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Ethical Complexities in Using GenAI: How do University Teachers and Students in Nepal Navigate them?

Rajendra Prasad Joshi
Far Western University
Sagun Shrestha
sagun.shrestha@open.ac.uk
The Open University
Bishnu Kumar Khadka
Mid West University

Research Article

Keywords: GenAI, Ethical Complexities, Institutional Guidelines, Contradictions, Higher Education

Posted Date: June 29th, 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-9776981/v1

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Additional Declarations:
No competing interests reported.

A statement of ethics approval -The study is approved by the Mid-West University Research committee.A statement on participant consent -The participants of this research have consented to participate in and/or publish this study.

Ethical Complexities in Using GenAI: How do University Teachers and Students in Nepal Navigate them?

A[a], B[b] and C[c]

[a]*X University,* [b]*Y University,* [c]*Z University*

Corresponding author's address: B

Abstract

Ever since GenAI penetrated higher education academic practices, the discussion on ethical complexities is equally wide. The reality is the ethical complexities that emerge in higher education settings differ in contexts where there are hardly any national or institutional guidelines. Thus, this study explores what ethical complexities emerge in Nepalese higher education settings when teachers and students of education discipline use GenAI and how do they navigate such issues. It also unfolds a series of misfits or systemic tensions that emerge when students and teachers use GenAI in their academic practices. The findings show that students face difficulty in distinguishing GenAI-supported outputs as their own work or GenAI outputs since institutional guidelines are missing. Students cannot clearly stipulate what percentage of or what nature of change on outputs will enable them to claim that those outputs belong to them, and they are not required to cite GenAI. Similarly, transparency is another issue as both teachers and students remain reticent about the use of GenAI as their practice is not guided by any institutional norms. This study is expected to support institutional heads and national policy stakeholders to understand what the ethical complexities are and how students and teachers are

handling them when they are using GenAI in higher education academic settings and what the roles of institutional and national guidelines can be to assist their use. This research also helps educational stakeholders from other contexts that share similar contextual values in relation to GenAI use in education.

Key Words: GenAI, Ethical Complexities, Institutional Guidelines, Contradictions, Higher Education

GenAI in Higher Education

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has the potential to produce diverse outputs such as text, images, videos, and code, and holds considerable promise for academic applications (B et al., in press). It is conceived to be capable of facilitating personalized learning, offering comprehensive and immediate feedback, and assisting with grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure refinement (Tang & Zhang, 2023; Zhen & Yahaya, 2024). There are many GenAI tools that are being used by teachers and learners such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek, perplexity, etc. Amongst all GenAI tools, ChatGPT has become more capable and accessible and their use in educational settings is growing (Kim et al., 2025). GenAI is being used for teaching, learning, and even in assessment by teachers and students. University students are increasingly utilizing GenAI in higher education for various purposes, including generating writing tasks, brainstorming concepts, and translating texts (Mack & Byanjankar, 2025; B et al., in press).

The integration of GenAI into education requires careful consideration. While these technologies can enhance learning experiences, there is a recognized risk of students becoming overly reliant on them, potentially leading to a superficial understanding of subjects and the possibility of inaccuracies or misinterpretations if not used thoughtfully (Selvi, 2024). Such dependence on GenAI may jeopardize the quality of student work, making it challenging for teachers to fairly assess individual contributions. This raises concerns regarding assessment fairness.

GenAI has the tendency to reinforce biases and lack sensitivity and contextual awareness, which can result in questions that are biased or discriminatory, that assume preconceptions, fail to consider other viewpoints and cause distress (Bjelobaba et al., 2025). The superficial use of GenAI tools may contribute to spreading ignorance and an illusory sense of achievement, which may harm societies (Aldulaijan & Almalky, 2025).

GenAI has a huge potential to change the scope of higher education, but to maintain academic integrity and advance fair learning opportunities, its integration must be handled carefully (Francis et al., 2025).

Ethical complexities in adopting GenAI in higher Education

The growth in GenAI tools creates challenges for ethical and responsible use (Beardsley et al. 2025). Using GenAI in higher education requires serious consideration of the ethical complexities. These include concerns about data privacy and security, as the use of large datasets raises issues around patient confidentiality (Ahmed 2026), the originality and authorship issues, plagiarism and academic integrity (Essien et al., 2024; Ooi et al., 2023; Lodge et al., 2023). The ethical concerns around authorship and integrity is widely discussed as it enables plagiarism and misinterpretation and devalues the genuine efforts of the students (Al-kfairy et al., 2024). Students use ChatGPT and write essays and pass it as the original text as if they have produced it themselves (Eke, 2023). So, the immediate ethical dilemmas include the erosion of traditional standards of academic honesty. The term AI-giasism has been introduced to define the unethical practice of using generative language models to produce content that is plagiarized from human authors or previously generated AI outputs without proper acknowledgment (Chan, 2023).

As GenAI becomes more common in academic research, ethical issues around accountability and transparency are increasingly critical (Caton & Hwang, 2025). Accountability requires ensuring responsible use of AI, with outputs traceable to their sources to safeguard research integrity and address biases or errors (Chen et al., 2024; Memarian & Doleck, 2023). Transparency involves making AI processes and decisions understandable to all stakeholders, including non-experts, which is essential for trust and ethical justification in research (Spiegelhalter, 2020; Caton & Hwang, 2025).

The other issue is that the responsibility for the ethical use of GenAI is often solely placed on students and more support is given to teachers for GenAI usage than to students (Mack & Byanjankar, 2025). Their findings also shed light on multiple under-discussed issues related to GenAI use in assessment, including teacher autonomy, career security, teacher-student relationship and teacher professional identity. Very few teachers have reported dilemmatic experiences related to their own use of GenAI to assist in their feedback provision, which could reflect teachers' limited awareness of the ethical implications involved in teachers' GenAI use (Luo et al., 2025). Academic authorship has long been shaped by the idealized image of a solitary genius, a notion that continues to influence how originality is framed in assessment practices (Johnson-Eilola & Selber, 2007). With the rise of AI tools like ChatGPT and Grammarly, even legitimate uses are often stigmatized as "cheating," and students who transparently use AI may be unfairly perceived as less capable (Caton & Hwang, 2025).

