

From Curriculum Values to School Conduct: A Secondary Document Analysis of Ghanaian Senior High Schools

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Abstract

This study examined how national values translate into expectations for student behavior and teacher conduct and developed a Ghana-specific implementation framework. Qualitative document analysis was conducted on nine core documents, including policy and curriculum texts, teacher standards, teacher and student conduct codes, and three Ghanaian empirical studies, supplemented by four contextual examination-integrity sources. Sources were purposively selected, coded, and interpreted through the lenses of social learning, ecological systems, social control, strain, and routine activity theories. The corpus presents a coherent values agenda of respect, diversity, equity, excellence, collaboration, truth, integrity, citizenship, learner dignity, and professional responsibility. However, district- and regional-level studies indicate implementation challenges, including peer and family influences, teacher-student relationships, inconsistent rule enforcement, counseling capacity, and adult participation in examination malpractice. The proposed Values-Based School Climate Framework (VBSCF) integrates curriculum enactment, teacher modeling, fair accountability, restorative and counseling support, academic integrity, family-community partnership, and monitoring. Ghanaian policy does not lack values; the central challenge is aligning adult conduct, school routines, relational supports, and accountability with those values. The framework is a document-derived synthesis that requires validation.

Keywords: Academic Integrity; School Climate; Student Discipline; Teacher Professionalism; Values Education

1. Introduction

Ghanaian Senior High Schools (SHSs) prepare adolescents for further education, work, and civic life. Schools therefore serve not only as sites of academic instruction but also as social environments where young people encounter norms, authority, peer influence, responsibility, and citizenship. Developmental and school-climate research indicates that behavior is shaped by interactions among learners, adults, families, institutions, and broader social settings, not by the formal curriculum alone (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cohen et al., 2009; Wang & Degol, 2016).

The Ghanaian documentary record affords this formative purpose explicit policy status. For instance, the Education Strategic Plan 2018–2030 links quality education to national development and outlines actions on positive discipline and teacher development (Ministry of Education, 2018). The National Pre-Tertiary Education Curriculum Framework states that schooling should develop honest, creative, and responsible citizens and identifies respect, diversity, equity, commitment to excellence, teamwork/collaboration, and truth and integrity as core values (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NaCCA], 2018). In addition, the National Teachers' Standards for Ghana and the GES Teachers' Code of Conduct position professional values, ethical conduct, learner dignity, and role modeling as components of teaching (Ghana Education Service [GES], 2008; National Teaching Council [NTC], 2017).

Evidence of misconduct requires careful interpretation. A study limited to 25 SHSs in Ghana's Central Region found that 70.3% of participating teachers and 57.6% of participating students reported witnessing student examination malpractice. Respondents ranked students, teachers, and invigilators as the three most involved groups (Yeboah, 2024). In Techiman North District, respondents identified substance abuse, vandalism, aggressive behavior, weak teacher-student relationships, poor classroom management, and inconsistent enforcement as salient discipline concerns (Yelewonah, 2024). A more recent mixed-methods study of 20 schools reported associations among indiscipline, peer influence, parental involvement, and teacher-student relationships, but its small within-school sample limits generalization to the school level (Fermah & Cai, 2026). These studies document concerns in specific samples; they do not provide national prevalence estimates.

Four concepts organize the present analysis. Values are cross-situational conceptions of desirable goals that guide evaluation and action (Schwartz, 2012). Values formation is operationally defined here as the educational and social process through which ethical and prosocial orientations are taught, modeled, discussed, internalized, and enacted through relationships and institutional practices (Bandura, 1977; Berkowitz, 2011). Conduct follows the GES definition of behavior, attitudes, and character exhibited within and outside the work or school environment (GES, 2008, 2024).

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life as expressed in norms, goals, values, relationships, teaching and learning practices, safety, and organizational structures (Cohen et al., 2009; Wang & Degol, 2016). Values formation is therefore the developmental process; conduct is its observable and regulated expression; and school climate is the relational and institutional setting that may enable or obstruct both.

Academic integrity is a related but distinct concept. It is a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage in learning and assessment (International Center for Academic Integrity [ICAI], 2021). This definition matters because examination malpractice cannot be understood solely as a security failure. Ghanaian evidence implicating students and adult examination actors, together with the GES prohibition on assisting, colluding, leaking questions, or enabling impersonation, links learner conduct to professional ethics and institutional guardianship (GES, 2008; Yeboah, 2024).

