DOI: https://doi.org//10.63102/jaac.v8i2.20257

https://jaac-sca.org ISSN 2637-3610

Volume 8 Issue 2 June 30, 2025

JOURNAL OF AFRICAN ARTS & CULTURE

PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL ACADEMIC POLICIES OF FIVE GHANAIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

[1] Reuben Agbelengor Glover
[2] Adolph Hillary Agbo
[3] Michael Ato Essuman

[1, 2, 3] Department of Publishing Studies,
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

reubenglover.cass@knust.edu.gh

CITATION: Glover, R.A., Agbo, A.H., & Essuman, M.A. (2025). Putting policy into practice: A comparative analysis of institutional academic policies of five Ghanaian public universities. *Journal of African Arts and Culture, 8*(2), 34-54.

Abstract

This qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) study draws from influential exemplary of Bretag et al. (2011a, b) to evaluate the academic integrity policies of five publicly funded Ghanaian universities. The findings indicate challenges in accessing policy documents online, the abundance of legal jargon (legalese) and obfuscating terminologies that may not be easily comprehensible. Most of the policies analysed adopt a penal approach, emphasising the penalisation of students for academic misconduct rather than fostering an educational framework. Additionally, there is a lack of support mechanisms for promoting academic integrity and no established guidelines for the ethical use of generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in education. The analysis highlights discrepancies in policy harmonisation and standardisation across the institutions. Based on the findings, the study recommends rethinking institutional policies by policymakers and shifting towards developmental approaches that leverage contemporary educational technologies (EdTech). It makes a compelling case for the adoption of an inclusive approach policy framework that aligns integrity policies across Ghanaian universities. The study contributes to the literature by providing a nuanced policy analysis that underscores the need for an interventionist approach to enhance policy acceptance and practice among Ghanaian universities.

Keywords: academic integrity policy, harmonisation, standardisation, ethical standards

1. Introduction

Ideally, universities have ‘idiosyncratic’ academic integrity policies aimed at guarding and guiding ethical scholarly activities and fostering a culture of academic integrity in their learning communities. In other words, a functional academic integrity policy is the guiding conscience of any academic endeavour. It reflects the institution's values (Eaton et al., 2023; 2022a, b) and should not be neutral or agnostic. It follows, therefore, that the philosophy and focus of any university’s academic integrity policy should reflect its members' collective expectations and aspirations in maintaining the highest ethical standards and integrity for the greater good of the university community and society. Regardless of the conceptual framework used to define academic integrity policy, its core values are essential to every facet of knowledge production, dissemination, promotion, and completion within a university. For that reason, quality assurance and academic integrity issues in education have gained primacy and

are considered priorities by university managers. This aligns with the global perspectives and broader intellectual conversations on the tertiary education ecosystem, where matters of quality and ethics are topical. These conversations have stimulated transformative enhancements of academic integrity policies and prompted reconsideration of the unethical use of evolutionary technologies in scholarly work.

In her eight-point Comprehensive Academic Integrity (CAI) framework, Eaton (2024) argues that academic integrity should be the foundation of all aspects of education. East (2009) suggests universities should promote academic integrity by aligning their policies with teaching methods, decision-making, and review processes. Such synchronisation is essential for creating a culture of academic integrity in these institutions. This perspective is corroborated by Bretag et al. (2011a) by affirming that policy practice revolves around the culture of academic integrity in every regard. To build an enabling educational environment where teaching, learning and research can thrive, a well-thought-out and all-inclusive academic integrity policy is pivotal in guiding such an enterprise. Such a policy document should be premised on "fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage" espoused by the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI, 2021).

As Youngsup Kim explains, "Academic integrity is a way to change the world. Change the university first; then change the world" (ICAI Conference Participant 2008). Taking cognisance of the multi-dimensionality of academic integrity and its communal effects on all academic community members (Bretag et al., 2011a; APFEI, 2010), all stakeholders must be committed to creating thriving academic communities of excellence that uphold principles of academic integrity, devoid of academic fraud, dishonesty, and other forms of misconduct as a multi-stakeholder pursuit (Bretag, 2016). Whereas institutional integrity policies are crafted to promote honest scholarship, establish ethical standards, and maintain intellectual credibility and institutional reputation, there is a limited body of studies on student awareness, perceptions and compliance (Gullifer & Tyson, 2013).

Many Ghanaian universities have formulated academic integrity policies to guide and regulate their academic activities. These policies infuse and institutionalise quality standards in academic work while judiciously protecting and managing their enviable reputation as a hub of integrity and pursuit of excellence. While institutional integrity policies have existed in Ghanaian universities, the fundamental question posed by the researchers is how effective these policies are in practice. Merely having explicit integrity policies is not enough without a steadfast commitment to their effective implementation. Policy without practice cannot be the panacea to the ever-increasing academic misconduct in university communities. The study suggests that to preserve institutional academic integrity and credibility, a university requires a well-crafted integrity policy that aligns with contemporary technologies and which should be implemented with a sustained commitment and supported by all university community members.

While a few studies have examined quality assurance practices in Ghanaian universities with a focus on educational quality, as noted by Mensah (2022), citing Painstil (2018), Swanzy (2015), Tsevi (2015), Boateng (2014), and Utuka (2012). It is concerning that issues of academic integrity policy in tertiary education in Ghana remain underexplored, creating a gap in scholarly literature and debate. As the tertiary education landscape continues to evolve, driven by privatisation, internationalisation, massification, commodification and commercialisation (Denisova-Schmidt, 2021), compounded by the increasing influence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in education, some of these institutional policies in practice have become outdated and unresponsive to emerging trends (Appiah et al., 2025). The study builds upon the foundational work of Bretag et al. (2011a, b). It integrates the "Technological Explicitness" component by Perkins and Roe (2023) and their applicability to the Ghanaian context. In other words, the study comparatively analysed accessible idiosyncratic academic policies of five publicly funded Ghanaian universities by exploring policy access, approach, responsibility, detail and support (Bretag et al., 2011a). It also explores their responsiveness to the ethical use of evolving generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) while advocating for the establishment of policy comparability standards across Ghanaian universities. This study is premised on the research

question: How do the integrity policies of publicly funded universities in Ghana align with the five core elements of exemplary academic integrity policy? (Bretag et al., 2011a, b).

2. Review of Related Literature

The ultimate objective of any institutional academic integrity policy is to safeguard and promote ethics and integrity in scholarship. It is, therefore, prudent to explore or understand the philosophical underpinnings of the concept of academic integrity policy. The term 'academic integrity policy' is complex and challenging to define. Bretag (2016) describes it as a multifarious topic with varied interpretations and conceptualisations depending on the context and approach of researchers. In a series of studies, Eaton (2024, 2021, 2017) contends that a universally accepted definition of the term remains elusive and difficult to establish. As a result, this uncertainty is increasingly complicating the work of scholars engaged in comparative policy research. Different researchers, such as Lancaster (2025), Mahmud (2024), Eaton (2024, 2021, 2017), Curtis and Clare (2023), Stoesz (2022), Curtis (2021), Bretag (2020), Bretag et al. (2020), Tauginienė (2018), Foltýnek (2015), and Bertram Gallant (2011), have attempted varied definitions of it.

In the literature, different phraseologies are used to describe or define the term academic integrity policy. While some writers use the phrase "academic integrity policy," which refers to guidelines and principles designed to uphold honesty and ethical behaviour in academic work, such as research, writing, and examinations, others label it as "educational integrity policy" to broadly include ethicality in pedagogy, learning and assessment with an emphasis on fairness and inclusivity across all "educational sectors" (Bretag, 2016; APFEI, 2010).

Syntactically, the phrase "academic integrity policy" has two keywords: 'integrity' and 'policy' in a lexical relationship. This study aims to operationalise the term by defining these two key terms and their interconnection.

2.1 What is Academic Integrity?

The European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI), cited by Tauginienė et al. (2018), define the term as "Compliance with ethical and professional principles, standards, practices and a consistent system of values that serves as guidance for making decisions and taking actions in education, research and scholarship." APFEI (2010) cited by Bretag (2016) defines "educational integrity as a commitment to the key values of honesty, trust, fairness, equity, respect and responsibility, and the translation of these values into action (adapted from the Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI), The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity 1999)." Integrity consistently applies ethical principles, emphasising honesty, trustworthiness, and accountability. This involves students submitting their work, educators maintaining transparency in grading, or institutions upholding academic standards. Macfarlane et al. (2014, p.343) define it as "the values, behaviour and conduct of academics in all aspects of their practice (teaching, research and service)" as expected from a 'good' academic.