In Nepal, the studies around ethical complexities that emerge while adopting GenAI in academic practices are far and between. Ghimire et al. (2024) explored how higher education students in Nepal have utilized, experienced, and perceived Chat GPT. They found that students had positive perceptions and experiences of utilising ChatGPT by students; however, they have also highlighted that the use of this tool has raised issues such as negative impacts on students' creativity, writing habits, and independent research abilities. Also, Ghimire et al. (2026) investigated how Nepalese students perceive GenAI use in their assessments and how they relate it to academic integrity. They found that the dearth of AI policies in higher education and lack of guidelines from teachers induced the issue of transparency. The students could not identify what is acceptable and unacceptable use of GenAI in their work, consequently they conceived that the action of only copying and pasting GenAI outputs in their work as unethical. The researchers highlight the need for a regulatory framework that supports the engagement of students in the use of GenAI in their learning and assessment.

Institutional guidelines to tackle plagiarism issues

The challenges that students face when using GenAI include ethical concerns due to unclear guidelines for proper use, which lead to stress and guilt about potential misuse or academic dishonesty (Aldulaijan & Almalky, 2025). Strong regulatory frameworks are needed to address ethical issues, as they allow researchers and educators to use GenAI ethically and effectively (García-López & Trujillo-Liñán, 2025). Adiguzel et al., (2023) highlights the need for scalable, consistent, and uniform regulations that match the utilization of AI with educational objectives and institutional principles.

Developing clear generative AI policies is essential to uphold academic integrity, distinguishing between legitimate assistance and misconduct such as plagiarism or collusion, while also encouraging responsible use of advanced AI tools (Duah & McGivern, 2024). Evidence shows that strong academic misconduct policies reduce violations (Noorbehbahani et al., 2022), with tutors' commitment playing a key role in shaping students' attitudes. In the absence of clear guidelines, students risk misinterpreting AI-generated misinformation, hallucinations, or biased narratives as valid content (Ahmed & Durowoju, 2025). Institutions, therefore, should establish strong regulatory frameworks and data protection measures to safeguard information and comply with privacy laws (Tan, 2023). The Russell Group principles (2023) recognize the ethical use of generative AI and emphasize equal access, while also warning of risks to intellectual property and privacy from data input by staff and students.

Academic integrity is further affected when AI is listed as an author in publications, as it cannot assume responsibility for content, potentially devaluing research outputs (Van Dis et al., 2023). These issues are exacerbated by weak institutional policies and codes regarding GenAI use (Ahmed & Durowoju, 2025). UNESCO (2023) advocates for state-level regulation of AI use with careful consideration of copyright issues. It is essential to develop GenAI policies that uphold academic integrity by clearly

distinguishing between plagiarism or collusion and legitimate AI-assisted work, while also promoting the use of advanced AI tools (Duah & McGivern, 2024). Copyright concerns arise when AI-generated content is used without proper source acknowledgment, potentially leading to plagiarism (Kasneci et al., 2023).

The studies discussed above set out the ethical complexities that emerge when they are adopted in academic practices without investigating how they emerge owing to the interaction of multiple elements of the teaching and learning activity systems. Thus, this study has investigated ethical complexities as systemic tensions in GenAI use in higher education. It has revealed how ethical complexities emerge when users interact with the GenAI tools; community, the teachers and students engage with; their roles and relationship; the motive they inculcate and institutional norms. This reveals that ethical complexities are not merely user-dependent but the result of complex interaction which requires deeper investigation between several interacting components. The following are the research questions that the researchers have explored in this study.

A. What ethical complexities surface when GenAI is used by higher education teachers and students?
B. What systemic tensions in relation to ethics, integrity and authorship emerge when teachers and students use GenAI in their academic practices?
C. How do teachers and students navigate those complexities while using GenAI in their academic practices?

Conceptual Framework

Activity theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015) guided the analysis of this study thereby allowing researchers to conceptualise the use of GenAI in teaching and learning as an activity system and helped them to identify the interaction amongst its constituent parts and note the emerging contradictions within the system.

This framework allows researchers to factor in human practices as subject-initiated, object-oriented endeavors (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Leont'ev, 1978; B, 2023)

which are mediated by both material and symbolic tools and artifacts and are either constrained or enabled by specific rules. Engeström (1987, 2015) sets out that any human activity system includes six interconnected components: subject, object, rules, mediating artifacts, community, and division of labor (See figure 1).

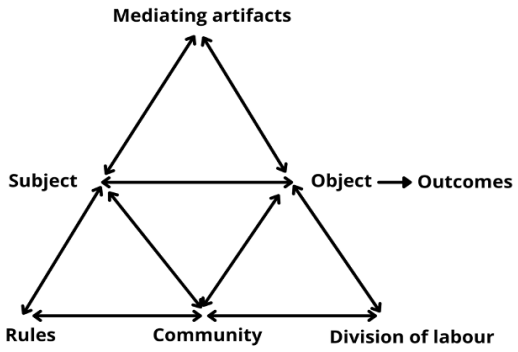


Figure 1 Activity Theory as a Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows that an activity system where the subject (an individual or group) uses tools (artifacts) to act on an object (goal/purpose or problem space), thereby transforming that object into outcomes. The community inludes the social and institutional environment, including participants engaged in the activity system. The division of labour involves the roles, relationships, responsibilities, power, and status within the community (Cole & Engestrom, 1993; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Rules include conventions, policies, and norms that regulate the subject's actions and shape interaction among participants.

