

# Constructing Institutional Identities: The Case of the Slogans of Selected Public and Private Universities in Ghana

<sup>1</sup>Gabriel Kwame Ankrah (PhD), <sup>2</sup>Gladys K. Sombonah, <sup>3</sup>Priscilla Aboagye Aryeh

<sup>1</sup>University of Mines and Technology, Department of Technical Communication, Tarkwa, Ghana.

<sup>2</sup>Akrokerri College of Education, Ghana

<sup>3</sup>University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa.

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## ABSTRACT

University slogans serve as potent semiotic tools through which higher education institutions communicate their identities, philosophies, and aspirations to the public. In Ghana, both public and private universities employ slogans to construct and project institutional identities that align with national development goals, cultural expectations, and global competitiveness. Drawing on data from the official slogans of ten public and ten private universities in Ghana, this study investigates the linguistic and ideological features that underlie the construction of institutional identities. Employing a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as analytical lenses, the study examines how language choices in these slogans reflect particular institutional values, power relations, and socio-cultural orientations. The analysis reveals that public universities tend to emphasize national service, knowledge production, and moral responsibility, while private universities foreground spirituality, entrepreneurship, and global citizenship. The findings highlight the intersection of education, ideology, and discourse in the Ghanaian higher education landscape, offering insights into how institutional communication serves as a microcosm of broader societal narratives.

**Keywords:** Institutional Identity; University Slogans; Ghana; Systemic Functional Linguistics; Critical Discourse Analysis; Higher Education Discourse

## INTRODUCTION

Language constitutes one of the most powerful resources for constructing and negotiating social identities. In institutional contexts, linguistic choices are rarely arbitrary; rather, they are strategically selected to embody, sustain, and communicate values, missions, and ideologies (Norman Fairclough 1995; Teun A. van Dijk 1998). Within higher education, slogans function as condensed linguistic artefacts through which universities project their institutional identity and brand ethos. Slogans capture the self-representation of universities, often serving as a linguistic gateway through which the public perceives and evaluates them. In Ghana, as in many other postcolonial societies, the discursive practices of universities are deeply intertwined with historical, political, and cultural narratives of nationhood, moral responsibility, and global aspiration (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1986; Kwame Anthony Appiah 1992). Examining how universities linguistically position themselves through slogans thus offers an important window into the dynamics of institutional identity construction.

Institutional identity refers to the composite of symbolic meanings, values, and discursive resources through which an organization differentiates itself and is recognized by others. This identity is constructed through multiple semiotic modes—logos, mottos, mission statements, and slogans—but language remains central (Pierre Bourdieu 1991; James Paul Gee 2011). University slogans, typically short and memorable phrases, condense institutional values and ideologies into succinct linguistic forms that are easily communicable to internal and external audiences. While they share certain characteristics with advertising slogans, university slogans go beyond marketing: they constitute ideological artefacts that project epistemic authority, moral credibility, and social purpose (Vijay K. Bhatia 2004; Ken Hyland 2012).

In Ghana, university education has expanded dramatically since the early 2000s, with the establishment of numerous private universities alongside long-standing public ones. This proliferation has generated a competitive educational marketplace in which institutions must distinguish themselves not only through academic programs but also through the symbolic capital of their names, logos, and slogans. Slogans thus operate as strategic discourse, simultaneously reflecting institutional histories and aspirations while appealing to prospective students, parents, and the wider society (Fairclough 2003; Bourdieu 1991). For public universities, identity is often tied to national development and civic responsibility; for private universities, it frequently integrates moral, entrepreneurial, or spiritual orientations. This duality makes Ghana an ideal sociolinguistic space in which to examine the linguistic construction of institutional identity.

Despite their importance, university slogans have received limited scholarly attention in African linguistics and discourse studies. While existing research has examined advertising language, political discourse, and educational policy texts, the semiotics of institutional self-presentation through slogans remains underexplored. Most Ghanaian linguistic studies have focused on political slogans, religious discourse, and media communication (e.g. Ruth Wodak 2011; van Dijk 1998). Yet, the slogans of higher education institutions—where the ideologies of knowledge, morality, and modernity intersect—offer a rich site for exploring the interplay between discourse, ideology, and identity.

This paper, therefore, aims to investigate how the slogans of selected public and private universities in Ghana construct institutional identities. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Identify the linguistic and rhetorical features used in the slogans.
2. Analyse the dominant themes and processes (material, mental, relational, verbal) encoded in the slogans.
3. Examine the ideological orientations reflected in these linguistic constructions.
4. Compare the identity discourses of public and private universities to uncover their ideological and communicative differences.

Grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995; van Dijk 2008) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014), this study conceptualizes slogans as sites of ideological struggle and social representation. CDA provides the theoretical lens for understanding how power, ideology, and identity are embedded in language, while SFL offers the analytical framework for exploring the relationship between linguistic choices and meaning-making functions. The intersection of these two frameworks allows for both textual and contextual analyses—tracing how language constructs reality within specific institutional and socio-political contexts.

The study contributes to the growing scholarship on educational discourse in Africa by highlighting how university slogans, as linguistic artefacts, encode institutional ideology and project distinct social personas. It also offers a framework for analysing institutional discourse that integrates linguistic form with socio-cultural function. The findings are expected to advance understanding of how Ghanaian universities position themselves within local and global academic hierarchies through language, and how these linguistic constructions mirror broader ideological and cultural orientations within Ghanaian society.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Institutional Identity and Discourse

The concept of institutional identity has been widely discussed in organizational communication, sociology, and discourse studies. It refers to the symbolic and linguistic practices through which institutions define and represent themselves to various audiences (Fairclough 1992; van Leeuwen 2008). Identity is not an inherent property of institutions but a discursively constructed phenomenon achieved through language and other semiotic resources. In educational contexts, identity construction manifests in mission statements, mottos, prospectuses, and slogans—texts that condense complex institutional values into accessible linguistic forms (Higgins 2011).

Fairclough (1995) argues that institutions reproduce and legitimize social structures through discourse, using linguistic forms to naturalize specific ideologies. Universities, as knowledge-producing institutions, use discourse not only to communicate their values but also to maintain symbolic authority. Their slogans, though brief, play a role in this process by representing institutional philosophies in a condensed, memorable form. In the context of higher education, these discursive practices are influenced by broader social, political, and economic factors, including globalization, marketization, and national development agendas.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, institutional identity is also relational—it emerges through differentiation from other institutions. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) note, identity is the product of positioning within interactional, cultural, and ideological fields. Thus, when universities proclaim slogans such as “In Wisdom We Build” or “Empowering Minds for the Future,” they are not merely describing themselves but constructing distinctive personae vis-à-vis other institutions and the broader society. The repetition of certain lexical and thematic choices across institutions also signals shared ideological orientations—for instance, toward knowledge, service, or faith.

### **University Discourse and Linguistic Branding**

Research on university discourse has expanded alongside the globalization and commercialization of higher education. Scholars such as Fairclough (1993) and Bhatia (2008) have highlighted the increasing marketization of academic discourse, whereby universities adopt promotional and corporate communication strategies to attract students and funding. Linguistic branding—the use of language to project institutional image—has thus become a key element of university identity construction (Piller 2001; van Leeuwen 2005).

Studies on university slogans, though fewer in number, have underscored their role in articulating institutional missions and values. Thurlow and Jaworski (2010) describe slogans as “compressed narratives” that encapsulate institutional ideology. In the African context, where universities operate amid competing pressures of tradition, modernization, and global ranking systems, linguistic branding often serves both promotional and ideological purposes. A university slogan may simultaneously appeal to national pride and global competitiveness—illustrating what Fairclough (2001) calls “the hybridity of discourses” in neoliberal educational spaces.

In Ghana, university discourse reflects both postcolonial legacies and contemporary aspirations. Early public universities, such as the University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), were founded to advance national development and human capital. Their slogans typically emphasize service, wisdom, and leadership—values aligned with civic responsibility. Conversely, newer private universities, often established by religious organizations, foreground moral, spiritual, and entrepreneurial values. This ideological contrast mirrors broader educational discourses in Ghana, where faith-based and secular worldviews coexist and compete for legitimacy (Oduro 2019).

### **Critical Discourse Analysis and Educational Institutions**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a powerful theoretical and methodological approach for examining how power, ideology, and social relations are constructed in institutional language. According to Fairclough (1992), CDA involves three interrelated dimensions: text, discourse practice, and social practice. This triadic model allows analysts to move beyond surface linguistic patterns to explore how discourses reproduce social structures and ideologies. Wodak and Meyer (2016) further argue that institutional discourse must be studied in its socio-political context, as texts are shaped by the institutional settings in which they are produced and consumed.

In educational discourse research, CDA has been used to reveal how language encodes hierarchies of knowledge, authority, and legitimacy. For example, Rogers et al. (2005) demonstrate how institutional texts reflect and reinforce power relations between administrators, teachers, and students. Similarly, van Dijk (2008) contends that educational institutions are key sites for ideological reproduction, as they define the norms of legitimate knowledge. Within the Ghanaian context, slogans can thus be seen as part of an ideological apparatus that projects specific visions of education, citizenship, and development.