Educational Ethics refers to the moral principles and values that guide behaviour and decision-making in educational settings. It encompasses fairness, respect, responsibility, and the commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Tauginienė et al. (2018) define ethics as a "choice-making around right and wrong values and behaviour," and it is also called moral philosophy, the discipline concerned with what is morally good and bad, right and wrong. The term is also applied to any system or theory of moral values or principles." Ethics provide the framework for what is considered right or wrong, while integrity is the steadfast commitment to living by those ethical principles. Together, they form the foundation of a trustworthy and effective educational system. In the literature, the terms "research integrity" and "research ethics" are occasionally used interchangeably (Eaton, 2024; Tammeleht et al., 2019, 2022; Hyytinen & Löfström, 2017).

2.2 What is Policy?

Generally, a policy is a set of principles or guidelines designed to influence decisions and actions within an organisation, group, or system. It provides a framework for consistent behaviour and decision-

making, ensuring that specific goals or standards are met. Regulations, on the other hand, establish rules to ensure compliance or fairness. Policies can serve various purposes, such as guidance, which offers direction to individuals or groups. Laswell and Kaplan (2014) define policy as "a projected goals, values and practices……."

2.3 What is Academic Integrity Policy?

While closely tied to ethics, an integrity policy consistently applies ethical principles in actions and decisions. It emphasises responsibility, expectations, trust, and transparency in maintaining academic honesty. Freeman (2013), cited by Bretag and Mahmud (2016), defines "institutional policy" as the "formal statements of principles which provide the overarching rationale for actions, procedures, or operations." Frequently, people think of academic integrity in terms of what not to do (Simonds, 2022) and prohibitions. It is important to understand that it embodies more than just avoiding misconduct; it represents a commitment to honesty and ethical behaviour in all academic endeavours.

In essence, the nexus between ethics and integrity is trite knowledge. An ethics policy provides the foundation of moral guidelines, while an integrity policy ensures those guidelines are upheld consistently and transparently. Both work together to foster a culture of trust and accountability. Creating a culture of integrity in a learning community involves crafting an explicit institutional integrity policy aligned with practice, educational approaches, and support mechanisms to facilitate its implementation. Bretag et al. (2011b, p.6) maintain that "how a university defines academic integrity in its policy will affect how it is taught and embedded in the curriculum."

Through a synthesis of relevant contemporary literature on academic integrity policy, the researchers attempted a functional definition as 'the ethical code of expectations of responsible, ethical conduct in knowledge production, dissemination, and promotion by members of a scholarly community to act with "honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage" (ICAI, 2021) in their academic activities. These values constitute the six pillars of ethical scholarship, which help members establish respectable and credible scholarly communities worthy of the trust and respect of society. Thus, any conduct or omission that deviates from the collective ethical values and standards, which compromises academic integrity, constitutes what is termed 'academic misconduct' or 'academic dishonesty.' In her authoritative work, "The Second Handbook of Academic Integrity," Eaton (2024) candidly addresses issues surrounding research integrity, academic integrity, research ethics, and the ethical conduct of faculty, administrators, and students in higher education globally. Glendinning (2023) explores the essential role of effective policies in upholding academic integrity within the social sciences. The author addresses the complexities associated with creating and implementing these policies, emphasising significant challenges such as resistance to change, the necessity for institutional support, and the importance of engaging stakeholders.

It should be emphasised that an integrity policy remains cardinal to every educational and scholarly enterprise regardless of the conceptual lens or phraseologies used to define the term or the cultural praxis adopted during implementation (Bretag et al., 2016). Some researchers view integrity issues as influenced by cultural orientations and epistemological understandings (Eaton, 2024; Dawson, 2021), while others see them as a lack of morality. Some researchers attribute these issues to a lack of academic skills (Eaton, 2024; Howard, 2000) or a combination of both factors. Orim and Awala-Ale (2024) have identified multiple factors contributing to the challenges of academic integrity in tertiary education throughout Africa. These factors include "the education system, pedagogy, sociocultural environment, economic systems, environment, infrastructure, technology, institutional policies, and management systems." Appiah et al. (2025), citing Bain et al. (2022), Azakir et al. (2020), and Haven et al. (2019), argue that establishing a robust research governance system presents a significant challenge for African universities. They point to various factors that contribute to the lack of "development and enforcement of research integrity," particularly in relation to international standards. Johann et al. (2024), as cited by Appiah et al. (2025), note that competing pressures, such as the "publish or perish" mentality, are obstructing the advancement of research integrity policies in these institutions. Contrary to this assertion, there is a rising interest in issues of ethics and integrity in tertiary education in Africa, perhaps because of the ongoing broader conversation on universal recognition of qualifications and protecting

institutional reputation. In a related development, UNESCO is leading the advocacy for a global convention for academic mobility by creating a global framework for fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory recognition of higher education qualifications. “The Global Convention establishes universal principles for the recognition of qualifications, fosters mobility between higher education institutions worldwide and ensures the rights of individuals to have their foreign qualifications assessed in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner” (UNESCO, 2020). The overarching principle of these regional and international agencies is the commitment to upholding the highest ethical and academic integrity standards in teaching, learning, and assessment processes, which foster trust and confidence in the quality and reliability of qualifications globally. The HAQAA1(2016–2018) and HAQAA2(2019–2022) initiative (Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation), which supports the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF) and the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA), has made significant progress in harmonising quality assurance practices throughout Africa (Colucci, 2019). As noted in the report, these frameworks are designed to enhance educational quality; however, they encounter challenges stemming from diverse educational contexts and varying levels of institutional capacity and readiness. It must be stated that addressing the multifaceted nature of integrity issues in higher education necessitates quality assurance measures, which are invariably linked to credible integrity policies.

Research indicates that some countries have taken bold steps to address academic integrity issues in their tertiary institutions. Australia has been a pacesetter in transforming tertiary education through several research and enhancement policy evolutions, leading to comprehensive academic integrity reforms (Yorke & Vidovich, 2016; Australian Government, 2011). In the same way, the United Kingdom maintained quality and learning comparability standards across their universities, although with occasional challenges (Yorke &Vidovich, 2016; Brown, 2010; Alderman, 2009). While Australia has the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Act 2011, the United Kingdom has the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (HEA, 2011), and the USA has the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). These national quality assurance agencies are to regulate and monitor learning standards based on individual and institutional policies intersecting with the national standard. Draper and Boland (2024) report that Quality and Qualifications, Ireland (QQI), in partnership with the TEQSA, has established the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN). This initiative represents a global call to action aimed at safeguarding academic integrity, enhancing information sharing, and developing cohesive strategies to address contract cheating. In contrast, some experts advocate for the formulation of "perspectives tied to specific regions of the world" (Moya, 2024; Foltýnek & Dlabolová, 2020; Foltýnek & Mahmud et al., 2019; Morris, 2018; Morris & Carroll, 2016; Bretag, 2016 b; Cinali, 2016; Glendinning, 2015). As a result, the literature includes region-specific research studies; for instance, Cerdà-Navarro et al. (2022) analysed academic integrity in Spanish universities, Ayala-Enríquez et al. (2020) focused on issues in Latin America, Gow and Sun (2024) analysed Asian universities, while Vassileva and Chankova (2023) investigated university policies pertaining to academic ethics and integrity in Southeast Europe. These international initiatives are referenced in this study.

In the literature, there is a plethora of academic integrity policy analysis research globally. The body of research encompasses a spectrum of inquiries, ranging from Yorke and Vidovich's 2016 work examining the development of quality policies within higher education, extensive analyses of the language employed in policy documents (Möller, 2022; Kaktiņš, 2014) and assessments of policy effectiveness (Möller, 2022; Foltýnek & Glendinning, 2015; Glendinning, 2013) to evaluating the alignment of policy with practice (Bretag & Mahmud, 2016; Bretag et al., 2011a; East, 2009). Research specifically centred on the quality of academic integrity policies has involved the evaluation of policy documents against five essential components deemed necessary for adherence to best practice guidelines (Bretag et al. 2011a, b). Such assessments have been carried out in Australia (Mahmud and Bretag, 2014), Canada (Miron et al., 2021; Stoesz & Eaton, 2022; Stoesz et al., 2019), Latvia and Lithuania (Anohina-Naumeca, Tauginienė & Odineca, 2018). In their review of 23 academic integrity policies from publicly funded universities in Ontario, Miron et al. (2021) concluded that most of the analysed policies did not meet the exemplary standards set by Bretag et al. (2011a, b) Similarly, Moya

and Eaton (2024) critically reviewed 43 policies from Chilean universities, revealing a predominant focus on punitive measures directed at students, often without accompanying support systems. In their evaluation of the integrity policies of 24 publicly funded Canadian universities, Stoesz and Eaton (2022) observed that most of these policies overlooked contract cheating as a form of academic misconduct. Mahmud and Bretag (2014) assessed postgraduate students' prior knowledge of research ethics and integrity and concluded that many are inadequately prepared for such studies. Eaton (2024) focuses on transformative changes in academic integrity policies at Australian universities. The HEA (2011) document offers practical recommendations on reviewing and updating existing policies to ensure they effectively deter and manage academic dishonesty. Furthermore, Appiah et al. (2025) explored the availability and accessibility of research policies at 283 African universities, revealing a lack of comprehensive research integrity policies throughout the continent. These evaluative studies shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of academic integrity policies in these countries, as noted by Möller (2022). By extension, insights gained from these research studies can be utilised to enhance policy documents, thereby improving implementation and reinforcing the academic integrity culture across Ghanaian universities.

