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Unmasking Land Grantors in Ghana's Public Higher Education Institutions Ecosystem for Transparency and Accountability

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Abstract

This article promotes transparency and accountability in Ghana's public higher education institutions' land grants by revealing hidden land grantors and recommending transparent procedures to increase accountability. The technique, findings, and conclusions are all described in this abstract. The study employs a constructivist methodology, a qualitative research approach, and a case study design. It interviews 13 key informants with semi-structured questions, and the records are transcribed, processed, classified, and thematically organized. We gathered data from land tenure agreements, press clippings, land valuation rates, and memorandum-style notes, which we then examined by photocopying and web downloads. For results, the paper suggests improving legal frameworks for Ghanaian PHEIs, establishing land banks for talks, and using Homans' social exchange theory and Adam Smith's rational choice theory to explain land awards. Further study is required to assess the influence of sustainability and resource distribution on the PHEI ecosystem. In conclusion, the study recommends that the three parties engaged in land grants—the Ghanaian government, Nananom/traditional authorities as grantors, and PHEIs as grantees—adopt policies to strengthen legal frameworks. The government might set up land banks for talks, and scholars could apply Homans' social exchange theory and Adam Smith's rational choice theory to explain land allocations in Ghana. More studies are needed to understand the influence of land grant sustainability and resource allocation on the PHEI ecosystem.

Keywords: Land grant, grantors, grantees, landowners, Ghana

Introduction

Land is the most critical production factor in creating and expanding Ghana's PHEI (Asamoah, 2017; Atuahene, 2013). Transparency in land grant ownership is crucial for ensuring fair and sustainable development. (Gyamera, 2023; Adams et al., 2019). Land can be the most critical production factor in developing and expanding Ghana's PHEI (Asamoah, 2017; Atuahene, 2013). Therefore, transparency in land acquisition is crucial for ensuring fair and sustainable development. (Gyamera, 2023; Adams et al., 2019; Yeboah & Shaw, 2013). Ergo/consequently, camouflaged land grantors, who obscure their identities and intentions, pose a significant threat to the accountability and integrity of land grant processes. (Biitir et al., 2020; Adams et al., 2019).

Land grants are the epicenter of construction in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem (Badu et al., 2018). Therefore, without land grants, it would be challenging to expand the existing campuses of PHEI or construct new

ones, given Ghana's current distribution range of land ownership. Seventy-eight percent belong to traditional authorities (Nananom), 20 percent belong to the GoG, and the remaining 2 percent have hybrid ownership (Akaabre, 2023; Vanderpuye et al., 2020; Asenso-Gyambibi, 2019). The government of Ghana (GoG) has 100 percent of Ghana's PHEI established via land grants. The establishment began with the University of Ghana in 1948, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in 1951, the University of Cape Coast in 1962, the University of Education–Winneba in 1992, and the University of Development Studies in 1992. and so on. Therefore, addressing the issue of camouflaged land grantors is crucial to ensure transparency and fairness in allocating and utilizing these public lands in building inclusive societies. (Gyamera, 2023; Biitir & Kuusaana, 2019; Kidido & Lengoiboni, 2019; Adams et al., 2019).

We generated this article from the research on the motives behind land grants for establishing and expanding PHEI in Ghana. The study's inspiration came from the King's warning to chiefs, encroachers, and land poachers not to trespass on the lands of XYZ-I University in 2021 (Kenu, 2021), as well as the authors' curiosity and grit. The absence of empirical research on the aspirations or ambitions that motivate grantors (aka traditional authorities or Nananom) to grant land to create PHEI in Ghana is the foundation for formulating the study's problem statement. To date, no reputable investigations have been conducted by academics into unmasking the true identities of land grantors in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem to ensure transparency and accountability in any high-impact or mainstream journal. The situation/condition is problematic because camouflaged grantors in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem frequently cause protracted and expensive litigation and delays in construction timelines. So, this manuscript aims to look at the identification of camouflaged land grantors in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem to increase transparency and accountability. The manuscript aims to uncover the true land grantors in Ghana's PHEI land grant ecosystem, hoping to increase transparency and accountability in the land-granting ecology.

The primary research question selected to allow for an in-depth analysis of the issue and collection of quality research data from key informants is: What categories of landowners provide land for establishing PHEI in Ghana? The study is noteworthy in several ways. First, it can potentially add to the body of information in the present literature about unmasking land grantors in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem, increasing transparency and accountability. Second, the essay gives essential information on how to develop policies that policymakers may employ when dealing with stakeholder land grants. Third, the research helps to close the gap revealed in the study. Fourth, the document provides a solution to the corruption connected with disguised land grantors. However, land award processes in Ghana are prone to fraud and abuse (Asiama et al. 2018; Mireku et al. 2016). One unpleasant feature that researchers commonly neglected is the land grantors' concealed identities (Miller et al., 2020; Yeboah & Shaw, 2013).

The land grant ecology of Ghana's PHEI includes three actors. They are grantors, grantees, and stakeholders. The grantors are the landowners, the grantees are PHEI, and the stakeholder is the GoG. Land grants are critical to Ghana's PHEI ecosystem because they are a key production factor in tertiary education, a means for developing human skills for development (Tsyhaniuk and Akenten, 2021; Swanzy et al., 2019; Asamoah, 2017). These land grants gave Ghana the legal right to own and utilize land property for various purposes, such as infrastructure development, forest protection, and establishing or expanding PHEI (Dowuona-Hammond, 2019).

To summarize, this essay aims to disclose the true identity of proprietors in land grant transactions for transparency and accountability. Furthermore, the document emphasizes the necessity of revealing the identities of land grantors to ensure openness and accountability. All actors' unmasking seeks to eliminate

dishonest, false, and fraudulent claims, particularly in a land grant environment. This paper includes the following research topics: literature review, gap location, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, triple helix model, research methods, findings, contributions, limits, and conclusions.

The study's literature evaluation brings the topic of identifying land grantors in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem into mainstream academic discourse. We started by studying the literature in the subsections listed below: 1) The context of Ghana's PHEI ecosystem; 2) The importance of land grant transactions; 3) The significance of transparency in land grant transactions; 4) The definition and concept of transparency in the land grant ecosystem; 5) The benefits of transparency in land grant transactions; and 6) The challenges and risks of land grant transparency. A systematic review of the study's literature addresses transparency in land grant transactions, accountability, and sociopolitical challenges associated with masked land grantors. However, we must qualify this literature review with one caveat. Given the lack of scholarly work on the issue, some materials utilized may not be within the ideal five-year timeframe for academic writing.

