EXAMINING EXEMPLAR ELEMENTS OF SELECTED MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS' ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS BASED EVIDENCE

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: This study examined the comprehensiveness and sufficiency of selected Malaysian higher education institutions' academic integrity (AI) policies. The investigation of eight public and private universities' AI policies was guided by the five core elements of the exemplar AI policy framework developed by Bretag, Mahmud, Wallace, Walker, James, Green, East, McGowan and Partridge (2011).

Methodology: This qualitative research focused on document analysis of purposively selected eight AI policies. The five core elements that guided the document analysis are access, approach, responsibility, detail and support. The data collected from document analysis was analysed via NVivo 11 software.

Findings: Public universities are educative-based, and private universities practice a punitive approach. All universities provide access to the AI documents to the university community and public, implement ad hoc basis education, awareness campaigns and modules to support the AI agenda and encourage responsibility among the staff and students to curb academic dishonesty. As for details, universities differ in terms of the amount and type of information provided in the documents.

Contributions: The study's findings provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening institutional policies and advocate for a standardised national AI policy to ensure consistency and academic rigour.

Keywords: Academic integrity policy, core elements of exemplar, document analysis, Malaysian higher education institutions.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Academic integrity, which is built on six core values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and bravery (International Centre for Academic Integrity, 2014), is part of the higher education agenda worldwide, as well as the Malaysian agenda. East and Donnelly (2012) argue the core of academic integrity is honesty. On the other hand, Shephard et al. (2015) indicate some alternative academic integrity core values based on discipline and other interpretation variances. One of universities core agenda is to achieve academic excellence by allowing students to grow and develop into critical-thinking, independent individuals. In this context, academic integrity is also part of the teaching and learning agenda (Gallant, 2008). However, it is open to plagiarism, cheating, and fabrication breaches as indicated by Pavela (1997). Plagiarism as a breach in terms of academic dishonesty is prevalent in higher education (Wilkinson, 2009).

Deterrence of plagiarism at tertiary level essentially requires an academic integrity policy with detailed information in terms of concept, types, and deterrence mechanism. An academic integrity policy created by universities provides principle of actions that the university has adopted or proposed in order to achieve integrity. Such a policy provides a direction that is consistent with the rules and objectives that the university wishes to achieve. Bretag et al. (2014) highlighted that the policies are governed by the purpose of improving shared values with all stakeholders through genuine and coherent commitment. As such, it relates to how rules will be applied, as opposed to rules themselves, which are clear instructions for the university to follow. The policy must also include information on avoiding plagiarism and promoting good academic integrity practices in academia.

Based on the five core elements of the exemplar academic integrity policy framework developed by Bretag et al. (2011), this study examined the comprehensiveness and sufficiency of academic integrity policies on plagiarism detection and prevention among selected public and private universities in Malaysia. Such an endeavour is considered effective in guiding the continual improvement of academic integrity policies, and relevant stakeholders' continuous engagement with good academic integrity practices. The research then provided recommendations for the academic integrity policies in terms of comprehensiveness and sufficiency. Given the findings, the recommendations can be used to improve the Malaysian tertiary institutions' academic integrity policies against plagiarism.

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Current Policies on Plagiarism

Pavela (1997) defines plagiarism as using other's ideas, words or statements without permission. In support of Pavela, researchers Wijaya and Gruber (2018) emphasise that deliberately or intentionally obtaining recognition for another party's work without acknowledgment is also considered as plagiarism. Sutherland-Smith (2011) argue that universities define this act of dishonesty and misconduct as a person misappropriating words, ideas, artwork, or computer programmes from another person or source. Different experts such as Howard (2002), Gullifer and Tyson (2014) and Adam et al. (2017) indicate that there is no standard definition of plagiarism with vast inconsistencies and many university policies regard plagiarism as something fixed and absolute. Mahmud and Bretag (2013a) discovered inconsistent definitions of research misconduct in their study of Australian university policies, as well as a lack of adequate detail and support. As a result, an appropriate academic integrity framework such as the framework developed by Bretag et al. (2011) offers an opportunity to provide a comprehensive scope of plagiarism, eliminating the problem of generalising plagiarism and diminishing the need to identify a universal definition as it occurs in various socio-cultural contexts, as indicated by Gullifer and Tyson (2014).

Existing institutional policies are developed to address academic dishonesty issues, especially plagiarism (East, 2010), and policy adherence is emphasised to avoid plagiarism (Hutchings, 2014; Roig, 2001). These low-tolerance policies may be used to hold students accountable for cheating, and failing to do so will result in academic integrity breaches at the institutions (Galloway, 2012; McCabe et al., 2012). Scholars have stated that understanding the core academic integrity is crucial, while the use of codes of conduct and technology to prevent plagiarism has not achieved fruitful success (Lang, 2013; McCabe et al., 2012). Despite

establishing integrity policies that adopt a punitive stance, surveys in various countries have revealed that student support and understanding of the policies are low (Glendinning, 2014). In the context of technology, Bradley (2011) stated that the use of plagiarism detection software that identifies students guilty of plagiarism and promotes a culture of distrust that undermines the teaching and learning process, despite the fact that many students may be unaware of academic integrity violating behaviours (Cronan et al., 2018).

