International University Partnerships in Contemporary Cambodian Higher Education

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Higher Education Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

This thesis explores the issue of power relationships in international partnership programs between Cambodian universities and universities in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea, two decades after Cambodia began to be reintegrated into the regional and international communities in the early 1990s. In particular, it examines how far each of the four cases is characterized by mutuality. The cosmopolitan concept of mutuality – made up of equity, autonomy, solidarity and participation – is adopted as the theoretical framework. The study follows a qualitative case study research design, with interviews as the primary method of data collection.

The findings have revealed that although in decline in recent years, French-Cambodian university partnerships over the last two decades have been supported by the French government, whose primary purpose is to promote French culture and language in Cambodia. American-Cambodian university partnerships have taken place on a relatively small scale, with modest support from American aid agencies. Clearly, the US has shown limited interest in Cambodia, other than spreading such concepts as liberal democracy and neo-liberalism in the country. Cambodian university partnerships with Japanese and Korean universities have recently expanded and have been seen to be tied to the increased economic activities of both countries in Cambodia.
Most international partnerships between Cambodian universities and their French, American and Japanese counterparts manifested each aspect of mutuality to some degree. In those programs, academicians from both sides had already built close relationships with each other before moving to establish a formal institutional agreement. By comparison, the degree of mutuality varied among Cambodian-Korean university partnerships, mostly newly established with few prior people-initiated connections. The findings suggest not only the greater maturity in the international experience of French, American and Japanese universities, as opposed to South Korean universities, but also the significant role of human agency and culture in international academic activities.
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List of Acronyms

ACC  Accreditation Committee of Cambodia
AEC  ASEAN Economic Community
AFD  Agence Francaise de Developpement
ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUCC Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
AUF  Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie
AUN/SEED-Net ASEAN University Network (AUN)/Southeast Asia Engineering Education Development Network (SEED-Net)
CCMEP Canada-China Management Education Program
CCULP Canada-China University Linkage Program
CDC  Council for the Development of Cambodia
CIDA  Canadian International Development Agency
CJCC  Cambodia-Japan Cooperation Center
CKCC  Cambodia-Korea Cooperation Center
CRDB  Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board (CDC)
DFID  Department for International Development
GATS  General Agreement on Trade in Services
IDRC  Canada’s International Development Research Center
IIEP  International Institute for Educational Planning
ILO  International Labor Organization
JICA  Japan International Cooperation Agency
KOICA  Korea International Cooperation Agency
MoEYS  Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
NIEO  New International Economic Order
NORAD  Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
ODA  Official Development Assistance
OECD  Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRK  People’s Republic of Kampuchea
SEAMEO Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCTAD</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Trade and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNTAC</td>
<td>United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOMP</td>
<td>World Order Models Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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Chapter One: Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that the world’s changing geopolitics since the 1990s, along with the intense process of globalization, has significantly changed the higher education landscape worldwide. This includes an increase in student and program mobility, mass student enrollment, the application of advanced communication and information technologies in teaching and learning, and the establishment of branch campuses in other countries (Knight, 2008; Altbach, 2006; Scott, 1998, 2005; de Wit, 2002; Maringe & Foskett, 2010; van der Wende, 2001, 2007; Teichler, 2004; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). One of the implications of such changes is that higher education institutions are no longer confined to a particular country or region, but are operating in a global environment. International university partnerships, although not a new phenomenon, have thus been increasingly seen as important for higher education development around the globe.

Cambodian higher education is no exception. Since the early 1990s, when the country began to be reintegrated into the regional and global communities, international educational activities, including university collaboration, have become one of the major sources for the development and improvement of many Cambodian higher education institutions. The purpose of my thesis is to examine the issue of power relationships in international partnerships between Cambodian universities and universities in four developed countries, including France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. I will begin this introductory chapter by presenting the background context surrounding the emergence of international university partnerships in Cambodia since the early 1990s. The statement of the problem will be also given in this context. Then, I will move on to explain my motivation for carrying out this study. Next, I will present the study’s purpose, a guiding research question and sub-questions, and the significance of the study. I will conclude this chapter by defining some key terms as well as providing an outline of my thesis.

Background Context and Statement of the Problem

The comprehensive Paris Peace Accords, signed on October 23, 1991 by four of Cambodia’s political factions, the United Nations, and 18 other countries, signified the end of two decades of protracted civil conflict and international isolation in Cambodia. In particular, the...
agreements set the groundwork for the country to commence a transformation process from a centrally planned economy to a free market and from authoritarianism to liberal democracy. With the support of the United Nations, Cambodia held its first free and fair national election in 1993 to form the new government called the Kingdom of Cambodia. Many Western countries and international organizations began pouring their development assistance into the country to help with its reconstruction and development process, following the massive destruction of social and economic institutions as well as human resources in the preceding periods.

Like other sectors, Cambodian higher education institutions were heavily dependent on foreign technical and financial assistance for their rehabilitation and operation throughout the 1990s. At the time, France was the only developed country willing to offer large-scale assistance to Cambodia’s higher education in a wide range of knowledge areas. Among them, for instance, the Institute of Technology of Cambodia (then named the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Higher Technical Institute) received its first funding package of almost US $18 million from the French government in 1994 (Duggan, 1997). Other countries, including the United States, Britain, Australia, and Japan, also offered several Cambodian higher education institutions financial and technical assistance, although it was relatively marginal compared to the French assistance, and focused on particular fields or disciplines. However, much assistance from multilateral agencies went to basic education (Duggan, 1997). This was based on the premise that return on investments in basic education was higher than that on investments in higher education. Hence, bilateral assistance, in any form, was indispensable for the development of Cambodian universities at the time.

On the downside, however, foreign governments and their aid agencies used their funding packages to directly influence the language of instruction, curriculum, and administrative patterns of Cambodian higher education institutions throughout the 1990s (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997; Clayton, 2006; Pit & Ford, 2004). For instance, the Institute of Technology of Cambodia was required to use the French language as the medium of instruction, when the French government began to offer full financial support (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997). In the same manner, the National University of Management (then National Institute of Management) began to use English as a foreign language, to follow American curriculum and programs of study, and made other reforms in its “twinning programs” with American universities (Hebert 1999). Overall, the existing literature tends to conclude that international collaborative activities in Cambodian
higher education during the 1990s were characterized by considerable foreign domination (Clayton, 2006; Pit & Ford, 2004).