Contradictions emrge in any activity systems and they are the sources of change and development. These contradictions are systemic tensions which manifest as paradoxes, misfits, tensions, inconsistencies, conflicts, dilemmas, or challenges (Engeström & Sannino, 2011). The analysis of contradictions help researchers investigate complex interactions between activity components.

Drawing on activity theory, the current study investigates the contradictions that emerge when university teachers and students in Nepal integrate GenAI into their academic practices.

Methodology

This study follows a mixed-methods study and presents both qualitative and quantitative results. Initially, the online survey was deployed to collect quantitative data, which then informed the subsequent qualitative data collection (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The population comprised higher education teachers and students of education from Far Western University (FWU) and Mid-West University (MU), Nepal. A random sampling procedure was deployed on a survey sample of 299 students (144 from FWU: 69 male, 75 female; 155 from MU: 68 male, 87 female) and 39 teachers (18 from FWU: 16 male, 2 female; 21 from MU: 18 male, 3 female).

The researchers also refined a survey instrument after a pilot with 16 students and 6 teachers. Based on survey responses expressing interest, 16 students and 6 teachers were selected for interviews whose profiles are detailed below.

Teacher Participants

FWUT1: Male, Masters degree, 16 years of teaching experience

FWUT2: Male, Masters degree, 15 years of teaching experience

FWUT3: Female, Masters (PhD Candidate), 4 years of teaching experience

MUT1: Male, Masters degree, 12 years of teaching experience

MUT2: Male, Masters (MPhil Candidate), 10 years of teaching experience

MUT3: Female, MPhil (PhD Candidate), 15 years of teaching experience

Student Participants

FWUS1: Male, Undergraduate, GenAI User

FWUS2: Female, Graduate, GenAI User

FWUS3: Male, Undergraduate, GenAI User

FWUS4: Female, Undergraduate, GenAI User

FWUS5: Female, Undergraduate, GenAI User

FWUS6: Female, Undergraduate, GenAI User

FWUS7: Female, Undergraduate, GenAI User

FWUS8: Female, Graduate, Non-user

MUS1: Male, Undergraduate, Non-user

MUS2: Female, Graduate, GenAI User

MUS3: Male, Graduate, GenAI User

MUS4: Male, Graduate, GenAI User

MUS5: Female, Graduate, GenAI User

MUS6: Male, Graduate, GenAI User

MUS7: Female, Graduate, GenAI User

MUS8: Male, Undergraduate, Non-user

Data analysis

At first, the survey results were cleaned by removing duplicates and incomplete entries. Researchers excluded student pilot data due to significant change in some of the components in a survey questionnaire that was deployed in a main study (new categories for gender, level of study, and university were placed), but teacher pilot data was merged as modifications were minor.

The consolidated, cleaned data was analyzed in SPSS for descriptive statistics (frequencies) to explain issues related to plagiarism and authorship while using GenAI in learning and the ways they address them. The qualitative analysis was guided by Braun & Clark's (2006) thematic analysis. Interviews were transcribed, coded and inter-rater reliability was checked with codes from three researchers. The remaining interviews were coded guided by the finalized coding scheme and logging any new emerging codes. The codes were organised around the emergent ethical complexities looked at from the frame of systemic contradictions while using GenAI for academic practices and the ways that teachers and students use to navigate them.

For the analysis of systemic challenges that triggered ethical complexities, the authors also modeled a teacher and student activity system. In the teachers activity system, teachers are the subjects who use GenAI to develop teaching resources and

who engage students in learning (object). This activity is mediated by tools like GenAI, computers and language. When teachers do so, they interact with the rules and norms of the institution and community they are in. At times they get support from their colleagues in which case, the horizontal relationship emerges and on other occasions, they might be questioned by higher authority of their institution reflecting vertical relationship. Similarly, in the students' activity system, students are the subjects and their object is to use GenAI for brainstorming or getting some ideas for developing assignments. This is mediated by GenAI, computer, Internet, language and interact with the institutional rules and community they are in. Like in teachers' case, they also get support from their fellow mates that show the horizontal relationship and at times they get instruction from their teachers that reflect their vertical relationship. After modelling both activity systems, the misfits or contradictions that triggered ethical complexities were analysed.

Findings and discussions

Emergent ethical complexities and contradictions

Both students and teachers have reported several ethical complexities that emerge when they use GenAI in their academic practices. In particular, they relate to the complexities around the issue of authorship, plagiarism and academic integrity.

Ethical complexities related to students' GenAI use

In a survey, students were asked what ethical complexities they face when they use GenAI in their learning. The figure 2 below shows that amongst the users,100 students which is 35 percent reveal that they face difficulty in distinguishing between their own work and GenAI outputs when they use GenAI to generate content and 33 percent (95 students) state that they are uncertain about the way to cite GenAI content.17 per cent are concerned about accidental plagiarism via GenAI, which means they use GenAI to correct inconsistencies in their writing or improve their language, but later they find their output is detected as an AI output. This latter action is linked to the claim of Al-Kfairy et al. (2024) who state that at times GenAI leads

students in plagiarism or misinterpretation. 13 per cent of students report that they were detected by plagiarism checkers when they used GenAI. Only 13 per cent (39 students) said that they haven't faced any difficulty regarding plagiarism associated with GenAI use in learning or developing assignments.