Existing Ghanaian studies commonly examine student indiscipline, guidance and counseling, teacher practice, or examination malpractice as separate topics (Adamu et al., 2021; Fosu-Ayarkwa, 2022; Quansah et al., 2022; Sackey et al., 2020; Yeboah, 2024). Likewise, international frameworks tend to emphasize a particular intervention domain: character education emphasizes ethical development; school-wide positive behavioral interventions emphasize prevention and behavior support; restorative practice emphasizes accountability and repair; and school-climate research maps the multidimensional environment (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; Bradshaw et al., 2009; Gregory et al., 2022; Morrison et al., 2005; Wang & Degol, 2016). What remains underdeveloped is a Ghana-specific account of how national curriculum values, adult professional conduct, student rules, counseling, academic integrity, and monitoring should function as a single implementation system.

This paper addresses that gap through qualitative document analysis. Its novelty is not a claim to have invented whole-school or values education. Rather, it derives a Ghana-specific synthesis of implementation from the country's own normative architecture and integrates student and adult conduct within the same explanatory and accountability framework. This joint treatment adds theoretical value because social learning predicts that students observe adult models; ecological theory connects behavior to linked systems; social control theory highlights bonds and shared beliefs; strain theory explains pressures toward illegitimate means; and routine activity theory identifies opportunities created by weak guardianship (Bandura, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cohen & Felson, 1979; Hirschi, 1969; Merton, 1938).

The study asks: (1) What values and behavioural expectations are embedded in Ghana's pre-tertiary policy and curriculum documents? (2) How do teacher standards and professional conduct codes position teachers in values formation? (3) What behavioural concerns are documented in the selected Ghanaian SHS discipline and examination-integrity sources? (4) What integrated school-climate framework can translate the documentary values agenda into school practice?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Values Formation, Character Education, and Schooling

Values education encompasses pedagogical approaches and supportive organizational structures designed to cultivate ethical and prosocial dispositions and competencies (Berkowitz, 2011). Research-based character education likewise frames moral development as a school-wide responsibility that integrates curriculum, relationships, modeling, opportunities for action, family participation, and sustained implementation, rather than isolated moral lessons (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). Social learning theory explains one mechanism: learners attend to and reproduce behavior displayed by influential models, especially when modeling is reinforced by consistent expectations and consequences (Bandura, 1977).

The Ghanaian curriculum framework is compatible with this broad conception. It embeds values throughout pedagogy and the curriculum, links them to citizenship, and describes a respectful classroom climate as a feature of standards-based teaching (NaCCA, 2018). Yet a normative statement does not demonstrate enactment. The analytical problem is therefore to trace the chain from declared value to adult model and institutional routine, to regulated conduct and support mechanism. The present study uses alignment to describe consistency across those links; it does not infer that a value has been internalized merely because it appears in policy.

2.2 Student Discipline and School Climate

School climate research organizes school life into overlapping academic, community, safety, and institutional-environmental domains (Wang & Degol, 2016). Positive climate is associated with clear and fair expectations, supportive relationships, belonging, safety, and conditions conducive to learning, though cross-sectional findings should not be assumed to be causal (Cohen et al., 2009; Osher et al., 2010). Studies in Ghana and elsewhere link truancy, violence, bullying, substance use, vandalism, and rule violations to school relationships, peer norms, supervision, counseling, classroom management, and perceived fairness (Chewen et al., 2018; Doku et al., 2012; Gyan, 2015; Henry & Huizinga, 2007; Ofori, 2018; Ofori et al., 2018; Olweus, 1993; Patrick & Adade, 2020; Sackey et al., 2016; Saputra et al., 2020; Yelewonah, 2024).

Ghanaian findings are heterogeneous and often localized. Principals have described discipline as consequential for school effectiveness, while school- and district-level studies report varying patterns and perceptions among students, teachers, and parents (Akrofi Baafi, 2020; Gyan et al., 2017; Kumah et al., 2025; Salifu & Agbenyega, 2016). Digital media can also extend peer interactions and misconduct beyond physical school spaces, making digital citizenship and cyberbullying prevention relevant to climate work (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018; Magis-Weinberg et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2019). The implication is both methodological and substantive: local findings can illuminate mechanisms and experiences, but they cannot establish a uniform national condition without representative sampling. This study therefore treats empirical documents as bounded evidence and national documents as evidence of formal expectations.