Plagiarism avoidance requires students to understand academic integrity and ensure the integrity in their academic work (Kaposi & Dell, 2012). However, Li and Casanave (2012), Manjet (2015), Mustapha et al. (2017) Mohamed et al. (2018) and Zejno (2018) found that, despite the students' understanding of the university's plagiarism policy, their writing featured patch writing and inappropriate citations. Plagiarism is unavoidable when students are exposed to academic discourse, and a non-comprehensive policy will cause distress to those learning to write academically as indicated by Bell (2018).

2.2 Students and Staff

One of the contributing factors of plagiarism is the lack of knowledge among students. Even though the policies are readily available, students may be unable to read and understand its contents (O'Regan, 2006; Power, 2009). According to Gullifer and Tyson (2014), the inaccessibility of information on academic integrity is the consequence of not reading and understanding a policy document, which leads to ignorance about plagiarism-related behaviours. This is evident as Hutton (2006), Power (2009), Dawson and Overfield (2006) and Bradley (2011) indicated students' ease of formulating a definition of plagiarism, but difficulties in detecting plagiarism in a text. Students may also feel unjustified due to the staff's unfairness, and may feel increasingly free to cheat (Graham et al., 1994). As a result of this lack of knowledge, students will be unaware of and under-prepared for their institution's requirements (Mahmud & Bretag, 2013b).

Aluede et al. (2006) asserted that academic staff are the most critical people on campus when it comes to preventing academic dishonesty. Universities rely on academic staff to determine and act against plagiarism. However, the majority of staff are not motivated by the same drive, partly due to the existing systems, place, time, and administrative obstacles that may hinder staff from pursuing this objective (Stuhmcke et al., 2016). There is already evidence of academic staff behaving unethically (Braxton et al., 2011). The reason being university staff may have differing opinions on integrity, which may affect the implementation of institutional academic integrity policies (Shephard et al., 2015). According to Adam et al. (2017), professors

who evaluated their students' work either disregarded plagiarism or labelled material as plagiarised despite having no intention. Even though the clues were apparent, they may overlook academic integrity breaches that were not detected by the detection software (Bradley, 2011). Therefore, students are not the only ones at fault for academic misconduct.

2.3 An Educational Approach to Integrity

Cronan et al. (2018) argued that prior unethical behaviours are significant predictors of future unethical behaviours, and students who engage in academic dishonesty will eventually advocate for it in the workplace. Rather than depending mainly on detection and punishment, an educative-focused policy is certain to have a greater impact on enhancing students' understanding of academic misconduct. Many researchers call for an educative approach (Howard, 2002; Gullifer & Tyson, 2010; Bretag et al., 2011) that employs a double strategy in educating about academic integrity. This involves education strategies alongside detection and punishment (Gullifer & Tyson, 2014) to provide a more educationally based framework of plagiarism with a positive educational experience (Elander et al., 2010). Certain scholars, such as Tatum and Schwartz (2017), advocate the application of strategies to encourage student integrity rather than punitive policing strategies to detect student cheaters. This involves educating faculty and students, as well as imposing stricter academic integrity policies. Shephard et al. (2015) also suggested that universities must specify what is being taught, and that there is a difference between teaching students how or what to think, and teaching them how to apply rules and procedures. A good policy should not only include a list of offences and penalties, but it should also distinguish between proper and improper practises and leave no room for doubt or discrepancies (Weber-Wulff, 2014). The university policy should address the prevalent factors that may affect the incidence of inadvertent plagiarism among students (Gullifer & Tyson, 2014).

Researchers have emphasised the need of academic integrity education in terms of introducing plagiarism policies to inform students about the various types of plagiarism that one might commit consciously or unconsciously, and the ways to overcome those instances. According to Levine and Pazdernik (2018), this will assist students, who do not have a complete understanding of plagiarism. Previously, Stabingis et al. (2014) discovered that university students prefer advice and guidance on academic dishonesty avoidance in their academic writing. This preference for guidance includes access to clear policies and penalties for academic dishonesty. Beasley (2014) reported that students who breached academic integrity would refrain from doing so, if they were aware of the policy and definition of

cheating. As such, helping students understand that academic honesty is key to achieving academic integrity, and this can be done by providing students guidance (Tatum & Schwartz, 2017). James et al. (2002) articulated the importance of enforcing a greater understanding of the concept of plagiarism in terms of good practises, such as knowledge of the practical implications in practise, knowledge of correct citation and referencing conventions, and addressing students' limited academic skills (i.e. critical analysis, thesis construction, paraphrasing). The institution will display a culture of academic integrity by establishing clear expectations concerning integrity, exhibiting trust and respect for students, and addressing cheating consistently and fairly (Stabingis et al., 2014).