Materials and methods

This section of the manuscript discusses the materials and methods deployed in the study. It covers the following areas: study location, etiology of the literature, gap/lacuna location, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, the triple helix model, and the research methodology.

Study location

The study was conducted in the middle-belt and northern-belt regions of Ghana.

Sources from the literature

Context of Ghana's PHEIs ecosystem

Ghana's PHEI has evolved throughout many policy regimes and at least five major constitutional eras (Osei Tutu, 2021; Buabeng et al., 2020; Atuahene, 2014). There is no unified legal structure that governs Ghana's PHEI environment. Indigenous peoples observe customary law. This duality legally regulates statutory land problems and transactions (Edwin et al., 2020; Yeboah & Shaw, 2013; Asante, 1965). The nation's top courts recognize the position of chiefs and clan leaders as landowners despite the state owning all mineral resources and allodial title land on behalf of Ghanaians. In reality, this dual land tenure model has enabled unethical property acquisition by powerful parties, sometimes at the expense of underprivileged populations (Adams et al., 2021). In Ghana, public service institutions are frequently given land concessions for land use and development. Land ownership awards encourage instructional expansion and infrastructure development at PHEI institutions (Gyamera, 2018; Lambrecht & Asare, 2015). Furthermore, land is the most common and straightforward type of collateral in the world, providing security of tenure (Maiangwa et al., 2004; Land Reform - Land Settlement and Cooperatives, 200; Feder et al., 1988). Research (Feder & Onchan, 1987; Asenso-Gyambibi et al., 2019; Arruñada & Garoupa, 2005) indicates that investment incentives and financing resources for establishing colleges/universities from investors drive ownership security. Secure land rights are critical for motivating individuals to invest in their properties and increasing agricultural productivity (Asenso-Gyambibi et al., 2019).

Land ownership and guaranteed tenure security are frequently identified issues for Ghana's PHEI ecosystem (Atuahene, 2014). Due to its secure character, the land supports the attention it receives in

Ghana's PHEI ecosystem (Swanzy et al., 2019; Asamoah, 2017; Atuahene, 2013). Land grants are vital in the operation of PHEI in Ghana (Asamoah, 2017). Sometimes, the closest person or family member of the grantors is chosen to possess the land and serve on university boards. The individual might potentially be a government-appointed regulator. These situations frequently result in conflicts of interest and misplaced trust. As a result, researchers should explore the transparency of land grant transactions in Ghana's PHEI alongside the institution's history and ties with the government and regulators (Darteh & Asamoah, 2020; Bingab et al., 2018; Bingab et al., 2016). Thus, enhancing legal systems is crucial to addressing the issue of disguised land grantors (Adams et al., 2019).

The government must update and apply land grant procedures to increase openness, reveal grantor identities, and penalize noncompliance (Owusu-Ansah et al., 2024). Domains of interactions and relationships include (a) government regulators, who share information with institutions about legislative decisions and other significant developments, and (b) institutions, which must seek land grants from the government and donor agencies by government regulations. Transparency is crucial because it demonstrates the need for enhanced land grant transactions, tenure security, and governance at Ghana's PHEI. The notion is that policy and financial criteria based on historical and contextual explanations are more likely to provide crucial paths for improving institutional performance.

Importance of land grant transactions

The land is an essential and strategic/crucial resource in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem (Kidido & Lengoiboni, 2019; Asamoah, 2017). There is a close link between land, land grants, institutional development, and academic growth. Land grants are an enabling component directly associated with increased educational facilities, amenities, and service delivery at educational institutions (Iverson, 2007). The land-grant model has enabled academic institutions to develop and grow their reach geographically and in terms of mission and effect (Goodwin, 2007; Schuh, 1993).

When correctly managed, maximum investment in PHEI land grants and the inflow of academic programs and student population in educational institutions are less likely to result in losses in academic and infrastructure investments (Levi, 2010). Students are supposed to gain more from their education in an atmosphere with superior educational and residential amenities. For example, the quality of student accommodation is an essential component in students' decision-making when choosing a university (Kustiani & Khidmat, 2021). Providing appropriate student accommodation in Ghana's PHEI has been a significant concern for higher education institutions, particularly as the number of college students and institution size have increased (Ong et al., 2013).

Institutions should strategically manage their land holdings with limited resources to secure actual baseline financing (Minhat et al.,2022). In other words, effective land management may result in considerable cost savings and revenue production for PHEI, which administrators and founders utilize to finance key academic activities (Minhat et al.,2022). Given the significant financial investment an investor or developer must make in property purchase and infrastructure costs, the processes around land transfers should be transparent (Miceli et al., 2003).

As a result, the GoG should simplify land transactions to establish PHEI in Ghana, leading to improved student experiences. Land acquisition frequently results in unintentional trust-building among grant parties (Purohit et al., 2023; Rachman et al., 2018). Land transactions are often viewed as a way for educational institutions to publicly demonstrate that their operations are devoid of fraud and dishonesty (Sandmann & Gillespie, 1991; Iverson, 2007). These PHEI, established to provide low-cost higher education to the

general public, are regarded as role models for other higher education institutions. Altbach (2005); Ansah & Sorooshian (2016). Furthermore, at the organizational level, recording the results of strategic land grant planning may be used to ensure public accountability. Sharing success stories with individuals outside the PHEI ecosystem establishes a benchmark for graduating students into a robust worldwide success rating system. The link between excellent practices and the economic determination of educational achievements emphasizes the need for transparent land grant agreements (Iverson, 2007; Ryan & Heim, 2002).

When the study is relevant to the school context, property-directed investment should improve access to educational services—creating optimum learning settings instilled with a culture of trust in connections through cumulative network asset ownership. This kind of ownership aligns with the utopian concept of massification, but researchers and readers must carefully review evidence to determine the most efficient path forward (Jackson, 2022). The characteristics of PHEI in the ecosystem contribute to the development of networks and trust, determining the types of transactions conductible in the future. If the GoG protects the PHEI in Ghana in a long-term supportive environment that promotes knowledge transmission, negative consequences from human skills training will be reduced (Helms, 2009; Reinman, 2015).

First, the government of Ghana must strengthen the legislative frameworks governing land grant schemes to ensure openness, identification of donor names, and penalization of noncompliance. To achieve this goal, the government should reform and vigorously enforce land grant regulations (Sandmann & Gillespie, 1991). Second, the GoG should publicize the identities of land grantors to deter illegal activity and improve scrutiny. This approach to public postsecondary education would not fundamentally challenge the legitimate use of land grants to address community socioeconomic needs. Bluntly stated contentment with Ghana's PHEI ecosystem outcomes from land allocations might be a shared public good that benefits the country's economy. To address the issue of disguised land grantors, a multifaceted solution with legal, financial, and civic implications is advocated.