2.3 Teacher Professionalism, Guidance, and Role Modelling

Teacher professionalism combines technical competence with ethical responsibility. Ghana's national standards require teachers to be guided by legal and ethical codes, engage positively with learners and communities, develop a positive professional identity, and act as role models (NTC, 2017). The teacher code sets out enforceable duties regarding fairness, attendance, learner protection, non-discrimination, professional dignity, examination conduct, and intervention against violence (GES, 2008). From a social learning theory perspective, these texts make adult conduct part of the mechanism by which school values are made credible or contradictory (Bandura, 1977).

Discipline reform also depends on professional capacity. Research following restrictions on corporal punishment shows that teachers may experience uncertainty when training and institutional support for alternative classroom-management practices are inadequate (E. T. Ampofo, 2021; Maphosa & Shumba, 2010; Quansah et al., 2022). Positive-discipline, restorative, and counselling approaches require clear limits alongside relationship skills, de-escalation, referral, reflection, and proportionate consequences (Kiprop et al., 2015; Morrison et al., 2005; Osher et al., 2010; Woods & Stewart, 2018). A Ghanaian evaluation of guidance services found constraints including limited facilities, funding, and in-service support, reinforcing the need to treat counselling capacity as an implementation condition rather than an assumed resource (Sackey et al., 2020).

2.4 Academic Integrity and Examination Malpractice

Academic integrity frames honest assessment as a shared institutional value rather than an attribute expected only of students (ICAI, 2021). Ghanaian studies associate examination malpractice with academic pressure, inadequate preparation, peer influence, institutional weaknesses, and the actions of students and adults (Adamu et al., 2021; Adzrolo et al., 2021; J. A. Ampofo, 2021; Dadzie & Annan-Brew, 2023; Gyamfi et al., 2022; Tindan & Chrisantus, 2024; Yeboah, 2024). International research likewise links cheating to attitudes, peer norms, anxiety, opportunity, and perceived fairness (Babanejad et al., 2020; Marsden et al., 2005; Mazer & Hunt, 2012; Nwosu et al., 2020).

Strain theory offers a cautious explanation for dishonest shortcuts when valued outcomes are emphasized but legitimate means are perceived as blocked, while routine activity theory highlights opportunity and guardianship during assessment (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Merton, 1938). These theories do not explain why any individual cheats. They provide sensitizing concepts for interpreting documentary evidence on pressure, collusion, weak supervision, and adult facilitation. Accordingly, WAEC chief examiners' reports were used only as assessment context because they primarily address candidate performance and instructional weaknesses, not direct measures of values or the prevalence of misconduct (West African Examinations Council [WAEC], 2024, 2025).

2.5 Existing Frameworks and the Added Value of the Present Synthesis

Whole-school approaches share the premise that durable change requires coordinated norms, relationships, routines, and leadership. School-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports have shown effects on organizational health and climate in a group-randomized trial, while a cluster-randomized evaluation of restorative practices reported fewer disciplinary incidents after one year but no first-year reduction in racial disparities (Bradshaw et al., 2009; Gregory et al., 2022). These findings support coordinated implementation while cautioning against assuming that a named framework automatically produces equitable outcomes.

Table 1. Comparison of Established Approaches and the Proposed Ghana-Specific Synthesis

Approach	Established emphasis	Boundary relevant to this study	Added function in the Values-Based School Climate Framework
Character/values education	Ethical and prosocial development through curriculum, modeling, relationships, and participation	Often presented as a broad developmental program rather than an alignment audit of Ghanaian regulatory documents	Connects NaCCA values to observable student and adult conduct and school monitoring
School-wide positive behavior support	Prevention, explicit expectations, reinforcement, and tiered support	Behavior-support architecture does not, by itself, specify Ghana's curriculum values or teacher-code obligations	Places positive support inside Ghana's policy, professional, and conduct-code architecture
Restorative practice	Accountability, dialogue, repair of harm, reintegration, and relationship building	Restorative processes address harm but do not replace safeguarding, examination security, or professional sanctions	Combines repair with proportionate sanctions, counselling, safeguarding, and academic-integrity controls
School-climate frameworks	Academic, relational, safety, and institutional dimensions of school life	Primarily descriptive unless linked to concrete implementation duties and indicators	Converts climate domains into actor-specific duties, routines, and monitorable indicators
Proposed Ghanaian synthesis	Joint alignment of curriculum values, teacher conduct, student conduct, support, integrity, partnership, and monitoring	Document-derived and not yet empirically validated as an intervention	Provides a locally grounded implementation map and treats adult and student conduct as mutually constitutive

The proposed Values-Based School Climate Framework (VBSCF) therefore differs by source, unit of integration, and intended use. It is derived from Ghanaian policy, standards, and codes; it integrates student and adult conduct; and it functions as an implementation and evaluation map. It is not presented as a statistically tested model, a replacement for positive behavioral or restorative practices, or evidence of causal effectiveness. Empirical validation is a task for subsequent research.