Students learn ethical guidelines and codes of academic integrity from their academic advisors, thus university staff must be trained to set a good example (Alfredo & Hart, 2011). According to Bradley (2011), most instructors have years of experience in academic discourse through education, absorbing norms in courses, receiving instructor feedback on assignments, reading extensively in their area of expertise, and participating in academic discourse. Academic integrity practises are the outcome of their observations of how other teachers and researchers behave (Fisher et al., 2009; Gray & Jordan, 2012). A study by Mahmud and Bretag (2015) found that students are more likely to be satisfied if the university staff receives integrity training and model ethical behaviour. By redefining the best practises for the faculty and staff to instill an academic integrity culture (Wright et al., 2018), the supervisor-postgraduate research student relationship will be strengthened as a mechanism for improving the support, training, and mentoring of novice academics (Mahmud & Bretag, 2013b). Only then can academic integrity policy and practise be aligned (Bretag et al., 2011; East, 2009).

As has indicated by Tran et al. (2022), in terms of ensuring the application of policy, the institution should move beyond merely policing policies or focusing on policing adherence to policies. Institutions should take more educative approach to support student learning and maximize academic integrity-oriented learning experience. At the same time, Kier and Ives (2022) and Packalen and Rowbotham (2022) also concurred with Tran et al. (2022) that a balanced strategy for academic integrity is obtainable via policy, procedures, compliance and commitment and finally, resources. Failing to balance is considered as weakening overall academic integrity. To ensure success of a policy, collaboration and shared responsibility amongst all stakeholders such as faculty and students. Further support on an educative approach academic integrity approach is proposed by Verhoef et al. (2022) via the establishment of Community of Practice for Academic Integrity (CoPAI). Such an establishment can enhance academic integrity holistically at higher education institutions via

valorisation institutional aspects, the engagement and empowerment of lecturers, and the engagement and empowerment of students.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample

The samples for this study are selected based on the QS Asian University Rankings 2021 by Quacquarelli Symonds, and SETARA-2019 by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education. Four Malaysian public universities with Research University status were selected. Four Malaysian private universities were selected (refer to Table 1). According to the QS Asian University Rankings 2021, the four public universities were ranked from 35th to 9th placing. The private universities were ranked from 190th to 89th placing. The universities are chosen based on these lists as these rankings are world's most popular university ranking systems.

The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (2018) designed SETARA-2017 to assist universities in developing strong fundamentals in teaching, research, and service delivery through appropriate assessment and evaluation metrics. SETARA list divides the Malaysia's tertiary institutions into three categories: (1) Mature University, (2) Emerging University, and (3) University College, and the ranking is based on a scale of 2 (Satisfactory) to 6 Star (Outstanding). The samples used for this study are 6 Star: Outstanding Mature Universities (Four selected public universities), and 5 Star: Excellent Emerging Universities (Four selected private universities).

Table 1: List of public and private universities

Public University	Private University
University A	University E
University B	University F
University C	University G
University D	University H

3.2 Procedure

This study's methodological approach is a qualitative approach that incorporates document analysis. One limitation of document analysis was obtaining the policy from each institution as some documents were not available on the university's official website. Nevertheless, the

policies were acquired through contact with the academic integrity officers, and they were also verified, as some documents were in the form of handbooks, guidelines, rules and regulations. The policies were evaluated using the five core elements of exemplar academic integrity policy framework by Bretag et al. (2011). The five core elements are explained below:

(1) Access

The policy is easy to locate, simple to understand, well written, clear, and concise. The policy uses comprehensible language, logical headings, links to relevant resources, and it is downloadable as an easy-to-print-and-read document (Bretag et al., 2011).

(2) Approach

Academic integrity is viewed as an educational process and appears in the introductory material to provide a context for the policy. There is a clear statement of purpose and values, as well as an institutional commitment to academic integrity that is genuine and coherent throughout all aspects of the policy (Bretag et al., 2011).

(3) Responsibility

The policy has a clear outline of responsibilities for all relevant stakeholders, including university management, academic and professional staff, and students (Bretag et al., 2011).

(4) Detail

The best policy incorporates simple flow charts to demonstrate how the policy is implemented in practise. The processes are detailed, with a clear list of objective outcomes, and the contextual factors relevant to academic integrity breach decisions are outlined. The policy describes in detail a range of academic integrity breaches and explains those breaches using simple classifications or levels of severity. Details on how breaches are identified (for instance, by using text-matching software) are provided. In relation to reporting, recording, confidentiality, and the appeals process, extensive but not excessive detail is provided (Bretag et al., 2011).

(5) Support

Systems for implementing the academic integrity policy are in place, including procedures, resources, modules, training, seminars, and professional development activities to enhance staff and student awareness and understanding of the policy. Proactive measures to educate

students about academic writing and referencing conventions, as well as practical strategies to prevent academic integrity breaches. A policy, no matter how clearly defined, will not be implemented unless it is backed up with long-term, sustainable, and realistic resources (Bretag et al., 2011).

