwuma, 2021:3). Additionally, certain campus staff may also be affiliated with these fellowships and may oversee the events and initiatives that are organised by students. For many evangelical students, belonging to a student group offers a sense of community and an opportunity to be nurtured in their faith (Bryant, 2005:5). Fape (1999:80-81) proposed regular meetings among the youth by contending that the influence of Jesus extends beyond individual responses, manifests through collective reactions, and operates within social dynamics, shaping group responses. Walls and Ross (2008:31-32) believe that meetings of such nature should be used to discuss issues of common interest, including practical Christian living, academic success, managing relationships with parents who are non-believers, premarital sex, and the choice of a marriage partner. This approach is expected to produce a nurturing effect.

In SU’s contemporary campus ministry, the legacy of Nigel Sylvester²—the establishment of Bible clubs in secondary schools—still lives on (sughana.org., 2022; Scripture Union Daily Power, 2022:VIII; Barker & Boadi-Siaw, 2003:22). As mentioned by Adu Boakye, the School Group Fellowship, as it is now called, “is the major discipleship tool for Scripture Union campus ministry at the SHS level” (Boakye, 2022). Programmes that are organised include Bible study, prayer meetings and retreats, on-campus evangelism, and musical concerts. Others include leadership and evangelism training as well as staff ministry visits (Scripture Union Bible Study outline for schools and colleges, 2019:2).

Nationally, SU’s school-based fellowships are in approximately 95% of all SHSs (Daily Power 2022:VIII). In the Ashanti region, 117 (79%) schools are covered, but only 6% of the student population belongs to the SU school-based fellowships. Fifty-four (84.4%) of the 64 public and private SHSs in Kumasi have SU school groups (SU Annual Report 2021; GES Register of Schools 2020).

Such student fellowships are suitable “atmosphere[s] for eclectic worship” (Cawthon & Jones, 2004:169). Furthermore,

because the contemporary ministries [parachurch groups] often do not directly associate with one denomination, persons of many different backgrounds feel

2 The first SU full-time staff worker in Ghana who worked from 1955 to 1962

comfortable coming to worship. This diversity allows for truly eclectic worship environments where students can bring their backgrounds together and learn from each other outside of the structure one might find in a traditional ministry [church-based school groups] (Cawthon & Jones, 2004:169).

Establishing non-denominational campus fellowship groups provides such an atmosphere for students in the SHSs. By extension, Christian Campus Fellowship groups engage and prevent students from drifting from their faith. This is because research has found that church disaffiliation occurs most often in the teenage years and the early 20s (O'Connor, Hoge & Alexander, 2002:723; Roozen, 1980:429).

Furthermore, members of the fellowship groups may benefit from more mature believers. This mentoring process is also possible due to the “peer group influence” tag on the youth (Fischhoff, Downs & de Bruin, 1998:77; Atkinson, Atkinson & Hilgard, 1983:92-93). Students in the campus fellowship groups rub against each other and share experiences towards Christian maturity. Concerning prayer, it is noteworthy that Walls and Ross (2008:31) stress the non-negotiable need to nurture new believers to have a strong prayer life. In the study's context, where peer influence is a key influential factor in spiritual formation, it is important to nurture students to view prayer as important and grossly personal, not just a formality or routine group activity.

In the school group fellowship, the Bible and other supportive literature play pivotal roles. The following sub-section is devoted to how SU makes these available to students and uses them in its campus ministry for discipleship.

2.5 The Bible as a missional tool for discipleship and Christian maturity

The Bible plays a crucial role in nurturing Christians of all ages. Among other things, it offers insight into theological issues. Within the discourse on the second mark of mission, Walls and Ross (2008:32) underscore the importance of a robust Christology and the “availability of devotional materials.” In this section, we examine students' access to and utilisation of the Bible and related literature in SU ministry.

SU attempts to make devotional materials available to students. Its Bible ministry produces, distributes, and sells devotional materials such as Daily Power—the Bible Reading Notes (BRN) used by the youth, Bibles, Christian literature, and Bible Study Outlines (BISO). During the study period, it was observed that a student-friendly Bible was launched in three of the SHSs by the former and current General Directors. This was done to ensure students' access to easy-to-read Bibles and stimulate students' interest in reading them. In addition to the Bible, Kyere mentioned that “members of SU school group fellowships are encouraged to get personal copies of the devotional materials at the beginning of each year” (Kyere, 2022). Additionally, some concerned adult members of SU provide Bibles and BRNs for needy students who cannot afford them.

Effective youth discipleship efforts are expected to go beyond young people's access to and interest in devotional materials. Walls and Ross (2008:32) intimate that disciple-makers must address key doctrinal issues such as those about Christ. A study of the 2022 Daily Power reveals that SU addressed this concern. For instance, the devotion on 13 January was on "Jesus, the light to the whole world."

