# Cambodian Academics: Identities and Roles

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## Highlights

- Cambodian academics develop their identities in relation to three forms: disciplinary, functional and social.

- With an obvious dominance of the roles of teacher, Cambodian academics in general are more of a disciplinary knowledge transmitter or conserver, rather than a knowledge producer. Such tendency limits their capabilities to contribute to global academic and scientific communities.

- Evidence on the roles and identities of Cambodian academics in applying or integrating scholarly knowledge is not clear from the data. Certain practices (such as serving state ministries in a particular policy domain) can be considered a part of knowledge application.

- Two related aspects of the Cambodian academic career system – working environment and career path – complicate academic identities and roles to a certain extent.

# Summary

This qualitative study aims to explore how faculty members at Cambodian universities conceive their academic identities, engage in different types of scholarly roles and perceive the organisation of the academic career system. A study to decipher the academic identities and roles is indispensable if Cambodia intends to promote research, science and excellence at higher education level. This study is also a prerequisite for the development of proper classification criteria, the diversification and ranking of Cambodian higher education institutions, and preparing the future higher education workforce when stakeholders are ready.

The study is guided by the four-scholarship framework (teaching, discovery, application and integration) developed by Ernest L. Boyer (1990) to understand academic identities and scholarly roles. It builds on the framework by integrating specific questions on emerging issues (such as academic ranking, academic reward practices) in the Cambodian higher education sector in relation to these four dimensions. Such an integrative framework allows the study to gain a holistic understanding of the academic profession in Cambodia and avoid criticism about the ignorance of practical issues.

The sample for this research comprises 47 faculty members from 10 Cambodian universities, covering public, private and public-administrative institutions. Thematic analyses of the qualitative data (from semi-structured interviews) were conducted by the four-member research team to examine core themes and subthemes in response to three research questions (what their academic identities are, what scholarly roles they engage in, and how they perceive the national academic system). Thematic analysis is an iterative and reflective process. All themes and subthemes were discussed, vetted and coded during team meetings. This collaborative and deductive-inductive approach collectively ensured the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

The study revealed that Cambodian faculty members viewed their identity in relation to three forms: *the disciplinary form* (i.e. academics attached to a specialised field and using different research or scientific approaches), *the functional form* (i.e. academics assigned by the institution as a teacher, a researcher, and/or with another role), and *the social form* (i.e. academics obliged to serve social communities or contribute to national policy).

Despite such emerging forms of academic identities, a large proportion of the interviewees acknowledged that the term "academics" is ambiguous, broad and barely dwelt on. A number of them contested their identity as "full academics," justifying that they lack authentic intellectual engagement in research.

By questioning the interviewees' about their daily duties, responsibilities and scholarly roles, it was clear that faculty members are mostly engaged in teaching – preparing lessons, searching for materials to update subject knowledge for teaching, classroom instruction and correcting students' work. However, no advanced notions of the scholarship of teaching – such as researching about student learning or systematically engaging with other faculty members to improve subject teaching and learning – were observed.

The study found very little evidence showing academics' engagement in basic research for the purpose of extending disciplinary theoretical knowledge or for pure curiosity. According to the data, research works do exist and are an emerging domain of faculty members' activities, but generally in the form of commissioned consultancy projects (generally applied research) or in the form of searching or reading published research works for teaching or self-improvement. Still, only a few of the number interviewed faculty reported engagement in consultancy works. These observations imply limited scholarship of discovery in Cambodia, even though the

majority of the interviewees perceptually understood that research is a core scholarly role, if not the most important, of being an academic.

In terms of the scholarship of application, what was obvious from the data was that faculty members do not engage in this type of scholarship in the name of an academic or their university. In fact, only some faculty members apply their knowledge seemingly because they have jobs (whether full-time, part-time or short-term contract) at other institutions. Whether such application of knowledge outside of the university and academic settings is in the form of scholarship requires further investigation.

Finally, we found very little evidence of the scholarship of integration apart from some inter-disciplinary applied research projects by universities reported to be leading in research productivity in Cambodia. Pure intellectual curiosity to seek holistic, connected knowledge and truth by integrating different research disciplines and fields at different levels seemed not to emerge in our data. The absence of the scholarship of integration could be resultant of the lack of a strong foundation in basic academic research (i.e. the scholarship of discovery).

Through our data, these multiple but contested conceptions of academic identities and the dominant scholarly role of teaching emerge along with perceived concerns about disorganised academic careers and distracted work environments. It is, for example, hard to identify certain well-established institutional platforms designed for engagement in scholarship of discovery and integration of knowledge. Those who reportedly engage in these scholarships generally could engage only in their own capacity, with limited institutional supports. The active platforms for the promotion of research in some leading universities are recent endeavours. Also, perceived job and career insecurity among the interviewees was high, leading to multiple distractions – for example, faculty members teaching at different institutions. The literature has put this situation of limited academic career pathways and distracted work environments down to various sociocultural factors such as the missing academic generation due to war, the lack of academic and research culture, the complex higher education governance structure, the higher education privatisation policy and the lack of optimal financial support from the government.

The findings do not imply any right or wrong academic conceptions or scholarly roles because types of academic identities and scholarly roles formed and engaged in by academics vary across contexts and fluctuate over time. This study raises the question of whether education leaders, policymakers and academics should start critically discoursing the issue of academic identities and scholarships at the policy and/or disciplinary community level now or later. If the majority of higher education leaders, administrators and policymakers consider these to be policy-relevant questions, the next question would be whether academic institutions with their engaged scholarships should improve reward and recognition schemes and develop differentiated status and higher values. Academic rewards, status and values are important to motivate collective intellectual capabilities and so extend the nation's knowledge stock (whether it is contextually-usable knowledge or breakthrough universal knowledge). Without proper policy dialogues, the advanced knowledge in the form of academic or scholarly work and its institutions can be confused with other forms of education or training. The data revealed somewhat vague and contested conceptions and reflections of the term "academic". The study findings also imply the need for proper interventions on conceptualisation and operationalisation of the academic profession and professionalism. This can be done through various practical mediums, for example, enhancement of academic or research-based postgraduate programs (with qualified academic supervisors, adequate academic materials and resources) or value-added programmatic knowledge-sharing platforms at higher education institutions.

# 1. Background of the research area

To understand the multi-faceted nature of academic professions and identities, some well-researched conceptual frameworks have been put forward. These mainly constitute the classic philosophical discussion of "the idea of a university" (e.g. Newman 1852; Humboldt 1970; Barnett 1990), the discriminatory classification of "scholarships" (e.g. Boyer 1990; Rice 1991; Glassick, Huber and Maeroff 1997), and the organisational and comparative discussion of "the changing academic profession" (e.g. Clark 1980, 1987; Teichler, Arimoto and Cummings 2013; Shin et al. 2014; Galaz-Fontes et al. 2016). According to Clark (1980), academic cultures incorporate the culture of discipline (i.e. disciplinary perspectives on university teaching and learning), the culture of profession (i.e. the roles of academics from a vocational point of view), the culture of enterprise (i.e. academic entrepreneurialism from an institutional perspective) and the culture of system (i.e. the national or regional system or policies influencing academia). Building on these academic cultures, Clark (1987) further incorporated into the whole academic life five dimensions for analysis: academic cultures, academic works, academic authorities, academic careers and academic associations.

These five dimensions of academic life vary across national contexts and time. Variety and disorder appear to be the hallmarks of academic organisations everywhere (Herbst 1985, 608). Different arguments about "what the university is for" or "what the scholarly roles of academics are" have to factor in different local and global contexts as well as temporal differentiations. The university is a complex and differentiated institution where different constructions of "academic" coexist (Harris 2005, 425). At some point in geographical history, the purpose of universities and the role of academics have included research, teaching, scholarships, services, and even religion and politics. Current global higher education systems generally assume that academic roles incorporate research, teaching, institutional services, social and community services, and perhaps professional and scholarly society services. Still, qualitative variations in these functions over time and between different national contexts exist. In some locales, academic engagement, focus and priorities remain fragmented due to national interests, sociocultural roots and disciplinary orientation (Poston and Boyer 1992; Quigley 2011).

Recently, research into the academic profession, work life and roles has switched focus to examine the changing academic profession (CAP). In the words of Aarrevaara and Finkelstein (n.d.), cited in the product flyer for the Springer series on The Changing Academy – The Changing Academic Profession in International Comparative Perspective, "The academy is expected to be more professional in teaching, more productive in research and more entrepreneurial in everything." The changing trends, according to the second CAP survey team of more than 100 scholars from 19 countries (2004–12),[1] include changes in academic environment, academic governance, academic functions and level of satisfaction with academic careers (Teichler et al. 2013, 1).

The diversity of academic systems and roles at the macro level poses another equally vital question at the individual level concerning the core identities of academics, which many researchers have tried to understand (e.g. Billot 2010; Tooms and English 2010; Quigley 2011; Pifer and Baker 2013; Feather 2014). Related questions, such as whether academic identity is a personal value or belief or related to institutional and contextual factors, is stable and unchanging or malleable and changing, and is necessary in the supercomplex academic profession, are discussed in the literature.

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1   The first survey, called "The Carnegie Survey of Academic Profession", was led and conducted by the Carnegie Foundation (1992–93) (Teichler et al. 2013, 3).

Understanding clearly academic roles and identities as they are shaped by different cultures and social systems and the changing structure of the national academic system is an important endeavour, at both the academic and the policy level. For example, Boyer's (1990) widely-cited work Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate made American scholars at that time rethink and initiate a specific line of inquiry to clarify the missions of the diverse American higher education institutions, the roles and responsibilities of American scholars, and the academic reward and recognition system. Besides policy and other practical benefits, the results of Boyer's study have contributed significantly to broadening the academic debate on what scholarships mean and what scholarly works should constitute (Simpson 2000, 7; Sorcinelli 2002, 46).

## 2. Introduction to the current study

### 2.1 Justifications for the study of academic identities and scholarly roles in Cambodia

We are nearly one-fifth of the way into the 21st century and the problems of unclear direction and system fragmentation in Cambodia's higher education sector are more pressing than ever. There are at least three types of higher learning institution – academies, universities, specialised institutes or schools (Chet 2009) – which come under the umbrella of 16 ministerial institutions (Un and Sok 2018). Cambodian higher education is deeply influenced by the legacy of several successive foreign higher education models, from French to Soviet to American (Pit and Ford 2004). As a consequence, higher education institutions are still characterised by overlapping missions and fuzzy disciplinary boundaries between vocational, professional and academic tracks (Un and Sok 2018).