To reduce dependency on foreign assistance and to enable higher education institutions to diversify their income sources, the Cambodian government introduced the policy of higher education privatization in the mid-1990s, allowing public institutions to charge tuition fees and private institutions to operate. Since then, the system has significantly expanded and greatly diversified to include 39 public and 62 private higher education institutions by 2012 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport [MoEYS], 2013a). It enrolled more than 216,053 students in 2011-2012 (MoEYS, 2013a), representing a sharp increase from 13,464 students in 1996 (World Bank, 2010). The system has offered specialized degrees at both undergraduate and graduate levels, “in nearly 100 fields ranging from foreign languages, health science, engineering, agriculture, tourism, business management to law and economics” (UNESCO, 2010, p. 26). Notably, student tuition fees have increasingly become the major source of income for all higher education institutions, public and private alike. Therefore, the privatization reforms, to a certain extent, marked a significant move away from aid dependence to self-reliance. (The issue of foreign domination in the 1990s will be further discussed in the literature review chapter).

Over the last two decades, the development of Cambodian higher education has also been influenced by the country’s engagement in the regional and international communities. Cambodia became a member of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on April 30, 1999 and a World Trade Organization (WTO) member on October 13, 2004. The increased regional and international involvement has shaped Cambodia’s current economic and political context, with a significant impact on the higher education sector. For instance, along with the growth of its economic interests in ASEAN, Japan has become more engaged with the development of higher education in ASEAN countries, including Cambodia. One of the examples of this is the extensive ASEAN University Network/Southeast Asian Engineering Education Development-Network (AUN/SEED-Net), which was initiated by the Japanese government in 1997 and began its first phase in 2003. (This program will be elaborated upon in Chapter Six). Moreover, ASEAN itself aims to enhance collaboration and engagement among universities in the region after the ASEAN economic integration, expected to begin in 2015. All this suggests that Cambodian higher education institutions and the country at large are no longer operating in isolation, but moving forward within the context of regional and international collaboration.
On the other hand, and in spite of such significant growth and expansion over the last ten years, the overall condition of Cambodian higher education institutions remains relatively poor. All of them, public and private alike, are mainly occupied with teaching or training, without focusing on research. The government does not offer any major financial support for higher education, except for funding a minimal portion of the salaries of university staff and faculty in the public sector. As Ford (2003) puts it, the system is still “on the periphery of the international scene – barely able to access it, let alone participate or contribute to it” (p. 12). The country remains one of the poorest and most aid-dependent countries in the world. The total foreign assistance from 1992 to 2011 amounted to US $12.13 billion, which has covered 90% of public expenditure in the country (Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board [CRDB] of the Council for the Development of Cambodia, 2011). Hence, against the backdrop of all these changes, my study sets out to explore the issues of power relationships in international programs between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in four economically advanced nations, namely France, the United States, Japan and South Korea.

Rationale for the Study

There are three major factors behind my interest in carrying out this study: (1) the sparse literature on this topic of power dynamics in contemporary Cambodian higher education; (2) the ongoing debate about persistent power relationships at the global level; and (3) the differences between Cambodian and Western values I have observed and experienced thus far. First, there has been little scholarly work on Cambodia’s higher education, let alone on its international university partnership programs. Studies by Clayton and Ngoy (1997), Pit and Ford (2004), and Clayton (2006) focused on the issue of foreign dominance over Cambodian higher education during the 1990s and early 2000s when all international partnership programs took the form of foreign assistance. However, I found few studies looking at partnership activities between Cambodian and foreign universities over the last ten years or so, amidst the rapid expansion of the higher education system as pointed out earlier. New forms of university partnerships have emerged, which deserve attention and in-depth research. Also, those early studies paid limited analytical attention to the issues of power dynamics from a cultural perspective – an aspect of growing concern since the 1990s.
Second, my interest in this topic has been instigated by an ongoing debate in the field of Comparative and International Education on the persistent issues of inequality and dependency in international university partnerships between the North and the South. Especially, it has been widely acknowledged that researchers and institutions in Europe and North America have been, and are still, playing a dominant role in their international activities with universities in the developing world (Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Binka, 2005; Boshoff, 2009; Buchert, 2002; Samoff, 1999; King, 2008; Habermann, 2008). Western epistemological assumptions have been seen as the preferred models or benchmarks in the world knowledge system, with limited attention paid to the local culture, beliefs, and values in the South, especially in practice. Ironically, many of the studies that have been done, with the purpose of tackling such issues, have largely been framed within dependency, world systems, neo-colonial and center-periphery theories. These theoretical lenses tend to see economic and political factors as the core issues, ignoring the cultural and local context of the South. Hence, instead of making an assumption based merely on the existing literature from other countries, I think it is important that my study adopts an alternative paradigm of cosmopolitanism to look at issues of power relationships in the Cambodian context. As a political theory, this paradigm places strong emphasis on human relationships and the local context, in a broader sense, as key to understanding international academic relations.

Last, but not least, my keen interest in exploring the issue of power dynamics in international programs in contemporary Cambodian higher education partly stems from the differences between Cambodian and Western values which I have experienced and observed over the years. Growing up in Cambodia, I was taught and learned to appreciate and accept inherent social orders in both the family and society. Such hierarchical relationships, deeply rooted in the Buddhist ethos, manifest themselves in various ways, based primarily on people’s position, sex, gender and age. To give one obvious example, it would be inappropriate and impolite, within the Cambodian context, for me to call my teachers, seniors or elders by their first names, or use the general pronoun “you” with any of them. Likewise, in most situations, I would not be expected or encouraged to question or challenge those who are regarded as ideologically privileged. Such practices have been highly valued and seen as a path to harmony in the family, community and society as a whole. This form of socio-cultural system is in contrast to the Western practice of liberal democracy, which for the most part regards hierarchical relationships as the roots of social problems. Hence, these cross-cultural experiences
have made me increasingly aware that Cambodian views of power relationships in international university collaborative programs might be different from those of their Western counterparts.