2.4 Evolving Landscape of Tertiary Education

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) Target 4.3 advises nations to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university education, by 2030 (UN, 2015, para. 1). In furtherance of this goal, the government of Ghana has taken steps to create equitable access and quality in tertiary education by enacting a new Education Regulatory Bodies Act, 2020 (Act 1023) to form the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), which is an amalgamation of the now-defunct National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE) and National Accreditation Board (N.A.B.). The commission's objectives are to regulate tertiary education in all forms to promote efficient and effective administration and accreditation of tertiary education institutions (GTEC, 2023). Under Section 4(a), the Act directs, "The Commission shall, in the performance of the general functions, ensure that tertiary education institutions apply the highest quality standards and relevance of teaching, learning and research programmes and outcomes" (GTEC, 2023). The act further mandates the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) to ensure adherence to the highest quality standards in tertiary education in Ghana. Statistics show that after independence, Ghana's tertiary education system grew from one public university, the University of Ghana, Legon, to 219 accredited institutions by 2023 (GTEC, 2023). This expansion demonstrates the commitment to enhancing educational access and quality in the country, as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) Target 4.3. (UN, 2015).

Tamrat and Teferra (2025, p. 1) state, "Africa's private universities are growing despite heavy constraints, offering alternatives to strike-plagued public institutions while struggling for legitimacy." This has led to a regime of academic capitalism rooted in a neoliberal, profit-driven enterprise (Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016), which poses a risk to the ethics and standards of scholarship. This shift transforms the focus from serving the public good to embracing a market-driven orientation, prioritising value for money. Unfortunately, these developments came with infractions against academic integrity and ethical principles in tertiary education and scholarship. The 'mushrooming' of private tertiary institutions in Ghana, often in violation of established regulations and standards, is worrying. Records indicate that some institutions are duly accredited, while others operate without accreditation (GTEC, 2023). Table 1 represents the statistical figure of the total number of active accredited tertiary institutions in Ghana in the year ending 2023.

Table 1. *Ghana Tertiary Education Commission Institutions with active accreditation*

DESCRIPTION	NUMBER
Chartered Private Tertiary Institution	10
Distance Learning Institution	2
Private College of Education	2
Private Nurses Training College	12
Private Polytechnic	1
Private Tertiary Institutions Offering HND/Degree Programmes	70
Public College of Education	40
Public Degree Awarding and Professional Institution	2
Public Nurses Training College	47
Public Technical University	10
Public University	16
Regionally-Owned (West Africa) Tertiary Institution	1
Registered Foreign Institution	2
Tutorial College	4
TOTAL	**219**

Source (GTEC annual report 2023).

2.5 Ethical Challenges in Tertiary Education

Despite the remarkable improvement in access to tertiary education in Ghana, dwindling government funding, the cost of residential facility user fees, academic facility user fees, the relevance of curricula, and the quality of graduates churned out of these publicly funded institutions are growing concerns. Writing about challenges that impinge on the growth of private higher education institutions, Tamrat and Teferra (2025) noted troubling developments of academic misconduct gaining notoriety and presenting ethical and epistemic challenges to academia, contributing to societal mistrust in tertiary education. These pitfalls are not only injurious to the reputation and prestige of these institutions among reputable university leagues but also undermine society's trust in scholarly research, teaching, degrees, and certificates, which are essential for human development within and beyond academic communities. As the International Centre for Academic Integrity suggests, a stronger civic culture is produced when a society's higher education institutions are integrated with an integrity ethos (ICAI, 2021). Therefore, university managers need to address these disturbing trends. In reviewing the literature on academic integrity, Macfarlane et al. (2014) comment on the importance of academic integrity in the context of the global expansion of higher education:

> The growth of higher education worldwide, partly in response to the development of knowledge economies and newly developing nations, is only sustainable in the longer term if there are good standards of conduct among academic practitioners. The emergence of global university brands and influential international rankings (e.g. Shanghai Jiao Tong and Times Higher Education World Rankings) mean that (positive and negative) perceptions of academic integrity can have a significant impact on institutional fortunes. (p. 35)

Similarly, Denisova-Schmidt (2021) in his paper "Mitigating Corruption in Higher Education" perfectly stated;

> The lack of academic integrity, fraud, and other forms of unethical behaviour are problems that higher education faces in both developing and developed countries, at mass and elite universities, and public and private institutions. While academic mis-conduct is not new, massification, internationalisation, privatisation, digitalisation, and commercialisation have placed ethics higher on the agenda for many universities. (2021)

Although academic misconduct is not new, it has long been a concern due to its deleterious effects on tertiary education. The debilitating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unregulated and unethical use of generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in education and research are aggravating an already troubling situation. Consequently, the public and other stakeholders are beginning to cast doubts on the integrity and value of the degrees and certificates of these graduates and, by extension, doubt the integrity of the degree-awarding institutions. Faculty and university management should be deeply concerned about the threat's intricacy and pervasiveness because integrity lapses harm institutional reputations, status, credibility, and legitimacy among the higher education league. Besides, the global university brands and influential international rankings mean that positive and negative perceptions of academic integrity can significantly impact institutional reputations (Macfarlane et al., 2014).

Macfarlane et al. (2014) further observe that these institutions are legally quasi-autonomous, mandated to produce and consume knowledge by their establishment acts. For that reason, many of them are operating in quasi-markets controlled by the government, competing to attract students. Despite these incumbrances, coupled with inadequate physical and digital infrastructure, the government demands that "public universities address the professional development needs of faculty as part of a culture that increasingly defines students as customers" (Macfarlane et al., 2014; Browne, 2010). These challenges have upset the educational ecosystem and rekindled scholarly conversations about ethical dilemmas in tertiary education. To effectively address these challenges, it is prudent for universities to undertake an enhancement-led reconsideration of their institutional academic integrity policies to ensure they are more responsive to and align with emerging trends in education.

Curiously, the acts of parliament that established Ghanaian public universities do not explicitly discuss policies relating to access to learning materials and academic integrity. Without any mandated guidelines and uniformity, universities are expected to take the initiative and establish their distinct institutional integrity policies and research guidelines. To cure this lacuna, some public universities have independently formulated institutional policies. These include regulations on intellectual property, academic integrity guidelines, plagiarism policies, research ethics standards, and protocols for producing, disseminating, and promoting knowledge. Unfortunately, the lack of a standardised and harmonised academic integrity policy across all public universities in Ghana has created idiosyncratic institutional policies, leading to irreconcilable definitions, expectations, ethics, violations, and penalties. This discrepancy undermines the national and, in some cases, international recognition of the certificates issued by these universities. In this regard, establishing an academic integrity policy analysis framework is essential for educational institutions that are committed to establishing a strong and unwavering environment of academic integrity (Moya & Eaton, 2024; Moller, 2022; Sureda-Negre et al., 2020) but then again, for a policy to effectively foster a culture of academic integrity in practice, the policy must align with teaching and learning, as articulated by Bretag et al. (2011a) and East (2009). Research indicates that a thorough approach to academic integrity should consider historical context, institutional factors, policy development, and current challenges (Parnther, 2020).

3. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on a hybridity of poststructuralist and critical discourse analysis paradigms (Vidovich, 2013; Hodgson, 2010), grounded in the pragmatist philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, which provides that the criteria for merit and the usefulness of any educational principle are their "workability and practicality" of ideas, policies, and proposals. The key theoretical underpinnings of pragmatism are the 4Ps (Practicality, Pluralism, Participation and Provisional), which enable researchers to engage in analogical and abductive reasoning to support their conclusions. The adopted framework was used within a local and global context to analyse selected policies. Additionally, the framework allows for a detailed exploration of academic integrity policies as complex entities that must be understood within their specific contexts. By incorporating Bretag et al.'s (2011a) five core elements of exemplary academic integrity policies and the recent addition of "technological explicitness,"(Perkins and Roe, 2023), the study provides a solid theoretical foundation supporting the authors' argument for a more technologically responsive and relevant academic integrity policy across Ghanaian universities.

Moreover, the study goes beyond theoretical considerations by integrating theory and empirically grounded policy and practice content analysis. This approach is used to analyse selected policy documents to examine commonalities and dissimilarities in these idiosyncratic institutional academic integrity policies, highlighting how each policy addresses what constitutes academic misconduct, what the policy approaches are, and policy responsiveness to issues of technological applications in scholarship in the context of cultural relativism vis-à-vis the special mandates of each university. For secondary sources, the paper draws on other trailblasing academic integrity policy analysis research works emanating from Australia, the United Kingdom, the USA, and Canada to enrich the literature review. Whereas the framework incorporates broad principles that apply to all phases of policy development and practice, it also brings to the fore emerging integrity challenges within the Ghanaian context, which are woefully understudied.