It is now imperative that two critical questions about academia and scholarships asked in Germany in the 17th century and in the United States in the 19th century be brought into perspective for Cambodia in the 21st century: Are the diverse types of Cambodian higher learning institutions serving different missions? Do the personnel in those institutions hold different identities and are they obliged to perform different roles – research, teaching, institutional services, social and community services, and academic community services?

It is time for Cambodia to clarify its higher learning and academic system, especially regarding academic identity and roles, individual and collective intellectual capacities, and academic system design and development. To that end, it is necessary to first delve into the perceptual and behavioural aspects of individual Cambodian academics. Three important questions the current study intends to address are: What does it mean to be a Cambodian academic? What scholarly roles and responsibilities are they dominantly engaged in? How does the Cambodian academic system shape their identity and work? In fact, the Department of Higher Education (DHE), the governmental body responsible for higher education (and relevant stakeholders) in Cambodia, has in some ways considered these issues. Outcomes to date include DHE researchers' engagement in a study on Cambodian Higher Education Diversity: Towards Differentiation or Homogeneity? (Khieng et al. 2017), the introduction of the tier system within the bigger frame of the Cambodian Higher Education Roadmap 2030[2] (MOEYS 2017), and a published paper on Governance and Finance for Public Higher Education in Cambodia (Mak, Sok and Un 2019). The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) has also released the Policy on Higher Education Vision 2030 (MOEYS 2014). If these policy interventions are understood and implemented rigorously and efficiently, this strategic turning point will

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2    The tier system categorises higher education institutions based on their missions (MOEYS 2017). Different categories receive different support from the government according to national priorities.

perhaps be dubbed "the Cambodian academic revolution". The current study seeks to integrate inputs from individual academics' perspectives into these appreciable policy endeavours.

It is debatable, however, whether it is reasonable and timely to examine academic identities and scholarly roles in Cambodia. Inevitably, some critical opponents may devalue this kind of study because the idea of the academic has its roots in Western, not Eastern or Cambodian, cultures. Ancient Cambodia may have had a totally different way of considering, or language to describe, someone of academic calibre.[3] However, such critique is not holistic as it justifies the point based solely on traditional or indigenous perceptions. The terms "academic", "academia" and "academy" exist in Cambodia – whether in the name of an institution or a functional office within educational institutions. Cambodia has the Royal Academy of Cambodia, the Policy Academy of Cambodia and other institutions of leaning called an academy. Offices dealing with academic affairs (e.g. student problems and curriculum issues) generally exist in most educational institutions at all levels across the country. Therefore, it is not right to say that exploring the idea of "the academic" is irrelevant because the term has already been embedded at different levels throughout the Cambodian education system, whether introduced by the French during colonisation or styled by the Soviets during the Cold War. The argument is that the term "academic" in Cambodia, and the identities and roles attached to it, should not be left unexplored and without a clear understanding of its core concepts and substance.

Previous scholarly studies have shed light on different aspects of academic professions in Cambodia, ranging from individual academic functions to entire academic systems (Pit and Ford 2004; Brooks and Ly 2010; Kwok et al. 2010; Howes and Ford 2011; Ahrens and McNamara 2013; Maxwell et al. 2015; Ros and Oleksiyenko 2018; Oleksiyenko and Ros 2019). However, little is known about faculty members' perceived academic identities (both in the personal and the collective sense) and their scholarly roles, as framed in Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship. Ignorance of academic identities and scholarly roles could leave academia's significant roles in broader society understated and unrecognised and specific skills and disciplinary contributions unrecorded. Also, academic reward and recognition schemes cannot work properly, making academics feel insecure and devaluing their often complicated and demanding work. The time has come for Cambodia to rethink what it means to be an academic and what the scholarly priorities and roles of an academic should be.

## 2.2 Specific purposes and significances of the current study

This study, as a part of a larger research project on the Cambodian academic profession, aims to conceptualise Cambodian academic identities and scholarly roles through faculty members' conceptions of what it is to be an academic and through perceptual and factual information about their engagement in different types of scholarship. A related focus of this study is how the larger academic system is viewed by faculty members and how it shapes their academic identities and roles.

Specifically, the study is guided by three main research questions:
- How do Cambodian faculty members identify themselves as an academic?
- What are Cambodian faculty members' core and dominant scholarly roles?
- What critical issues shape Cambodian faculty members' academic identities and scholarly roles?

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3   Teaching personnel in Cambodian universities are often addressed as "lecturer" or simply "teacher". At the institutional level, some universities have adopted professoriate titles (e.g. assistant professor, associate professor and professor).

It has three research objectives:

- To define Cambodian academic identities;
- To describe the core and dominant scholarly roles of faculty members at Cambodian universities;
- To identify critical issues shaping Cambodian faculty members' academic identities and scholarly roles.

These research objectives, though unable to bring a holistic approach and absolute clarity to classifying higher education institutions in Cambodia, are of critical importance for national endeavours to re-systemise them. Such systemisation (e.g. differentiation, evaluation, career path) can be achieved when ideas about academics and scholarships are clearly understood. For researchers wanting to explore and explain academic careers in Cambodia, this work should extend or offer another perspective (from individual identities and scholarly roles framework) to the existing research area. Amid the uncertainty of the current debate on faculty members' (sometimes forced) choice between teaching and research, this study should also establish a gateway at which decision makers can think through the roles and functions required of academics and so ease the creation of optimal academic career paths at Cambodian universities. All of these bring insight and add clarity and transparency to the notions of academic career development and scholarship for the future higher education workforce. As Metzler (1994, 446–447) said, "What is needed … is a vision for the future. We need to begin the search for alternative ways to conceptualize, define, pursue, and reward a new constellation of activities that we might call scholarship in the next millennium."

## 3. Literature review

### 3.1 The academic profession in Cambodia

Although there are no specific studies on academic identities, most previous studies have shed light on different aspects of the academic profession in Cambodia. Pit and Ford (2004) talked about generational differences in the academic profession in Cambodia and the struggles faced by higher education communities before the privatisation of higher education. Those who survived the Khmer Rouge regime and had not fled the country, most of whom were trained in the Soviet system, shouldered responsibility for rebuilding the higher education system despite limited capacity and resources. Whereas the next generations of academics and scholars, most of whom were trained in the west, were often lured into the private sector by higher financial rewards and partly because of weak collaboration between them and their Soviet-trained colleagues. Kwok et al. (2010) and Brooks and Ly (2010) referred to this phenomenon the "missing generation" of Cambodian academia. Pit and Ford (2004), along with Ahrens and McNamara (2013), further maintained that the privatisation embarked on in 1997 also complicated the system in a way that had both advantages and disadvantages for the quality of higher education in Cambodia. The privatisation of universities created more opportunities for income generation through teaching and supervising students' theses at different universities but compromised the quality of academic instruction.

Other studies, for example, Kwok et al. (2010), Howes and Ford (2011), MOEYS (2015) and Eam (2018), showed that Cambodia's higher education sector lacks deep historical roots of research and research outputs. As these studies highlight, what shapes this issue may relate to the systemic problems of academic cultural ambiguity at the national and institutional levels of administrative oversight, the lack of individual and institutional research competencies and

resources, the lack of adequate financial supports and even sociocultural factors. Furthermore, Maxwell et al. (2015) found that female Cambodian academics do not engage in research as much as their male counterparts because they often experience conflict between their academic obligations and family commitments. Despite these issues, Brooks and Ly (2010, 94) posited that Cambodian academics are passionate about their profession especially research, as "they justified their work in terms of their feelings of 'compassion', 'love', 'pity', 'prestige', 'obligation', and 'patriotism'". Nonetheless, Ros and Oleksiyenko (2018) argued that Cambodian academics' aspirations and demands for professional development are undermined by the dichotomy between policy and practice across different jurisdictions of the higher education system, eroding academic staff's commitment to the academic profession. At the same time, their intellectual engagement is inevitably compromised as a result of conflicting societal expectations of academia (Oleksiyenko and Ros 2019).

At the policy level, there seem to exist only two policy documents related to academic teaching, namely Teacher Policy and Teacher Policy Action Plan published in 2013 and 2015, respectively, by MOEYS. These documents largely focus on teacher education and training for general basic education rather than for higher education. Other policy documents on higher education such as Policy on Higher Education 2030 published in 2014 barely touch on the notion of academic professionalism except for highlighting the three roles of teaching, research and services. Un, Hem and Seng (2017) provide a summary of the civil service hierarchy structure for academic professions and point to the need for a clear understanding of the Cambodian academic culture and system.

### 3.2 Academic systems and academic careers

Current research studies on academic professions generally point to the changing nature of academic careers and the multiple agents within the higher education system (e.g. Teichler et al. 2013; Shin et al. 2014; Galaz-Fontes et al. 2016). Academic careers (e.g. academic works, academic salaries, academic ranks, academic evaluation and academic career paths) can be shaped by the national higher education system (Clark 1980, 1987) and/or the national system of knowledge. Clark (1983, 102) stated: "The system becomes deeply institutionalized …, which, with growing bureaucratization and professionalization, means that constraints upon change and imperatives for change are now increasingly centered in the system."

The national higher education system can be holistically viewed through the structure of higher education governance, which in certain countries is modelled on the liberal Anglo-Saxon capitalist system, and in others on the socialist system of Continental Europe (Pruisken and Jansen 2016). The reigning political economy generally influences various aspects of academic careers, from the nomination, recruitment, evaluation and promotion of academics to the freedoms they are given. In his major work "The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-National Perspective", Clark (1983 cited in Herbst 1985, 608) suggests:

> … to understand the power play in higher education that we see politicians, bureaucrats, and professors as interest groups jockeying for positions. In some national systems, as in Sweden, the interest groups involved are associations, unions, councils, and other organizations seeking to influence government. In others, as in the United States, professionals wield influence through guildlike bodies like the National Science Foundation. In still others, officials in central governmental bodies act as the patrons and controllers of higher education.

A comparative lens can also be used to understand the national academic career system. Altbach's (2003) research into academic careers in developing countries examines the different realities of the academic profession in developed and developing countries in terms of institutional environment, bureaucracy and politics, academic freedom, working conditions and renumeration. Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2010), studying the academic profession in Brazil, Russia, India and China, looked at the massification of higher education, the funding challenge, the relatively low research and development expenses, the practice of institutional mergers, the marketising force of privatisation in academia, and the attempts to create a strong national academic culture. Generally, researchers saw the changes from a more critical perspective; that said, the academic profession is "under stress as never before" (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley 2010, 25) and "truly in crisis" (Altbach 2003, 20). While both developed and developing countries are facing changes and uncertainties, academic career systems in the latter seem to be more vulnerable.