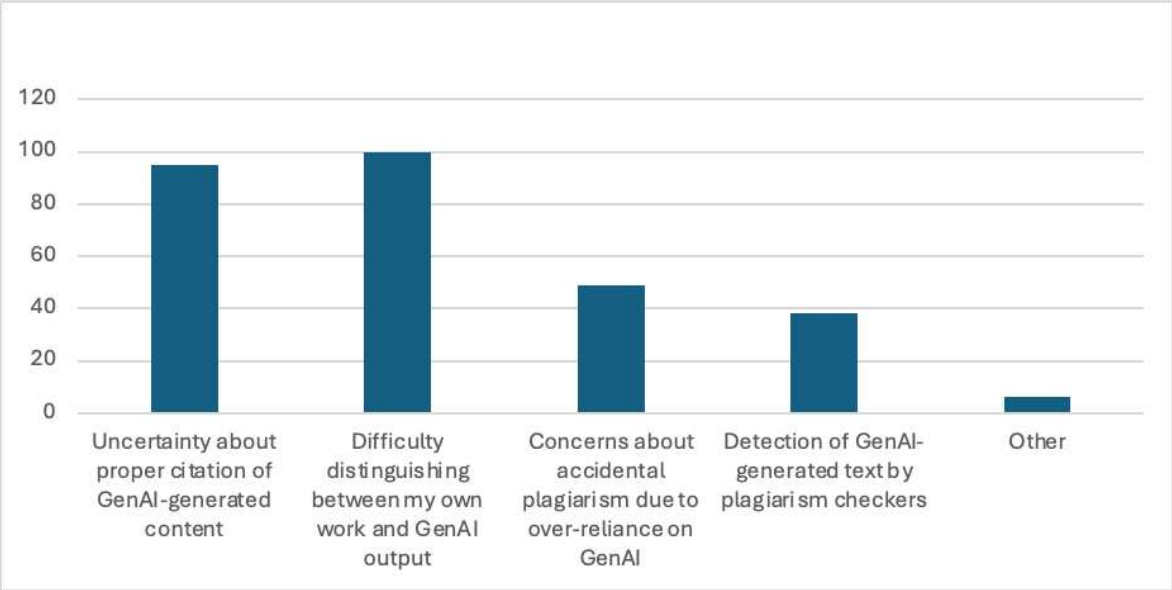


Figure 2 Issues related to plagiarism while using GenAI in learning

Students use GenAI to paraphrase or generate concepts using the prompts they provide; however, as indicated above, the majority of students cannot distinguish whether those outputs belong to them or to AI or it is a co-designed output. It stresses that the contradictions emerge between their object i.e., using GenAI to develop their writing and institutional rules. The absence of institutional rules which majority of students have reported leaves them in vacuum and make them remain indecisive, and this trend further triggers them to fall within ethical complexities of plagiarism and authorship (see figure 3).

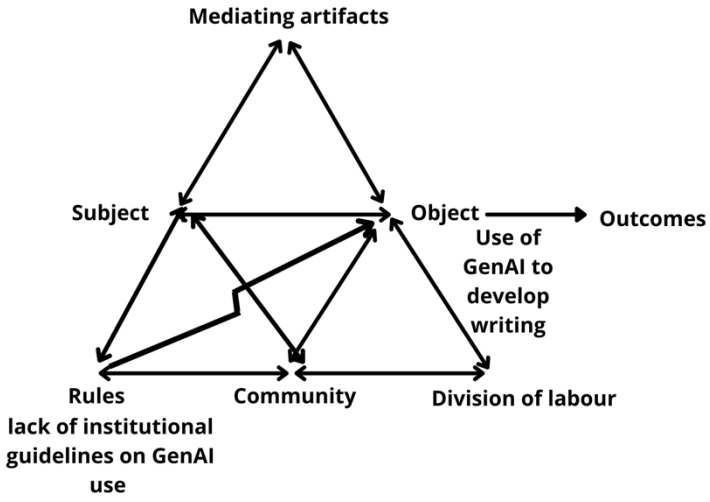


Figure 3 Contradiction between rule and object in a student activity system

In the meanwhile, the systemic tension also emerges between tools and objects in the students' activity system as the GenAI tools they use do not specify what happens with the personal data which they upload in these tools and how it processes them. This unknown Blackbox type of territory only makes students be more anxious and face some ethical challenges as explained by MUS8 below.

> **MUS8:** We have to be careful that GenAI can use our personal and confidential data which is related to morality and ethics.

The contradiction between tools and objects is manifested below (See figure 4)

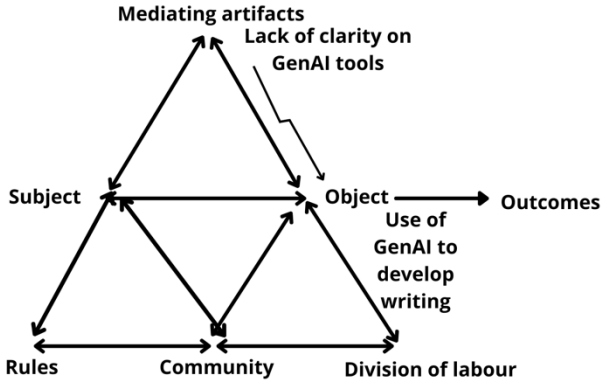


Figure 4 Contradiction between mediating tools and object of a student activity system

When teachers were asked what ethical complexities they identified in students' work, 13 teachers replied that students submit AI-generated text without proper

citation and they face difficulty in distinguishing between original students work and AI-generated content (Figure 5) which is also confirmed by the study of Eke (2023). This is also supported by their interview data:

> **FWUT1:** I feel that students have used AI-generated content in their assignments. I suspect the issue of plagiarism as I find uniformity in their writing that inculcates AI tone.
>
> MUT3: Plagiarism is indeed a serious issue. One should not copy AI-generated content as it is. It should be paraphrased or summarized.

Nine teachers have claimed that students verbatim copying trend and students paraphrasing GenAI-generated content without substantial contribution. This confirms Eke (2023) position who states that students use GenAI outputs as their original work which Caton & Hwang (2025) points out as an issue of transparency in leveraging GenAI. Eight teachers have claimed that using the AI-detection tool, they find difficulty to identify if the text submitted is AI-generated. The issue here is if any tool that claims to detect AI use can really detect Gen-AI use and if they do, how reliable they are.