## Systemic Functional Linguistics and the Grammar of Meaning

While CDA focuses on ideology and power, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) provides the analytical tools for examining how linguistic structures realize meaning in context. Halliday's (1985, 1994) model of language as a social semiotic system identifies three metafunctions—ideational, interpersonal, and textual—which together explain how language constructs reality. Of particular relevance to slogan analysis is the ideational metafunction, which is realized through transitivity: the configuration of processes (verbs), participants, and circumstances that represent experience.

Transitivity analysis enables researchers to identify whether a slogan represents action (material processes), cognition or emotion (mental processes), description or identity (relational processes), or communication (verbal processes). For example, the slogan “Empowering Minds for the Future” foregrounds a material process (“empowering”) that positions the university as an active agent. Similarly, “In Wisdom We Build” encodes both a relational process (“are wise”) and a material process (“build”), projecting wisdom as the foundation of institutional activity.

SFL has been widely applied in discourse studies to uncover the relationship between linguistic form and social function (Eggs 2004; Martin & White 2005). In slogan analysis, it enables the mapping of ideational meaning onto ideological purpose. When combined with CDA, SFL facilitates a comprehensive understanding of how linguistic features—lexical choices, grammatical structures, and thematic organization—contribute to the construction of institutional identities.

## African Educational Discourse and Identity Construction

In African higher education, identity construction is shaped by the interplay of colonial histories, local epistemologies, and global pressures. Scholars such as Bamgbose (2000) and Prah (2009) have highlighted the tension between indigenization and Westernization in African educational discourse. University slogans, as linguistic artefacts, reflect these tensions by integrating local values (e.g., community, morality, service) with universal ideals (e.g., excellence, innovation, leadership). This hybridity mirrors what Blommaert (2010) calls “the layered nature of discourse” in postcolonial societies.

Recent Ghanaian discourse studies (Agyekum 2019; Adika 2012) have underscored the importance of examining language in institutional and educational settings as a means of understanding national identity formation. Yet, there remains a paucity of research on the micro-linguistic level of institutional self-representation—particularly the analysis of slogans as sites of meaning-making. By situating slogan discourse within both CDA and SFL frameworks, the present study bridges this gap and contributes to a nuanced understanding of how Ghanaian universities linguistically negotiate their identities in a rapidly transforming educational landscape.

## Theoretical Framework

The present study adopts an integrated theoretical framework combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to explore how institutional identities are constructed through university slogans. These two frameworks, though distinct in orientation, complement each other in examining both the ideological and linguistic dimensions of discourse. CDA provides the interpretive lens for understanding power, ideology, and social meaning, while SFL supplies the grammatical and semantic tools for analysing how these meanings are realized in language.

## Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis, as articulated by Fairclough (1992, 1995), van Dijk (1998, 2008), and Wodak (2001), is grounded in the view that discourse is both socially shaped and socially shaping. It assumes that language is a medium through which power relations and ideologies are constructed, maintained, and contested. CDA thus moves beyond textual description to explain how linguistic practices relate to broader structures of dominance and control.

Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of discourse—comprising text, discursive practice, and social practice—is particularly relevant here. The first dimension involves the close analysis of linguistic features (lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical). The second considers the production, distribution, and consumption of texts within specific institutional settings. The third examines the wider social structures and ideological formations that inform those discursive practices.

In the context of university slogans, CDA facilitates the interpretation of how short linguistic forms encapsulate complex ideological positions. Slogans are not neutral descriptions; they are ideological acts that legitimize institutional missions and values. For example, a slogan such as “Knowledge, Integrity, Service” reflects an ideological commitment to moral education and national development. CDA enables us to unpack the implicit power relations—between the institution and the public, between tradition and modernity—that underpin such linguistic constructions.

This approach also recognizes that language use in institutional settings is inherently intertextual. University slogans often echo broader social and political discourses—of development, excellence, or faith—that circulate within Ghanaian society. As Fairclough (2001) notes, intertextuality is a key mechanism through which ideology is reproduced and naturalized. By drawing on shared cultural narratives, slogans position institutions within recognizable ideological fields, thereby reinforcing social cohesion and legitimacy.

### **Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)**

Systemic Functional Linguistics, developed by Halliday (1978, 1985) and later refined by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), views language as a social semiotic system—a resource for making meaning within social contexts. SFL posits that all linguistic choices serve three metafunctions:

- The ideational metafunction, through which language represents experience and reality;
- The interpersonal metafunction, through which language enacts relationships and attitudes; and
- The textual metafunction, through which language organizes messages coherently within context.

