

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

**ETHICS IN ACCOUNTING EDUCATION AND PRACTICE
IN GHANA**

BY

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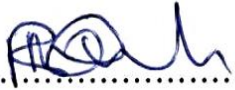
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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF PHD IN
ACCOUNTING DEGREE**

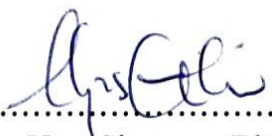
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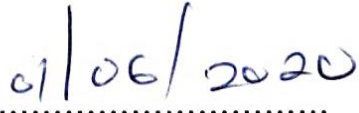
DECLARATION


I declare that this study is my own work and that it has not been submitted for any degree or qualification in any university and that all the sources used have been indicated and duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

Reports of unethical attitudes involving members of the accounting profession have increased in recent times. The reported ethical infractions occurring globally have resulted in the collapse of corporate bodies in developed and developing economies. Accounting educators and professional accounting bodies have been partly blamed for their failure to adequately prepare graduates through education and training. Others have blamed the ethical failures on the personal attributes of ethics (PAE) of accountants and organisational attributes of ethics (OAE) in the working environment together with other factors. The objective of this study has been to investigate the effect of ethics education interventions, personal attributes of ethics and organisational attributes of ethics on ethical attitudes of accountants (EAA) using evidence from Ghana, a developing country in sub-Saharan Africa. The study further examines ethics curriculum design of university and professional accounting programmes in Ghana. The study employed quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The first three objectives were addressed quantitatively whilst the fourth objective adopted a qualitative approach using interviews to answer the research questions. The study surveyed 77 accounting instructors from universities and 340 professional accountants. Thirteen key administrators including deans, heads of accounting departments (HoADs), senior officials and council members of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana (ICAG) and of the National Accreditation Board (NAB) were further interviewed. The principal component analysis was used to generate scores in measuring the study variables. The ordinary least square (OLS) estimation was used in the analysis of quantitative data. The results of the study reveal a positive and significant relationship between ethics related courses (ERC), method of teaching ethics (MTE), method of ethics intervention (MEI) and objectives of ethics courses (OEC). The results also show a positive and significant relationship between experience gained on the job and ethical attitude. The study further reveals that individual PAE and OAE in themselves are not sufficient in influencing ethical attitudes; rather they collectively combine to positively and significantly influence EAA. Additionally, faculty initiatives, industry demand, international benchmarking and modernisation are the drivers of ethics in the curriculum of universities and professional accounting programmes in Ghana. Finally, it was observed that the design of ethics in the curriculum of accounting programmes in Ghana is motivated by the desire to preserve the economy, the desire the desire to avoid corruption and by the dynamism of the business environment, globalisation and sustainability. The study has implications for the adoption of ERC, MTE and MEI in the development of ethics curriculum. Besides, the type of institution is key in the desire to achieve objectives set for making ethics interventions.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the Glory of God

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been completed without the support of many people to whom I owe a depth of gratitude. It is therefore right that I acknowledge those who made valuable contributions and provided support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	American Accounting Association
AACSB	Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business
ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
AECC	Association of Education Change Commission
AICPA	American Institute of Certified Public Accountants
CAGD	Controller and Accountant–General’s Department
CIMA	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
CPA	Certified Public Accountants
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EAA	Ethical Attitude of Accountants
ECH	Ethics Committee for Humanities
EEI	Ethics Education Interventions
EFMD	European Foundation for Management Development
EQUIS	European Quality Improvement System
ERC	Ethics Related Courses
FRC	Financial Reporting Council
FSA	Federation of Schools of Accountancy
GAAP	Generally Accepted Accounting Principles
GRA	Ghana Revenue Authority
HoADs	Heads of Accounting Departments
ICAEW	Institute of Chartered Accountants, England and Wales
ICAG	Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana
ICGC	International Central Gospel Church
IES	International Education Standard
IESBA	The International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants
IFAC	International Federation of Accountants
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
IIA	Institute of Internal Auditors
IMA	Institute of Management Accountants
LEI	Level of Ethics Intervention
MAE	Methods of Assessing Ethics
MCQ	Multiple Choice Questions

MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MEI	Method of Ethics Intervention
MMR	Mixed Method Research
MTE	Methods of Teaching Ethics
NAB	National Accreditation Board
NASBA	National Association of State Boards of Accountancy
OAE	Organisational Attributes of Ethics
OEC	Objective of Ethics Course
OLS	Ordinary Least Square
PAE	Personal Attributes of Ethics
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
ROSC	Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes
SCH	School Credit Hour
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SMTE	Specific Method of Teaching Ethics
UG	University of Ghana
UGBS	University of Ghana Business School
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
VVU	Valley View University

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Discussions on ethical issues have increased in recent times, particularly in the accounting profession due to the role accountants play as financial experts. Members of the accounting profession are responsible for ensuring that financial statements are prepared in accordance with accepted standards, that they are free from material misstatements and that they present a true and fair view of the financial performance of entities. In the performance of their generally assigned duties, accountants have a duty to uphold ethical principles. However, the corporate scandals that occurred at the beginning of the 21st century (e.g. Enron in USA and HIH in Australia) threatened the foundations of the accounting profession worldwide (O'Leary, 2009). Accounting instructors have also had their share of the blame as educators of accounting graduates in universities and in other tertiary institutions (Gray, Bebbington & McPhail, 1994; Rutherford, Parks, Cavasos & White, 2012). The expectations are that the role of accounting instructors in developing ethical awareness of students and graduates has the potential to address unethical practices in the corporate world (Padia & Maroun, 2012). Equal partners in the public blame are the accounting professional institutions that certify members for accounting practice (Bui & Porter, 2010; Smith, 2003). This is because, accounting, as a profession, has two sides to it: the academic and professional (Parker, Guthrie & Linacre, 2011). Members of the profession require accounting education from universities and other tertiary institutions in addition to professional training and practice to qualify as professionals.

From the literature, corporate scandals resulting in the loss of billions of dollars of investors' funds (Sorensen, Miller & Cabe, 2017) have generally been associated with developed

countries. In recent times, some developing countries have had their fair share of corporate collapses based on ethical failures. For example, Ghana, a lower-middle-income economy in Africa, has witnessed the collapse of seven banks in recent times. As is expected, fingers are already being pointed at accountants and auditors of these banks. Members of the accounting profession have also questioned the failure of auditors of the collapsed banks for failing to notice the going-concern issues of the distressed banks before their collapse.

In many developed countries, universities have made ethics interventions in the accounting curriculum a means of addressing unethical practices such as the accounting scandals of the 21st century (Ghaffari, Kyriacou & Brennan, 2008).

Within the area of studies that border on accounting education and practice research (Stuart, Pedersen & Stuart, 2014), universities and professional accounting bodies have received global attention due to the nature of programme design and its related activities. Most universities have concentrated on making ethics education interventions (EEI) to achieve objectives set for ethics courses (OEC) in developing ethical attitudes of graduates (Dellaportas, 2006).

The impact of personal attributes of ethics (PAE) and organisational attributes of ethics (OAE) on ethical attitudes has been widely acknowledged (Holtbrügge, Baron, & Friedmann, 2015). This has attracted the attention of universities and accounting bodies in designing programmes aimed at the development of personal and organisational attributes of ethics as a means of impacting ethical attitudes of accountants (EAA) (Ghaffari et al., 2008; Holtbrügge et al., 2015).

It is therefore important to examine ethics interventions, personal attributes and organisational attributes together in a single study to determine the relative contribution of each factor to implement adequate educational instruments (Hershcovis et al., 2007; Holtbrügge et al., 2015).

Within this area, the following questions are being considered in this study:

- i. are universities and professional accounting bodies achieving objectives set for making ethics interventions?
- ii. are ethics interventions in accounting programmes influencing ethical attitudes of accountants?
- iii. do the personal and organisational attributes impact on ethical attitudes of accountants?
- iv. what is the nature of ethics in the curriculum design of accounting programmes?

The next section presents some stylish facts on some of the issues raised before finding answers to the questions posed above. The discussion of the under-listed stylish facts sets the stage for establishing the basis for the study.

1.2 Stylised Facts

1.2.1 Global accounting education and practice

As a discipline, accounting has provided students with a number of key skills and knowledge essential for national development. From the literature, universities and professional bodies have provided accounting education and practice aimed at providing students with knowledge and skills to understand financial accounting statements (Graham, 2013). Although these institutions are lauded for such contributions (Howieson et al., 2014), accounting education and practice provided by these institutions have come under much pressure for their failure

to achieve set objectives and the shaping of ethical attitudes of accountants (Evans et al., 2006). Accounting educators and practitioners, in particular, have been accused of losing their moral compass (Everett & Tremblay, 2014); and are challenged to produce graduates and professionals with the right ethical orientation.

In response to the above calls, Ghaffari, Kyriacou and Brennan (2008) have found that some universities and professional bodies have designed accounting curricula having the likelihood of achieving set objectives to influence the ethical attitudes of graduates. Some studies have also found a strong positive relationship among ethics interventions, personal attributes and organisational attributes of accountants and ethical attitudes (Ghazali, 2015; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge et al., 2015).

Other studies, however, do not find any justification for ethics interventions and the development of personal and organisational attributes and ethical attitudes (Abdolmohammadi, Fedorowicz & Davis, 2009).

1.2.2 Accounting education and practice in Ghana

Universities in Ghana have been at the forefront of providing accounting education for the teeming graduates that enter the job market year after year. Ghanaian universities are categorised as public or private. Public universities receive funding and other forms of support from the government whilst private universities are funded by owners. The National Accreditation Board (NAB) provides accreditation for the programmes of all universities, which include accounting programmes.

The body charged with accounting practice in Ghana is the ICAG. The Institute was set up by an act of Parliament, ACT 170, in 1963 and was given the mandate to be responsible for

the conduct of the qualifying examinations for membership of the Institute. Included in the objectives of the Institute are:

“the registration of members of the profession under the Act; Other objectives are to prescribe or approve courses of study for such examinations; supervise and regulate the engagement, training and transfer of articled clerks (accountants); specify the class of persons who shall have the right to train articled clerks and to specify the circumstances in which any person of that class may be deprived of that right; maintain and publish a register of chartered accountants and of practising accountants; secure the maintenance of professional standards among persons who are members of the Institute and to take such steps as may be necessary to acquaint such persons with the methods and practices necessary to maintain such standards; and finally, to encourage research in the subject of accountancy and generally to secure the well-being and advancement of the profession of accountants” (Act 170, 1963).

As a means of maintaining professional standards among the membership, the Institute has been organizing paid Continuous Professional Development (CPD) at which members are introduced to new developments within the profession regularly. Individual members are required to make payment for participation. Though laudable, not all members take advantage of this facility due to financial constraints, especially where employers are not obliged to pay on behalf of their staff. The Institute also encourages members to join district societies within designated localities within the country. The district societies organize monthly meetings at which members are educated on new developments within the profession. It must be noted that not all professionals belong to the district societies as membership is voluntary. It is, therefore, possible to have a member of the profession who might not attend any professional training at the CPD or district levels within a particular year.

Professional accountants in Ghana may be classified into three categories; namely: accountants in academia, accountants in industry and accountants in professional practice. During the year 2018, a total of 318 professional accounting firms were licensed by ICAG to

practise in Ghana for the period ending December 31. The licensed firms have been classified into six categories: A1, A, B1, B, C and D based on revenue levels, number of partners and staff strength (ICAG 2018a). Of the number of licensed firms, about 90 percent are registered within the Greater Accra Region. The Ashanti Region ranks second with about 5 percent of licensed practising firms and the remaining 5 percent of firms are shared among the Upper-West, Northern, Brong-Ahafo, Eastern, Western and Central regions (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: List of Accountancy Firms Licensed by ICAG Valid Until 31 December, 2018

	Category of Firms						Total	%
	A1	A	B1	B	C	D		
No. of Firms	5	22	30	42	56	163	318	100
Registered Office:								
Greater Accra Region	5	21	27	37	50	145	285	89.6
Ashanti Region	0	0	3	3	2	7	15	4.7
Eastern Region	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0.94
Western Region	0	1	0	0	0	5	6	1.89
Brong-Ahafo Region	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	0.94
Northern Region	0	0	0	1	0	2	3	0.94
Upper-West Region	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.31
Central Region	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0.63
Total	5	22	30	42	56	163	318	100

Source: ICAG (2018)

1.2.3 Institutional and accounting programmes accreditation

The NAB which was established in August 2007 through an Act of Ghana's Parliament, Act 744, is the body charged with the responsibility of accrediting both public and private institutions regarding the contents and standards of their programmes (NAB, 2007). The Board has the mandate to determine the programmes and requirements for the proper operation and the maintenance of acceptable levels of academic and professional standards in consultation with the institution to be accredited. The Board has the mandate to determine the equivalence of diplomas, certificates and other qualifications awarded by institutions in the country or elsewhere. Additional functions include the publication, as it considers

appropriate, of the list of accredited public and private institutions and programmes at the beginning of each calendar year. Also, the Board is charged with the responsibility of advising the President of Ghana on the granting of Charter to private tertiary institutions as and when needed. Finally, the Board is required to perform other functions that may be determined by the Minister of Education.

1.2.4 Public universities

Public university education in the country started before the nation gained independence. The first university to be established in 1948 was named the University College of Gold Coast. The University College gained full university status in the year 1961 (University of Ghana, 2014). At the end of 1962, other public universities had been established that increased the number of universities in the country to three (3). By the year 2005, the number of universities in Ghana had increased to five (5). To date, the number had risen to a total of ten (10) (NAB 2016b). Of this number, seven (7) offer degree programmes in business administration and accounting related courses (NAB 2016b) (Please see Table 1.2 for the regional distribution of public universities that offer accounting programmes in Ghana).

1.2.5 Private universities

Ghana witnessed the birth of the first private university by a religious organisation in 1995. The Valley View University College, which is now Valley View University (VVU), was given accreditation by NAB in 1995. Two years after the establishment of VVU (i.e. 1997), the second private university, Central University College, was established by another religious organisation – the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC). Since 1997, there has been a steady increase in the number of such universities in Ghana. At the end of 2016, the NAB had accredited a total of 74 private universities in Ghana (NAB 2016a). A review of the list indicates that, of the total number, 44 offer programmes in accounting and business

related courses (NAB 2016a). Table 1.2 presents the regional distribution of private universities that offer accounting programmes in Ghana as at 31 December, 2016.

Table 1.2: Regional Distribution of Universities that Offer Accounting Programmes in Ghana

Region	Private	%	Public	%	Total	%
Greater Accra	28	64%	3	43%	31	61%
Eastern	4	9%	0	0%	4	8%
Central	3	7%	2	29%	5	10%
Brong-Ahafo	1	2%	0	0%	1	2%
Ashanti	5	11%	1	14%	6	12%
Volta	1	2%	0	0%	1	2%
Northern, Upper East and Upper West	2	5%	1	14%	3	6%
Total	44	100%	7	100%	51	100%

Source: National Accreditation Board December, 2016

1.2.6 Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana (ICAG)

The ICAG was established by an Act of Parliament, Act 170 of 1963. According to Act 170, the objective of the Institute was ‘to make provision for the conduct of examinations by the Institute and other matters connected with the accountancy profession’. Section 4(b) 1 of Act 170 states that “no person shall be qualified as a member of the Institute unless that person has received training or practical experience in the subjects of accountancy”. As required of any professional body, sections of the Act, specifically Section 14, makes provision for general disqualification of members of the profession. Additionally, Section 15 of the Act deals with striking of or cancellation of registration of a member if found guilty of professional misconduct. Section 16(3) of the Third Schedule of the Act makes provision for disciplinary action against members who may be found to have engaged in any acts of misconduct in the performance of their functions. At the end of June 2017, the Institute had registered 4,133 members who were in good standing (ICAG 2017).

1.3 Problem Statement

Ethics has been concerned with doing what is considered to be right and generally acceptable in society. The concept has long been incorporated in higher education (Callahan & Bok, 2012) though it became more pronounced in business education and professional accounting practice following the corporate scandals that occurred at the beginning of the 20th century that led to the collapse of some giant firms. The literature on ethics interventions has concentrated on university accounting education (Blanthorne, Kovar & Fisher, 2007; Dellaportas, Kanapathippillai, Khan & Leung, 2014; Marzuki, Subramaniam, Cooper & Dellaportas, 2017) to the neglect of professional practice. Additionally, studies that examine ethics education interventions have merely examined the differences in the perceptions of students, faculties and university administrators without examining whether the interventions are achieving objectives set (Cameron & O’Leary, 2015; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008). Studies involving ethics in higher education have explored the role of ethics education in ethical attitudes (Ballantine, Guo & Larres 2018; Jackling et al., 2007).

From the perspectives of universities and professional institutions, ethics interventions in curriculum design serve to influence the ethical attitudes of students (Jackling et al., 2007). Other pieces of evidence adduced in the literature blamed ethical failures within the accounting profession on accounting educators (Ballantine et al., 2018; Gray et al., 1994). Consequently, ethics intervention in accounting curriculum has been cited as a remedy in addressing unethical attitudes among accounting graduates and professionals in the business environment (Ballantine et al., 2018; Gray et al., 1994).

In addition to the role of ethics education interventions in ethical attitudes, attention has been devoted to the examination of personal and organisational attributes as playing a role in the ethical attitudes of accounting graduates and professionals (Conroy, Emerson & Pons, 2010;

Emerson, Conroy & Stanley, 2007; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge, Baron & Friedmann, 2015).

In spite of the acceptance of the role of ethics intervention in education and in personal and organisational attributes in shaping ethical attitudes, we are yet to have a study that examines the role of ethics education and personal and organisational attributes in a single study; thus, creating a gap. It is, therefore, necessary for a study in this area to address the identified gap by addressing the three elements since they are closely related, affect one another and collectively contribute to achieving objectives set. Additionally, the study contributes to the existing literature and provides additional insights from a developing country context.

The study, therefore, sought to investigate the effect of ethics interventions in accounting education and practice on objectives set for making such interventions. Secondly, the study sought to investigate the effect of ethics interventions on the ethical attitudes of accountants in Ghana. The effects of personal and organisational attributes on the ethical attitudes of accountants are also examined. Thereafter, the study explored the accounting ethics curriculum design of universities and professional accounting programmes in Ghana. The next section addresses the individual problem statements outlined above.

1.3.1 Ethics interventions in accounting education and practice

Many professions, including the accounting profession, have two sides, which include education and practice components, where practice involves professional training. Similarly, when it comes to the accounting profession, we can have research on ethics in accounting education and ethics in accountancy practice. The expectation is that research would be focused on the two perspectives (instructors/faculty and practitioners). On the contrary, a review of extant literature suggests that several researchers have focused on the perspective

of university accounting education (Blanthorne, Kovar & Fisher, 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008). Within the university education, the focus has been on either students and faculty (Adkins & Radtke, 2004) or schools and accounting department heads only (Dellaportas, Kanapathippillai, Khan & Leung, 2014; Kerr & Smith, 1995). The goal of ethics intervention has been mainly to influence accounting practice. Yet, very little has been researched regarding accounting practice, particularly regarding the opinions of professional accountants who are the expected beneficiaries of accounting education (Abdolmohammadi & Reinstein, 2012). The result is that we know very little about the effect of ethics interventions on accounting practice from the perspective of practitioners; thus, creating a gap. This study explores the perspectives of both faculty and practitioners to have the views of the relevant stakeholders (Asonitou & Hassall, 2019) in a single study to provide a comprehensive picture regarding the views of two key stakeholders in accounting education (instructors) and accounting practice (practitioners).

Similarly, studies on ethics intervention in accounting curriculum have focused on different elements independently. These include goals of accounting ethics education (Adkins & Radtke, 2004; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Loeb, 1988); methods of teaching ethics (Blanthorne et al. 2007; Kerr & Smith, 1995); where to integrate ethics – which subjects (Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008); when to integrate – which year or level of education (Dellaportas et al., 2014) and whether it should be taught at all (Kerr & Smith, 1995; Loeb, 1988). However, curriculum design involves a combination of the above interrelated elements of ethics related activities and processes. Sadly, the available research has focused only on the different aspects of ethics curriculum design stated above. This has therefore created a gap by presenting an incomplete and disconnected view of ethics intervention in accounting programmes. Therefore, to provide a complete and connected view of ethics-related curriculum in accounting programmes, there is the need to consider all the inter-connected

activities in a single study that would provide a comprehensive and broader view of the state of ethics in accounting programmes. This study seeks to contribute to the literature by examining the different components of ethics education interventions in a single study to provide a comprehensive view from the perspectives of accounting instructors and practitioners. This is necessary to provide empirical evidence of the relationship between the ethics intervention components and the objectives set to inform policy makers and to guide their practice.

Ethics research in accounting education has also considered demographic variables, especially regarding comparison among study groups (Peursen & Julian, 2006), particularly in developed country contexts. There is, however, paucity of research in this area from developing country perspectives (Ambala & Onumah, 2015). Consequently, this study has examined the influence of demographic variables to determine differences that may occur from a developing country perspective to enrich existing literature.

Additionally, curriculum design has been described as a “time-consuming, complex and idiosyncratic process” that needs deeper understanding using in-depth interviews (Ghaffari et al., 2008 p. 192). Despite the above, studies that address the different components of ethics interventions in accounting programmes do not provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under discussion, thereby creating a gap (Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al. 2008). As a result, we are yet to have studies that explore accounting ethics curriculum design to gain a deeper understanding of the processes involved. Also, the conclusion reached by Ghaffari et al. (2008) confirms that ethics in accounting curriculum design can have a deeper understanding with the use of interviews in addition to secondary data and questionnaires. The lack of studies exploring curriculum design in accounting programmes from in-depth interviews has prompted the need for this study. This study, therefore, focused

on the how (i.e. design practices), and the why (i.e. motivations and barriers, if any), in ethics curriculum design, using a qualitative approach. This approach was considered appropriate to provide a comprehensive study and deeper understanding of the phenomenon in addressing the identified gaps in the literature.

1.3.2 Ethics interventions and ethical attitudes

Ethical attitude and behaviour in business has been linked to the integration of ethics in accounting curriculum (Ballantine et al., 2018). The profession in the UK, for instance, has demonstrated this by integrating ethics into the curriculum of accounting courses (Ghaffari et al., 2008). In the view of Ghaffari et al. (2008), ethics education helps members of the profession to be objective and ethical in their service to the public. The professional bodies have supported the role of ethics by making it a requirement in the training of professional accountants. Specifically, the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA), Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants, England and Wales (ICAEW) revised their programmes by incorporating ethics into their respective syllabuses during 2005 and 2007 (Ghaffari et al., 2008). The ICAG similarly revised its syllabus in 2018 by incorporating ethics per the International Education Standard (IES) 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 to equip its members with the relevant ethical skills. It must be noted that the ICAG has integrated ethics within several modules throughout the qualification stages to prepare its members for ethical professional practice (ICAG, 2018b).

The above is a clear indication of a shift from the initial objections regarding the integration and teaching of ethics in the accounting curriculum (Bampton & Maclagan, 2005; McDonald, 2004). The objections stem from the premise that individuals form their moral values long before getting into tertiary education and could therefore not have a change in ethical attitudes from upbringing. Others also argue that accounting as a discipline is guided by legal

frameworks and standards which ensure objectivity and professionals are therefore not subject to ethical dilemmas (Bampton & Maclagan, 2005). Current events and changes in curriculum design across the world in universities and the professional bodies indicate the acceptance that ethics can and may influence ethical attitude and decision making (Alam, 1999; Gammie & Gammie, 2009). Despite the acceptance, very little has been researched to examine the influence of ethics intervention on ethical attitude, thus creating a gap. Also, the majority of the studies that examine ethical attitudes have been from the context of developed countries (Ballantine et al., 2018; Sorensen et al., 2017). This study attempted to address this gap with the use of a quantitative method to examine the influence of ethics intervention on ethical attitudes of accountants from the context of a developing economy.

1.3.3 Personal and organisational attributes and ethical attitudes

A review of previous literature has established an association between PAE and ethical attitude (Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge et al., 2015). Personal attributes are defined as characteristics that may be related to a person and which have the possibility of influencing attitudes, especially regarding ethical dilemmas (Taylor, 2013). However, there are differences in the definition of personal attributes in existing studies. For instance, several studies have measured personal attributes in terms of demographic factors: age, gender and professional qualification (Conroy, Emerson & Pons, 2010; Emerson, Conroy & Stanley, 2007; Emerson & McKinney, 2010; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013). Other studies have used factors such as openness, emotional stability and conscientiousness as a measure of personal attributes (Holtbrügge et al., 2015). This study measures personal attributes beyond demographic factors which include greed and desire for personal gains, behaviour of peers and superiors, personal values, family influences and pressures, religious background and ego strength as suggested by Abuznaid (2009) and Christie, Kwon, Stoeberl and Baumhart

(2003). It is believed that this measure of ethical attitude will extend the existing literature beyond demographics and the limited scope of the definitions of personal attributes.

Also, the extant literature has established a relationship between OAE and ethical attitudes. There has been a narrow and inconsistent definition of what constitutes organisational attributes in the existing literature. For instance, organisational attributes have been defined by Holtbrügge et al. (2015) as organisational culture, whereas Ghazali and Ismail (2013) use the knowledge of the professional code of ethics. The present study defines organisational attributes as conditions existing within the workplace that influence attitudes which include formal company policies and codes of conduct, visionary leadership, organisational climate and organisational culture/values (Christie et al., 2003; Modarres & Rafiee, 2011). Extending what constitutes organisational attributes and examining the effects of this broader definition may provide additional insights.

Furthermore, few studies have examined both attributes in a single study, thus not providing a comprehensive view of the effects of these attributes on ethical attitude (Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge et al., 2015). Finally, some of these studies examining the phenomenon have employed student samples, business managers or trainee accountants without the engagement of professional accountants in business and practice (Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge et al., 2015). The use of professional accountants in examining the effect of personal and organisational attributes in a developing country context extends the existing literature.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Using evidence from Ghana, the study examined mainly ethics education interventions and the effect of personal and organisational attributes on the ethical attitudes of accountants.

Based on this aim, the study specifically sought to:

- i. Investigate the effect of ethics education interventions (EEI) on the objective of developing ethics-related courses (OEC);
- ii. Investigate the effect of ethics education interventions on the ethical attitudes of accountants (EAA);
- iii. Investigate the effect of personal and organizational attributes on ethical attitudes of accountants;
- iv. Examine ethics and curriculum design of accounting programmes in Ghana.

1.5 Summary of Hypotheses Development

The literature that supports hypotheses development has been discussed from chapter two to five of this study. Below is a summary of the hypotheses developed by the study based on evidence obtained from the literature on ethics education interventions (EEI) and ethical attitudes of accountants (EAA).

1. H₁: EEI of universities in Ghana is significant and has a positive relationship with OEC
2. H₂: EEI is significant and has a positive relationship with EAA
3. H₃: There is a positive relationship between PAE and EAA
4. H₄: There is a positive relationship between OAE and EAA

1.6 Significance of the Study

The objective of the study was to examine the effect of ethics education interventions on objectives and ethical attitudes of professional accountants in Ghana. The study makes substantial contributions to the literature in many aspects. Firstly, the study provides evidence on the composition of ethics education interventions in university and professional accounting education.

The study further provides empirical evidence that objectives set for ethics in accounting education is achievable through ethics education interventions in universities and within the professional accounting practice.

The study provides theoretical bases to suggest that individual personal attributes of ethics are insufficient to influence ethical attitudes. However, the collective effects of personal attributes combine to positively impact on ethical attitude.

In addition, it is argued that individual attributes in the organisational environment are inadequate in influencing ethical attitudes. However, the combined effect of organisational attributes collectively influences ethical attitude positively.

Based on the perspectives of accounting instructors and professional accountants, the study identifies ethics curriculum design as being influenced by faculty initiatives, industry demand, international benchmarking and modernization. Besides, the motivation for ethics curriculum design includes preservation of economy, avoidance of corruption, dynamics of the business environment, globalization and sustainability of the society. Finally, barriers in curriculum design practices in accounting programmes in Ghanaian universities and professional institutions include lack of teaching resources, reliance on instructors' discretion, regulations from accreditation and professional institutions and large class sizes.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study covers ethics education interventions in accounting programmes of universities and the professional accounting institution in Ghana - ICAG, the effect of interventions of ethical attitudes of accountants and ethics and curriculum design of accounting programmes in Ghana. The target population is accounting instructors from all public and private universities

that offer accounting programmes in Ghana and the ICAG which is the institution with the mandate to regulate professional accountancy qualification and practice in Ghana. By the end of December 2016, there were 7 public and 44 private universities that offered accounting programmes (NAB 2016b, 2016a). This number excludes Polytechnics that have been newly converted into Technical Universities, as the study was mainly about traditional universities. According to ICAG, at the end of June 2017, a total of 4,133 professionally qualified accountants had been registered as members in good standing (ICAG, 2017).

The justification for the scope of the study is premised on the importance of accounting education and training of accounting graduates and professionals for national development. The graduates and professionals who pass out yearly make significant contributions to national development. Professional accountants are employed in all sectors of the economy, occupying prominent positions in both private and public sector organisations. They are responsible for the fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatements. Ethics education interventions and ethical attitudes of accountants are crucial for the development of the Ghanaian economy. The acquisition and maintenance of the right ethical attitude is essential to the prevention of unethical practices in financial performance at a time when limited resources within the country are needed for national development. The study, therefore, makes findings from the perspectives of accounting instructors and professional accountants who contribute in shaping the role of ethics education in ethical attitude and addressing the challenges in the academic and professional accounting education environment.

Data was collected from 77 accounting instructors from public and private universities and 340 professional accountants in Ghana. The study further used interview responses from deans and heads of accounting departments (HoADs) of business schools and senior officials

of regulatory agencies to provide a deeper and broader understanding of the issues being investigated.

1.8 Chapter Disposition

The study is organised into six chapters following the paper-based approach. This chapter is chapter one, which has provided a general introduction and background to the study. It has also presented stylised facts on accounting education and practice in Ghana, a problem statement, objectives of the study, a summary of hypotheses, the significance of and scope of the study. The second chapter, which is an empirical paper, examines the effect of ethics education interventions on objectives set by institutions in Ghana from the perspectives of instructors and professional accountants. Chapter three is the second empirical paper that examines the effect of ethics education interventions on ethical attitudes of accountants. Chapter four, the third empirical paper, examines the effect of personal and organisational attributes on the ethical attitudes of accountants in Ghana. Chapter five is the fourth empirical paper that adopts a qualitative approach to understand curriculum design practices of universities and professional accounting institutions. The last chapter, which is chapter six, presents a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations for the entire study.

CHAPTER TWO

ETHICS INTERVENTIONS IN

ACCOUNTING EDUCATION AND

PRACTICE IN GHANA

CHAPTER TWO

ETHICS INTERVENTIONS IN ACCOUNTING EDUCATION AND PRACTICE IN GHANA

Abstract

The study investigates the effect of ethics education interventions (EEI) on the objectives for making such interventions in accounting programmes of academic and professional accounting institutions. It employs a survey of 77 accounting instructors from universities and 340 professional accountants in Ghana and uses the ordinary least square (OLS) regression method to test various hypothesised relationships. The results indicate that ethics related courses (ERC), the methods of teaching ethics (MTE) and methods of ethics interventions (MEI) have a positive and significant impact in achieving the objectives set for making ethics education interventions in accounting programmes. Furthermore, public and religious institutions have significant and positive association while chartered institutions (institutions with autonomy) have a negative and significant association with objectives set. The study is useful for informing accounting educators and managers of professional bodies in the development of accounting ethics curriculum in universities and professional accounting institutions. The study further reveals institutional types that influence ethics intervention programmes in universities. It also adds to existing literature on ethics interventions in accounting programmes from a developing country perspective.

2.1 Introduction

Ethics in accounting education has been acknowledged to contribute among others to sensitise and deepen students understanding of ethical issues in accounting (Dellaportas et al., 2014) and thereby impact positively on society and lead to a reduction in financial scandals. Ethics intervention studies have been made from varied dimensions though they are connected. These are the goals of accounting ethics education (Adkins & Radtke, 2004; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Loeb, 1988); the teaching of ethics (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Kerr & Smith, 1995); the integration of ethics in various accounting subjects (Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008) and the methods and the levels of ethics integration (Dellaportas et al., 2014). Despite the interconnectedness of the issues above, less research has been focused on integrating them in one study to provide a deeper understanding based on comprehensive components of ethics education interventions.

A study on ethics interventions in accounting education is timely and relevant at a time in Ghana when seven banks have collapsed between August 2017 and August 2018 due to what has been termed as a ‘moral crises’ rather than a financial crisis (Awadzi, 2018, pp. 8 & 9). Additionally, the ICAG has sanctioned four auditing firms for various acts of complicity in the collapse of banks (ICAG, 2019).

Previous research in accounting ethics education has either focused on student samples (O’Leary 2009, 2012), faculty samples (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008), university administrators (Kerr & Smith, 1995), students and lecturers (Adkins & Radtke, 2004) or practising accountants only (Abdolmohammadi & Reinstein, 2012). Though the focus of ethics in accounting education is expected to be on university and professional education, we are yet to have a study that examines the perceptions of accounting instructors and accountants from practice and industry. The use of a non-student sample adds a

dimension that is under-researched in the literature. For example, accounting instructors are curriculum designers and lecture room facilitators with wealth of experiences to answer questions on the goals of ethics education. Secondly, some instructors have professional qualifications and practice experiences to give sound opinions regarding ethics goals. Also, accountants from industry and practice have varied experience beyond university education and professional training to make informed opinions on questions posed.

This study makes significant contributions through its literature review and survey by examining the different components of ethics education interventions in a single study to provide a comprehensive view of the perspectives of accounting instructors and practitioners. This is necessary to provide empirical evidence of the influence of ethics intervention components and objectives set to inform policymakers and to guide their practice.

The study contributes to the literature as it consolidates knowledge about the achievement of objectives set by universities through various ethics interventions. It addresses the gaps in the literature by investigating the extent to which EEI (ethics-related courses, methods of teaching, the specific method adopted by instructors in teaching, assessment methods and levels of intervention) affects the objective of raising ethical accounting professionals. It also examines the effect of institutions in the attainment of set objectives. Such knowledge is essential in the design of curriculum and assessment modes among accounting educators and change efforts in accounting education.

Consistent with the majority of extant literature, the study shows that the inclusion of ethics-related courses, methods of teaching and methods of assessments are significant variables in deepening the understanding of moral issues in accounting graduates. Furthermore, public and religious institutions have a significant influence in achieving objectives set for making

ethics interventions. The study also reveals that chartered institutions (with autonomy) are less likely to achieve objectives set since they are not affiliated to institutions that would require them to comply with terms of affiliation.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the literature concerning the components of ethics interventions and the development of hypotheses. Theories underpinning the study are presented after which the methodology of the study is outlined. The results of the study are presented and discussed after which the contributions, summary, limitations and implications for further research are also presented.

2.2 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

This section begins with a discussion on the concept of ethics in accounting education. It is followed by a review of the literature on ethics interventions in accounting education in universities and professional programmes and the development of the study hypotheses.

2.2.1 Ethical theories and accounting ethics education

Several ethics accounting education studies have applied ethical theories to examine attitudes and behaviour in accounting in the last decades. These include egoism, deontology and utilitarianism (Armstrong, Ketz, & Owsen, 2003; Deshpande, 1997; Duska, Duska & Ragatz, 2011; Forte, 2004b; Keller, Smith, & Smith, 2007; Modarres & Rafiee, 2011; J. A. Wood, Longenecker & McKinney, 1988). Following similar studies (Keller et al., 2007; Modarres & Rafiee, 2011), the choice of multiple theories is to present a more realistic view (Eisenhardt, 1989) and unique insight (Covaleski, Dirsmith & Samuel, 1996) into the phenomenon under study.