4. Research Methodology

The study uses a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) framework based on the configurational or holistic comparative method espoused by Esser and Vliegenthart (2017) and Ragin (1987, 2008). It facilitates in-depth analysis and enables generalisability, helps identify relationships between variables, and makes a connection between commonalities (Rihoux, 2006). This research method supports in-depth analysis, identifies relationships between variables, and makes connections between commonalities and generalisability. Additionally, the study adopts a case-sensitive approach deductively or inductively when necessary. This study compares with other studies in the field (Appiah et al., 2025; Moya & Eaton, 2024; Stoesz and Eaton, 2022; Miron et al., 2021; Saadia & Bretag, 2014; Bretag et al., 2011a; 2011b; Grigg, 2010). In research studies literature, comparative analysis has always been an integral part of public policy studies (Gupta, 2012), and it is used to explain divergent or convergent policy dynamics and nuances. At the same time, employing a configurational or holistic comparative method, similar to frameworks used in other academic integrity policy analyses. Configurational analysis facilitates the comparison of different cases while simultaneously providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in each case, particularly within small to medium-sized samples (Rihoux, 2006). The strengths of this approach lie in its capacity to capture the nuances of each case and to illuminate the unique cultural and institutional factors that influence policy formulation and implementation. Selected institutional integrity policies were systematically analysed to ascertain their conformity with the academic integrity policy framework espoused by Bretag et al. (2011a, b). Each institutional policy was examined separately, focusing on the following themes: policy title, scope (applicability to students and staff), definition of academic integrity, purpose, titles of supporting documents, effective date, and the date for the next review (Mahmud, 2024).

4.1 Online Search and Data Collection

A preliminary review was conducted of the official websites of twenty-six publicly funded universities in Ghana to identify relevant integrity policies, irrespective of phraseologies or nomenclature used to label them. University strategic plans/policies and departmental regulations were purposefully excluded. The online policies that were successfully located, accessed, and retrieved were evaluated and analysed to determine how the policies promote ethical academic activities within the universities. Additionally, secondary sources, including the acts of parliament by which these universities are established (which outline their establishment mandates), were also accessed for additional relevant information to enrich the analysis. Out of the twenty-six publicly funded Ghanaian universities that were searched, we could locate sixteen accessible policies on ethics and integrity. However, some of the policies are not downloadable. Primarily, five universities were selected for the study based on visibility, easy accessibility and retrievability or downloadability of pertinent integrity-related policy documents from their official websites. Secondly, they are also ‘primus inter pares’ among Ghanaian universities with a large student population. For ethical reasons, the selected universities' identities are anonymous but identified by a code instead. The study examines the empirical connections between the policies under evaluation by comparing them against Bretag et al.’s (2011a, b) exemplary academic integrity policy.

Table 2. *The Five Elements of Exemplary Academic Integrity Policy*

SN	Elements	Description
1	**Access**	This refers to the availability and accessibility of hard or soft copies of the policy document to the public that are easy to find and read. The content is clear and straightforward, using simple language and logical headings. It includes links to valuable resources, navigable and easily downloadable as an easy-to-print document. Access is key because even the best policy is worthless if it is inaccessible to the target audience.
2	**Approach**	This element introduces the contextual underpinnings of a policy by highlighting it as an educational endeavour. The policy must present a clear statement of purpose and values, demonstrating a genuine and coherent institutional commitment to academic integrity across all its components. This commitment should permeate every aspect of the policy. An exemplary approach transcends a mere initial statement of intent; it shapes the entire policy's language and substance.
3	**Responsibility**	This policy approach demands accountability from all relevant stakeholders, including faculty, administration, students, and staff, to exhibit the highest standards of academic integrity. Explicitly defining roles and responsibilities ensures that everyone knows what is expected of them within a community at the individual, organisational, educational system, and societal levels.
4	**Detail**	This component defines and classifies various forms of academic misconduct and degrees of severity. It details the deployment of detection tools and mechanisms, such as similarity check software against violations. The document specifies the procedures to follow in the event of a violation and the relevant steps for reporting and addressing incidents. Additionally, clear charts are included to illustrate the application of these processes.
5	**Support**	This component explains the need for support systems and measures to help put the policy into action. This includes procedures, seminars, training, resources, and professional development programmes to help faculty and students understand the policy. Through practical strategies such as education on academic writing and referencing, violations of academic integrity can be prevented.

Source: Bretag et al., (2011a, b), and Bretag & Mahmud (2016).

The study incorporates an additional element of technological explicitness, as expounded by Perkins and Roe (2023), to enrich the policy model. This inclusion ensures that the exemplary reflects emerging educational technologies, including the generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) boom in cognitive offloading, its ethical implications, its acceptability, and the opportunities it presents as tertiary education's next academic integrity frontier. Equally important is to ensure that the model aligns academic integrity policy with practice. Yankova (2024), expatiating on the work of Perkins and Roe (2023), explained the technological explicitness component as the incorporation into the policy document, information on the ethical use of educational technologies in scholarly works and constantly bringing the policy content up to speed in response to emerging technologies.

5. Presentation of Findings

University A

The university's official website clearly emphasises the importance of integrity among its members as a cornerstone for building trust with others. Its mission is defined as striving to become a world-class, research-intensive university that makes a significant impact at both national and international levels. The fundamental principle guiding this mission is to ensure that all research conducted under the

auspices of the university or on its premises adheres to ethical standards, delivers high-quality and aligns with its core values as well as global standards.

A thorough review of the website revealed several accessible policies, including Research Policy (2022), Research Ethics Policy (2023), and Plagiarism Policy (2016). Additionally, a comprehensive Research Strategy Policy for (2024-2029) is available online but is not downloadable. Notably, while none of these policies carries the explicit "academic integrity policy" title, for this study, a 14-page Plagiarism Policy is the nearest to an integrity policy on the website.

The policy explicitly outlines its purpose, defines plagiarism, types of plagiarism, evaluation criteria, members' responsibilities, procedures for investigating allegations, handling false accusations of plagiarism and potential sanctions for faculty and students.

It unambiguously states that retrospective punishment may apply in cases where plagiarism is discovered much later than its initial occurrence. “Depending on the gravity of the breach, the plagiarist may be forced to issue a public apology, withdraw the plagiarised material, lose their academic position, face legal prosecution or experience all the aforementioned.” The primary objective of the policy is to cultivate a culture of learning that actively discourages academic dishonesty and fosters ethical scholarship. However, the language used suggests a punitive approach, focusing more on violations than on educating and promoting integrity in scholarship. Again, the policy is characterised by vagueness and insufficient detail, and it also lacks the essential institutional support mechanisms required to promote a culture of academic integrity among its members.

Then again, recent reports by ‘Graphic Online’ indicate that the university has revised its plagiarism policy to a new policy titled “Policy on Plagiarism and Other Academic Misconduct” (Acquah, 2024), with a focus on originality, authenticity, and the essential human effort in scholarship. Unfortunately, the much-publicised policy was unavailable on the official university website, and extensive online searches have proven futile. This raises serious concerns and may create doubts in the minds of members of the university and stakeholders about transparency and accessibility. All selected policies have effective dates, but none have a proposed review date. This lack of a review cycle could result in outdated policies. The university has guidelines for using the Turnitin software to determine plagiarism.

University B

The University is conceived “to be the home of world-class pro-poor scholarship”. This commitment manifests in its “problem-based Learning methodology of teaching, research, community relations and outreach programmes” (Statutes, 2017). It has nine faculties and 11 Schools, offering various academic programmes, including undergraduate, postgraduate, and diploma courses. It operates through a multi-campus system located across various regions.

After surfing its official policies page, the following integrity-related policies were retrieved: Research Policy Document, Plagiarism Policy, and Intellectual Property Policy. The nine-page policy document establishes a framework for determining, detecting, preventing, and addressing plagiarism to uphold academic excellence, honesty, and integrity. It emphasises a strict punitive approach, including expulsion from the university, postponement of promotions, and rustication or any other disciplinary action prescribed for potential plagiarism breaches by students and faculty members.

The policy explicitly defines plagiarism, categorises its various forms, offers guidance on avoiding breaches, evaluating plagiarism, members' responsibility, institutional responsibility, procedures to follow in cases of plagiarism, and outlines institutional core values that promote ethical scholarship. While the document is easily accessible online and retrievable, it is not in-depth. Nevertheless, it includes examples of plagiarism, lists responsibilities for staff and students and details the activities necessary to uphold these responsibilities.

The university states that its aim is not only to punish but to help avert the issue of plagiarism among students and staff. To this end, it offers various resources to help students understand and avoid

academic dishonesty, including orientation programs, workshops, seminars, and access to online resources and library services. However, the tone of the policy suggests a penal stance, incorporating a well-defined scale of penalties that correspond to the severity of the misconduct, the course level, and the individual's history of academic dishonesty. Senior members guilty of plagiarism may suffer a demotion in rank or salary.