NVivo 11, a qualitative data analysis software, was used to analyse data retrieved from the documents. The data is combined, familiarised, and used to generate initial codes, search and review themes, define and name themes, and produce the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The necessary themes were identified and categorised under each exemplar. The interpretation of data is then discussed in order to identify academic integrity policies on plagiarism, and recommendations are provided to improve the academic integrity policies of the universities.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the academic integrity documents analysis of the eight universities, identified with pseudonyms, are discussed below.

University A

The policy of University A is easily accessible. There are two plagiarism policies: dated 2013 and 2017. The latter was used for the purpose of this research. In addition, the document is accessible on the university's Institute of Postgraduate Studies (IPS) website. Despite the presence of legal and technical terminology, the policy includes a Glossary of Definitions to aid comprehension and make the policy easy to read. The policy clear, concise, and well written, with well-structured sections that are clearly differentiated. The policy is written in both English and Malay language (the national and official language of Malaysia), but in the event of any discrepancies, the Malay version will be adopted. The policy's headings are logical since the contents correspond to the appropriate heading, and each section is divided into sub-headings. The policy lists other supporting documents to complement it although without links to relevant sources as the document is comprehensive.

The policy adopts an educational approach. The terms 'academic integrity' and 'plagiarism' are defined at the beginning of the policy. Furthermore, the policy employs the terms *academic integrity, good academic practise*, and *educational or educative approach* to emphasise the policy's role as an educational medium for preserving academic integrity. However, as it is a policy, it also includes a list of penalties for academic integrity violations. For example, University A specifies that if the level of plagiarism is considered to be higher

than Level Two, the Thesis Examination Panel has the authority to suspend the viva voce session and notify the student of the panel's decision. Next, the policy uses objective language that promotes academic integrity by using words such as *guide, instil, help, support*, and *assist*. This demonstrates that the university wants to guide students in avoiding plagiarism. It influences policy content by taking an educative approach, as it prioritises academic integrity, good academic practises, fairness, and natural justice. Moreover, according to University A, records of any plagiarism cases are kept for monitoring purposes, and the records are used to detect repeat offenders. Students' records will be retained in the register for 20 years, while staff records will be maintained for the duration of their service and for a minimum of 20 years after their service at the university has ended.

University A states that academic integrity is the responsibility of both faculty and students. Every stakeholder in the university has a role to play in ensuring academic integrity. In addition, a table is provided to show the authorities involved in the policy's design, implementation, and administration. The technique for detecting academic misconduct cases explains how each department is involved and how they collaborate to discover any academic integrity breaches, but it does not incorporate social levels, such as family and friends, to assist them if there is any academic misconduct.

In terms of the detail, the policy defines 'plagiarism' as "the act of presenting, quoting, copying, paraphrasing, or passing of ideas, images, processes, works, data, own words or those of other people or sources without proper acknowledgement, reference, or quotation to the original source(s)" (University A, 2017), and includes specific examples of plagiarism. The policy also includes a matrix table displaying the levels of plagiarism, ranging from Level One to Level Four, with fines imposed dependent on the level of plagiarism committed. The severity of plagiarism is also determined by the person's motivation, whether intentional or unintentional. In addition, the policy comprises two main segments: procedures for dealing with allegations of plagiarism misconduct in general, and procedures for dealing with allegations of plagiarism misconduct on Masters or PhD thesis by Research Mode. The flowcharts explain the process of academic integrity breach detection and decision-making. The *Procedure* section thoroughly explains the reporting, recording, and confidentiality of reported plagiarism. The university mentions using a detection tool as a guide to identify any cases of plagiarism; however, the software's identity is not disclosed. Contextual factors that are considered in determining academic misconduct include degrees of similarity, levels of plagiarism, significance, intention or motivation, mitigating factors, and academic conventions within the relevant discipline. This policy applies to all students at all levels, as well as

university staff, including those in non-academic positions, contracts, post-doctoral degrees, and visiting scholars.

In terms of the policy's support for staff and students, University A states that there is a centre responsible for formulating academic integrity awareness and education programmes. The centre offers academic integrity courses, seminars, workshops, guidebooks, websites, publicity materials, and periodic announcements as part of its training and awareness programmes. The centre is committed to preventing plagiarism through educational measures, in order to preserve academic integrity at the university.

University B

The policy is user-friendly and it is easy to locate, download, and print. The policy is also available on the university's Institute of Graduate Studies' website. Three documents were obtained that are two handbooks for postgraduate students and staff, as well as a document detailing the plagiarism rules. The handbooks are in English, but the plagiarism rules are available in both English and Malay. Despite this, the documents are simple to read. Even though the documents present the information in a clear and concise manner, the staff handbook contains more complex and compound sentence structure. It also contains some legal and technical terminology. The fact that the postgraduate manual is written in the second-person narrative is intriguing. The purpose of employing second-person narration is to encourage students to avoid plagiarism. The staff handbook contains a list of references that were helpful in creating the policy, while the postgraduate handbook includes supporting documents in the *Appendix* section.