3. Research Method and Materials

3.1 Design

The study used qualitative document analysis, a systematic procedure for reviewing and interpreting documents to elicit meaning, develop understanding, and generate empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). Policy document analysis is appropriate where formal texts are examined for their purposes, concepts, assumptions, and implications for educational leadership and practice (Cardno, 2018). The design was interpretive: it examined how values and conduct were constructed across texts and compared points of convergence, tension, and omission. It did not measure present behavior or estimate prevalence across Ghanaian SHSs.

3.2 Corpus and Analytical Status

The supplied source set contained 13 documents. Nine were designated core analytical documents because they directly established national expectations or provided Ghanaian empirical evidence relevant to the research questions. Four were designated contextual sources: two WAEC chief examiners' reports and two news or commentary records concerning examination integrity (Ackah, 2025; Association of American Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers [AACRAO], 2022). Contextual sources informed the assessment environment but were not coded as direct evidence of value formation or national prevalence. Academic literature outside these 13 documents was used to define constructs, compare frameworks, and interpret findings; it was not part of the formal corpus.

Table 2. Formal Document Corpus and Analytical Status (N = 13)

Category	Count	Documents	Institutional source	Years	Status and role
National strategy and curriculum	2	Education Strategic Plan; National Pre-Tertiary Education Curriculum Framework	Ministry of Education; NaCCA	2018; 2018	Core national aims, values, implementation context
Teacher standards and conduct	2	National Teachers' Standards; GES Teachers' Code of Conduct	NTC/Ministry of Education; GES	2017; 2008	Core professional values, role modelling, enforceable conduct
Student conduct codes	2	GES pre-tertiary student code; Mozano SHS student code	GES; Mozano SHS	2024; n.d.	Core national rules and school-level illustration
Ghanaian empirical studies	3	Yeboah; Yelewonah; Fermah and Cai	Journal/thesis sources	2024; 2024; 2026	Core bounded evidence on examination malpractice and discipline
Examination reports	2	WASSCE chief examiners' reports	WAEC Ghana	2024; 2025	Contextual assessment and instructional environment
News/commentary records	2	Modern Ghana article; AACRAO/Premium Times item	Modern Ghana; AACRAO/Premium Times	2025; 2022	Contextual only. Not used for strong or prevalence claims

3.3 Selection Criteria and Corpus Boundaries

Purposive selection followed four inclusion rules. A core document had to: (a) be an official Ghanaian policy, curriculum, standards, or conduct text applicable to pre-tertiary education; (b) provide a school-level code that illustrates how national conduct expectations are implemented; or (c) report Ghanaian SHS evidence directly related to discipline, school climate, or examination malpractice. Documents were contextual if they addressed the broader examination environment but did not directly answer the values-formation questions. Non-Ghanaian studies and broader scholarship were excluded from the formal corpus and used only in the literature review or theoretical interpretation.

This boundary mitigates the risk of silently expanding the evidence base. Findings reported as documentary results are drawn from the nine core texts. Claims presented as interpretations draw on theory and comparative scholarship. The

two WAEC reports and two media records provide only context. Appendix A lists each supplied document, its analytical status, and its use.

3.4 Coding and Analysis

Analysis proceeded in five stages adapted from qualitative document-analysis guidance (Bowen, 2009; Cardno, 2018). First, each source was logged by authorship, date, type, scope, and analytical status. Second, relevant passages were extracted and coded using deductive categories derived from the research questions and inductive subcodes emerging from the texts. Third, coded passages were compared across normative and empirical sources. Fourth, evidence was mapped to the five theories as interpretive lenses. Fifth, convergences and implementation gaps were synthesized into the VBSCF. Software-generated frequency counts were not treated as substantive evidence; the focus was on meaning, institutional alignment, and contrary or limiting evidence.