In fact, many studies have suggested that the promotion of Western concepts and ideologies in Cambodia over the half-century period has been a failure (Gyallay-Pap, 2007; Harris, 2005; Peou, 2000). As Gyallay-Pap points out:

While Cambodia’s political system has in fits and starts, since World War II in particular, assumed the trappings of an imported secular liberal democracy, not to mention the immanentizations of communism (also western-derived) in the 1970s and 1980s, these foreign elements, unlike the earlier Indic or even Chinese materials, have arguably yet to find a local root for a successful graft. (p. 76)

Taking the argument further, several studies have revealed that such a failure has been attributed to the fact that Western liberal democracy has always been in conflict with the deep-rooted social hierarchical system practiced in Cambodia, and in the ASEAN region at large (Ojendal & Antlov, 1998; Kent & Chandler, 2008; Ledgerwood, n.d.). All this indicates that the study of power relationships in contemporary Cambodian higher education cannot be fully understood without taking into account Cambodia’s cultural values. This epistemological assumption that power dynamics are a socially constructed notion further suggests that methodologically, a qualitative research approach would fit this study’s purpose well.

For all the above reasons, I am convinced that one can understand the issues of power dynamics in international university partnerships in contemporary Cambodia, only within the country’s social-cultural, economic and political context. It is important to highlight that while my own personal and cultural values, in many senses, are different from Western ones, I have increasingly become aware of the utility of Western values, by training and through my experience living and studying in North America for many years, and would acknowledge them as equally important. Therefore, it is not my intention to favor one value system over another throughout this dissertation project – such an approach would definitely be unwise or even counterproductive in this increasingly interconnected world. Instead, my study aims to explore and understand Cambodian issues by recognizing the agency of the locals in a way that would lead to dialogue between them and their foreign counterparts. Cosmopolitanism, which places strong emphasis on human agency and relations, serves this purpose, and thus is an appropriate theoretical lens for my study.
Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the power relationships in international cooperation between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the developed world. In particular, the study uses the cosmopolitan concept of mutuality (Galtung, 1975, 1980; Held, 2003, 2010) as a theoretical lens to examine how far those international university programs have manifested mutual benefits and equity. The four developed countries that will be used as comparative case studies include France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. France was the only country willing to offer extensive assistance to Cambodian higher education institutions in a wide range of knowledge areas during the 1990s. However, French educational assistance has gradually declined since the early 2000s, while Cambodian higher education has significantly expanded. Bilateral relations between the two countries have also been shaped by almost a century of French colonialism (1863–1953). Hence, it is important that any research on international academic relations in contemporary Cambodian higher education, including this study, needs to cover French educational programs.

In comparison, the United States has offered relatively marginal support for Cambodian higher education. Nonetheless, the American higher education model has increasingly become very influential in Cambodia, as in other countries around the globe. Several universities in Cambodia have recently increased their collaborative programs with American universities. Related to, and one may argue, helping facilitate, the dominance of the American model is the popularity of the English language among Cambodian scholars, students and higher education institutions (Clayton, 2006; Leng, 2010). By comparison, despite France’s wide-ranging support for Cambodian higher education, Cambodian students and institutions are less interested in learning French and would opt for English, if they had to make a decision between the two languages (Clayton, 2006). Thus, it is important that this comparative study looks at power relationships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France and the United States.

Japan has been the largest donor for Cambodia, with its assistance amounting to US $2.1 billion from 1992 to 2011 – representing nearly one fifth of the Official Development Assistance [ODA] Cambodia received over this period (Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board of the Council for the Development of Cambodia, 2011). Nevertheless, only recently has Japan increased its large-scale support for Cambodian higher education, in particular in the field of
engineering. The assistance is part of the extensive ASEAN University Network/Southeast Asian Engineering Education Development-Network (AUN/SEED-Net), which was initiated by the Japanese government in 1997. The program was aimed at promoting the development of higher education in the ASEAN region, mainly in the field of engineering. Interestingly, such extensive Japanese assistance has replaced France’s assistance, which has gradually declined in recent years, at Cambodia’s engineering university. Along with Japanese assistance was the introduction of the Anglo-American academic system and the English language to the university – a phenomenon that deserves in-depth study and analysis.

South Korea only restored its official relations with Cambodia in 1997. However, it has become one of Cambodia’s key economic partners, with its cumulative foreign direct investment in the kingdom reaching US $4,191 million from 1994-2012, the second largest after China (Council for the Development of Cambodia [CDC], 2013). Besides, it has emerged as one of the new donors for Cambodia, providing the country with up to US $180 million of development aid from 2005 to 2011 (CRDB, 2011). Cambodian-Korean university linkages have increased over time. Hence, this qualitative case study will offer a comparative analysis of inter-university collaborative programs between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in four developed countries, two Western and two Asian.

**Overarching Research Question**

I framed and developed my key research question, based on two major theories: the World Order Model Project theory by Johan Galtung (1975, 1980) and cosmopolitanism by David Held (2003, 2010). Like many other theorists, Galtung and Held have widely discussed the issues of dominance and power inequality between core and periphery nations. What is unique about their approach is that they both share similar views about the type of preferred future for the world, through developing the ideal framework of mutuality. This framework is made up of four aspects, including equity, autonomy, solidarity and participation. Guided by this framework, my primary research question is:

**To what extent are Cambodia’s international university partnership programs with developed countries characterized by mutuality?**
I broke this core question into two sub-questions, as follows:

a. **What are the rationales for international university partnerships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea?**

   This sub-question is aimed at providing the broad context in which international educational projects in Cambodian higher education have been developed since the early 1990s.

b. **How do Cambodians view their experience in international university cooperative programs?**

   From a Cambodian perspective, this question is intended to explore whether the current international partnership projects with the four developed countries have manifested mutuality or still take the form of foreign domination which took place throughout the 1990s, as indicated by several studies.

To address the above research questions, I followed a qualitative research methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012; Creswell, 1994, 2003, 2005, 2013). In particular, I used a multiple case study design, with France, the United States, Japan and South Korea each as cases, to explore the issue of power dynamics in contemporary Cambodian higher education. Data were collected mainly through interviews with faculty and administrators at three Cambodian universities, as well as with policy-makers and professionals at other relevant agencies, including the MoEYS, the Department of Higher Education, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia and the UNESCO Office in Cambodia.