## 3.3 Academic cultures

Clark (1980) discussed the four academic cultures, namely, discipline, profession, enterprise, and system, which form an important framework for studies in this research area. The culture of discipline suggests that intellectual enquiry is inherently based on academics' areas of study and related schools of thought. Other researchers regarded this culture of disciplines and intellectual traditions as academic tribes and territories (e.g. Becher and Trowler 2001). The culture of profession links to the question of the technicality, functionality and professional standards of those calling themselves academics. In other words, what vocational roles should academics play and at what levels or standards of efficiency or impacts are they considered professionals? The culture of enterprise infers the substance of institutional missions, structures, environments and other such factors that unavoidably shape academic values and beliefs and works. After the industrial revolution, academia, similarly to other socially constructed establishments such as schools, banks and hospitals, became institutionalised and corporatised, which some scholars see as a threat to pure academic freedom. Whether scholars like it or not, the institution, which Clark (1980) referred to as the enterprise, is another key dimension shaping academic culture and identity. Finally, the culture of system relates to academics' national, social and policy context. It is a macro-level conceptualisation of the academic culture. Like institutions, more often than not, the culture of system influences how academics work, are paid, promoted and valued.

## 3.4 Academic identities

Research studies have suggested that if we are to understand the academic careers of the future, we must first understand the identities of current and prospective academics and, more importantly, how those identities shape goals, behaviours and outcomes (Pifer and Baker 2013). According to Quigley (2011), the literature on academic identities and professions has been dominated by two conceptual models: the trait model and the functionalist model. The trait model looks at academic identity from the dimension of self-concept, illustrating identity through academics' own conceptions of their traits or attitudes. The model implies that it is necessary to see academics as individuals. But, in general identity theory, the concept of self and society are both considered, as well as the relation between them (Tooms and English 2010). On the other hand, the functionalist model looks at academic identity from the profession perspective, enlisting four criteria (adopted from Barber 1963) to enquire if being

an academic can be considered a profession.[4] This conceptualisation is framed by sociological approaches to academic professions in general.

The trait and functionalist models, however, although commonly applied in the area of academic identity, are considered a narrow approach to understandings of academic identity. Feather (2014), for example, views the functionalist profession-oriented analysis to be just a part of the academic self, not the whole in itself. This point can be more clearly understood by understanding the four academic cultures (suggested by Clark 1980) of discipline, the profession, the enterprise and the system, which shape academic identities. In other words, the functionalist perspective focuses on the culture of the profession, while Clark takes a broader cultural ecological perspective. Feather (2014) held that the environment academics are exposed to shapes their identities, values and attitudes. Important environmental factors include disciplinary, institutional and national contexts.

Another way to look at academic identities is to differentiate between traditional and contemporary perspectives on academic functions and roles. Studies on the changing academic profession have revealed that the academic functions of universities around the world can be classified into three types: research-oriented, teaching-oriented, half research and half teaching oriented (e.g. Teichler et al. 2013; Shin et al. 2014). Academics' situatedness varies according to the institutional functions and expected roles they perform. Harris (2005) claimed that the neo-liberal managerial perspectives on contemporary higher education shape academic identities and roles differently from the traditional perspectives that value academic freedom, autonomy, collegiality and democratic practice. The traditional perspective of academic identity is still supported and sometimes given more value by researchers in this area, believing that these characteristics are a natural part of what academia is. Progressive thinkers, counting Eugene R. Rice (1991) and Ernest L. Boyer (1990), when discussing academic or scholarly roles, tend to support a more holistic framework of scholarships.

### 3.5 Scholarly roles

The concepts of higher education, academia and scholarships are generally discussed together in the literature (e.g. Clark 1980; Boyer 1990; Rice 1991; Cummings and Finkelstein 2012). In the Springer series on The Changing Academy, academics and scholars are generally treated similarly:

> The term 'academic profession' is being employed as one of the most neutral terms (similarly scholar or scientist) or as the most neutral term in the English language to cover persons employed at institutions of higher education for the purpose of teaching and/or research. (Teichler et al. 2013, 8)

Scholarship, in simple language, is about the state of being a scholar, and can be reflected on and even assessed from academics' engagement in roles and activities. In other words, academic roles – such as teaching, research, service and leadership – reflect different but related aspects of the nature of scholarship. Higher education institutions are oriented towards different academic functions, and academics choose different scholarly roles (e.g. more teaching or more research)

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4    The four criteria adopted from Barber (1963) are (1) a high degree of professional and systematic knowledge; (2) primary orientation to the community interest rather than to individual self-interest; (3) a high degree of self-control of behaviour through codes of ethics internalised in the process of work socialisation and through voluntary associations organised and operated by the work specialists themselves; and (4) a system of rewards (monetary and honorary) that is primarily a hierarchy of symbols of work achievements and thus an end in itself, not a means to indulge individual self-interest and self-promotion.

(Shin et al. 2014). Other academic role descriptions include institutional service, community service, and citizenship. According to Boyer (1990, 16):

> Scholarship means engaging in original research. But the work of the scholar also means stepping back from one's investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice, and communicating one's knowledge effectively to students.

Further studies (Glassick, Huber and Maeroff 1997, 25) moved from scholarship reconsidered to scholarship assessed, defining six dimensions of scholarship assessment: clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation and reflective critique In the words of Simpson (2000, 8), "All scholarly works should be based on clear goals, adequate preparation, and the use of appropriate methods that then lead to significant results".

Boyer (1990) brought all these different scholarly roles and scholarships into one well-cited single framework. In his seminal publication "Scholarship Reconsidered", Boyer expands the definition of scholarship into four types: discovery, integration, application, and teaching (see Table 1).

Table 1: Boyer's four scholarships

| Scholarship of … | Conceptualisation | Implication for university functions |
|---|---|---|
| **Discovery** | This dimension involves researching and exploring knowledge and seeking truth. Many scholars refer to this idea as knowledge for knowledge or knowledge for its own sake and pure research or original research. It aims at creating new knowledge and so extending disciplinary frontiers. | Research function (disciplinary) |
| **Integration** | This dimension involves synthesising different types of knowledge across time, disciplines and conceptual dimensions. It uses integrative inquiry to integrate existing knowledge, so that scholars can see the relationship between the whole and the parts and create more holistic, not fragmented, meaning. | Research function and other scholarly engagement activities (interdisciplinary) |
| **Application** | This dimension includes the act of using knowledge from research or exploration and turning it into useful resources or practical techniques for communities or society at large. Many researchers refer to this as the scholarship of practice, the scholarship of engagement or the third role. | Services, outreach, or extension functions, either in policy form or application form |
| **Teaching** | This dimension involves educational activities or using knowledge (generally based on research) as a means to educate. According to Rice (1991), the scholarship of teaching has at least three elements: synoptic capacity, pedagogical content knowledge and what we know about learning. | Teaching and learning functions |

Source: Researchers' syntheses and interpretation of the four scholarships of Boyer (1990)

These four types of scholarship are separate yet related concepts (Boyer 1990; Rice 1991). To visually differentiate these four scholarships and their interrelationships, Clark (1980) relates to the idea of knowledge and Rice (1991) conceptualises the four scholarships with learning and knowing (i.e. how knowledge is perceived – concrete-abstract, and how knowledge is processed – reflective-active). So, the principles of different types of scholarships explained

by Rice are: concrete-connected knowing, reflective-observation knowing, abstract-analytic knowing and academic practice (Rice 1991, 12).

### 3.6 Conceptual considerations for the current study

The current study covers three perspectives of Cambodian academic life: the academic identity, the scholarly roles, and the academic cultures within Cambodian sociocultural contexts and systems. Using both exploratory and confirmatory questions, the study explores Cambodian academics' understandings of their academic identities and roles and their perceptions of issues within the academic system through the lens of Boyer's (1990) four dimensions of scholarship – discovery, integration, application and teaching.

To explore the scholarly roles of Cambodian academics, we asked the study participants specific questions under the four types of scholarship, such as what roles they are mostly engaged in on a daily basis, how much time they spend carrying out each role, and what challenges they face when engaging in each role. As for academic identity, we simply asked three questions to explore Cambodian faculty members' conceptions of their job: 1) What does being an academic mean? 2) Do you consider yourself to be an academic and what is it like? and 3) How do you see the differences between being an academic and other careers or professions (say, as a business person or a politician)? We also considered real issues in the national academic systems and cultures as another lens to view how academic identities are constructed and academic roles chosen. That said, we sought to understand how faculty members are recruited or appointed, evaluated and rewarded, and how they experience their status as a faculty member and view the difference between different types of higher education institutions (i.e. university vs technical and vocational education institution vs academy).

Three principle assumptions underlie the conceptualisation of this study. First, although some previous studies tried to distinguish between academic profession and scholarly profession (e.g. Clark 1986), the current study, consistent with most published works in the Changing Academy series, uses the terms "academic" and "scholar" interchangeably, as do most previous studies (e.g. Teichler et al. 2013, 8). Second, in developing and non-Western countries, the term academic may have different connotations for university workers and faculty members. So, we left the idea of academic identity undefined and approached our investigation exploratorily and constructively through Cambodian faculty members themselves. This is the inductive dimension of our research design. Third, embedded in our contextual understanding of the literature, we asked some confirmatory and factual questions about academic work and related issues where applicable. This is because some participants did not raise any particular issues of interest in their responses. This is, to a certain extent, the deductive dimension of our conceptual consideration.

## 4. Research methodologies

### 4.1 Overall approaches

This research study employed qualitative approaches, using the interpretivist paradigm and particularly thematic analysis. The interpretivist approach generates ideas and opinions from the participants' perceptions. In other words, knowledge is not independent of the participants' minds but socially constructed in a way that may create multiple realities upon interpretation (Yilmaz 2013, 316). Thematic analysis requires more involvement and interpretation from the researcher beyond counting explicit words or phrases with a focus on identifying and

describing both implicit and explicit ideas (i.e. themes) within the data (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2011, 10).