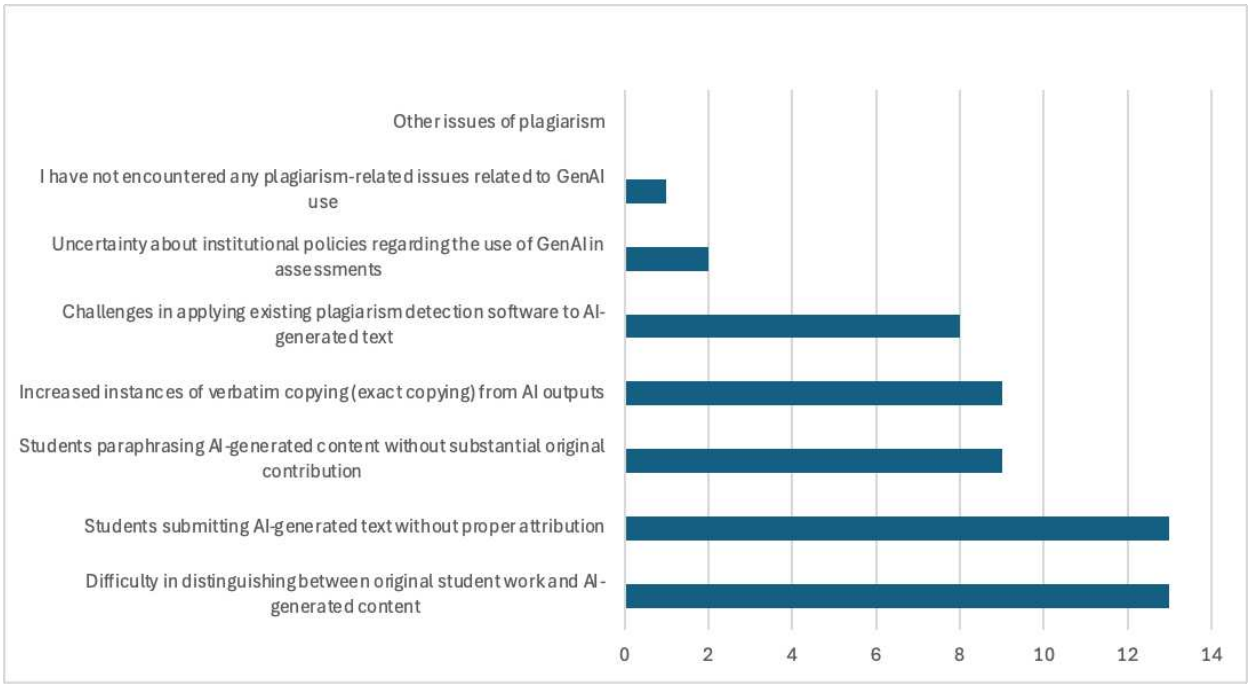


Figure 5 Issues related to plagiarism in students' work when they use GenAI (identified by teachers)

The contradiction emerges here (Figure 6) is between two interacting activity systems viz., of teachers and students. It is between teachers' object and students' behaviour. Teachers aim to engage students in active learning whereas students submit their work using GenAI without properly acknowledging it or copying in entirety as stated above.

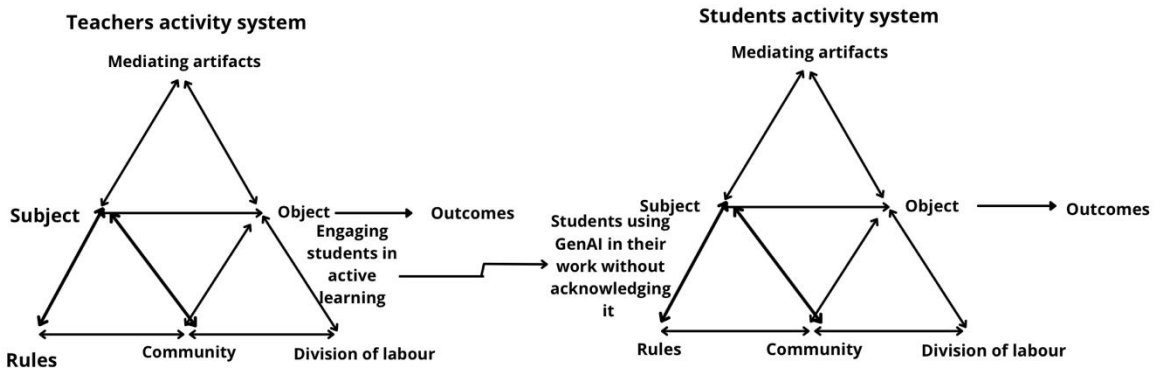


Figure 6 Contradictions between teachers and students interacting systems

There is also another layer of contradiction within teachers' activity system between tools and object. Teachers do not have a reliable tool to identify GenAI content in students' work which impacts their object i.e., engaging students in activity learning. It reveals that there are myriads of contradictions we locate when we set out ethical complexities in both teachers and students' activity system.

Ethical issues perceived by teachers

Teachers have also reported some of the ethical issues they have faced while using GenAI for pedagogy. They believe that the behaviour of a tool that generates content using the texts found elsewhere can still be equated to an intellectual theft and they also flag that the issue of plagiarism should equally be applied to a tool.

MUS8: I think when GenAI is asked, it generates the answers from different sources. The answers we get also partly include the intellectual property of others. Some

GenAI tools reveal the sources whereas others don't, so there is a chance for intellectual theft.
MUS3: Citation and plagiarism issues should apply to AI tools themselves rather than only to a researcher.