University C

The university's mission statement states, "The university is uniquely placed to provide quality education through the provision of comprehensive, liberal and professional programmes that challenge learners to be creative, innovative and responsible citizens." The stated core values are empowerment, equal opportunities, and ethical behaviour to promote integrity among members.

The university operates a collegiate system composed of five colleges and a school of graduate studies, offering various distance education modules. On its official website, the closest policies to integrity and ethics policies include a handbook on academic integrity and regulations for graduate studies (2021-2025), a Research Policy (2014), a Plagiarism Policy (2018), and an Intellectual Property Policy. Notably, there is no specific policy titled "Academic Integrity Policy."

The Plagiarism Policy outlines a comprehensive framework for maintaining academic integrity and addressing instances of plagiarism among both staff and students. This policy is linked to intellectual property laws in Ghana and identifies several forms of plagiarism. It also provides specific strategies for faculty and students to address plagiarism. It is mandatory for students to sign a statement affirming their commitment to this plagiarism policy.

As a proactive measure, the institution invests in plagiarism detection software and includes educational sessions about it at the beginning of each academic term. The policy also specifies consequences for staff and students based on the severity of plagiarism detected in their academic tasks. Employing a punitive approach to policy enforcement, the policy guidelines categorise potential plagiarism by percentage. For staff, plagiarism below 10% is deemed insignificant, while plagiarism of 70% or above can lead to a suspension of promotion for four years. Repeated offences may escalate to dismissal. For students, first-time offenders must resubmit their work with a maximum grade of C, while second-time offenders may face dismissal or be prohibited from continuing their studies. Furthermore, degrees may be revoked from former students if plagiarism is identified post-graduation. The range of sanctions associated with varying degrees of plagiarism reflects a nuanced understanding of the circumstances surrounding each case. While in principle and content, the policy is presented as every member's responsibility, its focus weighs heavily towards student misconduct and punitive measures against breaches.

University D

The institution's mission is "to train competent professional teachers for all levels of education as well as conduct research, disseminate knowledge and contribute to educational policy and development." Its core values are academic excellence, good corporate governance, service to the community, gender equity, social inclusiveness, and teamwork. It operates a multi-campus system.

A search on its official website reveals a few fragmented integrity-related texts scattered within different policy documents, making it difficult to locate, access and challenging to grasp. The policies are labelled as University Research Policy (2010), Quality Assurance Policy, School of Graduate Studies (SGS) Thesis/Dissertation/Project Handbook: A Guide to the Preparation, Submission and Completion of Degree Requirement (2018). However, none of these policies is titled Academic Integrity Policy or Plagiarism Policy. Some of the policies are decades old and have not been reviewed.

Among the accessed policies, the closest document addressing integrity in scholarship is the 16-page Research Policy document (2010). The institution does not have a dedicated working academic integrity policy. Although the Research Policy states that ensuring a milieu which encourages academic honesty and integrity within the learning community is a shared responsibility of every member, there seems to be a strong focus on students' academic misconduct and the prescribed punitive measures throughout

the document. There are no clearly stated principles and definitions in the document. The policy lacks definitions, details, members' responsibilities and support programmes to facilitate the document's objectives.

University E

The university provides an environment for training students with a high sense of professionalism, committed to problem-solving, active in community partnership and who approach their work with integrity. It functions as a multi-campus institution. It has policies, such as the Intellectual Property Policy (2021) and Plagiarism Prevention Policy (2016), that guide staff and students to make good decisions while performing their roles in the university's interest. These policies are easily accessible from the official website. However, some are only for viewing and not downloadable.

The university's 12-page plagiarism prevention policy advocates for creativity, innovation, and intellectual integrity while actively preventing instances of plagiarism. This policy establishes a framework aimed at deterring and addressing plagiarism among students and staff, with a commitment to fostering an academic environment where integrity is paramount. It provides a comprehensive definition of plagiarism, outlining its various forms, as well as detailing prevention measures and potential sanctions for misconduct. Within the document, plagiarism is broadly defined as the unjust appropriation of another's ideas, expressions, or work, regardless of whether the act is intentional or unintentional (Pagaling, 2022). The policy delineates the responsibilities of its members under institutional responsibility.

The university promotes plagiarism detection, encouraging originality in students' submissions. It mandates the utilisation of plagiarism detection tools such as Turnitin and training staff and students in proper citation practices. Preventive measures include educational initiatives like mandatory courses on academic writing, seminars on plagiarism awareness, and awareness campaigns to reinforce these principles.

The policy delineates specific responsibilities for faculty, staff, and students. Faculty are tasked with guiding students on proper citation practices and reporting instances of plagiarism. However, the policy is more focused on the specific mechanisms of detection and consequences. It outlines severe penalties for plagiarism, including failing grades, suspension, or expulsion, suggesting a systematic approach to addressing such offences. A mixed approach of educative and punitive approaches is adopted. Moreover, it highlights the importance of continuously monitoring the policy's effectiveness and conducting periodic reviews to adapt to emerging issues in academic integrity. Additionally, it calls for educational initiatives, including mandatory courses on academic writing. Unfortunately, none of the analysed policies include effective review dates.

In summary, many universities lack dedicated academic integrity policies; instead, related issues are often addressed under broader ethics or plagiarism policies. This lack of clear articulation may lead to confusion about what constitutes academic integrity. Findings highlighted accessibility challenges, with many documents not easily found on official websites. Some policies are only viewable, while others contain inaccessible or non-functional links, implying a lack of commitment to transparency. This can convey to students that academic integrity is not a priority. Analysis reveals fragmented and confusing content: Policies often vary in their definitions and principles regarding academic integrity, leading to ambiguity. Some universities provide fragmented texts that make understanding the guidelines and expectations difficult. The analysed policies typically adopt a punitive stance, focusing on sanctions rather than fostering a culture of understanding and support. University E stands out with a mixed approach that balances enforcement with educational initiatives, which may be more effective in promoting integrity. Findings revealed a lack of adequate guidance on misconduct. Many policies do not clearly outline processes for handling violations or appeals, nor do they mention the principle of restorative justice. Addressing contract cheating and the ethical use of generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is also lacking, highlighting a gap in modern academic integrity discussions. The analysis

highlighted ambiguous definitions of plagiarism. The broad characterisations often used reduce clarity in understanding specific violations, leading to potential conflicts between students' and faculty's interpretations of misconduct. The concern lies in the limited responsibility assigned to stakeholders within the documents. Many institutions perceive academic integrity as solely the student's responsibility, often overlooking the roles of faculty and administration. A collaborative approach that engages all stakeholders could be more effective in fostering a culture of integrity. Only one university has implemented proactive support mechanisms to aid faculty and students in understanding academic integrity. Comprehensive educational initiatives should be developed to promote ethical scholarship, including workshops, seminars, and resources as integrated support systems.

6. Discussions

A comprehensive search of the official websites of Ghana's 26 publicly funded universities uncovers a concerning trend: many institutions lack a dedicated academic integrity policy. Like the United Kingdom and Chinese institutional integrity policies (Gow & Sun, 2024; Deng et al., 2021; Chen & Kang, 2016), there is an absence of standardised terminology across the analysed policies. They are typically developed under various designations rather than a unified nomenclature. Notably, none of the policies is explicitly titled an "academic integrity policy." Instead, the closest to addressing academic integrity issues are typically labelled "ethics" or "plagiarism" policies. Consequently, the researchers had to identify which policy content effectively addresses integrity issues for analysis. Some universities have well-defined bespoke ethics policies, while others have multiple, fragmented, ambiguous, and overlapping policies which are difficult to access and read together. Additionally, none of the analysed policies met all the elements highlighted in the exemplary.

Accessing the policies was challenging since none of the universities has the full complement of their policies on their official home pages. Even when the policies could be located, some PDF documents were inaccessible and non-interactive due to the absence of functional links or resources (Frequently Asked Questions segment) that could provide additional information. This may send a mixed message that academic integrity is not paramount to the university. Universities A, B, and E have easily retrievable policies that are well-packaged on a dedicated page on their websites. However, some are only for viewing and not downloadable. On the other hand, accessing the plagiarism policy of University C was not easy. University D has several fragmented integrity-related texts dispersed among various policy documents, making them complex to locate, access, and understand. The findings reveal uncertainty about universities that do not publicly share their policies, raising questions about whether they have inaccessible policies or no such policies exist. Such findings are inconsistent with the exemplary. Bretag et al. (2011a, b) argue that such inaccessible policies are often deemed immaterial by students and other learning community members. Moreover, increasing accessibility to institutional policies enhances visibility and transparency, emphasising these policies' importance. Suryani and Sugeng (2019) report that only about 25% of public universities in Indonesia have academic integrity policies available on their websites. Instead, more of these documents can be found through Google searches, indicating that many universities have not fully recognised the importance of making these policies easily accessible to help prevent academic misconduct.