Significance of transparency in land grant transactions

Transparency in land grant transactions refers to the need for specific key criteria that land grant actors can follow. First and foremost, solid legal institutions must be in place to ensure compliance with land grant requirements, such as identifying donor/grantor identities and punishing infractions (Choi & Sami, 2012). Transparency has emerged as a critical policy problem in many areas of higher education. It includes the legislative process and the implementation and enforcement of the law. (Deighton & Smith, 2004). One commonly held belief is that one significant potential benefit of transparency, the availability of information about expected operational behaviors and standards, leads to fewer problems or arguments and greater ease of operation in any area (Bennett et al., 2008). However, there is evidence that transparency is not always favorable and that specific criteria must be satisfied before transparency may be beneficial (Liu et al., 2015). Additionally, openness in land grant transactions within Ghana's PHEI ecosystem may improve operational efficiency. (Darteh & Asamoah, 2020; Larbi et al., 2018). Consequently, it is necessary to have information on land grants, acquisition, and regularization of ownership, among other things. It may be available so that key stakeholders may acquire firsthand information about land grants and the sort of transaction they desire to implement, such as who owns what portions of the land scheduled for a grant.

So, what information should be available during the land grant? The transfer of public property to a land grant institution should be transparent, with a clear indication of who or what groups of persons or residents of the country may be eligible for title, tenure rights, or an interest in the land (Tenure, FAOL,

& Unit, M., 2009). Transparency is vital because it promotes responsibility and trust among diverse players/actors. These players are government entities in charge of awarding land rights and allocating common property resources to communities. Examples include municipal and district assemblies, land grant institutions, their implementing agencies, and PHEI. Transparency in land transfers allows traditional and community leaders, municipal assemblies, and PHEI to show that they assigned particular landed resources to a previous claim (Asenso-Gyambibi et al., 2019; Mireku et al., 2015). Securing tenure is essential for recruiting investors and supporting sustainable development (Byamugisha & Dubosse, 2023).

Definition and concept of transparency

Scholars define transparency by trans, which means across, totally, beyond, going beyond, throughout, sparing nothing, and pervasion (Ball, 2009). Thus, transparency is a fundamental concept in this research that enables the free flow of information internally and externally inside an organization (Teixeira et al., 2019). Transparency goes beyond just providing information; it stresses the perceived quality of the information communicated, which can seriously affect corporate success and ethics (O'Toole, 2019). Transparency is related to an open society and readily available policies and judgments. There is no opinion on openness's nature, premise, and purpose. 0However, there is universal agreement that administrative operations must be responsive to the affected community's needs, claims, and concerns (Mabillard & Zumofen, 2016). Moreover, Ghanaian society sees transparency as a moral and ethical foundation for public service.

As a result, the main issues presented involve administrative organizations' ability to be transparent about how they make decisions that influence the public, both positively and negatively (Ball, 2009; Brondoni & Bisio, 2017). Thus, transparency provides stakeholders in an organization or policy-making process with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions and evaluate the conduct of those making decisions that impact their livelihoods. The fundamental goals of transparency are to inform, mobilize, and persuade ordinary persons and interest groups. It contributes to mobilizing the passive community to combat corruption and hold rulers responsible (Mabillard & Zumofen, 2017).

Benefits of transparency in land grant transactions

Transparency helps governments make better decisions (Matheus et al., 2021; Mabillard & Zumofen, 2017; Kosack & Fung, 2014). Informed judgments can encourage stakeholder engagement and the formation of trusted relationships in land grant transactions. The GoG must proactively try to unmask land grantors, starting with improving legal structures, rules, and enforcement procedures (Cuthill, 2001; Stuebs & Sun, 2014). Even in nations with increasing demand for land, disputes, and complex process development can result in workflow transparency, which is crucial for conflict resolution. The approach is predicated on actual evidence of effective land management. Transparency may provide economies of scale, allowing for more efficient use of public resources, and thus is critical to the effective governance of land grant systems. (Fung et al. 2004). Furthermore, greater openness decreases bureaucratic red tape and the likelihood of corrupt intermediaries intimidating public authorities when the former bribes the latter (Fredriksson, 2014). Moreover, unmasking land grantors to enhance transparency in decision-making may subject individuals and organizations to taxes and fiscal discipline in land grant programs.

The process allows the public to watch and evaluate the acts of land grantors, increasing their legitimacy and responsibility. (Selan & Demšar, 2012). Transparency regarding impartial monitoring organizations

and regular reporting requirements can ensure that land gifts meet their terms and objectives. (Tassin et al., 2019). Furthermore, unmasking land grantors in land grant transactions involving PHEI in Ghana preserves stakeholders' vested interests and fosters transparency. The GoG must revise and strictly enforce unmasking grantors' names, where the disobedient is penalized (Owusu-Ansah et al.,2024; Mireku et al., 2016). The public disclosure of land grantor recipients would minimize unlawful activity and allow for more monitoring of land grant schemes, Owusu-Ansah et al. (2023); Hammond et al. (2009).

Challenges linked with transparency and accountability in land grant schemes

Land transactions in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem pose several issues and risks (Ameyaw & Vries, 2021). Significant are the historical origins of land-related organizations, fragmented, disorganized, and unharmonized functioning (Hillhurst et al., 2021). These have resulted in unsolved issues and risks in land governance. As previously stated, camouflaged land grantors have presented significant challenges in the Ghanaian PHEI ecology. Thus, making it impossible to regulate the most essential asset in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem. A lack of transparency hampers the stated land governance system and has considerably contributed to the difficulty in obtaining land for PHEI development. Masked land grants typically result in speculation, profiteering, and squandering by the land grant actors (Davis et al., 2014). Subsections on lack of transparency, corruption, and mismanagement risks, socio-political challenges and consequences, and international standards and guidelines infra, address some of the challenges/concerns of land grants in Ghana.

Lack of Transparency

The lack of transparency traverses Ghana's PHEI land grant environment. As a result, land grant transactions in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem have been equivocal or ambivalent. To remedy those mentioned above, the government might strengthen legislative frameworks to increase accountability and transparency (Bingab et al., 2018). Though incumbent governments have continued to recover significant expanses of land, the ecosystem suffers from a concealed identity of land grantors, which impedes development due to a lack of transparency, accountability, and ownership (Rudel & Hernandez, 2017). Historically, family and clan relationships determined land usage in Ghana. In Ghana, land utilization is a derivative of village norms (Akaabre, 2023; Vanderpuye et al., 2020). Thus, land ownership rests on the overall standards of how things should be in a subsistence agricultural economy (Vanderpuye et al., 2020). Ghana was one of the Sudanic nations that swapped land with Europeans and their descendants. Such meetings with other people resulted in massacres, retribution, assassinations, and dynastic conflicts. Traditional Ghanaian messages focused on who should rule the land based on the land security management system. The advent of "camouflaged land grantors" who conceal their names and objectives may compromise transparency and justice in Ghana's land distribution and governance system. (Mitchell et al., 2016).