It is very interesting to see how they think that plagiarism should be applied equally to a tool when it lifts content from elsewhere and generates content. This phenomenon questions the foundation on which it is built. This raises the contradiction between the tools and the belief system of subjects.

Ethical issues that both teachers and students face

Students use GenAI but do not tell teachers (lack of transparency) which impacts teaching so the contradiction is between students i.e., they use GenAI without acknowledging its use and teachers object i.e., engaging students actively in learning. This also aligns to the findings of Ghimire et al. (2026) who argue that students were not transparent in using GenAI, instead, they considered that just copying and pasting GenAI outputs into their work raises the ethical issue. Also when teachers use GenAI, they do not inform students either, which impacts their learning. Thus, in this case the contradiction is between teachers i.e., the use of GenAI by them but not informing students about its use and students object i.e., using GenAI in learning. As mentioned earlier, this issue of transparency in using GenAI in educational context has also been acknowledged by Caton & Hwang (2025). It reveals multiple inter-systemic contradictions between teachers and students' activity systems.

Navigating Ethical Complexities

It is important to investigate the ways these students navigate the ethical complexities such as plagiarism. As regards the ways students address plagiarism, 28 per cent of students (83 of them) mention that they carefully review and edit Gen-AI generated contents to ensure those works belong to them (Figure 3).

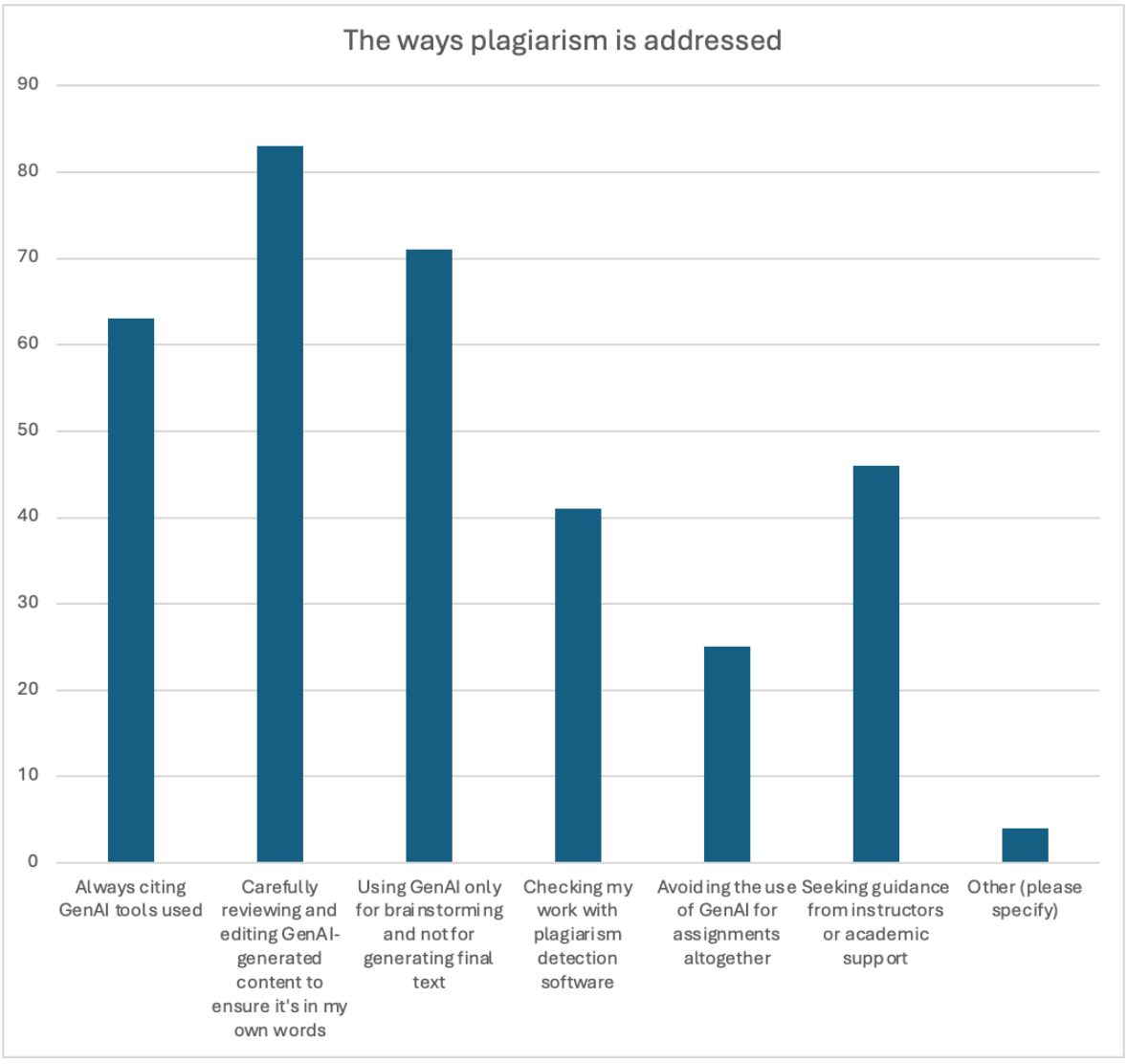


Figure 3. The ways Students address plagiarism

Their behavioural trend of carefully reviewing and editing GenAI-content to ensure it does not have any plagiarised content is also articulated to a large extent in the interview data. Primarily they focus on paraphrasing technique or emphasise their involvement to make sure it is not lifted from GenAI directly.

> **FWS7:** I have not faced any issue yet as I paraphrase the text when I use GenAI.
>
> **FWS5:** There are no guidelines but I think that we should not copy as they are. We have to embed our ideas. If we copy entirely from ChatGPT, it can be easily detected, so the good approach is to merge our ideas on it.
>
> **FWS6:** Our teachers know that these contents have been lifted from GenAI tools. They advise us that we should not copy in entirety but we can paraphrase it.
>
> **FWUS1:** We have to adopt it and make it human-generated content rather than copying it as it is.