Table 3. Coding Framework

Main code	Illustrative subcodes	Evidence question
Curriculum values	Respect; diversity; equity; excellence; teamwork/collaboration; truth/integrity; citizenship	Which values are explicitly named and what enactment is expected?
Teacher professionalism	Ethical codes; role modelling; learner dignity; attendance; fairness; community practice	How are adult values translated into professional duties?
Student conduct	Attendance; punctuality; authority; violence; substances; property; digital conduct	How are values translated into rules and sanctions?
Academic integrity	Cheating; collusion; leakage; impersonation; adult facilitation; guardianship	Which learner and adult responsibilities protect fair assessment?
School climate and support	Relationships; safety; belonging; counselling; rule clarity; parental partnership	Which environmental mechanisms enable or obstruct conduct?
Reform and monitoring	Positive discipline; restorative response; referral; indicators; review	How can values be operationalized and evaluated?

3.5 Trustworthiness, Ethics, and Limitations

Trustworthiness was supported by source triangulation, an explicit core/context distinction, a corpus inventory, and an evidence matrix that links each theme to direct sources. Negative-case attention was built into the analysis by recording tensions, for example, reform-oriented language alongside punitive sanctions and national aspirations alongside localized empirical concerns. Interpretations are labeled as such, and district- or region-specific results remain geographically qualified. These procedures improve transparency but do not eliminate interpretive judgment (Bowen, 2009).

The study relied on publicly available institutional and scholarly documents and collected no personal data; consequently, it involved no direct human participants. Its principal limitations stem from the corpus: the policy and code documents express formal expectations rather than observed practice; one school code is illustrative rather than representative; the empirical studies use different designs and local samples; and the 2026 mixed-methods study has a small number of participants per school. The analysis therefore supports an implementation framework and testable propositions, not national prevalence estimates or causal conclusions.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Ghana's Curriculum Vision Contains a Coherent Values Agenda

Direct documentary finding: The curriculum framework names respect, diversity, equity, commitment to excellence, teamwork/collaboration, and truth and integrity, and states that curriculum and pedagogy should be consistent with these values (NaCCA, 2018). It also links education to responsible local and global citizenship and describes respectful classroom behavior and discourse as features of standards-based implementation. The strategic plan complements this vision through policy commitments to educational quality, teacher development, counseling, and positive discipline (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Interpretation: These texts go beyond a simple list of virtues: they connect national identity, citizenship, pedagogy, classroom relationships, and assessment. Therefore, values formation is both curricular and institutional. Berkowitz's (2011) account of effective values education supports this interpretation by combining intentional pedagogy with adult modeling and supportive school structures. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective further suggests that curriculum messages become more credible when classroom, school, family, and policy environments reinforce them.

The principal gap is operational. Neither the presence of value language nor a curriculum objective demonstrates internalization. A school can teach integrity while rewarding results achieved through questionable means, or teach respect while adults use humiliating practices. The VBSCF responds by asking schools to translate each priority value into adult behaviors, student expectations, learning opportunities, support pathways, and reviewable indicators. This is an analytical inference drawn from cross-document alignment, not a finding that Ghanaian schools uniformly fail to enact the curriculum.

4.2 Teachers Are Central Carriers and Accountable Subjects of School Values

Direct documentary finding: The National Teachers' Standards require adherence to an ethical code, positive engagement with learners and communities, a positive professional identity, and role modeling (NTC, 2017). Moreover, the GES teacher code defines expected conduct through leadership, selflessness, integrity, impartiality, fairness, and honesty; it requires teachers to model decency and discipline and prohibits discrimination, degrading treatment, sexual violence, and facilitation of examination malpractice (GES, 2008). Teacher professionalism in the corpus is consequently relational, ethical, and protective, as well as instructional, an interpretation consistent with research linking teacher-student relationships to discipline processes (Mwaniki et al., 2016).

Interpretation through social learning theory: If learners observe teachers applying rules fairly, admitting errors, safeguarding assessment security, respecting dignity, and arriving punctually, adult behavior provides a model consistent with formal values. When adult conduct contradicts school messages, observational learning can normalize that contradiction (Bandura, 1977). This explains the theoretical gain from analyzing student and teacher conduct together: the conduct of authority figures is part of the environment through which student norms are learned, not an external variable.

The empirical studies reinforce this connection without establishing nationwide prevalence. In Yeboah's (2024) Central Region sample, teachers and invigilators were identified as actors in examination malpractice, alongside students. In the Techiman North District, respondents associated indiscipline with teacher-student relationships and classroom management (Yelewonah, 2024). Fermah and Cai (2026) also reported relationships among student behavior, adult relationships, and parental involvement, but their design and small within-school sample warrant cautious interpretation. Together, the studies justify treating teacher ethics and relational competence as intervention targets while acknowledging geographic and methodological limits.