Perhaps the GoG and traditional authorities created the present land management to safeguard the governing elites and their successors. The multiple interwoven issues associated with Ghana's land administration systems, history, policies, practices, and distribution systems were at the forefront of the country's land crisis. Ghanaian chieftaincy institutions also played an essential part in the exclusivity with which chiefs/kings obtained and controlled land. (Combinah et al., 2020; Kugbega, 2020). Given the present concept of historical scars of accumulation, the locals were the landlords for around 1,000 years before the arrival of Europeans. No comparison cost was available to provide a benchmark for property

rights security. None of the Ghanaian regimes examined are free of disagreement among stakeholders (Akaabre, 2023). Land ownership has been a significant cause of conflict and dislocation in Ghanaian culture, causing social and political instability (Asabere. 2004). Ghana's land ownership and tenure systems reflect existing practices and norms, colonial history, and modern societal dynamics (Yeboah & Shaw, 2013). There are three types of land ownership: public lands, customary lands, and "vested lands," a combination of public and customary lands (Yeboah & Shaw, 2013).

Corruption and Mismanagement Risks

Transparency in land grant transactions appears necessary for minimizing corruption and mismanagement linked to administrative discretion and public engagement (Ameyaw & Vries, 2020; Chiodelli & Moroni, 2015). A lack of transparency allows managers to act in ways that are less likely to generate value, particularly when land assets are involved (Lang & Maffett, 2011). These practices include misallocating resources and avoiding regulations at the price of societal advantages like public higher education. Mismanaged transactions at the land-grant interface can lead to corruption (Heyneman, 2014). The solicitation of bribes is one of the techniques by which corruption happens in official land-grant plans for Ghana's PHEI (Altbach, 2015; Kuranchie et al., 2014). These unscrupulous activities impair the openness and accountability of land-grant allocation, preventing fair access and perhaps diverting money away from intended beneficiaries (Kuranchie et al., 2014; Heyneman, 2014); Tsyhaniuk & Akenten, 2021; Paredes, 2020). In some instances, university staff deploy bribery to achieve project advantages, as well as to undersell land, undermine local government, and misappropriate loan monies. In general, informal land grant processes lead to corruption, resulting in inefficient resource allocation, degradation of public confidence, and undermining of higher education institutions' main goal (Kuranchie et al. 2014). As a result, many Ghanaian community members believe that PHEI land acquisition processes are slanted against their interests (Dowuona-Hammond, 2018; Adams et al., 2019; Gyamera, 2018; Miller et al., 2020; Kidido & Lengoiboni, 2019).

Socio-political Challenges and Consequences of Camouflaged Land Grant

Masked land grantors in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem for transparency and accountability may harm the community and the environment. When legitimate entities, families, and royals behind land grants stay masked, it is hard to trace their origins, validate their legitimacy, or evaluate whether they are consistent with Ghana's sustainable development goals (Aditya et al., 2021). The rise of civic groups aiming to restore lands to families with ancestral rights has highlighted the complexities and nuances of transparency and accountability in property transfers. Without proper land ownership and transfer records, it is hard to identify land grantors and ownership rights to resolve land disputes or conflicts. The lack of clear and consistent land registration processes has resulted in lengthy litigation, squandering valuable time, energy, and financial resources (Aditya et al., 2021). Furthermore, the absence of centralized systems and dependence on paper records create information silos, impeding effective land record administration. The absence of centralized systems and paper records supports a disguised land gift donation. The outdated procedures (both governmental and traditional) utilized to handle land ownership records are vulnerable to fraud and manipulation. Additionally, they lack the accountability to ensure the reliability, legitimacy, and integrity of land grant programs for PHEI establishment in Ghana.

International Standards and Guidelines for Land Grant Transparency

Through several global organizations, the international community has produced a set of rules to promote openness and good governance in land grant transactions affecting PHEI ecosystems. These solutions can help to solve the critical issue of hidden land grantors (Bertsch & Pierzynski, 2013; Myers, 2012; Minhat et al., 2022). According to these rules, sustainable development across international, regional, national, and community endeavors with standards fundamental to sound governance principles concerns modern society (Shefiu et al., 2019). Transparency and engagement comprise effective governance in land grant transactions within the ecosystem of public institutions of higher learning. For example, enhancing the legal system and implementing rules can increase openness and expose land grantors' names (Ahmed, 2018). Furthermore, exposing the identity of land grantors can deter illicit activity and increase public scrutiny. (Bingab et al., 2016)

Transparency and engagement are critical to good governance in land grant transactions in the community's higher education system. For example, improving the legal system and enforcing regulations can promote transparency and reveal the identities of land grantors (Ahmad, 2018). Furthermore, disclosing the identities of land grantors might inhibit illegal activities while increasing public attention. (Bingab et al. 2016). Governments and civil society organizations have banded together to lobby for more legitimate social decision-making in response to requests for more effective policy development and implementation. According to academics, effective use of transparency may boost legitimacy, citizen participation, and public trust, encouraging dynamic political change (Mabillard & Zumofen, 2016). States are increasingly considered models of good governance and ethical behavior in the land-granting sector of PHEIs (Kunthea, 2020). Ghana's government should develop, modify, and enforce land grant rules to enhance transparency, identify grantors, and sanction noncompliance (Kunthea, 2020; Mabillard & Zumofen, 2016). As a result, Ghana may improve its operations by comparing its land grant transaction processes to global best practices and experiences (Yaro & Tsikata, 2015; Gyamera, 2018). It is essential because researchers cite Ghana's land sector as a model for land reform in Africa and other developing nations (Hammond et al., 2008).

Stakeholder engagement in transparency and accountability

In Ghana's land grant ecosystems for PHEIs, transparency enhances accountability by giving stakeholders clear communications and access to public information while allowing them to provide input and comment (Bingab et al., 2018). The GoG and Nananom should set criteria to determine who is responsible for the success and sustainability of the land grant initiative. Local preference appears to be an essential element in enabling access to land. Clearly defined property rights and efficient dispute-resolution methods are required to ensure tenure and encourage responsible land use (Deininger et al., 2014; Reinman, 2015). To ensure this, the Ghana Land Commission promotes effective communication among land actors in the country's PHEI ecosystem through staff training and the formation of internal consultative groups that allow for the identification of the pros and cons of feasible local strategies that can be used to solve local problems (Waeterloos, 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2020) The Land Commission also facilitates community engagement by local authorities, which helps strengthen the public's trust in land governance and enables better oversight of land grant processes. (Kuusaana & Gerber, 2015).