The above collection of extracts show that students primarily paraphrase the GenAI contents and present it as their own. The question still persists here is how much paraphrasing by these students can ensure that it is acceptable. This question reflects the systemic tension in a loop again between institutional norms and their object. Since there are no institutional norms, their paraphrasing technique which they leverage as a strategy to address ethical complexities remains unexplained.

As regards other strategies, 24 per cent of students (71 of them) use it as a support to brainstorm some ideas and not to generate final outputs as claimed by Mack & Byanjankar (2025), and 21 per cent (63 of them) always cite when they use it which helps them address the authorship issues. Some interview data do confirm their claim. For example, MUS6 argues, 'I understand that content generated by AI belongs to other individuals' intellectual property, so sources must always be cited properly.' There are also students who at least dare to state that the content has been developed with the use of GenAI.

FWS6: If it is the idea of ChatGPT, we have to acknowledge it.

R. Do you mean you will say that this content is created by using ChatGPT if you have done so.

FWS6: Yes

The above interview extract reveals that FWS6 credits GenAI when they use these technologies to generate content. This practice is far and between in academic practices.

15 per cent students (46 of them) pointed out that they seek ideas from instructors to resolve the emerging ethical issues as there are no guidelines on GenAI use in teaching learning and assessment as pointed out by FWUS1, FWUT2 and FWUT3 below (B et al., 2026). This finding is confirmed by the following interview excerpts.

FWUS1: Our teachers frequently guide us about the use of GenAI and keep suggesting to us what to do and what not to.

FWUT2: The institutions should have AI guidelines to regulate use of AI.

FWUT3: The institutions that we are involved in must create a clear guideline and then we can use it.

Even though seeking some advice from their teachers seems to be an immediate resolution for students, it places teachers in another level of complexity due to the fact that they cannot clearly stipulate what learners can do in the absence of institutional guidelines. Since teachers cannot guide the way students expect them to do, a crossover of contradictions emerges between teacher and student activity system as well as within student activity system as shown below.

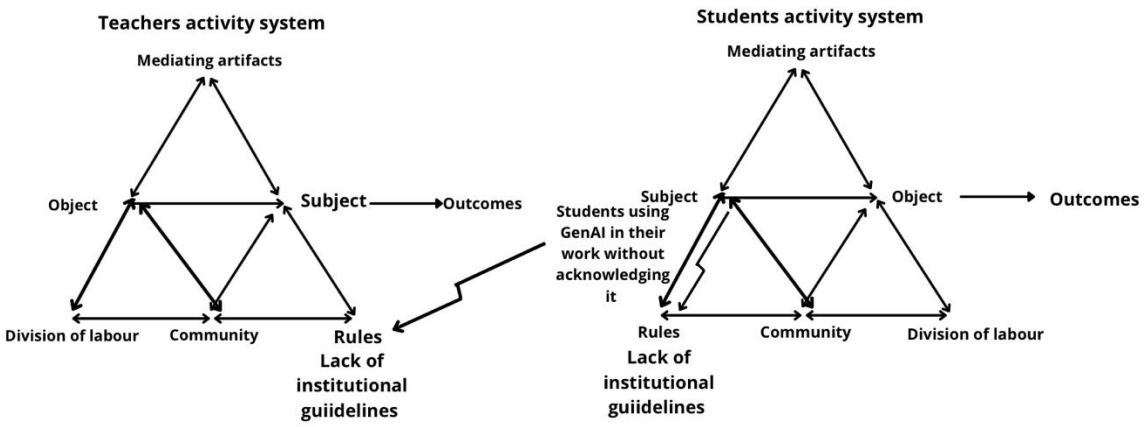


Figure 7 Multiple contradictions within student activity system and between teacher and student activity systems

Figure 7 shows that the first contradiction is between students' behaviour and rules of their activity system and the other contradiction appears between students' behaviour and rules of teachers' activity system. The fundamental thing is that as institutional rules are absent in both activity systems and the systemic tension appears due to students seeking support in guiding them to use GenAI tools. There is always a danger that it can exacerbate the whole teaching learning process owing to a lack of clarity on how to use GenAI tools in teaching and learning. The importance of institutional guidelines to shape users' attitude and to support their practices while using GenAI has also been significantly highlighted by Ahmed & Durowoju (2025), Noorbehbahani et al. (2022) and Tan (2023).

Amongst the student users, 8 per cent (25 of them) reveal that they avoid using GenAI for assignment development altogether. For them, developing assignments using GenAI can be a very critical issue. So, deploying a cautious approach, they are not using GenAI for assignment development. Indeed, it is the safest way to do so.

As regards the ways to address the authorship by teachers in their work, eight teachers claim that they focus on using GenAI as a tool to enhance their ideas rather than copying from work. It reveals that both teachers and students use GenAI in a similar fashion.