Furthermore, it is worth examining devotional materials in light of their appropriateness to encourage active engagement, foster intellectual understanding, and facilitate holistic Christian growth. Davidson et al., (2021:93) observe that in campus ministry, there is an emphasis on personal spirituality. This is important because Walls and Ross (2008:25-36) opine that it is crucial to educate students that, beyond the most sagacious human opinions and traditions, the Holy Bible serves as an unwavering cornerstone of faith. This view, we believe, is appropriate and timely, considering the context of the study and the threat of secularisation, in which faith issues appear to matter less in social discourses. Much as we agree with Davidson et al., (2021:93) and Walls and Ross (2008:25-36) on the need for personal spirituality development among students, we submit that students' seriousness in practical activities, such as having a positive academic attitude and working towards it, is part of God's plan for them towards their holistic growth. This must be given equal attention when preparing devotional materials for students.

To foster spiritual development, Akuoko mentioned that "the programmes run by the school group fellowships are dominated by small-group Bible studies" (Akuoko, 2022). As Ogden (2019:2) notes, group Bible study is an imitation of Christ's examples in nurturing His 12 disciples. To emphasise regular personal devotion, SU encourages its members to read the Bible and pray daily. The group regards this as "a primary twin focus" in developing Christian maturity (SU Field Ministry visit to Ashanti, 2016:73). This enables students to obtain a profound comprehension of the divine nature of God, find answers to their dilemmas, and contemplate how to practically live out their faith in a manner that pleases God and edifies other students.

2.6 Purity campaign as a discipleship tool

It is important to note that discipleship programmes designed for the youth are expected to be done with the challenges and needs of the youth in mind. Williams, Irby and Warner (2017:1) note a current discussion on the sexual lives of religious youth and young adults due to the growth of abstinence-only sex education and related programmes targeting youth sex-related issues. In studying some religious institutions that responded to the needs of the youth, they found out that emphasis was placed on issues related to sex. This is expected since adolescence is characterised by a surge in sexual impulses, the formation of sexual attitudes, and the commencement of sexual conduct (Moore & Rosenthal, 2007:1). This is one of the key issues adolescents battle with, and it can serve as a springboard for Christian nurturing.

SU responds by running campus programmes that address sex-related issues among the youth from a Christian perspective. This approach is employed through a programme called 'Purity Campaign.' Particularly, during Valentine's Day every year, the SU takes advantage of the euphoria in society and the catchphrase of 'Month of Love' to capture the attention of the youth and presents 'Jesus the True Love.' Fliers are designed as invitation notices for students who are not members of the fellowships. The picture below is the 'Purity Campaign' flier for 2022.



Figure 1: Jesus, The True Love flyer

Source: SU Purity Campaign (2022)

According to Akuoko (2022), "the youth's misunderstanding of the term love plunges them into situations like rape, incest, premarital sex, and defilement." This religion-hooked mediatory approach by SU leverages the fact that students and educational stakeholders in SHSs in Kumasi are generally sympathetic to religion, as 84.5% of residents identify as Christians and 11.2% as Muslims (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014:36). The programme's timing seems fitting because, as Bochow (2012:20) observed, Valentine's Day has become a significant event for young people, providing them with an opportunity to express their views on sexuality in a social context where such discussions are typically forbidden.

This approach is likely to produce a nurturing experience because, as Ellingson (2002:1-17) observed, religion has always played a role in regulating sexuality. The researchers' quandary about this approach is what happens after the Valentine's Day euphoria and the religion-induced experiences of students at such programmes. SU needs a robust post-Valentine's Day follow-up and nurturing mechanism for those who make any kind of resolution or commitment.

Overall, while the mission of God is not commonly discussed in relation to youth sexuality, it is important that faith communities critically assess it to address the nurturing needs of adolescents in Kumasi SHSs. Contrary to Bryant's (2005:5) observation that many evangelicals involved in campus ministry are not categorical about their stand regarding controversial issues like premarital sex and abortion, SU is clear about them. Its purity campaign and other campus mission programmes emphasise total abstinence from these issues.

2.7 Integrity campaign as a discipleship tool

Integrity refers to the quality of being transparent, honest, and consistent in beliefs and actions. It is a "firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values (incorruptibility), an unimpaired condition (soundness), or the quality or state of being complete or undivided (completeness)" (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Therefore, regardless of their susceptibility, a person's integrity is congruent in numerous facets of their lives, such that none is isolated, askew, or dissimilar from others. Wener (2022:2) adds that "our 'being' (who we are) must be connected to our 'doing' (our actions)." Young ones must be discipled to embody integrity in a way that their belief in God should be consistent with and exhibited in their thoughts and deeds.