The Ghanaian government has attempted to address the issues of openness and accountability in land grant transactions. However, the GoG and Nananom/traditional authorities can do more to counteract disguised land grantors by strengthening legal frameworks, disclosure standards, and supervision mechanisms (Mireku et al., 2015; Kuusaana & Gerber, 2015; Hammond et al., 2008). The GoG and traditional

authorities ought to create an institutional culture that is transparent in all its acts through ongoing public and internal interactions consistent with anticipated land grant transactions. One critical component is ensuring that the GoG has publicized all land grantors' identities (Swartz et al., 2019). Consequently, employees and other stakeholders understand the boundaries of authorized behavior and may report any violations of these standards. Stakeholder meetings in Ghana's public universities should include a variety of activities. For example, question-and-answer sessions, direct survey interviews, role-playing, and, most crucially, open discussions or discussions over land grant transaction concerns (Bingab et al., 2018; Nabaho, 2019). These sessions aim to share knowledge to improve democratic decision-making on land allocations in the PHEI environment.

Another goal of these sessions is to organize expert panels to evaluate results critically and create written records related to land deals (Abhilash, 2021). These open meetings/sessions allow stakeholders to participate in the land grant decision-making process and ensure their perspectives remain heard by the actors in land grant agreements. Furthermore, these collaborations require the involvement of stakeholders as well as the acquisition of relevant licenses, particularly in situations of individual land transactions (Nolte & Voget-Kleschin, 2014; Ibrahim et al., 2020; Hendriks et al., 2018; Antonio et al., 2021). In addition to open meetings, constant participatory engagement is critical for rural development plans since it enables local people to examine their problems and respond appropriately (Tarlani & Sirajuddin, 2020).

The way forward to address issues of camouflaged land grantors

Land grant actors may deploy various proactive actions to address the issue of camouflaged or masked land grantors. First, the three players might work together to build and strengthen legislative frameworks (Owusu-Daaku, 2021). The government may amend and enforce land grant procedures to increase openness and transparency, identify grantor names, and penalize noncompliance (Kanyane et al., 2020; Stanfield & Raço, 1994). Second, to eliminate land conflicts and increase monitoring, PHEI, the state, traditional authorities, and land grant ecosystem participants may publicize land grantor identities (Sarfo and Anokye, 2021; Wily, 2011). This transparency would enable other stakeholders to evaluate the legitimacy and purpose of land distributions (Mireku et al., 2016). Third, enhance monitoring and reporting. Implementing standard reporting mandates and setting up independent monitoring committees would ensure that land grant objectives and conditions were met (Deininger, 2003; Higgins et al., 2018).

In the absence of competent land titling, registration institutions, and courts, the article finds that, while land tenure reforms can clarify ownership, they cannot resolve underlying issues over limited resource access. Land registration, for example, has been proven to support the land transaction market by enhancing overall efficiency and presenting proof of better credit availability due to property rights formalization. However, thorough studies on cost-effectiveness and long-term effects are scarce in the literature (Deininger & Feder, 2009). The fourth is civic engagement. Civil society organizations CSOs), local communities, and other stakeholders can actively participate in land grant discussions and decision-making, offering valuable input and monitoring. The CSOs might ensure that land transfers match the needs of the community they are meant to benefit (Kanyane et al., 2020). Involving diverse stakeholders improves transparency, trustworthiness, accountability, and equity (Ameyaw & De Vries, 2020; Richards & Dalbey, 2006).

Gap/Lacuna location

To identify a gap in the literature, the researcher used three search techniques: internet phraseology searches, academic database searches, and bibliometric analysis. However, none of these techniques produced relevant results, indicating a gap in the literature. The bibliometric analysis found a scarcity of published research, books, or academic papers in prestigious, traditional, and high-impact journals.

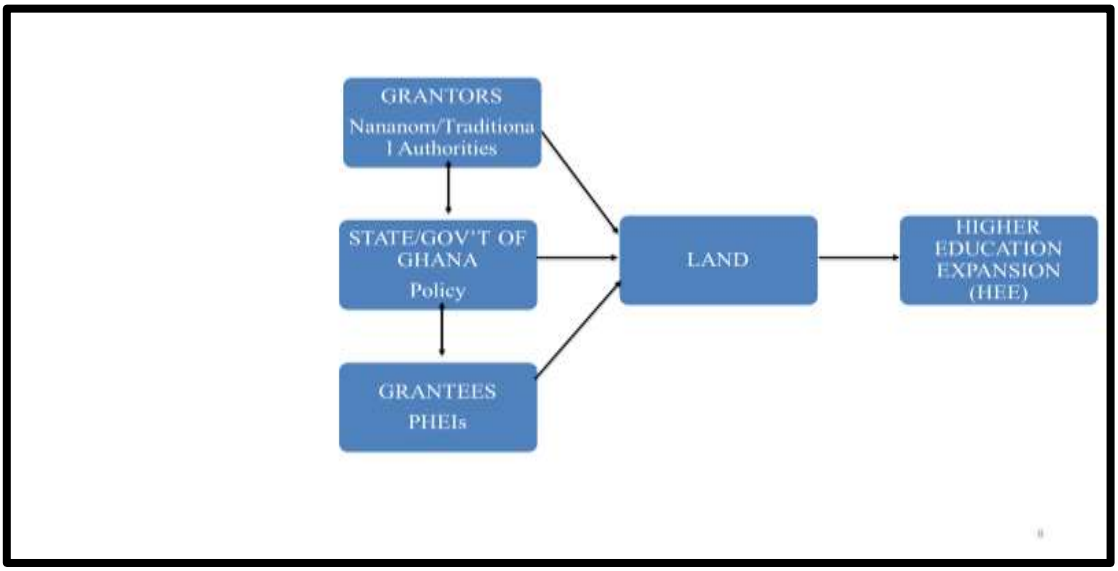
Conceptual, theoretical frameworks, and a triple helix model

The study examined the tripartite symbiotic connection between major actors in Ghana's PHEIs land grant ecosystem via three analytical lenses: 1. a conceptual framework, 2. two theoretical frameworks, and 3. a triple helix model.