Egoism is a theory that suggests that individuals act with self-interest and ignore the interest of others. With a foundation in the neoclassical utility theory, egoism is a philosophy that has a potential for conflict between personal interest and that of the firm (Keller et al., 2007). This is because a decision that would not bring personal benefit would be rejected at the expense of the organisation or the wider society such as the firm or professional association to which the individual belongs (Keller et al., 2007). Other studies have, however, argued that egoism may confer potential benefits not only on the individual but the firm and the professional association or the society at large and must, therefore, be carefully considered (Victor & Cullen, 1988). In the choice of ethics courses and teaching and assessment methods, accounting instructors may make decisions that would promote self-interest. Likewise, accountants as beneficiaries of ethics education interventions may make decisions that tend to promote self-interests in the preparation of financial statements. In the view of Wood, Longenecker, and McKinney (1988), egoism may be identified in the decision making of many professionals. Egoism may promote the interest of the society when there is congruence in the goal of the society and that of the individual at the centre of a decision. The absence of goal congruence could pose a potential conflict where individuals or firms at the centre of decision-making attempt to make a selection from a range of decisions (Keller et al., 2007). Egoism has been criticised for being self-serving rather than serving the interest of others (Duska et al., 2011). The broader interest of utilitarianism may complement the self-serving weakness of egoism.

Utilitarianism is described as the pursuit of deeds that have the potential to generate the highest good for a large section of society (Duska et al., 2011). The test of a decision is the action that brings happiness to a greater number of people including the decision-maker. The theory demands that decisions are based on friendship and relationship with others to do what is generally acceptable. It also seeks the interest of the team/firm and society and not

the individual exclusively (Victor & Cullen, 1988). It follows that decisions that are contrary to the expected benefits of society may be rejected. Ethics interventions in accounting education by educational and professional institutions are designed to influence the ethical attitudes of students and the wider society. Such interventions that improve the ethical attitudes of students and accountants have the potential to promote the interest of society. In addition to the pursuit of self and corporate interests, accounting educators and accountants need to recognise the moral obligation imposed – deontology, as propounded by Kant (Duska et al., 2011).

Deontology demands that decision making must be seen as a duty and not for self-interest (Duska et al., 2011). Application of deontology demands that accounting instructors perform their functions strictly following the demands of their institutions. The call to behave ethically must be seen as a moral duty to be desired and upheld in organisations and society (Carreira, Guedes & Aleixo, 2008). The weakness here is that the theory ignores the motive of acting and does not give opportunities for deviations even with a tangible reason (Whetstone, 2001). This could mean that individuals may not be allowed to use their initiatives for improvement in job functions.

The role of accounting instructors cannot be understated in discussing ethics in accounting education. The decisions of instructors as key stakeholders to a large extent may result in the achievement of objectives set by institutions. Despite their importance, instructors may face ethical challenges in the performance of their functions. For instance, the attitude of instructors in the choice of teaching or assessment method may be influenced by egoism (self-interest) where methods adopted favour the individual rather than the society. For example, instructors may adopt the use of multiple-choice questions (MCQ) method of assessment over written essays due to the number of students in a class.

Again, it is possible for some instructors desiring the interest of students and society, to be innovative in the choice of teaching method where an institution lacks the resources to provide access to the much-needed resources. This is likely to be in contrast with others who would rely only on available resources without extra efforts regardless of the possible benefit of innovating in the interest of students. Furthermore, the alignment of goals of institutions to the personal goals of instructors could influence their attitudes for a discussion of ethical issues in the classroom, in response to calls for increased ethics education for the benefit of both the instructor and the student.

This study argues that the nature of courses mounted by tertiary institutions, the levels of ethics integration, the methods of teaching and assessment may be influenced by a sense of obligation on the part of institutional heads and instructors. Also, the nature of ethics interventions may also be determined in the interest of the wider society to bring about a maximum benefit for all stakeholders. Again, the adoption of the teaching and assessment strategies recommended by AICPA for use by instructors in accounting courses could be described as an obligation in the interest of the accounting profession.

2.2.2 Ethics and accounting education

Ethics has been described as an old concept that has surfaced recently with its foundation deeply rooted in the thoughts of Socrates and Aristotle and spanning through several years (Svensson & Wood, 2003). Prior literature has described ethics as coming from the Greek word ‘ethos’ which means ‘character’ or ‘custom’; “that which is concerned with the kind of relationship a person has with himself or herself and how the individual constitutes himself or herself as a moral subject” (Baker, 2014 p.219). Some have also argued that ethics is the desire to search for and do that which is good and is committed to what is generally accepted as right in society (Duska, Duska & Ragatz, 2011).

The concept appears to be rooted not only in the morals of society but also in the core values of individuals depending on one's environment (Sims & Felton, 2006; Hall, 2011). It has been used synonymously with morals, morality, moral principles of conduct and what is considered to be right and wrong (Peurseem & Julian, 2006). It has been associated with trust and virtue and said to be the basis for the existence of society. One can, therefore, argue that since it has been tested and survived through the centuries, it can be relied upon to achieve desired outcomes. According to Svensson and Wood (2003), ethics is a function of not only culture but also of time; an assertion that agrees with the position of Hall (2011). These authors have introduced a time dimension into our understanding of ethics in addition to culture. It follows therefore that ethics evolves across time within societies and cultures. Acceptance of this position requires a continuous study of the concept to understand changing dynamics over time.

Some scholars have argued that the observance of ethical standards engenders public trust and confidence in the accounting profession (Smith, 2003) and must be encouraged. Gaa and Thorne (2004) define ethics to include actions of individuals in circumstances that impact not only the individual at the centre of the action but also the wellbeing of other stakeholders. The definition classifies ethics into a situation of choice and value where individuals perform actions based on personal values and choices they make. As a result, there is the need to inculcate ethical values in accountants during their academic and professional education to equip them with the skills necessary to make them behave ethically in their interest and the interest of society.

Previous literature discusses some factors that influence ethics in the educational curriculum to include: dean's gender, leadership, financial strength, religious affiliation and composition of curriculum committees (Rutherford, Parks, Cavasos & White, 2012). Other factors

discussed include the institutional environment, prestige, availability of credit hours, faculty interest and affiliation status (Evans, Klebe & Weaver, 2006). Resource constraints including time, materials and finance together with qualification of faculty to teach ethics have also been identified as factors that hinder the achievement of objectives set for making ethics curriculum design in business schools (Blanthorne et al., 2007).

2.2.3 International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants (IESBA)

A body of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), the IESBA seeks to serve the interest of the public in many ways. These include: supporting the development of high-quality international standards; promoting the adoption and implementation of the standard; building the capacity of professional accounting organizations; and making pronouncements on public issues. In achieving its objectives, the Board has issued a code of ethics that outlines the fundamental principles and conceptual framework to guide accountants worldwide. In applying the conceptual framework, accountants are required to exercise professional judgment, be open to new information and changes in facts and circumstances, and use the reasonable and informed third party test (IFAC, 2018, p. 8).

Additionally, the code assumes that members in senior positions as professional accountants may have the ability and opportunity to access information, and to influence policies, decisions made and actions taken by others involved with the employing organization (IFAC, 2018, p. 34). Consequently, senior members in the profession are required to encourage and promote ethics-based culture in the organization such as the introduction, implementation and oversight of ethics education and training programs (IFAC, 2018, p. 34).

Members of the accounting profession face some threats. These include threats of self-interest, self-review, advocacy, familiarity and intimidation. According to the standards, the

threats may be impacted by the nature and scope of professional activity, organisational and operating environments (IFAC, 2018). To combat these threats, the IESBA has provided guidelines to help members to evaluate and address them. Among the means of addressing threats in the accounting profession include appropriate training and education, the use of ethics and code of conduct and emphasis on the importance of ethical behaviour (IFAC, 2018). Ethics education could be used to equip graduates and professionals with the skills needed to address ethical challenges in the operating and organisational environment.

2.2.4 Objectives of ethics courses in curriculum (OEC)

Prior literature has assigned multiple reasons for having ethics in the curriculum of accounting programmes. These objectives range from issues that are aimed at developing an individual appreciation, developing the capacity to handle ethical issues and ability to influence a change in attitude (Adkins & Radtke, 2004; Saat, Porter & Woodbine, 2012). It is important to develop the abilities of graduates to have a sense of moral obligation to themselves and society. The provision of such skills and knowledge could prepare them to handle ethical dilemmas and uncertainties in the professional environment (Adkins & Radtke, 2004). The objective of ethics to accounting students and professionals has been identified as a means of improving the societal perception of the accounting profession (Shafer & Wang, 2010). Others see the objectives of ethics in accounting discipline as the restoration of trust and public confidence in the accounting profession (Naudé, 2008). Additional objectives for the teaching of ethics is to influence the moral behaviour and conduct of the student; a goal that is seen as difficult to achieve (Callahan & Bok, 2012).

The objective of ethics in accounting programmes of universities and professional accounting programmes is seen as essential in averting ethical scandals in the business environment (Fisher, Swanson & Schmidt, 2007). A prior empirical study involving final

year volunteer students found a positive and significant effect of ethics intervention on moral judgement development, a goal of an ethics course in accounting programmes (Dellaportas, 2006).

Though the principles of honesty and truth have been enshrined in the code of ethics of most professional accounting bodies (IFAC, 2018), unethical practices have not been eliminated from business transactions and financial reporting (Nijhof, Wilderom & Oost, 2012).

Findings from the perspectives of accountants and instructors made from a developing country context could prove useful in ethics intervention decisions of academic and professional institutions.

2.2.5 Ethics related courses (ERC)

From the perspective of deontology and utilitarianism, the decision to include ethics-related courses may be seen by accounting instructors as a duty required by their institutions and aimed at preparing graduates for the job market (Keller et al., 2007). However, the inclusion may result in sensitising students' understanding of ethical issues in the profession and thereby achieving an objective set by an educational institution or professional body. Ethics related courses play a key role in achieving the goal of ethics courses. However, mixed results have been reported by empirical research. For example, previous literature suggests that the incorporation of ethics-related courses in accounting programmes have a positive association with the objective of raising ethical accountants (Abdolmohammadi, 2008; Cohen & Pant, 1989). However, in a study involving 41 volunteer final year students to find the influence of ethics courses on moral judgement development - a goal of an ethics course, it was found that some students were negative about the effect of ethics courses on the goal of ethics courses (Dellaportas, 2006). Other studies have attributed the realisation of ethics objectives to factors such as family influences, church and institutions in society rather than

the inclusion of ethics related courses (Reidenbach & Robin, 1990). Consequently, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *There is positive relationship between inclusion of ethics related courses in accounting programmes and the objectives set for ethics related courses.*

2.2.6 Methods of teaching ethics (MTE)

According to the ethical theory of egoism and deontology, the method of teaching may be influenced by self-interest and/or as a moral duty required by institutions. Previous research regarding the impact of university curricula on the education of accounting graduates in ethics has established some relationship between teaching ethics and moral reasoning (an objective of ethics intervention) though not conclusive (Kerr & Smith, 1995; Bampton & Maclagan, 2005; Low et al. 2008; Copeland, 2015). In a study involving 262 auditing students, the author concluded that teaching methods showed positive and significant improvement in the ethical reasoning of participants (O’Leary, 2012). MTE has also been linked to the achievement of the objectives of raising ethical graduates, deepening the understanding of ethical issues (Howieson, 2003; O’Leary, 2009). However, in a study involving final year auditing class, no evidence was found concerning the method of teaching and the goal of improving moral understanding (Cameron & O’Leary, 2015). The above considerations lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *There is a positive relationship between the method of teaching ethics-related courses and the objectives set for teaching ethics-related courses.*

2.2.7 Specific method of teaching ethics (SMTE)

The AICPA has recommended several teaching strategies for accounting programmes (AICPA, 2015). Egoistic and deontological considerations may influence the choice of SMTE. For example, accounting instructors may use methods that involve less work or those

based on regulations. The achievement of objectives set has been associated with the choice of teaching strategy. For example, the teaching method that adopts active learning strategies produces positive outcomes (Ballantine, Guo, & Larres, 2018; Loeb, 2015). In contrast, passive learning strategies promote cheating and results in non-attainment of goals set (Ballantine et al., 2018). It is important to engage the empirical world to find the extent to which these recommended strategies/techniques used by instructors in the teaching of accounting are contributing to achieving objectives set. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: *There is a positive relationship between the specific method of teaching ethics-related courses and the objectives set for teaching ethics-related courses.*

2.2.8 Methods of assessing ethics-related courses (MAE)

Concerning assessment, some studies have associated improvement in ethical behaviour - an objective of ethics interventions with MAE (Milne & McConnell, 2001; Svensson & Wood, 2003). The mode of assessment has been reported to encourage or prevent cheating - an unethical attitude and behaviour that does not yield the desired objective of making ethics interventions (Ballantine et al., 2018). Milne and McConnell (2001) argue that though there is no perfect system of assessment in the curriculum of business programmes, the problem-based learning approach in assessment in the medical profession is useful at improving motivation levels and skills in clinical reasoning. Despite the existence of the varied methods of assessing, the ideal method(s) of assessing ethics to greatly enhance students' ethical attitudes as graduates on the professional ladder as accountants in the working environment is yet to be found (O'Leary, 2009). Research continues to explore the optimum method that has the potential to achieve the intended objective of training ethical accountants. From the above argument, this hypothesis is derived:

Hypothesis 4: *There is a positive relationship between the method of teaching ethics-related courses and the objectives set for teaching ethics-related courses.*

2.2.9 Methods of ethics intervention (MEI)

MEI could follow deontological considerations because institutional requirements demand one method over another. Also, the decision on the method of intervention could be based on that which produces the common good of society. MEI is a means of providing students and accountants with ethical skills necessary for the practise of their profession, a goal set for ethics intervention (Fisher et al., 2007; Graham, 2012). Conflicting findings are however evident in the literature. For example, empirical evidence from the United Kingdom and Australia found that the method of ethics intervention has a positive association in achieving objectives set (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008). Also, studies involving final year volunteer students found a positive and significant effect of ethics intervention on moral judgement development, the goal of an ethics course in accounting programmes (Dellaportas, 2006). In contrast, other studies have argued that ethics interventions are transient and may therefore not impact ethical attitudes, rather reasons such as curriculum content and environmental factors may account for ethical behaviour – an objective of ethics intervention (Lampe & Finn, 1994; Loeb, 1991). Consequently, the following hypothesis is derived:

Hypothesis 5: *There is a positive relationship between the method of ethics and the objectives set for teaching ethics-related courses.*

2.2.10 Level of ethics intervention (LEI)

The level of ethics interventions in accounting programmes of universities and professional bodies has been associated with ethical attitude – an objective of ethics intervention (Callahan & Bok, 2012; Ghaffari et al., 2008). The debate in some studies following deontological arguments have been in favour of interventions at the undergraduate level (Ghaffari et al., 2008) or interventions at graduate levels (Evans, Klebe & Weaver, 2006). From a survey of 295 deans from AACSB member schools, it was argued that there is little

evidence of the effect of ethics course on graduate students' ethical decision making - an objective of ethics intervention (Evans & Marcal, 2005). From the above arguments, there appears to be no consensus on the desired level in the academic and professional programmes as to when to make ethics intervention. Consequently, the following hypothesis is put forward:

Hypothesis 6: *There is a positive relationship between the level of ethics and the objectives set for teaching ethics-related courses.*

2.2.11 Institutional type and objectives of ethics interventions

Institutional type has been identified in the literature as having some relationship with the objective of making ethics interventions in accounting education (Rutherford et al., 2012).

Institutional type plays a role in the making of ethics intervention in institutions. While some studies have reported no significant difference between private and public institutions concerning required ethics interventions (Evans et al., 2006), others found positive and significant associations (Rutherford et al., 2012; Simpson, Onumah & Oppong-Nkrumah, 2015). For instance, in a study of factors that drive ethics in the MBA curriculum, Evans et al. (2006) reveal no significant difference between private and public institutions concerning ethics interventions. However, a recent study of Rutherford et al. (2012) in an undergraduate of AACSB-accredited institutions found a positive and significant relationship between private and public institutions. Against this background, the study includes institutional type 1 (private versus public) as a control variable.

Studies have shown that an institution's religious affiliation would be associated with ethics interventions in the university curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Evans et al. (2006) and Rutherford et al. (2012) found that religiously affiliated schools are more likely to make ethics interventions than non-religious institutions at both the

undergraduate and graduate levels of their curricula. The expectation is that the above-mentioned situation would hold in a developing country context despite resource constraints. In the Ghanaian context, public universities are financed largely by the government. Few private institutions have charter by the local accreditation body responsible for tertiary education to run programmes without recourse to affiliates. The study expects that chartered institutions may make ethics interventions because of their size and resource.

2.3 Research Method and Design

The study adopted a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey in investigating the effects of an ethics education intervention on the objectives set for making such interventions in universities and the professional accounting association in Ghana. The quantitative approach enabled the collection of primary data and the development of scales for measuring the variables used in the study. As an academic exercise with time constraints, the study collected data at a point in time (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

2.3.1 Population, sample and sampling technique

The study population involved all accounting instructors of universities that teach accounting programmes in Ghana. Currently, there are 7 public and 44 private universities that offer accounting programmes in Ghana (NAB 2016a, 2016b). With an estimated number of 5 instructors per university and a total population of 7 public and 44 private institutions, the study population consisted of about 255 accounting instructors nationwide. Regarding professional accountants, the population of members registered with the ICAG as at 30th June 2017 was 4,133 (ICAG, 2017).

The choice of instructors is justified based on their role as persons who design and teach ethics courses in accounting programs in their universities (Lampe & Finn, 1994). It also

included all professional accountants registered with the ICAG with a varied background in education, industry, private and public practice in all sectors of the Ghanaian economy. The study was conducted across 4 out of the 7 regions that have universities offering accounting programmes. Forty out of the 44 private universities that offer accounting programmes, representing 91 percent, can be found in the four selected regions of the country, which are the Greater Accra, Ashanti, Central and Eastern regions. The sample constitutes 91 percent of the population of universities in Ghana that offer accounting programmes.

Professional accountants were selected based on their role as relevant stakeholders in accounting education (Asonitou & Hassall, 2019). Also, the views of such relevant stakeholders are essential to assist educators in the design of curriculum (Asonitou & Hassall, 2019). The sample size for professional accountants was 760 from a population of 4,600. The sample is based on 95% confidence level when the parameter in the population is assumed to be over 70% or under 30% with the reliability of $\pm 3\%$ from a table of computed sample size for sample proportions (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2010, p. 437).

2.3.2 Data sources and collection

This study examines the perceptions of accounting instructors and professional accountants on ethics in accounting and professional education using primary (survey responses) and secondary data (universities' handbooks, syllabus for ICAG and the ICAG Acts, 170 of 1963). A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to instructors in accounting departments of four public universities and 24 out of a total of 44 private institutions that offer accounting programmes in Ghana. 77 valid and usable responses which represent an effective response rate of 38.5% were collected. This was consistent with prior research involving accounting instructors that reported a response rate of 36% (Marzuki et al.,

2017). A total of 760 questionnaires were distributed to professional accountants during the period out of which 340 valid and usable questionnaires representing 44.7 percent were collected after completion. The accountants' questionnaires were administered at ICAG residential marking centres in between October 2017 and May 2018. The method was adopted because the residential marking brought together over 150 professional accountants from all sectors of the Ghanaian economy for five days to mark and moderate the professional examinations scripts. The study further administered questionnaires at ICAG district society meetings within the national capital and two other regional capitals in the country during the data collection period. The district societies meet monthly to discuss issues of common interest to professional accountants such as those that pertain to their continuous professional development (CPD).

Also, questionnaires were hand-distributed at the 2017 Annual Accountants' Conference at which over 600 professional accountants gathered for four days. The completed questionnaires were collected on the same day or the last day of the conference. The two groups of respondents were deemed qualified to respond as they were professionally qualified accountants and accounting instructors, respectively, who were expected to provide reliable responses on their perceptions.

2.3.3 Variables measurement

Following Adkins and Radtke (2004) the dependent variable is OEC (objectives of ethics related courses). The independent variables are ERC (ethics related courses in the curriculum of accounting programmes), MTE (methods of teaching ethics related courses), SMTE (specific methods used by instructors in teaching), MAE (methods of assessing ethics related courses), MEI (methods of ethics interventions) and LEI (levels of ethics interventions). The study measured all variables on a seven-point Likert scale, at 1 ("strongly

disagree”) and 7 (“entirely agree”). Likert scale responses from the survey were entered and used in data analysis. The description of the variables, measurement and sources are shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Variable Description, Measurement and Source

Variable	Measurement	Source
OEC	Responses to a sixteen-item instrument (see Section D in Appendix B)	(Adkins & Radtke, 2004; Callahan & Bok, 2012; Dellaportas et al., 2014; McDonald & Donleavy, 1995)
ERC	Responses to a nine-item construct (see Section B in Appendix B)	(Bampton & Cowton, 2013; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008)
MTE	Responses to a twelve-point construct (see Section E in Appendix B)	AICPA (2015)
SMTE	Responses to a twelve-point construct (see Section E in Appendix B)	AICPA (2015)
MAE	Responses to a ten-item instrument (see Section F in Appendix B)	Dunfee & Robertson (1988)
MEI	Responses to a six-point instrument (see Section G in Appendix B)	(Dellaportas et al., 2014; Dunfee & Robertson 1988; Ghaffari et al., 2008)
LEI	Responses to a six-point construct (see Section H from Appendix B)	(Blanthorne et al., 2007; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008)

Source: Author’s Research (2017)

2.3.4 Research instrument

The study used a survey questionnaire as an instrument for data collection (see Appendix C). Following similar prior research, the study adapted some of the research instruments to make it more relevant to respondents (Fritzsche & Oz, 2007). The instruments were employed to examine the perceptions of accounting instructors and professional accountants regarding ethics interventions in Ghanaian universities.

2.3.5 Control variables

Empirical studies on ethics education have identified several factors that explain the decision to make ethics interventions in accounting programmes. Among the factors is the type of

institution (Rutherford et al., 2012; Simpson, Onumah & Oppong-Nkrumah, 2015; Evans et al., 2006). In the present study, the control variables and their measurements are as follows: Institution type 1: public institution = 1, private = 0; Institution type 2: religious institution = 1, non-religious = 0; Institution type 3: chartered institution = 1, affiliated institution = 0.

2.3.6 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are key elements in the research process (McKinnon, 1988). The failure of a researcher to ensure reliability and validity may create doubts about findings made. Reliability in the research process ensures consistency in the use of instruments in similar research (Smith, 2015). To ensure validity, the study adopted instruments that have been previously validated to improve results that are reliable and in agreement with prior studies. The study conducted an internal consistency reliability of the constructs using Cronbach alpha (Cronbach, 1951). The acceptable level is given as ranging between 0.7 and 0.8 even though the alpha may be dependent on the number of variables within a construct (Smith, 2015). The Cronbach alpha yielded values above 0.7 for all constructs which suggests a very strong internal consistency (Field, 2009). The reliability scales for the variables were $\alpha = 0.954$ for OEC, $\alpha = 0.885$ for ERC, $\alpha = 0.935$ for MTE, $\alpha = 0.857$ for SMTE, $\alpha = 0.926$ for MAE, $\alpha = 0.773$ for MEI and $\alpha = 0.859$ for LEI. To ensure the absence of multicollinearity, the study conducted the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of the regression variables (Zikmund et al., 2010). According to Zikmund et al. (2010), the acceptable level of VIF should be below 5.0. In the current study, the VIF of variables were all below 2.0, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity.

2.3.7 Check for common method bias

Common method variance is described as systematic uncontrolled variances that are lumped together in a latent construct (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). Errors emanating

from such variances could result in biases in measurement. The use of perception measures to assess the dependent and the independent variables from research respondents has the possibility of common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Common method bias has been linked to factors such as measurement errors; construct validity and reliability; the possibility of incorrect conclusions about the sufficiency of scale reliabilities and biases in the effects of correlated predictors among others (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). Some recommendations made for the reduction of common method bias by Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Nathan and Jeong-Yeong (2003) were therefore followed in the study. For example, the study ensured the anonymity of respondents by not making provision for the identity or name of organisation during data collection. The introduction to the questionnaire also contained a statement concerning the confidentiality of all information provided to assuage the fear of identification. To further address common method bias issues, the study conducted Harman's one-factor test on all constructs (Harman, 1967). The assumption of the test states that no single factor should account for more than 50 percent for the majority of the variance. A number of factors emerged from the results of un-rotated principal component factor analysis as opposed to a single factor. Also, the first three factors had eigenvalues of more than 1.0 with three of the factors accounting for a total variance of 46.9%. The first factor accounted for 31.06% which does not appear to suggest the presence of common method variance.

The study acknowledges the limitations of Harman's test which include: the technique cannot be used as a complete solution to the problem of common method variance; no empirical evidence exists regarding its efficacy and several studies have warned against its use (Fuller, Simmering, Atinc, Atinc & Babin, 2016).

2.3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are a key component of the research process at all stages – design, data collection, analysis and interpretation. It is necessary to ensure objectivity in the research study. Upholding ethical principles in research leads to correct interpretation and presentation of research output (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This means that failure to heed to ethical principles could impact on conclusions and recommendations made from the study. The University of Ghana’s College of Humanities has a committee that provides ethical oversight of research in the college. As a student of the college, the researcher applied for and obtained clearance from the Ethical Committee before administering the questionnaires (see Appendix B). An introductory letter was also obtained from the lead supervisor of the University of Ghana Business School to help gain access to universities and regulatory agencies (see Appendix A). Confidentiality of research participants and data is an important aspect of the research process, especially in the conduct of survey research (Saunders et al., 2009). Confidentiality was ensured in the study by not making provision for the identity and name of respondents on the instruments to ensure confidentiality. Also, to address ethical concerns, research participants were made to give their consent before they were administered questionnaires and interviewed.

2.3.9 Data estimation techniques and model development

In analysing the data, descriptive statistics were performed for all the regression variables to depict the distribution of the sample which included average indicators computed from the survey data. Regression analysis was run to test the effect of ethical interventions on the objectives of ethics courses. The study employed the traditional estimation technique using OLS Regression estimates to develop two regression models (instructors and accountants) for the study. The choice of OLS was due to several factors. First, similar studies in ethics interventions have used the OLS regression model (Adkins & Radtke, 2004; Ghazali, 2015).

Secondly, the model allows for testing of the relationship between the dependent and a set of independent variables. It allows for the estimation of the relative strength of independent variables on dependent variables and further allows for predictions (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). It is also seen to best answer the research questions posed in the study.

Additionally, the analysis of the variables satisfied the normality assumptions under the OLS estimation model. For example, VIFs were all below 5, which is an indication of the absence of multicollinearity (Zikmund et al., 2010). The Doornik Hansen test for normality revealed the probability of χ^2 as 0 and significant (Doornik & Hansen, 2008). The study performed the Breusch-Pagan/Cook Weisberg test, which had a problem with Heteroscedasticity. As a result, robust standard errors were used to overcome the problem of heteroscedasticity (Cook & Weisberg, 2019).

Principal component analysis (PCA) scores of the dependent and independent variables were computed and used in the regression model. A multivariate data reduction technique that is closely related to factor analysis, the PCA, is used in the reduction of a large number of variables into smaller and manageable numbers (Verma, 2013). Following the study of Adkins and Radtke (2004), the model examines the effect of ethics education interventions in the accounting curriculum offered in the university on OEC. The dependent variable is OEC and the independent variables are ERC, MTE, SMTE, MAE, MEI and LEI.

The models are as shown below:

$$OEC_1 = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 ERC + \beta_2 MTE + \beta_3 SMTE + \beta_4 MAE + \beta_5 MEI + \beta_6 LEI + Controls + \varepsilon \dots \dots \dots 1$$

$$OEC_2 = \alpha_1 + \lambda_1 ERC + \lambda_2 MTE + \lambda_3 MAE + \lambda_4 MEI + \lambda_5 LEI + U \dots \dots \dots 2$$

Where:

OEC - Objectives of ethics-related courses

ERC - Ethics-related courses

MTE - Method of teaching ethics

SMTE - Specific method of teaching ethics

MAE - Method of assessing ethics

MEI - Method of ethics intervention

LEI - Level of ethics intervention

Controls for OEC₁ are *Institutetypes 1*- Public institution; *Institutetypes 2* - Religious institution; *Institutetypes 3* - Chartered institution.

2.4 Results and Discussion

Analysis of the results begins with descriptive statistics of the samples. This was then followed by regression analyses of models 1 and 2 for instructors and accountants respectively. The descriptive statistics include the demographic variables and the components of EEI. The components of EEI are the variables used in the estimation of the OLS regression analyses. Table 2.2 presents the descriptive statistics of the sampled respondents. The gender distribution of instructors is made up of 66 males (85.71 percent) and 11 females (14.29 percent) as shown in Table 2.2. This shows that there are fewer female accounting instructors in universities in Ghana than males, an indication that the teaching of accounting courses is dominated by males. This situation is likely to impact on the teaching of ethics since the literature has identified female gender as being more inclined to ethical issues than males (Rutherford et al., 2012). The accountants' sample consisted of 340 respondents made up of 272 males (80 percent) and 68 females (20 percent). The number of female accountants who participated in the study (20 percent) was relatively more compared to female accounting instructors (14 percent); but in comparison with male accountants, it is very low. From the

study sample, it appears the accounting profession lacks gender balance, both in academia and in practice in Ghana

The results of the study indicate a very qualified sample of instructors that shows that there are competent persons in terms of qualification who are handling accounting courses in Ghanaian universities. The educational qualifications of instructors are doctorate degrees 16 (21 percent) and master's degrees 61 (79 percent). In terms of the educational qualifications of the accountants, 13 (3.8 percent) had doctorate degrees, 169 (49.7 percent) had masters' degrees, and the rest, 158 (46.5 percent) had bachelor degrees and below. The study followed prior studies in the categorisation of education into two (Deshpande, 1997; Nguyen, Greenland, Lobo & Nguyen, 2019).

In addition to academic qualification, 44 (57 percent) of the instructors had professional accounting qualifications. This means that more than half of the sampled respondents are professionally qualified accountants in addition to the required academic qualifications. Of the 44 professionally qualified instructors, 27 (35 percent) had ICAG qualification and the rest 17 (22 percent) had other professional qualifications such as Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), Certified Public Accountants (CPA), etc. This indicates a highly qualified faculty capable of teaching accounting courses to produce ethically sensitive graduates for the profession. The professional qualifications of accountants are ICAG (246: 72.4 percent) and other professional certifications such as ACCA, CIMA and CPA (94: 27.6 percent).

The study followed an approach similar to other ethics studies in the selection of age into groups: young (below 40 years) and old (40 years and above) (Deshpande, 1997; Ghazali, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2019). The age distribution of respondents is as follows: below 40 years – 147 (43.24 percent) and 40 years and above – 193 (56.76 percent). The variation in the age

distribution of the sample is not too wide and may be used to represent the view of accountants. The cross-tabulation of gender and age distribution of respondents below 40 years is as follows: females below 40 years – 36 (24.5 percent) and males – 111 (75.5 percent). For those 40 years and above, the gender and age compositions are 32 (16.6 percent) for females and 161 (83.4 percent) for males.

In terms of rank, 20 (26 percent) of Instructors are in the Senior Lecturer and Professorial rank while 57 (74 percent) were Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers and Part-time Lecturers. This means that the sample covered all the ranks within the teaching profession. Concerning accountants, the positions held by the respondents are directors and managerial positions (62: 18.2 percent) and other positions below that of Directors/Managers (278: 81.8 percent). This shows that the sample represented a fair coverage of positions held by respondents in the accounting profession.

Following prior similar studies, the experience of respondents was grouped into two ten years cut-off points below 10 years and 10 years and above (Marzuki et al., 2017; Stewart & O’Leary, 2007 p27). The instructors sampled are those with teaching experience above 10 years (28: 36 percent) and those with experience below 10 years (49: 64 percent). From the accountants’ sample, 186 (55 percent) have work experience below 10 years while 154 (45 percent) have experience above 10 years. The figures above are a representation of a young and vibrant group of respondents. In both categories, the number of respondents below 10 years outnumbered those with experience above 10 years. It must be noted, however, that the variation is not very wide.

Of a total sample of 77 respondents, 37 (48 percent) of instructors were from private institutions while 40 (51.95 percent) were from public institutions. This is an indication of an

even distribution of respondents from the two dominant university types in Ghana and could, therefore, be a good representation of the perceptions expressed. From a religious affiliation perspective, 55 (71.4 percent) of respondents teach in non-religious institutions, whereas 22 (28.6 percent) are from religiously affiliated institutions. The analysis shows that the survey covered the diverse types of institutions that exist in Ghana. Consequently, views expressed by the respondents could be relied upon to give a fair representation of the state of ethics in accounting education in both religiously affiliated and non-religious universities. Additionally, universities in Ghana may be classified as chartered or affiliated. The survey covered respondents from both types of universities. The analysis shows that 29 (37.66 percent) of respondent instructors teach in affiliated institutions and 48 (62.34 percent) teach in Chartered institutions. These results also indicate a good representation of views from all types of institutions that operate in Ghana.

In terms of sectors of the economy where accountants are engaged, respondents worked in a wide range of sectors within the country. The representation of accountants in the various sectors are service (consisting of education, accountancy, auditing, banking, public and private sector organisations) 250 (73.5 percent), and others (including construction, manufacturing and mining) 90 (24.5 percent) following similar research from prior studies (Stewart & O'Leary, 2007). A possible explanation is that the services sector of the economy employs more accountants than other sectors.

Table 2.2: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

		Lecturers		Accountants	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	66	86	272	80
	Female	11	14	68	20
Educational Qualification	PhD	16	21	13	4
	Masters	61	79	169	50
	Bachelors			75	22
	Others			83	24
Professional Qualification	ICAG	27	35	246	72
	Others	17	22	94	28
	None	33	43		
Experience	Below 10 years	49	64	187	55
	10 years and above	28	36	153	45
Rank/Position	Professorial/Snr Lecturer/Director	20	26	62	18
	Lecturer/Manager	57	74	278	82
Sector	Service			250	74
	Other			90	26
Age	Below 40 years			147	43
	40 years and above			193	57
Type of Institution	Private	37	48		
	Public	40	52		
	Non-Religious	55	71		
	Religious	22	29		
	Affiliated	29	38		
	Chartered	48	62		

Source: Field Data (2017)

2.4.1 Descriptive statistics of variables for instructors

Table 2.3 presents the descriptive statistics of the dependent variable **OEC** and explanatory variables in the instructors' sample which are **ERC**, **MTE**, **SMTE**, **MAE**, **MEI** and **LEI**. The results from Table 2.3 suggest that instructors were somewhat in agreement with the variables in the analysis with mean values ranging between the 4.5 and 5.2 on a 7-point scale. Respondents, however, neither agreed nor disagreed with the variable 'level of ethics

interventions’ with a mean value of 4.1 on a 7-point scale. This suggests that instructors were neutral in the variable ‘level of ethics intervention’.