In regards to the approach used to counter the problem of plagiarism, a mixed approach is used in the policies. For the postgraduate handbook, the university mentions academic integrity and even provide the students with the methods on how to cite resources. The methods are put into one section, which is the *Citation Methodology*. This shows that the postgraduate handbook uses an educative approach. On the other hand, the staff handbook uses a punitive approach where it provides the staff with guidelines on how to handle plagiarism cases among students, measures taken to combat the cases and the list of penalties for breaches of academic integrity which includes expulsion from the university. This is included in the staff handbook to maintain the reputation of the university. Other differences that can be found between the staff and postgraduate handbook are the mention of the term 'academic integrity'. In the postgraduate handbook, academic integrity and plagiarism are mentioned in the *Introduction* section and the language used is persuasive, due to the second-person narrative that is brought

into the handbook. Academic integrity is not mentioned in the staff handbook, and the language used is more objective. The approach adopted to preserve academic integrity influences the policy's substance, as the postgraduate handbook values academic integrity, correct research conduct, and academic excellence, whilst the staff handbook focuses on measures, detection, and procedures. The records of any breach of academic integrity are not retained because, according to the document analysis, there is no mention of the word 'record' in any of the documents.

To ensure the university's reputation, all students and staff at University B are responsible for maintaining academic integrity. The roles and responsibilities of students and staff are described in detail in the staff handbook. As there is no specific incorporation specialising in detecting academic integrity breaches, every case of academic integrity breach will be handled at the school or faculty level. The approach is rather fixed, as the postgraduate handbook briefly mentions academic integrity at the beginning, before focusing on 'telling' the student the correct and incorrect citation methods. Meanwhile, the university emphasises on the measures, detection, and procedures for academic misconduct in the staff handbook.

For the detail of the documents, there is an extensive list in the Appendix section of the postgraduate handbook, where the handbook provides examples of plagiarism offences and adds the methodology for doing in-text citations and references for a reference list. In the staff handbook, the university has included methods for verifying students' work for plagiarism, such as the programme *Turnitin*, Google Search, peer reviews, questioning the students' work, and referencing to the original source. The level of severity is explained in the staff handbook, which is adapted from the policy of Curtin University of Technology, and defines the extent of plagiarism as a small or minor portion, parts of work, and almost or all of the work. The penalties are clearly defined, but the severity of punishment in relation to the extent of plagiarism is subjective, allowing the faculty to determine the appropriate penalty for the offences committed. The staff handbook only mentions the awarding of "zero marks". The staff handbook also provides a flowchart that illustrates the process of academic integrity breach detection and decision-making. The university does not describe contextual factors relevant to academic integrity breach decisions. The procedure of the staff handbook has details on reporting, but recording and confidentiality are not mentioned in any of the documents provided. The postgraduate handbook pertains only to postgraduate students, whereas the staff handbook applies to all students in the university.

Finally, with regards to support, the authors of all documents are the academic staff from a particular faculty of the university. The resources provided to students and staff are

used to achieve academic integrity, and the academic staff are expected to carry out the measures outlined in the policy to prevent plagiarism among students, such as briefing students on plagiarism and offering courses on academic writing and plagiarism.

University C

There are three documents available for accessing the plagiarism policy: a guideline, research misconduct, and rules. Accessibility is a constrain because the guideline and rules are only available through contact with the university's staff. However, the research misconduct can be accessed through a link provided by the university. Since the retrieved documents are in Malay, students and staff who do not understand Malay will struggle to comprehend them. Regardless, the documents present the information in a clear and concise manner. Despite the fact that the documents contain legal and technical terminology, the guideline and research misconduct are easier to understand than the rules, because the two documents do not contain complex and compound sentence structures. To a certain extent, the documents are well written, as the guideline contains an *Introduction* and *Procedure* section, while the research misconduct and rules are not divided into sections.

In terms of policy approach, the documents adopt a punitive approach by detailing the detection procedure for cases of plagiarism and the types of punishment. For instance, according to the guideline, when a student is found guilty of plagiarism by the investigating committee and the offence is minor, his or her oral examination is suspended, and he or she is required to resubmit their thesis after it has been corrected. If the severity of the plagiarism is major, a Proceeding Disciplinary Tribunal will be established to hear the case and render a decision. The rules and research misconduct do not reference academic integrity or the guideline, but they do mention that plagiarism will jeopardise the university's integrity. The language used in the documents is objective, and any plagiarism cases are retained in accordance with the guideline, although the purpose is not indicated.

For the responsibility element, the university states that all staff and students are responsible for ensuring academic integrity at the university. Unfortunately, there is no affiliation between the departments in the university, as it operates at the faculty level in detecting academic integrity breaches. The university employs an approach that is focused on procedure, detection, and punishment. For example, in the research misconduct section, the university explains the characteristics of research misconduct, as well as the procedures that must be followed in order to handle a research misconduct case.