**Significance of the Study**

This study will contribute to the limited literature on Cambodian higher education. The findings will enable Cambodian higher education institutions to determine the kinds of international programs, in particular those related to university partnerships, which best serve the needs of Cambodian society. Each higher education institution could use the findings to identify their own potential to contribute to international partnership programs in whatever ways
possible, to create a form of dialogue rather than a one-way dominance by their more economically developed counterparts. Institutional leaders would be able to refine their academic programs, policies, institutional missions, values and functions, so that their respective institutions become more engaged within the international scholarly community. Policy-makers at the Cambodian Ministry of Education and at the Department of Higher Education could also use the findings to (re)evaluate their role in international academic relations.

Other post-colonial states and emerging economies might also learn from the Cambodian experience. Likewise, developed countries could use the findings to refine or rethink their role in international educational programs, through establishing and promoting mutually beneficial partnerships with a wide range of developing countries. Importantly, using the cosmopolitan concept of mutuality, this study explores issues in international academic relations outside the mainstream theoretical orientation of neo-Marxist approaches. In other words, it joins the new wave of scholarly work which places an emphasis on the importance of the agency of the local in international partnership programs. I believe that scholarship and practice have to go hand in hand to promote mutuality and equity among communities and countries around the world.

Definitions of Key Terms

In this section, I present the definitions of six key concepts, including the internationalization of higher education, the international university partnerships, mutuality, constructivism, cosmopolitanism and Theravada Buddhism.

Internationalization of higher education.

Since this study adopts the rationale for internationalization as one of its conceptual frameworks, it is important that the concept of internationalization in higher education is defined here. Knight (2008) describes internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions (research, teaching and service) or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels” (p. xi). This definition implies that internationalization embraces diverse cultural/ethnic groups within a country, and thus, is different from globalization, which is seen as a homogenization process. Internationalization is one of a university’s strategic responses to globalization and one of the
ways a nation reacts to the impact of globalization while, at the same time, respecting the individual identity and culture of the nation (Knight, 2008; van der Wende, 2001, Zha, 2003). Furthermore, Knight (2008), van der Wende (2001) and Zha (2003) have pointed out that the internationalization of higher education emphasizes the building of strategic relationships and cooperation among countries. This is reflected through such concepts as education or research cooperation, student or faculty exchanges, international curricula and joint programs.

**International university partnerships.**

One form of internationalization activities, international university partnerships refer to the formal linkages between local and overseas universities, which are established through the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) or other forms of institutional agreement. Such partnerships take various forms, including student/faculty exchanges, joint research, curriculum development, professional training, and dual/joint degree programs. This study will use the terms “university partnership”, “university collaboration” and “university linkage” interchangeably. These terms, by nature, suggest mutually reached agreements, in which all parties involved in joint international activities gain equal benefits, as often used by many studies, including de Wit (2002), Knight (2008) and Sutton and Obst (2011). This means that, in reality, these terms overlook the existing power imbalance between developing and developed countries, which have always tended to dictate how university partnerships are to be established and implemented. To complement this, therefore, my study uses the mutuality framework to explore and understand the issues of power relationships in contemporary Cambodian higher education.

**Mutuality.**

Within the context of international academic relations, the mutuality concept is rooted in Galtung’s (1975, 1980) structural theory of imperialism and has later been refined by David Held (2003, 2010) in his cosmopolitanism. This concept is made up of four aspects: (a) Equity, meaning the aims and forms of cooperative programs are reached through mutual agreement; (b) Autonomy, meaning participants from both sides show respect for and are willing to learn about each other’s culture, knowledge and belief systems; (c) Solidarity, meaning collaborative programs encourage strong links and interconnectedness among participants in the developing
world; and (d) Participation, meaning faculty, researchers and administrators in the developing world participate fully in all activities and contribute to knowledge production on an equal basis with those in the developed world.

**Constructivism.**

Methodologically, this study is situated within constructivism. This paradigm emphasizes that people “create subjective meanings of their experiences and the world that are negotiated within the social, cultural and historical context in which their lives are embedded” (Winston, 2012, p. 113). It adopts a value-explicit approach, meaning that a researcher’s own values, beliefs, prejudices and judgment are explicitly stated, thereby shaping the overall process of a research study. The aim of any inquiry under this paradigm is not to generate “a nomothetic body of knowledge in the form of generalizations”, but rather “to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of ‘a working hypothesis’ that describe the individual case” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 38).

**Cosmopolitanism.**

The key theoretical framework of this study is cosmopolitanism. This theory has a long history, with its basic principle maintaining that, “there are moral obligations owed to all human beings based solely on our humanity alone, without reference to race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, culture, religion, political affiliation, state citizenship, or other communal particularities” (Brown & Held, 2010, p. 1). As a political theory, it highlights the importance of human agency and local cultures and values. Since the 1990s, the paradigm has increasingly drawn more attention in the field of international relations, with the world moving toward a multipolar economic and political system, a departure from the geopolitical situation of the Cold War.

**Theravada Buddhism.**

One of the oldest schools of early Buddhism, Theravada literally means “Teaching, Doctrine or View” of the Elders, who in this case refer to the senior monks who preserve the religious tradition. A Theravadin is an adherent of this branch of Buddhism. Theravada
Buddhism, according to its followers, has three “Gems” or “Jewels”, including: the Buddha, referring to someone who is enlightened or awakened; the Dharma, meaning the teaching of the Buddha; and the Sangha, referring to the group or community of followers of the Buddha (Gombrich, 1988; Tilakaratne, 2012). There is a common metaphor connecting these three jewels or concepts together: “The Buddha is the great physician, the Dhamma is the remedy he prescribes, the Sangha is the nurse who administers that remedy” (Gombrich, 1988, p. 2). While Theravada Buddhism has now become ubiquitous around the world, the four countries with predominant adherents to this form in the ASEAN region include Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand.

In this study, I argue that the Buddhist ethos, which underpins the tradition of the patron-client relationships, has shaped how Cambodian people view their relationships with their foreign counterparts in international university programs. It is important to note that Buddhism has a long history and by now has varying interpretations and practices, even within the same school of Theravada Buddhism. As Ling (1993) explained, “‘Buddhism’ is an ideological abstraction, since ‘Buddhists’ and their Buddhist traditions are everywhere country-specific, and Buddhism, in real terms, has from the earliest days been pluralistic” (p. 5). The Cambodian form of Theravada Buddhism will be further elaborated upon in Chapters Three and Four.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into eight chapters. In Chapter Two, I connect three bodies of literature: (1) international cooperation and inter-university linkages in higher education since the Second World War; (2) international academic relations theories; and (3) inter-university linkage programs between Cambodian universities and their foreign counterpart since the 1990s. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, it is aimed at exploring the gap in the theoretical and practical literature regarding international university partnerships. Second, through this extensive literature review, I argue that cosmopolitanism is best suited for the study of the issues of power dynamics in the Cambodian context.