Table 2.3: Descriptive Statistics of Variables for Instructors

Variable	Observations	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
OEC	77	1	7	5.280	1.216
ERC	77	1	7	4.580	1.397
MTE	77	2	7	4.950	1.134
SMTE	77	2	7	4.710	1.080
MAE	77	2	7	4.920	1.100
MEI	77	2	7	4.570	1.132
LEI	77	1	7	4.160	1.347

Source: Field Data (2017)

OEC - objectives of ethics courses; **ERC** - ethics related courses; **MTE** - method of teaching ethics; **SMTE** - Specific method of teaching ethics; **MAE** - method of ethics assessment; **MEI** - method of ethics intervention; and **LEI** - level of ethics interventions.

2.4.2 Descriptive statistics of variables for accountants

Table 2.4 presents the means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values of the dependent and independent variables for accountants. From Table 2.4, accountants were somewhat in agreement with the majority of the variables analysed with mean values ranging from 4.4 to 5.5 on a 7-point scale. As in the case of the instructors, accountants neither agreed nor disagreed with the variable ‘level of ethics intervention’ (mean of 4.4 on a 7-point scale).

Table 2.4: Descriptive Statistics of Variables for Accountants

Variables	Observations	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
OEC	340	2	7	5.450	0.942
ERC	340	1	7	4.760	1.455
MTE	340	1	7	5.050	1.254
MAE	340	1	7	5.000	1.330
MEI	340	1	7	4.690	1.264
LEI	340	1	7	4.400	1.551

Source: Field Data (2017)

OEC - objectives of ethics courses; **ERC**- ethics related courses; **MTE** - method of teaching ethics; **MAE** - method of ethics assessment; **MEI** - method of ethics intervention; and **LEI** - level of ethics interventions

Pairwise correlations of variables – instructors

Table 2.5 presents the pairwise correlations for the study variables of university instructors. As can be seen, all the variables are positively correlated and the majority of them are significant at a five percent level. LEI is positively correlated with the other variables but only significant at five percent with MEI. The results do not show general issues of multicollinearity as the correlations among the variables range from 0.357 to 0.762. Also, ***, ** and * indicate statistical significance at the 1 percent, 5 percent and 10 percent levels respectively with t-ratios being reported in parentheses.

Table 2.5: Pairwise Correlations of Variables – Instructors

	OEC	ERC	MTE	SMTE	MAE	MEI	LEI
OEC	1						
ERC	0.543***	1					
MTE	0.705***	0.560***	1				
SMTE	0.456***	0.493***	0.699***	1			
MAE	0.578***	0.547***	0.762***	0.624***	1		
MEI	0.451***	0.599***	0.498***	0.438***	0.553***	1	
LEI	0.0836	0.168	0.128	0.214	0.0357	0.321**	1

** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Pairwise correlations of variables – accountants

Table 2.6 presents the correlations coefficients between the study variables of accountants. From the table, the majority of the variables are significantly and positively correlated at ten percent level or better. The ethics-related courses, method of teaching, the specific method of teaching, method of assessment, method and level of ethics interventions are all positively related. Also, the variables are statistically significant at 5 percent or better and consistent with prior literature (Adkins & Radtke, 2004; Ghaffari et al., 2008; O’Leary & Stewart, 2013). The analysis does not appear to have a problem of multicollinearity since the correlations range from 0.159 to 0.758 which are not very high (Field, 2009). Among the correlations, all the figures fall below 0.8. Also, ***, ** and * indicate statistical significance at the 1 percent, 5 percent and 10 percent levels respectively with t-ratios being reported in parentheses.

Table 2.6: Pairwise Correlations of Variables – Accountants

	OEC	ERC	MTE	MAE	MEI	LEI
OEC	1					
ERC	0.570 ^{***}	1				
MTE	0.758 ^{***}	0.475 ^{***}	1			
MAE	0.599 ^{***}	0.419 ^{***}	0.749 ^{***}	1		
MEI	0.517 ^{***}	0.398 ^{***}	0.516 ^{***}	0.583 ^{***}	1	
LEI	0.159 ^{**}	0.178 ^{***}	0.167 ^{**}	0.193 ^{***}	0.349 ^{***}	1

** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

2.4.3 Regression results - instructors

The results in Table 2.7 show a positive relationship between objectives of ethics courses and six of the explanatory variables which are ERC, MTE, SMTE MAE, MEI and LEI. The overall results indicate that the objectives of ethics courses can be explained by ethics education interventions.

Table 2.7: Regression of EEI on Objectives of Ethics Courses - Instructors

	1
ERC	0.154 (0.111)
MTE	0.580 ^{***} (0.139)
SMTE	-0.146 (0.121)
MAE	0.0638 (0.133)
MEI	0.0474 (0.118)
LEI	0.0254 (0.0874)
institutetype1	1.137 ^{***} (0.391)
institutetype2	0.544 ^{**} (0.267)
institutetype3	-0.598 [*] (0.328)
_cons	-0.373 ^{**} (0.181)
<i>N</i>	77
<i>R</i> ²	0.599
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.538
<i>F</i>	9.866
<i>P</i>	0.000

Standard errors in parentheses; Key: *** Denotes significance at 1%, ** at 5%, and * at 10% levels.

Note: **OEC** - objectives of ethics courses; **ERC** - ethics related courses; **MTE** - method of teaching ethics; **SMTE** - Specific method of teaching ethics; **MAE** - method of ethics assessment; **MEI** - method of ethics intervention; and **LEI** - level of ethics interventions.

As is expected, the study shows a positive association between ERC and achievement of objectives set for including the ethics courses in the curriculum of universities and professional institutions. Drawing on deontology and utilitarianism considerations, integration of ethics-related courses in universities programmes as required by regulations and for the good of society may positively influence the achievement of set objectives (Sorensen et al., 2017). Without the inclusion of ethics-related courses, students and practitioners may not have the opportunity to benefit from the exposure to ethics and its effect on financial reporting and performance. Furthermore, the inclusion of ethics courses has the potential of preparing accounting graduates to handle ethical dilemmas that may occur in the job environment.

The results of the study indicate that MTE adopted on egoistic and deontological considerations has a positive and significant relationship at 1 percent with the objectives set for ethics interventions. As can be seen from Table 2.7, MTE is positive and significant at 1 percent. This is explained by the fact that the method adopted in teaching may determine whether an institution would achieve the objectives set for making ethical educational interventions. The results also suggest that the MTE must be seriously considered in the desire to achieve objectives set in EEI. Again, the method of teaching has the likelihood to improve the ethical attitudes of accounting students at the university and professional accounting levels of education. For example, the method of teaching may assist in developing a sense of professional responsibility towards users of accounting information.

Consistent with expectations, the results of the study show a positive association between MAE and the objectives set for ethics education interventions. This means that the method adopted by an institution in assessing ethics-related courses has the potential to result in the achievement of objectives set for ethical educational intervention.

As is expected, the study indicates that the MEI is positively associated with objectives set though not significant. This means that the increase in ethics interventions may result in achieving objectives set by institutions which may include developing students to be morally responsible to themselves, their profession and society. The method of ethics intervention is also likely to develop in accounting students' abilities that are needed to deal with ethical conflicts that may occur in the job environment.

The results of the study also show a positive association between the LEI and the objectives set for ethics education interventions. These results mean that an increase in levels of ethical intervention in accounting programmes could lead to an improvement in achieving the objectives of producing ethically oriented graduates. The LEI also has the likelihood of preparing accounting students to deal with uncertainties that exist within the profession.

Contrary to the expectations of the study, SMTE is negatively associated with achieving the objectives set for ethical educational interventions. The findings provide support for an explanation for Howieson (2003) and Howieson et al.'s (2014) proposition that in the educational environment such factors as resource constraints and large class sizes may hinder instructors from adopting methods likely to make a positive impact on achieving set objectives. The findings concerning the specific method of teaching ethics adopted for ethics courses also prove that methods adopted by instructors are not leading to the achievement of objectives set for ethics education interventions probably due to the reasons cited above.

Additionally, the results of the study indicate that the control variable – institutional type 1-public universities – have a positive and significant association at 1 percent or better with the objectives set for ethical educational interventions. In Ghana, public universities are more resourced than private universities and may, therefore, be able to adopt measures that have

the potential to achieve set objectives. Some of the objectives include appreciating the history and composition of the features of accounting ethics and their relationships to the general field of ethics. Consistent with prior studies, the results of the study indicate a significantly positive relationship at 5 percent or better between institutional type 2, religiously affiliated universities, and objective set for ethical educational intervention (Simpson et al., 2015). This means that students of religiously affiliated universities are likely to be equipped with skills needed to understand the history and composition of issues in accounting ethics and their relationship to the general field of ethics than their counterparts in non-religiously affiliated universities.

Contrary to expectations of the study, the control variable – institutional type 3 (chartered universities which represent autonomy), reveals a negative but significant association at 10 percent or better between achieving objectives set for ethics education interventions. Chartered institutions in Ghana are well resourced and have more autonomy to award degrees than affiliated institutions and these include all public universities and a few private and religiously affiliated universities. A possible explanation for this result is that, due to the autonomy in decision making, chartered institutions do not have to conform to the requirements of any affiliate institutions. They can, therefore, decide on their own without any sanctions from parent institutions. Based on the above, there appear to be other factors that account for the adoption of ethics education interventions more than being a chartered institution.

The study provides evidence to suggest that ethics education interventions in accounting programmes have an association with achieving objectives set for making such interventions. Some valuable insights have emerged from the study. Firstly, the study provides empirical evidence to support a highly significant and positive association between the method of teaching ethics and the objective of making ethics interventions. This indicates that the

hypothesis H1 is supported at 1 percent with the results of the study. Educational institutions and managers must be interested in the methods adopted by instructors as it has the likelihood of achieving objectives set. If instructors adopt methods that demand less time and effort due to self-interest, institutions may not achieve their goal of improving students' ethical attitudes (Loeb, 2015).

Secondly, the specific method of teaching currently adopted by instructors shows a negative association with objectives set, though not significant, probably because instructors may not be using methods recommended by AICPA perhaps due to some challenges in the educational environment. From a developing country context, resource constraints may be cited as a possible factor in the choice of teaching method (Howieson, 2003; Howieson et al., 2014). Also, the lack of interest shown by instructors and large class sizes may account for the negative association between the specific methods of teaching adopted by an instructor. For example, the absence of relevant case studies may account for the inability of instructors to use recommended teaching methods. Also, instructors motivated by self-interest may justify their inability to use desired methods for lack of resources instead of being innovative. The development of teaching resources by instructors may pose some challenges. For example, as reported by Dellaportas et al. (2014), the use of teaching hours to develop resources may have the effect of hampering effective teaching and learning. This is because, the adoption of a teaching method such as case study may be seen as involving a lot of work, and may, therefore, be overlooked for other methods of teaching that do not involve additional work. Professional and academic institutions desiring to make ethics interventions in accounting programmes must consider the specific method of teaching ethics to achieve objectives set. The findings are, however, consistent with existing literature that universities and professional institutions have responded to the call for increased ethics education by making ethics interventions in accounting programmes (Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008).

Thirdly, from the perspective of instructors, the results of the study confirm that other components of ethics education interventions such as ERC, MAE, MEI and LEI are positively associated with objectives set for ethics interventions, though not significant. The explanation for this finding is that as schools introduce ethics courses, adopt assessment methods in ethics, make ethics interventions in varied forms and levels within the curricula, they may be promoting the desired outcome of producing ethically oriented graduates for the society. This may support the utilitarian theory of seeking the interest of society and not only instructors. According to the concept of utilitarianism, an activity pursued in the interest of the wider society would promote the highest good. While these findings are new in terms of ethics interventions in universities, there is support in the literature that ethics intervention in accounting education is a worthy cause that must be pursued (Dellaportas et al., 2014).

Fourthly, a school's governance structure (ownership of university) is positively associated and significant in influencing ethics objectives. The study provides evidence to suggest that public universities are more likely to achieve objectives set for inclusion of ethics in their curriculum contrary to the findings of Rutherford et al. (2012), who found that private colleges of business are more likely to include business ethics as a required course. The possible explanation in this context is that public universities in Ghana are more resourced to make ethics interventions than private universities. The study also finds a positive and significant association between religiously inclined universities and the achievement of objectives set for ethical intervention consistent with prior findings in the literature (Rutherford et al., 2012; Simpson et al., 2015). The study, however, finds a negative and significant association between universities that have autonomy with no affiliation and objectives for ethics education interventions contrary to expectation. However, the results are consistent with the findings of Rutherford et al. (2012) and Simpson et al. (2015) that a school's affiliation is significantly associated with the introduction of ethics intervention and thereby achieves the objectives of producing ethically oriented graduates for the benefit of

society. This can be explained that universities with no affiliation are under no obligation to make ethics interventions in their accounting programmes. Affiliated institutions, however, may make ethics interventions not out of self-interest but in the interest of their parent institutions to generate the greatest good to self, affiliate and the wider society.

2.4.4 Regression results - accountants

Table 2.8 shows the results of regression analyses on the effect of ethics education interventions on objectives of teaching ethics from the perspectives of professional accountants. The model identified several positive and significant results. The overall results of the model indicate that the objectives of ethics courses can be explained by ERC, MTE and MEI on a high level of significance.

Table 2.8: Regression of EEI on Objectives of Ethics Courses - Professional Accountants

	1
ERC	0.1972*** (0.0394)
MTE	0.5537*** (0.0512)
MAE	-0.0122 (0.0516)
MEI	0.1133*** (0.0426)
LEI	-0.0369 (0.0343)
_cons	0.0000 (0.0320)
<i>N</i>	340
<i>R</i> ²	0.659
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.652
F	107.066
p	0.000

Standard errors in parentheses; Key: *** Denotes significance at 1%, ** at 5%, and * at 10% levels.

OEC - objectives of ethics courses; **ERC** - ethics-related courses; **MTE** - method of teaching ethics; **MAE** - method of ethics assessment; **MEI** - method of ethics intervention; and **LEI** - level of ethics interventions.

First, the results of the study reveal a positive and significant association between ERC and OEC. This means that accountants view the inclusion of ethics-related courses in accounting programmes of universities and the professional association as having the possibility of influencing the objectives set for making ethics intervention at 1 percent significance. Secondly, a positive and significant association was found between MTE and OEC also at 1 percent. Thirdly, the study found a positive and significant association between MEI and OEC. These results are consistent with the expectations of the study and the regression model. It means that in the view of accountants, ERC, MTE and MEI are predictors of ethics objectives and must be carefully considered in the design of curriculum for accounting programmes. Additionally, two relationships of a non-significant nature were found between MAE and LEI. Surprisingly, the two non-significant associations were also negative contrary to expectation. The findings would appear to suggest that the method of assessing ethics is less likely to result in the achievement of objectives set in the view of accountants. One explanation may be that respondents were concerned about self-interest than utilitarian considerations. For instance, instructors may be concerned about the volume of work involved in assessment while accountants considered assessment that involved minimum efforts. This makes interesting findings and provides empirical evidence that contradicts Ballantine et al.'s. (2018) theoretically based assertion that learning approaches that can be linked to assessment methods can promote informed ethical behaviour and hence achievement of objectives set. Instead, it offers new insights into the relationship between methods of assessment and achievement of objectives for making ethics education interventions.

From the accountants' perceptions, ERC, MTE and MEI are predictors of objectives of ethics teaching; thus, confirming support for hypotheses H1, H2, and H5 at 1 percent from the results of the study. In the view of accountants, ethics-related courses, and the method of ethics

interventions in accounting programmes are important variables in the achievement of objectives set. This is in contrast with the perception of instructors who did not see them as key variables. However, both instructors and accountants agree with the method of teaching ethics. This could be because most professional accountants also teach as adjunct instructors in universities and professional examination schools across the country. Also, accountants perceive the method of ethics assessment and level of ethics intervention as negatively associated with the objectives of ethics courses. Furthermore, the method of ethics assessment and level of intervention are variables, which if not considered, have the potential to prevent the achievement of objectives set for making ethics interventions. Though contrary to the position of instructors, it may be necessary for instructors to consider the above findings in the choice and selection of ethics-related courses, methods of ethics intervention in addition to the level of ethics intervention for the achievement of ethics objectives for the benefit of the society.

The presence of egoism, utilitarianism and deontology may be evident in the choice of methods of teaching and assessment adopted (Armstrong et al., 2003; Keller et al., 2007; Wood et al., 1988). Several reasons may account for the choice of method and level of ethics integration in accounting programmes of universities and professional bodies. Firstly, the choice of teaching method may be influenced by the accountant's desire for a method that does not involve too much work (Loeb, 2015). It is also important for the adoption of assessment methods that encourage learning strategies and promote deep and strategic learning approach as recommended by Ballantine et al. (2018) and not methods that encourage shallow learning approaches such as memorization as could happen in the use of multiple-choice assessment (Ballantine et al., 2018; Gray et al., 1994). Accountants may also be interested in teaching and assessment methods that encourage the application of concepts rather than methods such as multiple-choice questions that promote shallow learning

(Ballantine et al., 2018). The study provides empirical evidence to suggest that instructors and accountants view the method of teaching ethics as key in achieving the objectives set for making ethics education interventions in accounting.

2.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The study contributes to the growing literature on ethics education in accounting programmes by providing empirical evidence of the mode of ethics education interventions in the objectives set for teaching ethics courses in the curriculum of universities. This is in response to the call for additional research aimed at providing a more comprehensive understanding of the numerous issues regarding the role of ethics in business schools' curricula (Rutherford et al., 2012). The study makes several contributions to literature.

The findings of the study extend existing literature which has predominantly centred on students and in few cases on accounting educators (Adkins & Radtke, 2004; Blanthorne et al., 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008). The study has examined the perceptions of accounting instructors and professional accountant regarding the effect of ethics education interventions on the goals of making such interventions. The findings provide empirical evidence that the method of teaching ethics is a predictor of the objectives set by institutions for making ethics interventions. This adds another dimension to Loeb (2015) and Ballantine et al.'s (2018) findings that the adoption of teaching and learning methods are key in achieving desired objectives for ethics education in accounting programmes. Further, the study highlights the importance of teaching methods adopted in achieving objectives set for making ethics education interventions in accounting programmes. The study further provides empirical evidence to show that the specific method of teaching ethics adopted by instructors, methods of assessing ethics, and levels of ethics interventions are less likely to contribute to achieving the objectives set for making ethics interventions.

Besides, public and religious institutions have a significant and positive association with achieving objectives set. In contrast, chartered institutions (with autonomy) have a negative and significant association with achieving the objectives set. By implication, egoistic tendencies in the educational environment may be preventing the adoption of methods of teaching that could yield the desired results. Also, institutions that have autonomy need not relent in efforts at achieving set objectives for making ethics education interventions. The study further shows, in terms of achieving objectives of making ethics intervention, that gender, educational qualification, experience in teaching ethics and the number of years of working experience have no significant influence. The findings demonstrate that **ERC**, **MTE**, **MEI** and type of institution are the key variables in the resolve to produce graduates who have the right ethical attitudes for the accounting profession.

Although the study was comprehensive and engaged quantitative techniques in making deductions, it had some limitations. First, 340 professional accountants and 77 instructors provided their opinions. It may therefore not reflect the opinions of the entirety of accountants and accounting educators in Ghana. Also, the study was cross-sectional and opinions might change over some time. Finally, the results of the study represent opinions of respondents limited to one country, and therefore capable of limited generalisation.

The limitations identified in the study inform directions for future research. The areas identified for future research include expansion of the sample to cover partly qualified accountants and other individuals practicing as accountants in industry to determine if their opinions would differ significantly from the results of the present study. Future studies must be extended to cover longer periods to do longitudinal studies to determine changes in ethical attitudes over a period. The study raises the potential for extension into other countries in the West African sub-region to benefit from cross-country perspectives within the African continent.

CHAPTER THREE

EFFECTS OF

ETHICS EDUCATION

INTERVENTIONS ON ETHICAL

ATTITUDES OF PROFESSIONAL

ACCOUNTANTS IN GHANA

CHAPTER THREE

EFFECTS OF ETHICS EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS ON

ETHICAL ATTITUDES OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS IN

GHANA

Abstract

The study investigates the effect of ethics education interventions (EEI) on ethical attitudes of accountants (EAA). It also investigates the effects of the demographic information of accountants on their ethical attitudes. The study employed a cross-sectional survey to collect data from 340 professional accountants in all sectors of the Ghanaian economy and used OLS estimation to test several hypothesised relationships. The results show factors beyond ethics education interventions (EEI) impact on ethical attitudes of professional accountants. Furthermore, demographic attributes such as the experience of accountants positively and significantly influence their ethical attitudes. The study recommends the use of experienced accounting practitioners as resource persons in training programmes as a means of shaping the ethical attitudes of students and less experienced practitioners. There is also the need for mentorship programmes within the accountancy fraternity where experienced members adopt younger ones as mentees in the quest to strengthen the ethical attitudes of all members of the accounting profession in Ghana for the benefit of society.

3.1 Introduction

The role of accountants in reported scandals at the beginning of the 21st Century has contributed in creating doubts in the minds of many people about ethics in accounting practice (Low et al., 2008; Copeland, 2015). The effects of the scandals on major economies have also led to calls by bodies such as the American Accounting Association (AAA), American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) and Federation of Schools of Accountancy (FSA) to include ethics in the training of accountants (Lampe & Finn, 1994; Blanthorne, Kovar & Fisher, 2007). They argue that the integration of ethics in the accounting curriculum will result in the improvement in attitudes and decision making regarding ethical dilemmas (Abdolmohammadi & Reinstein, 2012; Cameron & O’Leary, 2015; Ghaffari et al., 2008; O’Leary 2009, 2012).

However, existing studies show that the role of ethics in attitudes and behaviour of accountants is complicated. And to better understand this, scholars have explored ethical behaviour in business and knowledge of ethics of students and accountants in their stewardship roles (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Fisher et al., 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008). Such studies have found that ethics intervention may have a positive impact on members of the accounting profession which may eventually lead to a reduction in financial scandals.

Specifically, many of the studies on ethics education interventions (EEI) in accounting programmes have mainly examined differences in opinions of educators (Blanthorne et al., 2007), perceptions regarding the importance of the interventions (Adkins & Radtke, 2004), real subjects being taught (Lampe & Finn, 1994) and enablers and challenges in such interventions (Dellaportas et al., 2014). Others have also examined the effect of ethics instructions on the moral reasoning of accounting students (Cameron & O’Leary, 2015; O’Leary 2009, 2012). Though these are perceived to influence ethical attitude, there is the

need to examine the effect of EEI on the ethical attitude of real accountants (professional accountants) who are the ultimate beneficiaries of EEI. This has become germane because professional bodies in countries such as the USA, Australia and the United Kingdom have made ethics interventions in various forms as a means of shaping ethical attitudes among their members (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008). However, there has been very little evidence on the effect of such interventions on the ethical attitudes of accountants.

Using data from Ghana, a developing country, this study examined the relationship between ethics intervention in accounting education and the ethical attitude of professional accountants. This is crucial in a country where governments over the years have been making efforts at reducing financial weaknesses and irregularities in public accounts (Auditor-General, 2017). Commenting on the state of ethics in professional accounting training in Ghana, the Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC) of the World Bank reported that Ghana's professional accounting training does not include ethics (World Bank, 2014). Since the report was issued, very little has been done as a follow-up to review the progress made as a means of identifying the success or achievement made; a situation that gives cause for worry.

In recent years, seven banks have collapsed between August 2017 and August 2018, due to what has been described as a moral crisis rather than a banking crisis. Reasons assigned for the collapse of the banks have been given as the use of accounting entries in concealing the true state of affairs, breakdown in values, unethical behaviour and disrespect for ethics (Awadzi, 2018 p.8 & 9). These happenings give an indication of the importance of ethics in the performance of professional accountants globally.

Based on the above considerations, the study primarily investigates the effect of ethics education interventions on the ethical attitudes of professional accountants. It also explores other factors that may influence the ethical attitudes of accountants. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next section discusses the general background to the development of ethics and its consequences in the accounting profession. The third section reviews the existing literature on ethics in the accounting profession and the hypothesised relationship for the study. The fourth section presents the research method and design. This is followed by analysis and discussion of the results. The final section presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

3.2 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

This section reviews theory and literature on ethics and its consequences in the accounting profession. It also reviews the literature on the various components of ethics interventions as presented in the existing literature, especially in the Ghanaian context.

3.2.1 Stakeholder theory and ethics

Stakeholder theory is defined as a means by which managers conceive and organise their strategy to achieve set objectives (Freeman & Phillips, 2002). Stakeholder theory can be classified into descriptive, instrumental, normative and managerial (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Concerning the descriptive stance, Donaldson and Preston argue that the organisation can be seen as a group with varied and competitive interests that need to be met. Describing the instrumental stance of the theory, the corporation is seen as an instrument for measuring the varied corporate performance or goals. The normative thesis posits organisations' stakeholders have a legitimate interest in all aspects of the entities' operations and practices that must be managed. The managerial thesis of the theory states that organisations that are managed properly would yield results in the interest of stakeholders. Managing an entity

involves giving attention to attitudes, structures, and practices that combine to achieve set targets. Stakeholder management demands attention to the legitimate interests of all stakeholders, within the established entity structures and general policies of decision making (Freeman, Rusconi, Signori & Strudler, 2012). This thesis is essential for persons involved in managing and responsible for corporate policies, professionals, managers, shareholders, the government and others.

It is easier for business executives and theorists to see business and ethics as integrated and not in conflict when they use the language of stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2012, p. 1). Following from the above, the present study adopts the stakeholder theory to explain the roles of accounting educators and professional bodies in shaping the ethical attitudes of graduates and professionals.

3.2.2 Ethics and the accounting profession

As stakeholders, members of the accounting profession have certain rights and responsibilities conferred by society. They have a responsibility to their profession and society as they examine alternative ways of informing and educating stakeholders on issues of financial and economic accountability (Jeffrey, 2008). There has been a general acceptance of the role of ethics in the accounting profession. For instance, to guide the profession to abide by ethical principles, the IESBA of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) has issued the handbook of the code of professional accountants among its publications to guide members in their practice. The IESBA code has its focus on issues of public interest that include setting standards of quality that ensure adherence to 'high-quality' ethical standards of practice for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The code identifies the peculiar nature of the environment in which professional accountants work and has identified several threats that may hinder their performance because of professional activities, interests and relations. Among the threats faced by accountants are self-interest, self-review, advocacy, familiarity and intimidation (IESBA, 2018). Professional accountants are required to address the above threats by evaluating and eliminating such threats that may occur such as ethical dilemmas in the organisational environment. Additionally, the code demands that senior members of the profession who may have the ability and opportunity to access information, influence policies and decisions made in organisations must encourage and promote ethics-based culture in their environment (IESBA, 2018).

The accounting profession is seen as being responsible for providing information to a wide range of users (stakeholders) to resolve financial issues and to protect the interest of the public (Dillard, 2008). Financial reports produced are generally used for the benefit of stakeholders such as investors, stock market analysts, shareholders and government agencies among others (Abuznaid, 2009). The profession is highly regarded in many societies across the world and the expectation from stakeholders is that high levels of ethics would be upheld in decisions that affect their measurement, information gathering and communication (Langenderfer & Rockness, 1989). Additionally, the provision of accurate and full disclosure of financial information on the performance of economic entities has been described to be a moral obligation that requires the application of high moral and ethical principles. It has been observed that the accounting function is vital to the development and management of information systems that provide strategic direction and guidance to the management of organisations (Dillard, 2008).

The professional accountant is seen as having an enormous obligation to self and multiple stakeholders who rely on the objectivity, honesty and integrity exhibited in financial statements (McKernan, 2011). In performing the role of providing financial statements to aid decision making, accountants are required to apply ethics to ensure that legitimate rights to information are met. This study, therefore, throws the challenge to members of the profession about such a great expectation to not fail the society. Meeting the responsibilities stated above requires not only adherence to rules and regulations but also the willingness to do what is right in the interest of the general well-being of society.

3.2.3 Ethical consequences in the accounting profession

There has been some linkage between ethics and fraud. Even though fraud connotes illegality, not all ethical issues may be fraudulent. Some reported scandals have had a measure of fraud such as the case of Enron. Researchers have attributed the elements of fraud to include pressure, opportunity and ethics (Hall, 2011 p. 103). Hall defines pressure as work-related stress that could compel a person to abuse the trust to act honestly. Opportunity is also defined as having ‘access to assets and/or information’ that can be used to a person’s benefit against laid down procedures. Ethics is the ability to maintain a high sense of moral character to withstand personal selfish gains as opposed to corporate/societal gains. It is argued that a greater sense of ethics would provide strength to withstand pressure and opportunity to commit fraud. The absence of ethics in the practice of the accounting profession may be responsible for some ethical infractions committed by some members of the profession. This study argues that the observance of high ethical standards by members of the accounting profession tends to minimise the occurrence of fraud involving accountants.

3.2.4 Ethical attitude

The ethical attitude in business and the corporate environment has been a source of concern worldwide, especially following a series of scandals that have led to corporate collapses. These collapses brought to the fore the necessity for ethical attitudes of those persons in charge of businesses. The role of attitudes in organisational decision-making cannot be under-estimated. For example, previous literature has proposed that attitudes and values contribute to determining behaviour and decision making (Fritzsche, Oz & Fritzsche, 2007). Ethical attitude may be described as a disposition towards ethical dilemmas or questionable practices in business or other social endeavours. It has been suggested that attitudes could result in behaviour and decision making. The extant literature has established links between ethical attitudes and personal and organisational factors. Consequently, several studies have examined various factors that serve as predictors of ethical attitudes. Among the factors are age, gender, educational qualification, experience (Emerson et al., 2007; Holtbrügge et al., 2015; Musbah et al., 2016), position or rank (Conroy et al., 2010), culture (Christie et al., 2003) and ethics education (Abdolmohammadi & Reinstein, 2012; Cameron & O’Leary, 2015; Williams & Elson, 2010). Other studies have cited factors within organisations that impact ethical attitudes to include organizational ethics position (Ghazali & Ismail, 2013); organisational climate, size and code of ethics (Musbah et al., 2016); and organisational culture (Holtbrügge et al., 2015). Some scholars have used ethical attitudes and behaviour interchangeably, an indication that attitudes result in behaviour and decision making (Abdolmohammadi & Reinstein, 2012).

3.2.5 Ethics education interventions (EEI)

The study defines EEI as the inclusion of ethics in the curriculum of accounting programmes of universities and the professional accountancy body. EEI may include the introduction of ethics-related courses (ERC) (Ghaffari et al., 2008; Marzuki et al., 2017), the method of

teaching ethics (MTE) (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Loeb, 2015; Marzuki et al. 2017). Others include the methods of ethics intervention (MEI) (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008), the method of assessing ethics (MAE) (Dunfee & Robertson, 1988), and the level of ethics intervention (LEI) (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008). These interventions are made to equip graduates and professionals to handle ethical dilemmas that occur within and outside the working environment. It is also believed that ethics education intervention could contribute to shaping accountants' attitudes and thereby prevent future moral crises in the corporate environment (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008; Marzuki et al., 2017).

A review of the literature indicates that research regarding ethics integration in the curriculum of business schools and specifically in accounting curricula has generally originated from the developed countries. Particularly, a body of research has examined ethics interventions in the USA, the UK, New Zealand and Australia. An examination of ethics intervention methods from existing literature suggests a preference for embedding ethics across courses within the curriculum to standalone (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008). Regarding the levels of ethics interventions, the trend has been integration at the level of undergraduate (Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008) and graduate studies (Evans et al., 2006).

3.2.5.1 Ethics related courses (ERC) and ethical attitude

Following a publication of a report by the Treadway Commission, there have been calls for increased ethics intervention in accounting programmes (Loeb, 2006). The objective of introducing ethics-related courses in accounting programmes was to influence the ethical attitudes of accounting graduates and thereby reduce the likelihood of fraud in financial reporting and management. Sadly, a study involving 145 accounting department heads has

revealed that auditing was the only subject in the accounting programmes that had ethics embedded (Cohen & Pant, 1989). The situation seems to have improved in recent times with ethics integration in several subjects such as financial accounting, auditing, and management accounting among others within accounting programmes of business schools (Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008; Marzuki et al., 2017). This represents a marked improvement over initial ethics integration that was limited to a few accounting courses such as auditing (Cohen & Pant, 1989).

On the professional front, Ghaffari et al. (2008) report of the introduction of corporate governance as a means of addressing ethics in all the final papers of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) is also reported to have incorporated ethics in the law module of their syllabus in a bid to address the ethical challenges of their members (Ghaffari et al., 2008). The Institute of Chartered Accountants, England and Wales (ICAEW) was expected to follow the examples of ACCA and CIMA by incorporating ethics in more modules in the next reviewed syllabus to equip students with a foundation for ethical decision making in the interest of the society (Ghaffari et al., 2008). A review of the December 2018 syllabus for Professional Qualifying Examinations of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana (ICAG) reveals that ethics is embedded in subjects such as audit and assurance, corporate strategy, ethics and governance, corporate reporting, advanced audit and assurance and advanced financial management (ICAG 2018b). The expectation is that the inclusion of ethics/ethics-related courses may influence attitude and hence ethical decision making. Some studies have examined the effect of ethics instructions on the moral integrity of students rather than the inclusion of specific ethics-related courses on ethical attitude (O'Leary, 2012). According to Ghazali (2015), the effect of receiving ethics instructions from ethics-related courses on ethical attitude is not very certain. Ghaffari et al. (2008) found

that ethics is incorporated within financial accounting and auditing courses in the United Kingdom. Limitations of previous studies regarding ethics-related courses and attitudes are the focus on only business students (Ghaffari et al., 2008) and or lecturers (Evans et al., 2006; Blanthorne et al., 2007) as samples. The use of student samples raises concerns about reliability since students may have little industry experience. Additionally, despite the changes in the curricula of both academic and professional accounting programmes by integrating ethics in accounting courses, there is little empirical evidence of the effect of these ethics courses in accounting programmes on ethical attitudes. The study, therefore, proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *The inclusion of ethics related courses in accounting programmes has a positive effect on ethical attitudes of accountants.*

3.2.5.2 Methods of teaching ethics (MTE) and ethical attitude

The methods of teaching ethics in accounting programmes of business schools have expanded over the years from a limited number in previous years. Prior research has classified teaching methods as either active or passive (O’Leary, 2012). The active method of teaching ethics involves the use of discussions, debates, case studies, interactive questioning, role plays, and field-based activities (O’Leary, 2012). Active learning has been associated with getting beneficiaries to become ethically oriented and develop problem-solving and critical thinking abilities. Passive methods of teaching, on the other hand, are described as the use of traditional classroom lectures, class exercises, the use of guest lectures and videos, among others.

Other teaching methods, though not in the context of ERC, include problem-based learning using cases; problem-based learning using guided design; group learning-teamwork; debates; drama and role-plays; internship and fieldwork/attachment. The use of technology-

based and visual and computer-based instruction and tutorials have been noted to impact ethical attitudes (O’Leary, 2012). In addition to the above, other recommended teaching strategies include delivery of courses, either partially or wholly, online; fieldwork-service learning attachment (AICPA, 2015).