In slogan analysis, the ideational metafunction is particularly salient. It is realized through the transitivity system, which represents how processes (verbs), participants, and circumstances construct experiences of action, perception, and being. Halliday distinguishes several process types—material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural, and existential—each contributing different dimensions of meaning.

By analysing the transitivity structures in university slogans, one can uncover how institutions represent themselves as actors, thinkers, or moral entities. For instance, a slogan like “Empowering Minds for the Future” encodes a material process (“empowering”), positioning the university as an agent of transformation. A slogan such as “In Wisdom We Build” combines mental (“wisdom”) and material (“build”) processes, projecting a self-image grounded in intellect and productivity. SFL thus enables a precise description of the linguistic resources through which institutions enact particular social roles.

### **Integrating CDA and SFL**

While CDA provides a macro-analytical framework and SFL a micro-linguistic one, their integration offers a holistic approach to discourse analysis. Fairclough (2003) himself advocates a synthesis of linguistic and social theory, arguing that understanding the ideological effects of discourse requires detailed textual analysis. SFL, in turn, supplies CDA with the grammatical precision needed to trace the linguistic realization of ideology.

In this study, CDA is used to interpret the social and ideological dimensions of university slogans—how they reflect the moral, cultural, and political priorities of Ghanaian higher education. SFL is employed to examine the linguistic realization of those ideologies—how particular grammatical and lexical choices construct agency, values, and relationships. Together, the two frameworks enable both description and interpretation: SFL describes how identity is constructed; CDA explains why it is constructed that way.

This combined approach also aligns with the notion of critical systemic linguistics (Young & Harrison 2004; Bartlett 2012), which seeks to bridge linguistic form and social function. By using SFL as a descriptive toolkit within a CDA perspective, the analysis reveals how even brief institutional texts such as slogans embody larger social discourses—of nation-building, spirituality, or global competitiveness.

### **Application to the Present Study**

The CDA–SFL framework informs every stage of this research. At the textual level, slogans are analysed in terms of process types, participant roles, and key lexical choices. At the discursive-practice level, the study examines how slogans circulate through institutional and media channels. At the social-practice level, the analysis situates these linguistic forms within Ghana’s broader socio-cultural and educational landscape.

The framework thus allows the study to move fluidly between linguistic evidence and social interpretation, offering a comprehensive account of how Ghanaian universities use language to construct institutional identities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative-descriptive research design grounded in the interpretive paradigm. The aim is to explore how institutional identities are constructed through the linguistic and ideological features of Ghanaian university slogans. Given that slogans are short, context-dependent, and symbolically dense texts, qualitative analysis enables an in-depth interpretation of meaning beyond surface linguistic structures (Creswell & Poth 2018).

The analytical framework integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). CDA provides a macro-analytic lens for examining how discourse reproduces ideology, power, and social relations (Fairclough 1995; Wodak 2011), while SFL offers micro-level tools for analyzing how meaning is encoded through grammar and lexical choices (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). This combined approach allows for a systematic and theoretically grounded interpretation of both linguistic form and ideological function.

The study focuses on twenty (20) universities in Ghana, equally divided between public and private institutions. This balanced sampling enables a comparative analysis of how institutional ownership influences discursive identity construction within Ghana’s dual higher education system.

### **Data Selection**

The primary dataset consists of official university slogans obtained from institutional websites, prospectuses, and promotional materials. These texts were selected because they represent authoritative and publicly sanctioned expressions of institutional identity.

The sample includes:

Ten (10) public universities (e.g. University of Ghana, KNUST, UCC, UDS)

Ten (10) private universities (e.g. Ashesi University, Central University, Pentecost University)

To ensure data validity, slogans were cross-verified across multiple sources, including official websites, admissions brochures, and institutional social media platforms. Data collection was conducted between June and August 2025.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection process followed a systematic multi-stage procedure:

#### **Identification**

- A comprehensive list of accredited universities was obtained from the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC).

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**Extraction**

- Official slogans were extracted from institutional websites and verified promotional materials.

**Verification**

- Each slogan was cross-checked across at least two independent sources to ensure accuracy and currency.

**Compilation**

- Slogans were compiled into a structured dataset including institutional type (public/private), year of establishment, and thematic category.

**Preliminary Thematic Grouping**

- Slogans were initially categorized into broad thematic clusters (e.g. knowledge, service, faith, leadership, innovation) to guide subsequent coding.