The qualitative thematic analysis comprised five steps, involving both deductive and inductive procedures. First, the study conducted a comprehensive literature review on academic professions, academic identities and types of scholarship to understand the core issues and develop a systemic picture of the research area. Based on the conceptual inputs from the literature review, the second stage involved defining the conceptual framework and designing the interview questions. Third, semi-structured interviews were held with faculty members at the selected universities. Fourth, the interview datasets were formulated in the form of extended fieldnotes, namely, raw fieldnotes extended through comprehensive listening to interview audio files (except for six unrecorded interviews). Finally, the researchers analysed and interpreted the datasets to define and discover themes, responses and conclusions for each research question.

## 4.2 Data collection methods and procedure

Purposive sampling was used to select the target universities based on student enrolments, location and type. The study covered all three types of Cambodian university.[5] A total of 10 universities was selected. By type, the sample comprised five public universities, two public administrative institutions and three private universities.

The selected universities assigned faculty members for the researchers to interview. The diversity of faculty members gave the researchers greater scope to observe and understand multiple realities. In total, 47 faculty members were interviewed, 35 of whom were in social sciences, 11 in natural and physical sciences, and one in an unidentified field. Twenty-nine of them were working full-time and 18 part-time.

The semi-structured interviews were administered with the aid of an interview guide. The interview questions were designed to collect data on four important aspects: academic identities, academic works and roles, academic careers, and academic institutions and systems. Specifically, the aim was to explore Cambodian faculty members' conceptions and perceptions of what it is to be an academic (i.e. academic identity), the academic or scholarly roles they engage in (e.g. research, teaching, services), academic career aspects (such as recruitment and promotion) and academic national systems (e.g. the differences between universities, TVET institutions and academies). The interviews comprised nine main questions, along with other minor related questions (see Appendix 1). These questions were descriptive and perceptual, confirmatory and evaluative. The interviews were conducted in Khmer mostly, lasted for 30 to 60 minutes and all but six of them were recorded. The audio recordings and fieldnotes were the primary sources of data.

## 4.3 Data analysis methods and procedure

Applied thematic analysis was the main approach used to manage, code and analyse the data. This involved the classification of themes or patterns in the data and then generating structural codes for those themes to create a codebook (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2011). The analysis followed several important steps:

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5    The Cambodian higher education sector is classified into the three subsectors: universities, technical and vocational education and training institutes/centres, and academies. The university subsector comprises three types of university: public, private and public administrative institutions. One major difference between these types of university is the governance structure (Sam 2017).

1. All primary data from the interviews and fieldnotes was compiled and then cleaned in NVivo 12. Researchers read and sensitised the data to develop extended fieldnotes. Because of time limitations, the audio files were not fully transcribed. Instead, transcription focused on the content that supported the themes and subthemes in the extended fieldnotes. The extended fieldnotes containing core information from the interviews were double checked for consistency, accuracy and completeness.

2. The structural codes were developed and defined based on the core research questions, the main sections of the interview guide, and researchers' understanding of the data through sensitisation.

3. The data was coded based on the thematic structural codes (which contained three key parent codes: academic roles and responsibilities; academic identities and perceptions of being an academic; academic careers and academic institutions at the national system level). The data collected from the 47 interviews was coded into the structural codes.

4. The coded datasets and identified themes for the research questions were combined. The themes were discussed, recoded and finalised. The themes were then associated with existing theories and frameworks.

## 4.4 Credibility and trustworthiness

To ensure the reliability of coding and analysis and reconcile discrepancies, multiple coders were used, and their inter-coder agreements were checked and re-checked at different meetings. The use of inductive and deductive procedures and multiple coders in a collaborative way reduced the chance of researcher bias and inconsistency. Also, unlike most purely qualitative exploratory studies or anecdotal approaches, the systematic design of applied thematic analysis ensures thoroughness and depth of research findings and trustworthiness.

The research team sought permission from MOEYS and the selected universities before embarking on data collection. After permissions were granted and prior to the interviews, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation was affirmed. Consent forms were signed by the interviewers and the interviewees as evidence of the agreement. In addition, at the beginning of each interview, the interviewer asked for the respondent's verbal agreement, which was audio recorded. All interview responses and audio recordings were kept confidential and used only by the interviewers and the research team solely for the purpose of this study. None of the participants' names and institutions have been revealed in this or any other report.

## 4.5 Methodological limitations

For the purpose of this working paper, due to time constraints, we have used only a portion of the available data from a larger research study. The whole sample frame comprises 19 higher education institutions and 86 interviewees. We used data from the universities only (i.e. 47 interviewees from 10 universities). That said, the other 38 interviewees were from training institutions, academies and non-university institutions. In further analyses, we would try to observe the academic identities and academic works of these institutions from a comparative and institutional perspective. Analysis of the full datasets would also allow us to do quantification of these qualitative datasets, which we did not do for this report. Doing so would enable us to observe trends and patterns of quantifiable answers to some extended issues of academic identities and roles in Cambodia – for example, the number of participants

believing that academics are valued, whether academic careers are satisfactory in general, and how participants view the different academic institutions in Cambodia and why.

# 5. Findings

## 5.1 Construction of academic identities

The term "academic" seemed to be a contested concept for the interviewees. The majority of them found the term too broad, unclear and hard to define. When asked to define what an academic is or to identify the core identities of an academic, a considerable number of faculty members said they were unsure or had not thought critically about the term though they have heard it in their working environment. For many of them, the term had various or multiple meanings or practices under the overarching concept of education and can sometimes be external to the educational institutions. The following sentiments were echoed during most of the interviews:

> Now we still have questions about using the term "academic". The meaning is broad. When we think of education in general, people use the term "academic". (AIP21)

> "Academic" is a broad term for me. I don't think it has to be just about things in the school setting. It can also be about practices in the social setting. (AIP44)

Few interviewees sought to understand the direct translation of the term "academic" from the interviewers, while the majority responded to the interview questions without the need to translate the term, as if the word was already well applied and frequently used in an understandable way in Khmer. However, it should be noted that the term "academic" has yet to be Khmerised as a proper or commonly agreed Khmer word; a translation for "academic" did not seem to exist at the time.

Despite the lack of common meanings of "academic" among the interviewees, all of them felt they had been engaged in academic work. When asked whether they considered themselves to be an academic, the majority said they did. However, some added that they were not fully-fledged academics, mainly because they engaged only in teaching and were barely involved in research. They made the following comments:

> Teaching is just a part of academic work … Academics spend a lot of time on research and transfer knowledge to help society … I am not yet at the academic level. (AIP04)

> I am an academic to a large extent. I stand for truth and focus on evidence not rumour. My work is in the education sector. I teach, do research and complete tasks related to the development of education. That is in my specialisation. (AIP01)

Notwithstanding such ambiguity, the interviewees still gave opinions about the meaning of academic based on their exposure to the term in their daily working environment. Faculty members' ideas about what it means to be an academic were not homogeneous, corroborating most previous research findings on teachers in other contexts (e.g. Feather 2014), and seemed to be shaped by different cultures, as discussed by Clark (1980). Overall, the interview datasets reflect three forms of Cambodian academic identity: disciplinary, functional and social.

### 5.1.1 Disciplinary formation of academic identity

Most of the interviewees argued that academics are highly recognised experts in their respective disciplinary fields, working in higher education and exercising their perceived freedom to fulfil their duties and express their thoughts. These contexts collectively signify the idea of a

disciplinary form of academic identity (in terms of themes and approaches). This indicates that their approaches to knowledge are being evidence-based, specialised, technical, unbiased and scientific. At the same time, they are governed by certain professional codes of conduct linked with various attributes such as analytical attitude, criticality, ethicality, honesty, impartiality, independence and freedom. The following thoughts were voiced during the interviews:

> For me "academic" is something related to higher education ... what can be considered academic has to follow research rules, theories, data and proper scientific analyses, publishing, practice and follow up. (AIP31)

> I think when we count from university level, that can be regarded as academic ... high school may not count ... it [academic] is about a specific discipline ... I feel so... say, for myself, I specialise in food chemistry. (AIP05)

> Academics think more about ethics. They talk with references, unlike business people. Since words from academic are followed, information has to be truthful or include references to avoid mistakes. Academics care about their reputation. (AIP41)

Participants also differed in their opinions about what is considered knowledge – basically between theoretical disciplinary knowledge or tacit/practical knowledge – as they applied it in their academic work. Some regarded theories as the backbone of knowledge. Others saw real world experience as more important. This is again quite opposite to the pure or traditional conception of "academic" which generally sees knowledge for itself or knowledge for knowledge, not for any utilitarian purposes. The majority, however, embraced both as important elements of knowledge.

> My teaching is based on knowledge and work experience rather than theory, and I develop a course based on my observations in my workplace. I love teaching, but I want to have another full-time job because I want to use the knowledge from my studies, so I can use my work experience to teach students. (AIP07)

> Higher education is related to academia and research. It is about theory, using data in a scientific way. Trying to seek truth and be enlightened in the knowledge area. Teachers, professors and researchers are academics. (AIP31)

In spite of their advocacy of disciplinary academic freedom, which they believed was needed to pursue their disciplinary interests, most of them maintained that academic freedom had to be exercised within institutional and state laws. This understanding contrasts with the idea of academic freedom rooted in Western cultures, where academics are independent from the state and institutions to undertake their disciplinary endeavours (Altbach 2001). The following comments were aired during the interviews:

> Academics need freedom of speech to work and present evidence. Academics have to be allowed to speak freely, reasonably and technically. Academics engage in technical work and use scientific methods with data and information.  (AIP20)

> Academics are independent of their assigned tasks – tasks related to education – and have freedom and rights under the principles of law of the nation or institution. (AIP01)

We can understand the disciplinary form of academic identity from the idea of academic freedom. However, we should also acknowledge that some interviewees' conceptions of academic freedom within disciplinary boundaries were vague and unclear.