O’Leary (2012) argues that the passive method of teaching is the foundation of active learning. Despite the prevalent use of passive teaching in most learning environments, a combination of both passive and active methods of teaching may be necessary for yielding the desired objective of promoting ethically oriented outcomes. It was thus reported in a study involving 262 trainee auditors that both passive and active methods of teaching have the possibility of generating improvement in ethical behaviour (O’Leary, 2012). The weaknesses in the previous studies are the use of student samples (O’Leary, 2009; 2012; O’Leary & Stewart, 2013). For example, concerns have been raised over the reliance and the making of generalisation based on the findings from studies that rely on student samples due to their lack of working experience. Findings from such studies may not show variations due to the homogenous nature of such a sample regarding age and educational qualification and the absence of work experience (Holtbrügge et al., 2015). Given the above, the following hypothesis is put forward:

Hypothesis 2: *The method of teaching ethics-related courses has a positive effect on ethical attitudes of accountants*

3.2.5.3 Methods of assessing ethics-related courses (MAE) and ethical attitude

Several methods have been relied upon in the assessment of ethics courses in accounting curricula. Some of the methods identified in the literature include multiple choice questions (MCQ), written examinations in the form of essays, (Milne & McConnell, 2001), in-class written examinations plus essays, quizzes, term papers, take-home examinations,

internship/industrial attachments and group assignments (Dunfee & Robertson, 1988). The method of assessing ethics has been associated with the impact on ethical judgment and attitude (Dunfee & Robertson, 1988). The lack of an effective assessment approach is less likely to yield the desired ethical outcome (Swanson & Fisher, 2009). Research continues to explore the method that is likely to achieve the intended objective of training ethical accountants. The majority of prior studies regarding the effect of assessment on attitudes have mostly been from the perspectives of students and accounting educators. The opinions of professional accountants who have graduated and practised for considerable periods will be insightful to accounting educators. Consequently, this hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: *The method of teaching ethics-related courses has a positive effect on the ethical attitudes of accountants.*

3.2.5.4 Methods of ethics intervention (MEI) and ethical attitude

Various methods have been employed in the literature for integrating ethics-related courses in the accounting curriculum. They include standalone ethics course, embedded ethics in other course combinations of standalone and embedded course, optional ethics course and elective courses.

The debate has been the use of either stand-alone ethics courses or embedding ethics in many courses (Ghaffari et al., 2008). From the findings of some studies, the stand-alone courses are preferred over other methods of ethics interventions (Gray et al., 1994; Jonson, McGuire & O'Neill, 2015). In contrast, other studies have argued for ethics integration as the preferred choice of accounting educators over stand-alone or discrete methods (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Dellaportas et al., 2014). As is expected, various reasons have been assigned for the method of ethics integration in business programmes of universities. Evans, Klebe and Weaver (2006) argue that business students may see stand-alone ethics courses as being

outside the normal business programmes and therefore may not attach the needed importance to it.

From the above discussion, it can be argued that there is no consensus on the method of ethics integration. The choice has been either the use of stand-alone ethics courses (Gray et al., 1994; Jonson et al., 2015) or embedding ethics across the curriculum (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Kerr & Smith, 1995). Also, in the view of these authors, integrating ethics in accounting courses has the possibility of bringing out its significance in terms of the functional area of the study. The demerits of the integration method, however, is the difficulty of monitoring as its success is normally left to the discretion of faculty (Evans et al., 2006).

Moreover, there are no explicit findings on the effects of the foregoing methods of integration. The above authors suggest that integrating ethics in accounting courses has the possibility of bringing out its significance in terms of the functional area of the study. As the debate continues, researchers are undertaking additional research to uncover more insights into the phenomenon. Since there appears to be no consensus on the method of ethics intervention, it may be necessary to undertake research for additional insights. Additionally, not much is known regarding the opinions of professional accountants on the effect of ethical attitudes. The majority of previous studies have examined the perceptions of accounting students and lecturers but not perceptions of accountants. Consequently, the following hypothesis is put forward:

Hypothesis 4: *The method of ethics intervention has a positive effect on ethical attitudes of accountants*

3.2.5.5 Level of ethics intervention (LEI) and ethical attitude

The findings of Ghaffari et al. (2008) indicate the introduction of ethics at the final year of undergraduate programmes in most United Kingdom (UK) universities as a means of addressing students' ethical attitudes and thereby reducing ethics-related issues and avoiding ethical dilemmas in the business environment. Others had earlier recommended the introduction of ethics at the foundational levels to positively impact students' ethical attitudes (Fisher et al., 2007). At the professional level, it is argued that ethics integration has a positive impact on members' ethical behaviour and must, therefore, be encouraged (Ghaffari et al., 2008)

From the above arguments, there appears to be no agreement on the desired level in the academic and professional programmes as to when to introduce students to ethics. As has been observed above, the bulk of studies in this area have been based on samples of students (O'Leary, 2009; 2012), lecturers (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008) rather than on accountants who are facing ethical challenges in the work environment. Again, the issue of whether the inclusion of the level of ethics intervention is associated with ethical attitudes is yet to be settled (McDonald & Donleavy, 1995). Consequently, the following hypothesis is put forward:

Hypothesis 5: *The level of ethics intervention has a positive effect on ethical attitudes of accountants*

3.2.6 Other factors and ethical attitudes

In addition to ethics education interventions, ethical attitudes may be influenced by personal and organisational factors. Some of the factors investigated in prior literature include age, gender, educational qualifications, experience, position/rank and sector of work. For example, the age of a person is seen as a determinant of ethical principle and moral

reasoning. In a study of 221 accountants attached to audit firms in Malaysia, it was found that age was statistically significant and positive in influencing ethical judgment (Ghazali & Ismail, 2013). Other studies have found a positive and significant relationship between ethical attitudes and age (Holtbrügge et al. 2015). Musbah et al. (2016) however, report insignificant findings concerning age and the moral reasoning of 229 Libyan management accountants.

Studies on the relationship between gender and ethical attitudes have reported inconclusive findings. For example, the majority of ethics studies have reported a significant negative association between ethical attitudes and moral reasoning and gender (Conroy & Emerson, 2004; Holtbrügge et al., 2015). This indicates that women have more negative attitudes toward questionable practices than men. In contrast, other studies have found gender to be insignificant in influencing ethical attitudes (Ghazali & Ismail, 2013). In a study of the influence of individual and organisational variables in the moral intensity of Libyan management accountants, men were found to be more ethical than women, contrary to most studies.

The number of years' experience gained on the job has been noted to be associated with an ethical attitude in prior literature. According to Eweje and Brunton (2010), experience as a factor in ethics studies has been new compared to other factors that have been examined in the literature. Despite its newness, findings concerning experience have not been conclusive. For instance, Deshpande et al. (2008) have argued that the level of experience gained is significant in influencing ethical attitude. In a study involving 203 employees in three hospitals, it was found that employees with expert skills were less likely to demonstrate behaviour that may be considered ethical. Similarly, in a study on the ethical dimension of decision processes of 427 university alumni in Belgium, it was found that experience has a

negative association with ethical decision making (Roozen, De Pelsmacker & Bostyn, 2001). According to Roozen et al., (2001), employees with little work experience are more likely to be ethical in their decisions than those with more years of experience. This may be due to the willingness of less experienced employees to learn and acquire skills on the job as well as comply with ethical standards more than their experienced colleagues. Experienced employees may be tempted to overlook ethical issues due to familiarity and a sense of security due to the number of years' service. Other studies, however, have made contrary findings. For example, Eweje and Brunton (2010) and Ghazali, (2015) have reported a positive association between work experience and ethical attitudes and judgement.

The association between educational qualification and ethical attitudes has been addressed in the literature with inconclusive findings. For instance, previous studies have made insignificant findings concerning qualification and ethical attitudes (Chan & Leung, 2006; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Musbah et al., 2016; Pierce & Sweeney, 2010). This means that educational qualification does not predict ethical attitude. Contrary to the above, others have made significant findings concerning qualification and ethical attitude and decision making and judgement (Deshpande et al., 2008; Eweje & Brunton, 2010).

Limited studies have examined the association between rank or position of persons on the organisational ladder and ethical attitudes. In a study of 66 staff, 58 managers and 71 partners, it was found that rank or position is not a predictor of ethical attitude (Conroy et al., 2010). This was because managers and partners exhibited lower moral reasoning than staff, indicating a negative association between position or rank and ethical attitude (Conroy et al., 2010). Contrary to the above findings, a similar study examining the association between moral reasoning and the level of management in selected industries found no

increases in ethical reasoning (Forte, 2004a). Consequently, this study examines the effect of position/rank of the ethical attitude of accountants.

Ghana is described as having a growing services sector accompanied by increased urbanisation due to increased cocoa prices that have raised the incomes and consumption of farmers. The country also attained middle-income status in 2012 having enjoyed sustained growth due to several factors. These include: increase in commodity gold price, emerging oil and gas industry, foreign direct investment inflows and strong growth in the banking sector (World Bank, 2014, p. 12). The above factors have contributed to a highly regulated services sector in Ghana. Consequently, it is expected that accountants that work in the services sector would exhibit a higher ethical stance. However, in their study of accountants in public practice and those in industry, Emerson et al., (2007) argued that ethical attitude does not differ by specialty area. In contrast, other researchers observed that employees in the public sector were more ethical than employees in the private sector (Roozen et al., 2001). Pierce and Sweeney (2010), however, have reported a significant association between perceived ethical intensity and work area. Given the contrasting findings of such studies, it was clear that more investigation was required to understand the relationship between ethical attitudes and more control variables (Emerson et al., 2007).

3.3 Research Method and Design

The objective of the study is to examine the influence of ethics education interventions on ethical attitudes using the perceptions of accountants in Ghana. The research method used in analysing the effect of ethics education intervention and other factors on the ethical attitudes of professional accountants in Ghana is presented in the next section

3.3.1 Population, sample and sampling technique

The population studied consisted of 4,133 professional accountants registered with the ICAG as of June 2017 (ICAG, 2017). Professional accountants were mainly selected based on the following reasons. First, professional accountants have undergone academic and professional education leading to qualification and are therefore expected to have a thorough understanding of the ethics education interventions in accounting programmes in Ghana. Secondly, as professionals in industry and other specialized areas of the profession, they are expected to have experienced ethical dilemmas in the working environment and must have applied education interventions received in the course of their education and training together with other factors to shape their attitudes. The sample size for the study was 760 from a population of 5,000 using a 75 percent confidence level with a population parameter assumption of above 70 percent and reliability of ± 3 percent (Zikmund et al., 2010). A purposive and convenience sampling technique was used in the selection of participants from all sectors of the Ghanaian economy. The sampling was limited to professional accountants who are members of ICAG. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling procedure that is based on the judgement of the researcher (Saunders et al., 2009). Convenience sampling is also a non-probability sampling procedure in which the sample is selected based on convenience due to time constraints (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.3.2 Data sources and collection

Data for the study was collected using a questionnaire which was distributed between October 2017 and May 2018 to professional accountants at residential marking centres in three regional capital cities of Ghana. Additional questionnaires were distributed at the 2017 Annual Accountants' Conference in the Volta Regional Capital of Ho at which over 600 professional accountants met for a three-day conference. The study further distributed questionnaires at District Society meetings of the Professional Association in five Regions of Ghana. During the period, 760 questionnaires were distributed to professional accountants

out of which 340 usable responses, representing a response rate of 44.7 percent, were collected. The response rate was considered adequate as similar research involving accounting practitioners' perception of accounting curriculum hours elicited a 24.5 percent response rate (Crawford, 2011).

3.3.3 Variable description, measurement and source

The variables measured in this study are the ethical attitude of accountants (EAA) for the dependent variable, and ethics related courses (ERC), methods of teaching ethics-related courses (MTE), methods of assessing ethics-related courses (MAE), methods of ethics interventions (MEI) and levels of ethics interventions (LEI) for independent variables. The study measured all variables on a seven-point Likert scale. The measurement of the dependent variable EAA was (anchored at 1 = “always acceptable” to 7 = “never acceptable”). A higher score for EAA indicates the rejection of the unethical practice. The independent variables were anchored at 1 (“strongly disagree”) and 7 (“entirely agree”). Likert scale responses from the survey were entered and used in the computation of descriptive statistics. The description of the variables, measurements and sources is shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Variable Descriptions, Measurements and Sources

Variable	Measurement	Source
EAA	Responses to a fourteen-point construct (see Section L in Appendix B)	(Conroy et al. 2010; Emerson et al. 2007; Longenecker et al. 1989)
ERC	Responses to a nine-item construct (see Section B in Appendix B)	(Bampton and Cowton 2013; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008)
MTE	Responses to twelve-point construct (see Section E in Appendix B)	AICPA (2015)
MAE	Responses to a ten-item instrument (see Section F in Appendix B)	Dunfee & Robertson (1988)
MEI	Responses to a six-point instrument (see Section G in Appendix B)	(Dellaportas et al., 2014; Dunfee & Robertson 1988; Ghaffari et al., 2008)
LEI	Responses to a six-point construct (see Section H from Appendix B)	(Blanthorne et al., 2007; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008)

Source: Author's Research (2017)

3.3.4 Research instrument

The survey questionnaire consisted of eight parts. The first part required respondents to provide background information. The second part asked for opinions on modes of ethics intervention (see Appendix C). The questions were designed on a 7-point Likert-type scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (entirely agree). Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. The last section contained vignettes relating to ethical attitudes. The vignettes which were originally developed by Longenecker, McKinney et al. (1989) had been used by some studies including Longenecker, McKinney and Moore (2004), Emerson et al. (2007), Conroy et al. (2010), Ghazali (2015) and Ghazali and Ismail (2013). Respondents were asked to make a selection and rank the vignettes on a 7-point Likert scale of 1 (always acceptable) to 7 (never acceptable). The vignettes relate to unacceptable profit maximising behaviour and accounting transactions that seek to conceal facts to report a lower profit for tax purposes. Additionally, the vignettes dealt with behaviour that caused potential physical or financial harm and involved issues that could be classified as legal or illegal.

3.3.5 Control variables

In order to control for possible demographic effects, the study employed other factors as control variables. The control variables in the study are age, gender, experience, educational qualification, position/rank and sector. The study measured the control as follows: age – above 40 = 1, 40 and below = 0; gender – male = 1, female = 0, experience = 10 years and above years = 1; below 10 years = 0; educational qualification – ICAG = 1, Others = 0; Position – Directors/manager = 1, others = 0; Sector – Service = 1, others = 0. The measurement of control variables followed prior similar studies such as: age (Deshpande, 1997; Nguyen et al., 2019); experience (Ghazali, 2015; Marzuki et al., 2017; Stewart & O’Leary, 2007); sector (Emerson et al., 2007; Holtbrügge et al., 2015; Stewart & O’Leary, 2007); position (Conroy et al., 2010) and qualification (Conroy et al., 2010; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013).

3.3.6 Check for common method bias

It has been suggested that the use of the same questionnaire in gathering data for the dependent and independent variables may result in a potential source of common method bias (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Nathan & Jeong-Yeong, 2003). As a means of minimising the possibility of common method bias associated with the data collection, the study followed some recommendations made by Podsakoff et al. (2003). For instance, at the data collection stage, the questionnaire ensured the anonymity of respondents. Hence, the names of persons and their institutions were not provided. Respondents were also given time to complete the instruments, not in the presence of the researcher; thus, reducing the effect of social desirability. Also, the study performed Harman's (1967) one-factor test on the constructs to ascertain the presence or absence of common method variance. The result of the test did not reveal one factor. Rather, several factors emerged, suggesting the absence of common method variance. Furthermore, the un-rotated principal component analysis factor indicated the first factor to be 31.8% whilst the first three factors accounted for 48.95% of the total variance. Since the first factor did not account for the majority of the variance but only 31.8%, the possibility of substantial amount of common method bias seems not to exist.

3.3.7 Validity and reliability

To ensure the validity of constructs, the study adopted instruments that have been previously validated to guide the development of the questionnaire and to improve results that agree with prior studies (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Conroy et al. 2010; Dellaportas et al. 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008). The study also used Cronbach alpha to ensure reliability. Alpha values for all constructs were above 0.7, suggesting a very strong internal consistency (Field 2009). The reliability scales for the variables were: $\alpha = 0.976$ for EAA, $\alpha = 0.885$ for ERC, $\alpha = 0.935$ for MTE, $\alpha = 0.926$ for MAE, $\alpha = 0.773$ for MEI and $\alpha = 0.859$ for LEI. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) conducted on variables were: ERC = 1.35, MTE = 2.48,

MAE= 2.6, MEI = 1.74 and LEI 1.14. VIFs below 5.0 suggests the absence of multicollinearity (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019).

3.3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration has become an important aspect of social science research. Accordingly, researchers are required to uphold ethical principles so as not to cause undue anxiety and stress to research participants. Additionally, there is a need to ensure confidentiality to avoid causing any form of harm to participants in the research process (Saunders et al., 2009). Researchers are advised not only to be ethical in gaining access to participants but to be ethical in data collection, analyses and subsequent use of data gathered (Saunders et al., 2009). It is particularly important in a study that pries into the ethical attitudes of participants. To ensure a high form of ethics in the data collection and analysis, ethical clearance was sought from the Ethical Committee of the University of Ghana, College of Humanities, before administering the questionnaires (see Appendix B). Participants were also given the freewill to sign consent forms to signify their readiness to participate without compulsion (see Appendix E).

3.3.9 Model development

The study employed the traditional estimation technique using OLS Regression estimates to develop the regression model. Following similar prior studies (Adkins & Radtke, 2004), the study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey in the collection of primary data (Adkins & Radtke, 2004). The quantitative approach enabled the measurement of scales for the dependent and independent variables to be used (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). Additional reasons for using quantitative approaches include the development of regression models for testing of the relationship between the dependent and a set of independent variables; for estimation of the relative strength of independent variables on dependent variables and predictions (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). The approach was seen as suitable to answer the research questions posed in the study (Saunders et al., 2009).

Principal component analysis (PCA) scores of the dependent and independent variables were computed and used in the regression model. As a multivariate data reduction technique that is closely related to factor analysis, the PCA allowed for the reduction of a large number of variables into smaller and convenient numbers (Verma, 2013).

Following similar prior studies, the model examined the effect of ethics education interventions in the accounting curriculum on EAA in Ghanaian universities. (Ghazali, 2015; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013). The dependent variable is EAA and the independent variables are ERC, MTE, MAE, MEI and LEI. Other factors noted in the literature as influencing ethical attitudes are age, gender, experience, educational qualification, position/rank and sector (Conroy et al., 2010; Ghazali, 2015; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013). These factors were used in the regression models as shown below.

The model is as follows:

$$EAA_i = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 ERC + \beta_2 MTE + \beta_3 MAE + \beta_4 MEI + \beta_5 LEI + \text{Control} + \varepsilon$$

Where:

α = constant

β = regression coefficient

EAA = ethical attitude of accountants

ERC = ethics related courses

MTE = methods of teaching ethics

MAE = methods of assessing ethics

MEI = methods of ethics interventions

LEI = level of ethics interventions

ε = error term

Controls = Age, gender, experience, educational qualification, position/rank and sector

3.4 Results and Discussion

The descriptive statistics and pairwise correlations of the study are first presented in Tables 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 below after which the results of the regression are also presented in Table 3.5. Table 3.2 presents the descriptive statistics of the sampled respondents which include information relating to age, gender, position/rank, educational/professional qualification, experience, institution type and sector. The sample consists of 340 respondents, made up of 272 males (80 percent) and 68 females (20 percent). The number of female accountants who participated in the study (20 percent) was relatively more compared to female accounting instructors (14 percent). From the study sample, it appears the accounting profession lacks gender balance in practice in Ghana.

In terms of educational qualifications of the accountants, 13 (3.8 percent) had a doctorate, 169 (49.7 percent) had master's degrees, and the rest, 158 (46.5 percent) had bachelor degrees and below. The professional qualifications of the accountants of this study are ICAG (246: 72.4 percent) and other professional certifications such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and Chartered Public Accountant (CPA) (94: 27.6 percent).

The age distribution of respondents which is predominantly above 40 years is as follows: below 40 years: 147 (43.24 percent) 40 years and above: 193 (56.76 percent). The variation in the age distribution of the sample is not too wide and may be used to represent the view of accountants. The cross-tabulation of gender and age distribution of respondents below 40 years is as follows: females: 36 (24.5 percent) and males: 111 (75.5 percent). For those 40 years and above, the gender and age compositions are females (32: 16.6 percent) and males (161: 83.4 percent). In terms of rank, the positions held by the respondents are directors and managerial positions (62: 18.2 percent) and other positions below that of directors/managers

278: 81.8 percent). This shows that the sample represented a fair coverage of positions held by respondents in the accounting profession.

The experience of respondents is grouped into below 10 years and, 10 years and above. Also, a total of 186 (55 percent) have work experience of below 10 years, while 154 (45 percent) have experience of 10 years and above. These figures are a representation of a young and vibrant group of respondents.

In terms of sectors of the economy where accountants are engaged, respondents worked in a wide range of sectors within the country. The representations of accountants in the various sectors are service (consisting of education, accountancy, auditing, banking in public and private sector organisations): 250 (73.5 percent) and others (including construction, manufacturing and mining): 90 (24.5 percent). A possible explanation is that the services sector of the economy employs more accountants than other sectors.

Table 3.2: Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

Profile	Measurement	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	272	80
	Female	68	20
Educational qualification	PhD	13	4
	Master	169	50
	Bachelor	75	22
	Other	83	24
Professional qualification	ICAG	246	72
	Others	94	28
Experience	Below 10 years	187	55
	10 years and above	153	45
Rank/Position	Director /Manager	62	18
	Others	278	82
Age	Below 40 years	147	43
	40 years and above	193	57
Sector	Service	250	74
	Other	90	26

Source: Field Work (2017)

Table 3.3 presents the means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values of the dependent and independent variables for accountants. The number of responses is 340; the mean values of ethics interventions range from 4.4 to 5.1 on a 7-point scale suggesting that respondents agreed with the variables measured. Regarding ethical attitudes, the questionable vignettes were not acceptable to respondents (mean of 5.1 on a 7-point scale). A higher score is an indication of a stricter ethical stance.

Table 3.3: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variables	Observations	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
EAA	340	1	7	5.110	1.422
ERC	340	1	7	4.760	1.455
MTE	340	1	7	5.050	1.254
MAE	340	1	7	5.000	1.330
MEI	340	1	7	4.690	1.264
LEI	340	1	7	4.400	1.551

Source: Field Work (2017)

EAA - ethical attitude of accountants; **ERC** - ethics related courses; **MTE** - method of teaching ethics; **MAE** - method of assessing ethics; **MEI** - method of ethics intervention; and **LEI** - level of ethics interventions.

Table 3.4 presents the correlations coefficients between the study variables. From the table, the level of ethics intervention is positively associated with ethical attitude though not significant. The rest of the study variables are all significant at ten percent level or better and positively correlated. The analysis does not appear to have a problem of multicollinearity since the correlations range from 0.0524 to 0.749 which are not very high (Field, 2009). Also, ***, ** and * indicate statistical significance at the 1 percent, 5 percent and 10 percent levels respectively with t-ratios being reported in parentheses.

Regression analysis was performed using Stata statistical software. The results of the study show a positive relationship between ethical attitudes and the five explanatory variables involved in ethics education intervention though not consistent.

Table 3.4: Pairwise Correlations of Variables

	EAA	ERC	MTE	MAE	MEI	LEI
EAA	1					
ERC	0.147**	1				
MTE	0.164**	0.475***	1			
MAE	0.133*	0.419***	0.749***	1		
MEI	0.124*	0.398***	0.516***	0.583***	1	
LEI	0.0524	0.178***	0.167**	0.193***	0.349***	1

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The overall results indicate that ethical attitudes of accountants can be explained by ethics education intervention. Consistent with the expectation of the study, the results show a positive but insignificant relationship between **ERC** and **EAA**. This may be because institutions that offer ethics and ethics-related courses in their accounting programmes are more likely to produce graduates who can exhibit strong ethical attitudes when faced with ethical dilemmas. The results also support prior findings in the literature that suggest that the inclusion of ethics-related courses has the potential to impact on ethical attitudes (Ghaffari et al., 2008).

Consistent with previous literature, the results show a positive association between **MTE** and **EAA** (O’Leary, 2009; 2012; O’Leary & Stewart, 2013). This means the use of appropriate methods of teaching ethics has a positive impact on the ethical attitudes of graduates of the accounting profession and accountants in business and other fields. The results also appear to indicate that institutions that do not adopt the right teaching methods may not be equipping students with skills that have the potential to exhibit the right attitude when they are confronted with ethical dilemmas. Instructors may adopt teaching strategies that give them less work if they seek self-interest. In examining the method of teaching ethics from the lens of the stakeholder theory, concerns for societal interest may demand the use of methods that encourage the adoption of strategic and deep learning approaches. However, the interest of instructors may elicit the use of methods that demand less effort on the part of instructors.

The study also shows a positive association between **MAE** and **EAA**. This means that the use of appropriate methods of assessment has the potential to influence ethical attitudes. A possible explanation is that students attach seriousness to courses based on the method of assessment. Courses that are not assessed may not attract the needed attention and seriousness from students compared to those that have elements of assessment. Furthermore, the method of assessment has the possibility of influencing the learning approaches that are adopted by

students (Ballantine et al., 2018). Instructors working in the interest of the society as a stakeholder may adopt methods of assessment that necessitate diligent efforts at grading and the adoption of a deep learning approach on the part of graduates.

Regarding the relationship between **MEI** and **EAA**, the results show a positive association and an indication that the method of integrating ethics within an accounting programme can positively influence ethical attitudes. The results provide support for the hypothesised model and are consistent with prior studies (Williams & Elson, 2010). This means that an inappropriate method of ethics integration in an accounting programme may negatively influence the ethical attitudes of graduates and society.

The results further indicate a positive association between **LEI** and **EAA**. This means that the integration of ethics at the right level within an accounting programme is more likely to positively influence ethical attitudes (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Dellaportas et al., 2014). A possible explanation is that lack of ethics integration at the right year and level in an accounting programme can negatively influence the ethical attitudes of graduates and not achieve the best interest of other stakeholders.

The study further introduced six control variables in the model (see Table 3). Columns 2 to 7 presents the results of the control variables, including age, gender, experience, position, educational qualification and sector. The results between the main variables and ethical attitudes remained unchanged with the introduction of the control variables as indicated in columns 2, 5 and 6 in Table 3.6. However, working experience recorded a positive and significant effect in influencing ethical attitude. This suggests that ethical attitudes of persons with 10 years and above working experience are more likely to exhibit a high ethical stance. This means that the experience gained on the job has the potential to influence ethical attitudes than ethics interventions received in school. This is because qualified accountants with

several years' experience might have resolved ethical dilemmas on the job with experience than from ethics interventions received during the accountancy training process. From the stakeholder theory, this finding reiterates the professional demands of senior accountants to mentor junior members within their teams on ethics (IESBA, 2018). For example, support from seniors can help junior accountants to navigate ethical dilemmas emanating from others within the organisations that lack similar training as accountants. Such partnerships will also make it easy for others to learn to do what is ethically acceptable.

Table 3.5: Regression of EEI on Ethical Attitudes of Accountants

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ERC	0.0405 (0.0686)	0.0420 (0.0685)	0.0330 (0.0687)	0.0310 (0.0684)	0.0456 (0.0688)	0.0405 (0.0687)	0.0395 (0.0687)
MTE	0.0436 (0.0999)	0.0286 (0.100)	0.0523 (0.100)	0.0512 (0.0995)	0.0419 (0.1000)	0.0441 (0.100)	0.0431 (0.100)
MAE	0.000326 (0.0867)	0.00131 (0.0865)	-0.00937 (0.0869)	-0.0212 (0.0869)	0.00607 (0.0869)	0.000199 (0.0868)	-0.00069 (0.0868)
MEI	0.0141 (0.0722)	0.0217 (0.0723)	0.0181 (0.0722)	0.0212 (0.0720)	0.0108 (0.0723)	0.0114 (0.0725)	0.0164 (0.0724)
LEI	0.00710 (0.0577)	0.00550 (0.0576)	0.0121 (0.0577)	0.00234 (0.0575)	0.00829 (0.0577)	0.00579 (0.0578)	0.00229 (0.0584)
Gender		-0.197 (0.137)					
Age			0.148 (0.110)				
EXPE				0.222** (0.109)			
Position					-0.134 (0.140)		
Education						0.0627 (0.122)	
Sector							0.0669 (0.124)
_cons	0.0000 (0.0537)	0.158 (0.122)	-0.0842 (0.0823)	-0.101 (0.0727)	0.0244 (0.0594)	-0.0453 (0.103)	-0.0492 (0.106)
<i>N</i>	340	340	340	340	340	340	340
<i>R</i> ²	0.0404	0.0464	0.0456	0.0524	0.0430	0.0412	0.0412
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.0202	0.0233	0.0226	0.0294	0.0199	0.0180	0.0181
F	1.996	2.011	1.978	2.286	1.860	1.776	1.780
P	0.0550	0.0445	0.0485	0.0215	0.0655	0.0808	0.0801

Standard errors in parentheses; Key: *** denotes significance at 1%, ** at 5%, and * at 10% levels

Consistent with our expectations, the results of the study confirm that six components of ethics educational interventions (ERC, MTE, MAE, MEI and LEI) are positively associated with ethical attitudes of professional accountants though not significant. The explanation for this finding is that as schools introduce ethics courses, adopt teaching and assessment methods in ethics and make ethical interventions in varied forms and levels within the curricula, they promote the desired outcome of producing ethically oriented graduates for the society. While these findings are new in terms of ethics interventions in universities and the professional association, there is support in the literature that ethics intervention in accounting education is a worthy cause that must be pursued (Dellaportas et al., 2014).

The findings in the study suggest that experience is the key variable that influences EAA. Drawing on the managerial stakeholder theory that states that managing an entity require giving attention to attitudes, structures, and practices to achieve set targets. The ethical attitudes of professional accountants in organisations are shaped by structures and practices in the work environment. Also, ethical decisions based on experience could result from consideration of the interest organisation, team members, profession and society as partners. As one gains experience in the profession, the desire to mentor others could result in the pursuit of stakeholder interest. Also, the desire to contribute to society or the firm would encourage the acquisition of skills and knowledge needed in the performance on the job.in compliance with the requirements of IESBA (IFAC, 2018).

3.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The ethical attitudes of accountants are crucial for business organisations. It is important because the display of unethical attitude could result in misstatement and misrepresentation of financial statements which serve as a basis for investment decisions. The display of unethical attitudes by accountants in the past has resulted in the collapse of some corporate

giants around the world. The results of the study indicate that other factors beyond EEI contribute to shaping the attitudes of accountants towards questionable unethical practices. The key finding from the study is that experience is a predictor of an ethical attitude of accountants. This highlights the essential role played by the experience acquired by accountants on the job as significantly influencing ethical attitudes. It also reiterates the recommendation by the IESBA for the adoption of senior professionals to assist in training younger professionals to develop personal ethics to withstand questionable practices within the profession. The study calls for the consideration of additional factors beyond ethics interventions in academic and professional education for the development of ethical accountants. Results from the study further demands that senior members of the profession and ICAG district societies to adopt business schools in their district for mentorship of students and young professionals in response to the requirement of the IESBA (IESBA, 2018). Additionally, accounting educators may consider the use of senior professionals as guest lecturers to share their wealth of experiences, especially ethical challenges, with students in tertiary institutions to equip them for the job market.

Although the study was comprehensive and engaged quantitative techniques in making deductions, it had some limitations. First, 340 self-selected professional accountants attending a conference and marking scripts provided the opinions reported in the study. It may therefore not reflect the opinions of the entirety of professional accountants in Ghana. As has been mentioned earlier, the study was cross-sectional and opinions might change over a period. Finally, the measure of the study variables represents the opinions of respondents and not actual behaviour

The limitations identified in the study inform future research directions. The areas identified for future research include the expansion of the sample of respondents to cover partly

qualified accountants in industry to determine if their opinions would differ significantly from the results of the present study. Secondly, future studies must cover longer periods to determine changes in ethical attitudes over a period. Finally, the study raises the potential for extension into other countries in the West African sub-region to benefit from cross-country perspectives within the African continent.

The study has implications for academic and professional institutions making ethical interventions to consider avenues to tap into the experience of professional accountants in their curriculum designs. For example, the use of experienced practitioners as resource persons must be encouraged by these institutions as a means of shaping the ethical attitudes of students and practitioners. There is a need for the profession to educate its members to pursue the interest of the wider society rather than personal interest. Experienced faculty and professionals must be encouraged to share their experience with young students and professionals in training. There is a need for mentorship programmes within the academic environments where experienced members adopt younger ones as mentees in the quest to strengthen ethical attitudes for the benefit of society. Similarly, in line with the suggestion of IESBA, senior members of the profession within the district societies of ICAG must provide support by mentoring junior members on ethics in the workplace. Additionally, ICAG must encourage senior members of the profession within the district societies to adopt business schools within their localities for mentorship

CHAPTER FOUR

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES, ORGANISATIONAL ATTRIBUTES AND ETHICAL ATTITUDES OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS IN GHANA

CHAPTER FOUR

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES, ORGANISATIONAL ATTRIBUTES AND ETHICAL ATTITUDES OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS IN GHANA

Abstract

This paper examines the effects of personal and organisational attributes and demographic factors on the ethical attitudes of professional accountants. Empirically, ethical attitudes can be affected by personal and organisational attributes and other factors. However, existing studies have focused on either personal or organisational attributes; hence, the need for the current study. The study uses data from a survey of 340 professional accountants in Ghana and employs the ordinary least square regression analysis to test various hypothesised relationships.

The findings suggest that personal attributes (greed and desire for personal gains, behaviour of one's peers and superiors, personal values, family influences and pressures, religious background and ego strength) collectively have a positive and significant influence on ethical attitudes. Similarly, organisational attributes such as company policies, codes of conduct and visionary leadership collectively have a positive and significant influence on ethical attitudes. Also, other factors such as working experience is crucial in predicting ethical attitudes and gender has a significant and negative association and significant effect on ethical attitude than age, rank in organisation, professional accounting qualification and sector of industry where accountants are engaged. Drawing on the social contingent theory (SCT), the study posits that personal attributes may not in themselves influence attitudes but interacting with environmental conditions and cognitive processes of the individual may produce certain attitudes.

The study recommends that policies such as recruiting ethically oriented professional accountants should be encouraged. Organisations must create the necessary environments by developing and applying ethical codes and policies to encourage acceptable ethical attitudes. Also, employers must consider the experience of accountants during recruitment since these are predictors of ethical attitudes. Finally, accounting educators and professional bodies must encourage mentorship programmes using experienced members of the profession.

4.1 Introduction

Concerns about the role of accountants in global scandals across the world in recent times have fuelled research aimed at improving the ethical behaviour of professionals (Copeland, 2015; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013). At the core of the debate on unethical behaviour and attitude is whether the scandals with their attendant losses could have been avoided by having ethically sensitive accountants in society (Ghazali, 2015). As illustrated in the study of Copeland (2015), the author supports the need for further research that informs attitudes towards questionable practices especially in the accounting profession. What constitutes personal characteristics has been of concern in the literature. For example, prior studies have narrowly defined personality traits and have thus called for studies that adopt extensive personality traits (Holtbrügge et al., 2015).

Equally important in the fight against unethical practices has been the search for organisational factors as prerequisites for the development of ethically sensitive decisions (Holtbrügge et al., 2015). However, what constitutes organisational factors in prior literature has been limited in scope. For instance, Ghazali & Ismail (2013) used the ethics position of a corporate entity whilst Holtbrügge et al. (2015) adopted organisational culture. In another study, Christie, Kwon, Stoeberl, & Baumhart (2003) used organisation size as a proxy for organisational factors. It is therefore essential to have research that provides the impact of an expanded form of organisational factors on ethical attitude as suggested in previous studies (Holtbrügge et al., 2015).