**Analytical Procedures**

The analysis followed a systematic, multi-stage coding process, supported by the qualitative data analysis software NVivo (Version 14). NVivo was used to organize, code, and retrieve textual data, enhancing transparency and analytical rigor (Paulus, Woods, Atkins & Macklin 2017; Jackson & Bazeley 2019).

**Stage 1: Data Preparation**

- All slogans were imported into NVivo as individual text entries.
- Each entry was assigned metadata attributes (ownership type, thematic category, source).

**Stage 2: Open Coding (Initial Coding)**

- Using an inductive approach, slogans were first subjected to open coding (Saldaña 2021).
- Codes were generated for recurring lexical and semantic features (e.g. knowledge, faith, service, excellence).
- This stage produced an initial coding scheme reflecting dominant lexical fields.

**Stage 3: Axial Coding (Categorization)**

Codes were then grouped into broader analytical categories:

- Civic-developmental discourse
- Moral-spiritual discourse
- Global-entrepreneurial discourse

Relationships between categories were examined to identify patterns across public and private institutions.

**Stage 4: Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) Analysis**

Each slogan was analyzed for its transitivity structure following Halliday and Matthiessen (2014):

- Process types: material, mental, relational, verbal
- Participants: actor, goal, carrier, senser

- Circumstances: purpose, manner, location

For example:

“Empowering Minds for the Future” → Material process

“Faith, Integrity and Excellence” → Relational attribution

This stage enabled classification of slogans based on the types of meanings they encode.

### **Stage 5: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Building on the SFL findings, CDA was applied to interpret ideological meanings:

- Lexical field analysis (e.g. faith, service, leadership)
- Rhetorical strategies (parallelism, metaphor, nominalization)
- Discursive positioning (nationalist, moral-spiritual, neoliberal-global)

Following Fairclough’s (1995, 2003) framework, analysis moved across:

- Text (linguistic features)
- Discursive practice (production and consumption of slogans)
- Social practice (broader ideological context)

Additionally, insights from the Discourse-Historical Approach (Wodak 2011) were used to situate slogans within Ghana’s socio-cultural and religious context.

### **Stage 6: Pattern Interpretation and Synthesis**

- NVivo queries (word frequency and coding comparison) were used to identify dominant patterns.
- Findings were synthesized into thematic and ideological categories presented in tables.

## **4.5 Coding Reliability and Validity**

To ensure analytical rigor, the study employed multiple strategies for reliability and validity:

### **Intercoder Reliability**

Two independent linguists trained in CDA and SFL coded the dataset. Coding consistency was assessed through iterative comparison, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion. This aligns with best practices in qualitative discourse analysis (O’Connor & Joffe 2020).

### **Audit Trail**

All coding decisions, category definitions, and analytical steps were documented within NVivo, ensuring transparency and replicability.

### **Theoretical Validity**

Coding categories were grounded in established frameworks:

- Transitivity → Halliday & Matthiessen (2014)

- Ideology → Fairclough (1995, 2003)
- Discourse-historical context → Wodak (2011)

### Triangulation

The study integrates:

- Linguistic analysis (SFL)
- Ideological interpretation (CDA)
- Thematic categorization

This triangulation enhances the robustness of findings (Flick 2020).

### Data Presentation

Findings are presented both qualitatively and descriptively. Tables summarize the distribution of slogans by ownership, process type, and thematic focus, while selected excerpts are subjected to detailed discourse analysis. Beyond description, the analysis interrogates how linguistic choices function as strategic resources for persuasion, differentiation, and ideological positioning within Ghana’s competitive higher education market. In line with Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995; Wodak 2011), particular attention is paid to how slogans enact power by legitimizing institutional authority and shaping audience perception. Thus, the study moves from surface linguistic patterns to an interpretation of slogans as instruments of symbolic power and market positioning.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### Overview

University slogans operate as condensed narratives of institutional philosophy, distilling complex educational ideologies into memorable linguistic forms. In Ghana’s higher education context, such slogans function not only as descriptors but as strategic persuasive tools designed to attract students, secure legitimacy, and differentiate institutions within an increasingly competitive marketplace (Bhatia 2005; Mautner 2020).

From a CDA perspective, slogans are not neutral; they are ideologically loaded micro-discourses that construct institutional authority and align universities with broader socio-cultural values (Fairclough 2003; Wodak 2011). In particular, the deployment of religious language in private university slogans must be understood not merely as identity expression but as a discursive strategy of persuasion and symbolic power in the educational marketplace.

