

Sustainability in Higher Education Institutions: Policy Frontiers and Dynamics in Ghanaian Public Universities

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Abstract

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can play a vital role in societal sustainability transformations. Many universities worldwide are making efforts at varying scales to embed sustainability into their institutional activities through policy initiatives. While research on sustainability in higher education (SHE) policy is still in its early stages, the existing studies are largely dominated by Western contexts with a very limited number of studies focusing on the unique context of higher education institutions in African regions. This study, therefore, explores how public universities in Ghana, a Sub-Saharan African country, are incorporating sustainability into their policies across various domains of institutional activity, including education (teaching and learning), research, campus operations and facilities, governance, and community engagement. The research adopts a multi-site case study approach to assess the universities' orientations to sustainability and the existing sustainability policies. The study involves a combination of policy content analysis and interviews with key university officials to provide an in-depth understanding of the SHE policy situation, including sustainability policy development processes, the actors, and the drivers and barriers of SHE policies in Ghana. The research also examines how sustainability policies in Ghana are shaped by Indigenous knowledge and global programs and frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals. Being the first SHE policy research for Ghanaian universities, this study provides an opportunity for understanding the unique situation for the country and other similar contexts to inform global, national and local sustainability policy decisions and actions.