Conceptual Framework

The study focused on land, the key production component in establishing PHEIs in Ghana (Dza et al., 2020; Gyamera, 2018; Atuahene, 2014), as depicted in Figure 1.1. This conceptual framework represents a symbiotic relationship between the three actors in Ghana's land-granting ecosystem: grantors, the state/stakeholder, and grantees. Consultations between the three players result in land transfers from landowners such as "Nananom," the King and Chiefs, "Tindanas," and other traditional authorities. Land grant agreements in Ghana achieve formality when the grantor and grantee sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and pay the grantor the agreed-upon "drink money" (Akaabre, 2023). The drink money is frequently presented to the chief, under whose customary authority the land grant deal was negotiated and signed (Akaabre, 2023). In conclusion, the study underlines the significance of land in Ghana's PHEI development, demonstrating a symbiotic relationship between grantors, the state, and grantees. Landowners, including traditional authorities, negotiate land transfers using memoranda of understanding and "drink money," frequently paid to the chief who supervised the land transaction.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework Showing Land as the Key Production Factor



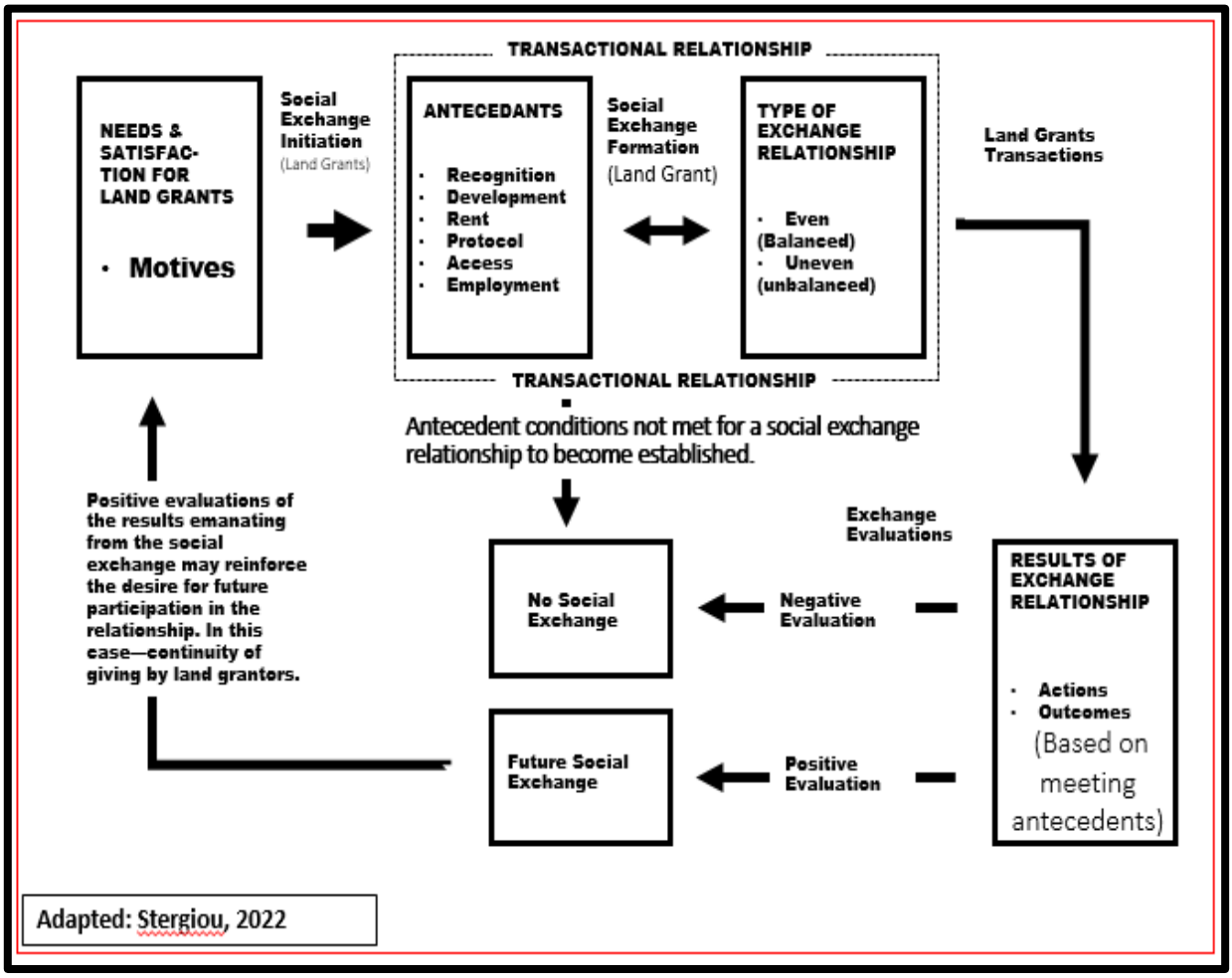
Source: Author, 2024

Social Exchange Theory

The authors applied Homans' Social Exchange Theory (SET) (1958) in the study to comprehend the role of land in establishing or expanding PHEI in ecology. Grantors' motivations create antecedents, which can

lead to the formation of social exchanges and relationships. These relationships may be equal or unequal in land grant agreements. Land grant transactions are classified by land actors as negative or positive, with negative assessments suggesting that no social exchanges occurred since the actors met the antecedent prerequisites. Positive feedback typically leads to further social interaction, enhancing the desire to stay involved in the relationship. The feedback may result in the continuance of land granting/giving by land grantors, creating a land granting cycle. The SET does not officially express this concept, but it suggests an innovation to encourage grantors to maintain land grant activities in the PHEI ecosystem, depicted in Figure 1.2 infra.