Chapter Three provides the country context in which this study is carried out. I begin the chapter with an overview of the land and people of Cambodia, followed by a brief outline of the country’s history, from the early centuries of the Christian era through to the present time. Next, I look at various aspects of contemporary Cambodian society, including its economic
development, politics and governance, socio-cultural system, education and Cambodian international relations.

I begin Chapter Four by introducing the political theory of cosmopolitanism, within which I situate this study. This is followed by the discussions of two conceptual frameworks for the internationalization rationale (Knight & de Wit, 1995; de Wit, 2002, 2011; Knight, 2008) and mutuality (Galtung, 1975, 1980; Held, 2003, 2010). These two conceptual frameworks are each used to address the two sub-questions of the study. At the end of the chapter, I discuss how power has been perceived and (re)conceptualized over time in Cambodian society, in particular in relation to the tradition of patron-client relationships.

Chapter Five presents the study’s qualitative methodology and research design. I first describe the ontology, epistemology and axiology of the constructivist paradigm, which underlies qualitative research. I then present various aspects of the case study research design, including the sampling method, research sites, data collection, and data analysis strategies. I end the chapter with the ethical considerations as well as the limitations of the study.

Chapter Six addresses the first research sub-question, by looking at the forms of and rationales for international university partnership programs between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the four case study countries. Emphasizing the importance of the local context, I also examine the emerging themes that have influenced those international university partnership programs.

Chapter Seven presents the findings about the issue of mutuality in contemporary Cambodian higher education, based on interviews supplemented with documents. The analysis is made along the lines of the four aspects of mutuality, including equity, autonomy, solidarity and participation. At the end of the chapter, I bring into the discussion the patron-client practice, which, to great extent, influenced how Cambodian participants constructed their power relations with their foreign partners.

In Chapter Eight, I summarize all the findings, first revisiting the two sub-questions, including rationales for international university partnerships in contemporary Cambodian higher education as well as the issue of mutuality. Various recommendations are also offered for Cambodian universities and government, foreign universities and governments, and other external agencies concerned with this issue. Then, I revisit the cosmopolitan concept of mutuality by discussing it within the Cambodian context of Buddhism. I end this chapter by looking at the limitations of the study, along with some suggestions for future research.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review existing practical and theoretical literature on international academic relations and discuss the critical tools available to examine university partnership programs in contemporary Cambodian higher education. I will look at the intersection among three bodies of literature: (1) international cooperation and inter-university linkages in higher education since the Second World War; (2) international academic relations theories; and (3) inter-university linkage programs between Cambodian universities and their foreign counterparts since the 1990s. I will begin this chapter by discussing the evolution of inter-university linkages in relation to international cooperation approaches in the post-World War II period. Following this, I will look at the international relations theories to seek an explanation for persisting power asymmetries in international university cooperation. Against the backdrop of these two sets of literature, I will then review the history of international cooperation in Cambodia since the early 1990s as it relates to the higher education sector and international cooperation.

International Cooperation and Inter-University Linkages

A review of related literature indicates that the history of cross-border inter-university linkages dates back as early as the origin of universities themselves (King, 2009; Altbach, 1998). However, most North-South inter-university linkages only emerged during the colonial period when new Western-style universities, colleges or institutes were established in the colonized Southern countries, as affiliates of Northern metropolitan universities (Altbach, 1998; Perkin, 2006; King, 2009; Schoole, 2008; Mazrui, 1975; Hountondji, 1998; Samoff & Carrol, 2004, de Wit, 2002). The main function of those affiliated institutions was to train a relatively small group of local elite to help with Western colonial administration in the South. Several forms of affiliated religious institutions were also created by Western private foundations in both colonized and non-colonized Southern countries, mainly to serve religious purposes (King, 2009; Altbach, 1998; Perkin, 2006). The limited role of those newly established institutions indicates that initial inter-university linkages between the two different parts of the world during the colonial period primarily served the interests of colonial governments or Western religious foundations, rather than responding to the needs of the colonized South. The growth and
expansion of higher education in the South only took place in the aftermath of decolonization (Altbach, 1998; Perkin, 2006; King, 2009; Schoole, 2008; Mazrui, 1975).

Following their independence, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, most former colonized nations in the South began expanding their higher education systems, as part of their national development plans. With limited resources, however, their higher education development remained heavily dependent on foreign aid agencies, both from their former colonial powers and from other Western countries, for financial and technical support (Altbach, 1998; King, 2009; Forster, 1999; Schoole, 2008; Gaillard, 1994; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Banya & Elu, 2001; Crossley & Watson, 2003). Those aid agencies included the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the British Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas (IUC) and aid agencies from France, Canada, other developed Western countries and the Soviet Union. The Ford, Rockefeller, Kellogg and Carnegie foundations were, and one may argue continue to be, instrumental in expanding an American approach to higher education (King, 2009; Schoole, 2008). It should be noted that multilateral organizations such as the World Bank have played a key role in international educational cooperation as well. While originally, their assistance programs focused primarily on basic education, and in some periods, non-formal and technical/vocational education, multilateral organizations have been influential in endorsing a human-capital driven cooperation in the higher education sector since the 1990s (Crossley & Watson, 2003; Banya & Elu, 2001; Collins & Rhoads, 2010).

Aid and technical assistance programs by foreign aid agencies usually linked higher education institutions in the South with those in the former metropoles in the North (King, 1990, 2009; Altbach, 1998; Schoole, 2008; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Banya & Elu, 2001; Arnove, 1980). In this form of university linkage program, scholarships and professional development opportunities were offered to faculty and outstanding students in developing nations to pursue their education at partner universities in developed countries. Scholars and staff from institutions in the North were also sent to the South to help with educational training and curriculum development. The American foundations, namely Ford, Rockefeller, Kellogg and Carnegie, also introduced new approaches and new fields of the social sciences into peripheral institutions which had followed the British or French curricula during the colonial period (King, 2009). In addition, it was through these foundations that the concept of “capacity building” (e.g. research and institutional capacity building) in international education development projects was first introduced to Asia, Africa, and Latin America after the Second World War (King, 2009). It is
important to highlight the fact that compared to programs of Western government aid agencies, such as USAID and CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), many projects by those private foundations did not necessarily link universities in the South with American universities. To quote from King (2007):

> It may be more common for bilateral agencies to utilize the linkage model, as they have a natural constituency of national higher education institutions to draw upon. By contrast, the international divisions of the American foundations have not felt a special obligation to use American universities, in linkage arrangements, in building university capacity overseas. (*His note in the draft (2007) of higher education and international cooperation: The role of academic collaboration in the developing world*)

Overall, however, international university partnerships in the period after the Second World War took the form of foreign assistance by Western governments and their aid agencies.