One of the most critical issues in Ghana's educational system that bothers integrity, especially among SHS students, is cheating in the form of examination malpractice. For instance, in the 2021 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), 1,339 subject results and 174 entire results were cancelled for various examination malpractices. The results of 3,667 candidates were temporarily withheld pending the conclusion of investigations into various cases of examination malpractice detected during and after the conduct of the examination (Ghana Web, 2021).

The solution cannot be left in the hands of educational authorities alone without exploring a theological response. If "Religion is not the only fount of cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes, but it is surely one of the most influential," and that "the gospel has inseparable social dimensions" (Harrison, 2010:26; Aims, Beliefs, and Working Principles of Scripture Union, n.d. :6), Akuoko's observation makes SU's response legitimate: "Christians on campus should let their light shine in the schools so that their presence can cause positive changes in the school environment regarding examination malpractices" (Akuoko, 2022). One of SU's responses to this situation in its campus ministry is the organisation of 'Integrity Campaigns' for school fellowship groups a few weeks before the WASSCE. This also resonates with Walls and Ross' (2008:31-34) dilemma on the "social concern" of discipleship programmes and their question on how discipleship can affect students.

The approach used by SU is also worth considering. According to the Area Programmes Officer of Kumasi, "the students are involved in assessing the demerits of examination malpractices in a broader social context. They are guided

to problematize, hypothesize, and then offer a prescription” (Akuoko, 2022). This approach backs Neufeld’s (2002:194-195) concession that contemporary missions to the youth must also be “participatory, interactive, and communal.” Adu Boakye adds that “students discuss cheating after watching a clip of a game in which the referee was unfair” (Boakye, 2022). This is a way of using the multisensory approach to engage students in meeting their own needs. Thus, through the organisation of integrity campaigns on the campuses, SU nurtures students to be honest and consistent.

2.8 Camps and conferences as tools for discipleship

Christian camps and conferences are responses to discipleship that provide spaces for learning about God’s mission, equipping for it, and receiving inspiration to participate in it. Miller (2014:300) opines that Christian camps have the potential for a lasting impact of the Great Commission on participants. He believes this is feasible since it involves putting kids and youths in an active outdoor setting where they might encounter difficulty and instruction while also developing mentorship ties. We believe that if used to its greatest potential, the living-learning environment’s 24-hour availability provides instruction, practice, and reflection that firmly embeds progress in cognition, emotion, behaviour, spirituality, and relationships. In the camping setting, the youth are guided to receive, keep, and share biblical principles needed for their lives (Ribbe, 2010:159; Fawver, 1992:48). Thus, camping youth in a Christian setting is a remarkable opportunity for the holistic development of the youth.

SU embarks on camps as a tool for discipleship. The content of these camps is regularly altered to meet the missional needs of the students in a dynamic context (Barker & Boadi-Siaw, 2003:8; Scripture Union Ministry Visit to Ashanti Region, 2016:73). According to Akuoko, “the SU Camps Ministry in Kumasi runs the Junior and Senior Mixed Camps, Teens Warriors Annual Retreat, Youth Development Camp, Vacation Study Camps, and Christmas Community Missions” (Akuoko, 2022). The others—the National Leadership Conference (NLC) and the Lifebuild Camps—are run exclusively to reinforce the SHS campus ministry.

Another key area of consideration, other than the content of SU camps and conferences, is the camp officer factor. Generally, camp officers³ are expected to be the campers’ mentors, modelling commitment to personal spiritual growth, humility, service, discipline, and diligence. They serve as models for living out the proclaimed gospel, resounding the possibility of Christian living even in contemporary contexts (Barker & Boadi-Siaw, 2003:20). This idea of modelling the Christian life has the potential to positively impact the youth. Draper (2019:264) argues that living the proclaimed word in the 21st century speaks louder than the proclamation of the word. This learning is expected to take place during the period of the camp and afterwards, which is possible because, during the personal interviews with the Regional Manager and the Area Programmes Officer (APO) of

3 Mature Christians who take care of campers

Kumasi, they reported that “some of the camp officer-camper relationships that are established at SU camps develop into lifelong mentor-mentee relationships, resulting in the personal and professional development of the mentees” (Antwi, 2022; Akuoko, 2022).

Apart from the camp officer factor, the integration of counselling sections into camp programmes was observed to play a significant role at camps. The camp organisers are conscious of the introduction and the frequency of counselling sessions on camp and conference programmes. As SU’s camp programmes showed, almost every activity offered an opportunity for counselling. For instance, the NLC (2019) programme reveals that there were counselling slots on four out of the six days of camping. Through counselling sessions, various group challenges and individual campers’ needs are diagnosed and addressed where possible.⁴

In concluding this section, the approach used by SU reveals the possibility of using camps and conferences as tools for teaching and discipling young ones. With fun activities, intentional community building, and lessons designed to address the needs of young ones, campus ministry can aim at fostering lifelong journeys of faith for young people. In this way, attempts are being made to disciple students through modelling and counselling.