Holtbrügge et al. (2015) argued that the perceptions of accounting professionals may differ from members of other professions regarding ethical and unethical practices. This is particularly important in an emerging economy where the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana (ICAG), the professional body responsible for regulating accountancy practice in

Ghana has sanctioned four practicing firms for their involvement in the recent collapse of seven banks (ICAG, 2019). The authors, therefore, called for studies that would examine the ethical attitudes of accounting professionals regarding personal and organisational characteristics (Holtbrügge et al., 2015).

Prior literature has acknowledged the effects of personal and organisational factors in shaping ethical attitudes. However, some of the studies have focused on personal attributes alone to the neglect of organisational factors (Conroy & Emerson, 2004; Conroy, Emerson, & Pons, 2010; Emerson, Conroy & Stanley, 2007; Fritzsche, Oz & Fritzsche, 2007). Others have also considered organisational factors in isolation from personal attributes (Bowen, 2004). A lot more studies have focused only on demographic variables as factors that influence ethical attitudes (Conroy *et al.*, 2010; Emerson *et al.*, 2007). The impact of personal, organisational and demographic factors on ethical attitude is therefore not realised. Consequently, further research is urgently required to provide a better understanding of the factors that shape ethical attitudes (Narula & Desore, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2019).

The research questions in this paper are presented as follows:

- Q1: Do personal attributes influence ethical attitudes of professional accountants towards questionable unethical practices?
- Q2: Do organisational attributes influence professional accountants' ethical attitudes towards questionable unethical practices?
- Q3: What other factors influence ethical attitudes of professional accountants towards questionable unethical practices?

The study makes significant contributions through its literature review and survey by deepening our understanding of the impact of personal and organisational factors on ethical

attitudes in developing countries. It addresses the gap in the literature by providing evidence to support the contribution of an expanded form of personal factors beyond demography in shaping ethical attitudes. The study confirms parts of the three-dimensional model interaction of the social cognitive theory (SCT) between personal, organisational and individual cognitive processes on ethical attitude. The study contributes to the literature in the range of personal and organisational characteristics that have been considered to give a broader understanding of factors that impact on ethical attitudes. This is essential for the design of change behaviours strategies among professionals (Holtbrügge et al., 2015).

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: the next sections present the literature review, theory and hypothesis. This is followed by the research methods and results of the study. Thereafter, the discussion, conclusions, limitations and policy implications are provided after which the future research directions are given.

4.2 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

This section presents the theory underlying the study and review of prior literature

4.2.1 Social cognitive theory (SCT)

Several theories have been propounded to explain human behaviour, especially concerning decision-making in organisations. SCT is a social theory that has been applied in prior ethics-related research (Aquino, Freeman, Reed II, Lim & Felps, 2009; Holtbrügge et al., 2015). Postulated by Bandura, the theory describes the effect of personal attributes and cognitive processes in the behaviour of persons in organisations. It presents a three-dimensional model in describing the behaviour of individuals instead of the normal two-dimensional model used in the literature. Human behaviour is assumed to reflect individual personality and factors within the environment, which makes it two-dimensional. SCT adds a third dimension that

includes the cognitive processes of the individual, personality and factors within the environment, which becomes a three-dimensional model rather than a two-dimensional model (Wood & Bandura, 1989). In contrast to prior psychosocial theories of human behaviour that have described behaviour using single factors, SCT explains behaviour using multiple factors. The multiple factors may not be of equal strength but have varied strengths contingent on the situation and environment. The factors include personal attributes and cognitive processes that influence how individuals perceive the environment. The theory further argues that cognitive processes of individuals are self-reflective (evaluation using past and personal standards), vicarious (observation of others) and symbolic (use of creation, comprehension and environmental conditions) (Bandura, 1999). The attitudes of accountants may be influenced by personal attributes (personality), the environment in which they operate (organisation/society) and the cognitive processes (how the person processes information available and benefits to be gained or losses to be suffered from a particular decision). It has been argued that the cognitive process involves the development of attitude or behaviour through observing others' behaviour to avoid mistakes in decision making or develop behaviour through learning from one's mistakes (Holtbrügge et al., 2015). SCT may thus be useful in explaining attitudes towards questionable unethical practices in the environment where accountants work. The absence of a strong institutional environment may influence the attitudes of accountants regarding their ethical stance in society.

4.2.2 Personal attributes and ethical attitudes

Personal attributes may be described as the features, traits or characteristics inherent in a person that tends to influence his/her attitude and behaviour. From the viewpoint of the SCT, personal attributes of individuals are coordinated through their cognitive, affective and behavioural processes and self-regulation processes (Galperin, Bennett & Aquino, 2011). Personal attributes are also influenced by self-regulating skills and the ability to withstand

unethical practices (Bandura, 1999). Individuals' ethical attitudes and behaviour in society have come to the fore following the Watergate scandal (Stevens, 2008). However, there have been conflicting findings concerning the influence of personal attributes on ethical attitude. For example, Abuznaid (2009) reported a negative association between personal attributes (such as the stage of moral development, family influence, and peer influence) and ethical behaviour. In contrast, other studies have highlighted a positive and significant association between values (the nature and personality of individuals) and ethical attitude (Christie, Kwon, Stoeberl & Baumhart, 2003; Fritzsche, Oz & Fritzsche, 2007; Holtbrügge et al., 2015; Modarres & Rafiee, 2011). However, other studies did not find a significant association between the impact of individual factors and personality traits on ethical attitude and decision making (Costa et al., 2016; Shafer, Morris & Ketchand, 2001). Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *There is a positive relationship between personal attributes and accountants' ethical attitudes*

4.2.3 Organisational attributes and ethical attitudes

Organisational attributes refer to conditions prevailing within the workplace that have the likelihood of influencing the attitudes of persons within that environment (Christie et al., 2003; Keller, Smith & Smith, 2007; Treviño, 1986; Victor & Cullen, 1988). The SCT posits that ethical attitudes are influenced by comprehension and adaptation of conditions in the environment in addition to personal attributes (Bandura, 1999). Previous studies have reported a positive association between ethical attitude and organisational culture, organisational values and corporate ethics position (Bowen, 2004; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge et al., 2015). In a study on the effects of organisational attributes on the conduct of employees at work, a significant, negative association was found between organisational climate and organisational misbehaviour (Vardi, 2001). Other studies have also reported no

significant effect of organisational factors on ethical attitudes (Roozen, De Pelsmacker & Bostyn, 2001). Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: *There is a positive relationship between organisational attributes and accountants' ethical attitudes.*

4.2.4 Other factors and ethical attitudes

Empirical studies on ethical attitudes have identified several other factors that explain the differences in ethical attitudes. Factors such as age (Emerson *et al.*, 2007; Ghazali, 2015), gender (Holtbrügge *et al.*, 2015; Musbah *et al.*, 2016; Taylor 2013), educational qualification (Ghazali, 2015), sector of work (Emerson *et al.*, 2007), position or rank (Conroy *et al.*, 2010) and experience (Eweje & Brunton, 2010; Ghazali, 2015) have been examined in previous literature with inconsistent findings. The next section reviews the literature on the other factors employed in the study. The next section presents literature on the factors employed in the study.

4.2.4.1 Age

Among the demographic variables that are key in influencing ethical attitude is age (Emerson *et al.*, 2007). As individuals age, they develop principles and values that direct their attitudes (Bandura, 1999). Also, an increase in age has been associated with knowledge of the effect of unethical attitudes in society (Pan & Sparks, 2012). It follows that an ethical attitude improves with age. However, there appear to be inconsistent findings regarding the influence of age on ethical attitude in several studies (Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge *et al.*, 2015). For instance, while some studies have reported no significant relationship between age and ethical attitude (Eweje & Brunton, 2010; Forte, 2004a), others have found age as the most robust predictor of ethical attitude (Costa *et al.*, 2016; Emerson *et al.*, 2007; Emerson & McKinney, 2010; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge *et al.*, 2015; Weeks, McKinney &

Longenecker, 1999). Based on the preceding discussion, this study makes the following hypothesis:

H3a: *Older accountants are more likely to reject unethical practices than younger ones.*

4.2.4.2 Gender

Individuals' cognitive perception of their environment can be partly explained by gender (Holtbrügge et al., 2015). According to the SCT, attitude could be explained by personal attributes such as gender, cognitive processes and the environment (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Ghazali and Ismail (2013) underscore the importance of research on gender differences regarding ethical attitudes due to the growing number of females that enter the job market and are holding managerial positions. However, there are mixed findings regarding their significance and directions of these relationships. For Instance, Kidwell, Stevens and Bethke (1987) and Taylor (2013) found no significant differences in the ethical attitudes of males and females, whilst others uncovered inconsistent results. A body of the literature has made findings of females having significantly more negative ethical attitudes towards corporate misdeeds than males (Chan & Leung, 2006; Conroy & Emerson, 2004; Deshpande, 1997; Emerson et al., 2007; Kelley, Ferrell & Skinner, 1990; Sweeney & Costello, 2009). On the contrary, Musbah et al., (2016) found that males were more likely to be ethical in their attitudes than females in a study involving management accountants in Libya. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3b: *Female accountants have a negative attitude towards unethical business practices.*

4.2.4.3 Educational qualification

From the perspective of SCT, education improves and broadens individuals' horizon. The general expectation of society is that the level of qualification would result in the exhibition of the highest form of ethical attitude (Swaidan, Vitell & Rawwas, 2003). In contrast, other

studies have highlighted a negative relationship between educational qualification and ethical attitude (Deshpande et al., 2008; Ghazali, 2015). A lot more studies have found no significant relationship between educational qualification and moral reasoning and ethical attitude (Chan & Leung, 2006; Deshpande, 1997; Forte, 2004b; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Kidwell et al., 1987; Musbah et al., 2016). The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H3c: *There is a positive relationship between educational qualification and accountants' ethical attitude.*

4.2.4.4 Sector

Conflicting findings are reported regarding the influence of the sector of work on ethical attitude. For instance, in a study examining ethical attitudes of accountants and field of specialisations, it was found that attitudes of accountants in audit practice were not significantly different from those in tax, accounting, education and consulting (Emerson, Conroy & Stanley 2007). In an exploratory study that examined governance factors that affect the ethical decision-making of internal auditors from public and private sectors, it was concluded that there are no significant differences in decision-making (Stewart & O'Leary 2007). In a study on unethical behaviour in the workplace, it was concluded that unethical behaviour towards society was more prevalent in the public, chemical and energy sectors than in others (Kaptein, 2008). Beyond the above findings, prior studies have not examined the influence of sector (service and others, including manufacturing and construction) on ethical attitude. It may be expected that professional accountants who work in the service sectors would be bound by strict codes of ethics and therefore would exhibit a more ethical stance towards questionable ethical practices. The present study, therefore, puts forward the following hypothesis:

H3d: *There is a positive relationship between the sector of work and accountants' ethical attitude.*

4.2.4.5 Experience

Compared to age and gender, not much has been researched on the effect of work experience and ethical attitudes (Eweje & Brunton 2010). As with other antecedents, conflicting empirical evidence exists between ethical attitude and experience. For example, in a study of the ethical perceptions among 655 business students in New Zealand, it was found that respondents with more experience displayed a high ethical stance than their counterparts with fewer years of experience (Eweje & Brunton 2010). Another study involving equal gender sample (50 males and 50 females) to examine differences in ethical perceptions, concludes that experience has a positive association with ethical perception (Kidwell et al., 1987). The findings appear to be consistent with prior studies that have examined career stage and found that persons within the later stages of their career exhibited higher ethical stance than those at the early stages (Weeks et al., 1999). However, a study of Canadian business students and professional accountants reveals no difference in ethical decision-making between the two groups of respondents (Cohen, Pant & Sharp, 2001). Also, in a study involving 536 business students and 158 business people, it was concluded that the students with no experience had a more negative view of questionable ethical practices than business people with experience, suggesting a negative association between experience and ethical attitude. This study adds to the limited studies on the effect of experience on ethical attitude by using professional accountants in industry and practice. The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H3e: *There is a positive relationship between the number of years' working experience and ethical attitude.*

4.2.4.6 Position/Rank

Inconclusive findings are evident regarding the influence of rank or position on ethical attitude. For example, given the experience and knowledge acquired, the expectation is that persons who occupy higher positions in firms would exhibit high ethical attitudes to serve as

examples for those in lower positions (Conroy et al., 2010). However, some studies have argued that managers may exhibit a more ethical stance due to their moral development and responsiveness (Forte, 2004b). For instance, Conroy et al. (2010) and Forte (2004a) did not find any relationship regarding position and ethical attitude while Ponemon and Gabhart (1994) reported an inverse relationship in a study among auditors in USA firms. Consequently, the under-listed hypothesis is proposed:

H3f: *There is a positive relationship between the position/rank of an accountant and ethical attitude*

4.3 Research Methods

The methods employed in achieving the objectives set for the study are addressed in the next section. These include the research design, study population, sample size and sampling technique, research instrument and data collection, the nature and source of research instrument used and the selection and measurement of research variables. The measures of reliability and validity employed are presented together with ethical considerations for the study.

4.3.1 Research design

The study employed a quantitative research approach using cross-sectional data to investigate the effect of personal and organisational attributes on the ethical attitudes of professional accountants in Ghana. This approach was preferred since prior studies examining the influence of organisational and personal attributes on ethical attitudes have relied on quantitative approaches (Ghazali, 2015; Ghazali & Ismail 2013; Holtbrügge et al., 2015). Furthermore, the emphasis of the study is to investigate the relationship between personal and organisational attributes and ethical attitudes of professional accountants and to be able to test hypotheses put forward by the study.

4.3.2 Population, sample and sampling technique

The study population consists of 4,133 professional accountants registered with the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana as of 30th June 2017 (ICAG, 2017). The sample size for the study was 760 based on 95% confidence level when the parameter in the population is assumed to be over 70% or under 30% with the reliability of $\pm 3\%$ from a table of computed sample size for sample proportions for a population of 5,000 (Zikmund et al., 2010, p. 437). The study employed convenience and purposive sampling techniques in the choice of professional accountants. A total of 760 questionnaires were distributed to professional accountants out of which 340 completed and usable ones, representing 44.7 percent, were collected after completion. The response rate is comparable to prior research which elicited a response rate of 36 percent (Marzuki et al., 2017). Since the respondents were all chartered accountants who had work experiences spanning from one year to over sixteen years, they were qualified to complete the questionnaires and more likely to provide answers based on their ethical experience at work (Ghazali & Ismail, 2013).

4.3.3 The research instrument and data collection

This study employed the use of closed-ended questions in the survey due to the nature of the objectives set. The instrument was made up of four sections. In section A respondents were asked about their demographic background. Section B contained measures of personal attributes and Section C measured organisational factors that influence ethical attitudes. Sections B and C were of the form of a seven-point Likert-scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = entirely agree. The measurement of variables and sources are in Section 4.3.4. Respondents were asked to make a selection and rank a set of ethically charged vignettes on a 7-point Likert scale of 1 (always acceptable) to 7 (never acceptable). The vignettes relate to unacceptable profit-maximizing behaviour and accounting transactions that seek to

conceal facts to report lower profits for tax purposes. A higher score indicates the rejection of an unethical attitude (Please see Appendix C).

As suggested by previous literature, a pilot test was carried out with 10 accountants before administering the questionnaires. It is argued that the pilot testing of the questionnaire contributes to the internal reliability of questions and the validity of data collected. Secondly, pilot testing helps to avoid ambiguity in questions and omission of important areas (Saunders et al. 2009). Errors found in the questionnaires were corrected before being administered to the study sample.

The study collected primary data using a questionnaire survey which was administered between October 2017 and May 2018 at ICAG residential marking centers where over 200 professional accountants from all sectors of the Ghanaian economy gathered for five days to moderate and mark the professional examinations scripts. Questionnaires were also administered at the 2017 Annual Accountants' Conference where over 600 professional accountants gathered for four days. The completed questionnaires were collected on the same day of administration and the last day of the conference.

4.3.4 Variable measurement

The study employed the traditional estimation technique using OLS Regression estimates to develop two regression models. The principal component analysis (PCA) scores, a method used in the reduction of a large number of variables into smaller and manageable numbers (Verma, 2013) were computed for the dependent and independent variables and used in the regression models. Descriptive statistics were performed for all the regression variables to depict the distribution of the sample which included average indicators computed from the survey data. Further regression analyses were run to test the effects of personal attributes,

organisational attributes and age, gender, experience, position or rank of accountants within an organisation, educational qualification and sector of industry where an accountant is engaged in a stepwise manner on ethical attitudes. Verma (2013) suggests the use of the stepwise regression method in situations where the extent of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is not known with certainty.

The dependent variable in the model is EAA and the independent variables are PAE, OAE, age, gender, experience, position, sector, and educational qualification of accountants.

$$\mathbf{EAA}_1 = \alpha_1 + \beta_1\mathbf{PAE} + \beta_2\mathbf{Age} + \beta_3\mathbf{Gender} + \beta_4\mathbf{Expe} + \beta_5\mathbf{Posi} + \beta_6\mathbf{Educa} + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots 1$$

$$\mathbf{EAA}_2 = \alpha_1 + \beta_1\mathbf{OAE} + \beta_2\mathbf{Sector} + \beta_3\mathbf{Expe} + \beta_4\mathbf{Posi} + \beta_5\mathbf{Educa} + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots 2$$

$$\mathbf{EAA}_3 = \alpha_1 + \beta_1\mathbf{PAE} + \beta_2\mathbf{OAE} + \beta_3\mathbf{Age} + \beta_4\mathbf{Gender} + \beta_5\mathbf{Expe} + \beta_6\mathbf{Posi} + \beta_7\mathbf{Educa} + \mathbf{Sector} + \varepsilon \dots\dots 3$$

Where EAA is Ethical Attitudes of Accountants (how accountants rank the vignette); PAE is the composite of all personal attributes of ethics that influence EAA; OAE is the composite of organisational attributes of ethics that influence EAA. Again, PAE1 is greed and desire for personal gain; PAE2 is behaviour of one's peers; PAE3 is behaviour of one's superiors; PAE 4 is personal values; PAE 5 is family influences and pressures; PAE 6 is religious background and PAE 7 is ego strength. Furthermore, OAE1 is formal company policies and codes of conduct; OAE 2 is visionary leadership; OAE 3 is organisational climate and OAE 4 is organisational culture/values. Also, AGE is age; EXPE is experience; POSI is position/rank in organisation; SECT is sector; EDUC is educational qualification and ε (error term). The results of the regression analyses are presented in Tables 3 to 5. The study uses ***, ** and * to indicate statistical significance at the 1 percent, 5 percent and 10 percent levels respectively and t-ratios reported in parentheses.

4.3.5 Selection and measurement of other factors

Empirical studies on personal and organisational attributes of ethics have identified several factors to explain behaviour and attitudes. These include variables such as age, gender, qualification, experience, position and sector. Various studies have employed these variables, especially in ethics-related research (Conroy & Emerson, 2004; Conroy et al., 2010; Emerson et al., 2007; Emerson & McKinney, 2010; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge et al., 2015; Rutherford, Parks, Cavasos & White, 2012). The present study measured the factors as follows. Age: 40 years and above = 1, below 40 years = 0; Gender: male = 1, female = 0; educational qualification: tertiary education = 1, none = 0; experience: 10 years and above = 1, below 10 years = 0; Position/rank of person within organisation: Directors/managers = 1, others = 0; and Sector of industry where accountant works: service sector = 1, other sectors = 0. The study adopted the above factors as independent variables as they are associated with ethical attitudes in earlier literature (Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge et al., 2015).

4.3.6 Check for common method bias

The study adopted some recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2003) in minimising the problem of common method bias in research. For instance, the authors recommend two strategies as the study design procedures and the use of statistical control techniques (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Since it was not possible to collect data on the dependent and independent variables from different sources, the study ensured the anonymity of respondents by not disclosing the identity as a means of reducing social desirability. Also, the questionnaire had an introduction that stated that the questionnaire was purely for educational purposes to reduce apprehension on the part of respondents. The study further adopted the statistical technique of the one-factor test on all constructs (Harman, 1967). The results of the test reveal the absence of common method bias as several factors emerged from the un-

rotated component factor analysis as opposed to one factor. The first factor that emerged had a variance of 28.6% which was less than 50% an indication that there was no common method variance. Additionally, the first three factors of the un-rotated principal component factor analysis accounted for 60.5% of the total variance. It can be argued that the problem of common method variance does not exist in the study.

4.3.7 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are two measures that are recommended for accounting research (Smith, 2015). They are necessary for the credibility of the research process and the findings that may be obtained. Smith (2015) posits that reliability allows for consistency in the application of instruments across situations such that similar research using the same instruments may generate comparable results. Some recommended measures of reliability involve the use of previously validated instruments (Smith, 2015). The present study adopted the use of a previously validated instrument in the measurement of variables employed. Among the measures of reliability from prior literature is the Cronbach alpha that represents the degree of reliability of the research instrument, test-retest reliability and split-half reliability. The study adopted 'the most common method of scale reliability which is the Cronbach alpha test (Field, 2009 p. 674). The acceptable level is given as ranging between 0.7 and 0.8 even though the figure is dependent on the number of variables within a construct (Smith, 2015). The alpha values for the variables in this study were EAA= 0.976, PAE = 0.875, and OAE = 0.923 which suggests a very strong internal consistency (Field, 2009). The study further conducted the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of the regression variables to ensure the absence of multicollinearity (Zikmund et al. 2010). All the VIF variables in the current study were below 2.0 which is within the acceptable level of 5.0 (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019).

4.3.8 Ethical consideration

As an important aspect of the research process, there is a need for researchers to ensure ethical clearance in all matters. Among the ethical issues that could arise in a research process are the safety of participants and the maintenance of the researcher's objectivity in the collection of data and data analysis. Other ethical considerations involve confidentiality, respect for assurances provided and the common interest of participants (Saunders et al., 2009). As a research-based institution, the University of Ghana requires research students to obtain ethical clearance for research that involves human agents. Consequently, the researcher applied to and received ethical clearance from the Ethical Committee of the College of Humanities, University of Ghana, before the commencement of data collection and analysis (see Appendix B). Participants' consent was also obtained before questionnaires were administered (see Appendix E).

4.4 Results and Discussion

Table 4.1 presents the descriptive statistics on the sampled respondents. It provides information relating to age, gender, position/rank, educational/professional qualification, experience and sector. The sample consists of 340 respondents made up of 272 males (80 percent) and 68 females (20 percent). From the study sample, it appears the accounting profession lacks gender balance in Ghana. The professional qualifications of accountants are ICAG, 246 (72 percent) and other professional certifications such as ACCA, CIMA and CPA, 94 (28 percent); an indication that the majority of the respondents acquired their professional qualifications through the ICAG.

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics of Chartered Accountants

Item		No. of Respondents	Percent. (%)
Gender	Male	272	80
	Female	68	20
Qualification	PhD	13	4
	Master	169	50
	Bachelor	75	22
	Others	83	24
Professional Qualification	ICAG	246	72
	Others	94	28
	None		
Experience	Below 10 years	187	55
	10 years and above	153	45
Rank/Position	Director/Manager	62	18
	Others	278	82
Age	Below 40 years	147	43
	40 years and above	193	57
Sector	Service	250	74
	Others	90	26

Source: Field Data (2017)

The age distribution of respondents is predominantly above 40 years. The age distribution is as follows: below 40 years 147 (43 percent) 40 years and above 193 (57 percent). This shows that older respondents were more than young ones. Again, the variation in the age distribution of the sample is not too wide and may be used to represent the view of accountants. Concerning positions/rank of respondents, directors and managers were 62 (18 percent) and other positions (below Directors/Managers), 278 (82 percent). This shows that the sample represents a fair coverage of positions held by respondents in the accounting profession. From the sample, a total of 186 (55 percent) have work experience below 10 years and 154 (45 percent) have experience above 10 years. The figures above are a representation of a young and vibrant group of respondents. The representation of accountants in the various sectors are service (consisting of education, accountancy, auditing, banking, public and private sector organisations): 250 (74 percent) and others (including construction, manufacturing and

mining): 90 (26 percent). A possible explanation is that the services sector of the economy employs more accountants than other sectors.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variables	Observations	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
EAA	340	1	7	5.110	1.422
PAE	340	1	7	5.110	1.382
OAE	340	1	7	5.450	1.371

Source: Field Data (2017)

Note: **EAA** - ethical attitude of accountants; **PAE** - personal attributes of ethics; **OAE** - organisational attributes of ethics.

Table 4.2 provides descriptive statistics of the dependent (EAA) and independent variables (PAE and OAE). The results show that the means for the variables range between 5.1 and 5.45. The mean of 5.1 on a 7-point scale for EAA suggests that respondents did not accept questionable ethical practices and therefore had a higher ethical stance. Respondents were also in agreement that personal and organisational attributes influence ethical attitudes.

Table 4.3 presents the correlations among the study variables. From Table 4.3, the majority of the variables are significantly correlated at a ten percent level or better and positively correlated. The analysis does not appear to have a problem of multicollinearity since the correlations range from 0.0524 to 0.758 which are all below 0.8 and therefore not found to be very high (Field, 2009).

Table 4.3: Pearson Correlations of Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
EAA	1								
PAE	0.176**	1							
OAE	0.177**	0.715***	1						
Gender	-0.0969	-0.0251	0.0167	1					
Age	0.0526	-0.0825	-0.0572	0.0980	1				
Expe	0.120*	0.0135	0.0943	0.0857	0.496***	1			
Position	-0.0483	0.0526	0.0602	0.122*	0.212***	0.167**	1		
Education	0.0104	-0.0314	-0.0354	0.151**	0.0579	0.0208	0.0024	1	
Sector	0.0468	0.0416	0.107*	-0.0833	-0.0123	-0.0701	-0.0102	-0.103	1

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

To investigate the influence of personal organisational attributes and demographic factors and to test the research hypotheses, the study conducted a linear regression analysis (Tables 4.4 to 4.6). The order of entry of variables into the regression analysis is presented in Table 4.4. The study first entered the factors relating to personal attributes (model 1), then factors relating to organisational attributes in model 2, and the combined variables in model 3 to test the robustness of the individual variables.

The results of the study indicate that personal attributes are positive and significantly associated with ethical attitudes at a 1 percent level; hence, H1 is supported. Some studies have found that personal attributes may negatively impact on ethical attitude and behaviour. Yet in this study, personal attributes are significant and positively associated with ethical attitude. Other studies have also reported that personal values and attributes have a strong influence on ethical attitude and behaviour (Christie et al., 2003; Fritzsche & Oz, 2007; Holtbrügge et al., 2015).

Regarding organisational attributes, some previous studies have found no significant relationship with ethical attitude (Roozen et al., 2001), while others have reported a negative influence on ethical attitude (Vardi, 2001). Yet in the study, organisational attributes are positive and have a significant influence on ethical attitude at a 1 percent level which is in agreement with the positive and significant association commonly reported in the literature (Bowen, 2004; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge et al., 2015). Thus, H2 is supported by the findings of this study. This indicates that the promotion of factors within the environment by accounting educators and professional associations would impact on ethical attitude.

Concerning age, some studies have found that increase in age comes with stricter ethical attitude and therefore report a positive and significant relationship between age and ethical

attitude (Conroy et al., 2010; Costa et al., 2016; Emerson et al., 2007; Ghazali & Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge et al., 2015). Yet in this study, age is not significant in influencing ethical attitude though it is positive. And this is consistent with the insignificant relationship between age and ethical attitude reported in some studies (Eweje & Brunton, 2010; Forte, 2004a; Ghazali, 2015). As a result, hypothesis H3a is not supported. That is, factors not related to age may be influencing ethical attitudes among Ghanaian professional accountants.

Concerning gender, this study reports a negative and statistically significant result at a 10 percent level with the influence of gender on ethical attitudes, thus lending support for H3b. A possible explanation is that females are less receptive to questionable ethical practices than males. Considering the percentage of women accountants in Ghana, it is possible that the few women who get admitted into the profession see it as a privilege and uphold a high ethical stance to protect their profession. The above findings are not surprising as some studies have reported similar findings concerning gender and ethical attitude (Conroy and Emerson, 2004; Conroy *et al.*, 2010; Emerson *et al.*, 2007; Ghazali and Ismail, 2013; Holtbrügge *et al.*, 2015). This is, however, in contrast with studies that have reported that men have stricter ethical stance than women (Musbah et al., 2016) and those that found no significant relationship (Kidwell et al., 1987; Taylor, 2013).

The regression results in Tables 4.4 to 4.6 (models 1 to 3) indicate a positive and statistically significant association at 5 percent between work experience and ethical attitude, consistent with some studies in the literature, thus, providing support for H3e (Eweje & Brunton, 2010; Ghazali, 2015; Kelley et al., 1990; Kidwell et al., 1987; Valentine & Rittenburg, 2007). The results suggest that accountants with many years' working experience are more likely to behave ethically than those with few years' experience. This is in contrast with similar studies that have reported a negative association between experience and ethical attitude (Deshpande

et al., 2008; Roozen et al., 2001) and others that have found no significant relationship (Desplaces, Melchar, Beauvais & Bosco, 2007; Stewart & O'Leary, 2007).

Also, the result of the combined model 3 indicates that experience is a predictor of ethical attitude than personal and organisational attributes. This can be explained by the SCT that argues that ethical attitudes are a reflection of how individuals observe others, evaluate situations using past and personal standards as well as using one's imagination, comprehension and adaptation of environmental conditions. Thus, it can be generally concluded that work experience is more crucial in predicting ethical attitudes than personal and organisational attributes (Holtbrügge et al., 2015).

Regarding educational qualification and ethical attitude, a positive and significant relationship was expected. Though a positive effect was reported, it was not statistically significant, thus H3c is not supported in consonance with prior studies (Kidwell et al., 1987; Musbah et al., 2016). This may be explained by the fact that having a postgraduate qualification alone may not result in an improved ethical attitude and rejection of unethical practices as reported by some studies. The findings are in contrast with studies that have reported a negative association between educational qualification and ethical attitude (Deshpande et al., 2008; Ghazali, 2015) and others that have reported significant positive relationship (Swaidan et al., 2003).

Contrary to expectation, the results indicate a negative but insignificant association between a person's position or rank and ethical attitude, consistent with previous literature (Conroy et al., 2010; Forte, 2004a). This means position does not influence ethical attitude; hence, H3f is not supported. This is surprising because, it is assumed that having risen to a higher position, one is expected to behave ethically to set an example for subordinates. The possible

explanation is that persons in high positions may be tempted to go against standards and ethical norms because they report to themselves and are not accountable to a higher authority. Also, the lack of or ineffective supervision, and monitoring and control systems may be responsible for the negative association between position/rank and ethical attitude.

Table 4.4: Regression of Personal and Organisational Attributes with Ethical Attitudes

	1	2	3
PAE	0.172 ^{***} (0.0537)		0.110 (0.0764)
Gender	-0.233 [*] (0.134)		-0.234 [*] (0.134)
Age	0.0168 (0.133)		0.0297 (0.134)
Position	-0.203 (0.142)	-0.223 (0.141)	-0.205 (0.142)
EXPE	0.135 ^{**} (0.0599)	0.124 ^{**} (0.0501)	0.125 ^{**} (0.0608)
Education	-0.0372 (0.129)	-0.0485 (0.129)	-0.0401 (0.129)
OAE		0.162 ^{***} (0.0541)	0.0854 (0.0776)
Sector		0.0755 (0.121)	0.0664 (0.122)
_cons	-0.0931 (0.191)	-0.288 (0.187)	-0.122 (0.218)
<i>N</i>	340	340	340
<i>R</i> ²	0.0638	0.0533	0.0686
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.0470	0.0392	0.0461
<i>F</i>	3.785	3.763	3.047
<i>p</i>	0.00116	0.00250	0.00255

Standard errors in parentheses

Key: *** Denotes significance at 1%, ** at 5%, and * at 10% levels

Note: EAA - ethical attitude of accountants; PAE - personal attributes of ethics; OAE - organisational attributes of ethics.

4.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has examined the influence of personal and organisational attributes together with other factors in predicting ethical attitudes of accountants in Ghana, using the quantitative approach. Based on 340 usable questionnaires from professional accountants registered with the ICAG on questionable ethical vignettes, several insights have emerged.

The study demonstrates that personal attributes such as greed and desire for personal gain, behaviour of peers and superiors, personal values, family influences and pressures, and religious background are predictors of ethical attitudes of accountants and must, therefore, be considered in the recruitment processes in organisations. A national policy must be developed that ensures that the training programmes of employers are configured to include issues that inculcate values that eschew greed and desire for personal gains in employees.

Table 4.5: Regression Analysis of Personal Attributes on Ethical Attitudes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PAE1	-0.0123 (0.0345)	-0.0130 (0.0344)	-0.00896 (0.0346)	-0.00901 (0.0343)	-0.0146 (0.0346)	-0.0126 (0.0346)	-0.0117 (0.0345)
PAE2	0.0732 (0.0491)	0.0669 (0.0492)	0.0708 (0.0492)	0.0677 (0.0489)	0.0728 (0.0491)	0.0742 (0.0493)	0.0748 (0.0492)
PAE3	-0.0434 (0.0523)	-0.0354 (0.0525)	-0.0375 (0.0526)	-0.0334 (0.0522)	-0.0385 (0.0526)	-0.0435 (0.0524)	-0.0479 (0.0526)
PAE4	0.0415 (0.0443)	0.0442 (0.0443)	0.0413 (0.0443)	0.0361 (0.0441)	0.0417 (0.0443)	0.0425 (0.0445)	0.0434 (0.0444)
PAE5	0.00997 (0.0471)	0.00650 (0.0471)	0.00763 (0.0471)	0.00885 (0.0468)	0.00955 (0.0471)	0.0101 (0.0472)	0.00896 (0.0471)
PAE6	0.00132 (0.0382)	0.00675 (0.0383)	-0.000414 (0.0382)	-0.0133 (0.0385)	0.00377 (0.0383)	0.00111 (0.0382)	0.00261 (0.0382)
PAE7	0.0680 (0.0440)	0.0608 (0.0442)	0.0688 (0.0440)	0.0804* (0.0441)	0.0660 (0.0441)	0.0668 (0.0443)	0.0667 (0.0441)
gender		-0.213 (0.136)					
Age			0.122 (0.110)				
Expe				0.242** (0.110)			
position					-0.140 (0.140)		
Education						0.0324 (0.122)	
Sector							0.103 (0.123)
_cons	-0.706*** (0.220)	-0.532** (0.246)	-0.792*** (0.233)	-0.808*** (0.224)	-0.693*** (0.220)	-0.732*** (0.241)	-0.776*** (0.235)
N	340	340	340	340	340	340	340
R ²	0.0408	0.0479	0.0443	0.0545	0.0436	0.0410	0.0428
adj. R ²	0.0205	0.0249	0.0212	0.0316	0.0205	0.0178	0.0197
F	2.015	2.081	1.918	2.385	1.888	1.767	1.851
P	0.0526	0.0372	0.0566	0.0165	0.0611	0.0825	0.0671

Standard errors in parentheses; Key: *** Denotes significance at 1%, ** at 5%, and * at 10% levels.