The situation, as described above, demonstrated strong power asymmetries in international programs between the North and the South (King, 1990; 2009; Arnowe, 1980; Baud, 2002). King (1990) described participants from the North (center) as trainers and those at the periphery as trainees, reflecting the inequality of knowledge transfer within such university linkage projects. Also, a foreign language, especially that spoken by the donor country, was usually the means of communication in university collaborative projects (Altbach, 1977, 1998, 2006; Sehoole, 2008). The most striking case of foreign domination was in the African region, in which local universities were greatly influenced by their Western counterparts in terms of language of instruction, curricula, and other major administrative aspects (Mazrui, 1975).

As noted in some of the critical literature at the time, donor countries from the West and their aid agencies mainly adopted a scientific and quantitative approach in their international educational activities, including inter-university linkage projects (King, 1990; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Hayhoe, 1989; Weiler, 1978; Eckstein & Noah, 1985; Carnoy, 1974; Masemann & Welch, 1997). Such a positivist approach was influenced by the emergence and dominance of a functionalist image of world order from the 1950s to the 1970s (Hayhoe, 1989, Masemann & Welch, 1997). The functionalists (in this case, scholars and policy-makers from developed countries) viewed the world as one system like a human body and thus, to keep it functioning as well as to maintain its equilibrium, they needed to integrate developing countries into the world through transferring scientific and technological knowledge to them. The dominance of the positivist and functionalist approach had a great influence on the field of comparative education at the time. Many comparative education scholars, including George Bereday (1965), Harold
Noah and Max Eckstein (1969), began efforts to make comparative education “scientific”, using statistical data on a large scale.

Complementary to the functionalist worldview was the prevalence of human capital development theory during the 1950s and the 1960s, which suggests a strong relationship between educational investment and economic development. The theory supported the view that in order to be modernized, developing countries needed to know how to harness science and technology pioneered by industrialized countries (Carnoy, 1974; Nair & Menon, 2002; Leys, 1996). Leaders and policy-makers of many developing countries were persuaded to buy into the theory as the premise for the expansion of their educational systems (Banya & Elu, 2001). Other peripheral nations, however, adopted this development theory due in large part to the aid conditions set by industrialized countries and other international agencies. The consequence of either case was that Western knowledge was “certified or legitimated as worthy, desirable and conferring status”, while knowledge originating in the developing world became increasingly neglected or, in some cases, “suppressed” (Noah & Eckstein, 1998, p. 76).

Along with the positivist and developmentalist approach was the fact that huge bilateral assistance for higher education in the developing world for decades following the decolonization period was mainly related to the Cold War competition between the Soviet bloc and the nations allied with the U.S. (Altbach, 1977, 1998; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; King, 1990; Sehoole, 2008; Arnove, 1980; Forster, 1999; Mundy, 2007; Berman, 1979). In other words, those developed countries were primarily interested in influencing political and economic ideologies in the developing world. Hence, international academic collaboration through aid and technical assistance, including inter-university linkage projects, was initiated and planned by Western countries, with little attention paid to the needs, culture and realities of the developing world. Peripheral universities, without resources, became increasingly dependent on institutions at the center. Crossley and Watson (2003), who have done extensive research on the development of comparative education since the end of World War II, have described this period of international educational cooperation, dominated by the North, as the “uncritical international transfer” of educational policy and practice (p. 89). Important to note is that, at the time, there was also limited collaboration among Western aid agencies working in the South (Crossley & Watson, 2003). This added more challenges to the already-underdeveloped systems of higher education in Southern countries, in the wake of their independence.
By the 1970s, the positivist approach and development theory were strongly contested, due to the failure in the transfer of knowledge, science and technology from developed countries to the South. Disparities between systems of higher education in the North and those in the South had become quite evident, with local knowledge in the South increasingly marginalized within the international knowledge system (Altbach, 1977, 1998; King, 1990; Crossley & Watson, 2003; Carnoy, 1974; Odora Hoppers, 2000). Instead of tackling development problems in the developing world, collaborative international academic projects, including inter-university linkage programs, were seen to reinforce knowledge inequalities and dependencies between the two different zones, providing greater benefits to universities and scholars at the center than their peripheral counterparts. Although there were several instances in which elite Southern universities gained considerable benefits from international projects with Northern agencies and universities (Sehoole, 2008), most Southern universities were limited in the degree to which they could respond to the needs and realities of their own societies (Carnoy, 1974; Crossley & Watson, 2003; Mazrui, 1975; Collins & Rhoads, 2010; Altbach, 1977, 1998).

This was an issue in Cambodia during its early period of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s (Ayres, 2000a, 2000b; Huon, 1974). Like leaders of many developing countries, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the postcolonial leader of Cambodia, began to adopt modernization and human resource development theories to help improve the country. Such a new idea of development and capitalism was not only puzzling to Cambodian students, but also did not work for the society, in which the majority of people (and are still) farmers (Ayres, 2000a, 2000b; Huon, 1974). As in many other developing countries, the consequences were “discrepancies between promises and reality, between educational delivery and social needs, and between the rising costs of educational provision and the funds available to meet those costs” (Ayres, 2000b, p. 443).