2.9 Youth leadership development in campus ministry

Within the educational setting, the integration of discipleship programmes offers unique opportunities for faith-based leadership development that benefit individuals, schools, and the larger society. In this section, we discuss how SU addresses leadership development in its campus ministry.

The need for leadership development among youth can be argued from various dimensions. Firstly, from a theological reflection on the priesthood of all believers, Walls and Ross (2008:35) justify the need for discipleship approaches that embed leadership development. To them, it is “crucial to the process of multiplication,” citing Paul’s admonishing to Timothy, thus, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). Secondly, although some psychologists have downplayed the capacity of the youth, describing them as experiencing “identity versus role confusion” (Atkinson et al., 1983:92-93), considering the mental capacity and experiential knowledge of youths, we agree with Males (2009:17) that adults must “learn to share leadership with the more flexible young” ones. This will contribute to the preparation of leaders for future generations. A third case can be made for leadership development among

⁴ According to the respondents, an opportunity for counselling is available for all students at almost all SU-organised programmes for the youth. Issues beyond the counselling capacities of the officers, such as health challenges, sexual and domestic abuse, parental neglect, and addictions of various types and degrees are referred to the right professionals for redress. Issues requiring parental attention are particularly addressed through the school authorities.

students, considering the social context on campus. In the realm of SHS, where students are already immersed in a social context shaped by the prefectorial system and denominational leadership, the case for leadership development through campus discipleship programmes becomes even more compelling. In SU campus ministry, most participants in the study noted that “many SU student leaders are also school prefects.” White (2014:213) points out that local churches already have their student groups on the SHS campuses to, among other things, groom leaders for the churches. Thus, the incorporation of leadership development into discipleship programmes from a non-denominational perspective may go a long way toward enhancing SU’s campus ministry, improving student leadership quality on campus, enriching the leadership experience of local church groups, and producing prospective leaders for churches, parachurch groups and society. This reflects Walls and Ross’ (2008:34) call for discipleship programmes to incorporate the need for Christians’ involvement in public leadership as a social concern.

Accordingly, one aspect of SU’s five-year strategic plan is to develop evangelical leaders for the church and society from a biblical perspective (Scripture Union Five-Year Strategic Plan III, 2017:17). SU’s aim in this regard echoes Gott and Craft’s (2020:61) call for more integration of faith-based student leadership development into contemporary leadership paradigms. It offers hope for transformation and resonates with Steuernagel’s (2008:63) view that the Christian faith can shape our thoughts about life. Although Gott and Craft (2020:61) appreciate that the initial goal of campus ministry is personal development, they also propose that such faith-based approaches to personal development should be explored with student leadership development. We agree with them because studies on youth leadership training on campuses have also shown that evangelical groups that give much attention to leadership recruitment influence leaders’ personal development and increase their numbers (Gott & Craft, 2020:61; Bryant, 2005:3). While Gott and Craft (2020:61) and Bryant (2005:3) emphasise these outcomes, Ering et al., (2020) push the discussion to the extent that effective youth leadership training is a tool for providing quality future leaders for the church.

However, SU, with its five-year strategic plan, sees an opportunity in its NLC and leadership training of all school prefects and SRC executives to affect society beyond the borders of the church. Thus, leadership training programmes designed by SU are intended to primarily produce good leadership for SU school fellowship groups, support the leadership needs of the Christian church (on campus and after school), empower school prefects, and ultimately produce leaders for society.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, an examination of SU’s approaches to discipleship and leadership development in SHSs in Kumasi, within the context of ongoing missiological discussions, reveals several key insights:

Firstly, SU's provision of devotional materials aligns with Walls and Ross' (2008:33) call for appropriate discipleship resources for young converts. Secondly, SU's initiatives address Christological issues through devotional materials and campus fellowship meetings, ensuring students are grounded in their faith. Furthermore, SU engages with the youth culture of Kumasi by identifying their concerns and responding with relevant programmes such as purity and integrity campaigns. This contextualisation resonates with students' lived experiences and partially addresses Weber's (2017:2) question on the contextualisation of SU's youth ministry in Africa. Additionally, the study reveals that SU addresses the nature of the supernatural primarily during evangelistic activities rather than discipleship programmes involving students outside the fellowship group. Lastly, SU's commitment to leadership development through camps, conferences, and pre-mission training underscores their dedication to empowering students spiritually and as leaders within their school communities. However, challenges remain in nurturing new converts. SU's Bibles, BRN, and BISO are mostly accessible to students who can afford them. Moreover, logistical obstacles, such as obtaining permission from school authorities, hinder effective follow-up efforts despite existing mechanisms.

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