The practical implication is that continuing professional development should link the National Teachers' Standards to concrete practices: positive and inclusive classroom management, adolescent development, restorative conversations, counseling referrals, ethical assessment, and safeguarding. School leadership and appraisal should recognize these as professional practices, while serious adult misconduct remains subject to formal procedures under the code (GES, 2008; NTC, 2017; Quansah et al., 2022; Sackey et al., 2020).

4.3 Student Conduct Codes Translate Values into Rules, but Implementation Must Be Developmental and Fair

Direct documentary finding: The 2024 GES student code regulates attendance, academic work, examination malpractice, bounds, punctuality, property, sexual offenses, violence, riots, gambling, recording, bullying, and weapons. It defines desirable conduct as leadership, selflessness, honesty, respect, obedience to lawful rules, and responsible community membership (GES, 2024). The Mozano SHS code shows how a school-level document translates similar categories into offense-and-sanction schedules (Mozano Senior High School, n.d.). The national code often pairs sanctions with caution, counseling, bonds witnessed by parents, apology, restitution, or referral, although severe offenses can result in suspension, dismissal, or police reporting (GES, 2024).

Interpretation through social control theory: Clear and consistently applied rules can strengthen belief in institutional norms; constructive participation can deepen involvement; supportive teacher and family relationships can strengthen attachment; and investment in education can strengthen commitment (Hirschi, 1969). Rules alone, however, may produce supervised compliance without moral understanding. The corpus supports a combined approach in which boundaries are explicit, consequences proportionate, reasons explained, support accessible, and opportunities for repair available where compatible with safety and law.

Local empirical evidence illustrates why implementation context matters. In Techiman North District, participants identified inconsistent policy enforcement, poor classroom management, weak teacher-student relationships, peer influence, and overcrowding among factors associated with indiscipline; substance abuse, vandalism, and aggressive behaviour were prominent reported forms (Yelewonah, 2024). Fermah and Cai (2026) reported demand among surveyed students for participation in rule making and among administrators for more counselling and non-punitive training. These findings do not describe every Ghanaian SHS, but they identify mechanisms that a national framework can require schools to assess locally.

Restorative practice adds accountability for harm without eliminating necessary sanctions. Its relevant questions are who was harmed, what responsibility is accepted, what repair is feasible, and how recurrence can be prevented (Morrison et al., 2005; Woods & Stewart, 2018). Evidence from a cluster-randomized school study suggests that implementation can reduce discipline incidents, but the absence of an early disparity effect cautions that equity must be measured rather than assumed (Gregory et al., 2022). Research on exclusionary discipline likewise supports monitoring unintended and unequal consequences rather than assuming that removal alone resolves underlying conditions (Skiba et al., 2014; Skiba & Losen, 2016). In the Ghanaian context, restorative responses should complement—not replace—safeguarding, due process, examination rules, and legal reporting.

4.4 Academic Integrity Is a Whole-School Values and Guardianship Problem

Direct documentary finding: The curriculum presents truth and integrity as doing what is right even without observation, while the student code classifies examination malpractice as serious misconduct (GES, 2024; NaCCA, 2018). The teacher code prohibits assisting candidates, leaking questions, condoning collusion or copying, and encouraging impersonation (GES, 2008). Yeboah's (2024) study makes the adult-student connection empirically visible: 70.3% of participating teachers and 57.6% of participating students reported witnessing student malpractice, and both groups placed teachers and invigilators among the leading actors involved. Because the sample was drawn from Central Region schools previously associated with malpractice, these percentages must not be generalized nationally.

Interpretation through strain and routine activity theories: High stakes, perceived inadequate preparation, or pressure for credentials can make illegitimate means appear attractive; accessible devices, collusion opportunities, compromised adults, and weak supervision can make them feasible (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Merton, 1938). Ghanaian empirical studies report associations with preparation, pressure, peer influence, institutional weakness, and adult participation, consistent with these mechanisms (Adamu et al., 2021; Dadzie & Annan-Brew, 2023; Tindan & Chrisantus, 2024; Yeboah, 2024). The theories organize possible conditions; they do not establish the motive of a particular candidate or causal effect from the present documents.