### 5.1.2 Functional formation of academic identity

The participants in general suggested that being an academic was to fulfil certain functions, roles and/or responsibilities. These included sharing knowledge, guiding students, teaching, researching, publishing, serving social communities and assisting policymakers. In other words, they associated academic identity with job fulfilment and vocational activities at the career, institutional and national levels, most of which amount to the universal academic roles of teaching and research, and service of some kind. This reflected the common understanding of the Cambodian higher education system; most of the interviewees shared the following view:

> For me, I think academics have at least two roles. First, they must have the ability to conduct research; second, the ability to transfer knowledge to students with ethical practice. Besides these two core roles, they have to engage in social work to develop human resources, make the country wealthy and contribute to its development. (AIP12)

Interestingly, some of them also held that academics should search for truth and create new knowledge by conducting research. Participants talked about research in general, referring to pure or applied research specifically. The interviewees, while acknowledging that the Cambodian system was teaching oriented or that they were not actively engaged in research, believed that academics in general had to fulfil both teaching and research functions. There was, however, a contrasting view among participants in their perceptions of which of the two was most important for being an academic. Some believed that teaching was the core role:

> Academics have to get engaged in both teaching and research. If they only do research, they're not academics – they're simply researchers, perhaps for a private company. (AIP02)

Others believed that research was the core role:

> If we teach without research, we cannot grow. Research can contribute to the growth of the society … research gives us the chance to always learn and think about new ideas … I tell my co-workers to focus on research for publications. (AIP05)

Whether through teaching or research, most of the interviewees believed that knowledge can be shared and transferred to society at large in the form of publications, instruction or public knowledge sharing. Most of them shared the following collective thoughts:

> It [being an academic] is about learning, understanding and researching – the three reinforce each other – and sharing what we discover from our research to raise awareness. So, it includes teaching and learning ... and even writing books and publishing and joining conferences. (AIP03)

There seemed to be little variation in how full-time and part-time faculty members saw themselves as academics. The majority in both groups believed that research and teaching were inseparable for academics. One notable difference, however, was that part-time faculty were generally engaged more in teaching than in the conduct of research or administration.

### 5.1.3 Social formation of academic identity

Most informants described academics as valuable assets to the country. Academics (often regarded as teachers across the interviews) were seen as the root of knowledge, enabling learning for all and able to participate in nation building, as some interviewees attested:

> Everything comes out of being a teacher ... no skill can be learned without teachers ... Teachers are the root ... (AIP24)

They value us. Students salute us. I value teachers myself and no one is more highly educated than teachers. (AIP26)

The value of education is that we can train and help people grow. We are happy to see them become successful. We polish them. I teach a lot of architecture students. Most get jobs. They invite me to their weddings. They respect me, telling me so directly. They meet me, and they greet me well. (AIP28)

Although they are independent and neutral, they have to participate in state affairs through research and policies ... so, for me, academic people are intermediaries between learning at universities and practice at public institutions. (AIP42)

Academics should engage in social work in the same way politicians need to, and know about changes in society, the economy, international relations, the environment and so on. All needs to be researched and observed. (AIP45)

Despite their indispensable multiple roles, most interviewees maintained that the general public view Cambodian academics as teachers. And being a teacher is closely linked to social responsibility. Arguably, these descriptions could have been shaped by Khmer values and mindsets that view academic individuals as extensively knowledgeable, respected, devoted, selfless and parent-like. This contextually-shaped notion of the socially-responsible "guru", the Khmer term being borrowed from Sanskrit and meaning "teacher", generally refers to someone who deals with education in all its forms and has a huge amount of responsibility in social, cultural, national and sometimes political affairs. This idea of "guru" may well be an absolute perceptual element in the minds of all the respondents, which perhaps shaped their answers almost every time they thought of the term "academic".

If I have to tell someone or the public what my job is, I simply say I am a teacher [guru] because it is easier for them to understand. They won't know my roles as the head or lecturer. And they will think lecturers are the same as teachers in other levels – just to teach. (AIP02)

In Cambodia, teachers come first, meaning most people just know that academics are teachers. They are not familiar with the term "researcher". Only academics themselves understand academic work. (AIP06)

The public see lecturers as teaching staff. They won't know about other duties because of our Khmer word which basically means "teacher". (AIP42)

While the notion of "guru" in a theoretical sense is related to higher status in Cambodia, participants associated it strongly with the idea of "academic", which nearly always sparked discussion of the financial aspects of being an academic. This emerging pattern in the data complicated the positive values of being an academic; in other words, we need to be clear about what aspects of academics or gurus are valued and what aspects (such as financial benefits) are not. Some interviewees expressed concern that the public's perspective of academics' status and salaries, coupled with limited understanding of academics' roles, could devalue the academic profession in the eyes of the general public. Some frustrations were aired during the interviews:

I'm not really satisfied with my job because others don't value it much. I don't gain the benefits that I consider suitable for the time I've spent. (AIP48)

In our society, people don't value academics because they don't understand the concept and there's no culture of research; mostly, when someone says "academics", they're referring to teaching. (AIP32)

## 5.2 Realities of scholarly roles

Boyer (1990) proposed four types of scholarship – discovery, integration, application and teaching – which can be taken to reflect academics' engagement in various academic activities and their roles and responsibilities. Simply put, academics are expected to fulfil three roles, namely research, teaching and services (Cummings 1998). These three roles combined make academics what Macfarlane (2011, 66) calls "an all-rounder". Therefore, we can understand Cambodian faculty members' scholarship by looking at the roles they play.

Teaching duties occupied most of faculty members' working hours, leaving them with little time to pursue other academic activities in the scholarship of discovery, while activities reflecting application and integration (i.e. integrating research from different disciplines or sources to observe connected patterns of knowledge or truth) were largely limited or simply missing. Although faculty members seemed to associate the idea of academic identity with research and publications, it is apparent that the majority of Cambodian universities and their faculty members do not actively engage in research, not to mention academic research. Most research projects are commissioned works, and the faculty members who conduct research mostly studied abroad and have a doctoral degree (Eam 2017) – they account for only about 9 percent of the total number of interviewed faculty members. Faculty members also engaged in different kinds of non-academic work, from ad hoc external relations support to peripheral administrative tasks. Moreover, it was common among most of the interviewees to hold multiple contracts at various workplaces. The following sections elaborate on faculty members' specific scholarship types.

### 5.2.1 Dominant scholarship of teaching

Teaching was considered the main role by all of the participants. The number of hours they spent teaching ranged from three to 30 a week, either at one or several universities, depending on their employment status. Their teaching loads included classroom instruction, lesson preparation, and marking students' work. The time spent on lesson preparation seemed to be relative to their experience with the subject matter and the number of subjects they taught. Preparation was said to revolve around such activities as designing PowerPoint slides and handouts, compiling course materials and developing course syllabi (especially at the beginning of a new term). Regardless of their experience, most of them claimed that preparation took much of their time. The following comments were made during the interviews:

> I spend lots of time [preparing materials] before teaching new lessons (1 or 2 hours to review and update). Mostly after work, I work for two hours before bedtime … I prepare slides for teaching or correct students' papers. (AIP37)

> I spend lots of time reviewing lessons before teaching since a teacher does not always know everything. I need to update my knowledge about the subjects I teach every day. I need to keep updating my lessons because this is my obligation and university regulation. (AIP38)

Most of them taught subjects within their area of expertise. However, instead of basing their lessons on academic research in their area of expertise, they often relied on materials from the internet and foreign textbooks. Very few used academic research papers and other locally published documents such as policy papers. The following claims were often made in the interviews:

> I use textbooks and documents from various internet sources in order to create slides for teaching. (AIP09)

I rely on resources from international books that are imported from other countries. (AIP14)

Here we could learn some limitations of teaching at Cambodian universities as advanced scholarly teaching requires immersion in research-based academic knowledge.

The teaching methods the interviewees used varied. However, most of them mentioned the combined use of student-centred and teacher-centred approaches. Those who were more oriented towards and advocated the student-centred approach wanted to encourage their students to take control of their own learning, as illustrated by the following comments:

I give students the topics and allow them to ask related questions. I tell them which sources and documents to find to broaden their understanding about the topics. The students ask questions themselves, find the answers to those questions and draw their own conclusions. (API01)

I give my students assignments to do research about some companies, so they can go and interview the staff in those companies, come back and present their research findings to the class (AIP07)

In teaching I am an advisor more than an instructor. I use electronic devices to assist me in teaching and to understand students' mindsets. (AIP30)

Other participants mentioned more conventional teaching techniques, including giving lectures in order to explain theories or concepts to students and using PowerPoint slides, as one lecturer explained:

I use PowerPoint and focus on practice more than theory – for  instance, sharing practical work experience … besides working here, I have some work outside… I can tell them about the real world challenges engineers face … (AIP06)

However, most of them did not have any formal teacher training before taking up their position. Instead, they tended to rely on their experience as students and discussions with more experienced peers and gain hands-on experience from actual teaching.

I have never taken a teacher training course, but I did attend a two-week teaching course [at my university], and I asked my parents who are also teachers for teaching advice. (AIP06)

To ensure quality of teaching and learning, I try to improve my teaching methodology and update my knowledge by reading. (AIP16)

The challenges respondents faced during their teaching include students' calibre. They complained that few students were capable of coping with the demands of university. Indeed, most of them pointed out that some students pay little attention to their learning and instead depend heavily on their teachers. The following sentiments were often voiced during the interviews:

Students do not like learning…Some subjects – like econometrics – are abstract and so students lose focus and interest. (AIP04)

My students are not paying attention to their learning. They are distracted by many things such their mobile phones. (AIP06)

Teaching is challenging. We need to motivate students to work hard. Master's degree students are generally married, have jobs and a family to take care of. (AIP31)

Most interviewees expressed frustration in implementing the student-centred approach because of students' dependency on them and criticism from colleagues that it is not suitable for

undergraduates. In other words, they believed that students-centred approaches were valuable theoretically but hard to implement in practice because of students' lack of independence and cognitive ability. In fact, Cambodian university students are highly dependent on their lecturers to spoon-feed them and direct their learning (Sam et al. 2012). Consequently, they often resorted to using the teacher-centred approach.

> I give students freedom to do more. Students sometimes complain; they say I do not teach. Students do not engage. But on reflection, they know they learn. (AIP01)

> I have used many student-centred approaches, but students were not happy with that. They started talking badly about the teachers. (AIP11)

> Students do not like the way I teach them. They are lazy to think. It is their habit. They think memory is more important than thinking. It is the culture. We need to train them how to think. My teaching style is based on my ideas. And when I was in a meeting with other teachers, they criticised the teaching approach I am using. They said Socratic method PhD level. (AIP16)

### 5.2.2 Emerging research: A variant scholarship of discovery

Interviewees' responses about their research responsibilities varied, reflecting the contested understanding of what constitutes research. What emerged from our data is that original or pure academic research is limited, while reported research projects are generally in the form of commissioned applied research. How our participants discussed their engagement in emerging research roles or the scholarship of discovery varied.