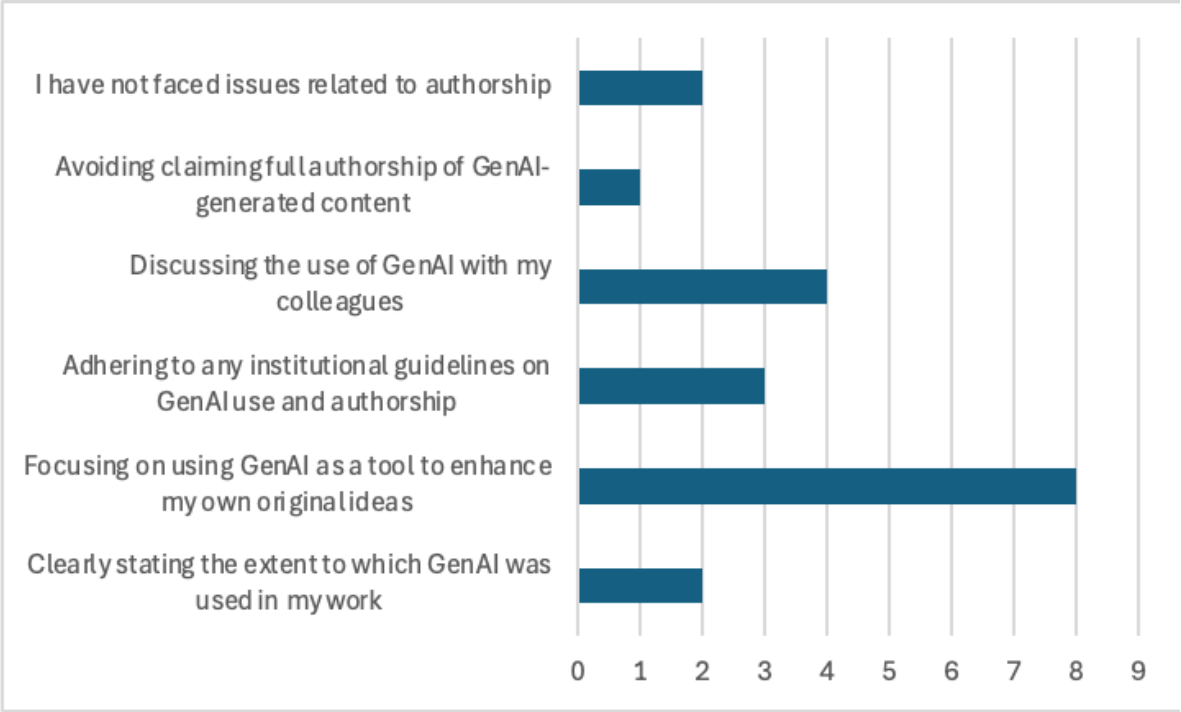


Figure 8 The ways the teachers address the issues related to authorship in their work

Teachers also discuss GenAI use and ethical issues with their friends. Probably this is due to a lack of institutional guidelines as they mention below. They also strongly mention the need for institutional guidelines.

> **FWT1:** My request is that universities in Nepal have to create clear, practical and balanced guidelines. This will help teachers to integrate GenAI in teaching and learning more confidently and responsibly. Guidelines will help not to misuse it and at the same time, it will help to be productive and creative. We cannot ignore GenAI; rather, we should embrace it as it is already with us.

Closer to the above quotes, the majority of teachers do claim that there are no institutional guidelines to guide their GenAI use; in contrast, three teachers state that they resolve the issue of authorship on GenAI use by adhering to the institutional rules but do not mention which institutional rules they follow. Even though transparency on GenAI use in students' and teachers' work is the issue (Ghimire et al., 2026; B et al., in press), two of them asserted that in any work they do, they clearly note the extent they have used GenAI. This is also confirmed by FWUT1 who claims 'I

give credit to the AI tool that I use for some reasons' which slightly contradicts with the below interview data:

> FWT1: This is one of the ethical areas. I am always confused about who to acknowledge for the authorship while generating content using GenAI. This has caused a big problem in academic publishing. I have faced a problem of citation when I use GenAI to create a research paper.

In the above extract, teachers do still express the confusion on how and whom to acknowledge when they generate content using GenAI. On one hand, there are no easily accessible instructions within GenAI tools on how to use or how the data being uploaded on the tools will be treated, and on the other hand there are no institutional guidelines, thus the contradictions emerge between both objects and tools (Figure 4) and subjects and rule in students activity system and between teachers and students activity system (See Figure 7).

Conclusions

Identifying ethical complexities when GenAI is used in higher education settings and understanding how both teachers and students navigate them is very challenging. We found that a myriad of contradictions emerge in both teachers and students' activity systems when they use GenAI in teaching and learning.

The majority of students use GenAI and face difficulty in distinguishing between their own work and GenAI outputs. They are not sure whether they can claim the outputs they get from GenAI as their own or simply cite that they are developed using GenAI. The question was still there even though they paraphrase or make changes on the outputs as there was no clarity on how much changes or paraphrasing is acceptable. Due to this, a contradiction emerges, such as between object of the student activity system i.e., using Gen AI to develop students' writing and institutional rules. Likewise, students very easily do not find details on how to use those tools responsibly within the tools, this also leads to contradiction between tools and students' object.

Teachers have also found that students submitted AI-generated content as their own work. Contradictions emerge as teachers try to engage them in active learning whereas students submit the work without acknowledging citation.

Transparency is another issue. It is found that both teachers and students remain reticent about using GenAI for their academic purpose. They cannot reveal their use easily as institutional guides are missing which brings additional complexity and strongly flags the need of institutional guidelines to help both teachers and students using GenAI in their practices.

To address ethical complexity, the majority of students claim that they carefully review and edit GenAI-generated contents to ensure those works belong to them, Primarily they use a paraphrasing technique and modify outputs to avoid an ethical issue. However, as mentioned earlier, ethical issues are not easily resolved unless institutional guidelines are present. To tackle this, pupils seek support from teachers to know what is acceptable in relation to the use of GenAI in their work; however, this is not a solution per se as every instructors' statements may differ widely and they can lead to further confusion.

This research is limited in examining ethical complexities that teachers and students of education discipline face whereas teachers and students of other disciplines might report other issues not covered above and also the researchers could not evaluate how ethical complexities are resolved with the support of institutional guidelines as the latter ones were not present in the locations being evaluated. Thus, the future research can bring a comparative angle on how teachers and students of different disciplines may report ethical complexities and how institutional rules interact with those ethical issues.

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