A values-based response must therefore operate before, during, and after examinations. Before examinations, schools can teach academic integrity, strengthen learning support, use fair formative assessment, and communicate expectations to families. During examinations, secure materials, trained invigilators, device controls, and reporting routes improve guardianship. After suspected misconduct, consistent procedures, proportionate sanctions, and adult accountability

protect fairness. These elements align the ICAI values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage with Ghana's curriculum and codes (GES, 2008, 2024; ICAI, 2021; NaCCA, 2018).

4.5 Behaviour and Values Formation Require a Ghana-Specific Whole-School Climate Approach

Cross-document finding: No single core source covers the complete implementation chain. The curriculum specifies values; teacher standards and the teacher code specify adult professional obligations; student codes specify behavioural boundaries and consequences; and empirical studies identify bounded concerns involving relationships, peer and family influence, enforcement, counselling, and assessment integrity (Fermah & Cai, 2026; GES, 2008, 2024; NaCCA, 2018; NTC, 2017; Yeboah, 2024; Yelewonah, 2024). Their convergence supports a whole-school synthesis.

Interpretation through ecological systems theory: Classroom modeling and peer relations operate within learners' immediate settings; parent-school and teacher-counselor connections operate across settings; institutional rules, staffing, and assessment systems shape opportunities indirectly; and national policies and social expectations provide the broader normative context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The VBSCF uses this nested logic to assign concrete responsibilities to actors. Social learning explains modeling; social control explains bonds and legitimate rule adherence; strain theory identifies pressure points; and routine activity theory focuses on guardianship and opportunity. The theories are complementary lenses, not variables tested by the document analysis.

Table 4. Evidence Matrix for the Five Findings

Finding	Direct core evidence	Bounded empirical evidence	Theoretical interpretation
Coherent national values agenda	Education Strategic Plan; NaCCA curriculum framework	Not a prevalence claim	Values education and ecological alignment
Teachers as carriers and accountable subjects	National Teachers' Standards; GES teacher code	Yeboah (Central Region); Yelewonah (Techiman North); Fermah and Cai (20-school sample)	Social learning; adult modelling; linked systems
Codes translate values into conduct	GES student code; Mozano SHS code	Yelewonah; Fermah and Cai	Social control; fair accountability; restorative repair
Academic integrity is systemic	NaCCA framework; teacher and student codes	Yeboah; supporting Ghanaian studies in discussion	Strain plus opportunity/guardianship
Whole-school alignment is required	Convergence across all six normative core texts	Convergence across three empirical core studies	Ecological integration of the five theoretical lenses

Table 4 separates direct documentary evidence from bounded empirical evidence and theoretical interpretation. On that basis, the VBSCF is proposed as an implementation map rather than an outcome claim.

Table 5. Values-Based School Climate Framework for Ghanaian SHSs

Pillar	Operational purpose	Illustrative practices	Responsible actors and indicators
Curriculum enactment	Translate national values into learning and routines	Values-linked lesson examples; student deliberation; co-curricular service; explicit digital citizenship	Teachers/NaCCA/leaders; lesson review, student participation, climate feedback
Teacher modelling and accountability	Align adult conduct with professional values	Fair treatment; punctuality; safeguarding; ethical assessment; conduct reporting; reflective CPD	Teachers/heads/NTC/GES ; appraisal, attendance, safeguarding and conduct records

Pillar	Operational purpose	Illustrative practices	Responsible actors and indicators
Student accountability and voice	Make expectations clear, legitimate, and educative	Accessible rules; student orientation; proportionate consequences; student participation in rule review	Students/staff/discipline committees; incident patterns, procedural consistency, student understanding
Restorative and counselling support	Address harm, causes, and recurrence while preserving safety	Counselling referral; restorative conference where appropriate; restitution; reintegration plan; parent meeting	Counsellors/teachers/parents; referral access, repeat incidents, completion of repair plans
Academic integrity	Align learning, assessment, and professional ethics	Integrity education; preparation support; secure materials; trained invigilation; adult accountability	Schools/WAEC/teachers/parents; irregularities, training, reporting and response timeliness
Family and community partnership	Connect expectations across settings	PTA/SMC workshops; parent communication; community mentoring; referral partnerships	Families/SMCs/PTAs/community; participation, follow-up, partnership coverage
Monitoring and improvement	Turn values into reviewable practice without reducing them to a single score	Disaggregated climate surveys; attendance; safety; counselling; discipline; teacher conduct; integrity review	School leaders/GES/inspectors; trends, disparities, action-plan completion

The framework's added value lies in alignment. For example, reducing examination malpractice requires curriculum integrity, competent teaching and preparation, ethical adult conduct, clear student rules, secure assessment, family communication, and monitored follow-up. Reducing violence requires safeguarding, supervision, relational practice, counseling, fair consequences, repair where appropriate, and pattern review. A framework that focuses only on student compliance would overlook adult modeling and institutional opportunity; one that focuses only on relationships would overlook necessary professional and assessment controls.