The documents define and provide examples of plagiarism for the detail aspect. Additionally, the documents classify plagiarism into three levels: almost all or whole, a part of half, and small or minor plagiarism. The policy provides little information on how breaches are identified, instead mentioning suspected cases of plagiarism in the form of a report and evidence. The penalties are specified in the documents, and they range from warning and resubmission of the thesis, to expulsion from the university, depending on the severity of the case. There is one exception where the research misconduct stipulates that genuine errors and differences of opinion are not deemed as plagiarism. The guideline includes one flowchart that illustrates the process of academic integrity breach detection and decision-making. The guideline and research misconduct apply to postgraduate students, while the rules apply to all students. However, none of the documents apply to the staff.

Finally, there is no mention of the university's specific system for dealing with academic integrity breaches in terms of support. The university merely outlines what plagiarism is and what actions can be taken if a student commits plagiarism in the university.

University D

Regarding the first element, access, the document is acquired through a poster shared by the university. The document is in the form of rules that can be downloaded and printed from their website. The rules are available in English and Malay, making it easier for international students and staff to understand the document in English. The rules are available in English and Malay, making it easier for foreign students and staff to understand the document in English. It also incorporates a few legal and technical terms. The document is not well written because there is not much information in the policy, but it does present the point well. *Plagiarism* and *Misconduct* are two logical headings that are related in the document. Nevertheless, the rules make no mention of supporting documents.

For the next element, approach, University D adopts a punitive approach in the rules, as the definition of plagiarism and the procedure for detecting plagiarism are explained in the document. This demonstrates that the university places a greater emphasis on definition and procedure. Moreover, the language used in the rules is objective. There is no mention of the word 'record' in the rules, indicating that they do not keep any records or cases of academic integrity breach.

In terms of responsibility, the students and staff are responsible in maintaining academic integrity at the university. However, their roles and responsibilities are not fully specified. Furthermore, the rules do not indicate how each department is involved in plagiarism cases;

therefore, dealing with academic misconducts will be difficult if there is no committee dedicated to detecting academic integrity breaches.

For the detail element, the rules do specify what constitutes plagiarism and provides examples of the acts. However, the severity or level of plagiarism is not indicated, and no information is provided on how breaches are identified at the university. Furthermore, neither the procedure for detecting plagiarism nor the penalties or outcomes of plagiarism cases are explained in the rules. The details on how to report academic integrity breaches are provided, but the recording and confidentiality of the breaches are not. Nevertheless, the rules apply to all university students and staff. In terms of support, the rules make no mention of resources, seminars, or modules to enhance academic integrity at the university.

University E

On the subject of access, three documents were obtained: Academic Integrity Policy, Academic Integrity Procedure, and Report on Academic Misconduct, with the third document containing forms to be filled out when an academic integrity breach is detected. The documents are difficult to locate and can only be retrieved through the university's intranet. The documents are well structured, and the content corresponds to the logical sections. The documents also present the points in a clear and concise manner. Although the policy contains several legal and technical terms, it also includes a list of definitions. The documents do not provide links to relevant resources, as they are sufficiently comprehensive. However, other supporting documents are mentioned with reference codes, while related policies are indicated.

In terms of the university's approach, they use an educative approach, in which they educate students on how to maintain academic integrity in their work. Academic integrity, honesty, and respect for students and staff are all highlighted in the policy. The policy emphasises the process of academic integrity rather than the procedure because the policy values academic integrity, intellectual reputation, and intellectual honesty. However, as this is a policy, there are penalties for breaches of academic integrity, as stated in the procedure document. There is a table for recording plagiarism cases that shows the type of records, medium, responsibility, location, and retention period of those records. Nevertheless, the reason for keeping the records is not mentioned.

In terms of responsibility, the university adopts a unique approach in that not only students and staff are held accountable for maintaining academic integrity, but family members are also expected to assist the university in the event of academic misconduct. The university notes in the *Investigation* section of the procedural document that family members can be called

upon to assist the Academic Integrity Officer (AIO) with the breaches. The approach is somehow embedded in the policy because it is predicated on academic integrity. However, the integrity and educative elements are not reiterated in the policy.

For the following element, detail, the policy defines academic integrity as "a pursuit of knowledge through a commitment to honesty and respect" (University E, 2017), as well as describing and providing examples of plagiarism. University E uses the software, *Turnitin*, to detect plagiarism, and academic judgement to determine the extent of plagiarism. However, evaluating plagiarism is subjective because it is dependent on the *Turnitin* Originality report and a similarity index provided by the university. The penalties are clearly indicated in the procedure document, and they include receiving zero marks in the assessments, failing the module, and being expelled from the university. However, the severity of punishment in relation to the extent of plagiarism is not indicated, making it subjective to determine the appropriate penalty for the plagiarism committed. A flowchart is included in the procedure document to illustrate the processes of academic misconduct and how decisions are made during the ordeal, which are handled by the AIO and the Student Disciplinary Committee (SDC). When determining the severity of a plagiarism case, the AIO can consider contextual factors such as the seriousness of the misconduct, the extent of the offence, the scope of the act, the value of assessment, and coercion, as well as the student's experience at the university, awareness, academic level, and history. The university's policy includes details on reporting, recording, and maintaining the confidentiality of reported plagiarism. The policy document applies to all students at the university, whereas staff academic integrity policies are specified in the university's research policy.