In response to the perceived failure of the positivist approach and development theory in the 1960s and 1970s, a number of international academic relations theories arose to examine the growing disparities between countries in the North and those in the South. Those theories include dependency theory, world systems theory, and the World Order Models Project (WOMP) theory. Despite some variations in their argument, they all contend that the failure of international academic cooperative programs, including the inter-university linkage projects, to transfer knowledge and science from countries in the North to those in the South was largely due to the inherently asymmetrical political and economic system, which had been dominated by the North
since the colonial period (Holsti, 1985; Carnoy, 1974; McLean, 1983; Odora Hoppers, 2000; Eckstein & Noah, 1985; Altbach, 1977, 1998; Hayhoe & Mundy, 2008; Crossley & Watson, 2003; Galtung, 1980). In particular, with abundant resources, industrialized countries in the North or at the center controlled the world’s scientific and technological research, including international journals and databases, upon which under-developed and non-industrial economies in the South or at the periphery became increasingly dependent. Thus, the failure of higher education systems in the South to respond to the development needs of their countries was attributable to the irrelevance of higher education curricula and research to the local economy. Simply put, knowledge, science and technology from the North did not work in the South, due to the different social, cultural, economic and political contexts. Through these theoretical lenses, the division of the globe into two major categories of center or developed and periphery or underdeveloped in the post-independence periods was seen as largely the same as the colonizer-colonized dichotomy in a preceding period, as explained within these international academic relations theories.

Along with the above socio-economic theories was the emergence of post-colonial theory by scholars from the third world or former colonized countries, who strove to “develop a body of writing that attempts to shift the dominant ways in which the relations between western and non-western people and their worlds are viewed” (Young, 2003; p. 2). Unlike dependency and world systems theories, which confine their focus mainly to international economic and political inequalities and dominance, post-colonial scholars examined the hegemony of Western knowledge and culture over those in developing countries (Young, 2003; Memmi, 1965; Said, 1978; Rock, 2008; Tikly, 1999). In his book *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said claimed that through colonialism, European countries used language and rhetoric to construct the worldview that they were superior to and more civilized than the “backward” Asians and other non-Westerners. Following the decolonization era, he continued, such a view remained powerful and was, in effect, reinforced by the legacies of colonialism and by the development and advancement of Western knowledge systems and society at large. One of the consequences was the growing marginalization of the knowledge and culture of developing countries, particularly in Asia, Africa and Latin America. On this ground, post-colonial theorists called for the restructuring of the worldview, arguing for the participation of third world scholars and literature in the world knowledge system. The main goal of post-colonial theory is to promote “the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being” (Young, 2003, p. 2).
The emergence of all the above-mentioned critical theoretical perspectives drew further attention to the already-much-criticized inequalities and dependencies between the North and the South, which had increased by the 1970s. This led to the call for more involvement of scholars and policy-makers from developing countries in the initiation, planning and implementation of international collaborative projects during the subsequent periods (Canto & Hannah, 2001; Girot & Enders, 2004; Hayhoe, 1989, Collins & Rhoads, 2010; King, 2009). International collaborative projects in Chinese higher education during the 1980s were exemplary of the changing trend towards mutuality and partnerships between the North and the South. As Ruth Hayhoe (1989) has pointed out, from the onset, Chinese scholars and policy-makers were involved in project initiations, planning and implementation (Hayhoe, 1989). Also, scholars in other developing countries, including Brazil, began to have their publications made in international journals either individually or as co-authors with scholars from the North through international university linkage programs (Canto & Hannah, 2001). Before then, relatively few joint research projects had existed between participants from the North and the South. Of course, the Chinese case might be seen to be exceptional, since the country was not a post-colonial society, but had its own economic and political system when it opened itself to the outside world in the late 1970s.

At the international level beyond the area of international academic relations, WOMP scholars, including Raul Prebisch, Johan Galtung and Ali Mazrui, also played an important role in joining hands with other non-aligned groups from the developing world to help restructure the international economic system that had been controlled by and thus, primarily served the interests of developed countries throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Sauvant, 1977; Singh, 1985; Galtung, 1977; Karunaratne, 1984; Malmgren, 1977). Sauvant (1977) described the inequalities of the world economic system as follows:

The interests, needs, and special conditions of the developing countries (DCs), most of whom were still colonies in the immediate postwar years, were largely ignored in this process. As a result, and in spite of a few later changes, the system and its mechanisms did not improve the situation of most DCs to the extent desired. Acute poverty, chronic unemployment, and endemic undernourishment continued in most of them, or even worsened, and their economic dependence on the metropolitan countries was perpetuated and even extended into new eras. (p. 3)

Due to such Western economic hegemony and exploitation, the group of seventy seven nations (G-77) from the developing world, along with WOMP scholars, pushed for the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in
1964, whose aim was to promote “the development-friendly integration of developing countries into the world economy” (UNCTAD, n.d.). The growing influence of the G-77 and the founding of the UNCTAD gradually allowed developing countries to gain more representation in the United Nations, whose economic policy had, before then, been exclusively controlled by developed nations and their organizations, namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Remarkably, with the wider support from developing countries, Raul Prebisch – the first Secretary General of the UNCTAD – was able to establish new economic principles, known as the New International Economic Order (NIEO), in 1974, with the purpose of creating a new international economic system that would equitably serve the interests of both developed and developing countries (Sauvant, 1977; Galtung, 1977; Karunaratne, 1984; Hveem, 1979; Laszlo et al., 1980). By design, the NIEO program would promote “greater control by DCs [developing countries] over their own economy”; encourage “greater participation of DCs in decision-making processes that affect their own situation”; enhance “international cooperation for development and assistance to DCs”; and provide “preferential and nonreciprocal treatment for developing countries” (Sauvant, 1977, p. 10). It should be noted that the growing influence of the G-77 group within the UN at the time helped, to a certain extent, balance the power among developed countries in the international arena as well. For instance, with the existence of the NIEO programs and the presence of the developing world in the UN, Nordic countries, like Norway, were able to stick to their own international aid programs of helping Southern nations, rather than to simply follow the mainstream aid policies of the US and other multilateral agencies, which were widely believed to have exploited Southern countries for their own benefits (Pharo, 2003).

In fact, the NIEO program aimed not simply to establish a new economic order, but to reorder the entire international system in order to reduce inequalities and dependencies between the North and the South (Hveem, 1979, p. 185). Galtung (1977) – one of the advocates of the NIEO – argued that developing nations needed more autonomy in managing their own economies and their countries at large, with self-reliance and self-respect, instead of being submissive to and heavily dependent on other countries. This means the extent to which the country “could withdraw from the world system and retain its capacity to meet basic needs, even on a sustained basis” (Galtung, 1977, p. 24). In promoting peace and mutual understanding among countries, Galtung founded an institute called the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO) in 1959, whose mandate is to conduct research on peace and international relations.
between countries in the world. The institute has thus far gained great support from various stakeholders, including the United Nations. Its research findings, in particular, have played an important role in impacting the decision making of such bodies as the United Nations and other international aid agencies, bilateral and multilateral alike. Hence, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a great movement at the global level towards creating a more equal world for every nation and community, and equal and mutual cooperation in international academic relations was part of the agenda.