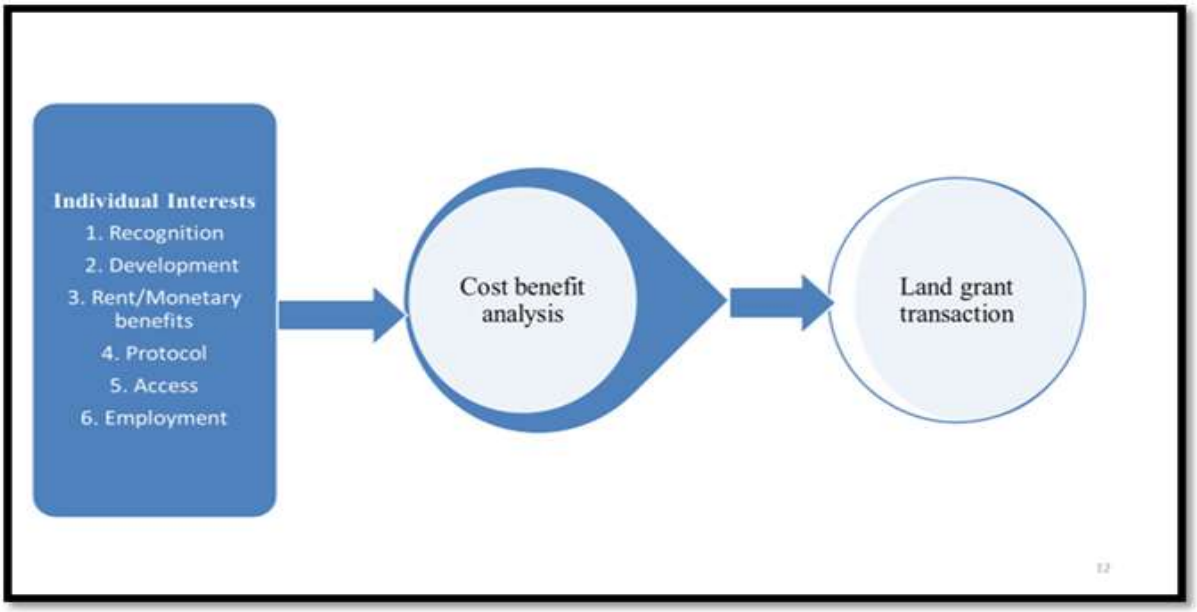
Figure 1.2: Social Exchange Theory



Rational Choice Theory

The study uses Random Choice Theory (RCT), as illustrated in Figure 1.3 infra, to explain the monetary motives that drive land allocations for the construction or growth of PHEI in Ghana. Adam Smith invented RCT in 1776 to examine how individuals use their interests to make the best decisions. Researchers can subject individual interests in the PHEI ecology to cost-benefit analysis, which yields positive consequences for land grant transactions. Regardless of socioeconomic status, money is the dominant motivator behind land grant decisions. In Ghana's PHEI ecosystem, financial considerations are the most critical factor affecting the acceptance or rejection of land grant agreements.

Figure 1.3: Rational Choice Theory

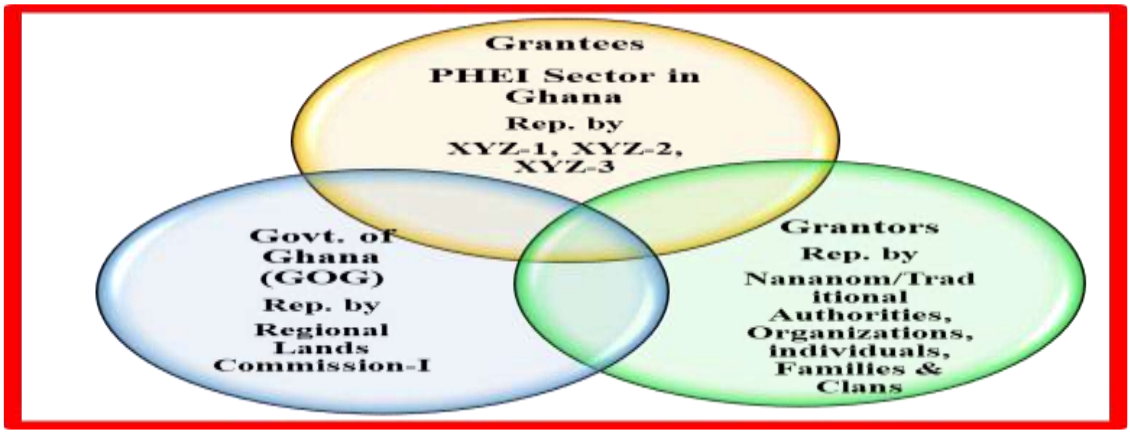


Source: Author, 2024

Triple Helix Model

Figure 1.4 depicts the symbiotic interaction between grantors, grantees, and the state/stakeholders in Ghana's land grant ecosystem, which includes PHEI. Their affiliation, dependence, and fraternity influence the distribution of land allocations for PHEI establishment or expansion. This model helps to comprehend the essential ecological links between Ghana's PHEIs and land grant transactions within the public higher education ecosystem.

Figure 1.4: The Triple Helix Model in the Land Grant Ecosystem



Source: Author, 2023

Research Methodology

The study takes a constructivist stance, using both a qualitative research approach and a case study research design. The authors gathered the primary data through interviews, document checks, and field notes. Interview recordings are transcribed, then manually classified, categorized, and thematized. The documents include local land evaluation rates, land tenure agreements, and snippets from news sources. We gathered the data via photocopying and internet downloads. We coded data extracts and categorized them. The study combines interview data with document evaluations to find remarkable or significant themes and reach crucial conclusions. Purposive sampling was employed to choose the participants or informants from whom we collected the data. Per Hennink and Kaiser (2022), we discontinued the study's data collection when the 13 key informants reached saturation point.

However, utilizing self-reported data from interviews may cause issues: 1. Response bias--respondents may provide replies that they believe are socially acceptable/desirable rather than their true thoughts or behaviors. The bias might prejudice the statistics, particularly in sensitive areas like the reasons underlying land donations for establishing or growing PHEI in Ghana. 2. Memory recall issues--participants may fail to recall earlier events or acts correctly, resulting in incorrect replies. Various things may affect or impact memory, including time after the occurrence. 3. Interpretation variability-- different informants/participants may perceive questions differently, resulting in inconsistent replies. The variability can influence both the reliability of the gathered data and the study's credibility. 4. Limited depth of comprehension--self-reported interviews may fail to reflect the complexities of a subject or issue if participants/informants lack information or insight into the larger context. To overcome the study's shortcomings, triangulate data from different sources and ensure thorough question design to increase the reliability and confirmability of self-reported data.

RESULTS

The study's four key findings/results and analyses in this section include a more detailed description of each result/discovery under the infra subheadings.

First Finding/Result

The study revealed that land grantors are well-respected members of the community and society. Frequently, they include the King, Chiefs, "Tindanas," family heads, and rich/opulent landowners. Why do land grantors spend time and money on disguising their identities? Expending resources to conceal grantors in public land transactions whose records are accessible with little or no effort appears irrational and wasteful. These camouflaged land grantors create untrustworthy habitats for expanding land grant schemes in Ghana, establishing and maintaining PHEI. Untrustworthiness among the three players in land grants, namely Nananom/traditional authorities and Tindanas/family heads, might jeopardize the viability and future possibilities of land grant practices in Ghana. This conclusion should stimulate future policy creation and legal frameworks to assure accountability, sustainability, and openness in unmasking land grantors in Ghana's PHEI.