### The Data

Table 1: Public Universities and Official Slogans (2025)

No.	University	Slogan	Thematic Focus
	University of Ghana	<b>Integri Prodedamus (Proceed with Integrity)</b>	Integrity/Moral Excellence
2.	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)	<b>Advancing Knowledge in Science and Technology</b>	Knowledge/Innovation

3.	University of Cape Coast	<b>Veritas Nobis Lumen</b> (“Truth, Our Guide”)	Truth/Enlightenment
4.	University for Development Studies (UDS)	<b>Knowledge for Service</b>	Service/Development
5.	University of Education, Winneba (UEW)	<b>Education for Service</b>	Pedagogy/Civic Duty
6.	University of Mines and Technology (UMaT)	<b>Knowledge, Truth and Excellence</b>	Technical/Ethical Values
7.	University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS)	<b>Health for Development</b>	Health and Nation-Building
8.	University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR)	<b>Energy for Sustainable Development</b>	Environment/Sustainability
9.	Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ)	<b>Ad Dei Gloriam</b> (“To the Glory of God”)	Faith/Professional Ethics
10.	University of Professional Studies, Accra (UPSA)	<b>Knowledge, Integrity and Professionalism</b>	Ethics/Professional Identity

Table 2. Private Universities and Official Slogans (2025)

No	University	Slogan	Thematic Focus
	Ashesi University	<b>Scholarship, Leadership, Citizenship</b>	Leadership/Global Citizen
2.	Central University	<b>Faith, Integrity and Excellence</b>	Faith/Excellence
3.	Pentecost University	<b>Transforming Society through Faith and Technology</b>	Religion / Transformation
4.	Valley View University	<b>Excellence, Integrity, Service</b>	Ethics / Christian Values
5.	Methodist University Ghana	<b>Excellence and Morality</b>	Discipline / Faith
6.	Catholic University of Ghana	<b>Scientia et Fide</b> (“Knowledge and Faith”)	Integration of Faith and Reason
7.	Wisconsin International University College	<b>Knowledge, Excellence, and Empowerment</b>	Academic Growth / Empowerment
8.	Presbyterian University Ghana	<b>Discipline in Leadership</b>	Leadership / Discipline

9.	Lancaster University Ghana	<b>A World of Possibilities</b>	Innovation / Global Perspective
10.	Ghana Baptist University College	<b>Excellence with Godliness</b>	Faith / Academic Excellence

### Thematic Distribution

A thematic comparison reveals three dominant identity frames across the dataset:

1. **Civic-Developmental Orientation (Public Universities):** Slogans emphasize nation-building, service, and knowledge production.
2. **Moral-Spiritual Orientation (Private Universities):** Slogans focus on faith, integrity, and transformation.
3. **Global-Entrepreneurial Orientation (Emerging Cross-sectoral Trend):** Found in both sectors but stronger in private universities, with emphasis on empowerment and global citizenship.

Table 3. Dominant Ideological Orientations by Ownership

Orientation	Public (%)	Private (%)	Key Lexical Items
Civic/National Development	50	15	Service, Development, Knowledge
Moral-Spiritual	20	50	Faith, Integrity, Godliness
Global/Entrepreneurial	30	35	Excellence, Leadership, Empowerment

### 5.4 Linguistic Patterns and SFL Analysis

#### Transitivity Structures

Public university slogans frequently deploy material processes—verbs of doing and creating—such as advancing, building, developing, and serving. These verbs foreground active contribution and align with national development discourse. Example: “Education for Service” (UEW) encodes a goal-oriented material process, positioning education as an instrument for collective good. Private university slogans, conversely, favor relational and mental processes. Expressions like “Excellence and Morality” or “Faith, Integrity, and Excellence” describe being rather than doing. They construct the university’s identity as a state of moral being and divine affiliation.

#### Nominalization and Parallelism

Both public and private institutions use nominalized triads—e.g., Knowledge, Integrity, and Professionalism (UPSA) or Faith, Integrity, and Excellence (Central University)—to condense multiple values into symmetrical units. This rhetorical pattern creates rhythm, memorability, and ideological balance, reflecting the tripartite cognitive pattern common in institutional discourse.

#### Metaphoricity and Personification

Metaphorical expressions such as “A World of Possibilities” (Lancaster University Ghana) and “Transforming Society through Faith and Technology” (Pentecost University) personify the university as an agent of transformation. Such metaphors situate higher education within the global neoliberal discourse of innovation and self-realization.