Table 4.6: Regression Analysis of Organisational Attributes with Ethical Attitudes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
OAE1	0.0859 (0.0572)	0.0798 (0.0571)	0.0850 (0.0572)	0.0774 (0.0572)	0.0902 (0.0572)	0.0879 (0.0575)	0.0851 (0.0573)
OAE2	0.0356 (0.0501)	0.0327 (0.0500)	0.0375 (0.0501)	0.0339 (0.0499)	0.0400 (0.0502)	0.0347 (0.0502)	0.0339 (0.0503)
OAE3	0.0460 (0.0657)	0.0440 (0.0655)	0.0458 (0.0657)	0.0465 (0.0654)	0.0499 (0.0657)	0.0464 (0.0658)	0.0446 (0.0658)
OAE4	-0.0567 (0.0654)	-0.0437 (0.0656)	-0.0559 (0.0654)	-0.0552 (0.0652)	-0.0642 (0.0656)	-0.0578 (0.0655)	-0.0549 (0.0656)
gender		-0.238* (0.135)					
Age			0.116 (0.109)				
Expe				0.198* (0.109)			
position					-0.186 (0.140)		
Education						0.0477 (0.121)	
Sector							0.0591 (0.123)
_cons	-0.607*** (0.220)	-0.430* (0.241)	-0.681*** (0.231)	-0.650*** (0.220)	-0.599*** (0.220)	-0.644*** (0.239)	-0.639*** (0.230)
<i>N</i>	340	340	340	340	340	340	340
<i>R</i> ²	0.0308	0.0398	0.0341	0.0404	0.0359	0.0313	0.0315
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.0193	0.0254	0.0197	0.0260	0.0215	0.0168	0.0170
F	2.664	2.766	2.361	2.810	2.487	2.157	2.173
P	0.0325	0.0183	0.0398	0.0168	0.0313	0.0585	0.0568

Standard errors in parentheses

Key: *** Denotes significance at 1%, ** at 5%, and * at 10% levels.

Other policies aimed at developing strong personality attributes such as the ability to withstand the behaviour of peers, superiors and family must be encouraged.

Additionally, organisations are encouraged to put in measures to develop formal company policies and codes of conduct together with strict enforcement of such codes and policies. There is a need to have a national policy that encourages demonstration of moral leadership in organisations. Also, the creation of ethically sound organisational culture and climate are more likely to influence the demonstration of acceptable ethical attitudes of accountants.

Again, persons with considerable experience in accounting practice have stronger ethical attitudes and must, therefore, be preferred over those who have less experience in the recruitment process for accountants.

Although the study was comprehensive and engaged quantitative techniques, it had some limitations. Firstly, 340 professional accountants at specific centers provided opinions reported for the study. It excluded partly qualified, accounting graduates and postgraduates who practice as accountants in various sectors of the economy. In Ghana, many persons practicing accountancy in organisations are at various stages of completing their professional qualifying examinations. The findings may therefore not reflect the opinions of the entirety of accountants in Ghana. Secondly, the study was conducted during an identified point in time and opinions might change over a period. Thirdly, the measure of the study variables represents the opinions of respondents and not actual behaviour. This limitation was addressed in the study by ensuring the anonymity of respondents.

The limitations identified in the study inform future research directions. These include the expansion of the sample of respondents to cover partly qualified accountants in industry and

practice and those with only academic qualifications to determine if their opinions would differ from the results of the present study. Secondly, future research must be extended to be longitudinal to determine changes in ethical attitudes over a period.

The findings of the study call for the creation of organisational environment that promotes the development of policies, codes and a culture that frowns on unethical attitudes and behaviour. Policies and codes must not only be developed but strictly enforced to ensure that persons who flout established policies must be disciplined to serve as deterrence to others against unethical practices.

CHAPTER FIVE

ETHICS AND CURRICULUM DESIGN OF ACCOUNTING PROGRAMMES IN GHANA

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ETHICS AND CURRICULUM DESIGN OF ACCOUNTING

PROGRAMMES IN GHANA

Abstract

The paper explores curriculum design and factors that drive ethics in accounting programmes of universities and professional accounting body in Ghana. The study adopts a qualitative design in terms of research method, data collection and analysis. Data was collected through interviews and sampling was purposively performed to include deans, heads of accounting departments, officers and governing council members of the professional association. Data was analysed concurrently and saturation occurred after 13 individual interviews. The study revealed that ethics in the curriculum of university and professional institutions is integrated within, across subjects, and within all levels of programmes. Also, ethics is integrated using a combination of stand-alone, embedded and narrative approaches. Factors such as faculty initiative, industry demand, international benchmarking and modernisation drive ethics in the accounting curriculum of universities and the professional programmes. Universities and professional institutions need to understand the nature of and drivers of ethics in the design of accounting programmes to be proactive in curriculum design. This will prevent over-reliance on faculty discretion. The study further presents evidence to suggest that motivation for having ethics in the accounting curriculum includes preservation of economy, avoidance of corruption, sustainability and globalisation. Several factors, such as lack of teaching resources, regulations, large class sizes and faculty discretion serve as barriers in achieving desired objectives of ethics curriculum design. The study recommends that universities and professional body must promote mentorship programmes. The study is one of the few that adopt an in-depth interview approach to unearth the nature of curriculum design and drivers of ethics in accounting programmes of both academic and professional institutions. It also extends extant literature on accounting education that has largely centered on the perceptions of students and educators in few instances to include heads of accounting departments and regulators of tertiary education and professional association.

5.1 Introduction

Unethical practices of accounting professionals in the performance of their functions have attracted global attention and led to calls for increased ethics interventions in business schools as a means addressing such behaviours and the attendant negative consequences (Ballantine et al., 2018; Copeland, 2015; Ghaffari et al., 2008; O’Leary, 2009). These criticisms of the profession and business educators have not come only from the business community but also from prominent personalities such as President George W. Bush in July 2002 after the collapse of Enron (Amernic & Craig, 2004) and other notable persons, media practitioners, the general public. All these people in society have combined their voices in the calls for ethics interventions in accounting education and practice. Responding to the calls made above, many commissions were established in some countries to investigate the causes of the ethical scandals and make recommendations for preventing future occurrences. Reports from some of the Commissions from United Kingdom (UK) include: Cadbury Report, (1992); Greenbury Report, (1995); Hempel Report, (1998) and Turnbull Report, (1999). Other commissions established after 2000 from the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), and Ghana include: the report of the Executive Council to the Financial Reporting Council (FRC, 2018), Pathway Commission Report (Pathways Commission, 2015) and the report of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana (ICAG) into the collapses of 7 banks in Ghana (ICAG, 2019)

Other interventions to address regulatory and ethics-related financial irregularities included the passage of the Sarbanes Oxley Act of 2002 and the Dodd-Frank Act of 2010 in the (USA) and the CLERKP9 Act of 2004 in Australia (Dellaportas et al. 2014). Additionally, the National Commission on Fraudulent Financial Reporting (Treadway Commission) recommended the inclusion of ethics in accounting programmes of business schools and

professional accounting programmes as a means of addressing unethical practices in the accounting profession (Loeb, 2006).

Also, as a means of restoring confidence in the profession in response to the occurrence of unethical practices in the accounting profession, there has been research about the introduction of ethics in the curriculum of accounting programmes in educational and professional institutions (Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008). Also, there is research about the review of accreditation requirements and demand for the inclusion of ethics in addition to technical subjects in the curriculum design of business schools by bodies such as the Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) (Kidwell, Fisher, Braun & Swanson, 2012). The above issues are a clear admission of the importance of ethics in the practice of the accounting profession.

At the professional front, it has been found that the professional bodies such as the ACCA and ICAEW incorporated ethics in the final levels of syllabi in 2007 (Ghaffari et al., 2008). However, not all professional bodies have reviewed their curriculum. For instance, the Institute of Chartered Accountants, Ghana (ICAG) has been noted as not considering ethics in their curriculum (World Bank, 2014); a situation that gives cause for research to examine the progress made since the issue of the report and the possible reasons that could be assigned for such state of affairs.

Among the several ethics education interventions in accounting programmes of universities and professional bodies, curriculum design has been identified as a major area that requires attention (Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008; Rutherford et al., 2012). Indeed curriculum design has been described as a “time-consuming, complex and idiosyncratic nature and process” that needs deeper understanding using in-depth interviews to examine

the nature, drivers, motivations and barriers to curriculum design (Ghaffari et al., 2008, p. 192). Amernic & Craig (2004 p.343) have also charged accounting educators to view accounting as ‘idiosyncratic, political, rhetorical and subjective’ that required a view other than ‘tangible and measurable’ thus requiring an interpretive view rather than purely objective analysis. Despite the above calls for an in-depth study of curriculum design in accounting programmes, we are yet to have a study that adopts such a method; thus, creating a gap.

The objective of this study is to understand the nature of curriculum design in universities and professional accounting institutions; the factors that impact on the curriculum design practices of academic and professional accounting programmes; motivations for curriculum design and the barriers to effective implementation of ethics in the curriculum of universities and the professional accounting institutions in Ghana. Based on the above aim, the study seeks to understand how an ethics curriculum is designed in accounting programmes of universities and in the professional accounting institutions in Ghana. The study further seeks to identify the other factors that impact on ethics curriculum design of accounting programmes of universities and the syllabus of ICAG. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The next section is a review of the literature and theories underpinning the study. It is followed by the research method (data sources, collection, analysis and ethical clearance). The results and discussion of the study are thereafter presented. The findings of the study are presented in the penultimate section after which the final section consisting of the findings, summary, conclusions and recommendations is also presented.

5.2 Literature Review

This section presents theory and literature regarding the curriculum design of universities and professional accounting bodies globally and in Ghana.

5.2.1 Virtue ethics and accounting education and training

The virtue ethics theory serves as a lens through which this chapter is positioned. Several ethical theories have been applied in the area of ethics education and the accounting profession (Mintz, 2006; Sorensen et al., 2017). The nature of the accounting profession requires that members possess a measure of virtue to discharge their functions effectively for the benefit of society. Among the virtues required of accountants in the performance of accounting functions are compassion, honesty, integrity, objectivity, reliability, fidelity, faithfulness and credibility (Mintz, 1995). Virtue has been identified as an attribute that promotes public trust and confidence in the performance of professional responsibilities. This has been demonstrated in the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants' (AICPA) code of professional conduct with an emphasis on integrity as a character required of professional accountants (Mintz, 2006). The motto of the ICAG is integrity and the word has been boldly inscribed in the crest of the Institute. Members are required to exhibit the highest form of integrity in the performance of their functions to their clients and all stakeholders. Accounting faculty responsible for the training of members of the profession also have a responsibility to incorporate virtue in the design of their curricula. The professional body charged with regulating the practice of accountancy also has a responsibility to also ensure the adherence of virtue in the programmes of the profession. The introduction to the International Ethics Standard Board for Accountants (IESBA) revised code relating to the offer and acceptance of inducement identifies some virtues such as integrity, objectivity and professional behaviour and fundamental principles as being the basic principles on which both accountants in business and public practice must comply with (IFAC, 2018)

According to Mintz (2006), virtue is a quality inherent in a person that makes life commendable. It is also described as a nature that makes a person considerate and willing to act in the interest of others and society in general. In addition to the general behaviour that

embodies virtue, the author identifies an aspect of virtue labelled intellectual which can be taught and applied (Mintz, 2006). In the professional accounting environment, virtue ethics must not only be in thought but actions since it is that which motivates a person to do what is right and acceptable. Sorensen et al. (2017) argue that virtue ethics may be a factor in the success of accounting education.

In the context of ethics in accounting education and practice, virtue can and may influence educators and practitioners in carrying out their functions effectively for the benefit of society. The possession of virtues such as integrity, honesty, objectivity, reliability and faithfulness improve public trust and confidence in the profession and educators, and regulators have a responsibility to ensure that the profession exhibits these virtues. This study draws on virtue ethics to explain curriculum design practices and motivation in university and professional accounting programmes.

5.2.2 Curriculum design and accounting education

The accounting profession plays a significant role in the general management of business for economic development. The maintenance of ethical standards by accountants has been argued as a basis for a sound accounting practice that ensures the sustainability of business enterprises and the growth of economies. The introduction of ethics as a requirement for ethics in the accounting curriculum is said to have originated from the AACSB in 1979 (Marzuki et al., 2017). Others trace the inclusion of ethics in the curricula of business schools to the call by the National Commission on Fraudulent Financial Reporting (Treadway Commission) in 1987 (Loeb, 2006). Other bodies in the USA such as the National Association for State Board of Accountancy (NASBA) made a call in its exposure draft that was issued in 2005, recommending the introduction of three credit hours each of accounting and business ethics in accounting programmes of universities (Blanthorne et al., 2007). Interventions made

by the above-mentioned bodies may have contributed to the introduction of ethics in the academic and professional accounting programmes in countries such as the USA, UK and Australia (Blanthorne et al., 2007). The study defines ethics intervention to include the nature of curriculum design, teaching methods and reasons that promote or serve as barriers to effective ethics interventions.

5.2.3 Ethics inclusion in university accounting curriculum

Ethics in accounting curriculum has not been consistent across countries. Universities and professional accounting bodies across the world have adopted various modes of ethics integration. Ethics interventions have been made in curriculum designs depending on the needs and at the discretion of institutions.

Fisher, Swanson and Schmidt (2007) and Graham (2012) argue that the adoption of ethics as a stand-alone course in undergraduate programmes in the US and the UK was preferred as a means of providing students and accountants with ethical skills necessary for the practice of their profession. The reasons assigned by previous studies for the choice of method was cited as the potential of introducing students to the basic framework of ethical psychology and ethical theories to provide a firm foundation for the understanding of new concepts in accounting discipline (Fisher et al., 2007; Graham, 2012). They argued further that having standalone courses was likely to help students appreciate integrated learning of these new concepts. Despite preferring a stand-alone course to an integrated course, it appears from the literature that preference for the stand-alone mode of integration is not pervasive.

From the Australian perspective, Dellaportas et al. (2014) found that the integrated method of ethics intervention in some courses in accounting degree curricula is preferred over the

discrete method of having a stand-alone course in agreement with the UK findings of Ghaffari et al. (2008). The debate in the research community has thus been the choice of having standalone ethics courses in accounting curricula (Loeb 1994; Gray et al. 1994) or embedding ethics within the curricula (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Kerr & Smith, 1995). The above researchers considered the methods of ethics intervention exclusively from the perspectives of students and instructors without the perspectives of professional accountancy bodies.

The debate on methods of integrating ethics in the accounting curricula of both academic and professional institutions across the world is likely to continue as researchers from both developed and developing countries embark on studies to unearth reasons and motives from various backgrounds. Again, reasons attributed from the US findings appear to be at variance with the UK and Australian perspectives; thus, requiring additional studies from the perspective of developing countries such as Ghana as an extension to the literature.

At the undergraduate level, most universities in Ghana have introduced ethics at the higher levels of their programmes rather than at the lower level. From the UK, Ghaffari et al. (2008) report of ethics introduction at both undergraduate and graduate levels with a greater percentage being introduced at the final year of the accounting degree programmes. The findings of (Ghaffari et al., 2008) indicate the introduction of ethics from level two hundred to the final year (level four hundred) in most UK universities. However, no reasons were assigned to the findings. The authors further argue that the most effective level and method of integrating ethics is yet to be found.

Table 5.1 presents some empirical findings in the literature regarding ethics in curriculum design, methods adopted and findings.

Table 5.1: Summary of Literature on Ethics in Accounting Curriculum Design

Author(s)	Objectives	Method	Results/ Findings
Evans et al (2006) USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of neo-institutional theory and internal view of power to investigate internal and external factors that influence MBA curricula. 	Survey of accounting 200 MBA programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional influences and religious affiliation affect the amount of attention to MBA programmes.
Rutherford et al. (2012) USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines the role of business ethics in AACSB-accredited schools' curricula 	Survey of all United State undergraduate business schools accredited by the AACSB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values of a school and leadership influence business ethics in schools' curricula
Carmona (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines individual approach to the reform of accounting curriculum 	Survey of accounting faculty and students	The need to consider the trilogy of educational values which include technical, values and skills in the accounting curriculum
Langenderfer & Rockness (1989)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines three accounting dilemmas in professional and academic accounting curricula: ethical-legal, philosophical-practical and moral-amoral. 	Conceptual paper	Provides a practical step-by-step approach and decision model for ethics programmes
Dellaportas et al. (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines ethics Education in the Australian Accounting Curriculum: A Longitudinal Study Examining Barriers and Enablers 	Mail survey questionnaire to the Heads of 39 Schools and Departments of Accounting representing the population of universities in Australia that offer degree programmes in accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased levels of ethics intervention, Failed enhancement of the extent of ethics education in the intervening period Lack of qualified staff and research opportunities

Source: Author's Research (2017)

5.2.4 Ethics inclusion in the professional accounting curriculum

Ethics has been included in the programmes of the accounting profession as is practiced in other professions such as in the legal, medical and engineering professions (McPhail, 2001). In the view of McPhail, the ethical orientation of members of the accounting profession contributes to shaping them from being purely technical to have a sense of humanity and

civility. Arguably, members of the profession cannot afford to compromise their ethical obligation towards society. Rather, accounting professionals have a responsibility to ensure that they are not only technically competent but also ethically sound as part of professional development and training. As of 2007, ACCA was said to have incorporated ethics in the final papers of the professional levels whilst CIMA had ethics only in the law module to the exclusion of other subjects in 2005 (Ghaffari et al., 2008). Regarding ICAEW, there were indications that ethics was to be embedded in the relevant modules during the 2007 review of the course syllabus.

The general position of ethics in the curriculum of professional bodies since 2005 and 2007 might have changed significantly especially the ICAG syllabus. For instance, the ICAG has recently reviewed its syllabus and has ethics incorporated in several modules of the final parts (ICAG, 2018b). As a regulator of the accounting profession, the ICAG has the mandate to design programmes that have ethics in compliance with the IESBA code of ethics (IESBA, 2018). As an independent body with a self-governance system, the ICAG is not under an obligation from the government or other professional bodies in the training and regulation of accountants in Ghana.

5.2.5 Curriculum design and accounting ethics

The importance attached to a course would allow its inclusion into a school's curriculum irrespective of the number of hours available. Furthermore, the presence of accreditation agencies such as the Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has the potential of influencing curriculum design (Evans et al., 2006). In providing reasons for the above situation, the authors cite the requirements of Australian accreditation guidelines that stipulate having ethics integrated throughout the curriculum. Gray, Bebbington & McPhail (1994) have attributed the inclusion of ethics in accounting education

as a means of addressing the ethical failure of accounting educators to promote the moral education of graduates for national development. One can also attribute ethics in the curriculum of accounting programmes to comply with regulatory bodies of various countries. In Ghana, the National Accreditation Board (NAB) is the body mandated to issue accreditations to tertiary institutions for academic programmes. As a requirement for accreditation, universities are to design their curricula to meet certain general required standards (NAB, 2011). Elsewhere, affiliation status of institutions have been found to influence the design of curriculum, particularly the inclusion of ethics (Evans et al., 2006; Rutherford et al., 2012). From the above, it appears that regulatory requirements account for the inclusion of ethics in the curriculum of accounting programmes.

In the view of Dellaportas et al. (2014), the collapses of some corporate giants due to unethical breaches in the recent past account for the inclusion of ethics in the curriculum of business schools. Thus, ethics education may assist in preparing graduates and professionals to resist ethical dilemmas in the course of their profession and thereby prevent a repetition of unethical breaches in corporate environments (Dellaportas et al., 2014).

Extant literature identifies other factors that drive ethics in the accounting curriculum to include the financial strength of the institution, a dean's functional background, size of faculty, prestige and gender of the institutional head (Evans et al., 2006; Rutherford et al., 2012). This suggests that in the absence of financial resources, ethics may not be considered in the design of accounting curriculum despite the existence of regulatory requirements and possible benefits that may accrue to society from the education of ethically oriented accounting graduates. From the findings of Rutherford et al. (2012), deans with a management background and those that are female are likely to consider ethics in their curriculum. The age of an institution, desire to provide graduate lifelong learning skills and

a broad holistic approach to the provision of service have also been found to drive ethics in the curricula of institutions (Ghaffari et al., 2008). The above factors, notwithstanding, leadership and values are noted to be key in the presence of ethics in curriculum design.

Evans et al. (2006) have categorized the above factors into two. These are the type of institution and the influence of external forces that are exerted on an institution (such as regulations) to operate in a required manner; and values and interests of actors within institutions (such as deans and faculties). In the view of the authors, external factors that drive ethics in an institution's curriculum could include professional bodies' requirements, as well as university and religious affiliation. Additionally, factors that impact the design of curriculum in business schools include the interest of faculty. Lack of interest and cooperation from faculty has the potential to negatively affect teaching, research and service of an institution. Institutional faculty constitutes a strong resource in the design of curriculum for educational institutions. The availability of credit hours has been cited as having a strong impact on the development and inclusion of courses (Evans et al., 2006). Schools that have fewer hours for additional courses are less likely to include ethics in the curriculum.

5.2.6 Barriers to curriculum design

Several factors have been identified in the literature as hindering the design and effective implementation of ethics in the curriculum of educational institutions and the professional bodies' associations. Among the factors are the reluctance of accounting educators to be involved in ethics education as a result of lack of opportunities; lack of qualified/trained educators to handle ethics in curriculum and the possibility of indoctrination of personal values of accounting educators (Dellaportas et al., 2014). Furthermore, the lack of space in the curriculum to accommodate courses in ethics has been cited as a barrier to the effective design of the ethics curriculum of business schools (Dellaportas et al., 2014). From the above

analyses, it can be argued that educators see technical accounting courses as more relevant and hence find space in the curriculum while ethics is relegated for lack of space. The authors further argue that the moral standards of students are usually formed long before they enter universities and the professional track and may therefore not be easy to change. Resource (books and cases) constraints and the subjective nature of ethics have also been cited among the factors that hinder the design and implementation of ethics in accounting curriculum. The inclusion of ethics in accounting curriculum has been described as a ‘mere response’ to critics – an indication of lack of commitment on the part of administrators and educators (Dellaportas et al., 2014 p. 376). It has also been suggested that ethical dilemmas may be subjective and not scientific (Dellaportas et al., 2014). As a result, ethics may, therefore, be out of place in an accounting curriculum that seeks to inculcate technical knowledge to graduates.

Commenting on the speech by President George W. Bush in 1982, three failures of accounting educators and hence a review of the curriculum were identified (Amernic & Craig, 2004). These are the failure to develop the professional, moral and ethical status and behaviour of accounting graduates to serve as the foundation on which to develop their professional career; failure to use teaching, research and practice to make the profession as effective as possible for the benefit of society and to expose charlatans and misfits in the profession; and failure to ensure reliable reporting of financial performance (Amernic & Craig, 2004). It is therefore believed that the infusion of ethics in the curriculum would help address the ethical failure that threatens the foundations of corporate performance.

5.3 Research Method and Design

Academic research can be conducted from several perspectives such as quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). The approach adopted is usually influenced largely by the nature of the study and research questions posed (Saunders et al., 2009). Using

the interpretive research philosophy, the study adopts a purely qualitative approach in the choice of method, data collection and analysis. The choice of approach was influenced by many factors. Firstly, it offered a detailed understanding of the complex processes of curriculum design. Next, such understanding can best be uncovered by talking with stakeholders with rich information and allowing them to tell their stories unhindered. The study intends to solicit information from deans, HoADs, accreditation and regulatory officials whose number represents a smaller proportion of a population that is deemed appropriate for the study. The approach further allows for in-depth interviews and analysis using themes and patterns (Creswell, 2014). Interviews are the most appropriate means of researching ethical practices in accounting (Jones & Solomon, 2010). According to Gray, (2004) a sample size of eight is sufficient for validity in qualitative studies. Data was gathered from semi-structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2009). This method was chosen over other possible methods due to the researcher's objective of having a deeper understanding of the motives of research participants concerning ethics and curriculum design of accounting programmes (Saunders et al., 2009).

The study adopted the use of purposive sampling in the selection of participants who were rich in information to draw insightful and deeper understanding (Patton, 2002). Curriculum design is a complex process of inter-related activities that cannot be provided by one group of actors. In the universities, curriculum design involves the contributions of faculty members, deans and the accreditation agency. Concerning the accounting profession, curriculum/syllabus design also involves senior officials and members of the council, among other actors.

The study population, therefore, consisted of deans, HoADs from both public and private universities and senior officials from the accreditation agency in Ghana. The study population

at the professional body included senior officials and council members. The study also involved accreditation officials based on the role of their institution in the approval of curriculum design. The use of heads of accounting departments (HoADs) and deans of business schools was based on their role in curriculum design and the general management of business departments and schools. Senior management and governing council members of the professional accountancy institution were chosen for their role as responsible for certification and regulation of accountancy practice. Furthermore, senior officials of the National Accreditation Board (NAB) were interviewed for their views concerning the curriculum design of accounting programmes in Ghanaian universities (see Appendix D).

Face-to-face interviews were employed in the study because it offered participants the freedom to express themselves in answering the research questions (Dellaportas, 2006; Schwartz, 2004). Also, research participants had the freedom to provide historical and additional information that may be useful for the research. An additional benefit of using face-to-face interviews over other methods is the benefit of offering researchers the opportunity over the line of questioning to probe further and unearth additional information to enrich the outcome of work (Creswell, 2014). The interview method was also found useful as it provided feedback from participants, an added advantage that may be missing from research participants who complete a structured questionnaire without interaction. It must be noted that the sample size in qualitative research is not as large as found in quantitative studies and recruitment of participants ends as soon as saturation occurs. This is because the objective of qualitative studies aims at gaining in-depth understanding rather than larger representatives of populations.

5.3.1 Data sources and collection

This section outlines and presents the sources and methods of data collection employed in the study. The study employed semi-structured interviews and a review of documents in the data collection exercise. The study used self-designed interview guide based on the objectives set for the study in the collection of interview data from deans and HoADs of two public and one private university, senior officials and council members of the professional accounting institution and senior officials of the institution mandated to give accreditation to tertiary educational institutions in Ghana. The interview guide had sections that dealt with details of interviewees, questions on the nature of ethics-related courses, processes of curriculum design and reviews, and other factors relating to the why, what and how of ethics curriculum in accounting programmes of universities and the professional accounting body.

The study identified five institutions to be included in the research project. These were two public universities including the premier public university, the accreditation agency of university education in Ghana, the regulatory body of the accountancy profession and a private university. The public universities selected have affiliation with about half of all private universities that run accounting programmes and are therefore considered an appropriate representation of university education (Creswell, 2014).

After deciding on the type of institutions, informal contacts were made as to the means of gaining the consent of the proposed participants. Thereafter, introductory letters were sent to the institutions and the interview participants as gatekeepers to seek permission in the conduct of the interview (see Appendix A). Follow-ups were made to agree on exact dates, times and venues for the meetings at the convenience of the participants. To receive access to data sources, informal discussions were held with selected participants before fixing dates for interviews. Some of the research participants requested copies of the interview guide well

ahead of the interview. Copies of the interview guide for the various institutions were similarly made available ahead of interview dates. Reminders were sent to participants through emails and telephone calls a day before the interview. Confirmation of time and venues was obtained for each of the scheduled interviews to avoid disappointment and undue delays.

On the appointed dates agreed for interviews, the researcher was prompt on time to avoid delays and disappointments. With permission from participants, interviews were recorded using an electronic recorder and transcribed in a typed form before being analysed for discussion and drawing conclusions. In addition to the recorded interviews, the researcher took notes of events, happenings and the demeanour of interviewees such as non-verbal communication during the interview to aid in the analysis of the data gathered. Some participants were enthusiastic about the study and expressed the desire to receive recommendations of the study to further improve on ethics interventions in their respective institutions. Others volunteered to contact their colleagues who are HoADs in other institutions for recruitment.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants between October 2017 and January 2018. The advantage of the above method allowed participants to provide historical information and detailed explanations to questions posed (Saunders et al. 2009). It also allowed the researcher to make follow-up questions and have control over the mode of questioning. Interview technique in data collection is seen as the most suitable means of addressing ethical issues in accounting (Jones & Solomon, 2010; Parker & Roffey, 1997). A total of 13 persons were interviewed (see Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) using purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Deans and heads of departments were specially selected

for their roles in the design of curriculum, teaching and assessment of accounting programmes and courses (Dellaportas et al., 2014).

Others scheduled the interviews on public holidays to avoid work interruptions. Participants were assured of anonymity and the opportunity to opt-out if so desired. Thankfully, none of the interviewees opted out of the research project. This was done to ensure that participants gave out honest answers devoid of social desirability biases. Participants were also allowed to provide their written consent before the recording of interviews. Each interview lasted for a period between 60 and 90 minutes. Before the commencement of interviews, the recorder was checked to ensure the good working order and for battery strength. Notes and memos are very important and allow the interviewer to capture all events during the fieldwork such as the mood and behaviour of research participants and happenings in the environment. The researcher made use of a notebook and pen to take notes of the events to ensure the collection of all available data for analysis (Ghaffari et al., 2008).

Interview participants were welcomed and given an overview of the study to assure them of confidentiality and trust. This made them comfortable to contribute openly without looking over their shoulders. All the 13 interviews were conducted in participants' offices at the places of work. Due to the busy schedule of some interviewees, there were telephone interruptions that extended the interview time beyond what would have been the normal length. Interviewees apologized for the interruptions and continued with the interviews. Follow up questions were asked to elicit more details on some issues. The interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation occurred as new issues were not emerging (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A total of 13 interviews were conducted in participants' offices at the places of work. The sample size was appropriate because other studies have used fewer sample sizes. For example, Sen (2006) and Doherty (2000) used 7 samples each in their studies. The

saturation point occurred after 13 interviews. In addition to the interviews, secondary data was also used to ensure the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2014). The secondary data included handbooks of universities and the 2018-revised syllabus of the ICAG.

Details of interview participants and their institutions are as shown in Tables 5.2 to 5.4:

Table 5.2: Summary of Research Participants

Source of Interview	Number of Interviewees
Public Universities (2)	(7) 5 from Public University A, and 2 from Public University B)
Private Universities (1)	1 ¹
Accreditation Agency	2
Regulatory Agency	3 ¹
Total	13

Table 5.3: Details of Research Participants from Universities

Interviewee	Institution	Position	Rank
C1	PU 1	Dean of Business School	Professor
C2	PR1	Dean of Business School	Senior Lecturer
C4	PU1	Former Head of Department	Senior Lecturer
C5	PU1	Head of Department	Senior Lecturer
C6	PU2	Dean of Business School	Professor
C7	PU1	Head of Department	Senior Lecturer
C8	PUI	Former Head of Department	Senior Lecturer
C11	PU1	Former Head of Department	Senior Lecturer

Source: Author's Research (2017)

Table 5.4: Details of Research Participants from Regulatory and Accreditation Agencies

Interviewee	Institution	Position
C1	RA1	Council Member - ICAG
C9	RA1	Senior Member - ICAG
C10	RA1	Council Member/Senior Member - ICAG
C3	RA 2	Senior Member/Quality Assurance - NAB
C12	RA 2	Senior Member/Quality Assurance - NAB

¹ Participant was from a Private University and Regulatory Agency

At the accreditation agency, the official to be interviewed invited another colleague who is a senior manager in the unit to join in the interview. Therefore, instead of a one-to-one interview, two persons were contributing to answering the same questions; a scenario which assisted by filling in the gaps and adding fresh insights. Though not anticipated at the beginning of the interview, this contributed enormously to enrich the information provided.

5.3.2 Data management and analysis

Several steps are recommended in the collection, preparation and management of qualitative data to ensure the credibility of findings. Among them are the use of field notes that captures details of both verbal and non-verbal communication during the data collection stages; a transcription of recorded interviews into text data for ease of use; and the maintenance of contact summaries (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson & Jaspersen, 2018). Others include the storage of data securely to avert unauthorized access and the use of a password where data is stored on computers (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). In adhering to the above steps, the researcher kept a record of field notes during the interview stages of data collection.

Furthermore, with the permission of participants, interviews were recorded and saved on the researcher's laptop which was secured by a password. The transcription of interview data was done by the researcher without the assistance of third parties to ensure confidentiality. To ensure the anonymity of respondents, research participants were given code numbers rather than the use of names and institutions in compliance with the requirements of ethical clearance (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). To prevent loss of data in the event of a computer crash or virus invasion, data was stored onto a second computer with a secure password at the researcher's office. It must be noted that the analysis of the interview data was parallel to the interview process. After every interview, the recorded data with notes taken were simultaneously transcribed and analysed.

Data were analysed during the collection and write-up phases as suggested in the literature (Creswell, 2014). Data were grouped into a smaller number of themes along with the research questions and analysed using NVivo 11 software. The themes were developed using significant statements from interviewees to generate meanings (Creswell, 2014).

5.3.3 Reliability and validity

Issues of reliability and validity are necessary for both quantitative and qualitative research approaches as they ensure the credibility of research findings. Reliability involves ‘ensuring transparency in data collection processes and interpretation that may be provided’ whilst validity involves ‘gaining to access to the perspectives of those in the research settings’ (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018 p. 134). Reliability in qualitative research is also described as “the consistency of a research instrument in that the results it achieves should be similar in similar circumstances” (Smith, 2015 p. 33). It ensures that under similar circumstances the same process with participants would yield similar results when replicated. Smith (2015) further defines validity as the extent to which a research process achieves the objectives set for embarking on the process. To ensure reliability and validity, the study kept a record of all processes and reported the same to ensure possible future replicability of the study. It is important to check the validity of qualitative data to ensure accuracy. To ensure reliability and validity of findings from the perspectives of both the researcher and the research participants the study followed several recommendations made by Creswell (2014).

Some forms of validation suggested include member checking, peer debriefing and the use of external auditors (Creswell, 2014; Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006). The study submitted findings made from transcribed copies of transcripts to interviewees for checking accuracy (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, coded transcripts with themes and sub-themes based on the research questions were submitted for review by two senior members of faculty in the

department who were qualitative-bias as external auditors for the work. The reviewers made substantial inputs for reviewing the work. The use of multiple validation procedures was to ensure the accuracy of findings made and conclusions drawn. Creswell (2014) calls for the use of accurate data and avoidance of falsification, suppression of findings, or invention of findings to support the desires of the researcher or target audience. In prosecuting the study, the researcher did not at any point in the research process attempted to falsify, suppress, or invent findings to meet the needs of any stakeholder.

5.3.4 Ethical clearance

Researchers have obligations to ensure the highest ethical standards during the research process. Depending on the institution of study, varied processes are involved in the acquisition of ethical clearance. Research students of the University of Ghana are required to submit proposals of their research work to the University of Ghana Ethics Committee for the Humanities (ECH). For this study, a proposal was submitted following the requirements of the University to the Committee. The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee and clearance was given (see Appendix B). The researcher also negotiated access to departments of accounting in selected institutions using introductory letters obtained from the HoAD of the University of Ghana Business School where the researcher was studying (see Appendix A). This was to gain access and ensure the consent of research participants as suggested in prior literature (Smith, 2015). In addition to obtaining access from heads of departments and units, the researcher sought consent from the individual participants before being enrolled for the study.

After obtaining access from the institutions, negotiations were made with individual participants to ensure their availability and convenience for the dates agreed for the interviews. Also, participants were given consent forms to signify their acceptance to

participate in the study (see Appendix E). The researcher also discussed the possibility of withdrawing from the study at any point without any negative effect on participants. The contact of participants was taken to enable the researcher to contact them to confirm the appointment before the interview and also to ensure their availability. Before the interviews, permission was sought from research participants to record the interviews (see Appendix D). Transcripts of recorded interviews were given to participants for verification before proceeding with further analysis.