In terms of students and staff support, the university provides resources in the form of academic integrity education, educative processes, orientation sessions, and modules. However, the policy does not explain how the resources provided help to maintain academic integrity at the university. In addition, the resources provided are, to a certain extent, proactive measures to raise awareness and educate students on plagiarism.

University F

University F's policy features ease of access, downloading capability, and printability for students and staff to read. The policy is written in the second person narrative, in the form of a handbook, and contains some legal and technical terms. The handbook is well written, with clearly outlined sections that explain the points concisely using some complex and compound

sentence structures. However, the handbook makes no reference of any supporting documents that assist them in writing the document.

In terms of approach, the university employs a punitive approach, emphasising more on procedures for detecting plagiarism cases and penalties when a student commits academic dishonesty. The handbook outlines the procedure and a list of penalties for academic integrity breaches, which include a failing grade, assignment resubmission, warning letters, and semester suspension. This shows that the university's focus is on procedures and penalties. The handbook's language is objective, and it indicates that records of plagiarism cases are kept, but there is no mention of the purpose for this in the policy.

For the responsibility element, University F asserts that it is the responsibility of the students and staff to maintain academic integrity. The procedure explains each department's role in investigating plagiarism cases; nevertheless, issues are only handled at the faculty level. Furthermore, there is no social involvement, such as parents and friends, to assist the university in combating plagiarism.

In terms of the detail aspect, the handbook classifies the types of plagiarism, which are course work components, major project or thesis or dissertation, and group works. The penalties for committing plagiarism in these categories include a Fail grade or a zero mark for any component, as well as a stern warning letter from the Dean of the Faculty. The handbook also divides plagiarism into four categories: First, Second, Third and Beyond the Third Time. The penalties are clearly mentioned in these categories based on the level of plagiarism committed by the students. Even though the handbook does not explicitly mention the use of any software to detect plagiarism, it does include a similarity index to determine the extent of plagiarism committed by a student. The procedure for handling plagiarism cases is comprehensive and detailed, but there is no flowchart to explain the plagiarism decision-making systems. The handbook contains details on reporting and recording plagiarism cases, but there is no mention of confidentiality. In addition, the university defines 'collusion' in the handbook as 'making arrangements with another student to cheat'. This suggests that collusion can be a factor for a student to commit plagiarism. The policy only applies to the university students.

In terms of university support, they take a proactive approach to combating plagiarism. The handbook mentions the teaching of proper citation, although the purpose is not explained. The university also mentions plagiarism moderation, procedures, and soft counselling by higher authorities in the faculty to teach the proper citations to the students. However, the students are expected to follow the rules, in order to avoid being penalised for plagiarism.

University G

For the first element, access, the document is in the form of a handbook that can be obtained through the university's website. Despite the presence of legal and technical terms in the handbook, the points presented are clear and concise. The handbook contains only two sections: *Plagiarism* and *Plagiarism Checking*. The document does not provide any links to relevant resources, although it does reference the Copyright Act of 1987 as a supporting document.

In terms of approach, the university takes a punitive approach to maintaining academic integrity. The handbook gives more emphasis on definition and detection, as they define plagiarism at the beginning of the handbook and explain how plagiarism is detected in the document. In addition to this, there is no mention of keeping a record of plagiarism cases for evaluation.

Postgraduate candidates, supervisors, and the University are responsible for preventing plagiarism cases. The handbook explains each party's roles and responsibilities, in order to maintain academic integrity at the university. However, as it operates at the faculty level, there is no collaboration among the departments involved.

In terms of the handbook's detail aspect, it does not mention the levels of plagiarism. On the other hand, the policy stipulates that a 10% similarity index is the threshold for any potential plagiarism. This means that a plagiarism case is filed when a postgraduate student reaches a certain percentage on the similarity index. In addition, the handbook states that they will use a plagiarism checking software that is approved by the university. However, the process of detecting plagiarism is not specified in the handbook, and there is no list of outcomes for the types and severity of plagiarism, as well as the penalties that a student can face if it is proven that they have committed plagiarism. The handbook does not state the recording, and retaining of plagiarism cases' record confidential. This handbook is solely applicable for postgraduate students.

In terms of University G's support, the handbook makes no mention of any resources that discuss plagiarism prevention. Rather, the handbook is a resource that instructs candidates on how to avoid plagiarism, and it is expected to be used as a guide to do so.