Policies analysed from universities A, B, C, and D indicate a punitive approach towards academic misconduct, placing greater emphasis on policing, enforcement and sanctions rather than on providing educational support and guidance. In contrast, university E employs a mixed approach to fostering integrity among its members. This reflects practices in Australia and Canada, as noted by (Moya & Eaton, 2024; Stoesz & Eaton, 2020; Bretag et al., 2011b). East (2015) contends that "an academic integrity policy can direct the implementation of educative responses, but their effectiveness depends on alignment with local practices in subjects and courses." Research indicates that the punitive approach is the most used strategy by many institutions globally (Moya & Eaton, 2024; Cullen, 2022; Bretag et al., 2011a; Bertram Gallant, 2008). Regrettably, a punitive approach fosters an antagonistic and toxic environment characterised by mistrust, which ultimately undermines collaboration and is detrimental to both teaching and learning processes, as cautioned by Miron et al. (2021). Besides, some argue that excessive regulation can stifle academic freedom and limit free expression. Despite the implementation

of a punitive approach, the policies did not adequately outline the procedures for adjudicating violations or the processes for appeals. The principle of restorative justice as an alternative approach to remedy breaches was not offered in any of the documents. (Moya & Eaton, 2024; Cullen, 2022; Moriarty & Wilson 2022; Miron et al., 2021). None of the documents acknowledged whistleblowers as vital stakeholders and confidentiality in fostering academic integrity. Two of the policies prescribe the use of Turnitin as an anti-plagiarism tool for the purposes of detection and prevention.

Again, all the documents lack Q&A tools and links for further information or interaction. Notably, none of the policies explicitly addressed contract cheating as a form of academic misconduct, but there are implied references to the passing-off of outsourced work for assessment as plagiarism (Stoesz & Eaton, 2022; Ellis et al., 2018). Likewise, the ethical use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in education (Moya & Eaton, 2024; Foltynek, Bjelobaba, Glendinning, et al., 2023) did not find expression in any of the documents. The transition into a post-plagiarism era is reshaping our understanding of academic integrity (Eaton, 2025) and the unethical use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and its implications for teaching and learning (Moya & Eaton, 2024; Lancaster, 2023; Foltýnek et al., 2023; Anson, 2022; Kumar et al., 2022) as well as the rethinking of cognitive offloading in academia. It is imperative that institutions fully embrace this shift and integrate it into their policy.

Notably, there are inconsistencies in definitions and policy principles. The analysis indicated that three of the documents reviewed employed the term "plagiarism" in a broad context, encompassing various forms of academic misconduct. Such generalised definitions pose significant challenges for classification, identification, and the precise language necessary for an in-depth discussion regarding specific violations (Stoesz et al., 2019; Eaton, 2017). Plagiarism is a complex concept that varies by discipline and assessment type, as noted by Eaton (2024), Simon (2016), and Carroll (2007). Authors, including Simon (2016), Hamilton et al. (2004), Chuda et al. (2012), Porter (2010) and Blythman et al. (2007), highlight the difficulties of defining it in non-textual fields like graphic design and music, unlike in prose text disciplines. Nevertheless, universities often apply a single definition, treating it as universally applicable, which disregards important nuances of subject specifics. Furthermore, varying definitions of plagiarism within institutional policies may result in definitional obfuscation, contributing to misunderstandings about what constitutes plagiarism. This has created definitional complexities and conflicts between individual interpretations and official definitions (Moya & Eaton, 2024; Adam, 2016). The absence of detail creates gaps that lead to inconsistencies in implementation. The abundance of legal jargon (legalese) may not be easily comprehensible to all members. Again, the underlying policy principles were not explicated to the reader, creating uncertainty about shared values and expectations. Moya and Eaton contend that the conflation of diverse misconduct types leads to ambiguities and inconsistencies in detection, prevention, and sanctions.

Regarding the element of responsibility, two universities implemented an inclusive approach that emphasised shared responsibility, clearly categorising the responsibilities of all members and the corresponding sanctions for violations. In contrast, the remaining institutions viewed it primarily as the student's responsibility. This perspective positions faculty and administration as enforcers with disciplinary authority over students, thus creating a master-servant dynamic. According to Bretag et al. (2011a, 2013), as cited by Mahmud and Bretag (2014), fostering integrity at all levels of education is a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders. Senior university members must be role models for their junior counterparts in promoting academic integrity values within and outside their learning communities. An inclusive approach entails students being active participants rather than passive recipients (Moya & Eaton, 2024; Richard et al., 2016). Engaging students in policy development and implementation necessitates raising awareness, conducting educational initiatives, and providing necessary skills. Authors such as Casey (2024), Cullen (2022), Sefcik et al. (2020), Khan et al. (2020), Morris (2018), and Bretag et al. (2014) explored students' involvement in promoting academic integrity within their learning communities. Khan et al. (2020), as cited by Casey (2024), suggest that student involvement enhances awareness of academic integrity. Bertram Gallant (2011) posits that students' formal participation validates integrity campaign messages. Casey (2024) and Chauhan et al. (2017) recognise student peer educators as crucial contributors to fostering a culture of academic integrity. In

brief, without student engagement, efforts to establish an Integrity Academy through policy will be futile and ineffective.

Developing integrated support systems is crucial for fostering a resilient culture of academic integrity within educational institutions. The research findings highlight that only one university has successfully incorporated specific support mechanisms within its policy framework. In the researchers' view, this amounts to 'negligence of duty' by policymakers. This highlights the pressing need to introduce targeted educational initiatives, such as mandatory courses focused on the intricacies of academic writing and the principles of ethical scholarship. By building capacity for both faculty and students through supportive systems, we can create an environment where integrity is regarded as the standard rather than an exception.

The university must provide institutional support through strategic educational development programs and easily accessible resources to enhance its members' understanding of anti-plagiarism measures. These programmes can include workshops on citation practices, seminars on ethical research methodologies, and digital resources that reinforce the importance of ethicality in scholarship. Such initiatives equip members with vital knowledge and inspire a strong commitment to ethical academic conduct, ultimately leading to a culture that prioritises integrity and discourages any form of academic misconduct. An academic integrity office may collaborate with students, faculty, and staff to develop and centralise essential resources that assist students in navigating the complexities of academic integrity. Such initiatives aim to clarify policies and procedures, thereby enhancing understanding and compliance (Thacker, 2024). Unfortunately, none of the policies specified the establishment of a dedicated centralised office for academic integrity, which would be responsible for overseeing investigations and the enforcement of policies and penalties.

To put it succinctly, effective policies are scarce, leading to insufficient education, training, cross-institutional outreach, and dialogue. This situation contributes to failing integrity standards and fragmented academic ecosystems. Therefore, national-level coordination of policies through collaborations, structuralising, orchestrating and cross-innovation activities in policymaking is essential for successful academic integrity policy implementation across Ghanaian publicly funded universities.

7. Limitations

This study is exclusively restricted to publicly available policies from the official websites of publicly funded universities. This approach was chosen to examine how accessible these institutional policies are to the public. Purposely, no attempts were made to contact the universities for clarification, as the researcher believes their official website adequately represents them. However, it is important to acknowledge that not all universities may have a strong online presence or publish their policies online, which could create a misleading impression that integrity policies do not exist. The researchers recognise the limitations of this methodology and recommend that future integrity policies consider including both online and hardcopy documents. According to the perspectives presented by Mahmud (2024), Mahmud et al. (2019) and Foltýnek et al. (2018), the researchers caution against the generalisability and replication of the findings in other countries. This concern arises from the potential challenges posed by varying cultural and institutional contexts that may impact the applicability of the results.

Additionally, this study did not consider factors such as demographics, programmes offered, private universities, and the role of the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) in coordinating the standardisation of integrity policies in tertiary education. Eaton (2024), Ozga (2000) and Stoesz et al. (2019) advise against potential subjectivity in such analysis. These limitations highlight research gaps that could be explored in future studies. Although the analysis covers a limited number of institutional policies, they contribute meaningfully to the overall analysis and inform key policy recommendations.

8. Implications

Enhancing policy clarity and accessibility is key to putting policy into practice. In that regard, universities must ensure that academic integrity policies are clearly defined, easily accessible and

regularly updated to reflect current challenges, such as contract cheating and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) misuse. Shifting from a purely punitive approach to one that incorporates educational support can promote a more positive culture of integrity. Engaging students in the development of these policies is essential. The importance of training programmes cannot be overemphasised, but institutions should invest in targeted educational initiatives to equip students and faculty with the necessary skills to navigate academic writing and ethical research practices. A collaborative effort involving all members of the academic community is critical. Policies should reflect shared responsibilities and promote active participation in fostering integrity. Implementing these changes can help establish a stronger foundation for academic integrity, fostering an environment where ethical scholarship is the norm rather than the exception. Universities can mitigate academic misconduct and enhance the overall educational experience by embedding integrity into the institutional culture. The analysis of academic integrity policies across Ghana's publicly funded universities reveals significant challenges and inconsistencies that can undermine the promotion of ethical scholarship.