Participants' confidentiality was ensured in the study by the assignment of codes to all interview participants. Additionally, records of interviews were kept on a laptop computer that was secured with a password. Also, the transcripts of all transcribed interviews were kept under lock and key and saved onto a laptop secured with a password. To reduce any possible anxiety, it was explained to participants that the research process does not portend any harm even though most of the research participants were knowledgeable persons who had a deep knowledge of the research process.

5.4 Results and Discussion

The study employed an interpretive approach to examine the curriculum design processes of ethics in accounting education from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders (heads of accounting departments, senior officials of regulating agency and professional accounting association) to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In achieving the objectives set, the study collected data and insights from universities, the accreditation agency and the professional accounting body mandated to regulate accountancy practice in Ghana.

The need to integrate ethics in the accounting curriculum has been recognised and practised over an extended period especially in developed countries (Blanthorne et al., 2007). Other countries such as Malaysia have also integrated ethics in the accounting curriculum in response to national guidelines of government (Marzuki et al., 2017). The situation in Ghana seems to be at variance with what has been described above in the developed and other countries such as Malaysia. To the researcher's knowledge, there is no such requirement from the government of Ghana through the regulatory agency (NAB) to universities. Also, the professional accounting body in Ghana, ICAG, is under no compulsion from the government to include ethics in the course syllabi. Universities on their own have incorporated ethics in the accounting curriculum in response to reasons adduced from the study.

5.4.1 Nature of curriculum design

In obtaining an understanding of the nature of curriculum design in universities and the ICAG, interviews were conducted to elicit the views of key stakeholders. Several themes emerged from the analysis of interview transcripts. Some of the themes that emerged are subject-specific and cross-subjects interventions. In terms of levels of the educational/professional ladder at which ethics is integrated, the themes are cross-levels and multi-inclusion.

5.4.1.1 Subject-specific

This theme describes the nature of ethics intervention where ethics-related courses are incorporated into specific subjects within the accounting curriculum of university programmes. From the responses, ethics is incorporated into accounting programmes within specific subjects at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Some of the subjects identified by respondents included auditing, corporate reporting and analysis, accounting information systems, sustainability accounting, corporate social responsibility, business policy and auditing at the undergraduate level as reported in the literature (Blanthorne et al.,

2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008). Ethics is also embedded in audit and assurance at the graduate level. The objective of having ethics embedded in specific subjects is to address ethics in the practices of management and business in general. These are in furtherance of promoting the virtues of public trust and confidence in the accounting profession. The following responses from the interviewees support some of the observations in the literature.

“So in terms of subject areas we have auditing, corporate reporting and analysis and at the graduate level, we have audit and assurance. Because even though we are reviewing the curriculum to infuse ethics into corporate social responsibility which will be taught at level 200 which will be mandatory, to me I think the reason why it is done at those levels is that ethics is subject-relative” (C4).

“Individual courses have some ethical issues being discussed like in the accounting information systems, sustainability accounting, auditing” (C5).

“It is in specific disciplines. If you take accounting for instance, they have issues of sustainability reporting, social responsibility and sustainability, we have governance issues, and all these are geared towards addressing ethics in management and business in general” (C6).

At the professional level, ethics is embedded in audit and assurance, corporate strategy, ethics and governance, advanced audit and corporate reporting. Beyond subject-specific incorporation, graduating students of the professional body are provided with ethics practical training before they are admitted into membership. One respondent noted:

“It is part of a list of subjects; corporate strategy, ethics and governance, three subjects grouped. So if you are not careful, the ethics bit gets lost within the three. Apart from that, before you are admitted to becoming a member, you go through an induction programme and as part of the induction programme, we have about two hours' talk on ethics so all prospective members go through ethical training” C10.

The objective is to provide practical ethical issues beyond examinations to adequately prepare them for practice. To further equip members ethically, members are encouraged to join district societies of the Institute within their areas of residence or work. These societies organise continuous professional development (CPD) at which issues of ethics among other relevant professional topics are discussed to update their professional knowledge in emerging trends within the profession.

The findings of the study indicate that universities in Ghana have integrated ethics in the curriculum using multiple methods as reported in prior literature (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008). An explanation for ethics integration in specific subjects may be a means of preparing students to be ethical in the management of the business environment. From previous literature, ethics integration in accounting subjects aims at equipping graduates with ethical skills and knowledge in addition to technical knowledge to enable them to acquire virtues that effectively prepare them to withstand ethical pressures in the working environment. Despite the criticism that ethics cannot be taught in the classroom (Dellaportas et al., 2014), accounting educators believe that ethics is necessary for the management of businesses.

5.4.1.2 Across subjects

An alternative to the ethics intervention through specific courses is the means of spreading ethics across several accounting subjects. As argued by Ghaffari et al. (2008), ethics as a subject has been embedded across the curriculum in addition to being offered as a stand-alone course. The above method was seen by respondents as the most effective means of incorporating ethics in accounting programmes at the university and professional levels. In their view, this method will ensure that all courses have ethical components and students

would have no option of avoiding ethics in their studies. As suggested by Mintz (2006), this is expected to equip students with the virtue of doing what is right in the interest of society.

“I know that there are several courses also that have components of ethics in them”
(C1).

One respondent opposed the method of having ethics as a stand-alone subject in contrast to what pertains to the other domains (Gray et al., 1994). Rather, it was suggested, that ethics should form part of all accounting related subjects. The objective was to incorporate ethics in all subjects at the next curriculum review date so that students would not learn it for examination purposes but have ethics properly imbibed in them in the public interest as argued by Sorensen et al. (2017).

“So I don’t share the idea where we have ethics as a subject. For me, moving forward if we are to review the syllabus, I will advocate review for ethics to be imbibed in all the questions we ask our students so we that don’t make it one subject otherwise, people will just learn to pass and that’s it” (C10).

The study confirms that ethics has been introduced in various subjects within the university education, from the commencement of the courses to graduation at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The objective has been to instil the virtues of ethics in students before their graduation to adequately prepare them not just to pass examinations, but also to be ready to address ethical challenges in the work environment (Sorensen et al., 2017). Additionally, the objective may be the possibility of influencing students’ learning from varied subjects. Integrating ethics across courses may generate the interest of students and encourage them to adopt deep learning (rather than rote and shallow learning) necessary to influence ethical behaviour not only in the classroom regarding cheating (Ballantine et al., 2018) but also in the working environment in the handling of ethical dilemmas.

5.4.1.3 Across levels

The integration of ethics in the accounting curriculum of business schools has been done across different levels of university education. Under-graduate programmes range between three to four years depending on a student's entry qualification. The normal period for high school graduates in Ghanaian universities is four years. Students in year one (level 100) study university-wide courses and school-specific courses. From year two (level 200), students are taught the subjects in their schools or departments. Accounting students begin the study of accounting courses from level 200 (year two) to level 400 (year four). Ethics related courses are also taught at the graduate levels in business schools. In the view of respondents, ethics-related courses have been integrated into courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in universities.

“So whether in the level 200 where our courses begin, level 300, 400 and at the graduate level, ethical issues come up in all of them and we discuss it” (C10).

Ethics interventions in previous literature have generally been at the upper levels in the undergraduate programmes (Ghaffari et al. 2008), but no reasons were assigned for integration at the level. In the view of Ghaffari et al. (2008) there appears to be no answer to the appropriate level of ethics integration. Responses from interviewees indicate that business schools in Ghana have integrated ethics at higher levels for different reasons. Firstly, at level 100 (year 1) students are required to undertake university-wide courses and therefore may not have available space on the curriculum. From levels 200 (year 2), accounting students are introduced to management courses. Programme specialization begins at 300 (year 3); hence, the introduction of ethics at that level.

It must be noted that ethics is not only integrated at the graduate and undergraduate levels of our education but also the professional level. Within the professional accounting programmes,

ethics integration is in most parts of the qualifying professional examinations of accountants as found in CIMA and ICAEW in the UK (Ghaffari et al., 2008). At the professional level, ethics is also given prominence at induction programmes of newly qualified accountants to reinforce what they studied at the qualifying examinations stages. The professional examinations of ICAG are in three parts (1 to 3). According to respondents, ethics can be found in levels 2 and 3 within the professional programmes with the probable objective of preparing members of the profession to have the virtues of the profession significantly entrenched in them.

“I think all parts, especially parts 2 and 3. Most of the ethics subjects are in part 2 and there are some in part 3. Part 1, we have some legal issues which are also ethical, like business law. So I will say it cuts across the entire three parts” (C2).

“But part 2 we have audit and assurance that has some issue about ethics, then we have corporate strategy, ethics and governance which has a full section on ethics and is taught very well in that subject. Then the advanced audit and corporate reporting in part 3 where we have some ethics being brought in. Beyond that, when the students qualify, between qualification and getting into membership, the practical training that they are supposed to get before they get into membership we have built it to bring out some ethical issues” (C9).

Beyond the decision to adequately incorporate ethics in the curriculum to prepare graduates to withstand ethical pressure, the profession also provides practical training at which ethical issues are considered as a booster. A review of the revised syllabus of the ICAG revealed that ethics-related courses are included in specific subjects (ICAG, 2018a), across several subjects and at levels 1 to 3 of the professional stage. Also, a review of handbooks of universities included in the study revealed that ethics-related courses are integrated mostly in years 2 to 4 of the undergraduate programmes and in graduate courses.

5.4.1.4 Multi-method

Various methods have been used in integrating ethics in the accounting courses of universities and the professional accounting programmes. From the literature, ethics has been narrative, quantitative, stand-alone, and embedded or a combination of any of the methods mentioned. Ethics in accounting programmes of universities and professional examination courses in Ghana have mainly been narrative. Students have been introduced to ethics through the use of ethical theories in the literature. Other means of exploring ethics in the programmes have been discussions of issues that guide the ethical conduct of accounting professionals. Cases involving ethical dilemmas and possible means of resolutions have been addressed in both university and professional programmes. Additionally, various models that guide corporate entities in dealing with ethical issues have been among the ethical issues addressed in accounting programmes.

At the university and professional levels, the methods of ethics integration have generally been a combination of stand-alone or embedded in other courses. Respondents mentioned instances of having ethics as “core” and therefore compulsory for all students or designed as elective

“It’s a core. The one course that they have to take in ethics is a core and then in some of the elective courses that I mentioned, and then, of course, the business policy course is also a core. We have stand-alone and others integrated into the courses so there is a requirement that every student has to take at least 40 hours in ethics as a stand-alone course” (C1).

From the above, it is evident that methods of ethics integration in accounting programmes in Ghana is multiple; not one method is practised as confirmed below:

“So I will say it is a combination of stand-alone questions and embedded questions” (C9).

In probing further as to the reasons for the multiple methods of ethics integration, a respondent attributed it to the structure of the programmes and experience of curriculum designers. The responses below confirm the reasons for the multiple methods of ethics integration and the motives behind the method.

“It is 200 because, in the first year especially, most of the courses are what we call University required courses) and we are unable to treat so many things in the first year. But in level 200 that is when we start introducing them to Management, Business Management, and Principle of Management so we think that is the time to start exposing them to the importance of ethics, and the issues of social responsibility and sustainability, etc. And then in level 300 (Year 3), that is when they go into their specialisation areas.” C6.

“If you go through the far past, apart from auditing, there were no ethical issues in there. So those who designed the course may have been biased towards narratives so that’s why” (C2).

A review of handbooks reveals that religious institutions have some levels of stand-alone ethics courses such as Islamic ethics, Christian ethics and biblical foundations of Christian ethics. In addition to the above, business and professional ethics are also offered as a stand-alone course. Apart from the above, the rest of the ethics courses are embedded in other courses within the curriculum.

The study demonstrates that no single method of ethics integration is practised in universities. Since no strict guidelines exist for ethics integration as reported in prior literature, a combination of methods, such as stand-alone, embedded and a combination of both is practiced depending on the institution. There appears to be flexibility in the method of ethics integration from responses of interviewees consistent with existing literature (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Ghaffari et al., 2008). This is also contrary to earlier findings that support the use of a stand-alone method of integration (Gray et al. 1994).

The nature of ethics integration at the professional level appears not to differ significantly from the universities. For instance, within the professional accounting programme, ethics are embedded in specific subjects and across subjects such as corporate strategy, ethics and governance, advanced audit and corporate reporting. In terms of levels of integration, ethics are embedded in parts/levels 2 and 3 of a three-part programme, thus following the model of universities.

The argument can also be extended to mean that foundation years of accounting programmes in universities and professional bodies are mostly devoted to general courses that narrow to strict technical accounting courses in advanced years. From Part 2, it is expected that students would have passed the foundation stages of the professional programme and made decisions to pursue accounting as a profession. The above findings reveal the incorporation of virtue ethics in programmes to adequately prepare professionals for the job market. In an introduction to the 2018 revised syllabus of the ICAG, it has been stated that ethics essentials of professional ethics have been included in the entire syllabus at all the qualification stages and in several subjects (ICAG, 2018b).

In the developing country context, resource availability impacts the achievement of set objectives. As observed from responses, lack of access to teaching and other resources negatively impact performance. Added to unavailability is the exercise of lecturers' discretion. Though not entirely wrong in itself, allowing individual instructors to use their discretion could be problematic. Hardworking instructors could innovate to use the best practice available to achieve set object while the lazy and not resourceful ones would be a hindrance to set objectives.

5.4.2 Curriculum design drivers

As mentioned earlier, the study further sought to answer the research question on the curriculum design of ethics in the accounting programmes in universities and the professional accounting association. Analysis of data from the responses from Deans, HoADs and Council members and senior officials of the professional accounting body and accreditation organisation revealed factors that drive ethics in curriculum design processes as faculty initiative, industry demand, international benchmarking, modernization and the quest to preserve the society. These are presented below.

5.4.2.1 Faculty initiative

Faculties in institutions develop innovative ideas concerning new courses and review of existing ones. They then sell the ideas to their peers and HoAD for adoption. If the individual faculty can provide convincing evidence and the idea appears acceptable to colleagues in the department, it is accepted and taken through the process of course design by the institution for inclusion in the curriculum. The under-listed responses are in support of this theme.

“Anybody at all can come up with an idea. So, we encourage faculty to come up with some kind of innovation” (C7).

“When it comes to the addition of new courses, any individual who comes up with a course and can convince the rest, especially the head of department, can have that courses added to existing ones”. (C4)

From the above statements, departments do not subscribe to having scheduled the addition of new courses and review of existing curriculum to reflect changes in curriculum design. However, individual faculty has the freewill to suggest additions and review of existing curriculum to reflect changes in course structure that would be in the public interest as an obligation to the society (Sorensen et al., 2017).

5.4.2.2 Industry demand

Other reasons assigned to the design of new courses and the review of existing courses were attributed to industry demand. From the respondents, universities design programmes to train accounting students to provide support for industry. In the same manner, the professional body also responds to the needs of industry in the design and review of courses. It can be inferred from the responses that university and professional courses are designed or reviewed not for design or review sake but to meet the specific needs of industry or society (Sorensen et al., 2017). The quotations below reflect responses that support the theme.

“...Accounting is meant to satisfy business so as and when business changes and there is the need for new treatment of business transactions, then we need to think about what course will be developed to meet that need. So basically, the development of courses in the profession has been as a result of changes in the dynamics of business environments”. (C8)

“One reason may be the demand from the industry, By and large, it is the demand from the industry. For instance, when we tried to have the new programme - MSc Accounting and Finance, it was virtually demanded from the ICAG for us to have that kind of programme which is tailor-made to the ICAG members and the industry.” (C4)

5.4.2.3 International benchmarking

Universities and the professional bodies make efforts to be abreast with changes occurring internationally to remain current. As a result, they try to benchmark best practices elsewhere (local or international) in the design of curriculum to equip their graduates with qualities that make them eligible to practice in all environments.

“We think that the global world is very dynamic, and things change very fast so if you administer your syllabus for a period of time, we thought that four years is long enough for us to take stock of what has happened and see whether there’s a need to rethink and redesign the curriculum or to maintain it’ C2

Professional bodies also design courses in accordance with international associations' standards. In the view of the respondents, design of current courses makes them comparable to the peer organisations and ensures that they remain competitive. Responses from officials of the professional body are presented in the foregoing.

“We are a professional accountancy body and we are also under the (IFAC) and they have standards that govern examinations and accountancy education in general, you know the IESBA. So that sets the framework for the syllabuses” (C10).

“When you do the survey, stakeholder consultations and international benchmarking, it helps you to get different shades of opinions that would help. Otherwise if we don't do that and we want to produce what we think is good, we might not get what is best’.
(C9)

5.4.2.4 Modernization

Universities have been influenced by modernisation for the inclusion of ethics in the design of accounting curriculum for universities. The desire to keep up with the changing needs of modern society has been noted to be a factor that drives ethics in the design of accounting curriculum. The views expressed by some respondents give credence to the findings.

“The process involves noting the desire for a certain new course because of modernization and the department requesting a member to develop a paper on the conceptualization of the topic” (C8).

“I didn't do ethics when I was a student but if looked at globally, things are changing. If the auditors at Ernst and Young were ethically sound, I don't think what happened within Arthur-Anderson would be like that even though what they were doing go against certain corporate governance norms.” (C4)

5.4.3 Motivation for curriculum design

This refers to factors that contribute to the development of society rather than a personal and institutional benefit. According to the virtue theory, the motivation for accounting education

ought to dwell on that which is right (Mintz, 2006), and comply with due diligence with a sense of objectivity and integrity in the interest of the society (Sorensen et al., 2017). Sub-themes that emerged from the above theme included: preservation of economy, avoidance of corruption, dynamics of the business environment, globalisation and sustainability.

5.4.3.1 *Preservation of economy*

Interviewees believed that society's survival is among the objectives for the ethics curriculum design of accounting programmes. From the responses, the absence of ethics in the accounting curriculum would spell doom for a developing country such as Ghana. The responses below are examples of some views generated from the interview transcripts that support the theme.

“We teach ethics in the classroom and as I said, I don’t think that is the best way for people to experience ethical dilemmas. But that is the best approach that we have now. So it is absolutely essential if we want to preserve our country. I’d like to say having an ethical group of young people is a strong defense for Ghana’s future” (C1).

The above responses speak volumes about the importance attached to the teaching of ethics in the accounting curriculum of a developing country like Ghana. Academia and the professional body are in agreement that upholding ethical principles could put the nation on a sound footing without the necessary shocks that have occurred elsewhere (Sorensen et al., 2017). It also emerged that the observance of ethical principle is likely to result in the maintenance of rules and regulations which are necessary for the survival of a developing economy like Ghana (Mintz, 2006).

From the study, new insights have emerged concerning the motivation for the ethics curriculum design of accounting programmes in universities and the professional accounting body.

5.4.3.2 Avoidance of corruption

Corruption has been in the news in the past decades. To some, it is a perception; not reality. Yet others see corruption as an issue that could destroy the economy, and which must be addressed. Respondents were of the view that teaching ethics in the curriculum of schools and the professional body's curriculum could help to eliminate lapses in the preparation and reporting of financial information (Mintz, 2006). The inclusion of ethics is said to remedy this situation as well as minimize corruption and other vices such as defalcations and fraud that occur within the accounting profession (Mintz, 2006) as put forward by a respondent.

“Even with the accounting, the standards came about from some of the lapses which came about which people capitalised on. So those standards came about to tighten the loose ends to more or less make the defalcation or fraud to occur” (C7).

Others have suggested that ethics education is capable of overhauling our nation from corruption, lack of adherence to rules and regulations, and behaviours that do not promote nation-building (Sorensen et al., 2017). The professional body as an institution responded to increasing ethical breaches of its members by incorporating ethics into the training of accountants. This appears to support the view that ethical training has the potential to minimize unethical behaviour. Views expressed by respondents are as stated:

“... So, our whole system is essentially corrupted, and I think that it is very important that we reintroduce ethics into the entire system, not just in our education but our entire cultural and social system. So, it is extremely important. If I have my way, there would be an ethics component in every course in addition to a stand-alone oriented practice course that will be focused on ethics” (C1).

“... We (professional body) found that there was an increasing report of ethical infractions from members. People reported several unethical conduct from our members and we felt that perhaps they were not receiving sufficient ethical training” (C2).

The universities and the professional body believe that ethics in the accounting curriculum would help in preventing corruption that appears to be endemic in developing economies such as Ghana. Members of the profession are required to exhibit the highest form of virtue in the discharge of their obligation to society. From the literature, virtue is a quality that seeks the interest of society and encourages persons to do what is right and socially acceptable such as avoidance of corrupt practices (Sorensen et al., 2017).

5.4.3.3 Dynamics of the business environment

Changes occurring in the business environment also account for the inclusion of ethics in the curriculum of universities and the professional accounting body. Institutions have responded to these changes by introducing ethics in the curriculum to help their students to be relevant in the changing environment as per the following responses.

“So, the main reason for the introduction was to deal with the practical ethical issues that confront the profession daily and they are on the increase” (C2).

“The concept of ethics runs through some of the courses at the department because the courses apart from preparing students to be professionally qualified to practice, it also trains them to go and behave appropriately in the industry or wherever they find themselves” (C8).

The study confirms that universities and the professional accounting body in Ghana design ethics in the accounting curriculum based on happenings in the business environment. Indeed, non-response to changing the business environment may affect the relevance and continued existence of such institutions. Students seek to enrol in academic and professional institutions that have the likelihood of equipping them with holistic skills and knowledge. The revision of IESBA’s code to include virtues such as objectivity and professional behaviour (IFAC, 2018) and the ICAG motto of integrity could contribute to adequately prepare students and professional accountants to be competitive in the business environment.

5.4.3.4 Globalisation

Events happening around the world have led to the introduction and teaching of ethics in the curriculum of accounting programmes. Except for the teaching of a professional code of ethics in auditing and some courses, ethics was not taught in universities. The above situation appears to have changed with globalisation. To others, the changes in educational standards around the world are influencing the inclusion and teaching of ethics to accounting students as confirmed in the under-listed response.

“With the curriculum, we strictly go by the context of the international education standards which require that for everybody to qualify the courses that they do should have elements of ethics” (C2).

Again, changes occurring globally have resulted in the teaching of ethics to prepare graduates to be competitive globally as stated below.

“Apart from preparing them for the profession, I also think it is to prepare our students to be abreast with global trends so that they can work anywhere in the world” (C5).

The findings of the study confirm that globalization accounts for ethics intervention in the curriculum of accounting programmes of universities and the professional body consistent with prior literature (Peursen & Julian, 2006). In a world full of opportunities, individuals seek an education that prepares them not only for the local environment but also beyond their immediate environment into the global market.

5.4.3.5 Sustainability

In the performance of their stewardship functions, accountants are required to maintain high ethical standards that ensure confidence and trust from society. In the view of respondents, sustainability involves keeping the profession from extinction and preventing undesirable persons from becoming members. It also ensures the continued existence of the profession. In support of previous literature, educators were of the view that irrespective of one's

specialisation as a business school graduate, the maintenance of high ethical standards may ensure sustainability (Gray, 2010). The statement below gives credence to the above.

“We think ethics is very important because we believe as educators we should train our students not only to go out there and be good HR managers or Accountants or Finance managers, but they should practise their disciplines in ways that ensure that there is sustainability” (C6).

The study confirms that having ethics in the curriculum of accounting programmes ensures sustainability of the profession in addition to the performance of the technical functions required of members of the profession. Having ethical professionals has the possibility of sustaining modern professions in many corrupt environments.

5.4.4 Barriers in curriculum design

From the interview transcripts, the major theme that emerged regarding factors that impact on curriculum designed was resource management. Sub-themes also emerged among which were access to teaching resources, the discretion of lecturers, class size and regulations.

5.4.4.1 Access to teaching resources

To achieve the objectives set, there is a need to have some basic resources. Institutions have barriers in the achievement of curriculum objectives especially in the developing country environment where resources are limited. Responding to questions on barriers to effective introduction of ethics, access to teaching resources was listed as key in the choice of a particular method as described by some respondents:

“Even though the accounting information system is not about the numbers (class size), sometimes some logistics are unavailable” (C5).

“Previously we didn’t have access to cases so you cannot blame the faculty for not using cases because we didn’t have them. So if you have cases, then you can easily use them to teach but if you don’t have them, I don’t see how you will be able to use cases” (C4).

Without teaching resources, instructors have to spend valuable time developing instructional resources instead of teaching. It is therefore not sufficient for institutions to recommend strategies without committing resources to provide the needed logistics to ensure their application.

Lack of teaching resources as a barrier is consistent with prior literature where resource limitation is emphasized (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Dellaportas et al., 2014). Evidence from the literature suggests that access to teaching resources such as cases and other resources may account for achieving the objective set for curriculum design. Although access to resources may hinder the achievement of an objective set, instructors with virtue and desire to serve the interest of society may innovate with limited resources and still make an impact in the lives of graduates and professionals.

5.4.4.2 Discretion of instructors

In addition to recommending strategy and making provision for resources, the discretion of individual instructors was identified as a factor in the prosecution of the curriculum to impact on ethical attitude. According to respondents, instructors are assigned course outlines and they decide the approach to adopt. Below are sample responses from the interviewees:

“You know ICAG doesn’t offer tuition, but we have a school but the way the teaching is offered depends on the individual teacher. Depending upon who is teaching, you can influence people’s thinking” (C2).

“I tend to cite examples of ethical cases we are dealing with without mentioning names and the sanctions and implications on future practice. So depending upon who is teaching, you can influence people’s thinking” (C5).

It would be useful for the authorities of universities and the professional accounting body to be aware that instructors use their discretion in adopting a particular strategy for efficient

management in the implementation of curriculum strategies to achieve objectives set. There is the need to have uniformity in adopted methods within the university and at the professional level rather than allowing individual instructors to use their discretion. Lecturers' discretion may be similar to lack of interest and commitment since one's interest or lack of it may or may not promote ethics in the design of curriculum for the benefit of society (Sorensen et al., 2017).

5.4.4.3 Regulations

The policy of an institution determines the mode of teaching and assessment of ethics and ethics-related courses. Additionally, regulatory bodies sometimes exert influence on the method of teaching and assessment as stated below by some respondents. This may restrict innovation on the part of instructors because one must adhere to set rules that may not be varied. The virtue theory requires that accounting education places emphasis on doing what is right in the interest of the society such as compliance with obligations set (Mintz, 2006).

“I think what we are trying to do now is to stipulate the low-order - multiple-choice questions (MCQs) type and high-order questions - those that require you to do some thinking, as prescribed by the NAB {National Accreditation Board}” (C1).

“What we know is that generally from the university's policy, you can't set MCQs for graduate studies and you can't set exam that is two hours; yet the maximum should be three hours. So there are general guidelines when it comes to assessments but the approach as to case study or not, no it's not prescribed” (C5).

5.4.4.4 Class size

This refers to the number of students who sit in a class at any particular point in time. From the interviews, the number of students in a class influences the teaching method adopted by an instructor (Loeb, 2015). A small class size lends itself to the adoption of modern teaching strategies such as cases and debates. The reasons assigned for using or not using a particular

teaching strategy could be attributed to class sizes in universities as was stressed by some respondents as follows:

“If we have smaller class sizes we could have serious debates, we could have experiments where you control the environments, we could give them dilemma cases for them to argue and to make judgements, so in general, it is more about the numbers. Unfortunately, without the numbers {number of students in a class}, we use the traditional way of taking students through the concept” (C5).

“At the graduate level, I know that we have started using cases to teach but at the undergraduate level, even though there are some of our colleagues who are using cases to teach, because of the numbers (class size), it is very difficult to use cases at the undergraduate level” (C4).

The study confirms that among the barriers to ethics in accounting curriculum design is the size of a class (Howieson, 2003; Loeb, 2015). From the findings, large class sizes in universities appear to hamper the adoption of modern methods of teaching that would otherwise have generated effective outcomes and virtues.

5.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This study sought to understand the nature of curriculum design in universities and the professional accounting body, the factors that drive ethics in the curriculum and the motivations for ethics in curriculum design (i.e. expected outcomes of curriculum design of academic and professional accounting programmes). It also sought to understand the barriers to effective implementation of ethics in the curriculum of universities and the professional accounting body in Ghana by drawing on related literature and the role of virtue ethics. From the literature, we argue that curriculum design is a key element in academic and professional programmes of most disciplines, including accounting. This is important especially in the accounting profession that prides itself as having the hallmarks of honesty, integrity, trust,

confidence and a high sense of moral integrity (Dellaportas et al., 2014; Fisher et al., 2007; Saat et al., 2012). As a self-governing profession, the regulatory model of our national governance systems offers the ICAG the free will in the design and implementation of appropriate programmes in the achievement of their objectives.

The findings of the study reveal that the nature of ethics in the curriculum in academic and professional institutions in Ghana is multiple. Specifically, ethics is integrated into specific subjects and across multiple subjects. Concerning levels of ethics integration in universities, ethics is integrated into academic programmes from year 2 to year 4 of undergraduate programmes and at the graduate levels.

At the professional front, ethics is integrated at all levels of the professional accounting programme and is more prominent in parts 2 and 3. For both academic and professional programmes, ethics is integrated using a combination of stand-alone, embedded and narrative. It can also be concluded that curriculum design in academic institutions is driven by the initiative of individual faculties, industry demand, international benchmarking and modernisation. Findings of the study also indicate that curriculum design is motivated by the desire to preserve the economy and avoid corruption. Others are the dynamics of the business environment, globalisation as well as the desire for the sustainability of the profession and society.

Regarding corruption, the findings reveal that ethically oriented person would not engage in unethical actions that may tend to corrupt the individual or society – a canker that is frowned upon by the profession as contrary to the virtues of the profession. In a world of technology, it is important that the training of graduates is geared towards what pertains elsewhere to ensure the mobility of accounting professionals. The findings further reveal that in the Ghanaian environment, access to teaching resources, the discretion of instructors, regulations

and class size serve as barriers to ethics in the design of the accounting curriculum of both universities and the professional accounting programme.

The study provides empirical evidence to support findings in previous literature regarding the ethics curriculum in universities in Ghana (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Dellaportas et al., 2014; Ghaffari et al., 2008). The findings reveal that ethics curriculum design in universities in Ghana has been multiple, involving methods such as subject-specific, across-subjects and levels, and the use of stand-alone, embedded and narratives across universities. Besides, individual faculty's discretion has accounted for the nature and method of ethics integration. Other factors accounting for ethics integration have been the desire to preserve the economy from unethical practices that have occurred elsewhere and on the local front and resulted in the collapse of businesses. Other motivations of ethics in the curriculum have been the avoidance of corrupt practices in business.

From the virtue ethics perspective, university faculties and deans in Ghana see it as their responsibility towards the society to imbibe ethics in graduate through curriculum design to adequately prepare accounting graduates to have virtues of the profession. Furthermore, changes occurring in the business and global environment have accounted for the design of ethics in the curriculum of universities and the professional association.

The study recommends that there should be formalized procedures in the design and review of the curriculum at stipulated intervals, especially in universities' programmes. Though dependence on faculty initiatives must be encouraged, such a key factor in education as curriculum design must not be left to the discretion of individual faculty members. Furthermore, universities and professional accountancy institutions must develop structures in the design of the curriculum and monitor their graduates' performance in the job market to promote ethical behaviour and attitudes at all times.

CHAPTER SIX

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations for the entire study. The chapter begins with the summary of the entire study after which the conclusions and recommendations are presented in that order. The limitations of the study and future research directions together with contributions made are also presented in the chapter.

6.2 Summary of Findings

Ethics education interventions have been made by academic institutions to prepare graduates for the business environment. Professional accounting bodies have likewise made ethical interventions in their programmes to address ethical infractions involving members of the profession that have the potential to collapse corporate organisations worldwide. The results of corporate collapses include loss of huge investments and jobs that could threaten even the most advanced economies. The essence of academic and professional accounting institutions has been to make ethics interventions to shape the ethical attitudes of accountants and thereby restore confidence in the profession and avert future collapses.

Following from the above, the questions addressed by the study have been:

- What is the effect of EEI on the objectives set for making ethics interventions?
- What is the effect of EEI on the ethical attitudes of accountants?
- What is the effect of personal and organisational attributes on the ethical attitudes of accountants?

- How and why are ethics curriculum designs in accounting programmes of universities and the professional accounting body in Ghana shaping the ethical attitudes of graduates and professional accountants?

To answer the above questions, the study specifically investigated ethics in academic and professional accounting programmes in Ghana. Particularly, the study

- investigated the effects of EEI on objectives of teaching ethics related courses;
- investigated the effects of EEI on ethical attitudes of accountants;
- investigated the effect of personal and organisational attributes on ethical attitudes of accountants; and
- examined ethics and curriculum design of accounting programmes in Ghana.

The first three objectives were approached from quantitative perspectives and the fourth objective was addressed from an interpretive approach using qualitative methodology. The study presented the empirical results obtained at the end of each of the chapters.

Chapter one of the study presented the general introduction to the study and addressed the background, statement of the problem and research objectives and questions. It also presented the summary of hypotheses, significance, scope and context of the study.

Chapter two investigated the effect of EEI on objectives set for making ethics interventions by academic and professional institutions from the perspectives of instructors and professional accountants. Primary data was collected using a cross-sectional survey from 77 accounting instructors in universities and 340 professional accountants in Ghana. For universities, the results of the study revealed a positive and significant association between OEC and MTE and also between the control variables Institution type 1 – public institutions

and type 2 – religious institution. The results of the study, however, indicate a negative and significant association between OEC and institution type 3 – chartered institution. For professional accountants, the results of the study revealed a positive and significant association between OEC and ERC, MTE and MEI.

Chapter three presented a second empirical paper that investigated the effect EEI on EAA, using data from 340 professional accountants. The chapter also employed OLS estimation to test a hypothesised relationship between EAA and EEI and other factors such as age, gender, experience, position or rank of the accountant in organisation, educational qualification and sector of the economy where accountants work. The results of the study indicate that experience is positive and significantly associated with the ethical attitudes of accountants.

Chapter four of the study presented a third empirical paper that investigated the effect of personal and organisational attributes on the ethical attitudes of accountants. The chapter used the same survey data from 340 professional accountants and OLS estimation to test a hypothesised relationship between EAA and personal attributes of ethics (PAE) together with other factors. The study also tested a relationship between EAA and organisational attributes of ethics (OAE) with other factors. Other factors used in the hypotheses included age, gender, experience, position, educational qualification and sector. The findings of Chapter four revealed that PAE is positive and significantly associated with EAA. Also, OAE is positive and significantly associated with EAA. Among the other factors, experience is positive and significantly associated with EAA while gender is negative and significantly associated with EAA.

Chapter five presented a fourth empirical paper that examined the ethics curriculum design of accounting programmes in universities and the professional body syllabus. The objective

was to analyse the perspectives of deans, heads of accounting departments and senior officials of regulatory bodies in universities and the professional body. This chapter adopted a qualitative approach in the research method, data collection and analysis. Responses obtained were categorised into the following themes: multi-dimensional nature of ethics integration; design processes and motivation for ethics curriculum.

This final chapter of the study – Chapter six presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations for the whole study.

6.3 Conclusions of the Study

The objective of the study was four-fold – to examine how ethics is shaping the ethical attitudes of accountants in Ghana. The following are the conclusions based on the specific objectives of the study.

6.3.1 Effects of EEI on objectives of ethic courses

The study concludes that ethics-related courses, methods of teaching ethics and methods of ethics interventions are predictors in achieving the objectives set for making ethics education interventions in accounting programmes. Also, the nature of institution - public or religious institution – has a significant and positive association with achieving objectives set. Furthermore, chartered institutions (autonomous institutions without affiliation) may not be achieving set objectives for making ethics education interventions.