## **Ideological Interpretations (CDA Perspective)**

### **Public Universities: Nationalism and Development**

A. Public Universities: Nationalism and Development (unchanged core, slightly tightened) Public university slogans mirror Ghana's post-independence ideological tradition that links education to national progress. Phrases such as Knowledge for Service and Health for Development align with state-driven discourses of modernization. These institutions position themselves as instruments of public good, reinforcing civic legitimacy and state-oriented authority.

### **Private Universities: Faith, Persuasion, and Symbolic Power**

Private university slogans reveal not only the influence of religious foundations but also the strategic deployment of religious discourse as a persuasive and competitive resource. The recurrent use of lexical items such as faith, Godliness, Christian values, and morality functions at multiple discursive levels.

First, from a genre perspective, such language reflects what Bhatia (2005) describes as promotional hybridity, where institutional discourse blends informational, ideological, and persuasive functions. Religious expressions are not merely declarative; they are value-laden signals aimed at constructing trust, credibility, and moral authority. In a context where higher education is increasingly marketized, these values become symbolic commodities that differentiate institutions.

Second, from a CDA perspective, religious language operates as a form of symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991). By invoking divine authority ("Excellence with Godliness", "Knowledge and Faith"), institutions elevate their legitimacy beyond the secular domain, positioning themselves as morally superior or spiritually grounded alternatives to public universities. This aligns with Wodak's (2011) Discourse-Historical Approach, which emphasizes how discourses draw on culturally embedded belief systems to legitimize authority.

Third, religious discourse functions as a persuasive strategy targeting specific audiences, particularly within Ghana's highly religious society. By aligning institutional identity with widely shared spiritual values, private universities construct affective and ideological alignment with prospective students and parents. This reflects what recent studies identify as identity-based branding, where institutions appeal to the beliefs and aspirations of their target market (Henderson & Bowden 2020; Saichaie & Morphew 2021).

Fourth, the use of religious language can also be interpreted as a market differentiation strategy. In a crowded higher education sector, faith-based discourse allows private universities to carve out a distinct niche, positioning themselves as providers of not only academic excellence but also moral and spiritual formation. This aligns with neoliberal educational discourse, where institutions compete through branding and value-added identity claims (Mautner 2020).

Thus, religious language in private university slogans is not simply reflective of institutional heritage; it is performative, strategic, and ideological—a means of exercising symbolic power, shaping consumer perception, and securing competitive advantage.

### **Emerging Hybridity: Global Citizenship**

A third, hybrid orientation appears in slogans that combine moral, civic, and global aspirations. For example, Scholarship, Leadership, Citizenship reflects a convergence of academic excellence, ethical responsibility, and global engagement.

This hybridity illustrates what Fairclough (2001) describes as the mixing of discourses in late modernity, where institutions simultaneously draw on civic, religious, and neoliberal frameworks. It also reflects contemporary trends in higher education branding, where universities position themselves as globally relevant while maintaining local legitimacy (Mwinlaaru & Nartey 2022).

## Lexical Field Analysis

Table 4. Lexical Frequency of Key Ideological Terms

Lexical Item	Frequency (Out of 20)	Orientation
Knowledge	10	Academic/Civic
Excellence	9	Global/Entrepreneurial
Faith	7	Moral/Spiritual
Service	6	Civic/National
Integrity	5	Moral/Professional
Leadership	4	Global/Entrepreneurial
Development	4	Civic
Godliness	2	Spiritual
Empowerment	2	Global

This lexical pattern demonstrates a dominant discourse of excellence and knowledge, intersecting with faith and service. The overlap suggests that while the institutional orientations differ, all universities ultimately frame education as both transformative and moral.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Public universities articulate collectivist, state-aligned identities, grounded in national development and civic responsibility.
2. Private universities articulate faith-infused identities that function strategically as persuasive and market-differentiating resources, not merely as reflections of religious affiliation.
3. Religious language operates as a form of symbolic power, enhancing institutional legitimacy and appealing to culturally embedded belief systems.
4. Both sectors increasingly adopt global neoliberal discourses of excellence, leadership, and innovation.
5. Linguistically, these ideologies are realized through transitivity patterns, nominalization, evaluative lexis, and metaphor, which together construct institutional authority and identity.
6. Ghanaian university slogans thus represent a discursive intersection of ideology, persuasion, and market competition, rather than purely descriptive identity statements.

## Conclusion and Implications

This study has examined the slogans of selected public and private universities in Ghana as semiotic sites for constructing institutional identity. Drawing upon the dual framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the analysis revealed how linguistic form interacts with ideological orientation to project distinct yet intersecting images of the Ghanaian university.