Second Finding/Result

The second key finding identifies societal motivators and barriers that increase land grantors' willingness to provide land for the development or growth of PHEI in Ghana's tertiary education ecosystem. The driving motivations are social recognition, access to the executive administration of PHEIs, prestige/status enhancement within the grantors' society, community, and national development, political influence, and a rise in local property values. Unratified agreements, encumbered lands, and the wording of the MOU, which specifies the nature, form, and terms of the land donation efforts, were among the barriers. Land

grants appropriately documented, describing each land transaction's form and substance, are the first step toward accountability and transparency.

Third Finding/Result

The study revealed that concealing the name of the land grantor can obfuscate cash and non-monetary contributions such as land usage fees, stool lands taxes, market-rate compensation, protocol, scholarships, and employment quotas. Given this fact, the Ghanaian legislature could enact legislation to separate a portion of the fees and taxes received. The GoG and Nananom utilize the fees and taxes to promote community development. These are institutionalized, portrayed, and evaluated in Adam Smith's rational choice theory. The study laid the groundwork for financial and non-cash incentives that often drive land grant transactions in Ghana's PHEI ecology/ecosystem.

Fourth Finding/Result

The study's fourth significant finding is that PHEI (grantees) can employ effective legislated legal frameworks and policy strategies to discourage and prevent masked land grantors from granting land to establish and grow universities and colleges in Ghana's public higher education ecosystems. In contrast, the grantors can utilize well-crafted policy guidelines and strong legal frameworks to chart the course of transparent and accountable land-granting procedures in Ghana's PHEI environment. However, a camouflaged or masked land grantor does not appear positioned to provide a well-deserved guarantee of official acknowledgment of land gifts that belong to them. No significant number of anonymous grantors would be enthusiastic about creating laws, named scholarships, or guaranteed/assured work prospects for community members. As a result, Ghana must reveal the identities of the land grantors. Uncovering the identities of land grantors in communities might be a goldmine for identifying motivations and efforts that could lead to land grant exchange partnerships. Balanced interactions might result in behaviors and results. When favorable appraisal results in subsequent social exchange transactions, the SET depicts the continuation of land grants as a cycle of land giving for establishing and growing PHEI in Ghana's higher education environment.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section discusses the contributions, limitations, and conclusions presented.

Contributions

This study addresses a gap in the mainstream conventional literature regarding the motivations/rationale behind land allocations for developing PHEI in Ghana. Furthermore, the study distinguishes between the land grant and acquisition processes for the first time in Ghanaian land literature. Traditional authorities accomplish a land grant transaction when the grantee pays "drink money," a written MOU signed between the grantor and the grantee. The agreed MOU must be formalized in a competent court of jurisdiction in Ghana before the land purchase procedure may begin. Without the first, the latter cannot accede, and hence, land ownership is almost impossible in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem. Furthermore, the research might lead to developing policies and legal frameworks to promote openness and accountability in Ghana's land grant environment. These policies and frameworks will help Ghana's PHEI develop and expand. Unmasking camouflaged land grantors, for example, might boost confidence and credibility in Ghana's land grant space among the three actors: Nananom, the state, and PHEI. The report recommends the establishment of land banks to enable and promote the sharing of knowledge accessible in the land grant ecosystem of Ghana's PHEI. The land banks will save time and money in lawsuits involving disgruntled

and disguised landowners. The article advises a further study to investigate how land grantor intentions influence long-term sustainability and resource allocation in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem.

Limitations

This portion of the article lists four contextual considerations that serve as the article's constraints. 1) According to SET, individuals should weigh the costs and benefits before engaging in social exchange activities. However, contextual issues such as traditional authority's obligations in society may limit the theories' application in the reasons for unmasking disguised land grantors in Ghana's PHEI ecosystem to maintain transparency and accountability. 2) RCT does not account for intuitive thinking or gut feelings when making hasty decisions in land grant ecosystems to disclose masked grantors. Therefore, there may be little time to weigh the costs and advantages. Furthermore, RCT presupposes those individuals are knowledgeable and can accurately foresee the future. This assumption is frequently considered unworkable in most land grant cases, as economic data is sometimes insufficient or subject to change. 3) The restrictions or constraints associated with land as a crucial production element, according to Article 267 of Ghana's 1992 constitution, chiefs, and family heads are the caretakers of such lands and have the authority to enforce rights and duties to the provided land. That structure is appropriate in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas. In Ghana, lands that are 80 percent held by customary rules can be acquired by grantees as leasehold properties, with ownership limited to 50 years for expatriates and 99 years for natives. These seem challenging for PHEI. Because higher education institutions might remain on land for centuries, the availability of land as a focal point in Ghana's land grants ecology looks complicated or uncertain. 4) Challenges linked with land acquisition, usage, and duration of ownership, as well as a maze of constitutional articles and land acts that appear to have impacted land and its ability as a significant production component in the formation of PHEI in Ghana, the most recent being the Land Act 2020 (Act 1036). Overall, the four elements highlighted here are examples of the constraints that might impede the identification of disguised land grantors in Ghana's PHEI for transparency and accountability.

Conclusion

Land grant agreements are crucial for tackling socioeconomic difficulties and promoting sustainable development in the Global South. However, the opacity surrounding land grantors in African nations, especially Ghana, appears to undermine the long-term viability of land grant procedures across the continent. Therefore, to improve transparency, accountability, equitable resource distribution, and appropriate land use practices, the tripartite actors of grantors, grantees, and the state could work together. They would enable the development of robust PHEI systems capable of facilitating the establishment or expansion of quality PHEI to promote human skills development and national development, particularly in the ECOWAS. In addition, the study sets the path for future research on land grant transparency: 1. The influence of digital platforms on land grant transparency: Look at how digital tools and platforms, such as blockchain and GIS technology, might improve transparency in land grants. Evaluate their efficacy in decreasing corruption, increasing public access to information, and guaranteeing accountability 4in land management. 2. Stakeholder engagement in land grant procedures: Investigate the role of various stakeholders (local communities, NGOs, and government agencies) in increasing openness in land grant procedures. Examine case studies where stakeholder participation has increased transparency and consider how researchers may reproduce land-grant transactions in other situations. 3. Conduct a comparative examination of land grant policies across nations or regions, emphasizing transparency measures. Evaluate

these rules' efficacy in reducing land conflicts, guaranteeing equitable distribution, and encouraging sustainable land use practices.

ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GoG	Government of Ghana/Ghanaian Government
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PHEI	Public Higher Education Institutions
RCT	The Rational Choice Theory
SET	Social Exchange Theory

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