Most of them often related research to personal learning in order to expand their knowledge and upgrade their teaching materials and teaching methods. Activities related to this type of engagement in research include reading books and online materials:

> Research is for my own lifelong learning. I do it for [myself] as personal research, so I read books. I learn from my students' research theses, and I do self-reflection. (AIP42)

The conduct of basic research to produce theoretical knowledge that could lead to international publication was not widely discussed among the participants. However, a few of them mentioned that they have had research published, especially in their university journals, as illustrated by the following comments:

> I have had a few papers published in my university journal. (AIP39)

> My journal articles are related to the economy and published in my university journal series. (AIP13)

Other participants had engaged in this type of academic research during their postgraduate studies and were able to have research published back then, as they mentioned:

> Research is not intensive for me. I used to publish articles. I'm still in contact with my supervisors in some way. (AIP04)

> I had a few journal articles published while I was doing my master's and doctoral degrees. (AIP06)

Participants' limited involvement in academic research aimed at creating new knowledge was often associated with lack of funding and research infrastructure, and teaching and administrative workload challenges.

My main challenges are related to the lack of funding for research … so I have to try to find funding or grants to support this … We did not have enough equipment to do experiments because the department is new. It has been established for just four or five years, so sometimes we need to run tests in other departments or hire services from other firms. (AIP08)

Now I'm busy with lots of office work and meetings with guests. This affects teaching time with the students, especially if I have a heavy teaching workload. I don't have time to do research myself. It's hard to do research because of time availability. There are problems with the research support system. For example, lecturers can't get students to help them do research and the curriculum doesn't support research. (AIP03)

I have ideas about doing some research but there are many obstacles such as time management and financial support. (AIP36)

Other interviewees cited some publication challenges:

We have to have at least one project in hand. Report for [the university] per semester. There is a requirement for publications, but it cannot be strictly reinforced as lecturers do not have enough experience. [The university] is still young in research. (AIP06)

I participated in a research project on self-help groups. The project failed because when we wrote it up for publication, there was a problem with research ethics. And they rejected the paper. (AIP48)

### 5.2.3 Scholarship of application and integration: The limited scholarship

The interviews did not clearly show faculty members' engagement in the scholarships of application and integration. In terms of the former, what was obvious from the data was that faculty members did not engage in this type of scholarship in the name of their university or another academic institution. Our data suggests that only some faculty members apply their knowledge, seemingly because they have jobs in other institutions. Having multiple jobs may be one of the core factors that explains how Cambodian faculty members apply their knowledge in practical settings. Whether such applications of knowledge outside of the university and academic setting are in the form of scholarship is beyond the scope of the current study and therefore requires further investigation.

We also found very little evidence for scholarship of integration, apart from some reported inter-disciplinary applied research projects. Pure curiosity to seek higher truth by integrating and connecting research disciplines and fields seemed not to emerge in our data. The absence of the scholarship of integration could be resultant of the lack of a strong foundation in basic research (i.e. the scholarship of discovery).

However, despite the absence of general emerging themes, a few cases that could be regarded as the scholarship of application include reported activities such as serving academic committees for their institutions (engaging in curriculum development or evaluation, and organising training, workshops and field trips for external teachers and internal staff and students), services to the government (as a project consultant) or social communities (in the form of service learning or institutional events), product development (for example, the production of cucumber pickles as an outcome of a donor-funded research project). For those few respondents, these activities were infrequent or ad hoc. The following excerpts from the interviews illustrate these points:

I coordinate students' school visits at a private company once or twice a year depending on approval of the private enterprise. (AIP26)

> Besides my work at school, meeting with people and villagers informally is partly academic work. I used to be involved in an association but it hasn't been active, so I don't really participate anymore. (AIP47)

> Besides teaching, I accompany the students to the library, especially those in year one. I tell them where to find the documents they need to do their assignments and tell them ways of reading. (AIP46)

> Since school has a requirement for both teachers and students, I have to take part in study tours (one or twice a year) with the students. (AIP45)

There were also a few reported practices that we found hard to determine whether they could have the elements of the scholarship of knowledge integration through research. One such case was the engagement of some Cambodian academics in research projects outside their scope of work at the university they taught. As the interviews indicated, the participants working at the institutions that focus on science were required to have at least one research project. Because their university had limited funding, most of them resorted to applying for funding from donor agencies or private companies that were largely interested in applied research to solve certain problems and create certain products. Meanwhile, research enthusiasts whose universities did not have a research requirement acted as freelance researchers to apply for contract research projects from other agencies such as international donors or affiliated themselves with other research organisations. Among these projects, a few are inter-disciplinary and participated in by multiple institutions, national and/or international. These activities happen on an ad hoc basis and largely depend on individual cases or institutions. The following sentiments were shared during the interviews:

> We have to have at least one project in hand, so every researcher proposes a research project to potential fund providers, but my university doesn't have its own research funding yet. (AIP06)

> I've been involved in research projects and consultancy work for UNICEF, MOEYS, Chinese Maritime Silk Road fund… This is a seasonal job and involves team work. (AIP03)

> I am working for [a national research institution]. There are around 10 projects to be done a year. I am taking part in two or three projects there, but I don't do any research at my university. (AIP16)

### 5.3 Critical perspectives on academic works and careers

The interviewees' identities and their scholarly roles were largely compromised by various issues within Cambodian academic cultures and career systems. The following subsections elaborate on these complications, with a clear focus on two critical data-driven aspects: work environment and academic career path.

#### 5.3.1 Work environment and employment status

Inconsistencies in the employment structure (in terms of defined roles and recruitment approaches) at Cambodian universities inhibit the potential pursuit of scholarship. According to the interviews, the employment status of Cambodian faculty members is traditionally linked with teaching. In public universities, the majority of academics were also employed in the civil service system, which is governed by the state and requires a state-administered examination pass, but without clearly defined roles and responsibilities (see Un et al. 2017). That ambiguity is especially true for the research role. In practice, it was the universities that further assigned the roles and responsibilities of their academic staff (be it teaching, research or other duties)

and offered teaching-session-based payment in addition to their monthly civil servant salary. As a science faculty member put it:

> I am a civil servant, but my role as a research coordinator is the position created by my university. (AIP06)

While certain public universities have introduced research roles and responsibilities in the academic employment structure, others have left their faculty members to pursue research functions on their own. The following thoughts were echoed during the interviews:

> You need to show your research competence and, more importantly, you need to have a research to become project a lecturer-researcher. (AIP05)

> To apply for a lecturer-researcher, one needs to have a research projects or collaborate with others to work on a research project. Minimum research project is one per year. The lecturer-researcher's first task is to conduct research; the second is to teach, which amounts to around 192 hours per year. (AIP06)

> I want to do research here and publish, but the university does not seem to take any initiative. There is a research centre, but there aren't any meetings, and what I'm doing now is teaching most of the time. (AIP16)

That the formal examination requirement is required is not true in all cases of academic recruitment. Some civil servant faculty members were transferred from other public institutions and did not take any exams to qualify as university staff, as one interviewee revealed:

> Lecturers are transferred to school directly. If the state assigns them to that position, we can't reject them. (AIP15)

Some universities have recruited their own academic staff, which required candidates to submit their CV. However, most interviewees argued that the recruitment in both private and public universities is mostly for part-timers to fill teaching positions on a contractual basis, emphasising a higher degree and teaching experience (see also Un et al. 2017).

> … Second is through selection of shortlist, for part-timers. We look at a few criteria such as attitude, study background and teaching experience. We check whether they have teaching competencies. We interview them. We have the right to offer a position in the department. The discipline is considered later, and the director of the department has the right to decide. (AIP15)

> There is a job announcement for lecturers on the university's website. The main criteria to be considered before choosing a lecturer is level of education, whether a master's or a PhD. New lecturers will be observed after they are chosen. (API26)

> Among all criteria, experience is the most important. The candidates are selected based on their academic skills such as pedagogy skills in the disciplines, and we also consider their attitudes, but research is not used as a criterion for selection. (AIP44)

At the same time, faculty members who were highly experienced in their fields were reportedly offered posts to teach in both public and private universities rather than going through any formal selection procedure, as one lecturer admitted. Academic or personal networks may play important roles here. One interviewee acknowledged:

> There are many ways of recruiting part-time lecturers such as announcement and interviews. For me, I got a post here because I know people here. (AIP34)

### 5.3.2 Performance appraisal and career path

The interviews revealed the absence of an effective performance appraisal and evaluation system and program, meaning activities related to the scholarships of discovery, integration and application are unreported and unrecognised. Most participants mentioned student evaluation as a formal form of performance appraisal, which was based solely on students' opinions of their teaching practices and experiences. Some interviewees expressed disapproval of this kind of academic performance evaluation. Also, some questioned the objectivity of the results from what is in effect an opinion survey. The following comments were made:

> There is evaluation by students for both part-time and full-time teachers. (AIP07)

> There is a student survey or evaluation of lecturers, and it normally focuses on teaching, documents, knowledge and attitude (AIP42)

> There is no clear or regular evaluation of staff performance. There is student evaluation, but I don't support this because I doubt that students can evaluate us properly. (AIP02)

Overall, most of the interviewees doubted the validity and objectivity of student evaluation. The interviews revealed that those who scored well in student evaluations were given more teaching time and certificates of appreciation.

> I'm not sure what high performers receive, perhaps a certificate? (AIP07)

> There is no promotion for lecturers. But, if they teach well, they will be given more classes [and therefore will be able to earn more]. (AIP26)

Only the science faculty members, all from the same institution, who identified as lecturer-researchers were evaluated based on their research in addition to student evaluation. Nonetheless, this evaluation had yet to seriously include publications. One of them maintained:

> Evaluation is for all researchers in the unit. We have to have at least one project in hand, and must report on research activities to [the university] every semester. There is a requirement that researchers publish their work, but it cannot be strictly enforced as they don't have enough experience. [The university] is still young in research. (AIP06)

Given the issues besetting effective and exacting academic assessment and evaluation, the ranking and career paths of Cambodian academics are not being operationalised in practice. Ministerial and institutional attempts have been made to address these issues, but most of our respondents doubted that these will lead to any immediate improvements. For instance, they still do not have clearly assigned ranks such as assistant professor, associate professor or professor.

## 6. Discussion

## 6.1 Multiple and contested academic identities

Our data shows clearly that Cambodian academics identified with the disciplinary, functional and social dimensions of academic identity. It is also clear that Cambodian academics, similarly to academics everywhere, concerned themselves with their knowledge subjects, institutional roles and social systems.