University H

In relation to access to University H's policy, the policy is obtained through e-mail contact with a relevant university staff. The staff retrieved the policy from the university intranet. As a result, the policy is difficult to locate. There are two documents obtained: a rule and a code of

conduct. Despite the use of some legal and technical terms, the code of conduct includes a list of definitions, making the policy easy to read. Both documents are well written, with the code of conduct containing thorough details written in the document. Even though the rule is easier to read than the code of conduct, the points in both documents present the ideas clearly and use logical headings to match the content provided in the policy. The documents contain no relevant resources, although the rule acknowledges the Copyright Act 1987 [Act 32] and Section 55 of the Student Code of Conduct Rule as supporting documents in developing the policy.

University H employs punitive approach in the documents, as they outline the disciplinary procedure and penalties for plagiarism committed by a student. Although the rule does not mention academic integrity, the code of conduct does mention integrity in the context of research ethics, which is "a genuine search for knowledge, adherence to recognised principles of research conduct, honest conduct, and the dissemination and communication of results" (University H, 2011). Another difference between the two documents is that there is no mention of the term 'record' in the rule, while the term is mentioned in the code of conduct. Should any misconduct occur in a research, the university's Scientific and Ethical Review Committee (SERC) will retain records of research activities as evidence. The punitive approach influences the policy to use objective language.

In both documents, the university states that students and staff are responsible for ensuring that research is free of plagiarism. Their roles are clearly outlined, including the SERC's role as the primary authority in determining whether or not there are aspects of plagiarism in a student's research. For the rule document, the procedure explains how each department is involved, but there is no incorporation between the departments; on the other hand, the code of conduct document incorporates the SERC in all decision-making in any plagiarism cases, as it is the main committee in deciding if a student commits plagiarism.

In terms of the detail aspect of the documents, the levels of plagiarism are not mentioned, nor are the details of how breaches of plagiarism are identified in a student's research. However, the details of the penalties are specified, which include amendments of the plagiarised part, deduction of marks, and issuance of an F Grade for the course concerned. The procedure for detecting plagiarism is comprehensive and written in detail, but there is no flowchart that illustrates the system so that it can be easily followed and understood. Details on reporting, recording, and confidentiality are not mentioned in the rule, but are included in the code of conduct. There are no contextual factors involved in the decision, as any plagiarism detected is

purely based on evidence. The policies that are given are applied to all students and staff of the university.

University H makes no mention of any system or centre that specialises in detecting academic dishonesty. The documents also make no mention of any measures that can be taken to avoid plagiarism. It can be said that it is the students' responsibility to know how to make proper citations so that their work is not labelled as plagiarised.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Recommendations are needed to improve Malaysian universities' existing academic integrity policies. The recommendations are based on the framework proposed by Bretag et al. (2011). Firstly, access to academic integrity document is of utmost important. Accessibility of document in terms of its location, ease of retrieval and accessibility to students, staff and other stakeholders will make a great impact in showing the commitment of an institution in promoting academic integrity exemplar values. In addition, accessibility in terms of ease of understanding is crucial that the message in the policy is accepted by those concerned.

Next, accessibility also requires that the policy covers all group of people in an institution such as undergraduates, postgraduates, academic staff, non-academic staff, etc. Secondly, approach taken via the policy such as punitive or educative approach influences adoption of academic integrity practices in academic routine. Whether academic integrity is adhered too in fear of punishment or for the purpose of fair play in academia impacts the effectiveness of the policy.

Thirdly, responsibility of each stakeholder affected by the policy should be clearly articulated. Staff, students, non-academic personnel in an organisation are collectively accountable to academic integrity breach. As such, the roles and responsibilities of each category of individual must be clearly presented in the policy. In addition, in the case of breach of academic integrity, the steps to be taken to address it, the responsibilities of individuals at faculty or institution level needs to be précised. Responsibility of those involved in academic issues is also vital to ensure that good and positive academic integrity practices are upheld.

Fourthly, the issue of details is crucial in ensuring the effectiveness and adoption of the policy. Academic integrity related terms such as academic dishonesty, cheating, plagiarism, etc are to be clearly defined in the context of each institution. In addition, standard operating procedures in case of rendering penalties must also be clearly operationalised.

Finally, support is important as it will ensure that there is awareness and knowledge of the existence of an academic integrity policy. Support in terms of dissemination of information

regarding the policy, the content of the policy, staff and student familiarisation with the policy and continuous updating via modules, workshops, announcements, sharing session are key to sustain the existence, acceptability, and effectiveness of academic integrity policy.

Other non Bretag et al. (2011), non-oriented recommendations are firstly, a national level academic integrity policy for higher education institutions in Malaysia to use a guide to create a customised academic integrity policy to suit each higher education institutions' needs as research by Mohd Zain et al. (2021) indicate there are no standard policies for all educational institutions in addressing academic integrity issues. In addition, there should be a course specifically on citation methodology that is compulsory for first-year undergraduate students. This will allow the institutions to have the autonomy to develop their own policies and manage the situations. There should be more initiatives by universities to promote academic integrity, such as training, knowledge sharing, and good practices, including university staff being well trained in knowing the types of plagiarism and other ways academic integrity can be breached, as well as the correct ways.

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