6.3.2 Effects of EEI of ethical attitudes

In investigating the effect of EEI on ethical attitudes of accountants, the study concludes that experience is positively associated and significant in predicting ethical attitudes of accountants in Ghana. Other factors such as ethics-related courses, methods of teaching

ethics, methods of assessing ethics, methods of ethics interventions and levels of ethics interventions have a positive association with ethical attitudes of accountants; yet, these are not predictors of ethical attitudes. Furthermore, other factors such as age, educational qualification and sector though positively associated with ethical attitudes are not predictors of ethical attitudes of accountants. Also, female accountants were found to be more ethical and unlikely to engage in unethical practices. In terms of position or rank of accountants within organisations, the study found a negative association between the rank of an accountant and ethical attitude, though not significant in influencing ethical attitudes.

6.3.3 Effect of personal and organisational attributes on EAA

The study concludes that personal attributes (greed and desire for personal gain, behaviour of one's peers, behaviour of one's superiors, personal values, family influences and pressures and religious background) collectively have a positive and significant influence on ethical attitudes. Additionally, organisational attributes (formal company policies and codes of conduct, visionary leadership, organisational climate and organisational culture/values) collectively have a positive and significant influence on ethical attitudes. Furthermore, other factors such as gender are significant and negatively associated with ethical attitude. This means that from the study, there is evidence to suggest that female accountants are more ethical and unlikely to engage in unethical practices than their male counterparts. Furthermore, the working experience of an accountant is significant and positively associated with ethical attitude. From the study context, age, rank in organisations, educational qualification, and sector of work, are not predictors of ethical attitudes.

6.3.4 Ethics and curriculum design of accounting programmes

The integration of ethics in academic and professional accounting programmes in Ghana is multi-dimensional. Ethics has been integrated into specific subjects and across several

subjects. In terms of levels, ethics integration in academic programmes has predominantly been made from year 2 to year 4 and at the graduate levels. In professional programmes, ethics is integrated at levels 1 to 3. For both academic and professional programmes, ethics integration has been a combination of stand-alone, embedded and narrative as well as elective and core. The study also concludes that curriculum design is influenced by individual faculty initiatives, demand from industry, desire to benchmark international institutions, and the need to be abreast with modern trends in the educational and professional environment. The motivation for having ethics in the accounting curriculum has been identified as a means of preserving the economy and avoiding corrupt practices. Additionally, ethics integration has been in response to the dynamics of the business environment, training of graduates and accountants who can fit into the global environment and the quest for sustainability of the profession and economy.

Despite the motivations for making ethics interventions in the design of accounting curriculum of academic and professional accounting association in the Ghanaian context, factors such as access to teaching resources, discretion of instructors, regulations and class sizes serve as barriers to ethics in the design of accounting curriculum of both universities and the professional accounting programme.

6.4 Recommendations and Implications

The study investigated the effects of ethics education interventions on the objectives of making such interventions. It also investigated the effect of ethics education on ethical attitudes and further examined the effect of personal and organisational attributes and other factors on ethical attitudes of accountants using evidence from Ghana. Additionally, the study explored ethics and curriculum design of university and professional accounting programmes

in Ghana. Based on the findings and conclusions made above, the study makes the following recommendations.

Firstly, managers of university and professional accounting institutions must carefully consider incorporating ethics-related courses in the design of the accounting curriculum as these variables positively impact the achievement of objectives set for making ethical interventions in their programmes. Also, institutions must pay particular attention to the method of teaching ethics and the methods of ethics interventions as these have a significant impact on achieving objectives set for making such interventions. Furthermore, attention must be paid particularly to public and religious institutions as they have the likelihood to achieve the objectives set for such interventions from empirical data analysis. Also, chartered institutions must be closely monitored and not left unsupervised as they are less likely to achieve objectives set due to their autonomy.

A second managerial implication based on evidence from the study is that in shaping the ethical attitude of accountants, experience is a key variable that must not be overlooked. This is because even though ethics interventions reveal a positive association with ethical attitudes, they are not significant in shaping attitudes without experience. This calls for the encouragement of mentorship programmes within academic and professional environments where experienced members adopt younger ones as mentees in the quest to strengthen the ethical attitudes of all members of the profession in Ghana for the benefit of society. Also, though reliance on other factors such as age, gender, educational qualification, sector of the economy where accountants work, position or rank of accountant in organisations has some association with ethical attitude, these factors are not predictors of ethical attitude. This calls for the consideration of additional factors beyond ethics interventions in university and

professional education for the development of ethical accountants. The results from the study indicate that over-reliance on ethics interventions may not generate the desired results.

The study also adds to the growing literature that personal attributes predict ethical attitudes. Also, evidence from the study indicates that female accountants are more likely to be ethical than male accountants. Furthermore, in the recruitment of professional accountants, work experience must be highly considered as the results of the study indicate that experience has a significant positive effect on ethical attitude than age, rank in organisations, educational qualification and sector of work. In terms of organisational attributes that impact on ethical attitudes, the study proves that formal company policies and codes of conduct, visionary leadership, organisational climate and organisational culture/values collectively predict ethical attitudes. Consequently, organisations are encouraged to create the necessary environment by developing and applying ethical codes, policies and culture that frown on unethical attitudes and behaviour.

Finally, the study recommends that there should be formalised procedures in the design and review of curriculum at stipulated intervals in universities. Faculty initiatives, though commendable as a key factor in education must not be left to the discretion of individual faculty members. Universities and the professional accountancy institutions must develop structures to follow up their graduates and promote ethical behaviour and attitudes at all times and not just educate and train them for the society at one point in time. With limited resources, universities and the professional body must innovate to shape the ethical attitudes of graduates and professionals.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

This study is not without limitations as observed by Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2009). One limitation of the work is the reliance on data sources from perceptions of 77 accounting instructors and 340 professional accountants. Secondly, the self-reported nature of responses from instructors and professional accountants may suffer from response biases. Thirdly, the use of perceptions from only 340 professionally qualified accountants, excluding partly-qualified accounting graduates and post graduates who practise as accountants in various sectors of the economy may pose a limitation. Hence, the findings may therefore not reflect the opinions of the entirety of persons practicing accountancy in Ghana. The cross-sectional nature of the study also poses a limitation as opinions might not remain the same over a period of time. The final limitation is that the study variables represent opinions of respondents and not actual behaviour and this calls for caution in generalizing the findings.

6.6 Contributions of the Study

The study contributes to the existing literature in terms of policy, theory and practice.

Contribution to Policy

To the researcher's knowledge, this is the first paper that investigates the effects of ethics education interventions on the objectives set for making such interventions. The results have implications for the development of accounting ethics curriculum by universities and the professional accounting bodies concerning the achievement of objectives set for making such interventions. The paper contributes to the literature by providing evidence to suggest that the inclusion of ethics-related courses, methods of teaching ethics, and method of ethics interventions are predictors in achieving objectives of ethics interventions. This adds to existing literature in ethics intervention in accounting programmes from a developing country perspective.

Contribution to Theory

The study also adds to the existing literature on the influence of personal and organisational attributes on the ethical attitudes of accountants. Previous research has largely focused on student samples and/ or managers in organisations. The study adds to the few studies that employ the use of professional accountants to investigate the effect of personal and organisational attributes on the ethical attitudes of professional accountants. In terms of theory, the study posits that experience and gender are key factors that influence the ethical attitudes of accountants in Ghana. The study further provides evidence to suggest that greed and desire for personal gains, behaviour of one's peers and superiors, personal values, family influences and pressures, religious background and ego strength, collectively predict ethical attitudes. Also, evidence from the study indicates that formal company policies and codes of conduct, visionary leadership, organisational climate and organisational culture/values collectively predict ethical attitudes. Consequently, organisations are encouraged to create the necessary environment by developing and applying ethical codes, policies and culture that frown on unethical attitudes and behaviour and developing the personal attributes of employees.

Contribution to Practice

An important managerial implication is that universities must identify the optimum method of ethics intervention rather than adopting multiple methods based on resource limitations, large class sizes and discretions of faculty, HoADs and deans. Ethics in accounting curriculum design must be based on proactive considerations rather than relying on individual faculty initiatives, demand from industry, desire to benchmark international institutions and the pursuit of being abreast with modern trends in accounting educational and professional environments. This calls for the consideration of the above issues by managers of universities and professional bodies to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders and not only faculty in

the development of ethics interventions. Furthermore, universities and professional institutions must work to eliminate or minimize all barriers to ethics interventions as they serve to reduce the expected benefits.

6.7 Future Research Directions

The limitations identified in the study inform future research directions. Future research could extend the research period to cover all universities in Ghana that offer accounting programmes to provide a wider scope of the topic. Secondly, future research must address the limitation of self-response bias by testing for social desirability bias. Thirdly, future research must expand the sample of respondents to cover partly qualified accountants in industry and persons who may not have professional qualifications but are practising accountancy to determine if their opinions would differ from the results of the present study. Future research must be extended over a period to have longitudinal studies to determine changes in ethical attitudes over a period. Finally, future studies must be extended to other countries beyond Ghana for comparative studies.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
BUSINESS SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING



Ref. No.: **DoA.58/Vol.III**

10th May, 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

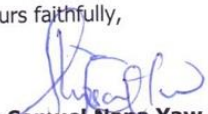
This is to introduce to you, **Mrs. Regina Mensah Onumah**, a student at the University of Ghana Business School, Legon who is pursuing a PhD in Accounting programme.

Mrs. Onumah is required to submit a Thesis as part of the requirements for the award of the PhD and the topic of her research is: **"Ethics in Accounting Education and Practice in Ghana"**.

I would appreciate any assistance that can be given to her to enable her collect data/information for the study.

This is purely an academic exercise and any information given would be treated as confidential.

Yours faithfully,


Dr Samuel Nana Yaw Simpson
[Principal Supervisor]

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

P. O. Box LG 78, Legon, Accra, Ghana.

• Telephone: +233 (0) 342 197 101

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• Website: www.ug.edu.gh

APPENDIX B



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES (ECH)

P. O. Box LG 74, Legon, Accra, Ghana

My Ref. No.....

4th September, 2017

Ms. Regina Mensah Onumah
Department of Accounting
University of Ghana Business School
University of Ghana
Legon

Dear Ms. Onumah,

ECH 002/17-18: ETHICS IN ACCOUNTING AND PRACTICE IN GHANA

This is to advise you that the above reference study has been presented to the Ethics Committee for the Humanities for a full board review and the following actions taken subject to the conditions and explanation provided below:

Expiry Date:	29/08/18
On Agenda for:	Initial Submission
Date of Submission:	12/06/17
ECH Action:	Approved
Reporting:	Bi-Annually



Please accept my congratulations.

Yours Sincerely,

Rev. Prof. J. O. Y. Mante
ECH Chair

CC: Dr. Mohammed Amidu, Department Accounting, University of Ghana Business School

Tel: +233-303933866

Email: ech@ug.edu.gh | ech@isser.edu.gh

APPENDIX C

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA BUSINESS SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING

QUESTIONNAIRE ON ETHICS IN ACCOUNTING EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

This questionnaire is being used to solicit information on “Ethics in Accounting Education and Practice in Ghana”. The study is a PhD Thesis aimed at providing inputs for possible improvement in curriculum design, teaching and assessment methods of ethics in accounting programmes being offered at the tertiary level to train ethical accountants for national development. It also seeks your views on personal and organizational attributes that influence the ethical behaviour of accountants. The study will benefit educators, accountants and policy makers. We therefore seek your maximum co-operation and assure you that any information provided will be treated with confidentiality. Please respond by ticking the appropriate box with [√] or providing appropriate answers and comments where necessary. Thank you for your co-operation.

SECTION A Background Information

1. Gender: Male [] Female []
2. Educational/Professional Qualification (tick as many as applicable):
Doctorate’s Degree [] Master’s Degree [] Bachelor’s Degree [] HND []
ICAG [] ACCA [] CIMA [] CPA [] Other(s) please specify.....
3. Position in Institution: Director of Finance [] Accounts Officer [] Accountant [] Other(s)
please specify.....
4. In which sector of the economy do you work?
Banking [] Education [] Agriculture [] Manufacturing [] Mining [] Energy []
Civil/Public Sector [] Trade and Industry [] Construction [] Others Please specify
5. How many years have you been practising/working as an accounting professional?
Below 5 years [] 6 – 10 years [] 11 – 15 years [] 16 years and above []
6. Age: Below 30 years [] 30 – 40 years [] 41 – 50 years [] 51 years and above []
7. Nationality: Ghanaian [] Non-Ghanaian [] Please specify your nationality.....

SECTION B
Ethics/Ethics Related Courses

Below are ethics and ethics related courses in accounting curriculum. Indicate your opinion on the extent to which ethics is embedded in the under-listed courses on a scale of 1: Strongly Disagree to 7 for Entirely Agree by ticking [] the appropriate box.

Courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B1. Financial Accounting.							
B2. Cost and Management Accounting.							
B3. Auditing							
B4. Corporate Reporting							
B5. Financial Reporting							
B6. Accounting Information System							
B7. Public Sector Accounting							
B8. Taxation							
B9. Financial Statement Analysis							

SECTION C
Curriculum Design

The following relate to **issues that drive ethics in accounting** curriculum design in tertiary institutions. Indicate your opinion based on a scale of 1 for Strongly Disagree to 7 for Entirely Agree

Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1. Professional bodies requirements/exemptions.							
C2. Ghana National Accreditation Board requirements.							
C3. To provide students with lifelong learning skills.							
C4. Broad holistic approach.							
C5. To provide graduate skills.							
C6. University requirements.							
C7. Affiliated universities requirement							
C8. Religious affiliation							
C9. Gender of institutional head/dean (female)							
C10. Dean's functional background in management							
C11. Financial strength							
C12. Faculty interest							
C13. Size of faculty							
C14. Availability of space/credit hours in curriculum							
C15. Age of institution							
C16. Prestige							
C17. Composition of curriculum committee							

SECTION D

Objectives of Ethics/Ethics Related Courses

Please indicate which of the following you consider as objectives for the teaching of ethics in accounting programmes at tertiary institutions by ticking the appropriate box(es) as [√]. Indicate your opinion on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree **to 7** for Entirely Agree.

Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D1. To sensitise students' understanding of ethical issues in accounting							
D2. To deepen students' understanding of ethical issues in accounting							
D3. To develop students personal ethics							
D4. To develop problem solving skills that have ethical implications							
D5. To develop a sense of professional responsibility towards users of accounting information							
D6. To develop knowledge of the code of professional ethics for Accountants							
D7. To develop understanding of the code of professional ethics for Accountants							
D8. To improve the ethical attitudes of accounting students							
D9. To relate accounting education to moral issues							
D10. To develop "a sense of moral obligation" or responsibility							
D 11. To develop the abilities needed to deal with ethical conflicts or dilemmas.							
D12. To learn to deal with the uncertainties of the accounting profession.							
D13. To "set the stage" for a change in ethical behavior							
D14. To recognize issues in accounting that have ethical implications.							
D15. To appreciate the history and composition of all aspects of accounting ethics and their relationship to the general field of ethics							
D16. To understand the history and composition of all aspects of accounting ethics and their relationship to the general field of ethics							

SECTION E

Methods of Teaching Ethics Related Courses

Below are methods useful in the teaching of ethics/ethics related courses in accounting. Indicate your preferred method by ticking [√] the appropriate box on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree to **7** for Entirely Agree.

Teaching Method	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E1. Enhanced (Modified Lecture) use of demonstrations, responding to pre-submitted student-generated questions, mastery tests/quizzes							
E2. Questioning and Discussion including knowledge, comprehension, analysis, synthesis and evaluation questions							
E3. Writing in Class-includes journals, one-minute papers, responses to unstructured problems or cases							
E4 Problem-based Learning – Cases: Use of knowledge, concepts, and skills relevant to a course to solve realistic business problem							
E5. Problem-based Learning – Solving problems by dividing them into a series of prescribed steps							
E6. Group Learning-Teamwork							
E7. Debates							
E8. Drama/Role Playing							
E9. Technology-Visual and Computer- Based Instruction/Tutorials							
E10. Technology-Based Delivery: Courses delivered partially or wholly online							
E11. Fieldwork-Service Learning attachment							
E12. Accounting Internship/Industrial attachment							

SECTION F

Methods of Assessing Ethics Courses

Below are methods useful in assessing ethics in accounting. Indicate your preferred method by ticking [√] the appropriate box on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree to **7** for Entirely Agree

Assessment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F1. In-class examination (Multiple Choice Questions {MCQ})							
F2. In-class written examination (Essays)							
F3. In-class written examination (MCQ plus Essays)							
F4. Quizzes							
F5. Term paper							
F6. Take home exams							
F7. Internship/Industrial attachment							
F8. Debates							
F9. Individual assignment							
F10. Group assignment							

SECTION G

Method of Ethics Intervention

Please indicate which of the following you consider as preferred method of ethics intervention in accounting programmes at tertiary institutions by ticking the appropriate box as [√] on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree to **7** for Entirely Agree

Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
G1. Integrate ethics throughout accounting curriculum							
G2. Offer a separate compulsory ethics course							
G3. Combine integration with a separate compulsory course							
G4. Combine integration with a separate optional course							
G5. Offer a separate optional ethics course							
G6. Combine integration with a separate compulsory course and a separate optional course							

SECTION H

Level of Ethics Intervention

Please indicate which of the following you consider as preferred level of ethics intervention in accounting programmes at tertiary institutions by ticking the appropriate box as [√] on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree to **7** for Entirely Agree

H1. Graduate level							
H2. Undergraduate level 100 only							
H3. Undergraduate level 200 only							
H4. Undergraduate level 300 only							
H5. Undergraduate level 400 only							
H6. Undergraduate levels 100 to 400							

SECTION J

Personal Attributes

Listed below are statements relating to personal attributes that influence the ethical behaviour of accountants. Indicate your opinion by ticking the appropriate box as [√] on a scale **1** for Strongly Disagree to **7** for Entirely Agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
J1. Greed and desire for personal gain							
J2. Behaviour of one's peers							
J3. Behaviour of one's superiors							
J4. Personal values							
J5. Family influences and pressures							
J6. Religious background							
J7. Ego strength							

SECTION K

Organisational Attributes

Listed below are statements relating to organisational factors that influence the ethical behaviour of accountants. Indicate your opinion by ticking [√] the appropriate box based on a scale of **1** for Strongly disagree to **7** for Entirely agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
K1. Formal company policies and codes of conduct							
K 2. Visionary leadership							
K3. Organisational climate							
K4. Organisational culture/values							
K5. Industry's ethical climate.							
K6. Society's moral climate							
K7. Political climate of country							

L

Ethical Attitudes of Accountants

Listed below are Vignettes relating to ethical attitudes. Indicate your opinion by ticking the appropriate box as [√] on a scale **1 always acceptable to 7 never acceptable.**

Vignettes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
L1. An executive earning GH¢100,000 a year overstated his expense account by about GH¢3000 a year							
L2. In order to increase profits of the firm, a general manager used a production process that exceeded legal limits for environmental pollution							
L3. Because of pressure from his brokerage firm, a stockbroker recommended a type of stock that he did not consider to be a good investment							
L4. A small business received one-fourth of its gross revenue in the form of cash. The owner reported only one half of the cash receipts for income tax purposes							
L5. A company paid a GH¢350,000 "consulting" fee to an official of a foreign country. In return, the official promised assistance in obtaining a contract that will produce GH¢10 million profit for the contracting company							
L6. A company president found that a competitor had made an important scientific discovery that would sharply reduce the profits of his own company. He then hired a key employee of the competitor in an attempt to learn the details of the discovery							
L7. A highway-building contractor deplored the chaotic bidding situation and cutthroat competition in his industry. He therefore, reached an understanding with other major contractors to permit bidding which would provide them with a reasonable profit							
L8. A company president recognized that sending expensive Christmas gifts to purchasing agents might compromise their positions. However, he continued the policy since it was common practice and changing it might result in a loss of business							
L9. A corporate director learned that his company intended to announce a stock split and increase its dividend. On the basis of this							

information, he bought additional shares and then following the announcement sold them for a gain						
L 10. A corporate executive promoted a loyal friend and competent manager to the position of divisional vice president in preference to a better-qualified manager with whom he had no close personal ties						
L11. Finance Director selected a legal method of financial reporting which concealed some embarrassing financial facts that would otherwise have become public knowledge						
L12. An employer received applications for a supervisor's position from two equally qualified applicants but hired the male applicant because he thought that some employees might resent being supervised by a female						
L13. Dan is a purchasing agent who has the final say on which suppliers his firm will buy from. Dan let it be known that when price and other things were equal, his purchasing decisions could be swayed by receipt of an "appropriate" gift						
L14. The board of directors of TT Co Ltd recently approved a policy earmarking 7.5% of its profits for corporate giving. The funds will come directly out of retained earnings and thereby reduce the payout of dividends to the shareholders of the firm						

SECTION M

Suggestions for Improving Ethics in Accounting Programme Design , Delivery, Assessment and ethical behaviour of Accountants

M1. Suggest way(s) to improve the design of ethics in accounting programme.....

.....

M2. Suggest way(s) to improve the teaching and assessment of ethics in accounting.....

.....

M3. Suggest way(s) to improve the ethical behaviour of accountants.....

.....

.....

Thank you very much for your time and effort.

SECTION B
Ethics/Ethics Related Courses

Below are ethics and ethics related courses in accounting curriculum. Indicate your opinion on the extent to which ethics is embedded in the under-listed courses on a scale of 1: Strongly Disagree to 7 for Entirely Agree by ticking [] the appropriate box.

Courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B1. Financial Accounting.							
B2. Cost and Management Accounting.							
B3. Auditing							
B4. Corporate Reporting							
B5. Financial Reporting							
B6. Accounting Information System							
B7. Public Sector Accounting							
B8. Taxation							
B9. Financial Statement Analysis							

SECTION C
Curriculum Design

The following relate to **issues that drive ethics/ethics related in accounting** curriculum design in tertiary institutions. Indicate your opinion based on a scale of 1 for Strongly Disagree to 7 for Entirely Agree

Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1. Professional bodies requirements/exemptions.							
C2. Ghana National Accreditation Board requirements.							
C3. To provide students with lifelong learning skills							
C4. Broad holistic approach.							
C5. To provide graduate skills.							
C6. University requirements.							
C7. Affiliated universities requirement							
C8. Religious affiliation							
C9. Gender of institutional head/dean (female)							
C10. Dean's functional background in management							
C11. Financial strength							
C12. Faculty interest							
C13. Size of faculty							
C14. Availability of space/credit hours in curriculum							
C15. Age of institution							
C16. Prestige							
C17. Composition of curriculum committee							

SECTION D

Objectives of Ethics/Ethics Related Courses

Please indicate which of the following you consider as objectives for the teaching of ethics in accounting programmes at tertiary institutions by ticking the appropriate box(es) as [√]. Indicate your opinion on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree **to 7** for Entirely Agree.

Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
D1. To sensitise students' understanding of ethical issues in accounting							
D2. To deepen students' understanding of ethical issues in accounting							
D3. To develop students personal ethics							
D4. To develop problem solving skills that have ethical implications							
D5. To develop a sense of professional responsibility towards users of accounting information							
D6. To develop knowledge of the code of professional ethics for accountants							
D7. To develop understanding of the code of professional ethics for accountants							
D8. To improve the ethical attitudes of accounting students							
D9. To relate accounting education to moral issues							
D10. To develop "a sense of moral obligation" or responsibility							
D 11. To develop the abilities needed to deal with ethical conflicts or dilemmas.							
D12. To learn to deal with the uncertainties of the accounting profession.							
D13. To "set the stage" for a change in ethical behaviour							
D14. To recognize issues in accounting that have ethical implications							
D15. To appreciate the history and composition of all aspects of accounting ethics and their relationship to the general field of ethics							
D16. To understand the history and composition of all aspects of accounting ethics and their relationship to the general field of ethics							

SECTION E

Methods of Teaching Ethics Related Courses

Below are methods useful in the teaching of ethics/ethics related courses in accounting. Indicate your preferred method by ticking [\surd] the appropriate box on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree to **7** for Entirely Agree.

Teaching Method	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
E1. Enhanced (Modified Lecture) use of demonstrations, responding to pre-submitted student-generated questions, mastery tests/quizzes							
E2. Questioning and Discussion including knowledge, comprehension, analysis, synthesis and evaluation questions							
E3. Writing in Class-includes journals, one-minute papers, responses to unstructured problems or cases							
E4 Problem-based Learning – Cases: Use of knowledge, concepts, and skills relevant to a course to solve realistic business problem							
E5. Problem-based Learning – Solving problems by dividing them into a series of prescribed steps							
E6. Group Learning-Teamwork							
E7. Debates							
E8. Drama/Role Playing							
E9. Technology-Visual and Computer-Based Instruction/Tutorials							
E10. Technology-Based Delivery: Courses delivered partially or wholly online							
E11. Fieldwork-Service Learning attachment							
E12. Accounting Internship/Industrial attachment							
E13. Others, please specify and rank.....							

SECTION EA

Methods used in Teaching Ethics Courses

Below are methods used in teaching ethics in accounting. Indicate which method you use in teaching by ticking [\surd] the appropriate box on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree to **7** for Entirely Agree.

Teaching Method	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
EA1. Enhanced (Modified Lecture) use of demonstrations, responding to pre-submitted student-generated questions, mastery tests/quizzes							
EA2. Questioning and Discussion including knowledge, comprehension, analysis, synthesis and evaluation questions							
EA3. Writing in Class-includes journals, one-minute papers, responses to unstructured problems or cases							
EA4 Problem-based Learning – Cases: Use of knowledge, concepts, and skills relevant to a course to solve realistic business problem							
EA5. Problem-based Learning – Solving problems by dividing it into a series of prescribed steps							
EA6. Group Learning-Teamwork							
EA7. Debates							
EA8. Drama/Role Playing							
EA9. Technology-Visual and Computer-Based Instruction/Tutorials							

EA10. Technology-Based Delivery: Courses delivered partially or wholly online							
EA11. Fieldwork-Service Learning attachment							
EA12. Accounting Internship/Industrial attachment							
EA13. Others, please specify and rank.....							

SECTION F

Methods of Assessing Ethics/Ethics Related Courses

Below are methods useful in assessing ethics in accounting. Indicate your preferred method by ticking [√] the appropriate box on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree **to 7** for Entirely Agree

Assessment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
F1. In-class examination (Multiple Choice Questions {MCQ})							
F2. In-class written examination (Essays)							
F3. In-class written examination (MCQ plus Essays)							
F4. Quizzes							
F5. Term paper							
F6. Take home exams							
F7. Internship/Industrial attachment							
F8. Debates							
F9. Individual assignment							
F10. Group assignment							
F11. Others, Please specify and rank.....							

SECTION G

Method of Ethics Intervention

Please indicate which of the following you consider as preferred method of ethics intervention in accounting programmes at tertiary institutions by ticking the appropriate box as [√] on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree **to 7** for Entirely Agree

Issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
G1. Integrate ethics throughout accounting curriculum							
G2. Offer a separate compulsory ethics course							
G3. Combine integration with a separate compulsory course							
G4. Combine integration with a separate optional course							
G5. Offer a separate optional ethics course							
G6. Combine integration with a separate compulsory course and a separate optional course							

SECTION H

Level of Ethics Intervention

Please indicate which of the following you consider as preferred level of ethics intervention in accounting programmes at tertiary institutions by ticking the appropriate box as [√] on a scale of **1** for Strongly Disagree to **7** for Entirely Agree

H1. Graduate level							
H2. Undergraduate level 100 only							
H3. Undergraduate level 200 only							
H4. Undergraduate level 300 only							
H5. Undergraduate level 400 only							
H6. Undergraduate levels 100 to 400							

SECTION J

Suggestions for Improving Ethics in Accounting Programme Design and Delivery

J1. Suggest way(s) to improve the design of ethics in accounting programme.....

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.....

.....

J2. Suggest way(s) to improve the teaching and assessment of ethics in accounting.....

.....

.....

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Please attach extra sheets if necessary

Thank you very much for your time and effort.

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA BUSINESS SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING

INTERVIEW GUIDE ON ETHICS IN ACCOUNTING EDUCATION AND PRACTICE Interview Guide for Deans/HoADs/Curriculum Committee Members

Part A:

Details of interviewee:

- Designation of respondent
- Functions
- Number of years in current position
- Number of years in organization

Part B:

Research Objective 1:

To examine the nature of ethics/ethics-related courses in the curriculum of academic and professional institutions in Ghana

1. Can you please tell us your understanding of the concept of ethics in the curriculum of business schools?
2. How does your university see the idea of ethics in the curriculum?
3. How has the concept been integrated in the curriculum of your Institution in terms of:
 - Subject areas?
 - Is it narratives, quantitative, mixture?
 - Methods of integration-standalone, embedded, core, elective?
 - Level of integration- undergraduate, graduate?
 - Level 100, 200, 300, 400, 100-400?why?
4. Why would you introduce ethics in the curriculum of your school? Why not?
5. When it comes to ethics related courses, what methods do you use and why?

Research Objective 2:

To identify the factors that influence the design of accounting curriculum of academic/professional institutions

1. Can you please walk me through the process of designing the university's curriculum?
2. Any there any reason for the answer above?
3. How are courses reviewed? Is it the same as introducing new course design? What reasons can you assign for this?
4. What are the quality control measures in design/review of courses? Is it personal/ University/ departmental? Can you please give examples?
5. Does the design/review of courses prescribe teaching methods? Why and why not?

Research Objective 3:

To examine the role of personal attributes in the ethical behaviour of accountants

- 1 How does the school develop personal attribute of students as a means of influencing their ethical behaviour?
- 2 How equipped are students of this university to handle ethical dilemmas in their work life?
- 3 How ethical are students of this university?
- 4 Can we assign any reasons for the above answer?

Research Objective 4:

To examine the influence of organisational attributes in the ethical behaviour of accountants.

1. How does your university influence ethical behaviour of its students in their professions in their various organizations in Ghana?
- 2 Do you think that where your students end up working has an effect on their ethical behaviour? Why do you say so?

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA BUSINESS SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING

INTERVIEW GUIDE ON ETHICS IN ACCOUNTING EDUCATION AND PRACTICE
Interview Guide for ICAG Officials

Part A:

Details of interviewee:

- Designation of respondent
- Functions
- Number of years in current position
- Number of years in organisation

Part B:

Research Objective 1:

To examine the nature of ethics/ethics-related courses in the curriculum of academic and professional institutions in Ghana

1. Can you please tell us your understanding of the concept of ethics in the curriculum of professional associations like the ICAG?
2. How does the ICAG see the idea of ethics in the curriculum?
3. How has the concept been integrated in the curriculum of the Institute in terms of:
 - Subject areas?
 - Is it narratives, quantitative, mixture?
 - Methods of integration-standalone, embedded, core, elective?
 - Level of integration- Part 1, 2 or 3? Or all levels?why?
4. Why would you introduce ethics in the curriculum of the Institute? Why not?
5. When it comes to ethics related courses, what methods do you use and why?

Research Objective 2:

To identify the factors that influence the design of accounting curriculum of academic/professional institutions

1. Can you please walk me through the process of designing the Institute's curriculum?
2. Any there any reason for the answer above?
3. How are courses reviewed? Is it the same as introducing new course design? What reasons can you assign for this?
4. What are the quality control measures in design/review of courses? Is it personal/ IFAC/ Accreditation? such as IESBA, Can you please give examples?
5. Does the design/review of courses prescribe teaching methods? Why and why not?
6. What teaching methods do you use when considering ethcis/ethics related courses? Why?
7. Does the Institute consider ethics related CPDs for members? Why?

Research Objective 3:

To examine the role of personal attributes in the ethical behaviour of accountants

1. How does the ICAG develop personal attributes of students/members as a means of influencing their ethical behaviour?
2. How equipped are student/members of this Institute to handle ethical dilemmas in their work life?
3. How ethical are members of the ICAG?
4. Can we assign any reasons for the above answer?
5. Have you dealt with issues of unethical behaviour among members of the Institute? How? Why?

Research Objective 4:

To examine the influence of organisational attributes in the ethical behaviour of accountants.

1. How does your university influence ethical behaviour of its students in their professions in their various organizations in Ghana?
2. Do you think that where your students end up working has an effect on their ethical behaviour? Why do you say so?

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA BUSINESS SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING

INTERVIEW GUIDE ON ETHICS IN ACCOUNTING EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

Interview Guide for NAB Officials

Part A:

Details of interviewee:

- Designation of respondent
- Functions
- Number of years in current position
- Number of years in organisation

Part B:

Research Objective 1:

The nature of ethics/ethics related courses in the curriculum of academic and professional institutions in Ghana

1. NAB's process in the accreditation of educational institutions
2. The concept of ethics in the accreditation of public and private institutions in the training of students in Ghana
3. The role of NAB in the integration of ethics in curriculum of educational institutions

Research Objective 2:

Factors that influence the design of accounting curriculum of academic/professional institutions

1. Identification of institutions for accreditation
2. Issues that guide in the accreditation of programmes of educational institutions
3. Innovations in the curriculum of accredited institutions
4. Quality control in curriculum of accredited institutions

Research Objective 3:

The role of personal attributes in the ethical behaviour of accountants

1. Provision of students with ethical training that influence their ethical behaviour
2. Equipping students of Ghana's business schools to handle ethical dilemmas in industry and practice
3. Dealing with unethical practices with respect to institutions in Ghana

Research Objective 4:

To examine the influence of organisational attributes in the ethical behaviour of accountants.

1. The role of NAB in influencing ethical behaviour in the practice of graduates in the various organisations in Ghana

APPENDIX E

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA BUSINESS SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING

Research Ethics Form: Informed Consent Form for Research Participants

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Section A- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title of Study: ETHICS IN ACCOUNTING EDUCATION AND PRACTICE IN GHANA

Section B- CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

General Information about Research

This research is to solicit information on “Ethics in Accounting Education and Practice”. The study is a PhD thesis aimed at providing inputs for possible improvement in curriculum design, teaching and assessment methods of ethics in accounting programmes being offered at the tertiary level to train ethical accountants for national development. It also seeks views on personal and organisational attributes that may influence the ethical behaviour of accountants. Questionnaire will be used to collect data from participants and interviews will be held with some participants.

Benefits/Risks of the study

The study will benefit accounting educators, accountants and policy makers. There are no physical, social and psychological risks anticipated. There are no hazards to participants of the study.

Confidentiality

Information provided will be used solely for academic purposes and confidentiality is assured. Kindly note that all groups may have direct access to the research records at any particular time; thus by signing or thumb printing a written consent form, you or your representative is authorizing such access.

Compensation

No compensation packages either in cash or kind is available for participants who participate in the study.

Withdrawal from Study

Participation is voluntary and one may withdraw at any time without penalty. Additionally, participants will not be adversely affected if they decline to participate or later stop participating in the research.

Participants are assured that their consent or that of their legal representatives will be informed in a timely manner if information becomes available that may be relevant to their willingness to continue participation or withdraw.

Contact for Additional Information

There is no anticipated injury for participating in this research, but one may contact the Head of Department of Accounting at the University of Ghana Business School (UGBS) for answers to any questions about this research in the unlikely case of research-related injury.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study you may contact the Researcher at rmonumah@gimpa.edu.gh or 233-020-8200-820.

Section C- PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

"I have read or have had someone read all of the above, asked questions, received answers regarding participation in this study, and am willing to give consent to participate in this study. I will not have

waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records."

Name of Participant

Signature or mark of Participant

Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

Name of Researcher

Signature of Researcher

Date