The complexity of academic identities in Cambodia is evident from the data. Participants have shaped their identity mostly through attachment to their functions, disciplines and sociocultural contexts. In a deeper and more relational sense, the academic identities of Cambodian faculty

are constructed as an interplay between the socio-national form of identity which Brooks and Ly (2010, 95) viewed as "the virtuous motivation … [which] has traditionally been cultural characteristics of the Khmer" and the disciplinary identity attached closely to the functional role of teaching. These identities are influenced by the academic career structures and work environments within the Cambodian higher education system (e.g. Clayton and Yuok 1997; Sloper 1999; Eng 2014). Such formation of academic identities corroborates most theories of identity which use the notion of values, roles, cultures, disciplines and contextual systems to relate to academics (e.g. Harris 2005; Henkel and *Vabø* 2006; Feather 2014; Billot 2010). To quote Harris (2005, 426), "Identities are influenced by individual values and beliefs as well as by institutional culture and positioning".

From a Cambodian contextual perspective, how Cambodian faculty members construct their identities can to some extent be understood through the models of higher education that shape Cambodian universities, the historical development of teaching careers (i.e. the idea of the guru) and the fragmented national school and higher education systems. The history of Cambodian higher education is short, only formally established after independence from France in the early 1950s (Brooks and Ly 2010; Howes and Ford 2011). That said, the conceptualisation of academic identity could be complicated by differences in academic experience between different generations of academics who have been trained in the Soviet system and the Western system and who are considered to hold different points of view about teaching and research (Pit and Ford 2004). Moreover, as the current study indicates, Cambodian faculty members are viewed by other members of society as teachers (the idea of the guru), a notion instilled by traditional understandings of the role of education. Teachers at all levels are traditionally regarded as the source of knowledge and expected to serve the nation by transferring knowledge to the younger generations (Ayres 2000; Brooks and Ly 2010). With regard to such knowledge transfer, Oleksiyenko and Ros (2019, 232) asserted: "Teachers' moral responsibility is described by Cambodian lecturers as a contribution to their students' development … Public opinion is also largely based on final outcomes only, most critically – graduate employment (or lack thereof)." In other words, their service to society is the preparation of students for employment mainly through their teaching.

The contested academic identities among them suggest the questionable quality of postgraduate education that is market-driven rather than academically motivated (Ahrens and McNamara 2013) and the weak base of the academic profession in Cambodian higher education, which is often evident in other postcolonial countries (Altbach 2001).

## 6.2 Concerns about advanced academic or scholarly roles

Cambodian faculty members' engagement in scholarly roles, viewed from the holistically advanced level of scholarship, remains limited. Although faculty members' duties revolve largely around teaching, this teaching role can hardly be considered the scholarship of teaching as proposed by Boyer (1990). Rice (1991) stated that scholarship of teaching has at least three elements: synoptic capacity, pedagogical content knowledge and what we know about learning. The lack of these does not make a person – though engaged in teaching – a scholar.

This limited scholarship of teaching is due partly to the historical lack of roots in the scholarship of discovery (i.e. original research roles) and skills in academic development. Most Cambodian faculty members mainly base their teaching on knowledge obtained from their formal education instead of from academic research. Despite participants' acknowledgement of the role of research in their teaching, some of research activities reported in the interviews are not

consistent with systematic scholarly research on teaching and learning. Rather, the research efforts are merely an exercise to collect information through reading and communicating with people – there was no sign of thorough critical analysis. This so-called research for teaching seems to suggest confusion between the terms "search" and "research", perhaps conditioned by their strikingly similar translation in Khmer (see Keuk 2015).

More to the point, research that could be considered scholarship of discovery remains limited. This is the result of the employment structure which emphasises teaching but does not have clear descriptions or evaluation criteria for other scholarly activities such as research and services. To complicate the matter further, the teaching-oriented employment structure has weak and ill-defined reward and recognition systems that provide faculty members virtually nothing apart from the extra money earned through the allocation of more teaching hours. This employment structure is breeding moonlighting and affiliations across multiple universities (Brooks and Ly 2010; Un et al. 2017). At the same time, it is undermining faculty members' commitment to professional development and scholarship building (Ros and Oleksiyenko 2018). Some take up full-time employment outside universities and become "taxi cab" lecturers, described by Altbach (2005, 154) as someone "who rushes from his or her professional job to teach a class at the university." Regarding the issue of moonlighting and professional development, Ros and Oleksiyenko (2018, 33) postulated:

> …lecturers can easily become discouraged to improve their competencies when competition calls for a greater quantity of teaching hours and supervised students, rather than for improving the quality of teaching and dedication to the learning environments … Resorting to moonlighting opportunities in order to obtain better income, generates serious impediments to self-improvement activities, including reading, doing inquiry-based fieldwork, writing, and contributing to global scientific networks.

Although some emerging research-active higher education institutions have innovated their employment structure to include research duties for academic staff, they have mostly been doing applied research. Further, the research is somewhat income-oriented as it generally serves the interests of funding agencies rather than those of local communities (Sam and Dahles 2017; Rappleye and Un 2018). They are engaged in what Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) call "academic capitalism". Also, Cambodian faculty members generally play a submissive role in donor-funded research projects, compared to their international counterparts (Leng 2016). Other research-active faculty members are seemingly leaving their academic roles and instead becoming freelance researchers or what Usher (2002) calls "knowledge workers" who see the opportunities of using their research skills in knowledge-intensive organisations.

Again, the "missing generation" is yet another undeniable historical fact of Cambodian academia responsible for the low academic research engagement of Cambodian faculty members (Kwok et al. 2010; Brooks and Ly 2010; Kitamura and Umemiya 2013). Kitamura and Umemiya (2013, 87) mentioned "the kind of works normally taken care of by those in their 40s and 50s need to be shouldered by those in their 30s, because of historical reasons particular to Cambodia," influencing academic workloads and environments.

### 6.3 Distracting academic work environment and career evaluation

Given the current employment structure at universities and low civil service salaries (Un et al. 2017), one of our critical perspectives is that Cambodian faculty members are distracted by the feeling of pay insecurity, referring to the lack of a decent income. This

work situation is exacerbated in some ways by doubts and uncertainties about how they are evaluated and promoted. These critical academic issues retrospectively shape their academic identities and roles.

Although moonlighting and multiple-affiliations mean academic staff can earn a high income (Ahrens and McNamara 2013), to do so, they usually overload themselves with teaching duties. At the same time, big money donor-funded research projects lure research-oriented faculty members into bidding for as many contracts as possible. This distraction is so serious that most faculty members seemed motivated by financial incentives and thus were willing to compromise the quality of their academic work (Ros and Oleksiyenko 2018). In a study of Cambodian academic professions (using the CAP survey), Kitamura and Umemiya (2013, 87) concluded:

> First, academic staff are burdened with greater workloads in terms of teaching and administration and do not have much time for research. Second, academic staff, particularly those in their 30s, are spending long hours working part-time jobs.

In addition to teaching duties, the study data indicates that full-time faculty members were assigned different levels of administrative tasks then their part-time counterparts, who generally were solely engaged in teaching. These administrative responsibilities include ad hoc assignments from the institution and daily administrative and paperwork tasks depending on the administrative position they held. In addition, faculty members – both full-time and part-time – may have outside jobs, assignments or even their own business. These multiple-task and multi-position situations create many distractions while doing academic work. In other words, they have to balance their time across many tasks, perhaps even at the cost of underperforming and diminished professional standards of work.

## 7. Conclusions and implications

Cambodian academic identity is generally linked to three dimensions: functional, disciplinary and social. Still, the idea of being an academic is not yet clear at the individual level and needs further comparative analyses (i.e. with others engaging in more technical, vocational and specialised domains) to formulate the common qualities of Cambodian academics. What is clear from this study is that teaching, research and social services are generally believed by Cambodian faculty members to be the core roles of an academic. Quite different from the perceptual claims, faculty members' main roles in reality are teaching and to some extent doing non-academic tasks (especially for full-time faculty members), with academic research, application or integration of knowledge virtually ignored. Overall, when it comes to the advanced scholarship of teaching and learning in Cambodia, even the claims about engagement in scholarly teaching are dubious. The country's academic community largely lacks the element of pure academic discovery and exposure to strong academic cultures, resulting in the virtual absence of the scholarships of integration and application. The critical issues that shape these identities and roles – for example, the French and Soviet legacies, the hybrid models of higher education, the weak postgraduate programs, the socio-national formation of a guru – have to be considered. These findings do not imply any right or wrong academic conceptions or practices because academics engagement in different scholarship types and academic roles tends to fluctuate across contexts and over time.

This study points to the need to question whether it is necessary for Cambodian universities to function fully in the four scholarships or leave some scholarships for other kinds of institutions and whether we should start critically discussing this issue of scholarships at the policy and

academic community level now or later. If the majority of stakeholders in Cambodian higher education believe these are core questions, that should further lead to the need to redefine or re-classify the organisation of the country's academic career system – namely, whether universities that demonstrate engaged scholarship should establish different reward schemes, academic status and values. Although not the sole factors, these elements are pragmatically important to sustain the nation's intellectual capabilities and knowledge stocks for future generations (be it applied local knowledge or universal theoretical knowledge). Advanced knowledge in the form of scholarship should not be confused with other forms of education or training.With so few engaged in advanced levels of scholarship, one might reasonably ask, "is it important that Cambodian faculty members pursue higher scholarly works?" The answer, we argue, depends on the extent to which they shoulder the expectations of Cambodian society and global academic communities. While the government expects universities to produce qualified human resources for the country to reposition itself in the globally connected world (MOEYS 2014), this promise has yet to be successfully fulfilled as skill gaps and mismatches are still an alarming issue (Khieng, Madhur and Chhem 2015). Research-active universities are of vital importance for developing countries to connect with the knowledge economy (Altbach 2009). The same applies to faculty members at the individual level in their networking with global academic communities (Macfarlane 2012). Donor-driven research activities undertaken by some universities and Cambodian faculty members are appreciated but they could be viewed as mere knowledge workers and undervalued by global research communities because their academic prowess is not visible  (as the outputs are mainly written research reports rather than scientific peer-reviewed journal articles). With all these contexts, engaging in high-intensity serious scholarly works is highly recommended for Cambodian academics to contribute to their communities and scholarly societies.