Implementation should be staged and evaluated. Schools could begin with a document-and-practice audit, identify one or two priority values, specify observable adult and student practices, strengthen support and reporting channels, and review disaggregated indicators over time. The framework should then be tested through multi-school studies using validated climate measures, administrative records, qualitative accounts, and implementation-fidelity evidence. Until such validation occurs, the VBSCF should be treated as a reasoned, document-based proposition.

5. Conclusion

The document analysis answers the four research questions as follows: Ghana's national strategy and curriculum embed a coherent agenda of respect, diversity, equity, excellence, collaboration, truth, integrity, citizenship, and responsible development; teacher standards and the GES code position teachers as ethical models, protectors, assessment actors, and accountable professionals; the selected empirical sources document examination malpractice and disciplinary concerns in bounded regional, district, and multi-school samples, with recurring attention to peer and family influence, teacher-student relationships, enforcement, counseling, and adult participation; and the proposed response is a Ghana-specific Values-Based School Climate Framework that aligns curriculum enactment, teacher modeling, student accountability, restorative and counseling support, academic integrity, family-community partnership, and monitoring. The central conclusion is therefore not that Ghanaian education lacks stated values, nor that the reviewed local findings represent every SHS, but that policy aspirations depend on coherent school-climate mechanisms that make these values visible in adult conduct, student rules, learning, support, and assessment. Because the framework is an interpretive synthesis rather than a tested intervention, future multi-school research should examine its feasibility, equity, implementation fidelity, and effects.

Acknowledgement

The author acknowledges the Ghanaian public institutions and researchers whose policy documents, standards, codes, reports, and studies formed the documentary evidence for this analysis.

Funding

The author received no specific funding for this study.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Appendix A. Complete Corpus Inventory

No. || Document || Year || Source/type || Status || Analytic role

1	Education Strategic Plan 2018–2030	2018	Ministry of Education policy	Core	National goals, implementation, positive discipline and teacher development
2	National Pre-Tertiary Education Curriculum Framework	2018	NaCCA curriculum framework	Core	Values, citizenship, pedagogy, classroom climate and assessment
3	National Teachers' Standards for Ghana	2017	NTC professional standards	Core	Professional values, ethical code, role modelling and community practice
4	GES Teachers' Code of Conduct	2008	GES professional code	Core	Definition of conduct, learner protection, adult misconduct and assessment ethics
5	Code of Conduct for Students in Pre-Tertiary Education	2024	GES national student code	Core	Student expectations, offences, sanctions, counselling and accountability
6	Student Code of Conduct	n.d.	Mozano SHS school code	Core	School-level illustration of offence-and-sanction translation

1	Education Strategic Plan 2018–2030	2018	Ministry of Education policy	Core	National goals, implementation, positive discipline and teacher development
7	A Survey of Examination Malpractice in WASSCE in the Central Region of Ghana	2024	Yeboah; journal study	Core	Regional perceptions, witnessing rates, and actors implicated in malpractice
8	Indiscipline in Senior High Schools in Techiman North District, Ghana	2024	Yelewonah; MPhil thesis	Core	District-specific forms, associated factors, and reported effects
9	Discipline at a Crossroads	2026	Fermah and Cai; journal study	Core	Multi-school mixed-methods evidence and reform proposals, interpreted with design cautions
10	2024 Chief Examiners' Reports—Ghana	2024	WAEC report	Contextual	Assessment and instructional context; not direct values/prevalence evidence
11	2025 Chief Examiners' Reports—Ghana	2025	WAEC report	Contextual	Assessment and instructional context; not direct values/prevalence evidence
12	Examination Malpractice in Ghana: The Role of Teachers and Stakeholders	2025	Modern Ghana commentary	Contextual	Illustrative public commentary only; not used for strong claims
13	WAEC Set to Release Withheld Results, Punishes Offenders	2022	AACRAO/Premium Times news item concerning Nigeria	Contextual	Regional news context only; not treated as Ghanaian evidence