9. Conclusion

This study enriches the ongoing discourse on academic integrity by providing comparative insights that can inform policy and practice to enhance credibility and drive transformative change in Ghana's tertiary education. The development and enforcement of research integrity in Ghanaian universities frequently fell short of international standards and alignment with academic integrity policy exemplary due to a lack of commitment, insufficient institutional capacity, a lack of awareness (of the need for such policies) and limited resources (Appiah et al., 2025). In this study, the evidence presented includes comparative policy document analyses, highlighting commonalities and discrepancies across different institutions. Many institutions have established integrity policies encompassing various areas, including ethics, plagiarism, intellectual property, publications, data management, misconduct, and research innovation. However, they frequently overlook vital aspects such as the academic integrity policy. This oversight reflects a preference for broad guidelines and "umbrella terminologies" instead of specific policies needed to address challenges. To effectively address this issue, universities must prioritise the development of comprehensive academic integrity policies. Furthermore, these policies should be readily accessible to the public to ensure transparency and awareness.

This study asserts that the academic integrity policies in Ghanaian universities should align with the exemplary standards proposed by Bretag et al. (2011a, b), as an analysis of existing policies reveals that none currently satisfy this benchmark. In context, it is essential for universities to systematically reassess and improve their academic integrity policies to keep pace with emerging educational trends and technological advancements. Moreover, institutions should develop proactive strategies to uphold and promote academic integrity, considering the growing prevalence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and contract cheating in tertiary education.

This study offers a substantial contribution to the field of academic integrity by underscoring the necessity for policies that are both theoretically sound and practically relevant in the context of evolving technologies. By focusing on Ghanaian universities, this research highlights an important concern often underrepresented in academic integrity discourse, thus enriching the broader global conversation. The findings and arguments presented herein also create new opportunities for further research in this important area.

References

Acquah, R. (2024, February 26). The University of Ghana has revised its plagiarism policy to include AI. *Graphic Online*

Anohina-Naumeca, A., Tauginienė, L. & Odineca, T. (2018). Academic integrity policies of Baltic state-financed universities in online public spaces. *International Journal of Educational Integrity* 14, 8. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-018-0031-z

Appiah, D, Duut, J. M., & Adu-Gyebi, C. (2025). Public Availability of Research Integrity Policies in Leading African Universities. *Journal of Academic Ethics.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-025-09600-8

Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity (APFEI) (2010). What is educational integrity? http://apfei.edu.au/tiki-index.php

Australian Government (2011). Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011. *Federal Register of Legislation.*

Ayala-Enríquez, P., Franco-Pérez, N., Guerrero-Dib, J. G., & Pizarro-Puccio, G. (2020). From moral awareness to academic integrity in Latin America. In T. Bretag (Ed.), *A research agenda for academic integrity* (pp. 28–39). Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. https:// doi. org/ 10. 4337/ 97817 89903 775

Bertram Gallant, T. (Ed.). (2011). Creating the Ethical Academy: A Systems Approach to Understanding Misconduct and Empowering Change (1st ed.). *Routledge.* https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203840481

Bretag, T. (2020). A Research Agenda for Academic Integrity, *Edward Elgar Publishing* Limited, The Lypiatts 15 Lansdown Road, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 2ja, U.K., ISBN 978 78990 377 5 (eBook) https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2011A00073

Bretag, T., Curtis, G., McNeill, M., & Slade, C. (2020). Academic integrity toolkit. https://www.teqsa.gov.au/academic-integrity-toolkit

Bretag, T. (2016). Defining academic integrity: International perspectives – Introduction. In T. Bretag (Ed.), *Handbook of academic integrity* (pp. 3–5). Springer

Bretag, T. & Mahmud, S. (2016). A conceptual framework for implementing exemplary academic integrity policy in Australian higher education. In T. Bretag (Ed.), *Handbook of academic integrity* (1st ed., pp. 463–480). Springer. https:// doi. org/ 10. 1007/ 978- 981- 287- 098-8_76.

Bretag, T., Mahmud, S., East, J., Green, M., & James, C., McGowan, U., Partridge, L., Walker, R., & Wallace, M. (2011a). Academic integrity standards: A preliminary analysis of the academic integrity policies at Australian Universities. *Proceedings of AuQF* 2011 *Demonstrating Quality, Australia, 48–53.* https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi? article=1332& context=asdpapers

Bretag, T., Mahmud, S., Wallace, M., Walker, R., James, C., Green, M., East, J, McGowan, U. & Patridge, L. (2011b). Core elements of exemplary academic integrity Policy in Australian higher education. *International Journal for Educational Integrity,* 7(2), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.21913/IJEI.v7i2.759

Casey, J. (2024). An auto-ethnographic approach to academic integrity: experiences through the lens as a student, design teacher and academic integrity officer. *International Journal for Educational Integrity* 20, 26. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-024-00173-4

Cerdà-Navarro, A., Touza, C., Morey-López, M., & Curiel, E. (2022). Academic integrity policies against assessment fraud in postgraduate studies: An analysis of the situation in Spanish universities. *Heliyon,* 8(3). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09170

Colucci, E. (2019). Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation HAQAA (HAQAA Initiative). *ENQA Webinar,* February 11, 2019. University of Barcelona. https://www.aau.org/haqaa.

Curtis, G. J., & Clare, J. (2023). Academic Integrity Scholarship: The Importance of Theory. In: Eaton, S.E. (eds) *Handbook of Academic Integrity.* Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-079-7_164-1

Curtis, G. J. (2021). Evolving an understanding of academic integrity: Keynote address. European Conference on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism (ECAIP), Online https://academicintegrity.eu/conference/proceedings/2021/book_of_abstracts2021.pdf

Denisova-Schmidt, E. (Ed.). (2021).Corruption in higher education: global challenges and responses. *Leiden: Brill/Sense.*

Draper, M., Boland, M. (2024). Contract Cheating: Legal, Regulatory, and Policy Responses. In: Eaton, S.E. (eds) *Second Handbook of Academic Integrity*. Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54144-5_114

East, J. (2009). Aligning policy and practice: An approach to integrating academic integrity. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning,* 3(1), A38–A51

Eaton, S. E. (2025, January 29). From Plagiarism to Postplagiarism: Navigating the GenAI Revolution in Higher Education Centre for Artificial Intelligence Ethics, Literacy, and Integrity

(CAIELI): Generative AI Workshops, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada. https://hdl.handle.net/1880/120649
http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/viewFile/66/62

Eaton, S. E. (2024). *Second Handbook of Academic Integrity* (2nd ed., 2024). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54144-5

Eaton, S.E. (2023). A Comprehensive Academic Integrity (CAI) Framework: An Overview. Calgary, Canada: University of Calgary. https://prism.ucalgary.ca/handle/1880/116060

Eaton, S. E., Vogt, L., Seeland, J., & Stoesz, B. M. (2023). Academic Integrity Policy Analysis of Alberta and Manitoba Colleges. *Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity,* 6(1). https://doi.org/10.11575/cpai.v6i1.76901

Eaton, S. E. (2022a). New priorities for academic integrity: equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonisation and Indigenisation. *International Journal for Educational Integrity.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-022-00105-0

Eaton, S. E. (2022b, April 5). Why we need to pay attention to equity, diversity, and inclusion in student conduct. BMC On Society. https://blogs.biomedcentral.com/onsociety/2022/04/05/why-we-need-to-pay-attention-to-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-student-conduct/

Eaton, S. E. (2021, June 11). Communities of Integrity: Engaging Ethically Online for Teaching, Learning, and Research - Closing Keynote Address European Conference on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism (ECAIP), Online. http://hdl.handle.net/1880/113490

Eaton, S. E. (2017). Comparative analysis of institutional policy definitions of plagiarism: A pan-Canadian university duty. *Interchange*, 48(3), 271–281. https:// doi. org/ 10.1007/ s10780-017-9300-7

ENAI. (n.d.). European network for academic integrity. https://www.academicintegrity.eu/

Esser, F., & Vliegenthart, R. (2017). Comparative Research Methods. *In The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods* (eds J. Matthes, C.S. Davis and R.F. Potter). https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0035

Foltýnek, T., & Glendinning, I. (2015). Impact of policies for plagiarism in higher education across Europe: Results of the project. Proceedings of the Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry in Brno, 63(1):207–216. (Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe). https://doi.org/10.11118/actaun201563010207

Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). (2023). Strategic Plan 2023-2027 Ghana Tertiary Education Commission. https://betterghanadigest.com/2022/09/01/ghana-tertiary-education-commission/

Glendinning, I. (2023). Developing and Implementing Policies for Academic Integrity – Management of Change. In: Curtis, G.J. (eds) Academic Integrity in the Social Sciences. Ethics and Integrity in Educational Contexts, vol 6. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-43292-7_6

Gow, S., & Sun, Q. (2024). Academic Integrity in China: Challenges for Policy, Practice, and Quality Assurance in Higher Education. In: Eaton, S.E. (eds) *Second Handbook of Academic Integrity.* Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-079-7_175-1

Gullifer, J. M., & Tyson, G. A. (2013). Who has read the policy on plagiarism? Unpacking Students' understanding of plagiarism. *Studies in Higher Education,* 39(7), 1202-1218.