We do admit, however, that it would be virtually impractical for Cambodian faculty members to start pursuing all four scholarships at once. Even so, as Cambodian higher education has moved from rebuilding to unregulated massification, faculty members can no longer rely on merely collecting information from their work environments and personal experiences without critical analysis. Their teaching must be properly supported by research that produces local knowledge to increase their expertise, inform their teaching practice, be relevant for students and contribute to global scholarship building. For that to happen, Cambodian faculty members' academic identity and work must be reconsidered, and important roles must be rewarded so as to allow them to commit themselves to fulfil scholarly roles, as Altbach (2009, 24) maintains: "The academic profession is central to the success of the university everywhere… Full-time commitment and adequate remuneration constitute other necessities. A career path that requires excellence and at the same time offers both academic freedom and job security is also required". Alas, without such reconsideration and mechanisms, Cambodian academia could continue to lack scholarship of discovery, which forms the basis for their engagement in the scholarships of integration, application and teaching.

We could start reconsidering Cambodian scholarship by (1) looking at the national academic system through critical and truth-based dialogues, (2) conducting studies on typology and diversification of higher education institutions, and (3) strategising mediums for academics to connect with international academic communities. Academic roles and scholarship types should be framed at optimum levels, whereby academic staff are expected to meet criteria for professionalism and scholarship. Without that mechanism, Cambodian academia will continue to lack the necessary scholarship of discovery and, without that, valued, outstanding Cambodian scholars will be left unrecognised and under-utilised. Even worse, as other scholars argue, the Cambodian academic profession would no longer be able to retain and attract the best talent,

resulting in brain drain to other professions offering more opportunity and recognition (Pit and Ford 2004). Simply put, the academic profession would be regarded as a "stunned career" (Ros and Oleksiyenko 2018, 33). For young Cambodian academics, Oleksiyenko and Ros (2019, 233) remarked:

> …there is a strong push out of the profession for the young faculty members, who do not see compelling role models or incentives to continue struggling in a low-status and exhausting job. In the absence of intellectual leadership in their institutions, or global connections, many lose faith in the academic profession.

There are some further implications for policy consideration, practice and future research. First, there is a need to clarify the concept of an academic at university level, so that we can understand what types of scholars we want for the nation. The study findings highlighted somewhat vague and confused conceptions and experience of the term "academic" in general. Thus, there is an urgent need to establish proper knowledge-sharing platforms on academic and research culture and academic professionalism. This could be achieved through various practical mediums; for example, through enhancing proper academic or research-based postgraduate programs across the country (with qualified academic supervisors, adequate academic materials and resources, and a proper system of postgraduate education) or through programmatic training at teacher training institutions for higher education. A system to support quality postgraduate schools is necessary for nurturing scholarship and so should be explored through rigorous research. Programmatic interventions on academic identity and work at higher education level can provide good inputs for faculty members to rethink their profession, their academic self and their relations to different cultures and agents. Likewise, embedding knowledge sharing and collaborative program planning in academic professionalism for Cambodian tertiary training institutions are equally necessary. For further research works, comparative and institutional perspectives on the idea of academic identity between universities and other higher education institutions (e.g. training institutes) are needed to understand the convergent and divergent features among different types of Cambodian academic and educational institutions.

## Acknowledgements

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview questions

| Interview Guide |
| --- |
| **on** |
| **Academic Identity and Academic Works of Cambodian Academics** |

**Interview instruction: Setting the scene** (5 minutes)

**1.** *Interviewer's self-introduction:*

After salutation, interviewers **introduce themselves** to participants, telling name, position, institution, and connection between the interviewer's institution and the interviewee's institution when appropriate.

**2.** *Interview objectives:*

The interview is guided by **four main objectives**:

1. to explore Cambodian faculty members' definitions and conceptions of being an academic and academic freedom
2. to conceptualise, define, and operationalise key dimensions and elements of Cambodian academic works
3. to explore participants' perceptions of the types, nature, roles and governance system of academic institutions in Cambodia
4. to observe patterns of differences of conceptions of being an academic and academic works in terms of institutional type and institutional orientation and personal attributes.

These 4 objectives comprise **9 main questions** to be asked by the interviewers to the interviewees. *[The interviewers use the term "academic" throughout the interview. The Khmer translation of the term is អ្នកសិក្សាស្រាវជ្រាវ ឬបណ្ឌិតសភាចារ្យ.]*

**3.** *Confirming time availability of respondent and the use of voice recorder:*

- The interview lasts about **1 hour**.
- **Voice recorder** is and should be used for technical reasons. **The data will be kept confidential** and used only by the interviewers and the research team for the purposes of this study.
- Interviewees and interviewers read and sign the **consent form** to agree to participate in the interview.

| Sections | Time | Specific questions |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Interviewee's self-introduction** | 3–5 minutes | • Name, age, position, institution, work background, current institution<br>• Educational level, graduating university, academic background |
| **I. Conception and perception on academic identity** | 10–15 minutes | 1. What does **being an academic** mean to you? What core identity do you think an academic has?<br>2. Do you think you are an academic? **What is it like** to be one?<br>3. What is **academic freedom** to you? |
| **II. Scope and key elements of academic work** | 10–15 minutes | 4. What **kinds of roles** do you think academics play and engage in? And why?<br>5. What **specific works** are you doing right now that you consider to be part of being an academic? How do you **allocate time** for each specific academic task? Which one do you engage in most? Why?<br>6. **On academic career satisfaction and development:**<br>• Are you **satisfied** with your current career? Why?<br>• What are the **main challenges** in your career?<br>• Do you need **professional development**? What are they? Why is it important? |

| III. Perceptions of the nature and system of academic institutions and academic profession | 10–15 minutes | 7. Do you think being an academic is a **profession**? Why? What characteristics does this profession have?<br>8. **On academic career aspects:**<br>• How were you recruited?<br>• How are you evaluated?<br>• How can you be promoted?<br>• How are you rewarded?<br>• Where do you want to be in the next 5 to 10 years?<br>9. **On academic institution:**<br>• What is an academic institution to you? Do you think academy, university and TVET institutions are the same or different from one another? Why? Do you think your current institution is an academic institution? Why?<br>• Which institutions in Cambodia do you think can be considered an academic institution? What do you think is the nature of those institutions? What roles should academic institutions play? |
| **Closing the interview** | 3–5 minutes | Thanks, interviewees' questions after the interview, and incentives |
| **Thanks for your cooperation!** | | |

## Appendix 2: List of participants

| No | Code | Sex | Position | Interviewer | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | AIP01 | M | Full time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 27 April 2018 |
| 2 | AIP02 | M | Full time lecturer | Ros Vutha | 10 June 2018 |
| 3 | AIP03 | M | Part time lecturer | Heng Sambath and Ravy Sophearoth | 7 June 2018 |
| 4 | AIP04 | F | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 13 June 2018 |
| 5 | AIP05 | M | Full time lecturer | Ros Vutha and Ravy Sophearoth | 26 April 2018 |
| 6 | AIP06 | M | Full time lecturer | Ros Vutha | 30 April, 2018 |
| 7 | AIP07 | M | Part time lecturer | Ros Vutha | 30 April 2018 |
| 8 | AIP08 | M | Full time lecturer | Heng Sambath | 30 April 2018 |
| 9 | AIP09 | M | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom | 26 April 2018 |
| 10 | AIP10 | F | Part time lecturer | Heng Sambath | 26 April 2018 |
| 11 | AIP11 | M | Full time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 26 April 2018 |
| 12 | AIP12 | M | Full time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 26 April 2018 |
| 13 | AIP13 | M | Full time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 26 April 2018 |
| 14 | AIP14 | M | Full time lecturer/Deputy head | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 4 June 2018 |
| 15 | AIP15 | M | Full time lecturer/Director | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 4 June 2018 |
| 16 | AIP16 | F | Full time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 4 June 2018 |
| 17 | AIP17 | M | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom | 7 June 2018 |
| 18 | AIP18 | M | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 12 June 2018 |
| 19 | AIP19 | M | Full time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 4 April 2018 |
| 20 | AIP20 | M | Full time lecturer/Vice Dean | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 5 April 2018 |
| 21 | AIP21 | M | Full time lecturer/Vice Dean | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 5 April 2018 |
| 22 | AIP22 | M | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 5 April 2018 |
| 23 | AIP23 | M | Full time lecturer/Head | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 5 April 2018 |
| 24 | AIP24 | M | Full time lecturer | Eam Phyrom | 31 May 2018 |
| 25 | AIP25 | F | Full time lecturer | Heng Sambath and Ravy Sophearoth | 31 May 2018 |

| 26 | AIP26 | F | Full time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 8 June 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27 | AIP27 | M | Part time lecturer | Heng Sambath | 8 June 2018 |
| 28 | AIP28 | M | Full time lecturer/Director | Eam Phyrom | 8 June 2018 |
| 29 | AIP29 | M | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 8 June 2018 |
| 30 | AIP30 | M | Full time lecturer/Head of Research Department | Eam Phyrom | 2 April 2018 |
| 31 | AIP31 | M | Full time lecturer | Eam Phyrom | 2 April 2018 |
| 32 | AIP32 | M | Part time lecturer/Researcher | Ros Vutha and Heng Sambath | 2 April 2018 |
| 33 | AIP33 | M | Full time lecturer | Ros Vutha and Heng Sambath | 2 April 2018 |
| 34 | AIP34 | M | Part time lecturer | Ros Vutha and Heng Sambath | 2 April2018 |
| 35 | AIP35 | M | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom | 2 April 2018 |
| 36 | AIP36 | M | Full time lecturer/Dean | Heng Sambath | 18 May 2018 |
| 37 | AIP37 | M | Full time lecturer/Dean | Heng Sambath | 18 May 2018 |
| 38 | AIP38 | F | Full time lecturer | Heng Sambath | 18 May 2018 |
| 39 | AIP39 | M | Full time lecturer/Dean | Heng Sambath | 25 April 2018 |
| 40 | AIP40 | M | Full time lecturer/Dean | Eam Phyrom | 25 April 2018 |
| 41 | AIP41 | M | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 25 April 2018 |
| 42 | AIP42 | M | Part time lecturer | Ros Vutha | 2 May 2018 |
| 44 | AIP44 | M | Full time lecturer/Vice dean | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 4 April 2018 |
| 45 | AIP45 | M | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 4 April 2018 |
| 46 | AIP46 | M | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 4 April 2018 |
| 47 | AIP47 | M | Full time lecturer/Vice dean | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 4 April 2018 |
| 48 | AIP48 | M | Part time lecturer | Eam Phyrom and Heng Sambath | 4 April 2018 |

**Note:** A participant, coded AIP43, was excluded from the study because he is not Cambodian. We decided later on at the analysis stage that we would focus only on Cambodian faculty members. So, the total number of participants is only 47.

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