The results demonstrate that public universities foreground collective service, national development, and knowledge production, positioning themselves as agents of modernization and social progress. Private

universities, by contrast, articulate moral and spiritual values alongside aspirations toward excellence, empowerment, and transformation. Together, these two sectors represent the ideological duality of Ghana's educational philosophy: the civic and the spiritual, the national and the global.

From a linguistic perspective, slogans employ nominalization, parallelism, metaphor, and material-relational process types to condense institutional philosophy into succinct yet powerful statements. Such rhetorical compactness ensures memorability while enacting institutional legitimacy. The blending of moral and developmental lexicons across ownership categories also points to increasing hybridization in higher education discourse, as universities strive to remain nationally relevant yet globally competitive.

## **Implications for Institutional Communication**

### **A. Branding and Policy Communication:**

Universities should recognize that slogans are more than marketing devices; they are instruments of institutional storytelling. Clarity and ideological coherence between slogans and institutional mission statements can enhance both credibility and stakeholder engagement.

### **B. Pedagogical Insight:**

Understanding the linguistic ideologies behind slogans can inform courses in communication, linguistics, and education management, particularly within Ghana's tertiary sector.

### **C. Sociolinguistic Relevance:**

The study underscores how educational discourse contributes to national identity formation and reflects socio-religious orientations in postcolonial contexts.

### **D. Global Positioning:**

Ghanaian universities increasingly align their linguistic identities with global education trends—emphasizing leadership, innovation, and excellence—without discarding traditional values of morality and service.

## **6.2 Recommendations for Future Research**

### **Future studies may:**

1. Extend the dataset to include polytechnics and teacher education institutions.
2. Compare Ghanaian university slogans with those from other African nations to explore regional ideological trends.
3. Investigate student and staff perceptions of university slogans as lived discourse rather than static text.
4. Employ multimodal discourse analysis to include visual symbols, logos, and colors alongside verbal data.

In sum, Ghanaian university slogans represent condensed ideological blueprints through which higher education institutions negotiate their roles as moral, civic, and global actors. They are linguistic performances of institutional selfhood, reflecting the aspirations and contradictions of a nation that values both faith and development.

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**Appendix A: Public and Private Universities with Slogans**

Category	University	Official Slogan	Source
Public	UG	Integri Procedamus (“Proceed with Integrity”)	UG Website
Public	KNUST	Advancing Knowledge in Science and Technology	KNUST Website
Public	UCC	Veritas Nobis Lumen (“Truth, Our Guide”)	UCC Website
Public	UDS	Knowledge for Service	UDS Website
Public	UEW	Education for Service	UEW Website
Public	UMaT	Knowledge, Truth and Excellence	UMaT Website
Public	UHAS	Health for Development	UHAS Website
Public	UENR	Energy for Sustainable Development	UENR Website
Public	GIJ	Ad Dei Gloriam (“To the Glory of God”)	GIJ Website
Public	UPSA	Knowledge, Integrity and Professionalism	UPSA Website
Private	Ashesi University	Scholarship, Leadership, Citizenship	Ashesi Website
Private	Central University	Faith, Integrity and Excellence	CU Website
Private	Pentecost University	Transforming Society through Faith and Technology	PU Website
Private	Valley View University	Excellence, Integrity, Service	VVU Website
Private	Methodist University Ghana	Excellence and Morality	MUG Website
Private	Catholic University Ghana	Scientia et Fide (“Knowledge and Faith”)	CUG Website
Private	Wisconsin University College	Knowledge, Excellence, and Empowerment	WUC Website
Private	Presbyterian University Ghana	Discipline in Leadership	PUG Website
Private	Lancaster University Ghana	A World of Possibilities	LUG Website
Private	Ghana Baptist University College	Excellence with Godliness	GBUC Website

**Appendix B: Summary of Analytical Coding**

Slogan	Process Type	Dominant Ideology	Key Lexical Features
Knowledge for Service	Material	Civic	Knowledge, Service
Faith, Integrity and Excellence	Relational	Spiritual	Faith, Integrity, Excellence
Scholarship, Leadership, Citizenship	Relational+Material	Global	Leadership, Citizenship
Integri Procedamus	Relational	Moral	Integrity
Energy for Sustainable Development	Material	Environmental	Development, Sustainability
Transforming Society through Faith and Technology	Material+Mental	Hybrid (Faith, Innovation)	Transforming, Faith, Technology
Excellence with Godliness	Relational	Spiritual	Excellence, Godliness
Education for Service	Material	Civic	Education, Service