Gupta, K. (2012). Comparative Public Policy: Using the Comparative Method to Advance Our Understanding of the Policy Process. *Policy Studies Journal,* 40, 11–26. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2012.00443.x

HAQAA1. (n.d.). About the HAQAA initiative. https://haqaa.aau.org/

HAQAA2. (n.d.). HAQAA2 activities. https://haqaa2.obsglob.org/activities/

Higher Education Academy [HEA]. (2011). Policy works: Recommendations for reviewing policy to manage unacceptable academic practice in higher education. https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/policy-works-recommendationsreviewing-policy-manage-unacceptable-academic-practice

International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI). (2021). The fundamental values of academic integrity. (3rd ed.). http://www.academicintegrity.org/the-fundamental-values-of academic-integrity

Kezar, A., Bernstein-Sierra, S. (2016). Commercialisation of Higher Education. In: Bretag, T. (eds) *Handbook of Academic Integrity.* Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-098-8_59

Lancaster, T., Draper, M., Dann, S., Crockett, R., & Glendinning, I. (2025). Developing policies to address historic contract cheating and misuse of Generative Artificial Intelligence. *Loughborough University. Journal contribution.* https://hdl.handle.net/2134/28194365.v1

Lasswell, D. H. & Kaplan, A. (2014). "Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry." 1st edition. *Routledge*, New York. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315127156

Macfarlane, B., Zhang, J., & Pun, A. (2014). Academic integrity: a review of the literature, *Studies in Higher Education*, 39:2, 339–358. doi:10.1080/03075079.2012.709495

Mahmud, S. (2024). Transformative Change in Academic Integrity Policy at Australian Universities. In S. E. Eaton (Ed.), *Second Handbook of Academic Integrity* (2nd ed., pp. 825–839). (Springer International Handbooks of Education; Vol. Part F2304*). Springer Nature* https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54144-5_119

Mahmud, S. & Bretag, T. (2014). Fostering Integrity in Postgraduate Research: An Evidence-Based Policy and Support Framework, *Accountability in Research*: Policies and Quality Assurance, 21:2, 122-137. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2014.847668

Mensah, M. (2022). Internal Quality Assurance Practices In Higher Education: Evidence From A Ghanaian University. *European Journal of Education Studies,* 9(7). doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v9i7.4388

Miron, J., McKenzie, A., Eaton, S. E., Stoesz, B., Thacker, E., Devereaux, L., Persaud, N., Steeves, M., & Rowbotham, K. (2021). Academic Integrity Policy Analysis of Publicly-funded Universities in Ontario, Canada: A Focus on Contract Cheating. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy* (197), 62–75. https://doi.org/10.7202/1083333ar

Moller, A. (2022). An analysis of university academic integrity policies in New Zealand. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *47*(3), 338-350. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2022.2130195

Moya, B. A., & Eaton, S. E. (2024). Academic Integrity Policy Analysis of Chilean Universities. *Journal of Academic Ethics* 22, 639–663 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-024-09515-w

Moya, B.A. (2024). Academic Integrity Policies in Hispanic South American Higher Education: Status and Recommendations. In: Eaton, S.E. (eds) *Handbook of Academic Integrity.* Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-079-7_122-1

Orim, SM., & Awala-Ale, A. (2024). Academic Integrity Perspectives: Insights from Africa. In: Eaton, S.E. (eds) *Second Handbook of Academic Integrity*. Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54144-5_9

Pagaling, R., Eaton, S.E., & McDermott, B. (2022, April 4). Academic Integrity: Considerations for Accessibility, Equity, and Inclusion. University of Calgary. Calgary, Canada. http://hdl.handle.net/1880/114519

Parnther, C. (2020). Academic misconduct in higher education: A comprehensive review. *Journal of Higher Education Policy And Leadership Studies,* 1(1), 25–45. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.29252/johepal.1.1.25

Perkins, M., & Roe, J. (2023). Decoding Academic Integrity Policies: A Corpus Linguistics Investigation of AI and Other Technological Threats. *Higher Education Policy*,

OnlineFirst, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-023-00323-2

Ragin, C. C. (1987, 2014). The comparative method: Moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies. In The comparative method: Moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies, 11th ed. (pp. 185–185).*University of California Press.*

Rihoux, B. (2006). Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Systematic Comparative Methods: Recent Advances and Remaining Challenges for Social Science Research. *International Sociology*, 21(5), 679–706. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580906067836

Simonds, J. (2022). Academic Integrity and Referencing: What Is Academic Integrity? In SAGE Skills: Student Success. *SAGE Publications*, Inc., https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071887233

Simon, (2016). Academic Integrity in Non-Text-Based Disciplines. In: Bretag, T. (eds) *Handbook of Academic Integrity*. *Springer*, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-079-7_61-1

Stoesz, B. M., & Eaton, S. E. (2022). Academic Integrity Policies of Publicly Funded Universities in Western Canada. *Educational Policy*, *36*(6), 1529-1548. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904820983032

Stoesz, B. M., Eaton, S. E., Miron, J., & Thacker, E. J. (2019). Academic integrity and contract cheating policy analysis of colleges in Ontario, Canada. International Journal for Educational Integrity 15(4). doi: 10.1007/s40979-019-0042-4

Suryani, A. W., & Sugeng, B. (2019). Can You Find It on the Web? Assessing University Websites on Academic Integrity Policy. In *2019 International Conference on Electrical, Electronics and Information Engineering, Denpasar, Indonesia* (pp. 309-313). ICEEIE. https://doi.org/10.1109/ICEEIE47180.2019.8981405

Tamrat, W., & Teferra, D. (2025). Private Higher Education in Africa: Roots, Trends, and Challenges. *International Higher Education.* https://doi.org/10.6017/895b9e0d.711151a4

Tauginienė L, Gaižauskaitė I, Glendinning I, Kravjar J, Ojstersek M, Robeiro L, Odineca T, Marino F, Cosentino M, Sivasubramaniam S, Foltynek T. "Glossary for academic integrity". ENAI report (revised version), (October 2018): Available online. URL - https://www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/EN-Glossary_revised_final_24.02.23.pdf

Thacker, E.J. (2024). Academic Integrity and the Canadian University Ombudsperson. In: Eaton, S.E. (eds) *Second Handbook of Academic Integrity*. Springer International Handbooks of Education. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54144-5_107

The Republic of Ghana (2020). Education Regulatory Bodies Act, 2020 (Act 1023).

The White House (2009) Memorandum of March 9, 2009: *Scientific integrity.* Fed Reg 74(46):10671–10672.

United Nations (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

UNESCO (2020). A practical guide to recognition, implementing the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education, published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Education sector, Paris, France. https://doi.org/10.54675/CUVL2955

Vassileva, I., & Chankova, M. (2023). *Investigating university policies pertaining to academic ethics and integrity in Bulgaria: a study protocol* [Conference presentation]. ECEIA 2023, Derby, UK. https://academicintegrity.eu/conference/european-conference-on-ethics-andintegrity-in-academia-2023

Vidovich, L. (2013). Policy Research in Higher Education: Theories and Methods for Globalising Times, Theory and Method in Higher Education Research (International Perspectives on Higher Education Research, Vol. 9), *Emerald Group Publishing Limited,* Leeds, pp. 21–39. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3628(2013)0000009005

Yankova, D. (2024). Academic Integrity Policies in HEIs Across Cultures. *English Studies at NBU,*10(1), 5–20. https://doi.org/10.33919/esnbu.24.1.1

Yorke, J., & Vidovich, L. (2016). The Development of Quality Policies in Higher Education. In: Learning Standards and the Assessment of Quality in Higher Education: Contested Policy Trajectories. *Policy Implications of Research in Education*, Vol 7. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32924-6_2

Call for Paper
The Journal of African Arts & Culture (JAAC) is an open access online platform for scholarly dialogue relating to African Arts and culture. It is committed to publishing and disseminating high quality scholarly materials that demonstrate the power and significances of the arts and culture in general in African society past and present. This journal with interdisciplinary scope publishes progressive research in the field of ancient, contemporary and modern African Arts and Culture. It covers issues in both performing and visual arts; accepts original scientific papers, critical essays, interviews, exhibition and book reviews, critiques, short reports amongst others.

JAAC welcomes article submissions at any time. JAAC is published four times a year: March, June, September, and December.

Send all inquiries about your article submission to:
jaac.journal@gmail.com OR
jaac.journalsca@gmail.com
For more information on submission guidelines visit **https://jaac-sca.org**