By the early 1990s, the rhetoric of new partnerships and ownership in international education cooperation between the North and the South had become more widely discussed than ever before (Crossley & Watson, 2003; Buchert, 2002; King & Buchert, 1999; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Audenhove, 1998; Habte, 1999). In particular, many institutions, researchers and scholars from both developed and developing countries, who had been involved in international collaborative projects, called for a “genuine partnership” in tackling issues within the developing world. They acknowledged that disparities between higher education systems in the North and those in the South had widened over years, due in large part to the lack of Southern involvement in international project design and development (Crossley & Watson, 2003). Many developing countries were also critical of the continued dominance of positivist thinking in international development programs, including inter-university collaborative projects, which had been seen to contribute not only to the failure of knowledge transfer from the North to the South but also to the marginalization of local knowledge in the latter.

The call for genuine partnerships in inter-university collaboration as well as in international development programs at large between the North and the South in the early 1990s could also be seen as a response to the growing criticism of international educational assistance policy, which had favored basic education at the expense of higher education in the developing world throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Crossley & Watson, 2003; Banya & Elu, 2001). Beginning in the 1970s, due to severe economic recession, most developed countries began to reduce their development assistance in the developing world in the subsequent periods. For instance, the total British assistance to developing countries declined from $2,156 million in 1979 to $1,601 million by 1994 (OECD, 1998, cited by Banya & Elu, 2001; King, 2009). King (1999) indicated that on average, Official Development Assistance (ODA) from each OECD member country fell from 0.61 percent of gross national product (GNP) in 1961 to 0.27 percent in 1996. As a consequence of the decreased bilateral assistance from the North, most developing
countries turned to multilateral aid agencies, including the World Bank, for their assistance. However, the World Bank had provided funding mainly to basic education and, at some points, non-formal and technical/vocational education, since the late 1960s when they began funding international educational development programs (Banya & Elu, 2001; King, 1990, 2009; Crossley & Watson, 2003). These multilateral organizations argued that the return on investment in basic education was higher than that in higher education. They also claimed that higher education in many developing countries at the time was a luxury, and that funding the sector would only widen the gap between the rich and the poor (Banya & Elu, 2001). All this, along with the IMF’s Structural Adjustment Programs related to reduction of social spending, negatively impacted the development of higher education in the developing world, most severely in Africa, throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Banya & Elu, 2001; Crossley & Watson, 2003; King, 2009; Sehoole, 2008; Samoff, 1999; Samoff & Carrol, 2004). As discussed earlier, this was also the case for Cambodian higher education during the 1990s, when the World Bank and other international organizations offered their assistance to basic education, rather than higher education (Duggan, 1997).

The growing criticism of such a basic-education-oriented aid policy was brought to international attention during the early 1990s. In particular, at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, many scholars and policy-makers from the South questioned the aid policy, which focused mainly on basic education (Crossley & Watson, 2003; Banya & Elu, 2001; Habte, 1999; King, 2008). They argued that “Education for All” should be emphasized at all levels, if developing countries were to eradicate poverty as well as to participate in the world knowledge-economy. This argument, along with the widening gap between higher education systems in the North and those in the South, gained the attention of aid agencies, bilateral and multilateral alike, and led to a restructuring of their aid policies to call for new partnerships and ownership in international educational projects, including inter-university linkage programs. Noticeably, in the field of comparative education, as Bray (2003) noted, the 1990s marked an increased attention to and recognition of the cultural dimension of education in the field of comparative education. Such an observation was based on the works of many comparative education scholars, including Crossley and Jarvis (2000), Leach and Little (1999), and Hayhoe and Pan (2001), among others.

To achieve the so-called genuine partnerships and ownership, many Western government agencies, including Sweden’s SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation),
Norway’s NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation), the United Kingdom’s DFID (Department for International Development), and Japan’s JICA, adopted such new mechanisms as sector-wide programs or demand-led research projects, with the aim to not only provide greater involvement and participation from the South but also reduce the so-called Northern visibility in the South (Crossley & Watson, 2003; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; King, 1999, 2008; Nair & Menon, 2002). Those bilateral aid agencies also suggested that, as aid providers, they needed to establish and enforce a new code of conduct for themselves as well in their international development programs, including university-linkage projects (King, 1999).

Sweden’s SIDA also refocused its research funding agenda from applied research to basic research, so as to improve the quality and to ensure a sustainable growth of Southern higher education institutions (Olsson, 2008). Hence, the discourses of aid-providers, donors and recipients have gradually been replaced with terms such as “development partners” (King, 2008). It should be noted that the World Conference on Education for All as well as the growing concern about genuine partnerships also influenced the World Bank’s approach toward supporting higher education over the last ten years (Banya & Elu, 2001; King, 1999). The World Bank’s new commitment to supporting higher education is expressed within several of its recent reports, including Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril or Promise produced in 2000 by the Task Force on Higher Education and Society (TFHES) and Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education published in 2002. Overall, the early 1990s saw a marked shift in the international aid policy of both bilateral and multilateral agencies toward more equal partnerships in international academic relations.

In fact, international education projects, including university linkages, by such countries as Canada, Norway, and Sweden, had focused on addressing the development needs of developing countries since early on. Following the decolonization era, those countries tried to establish their role as middle-power countries, rather than centers dealing with peripheries (Trilokekar, 2009; Weiler, 1983; Stokke, 1989, 2005; Pharo, 2003). Instead of imposing their own ideology on developing countries or following those of the U.S. capitalist, the Soviet communist bloc or even multilateral agencies, including the World Bank, they oriented their international assistance to meeting the development needs of developing countries. In terms of research collaboration, for instance, Canada’s International Development Research Center (IDRC) was established in 1970, with a mandate to “encourage and support research initiated and conducted by developing countries into the socio-economic problems impeding their
development, and on the application and adaptation of knowledge for the solutions of those problems” (Bernard, 1988, p. 164). Since early on, instead of developing research agendas for the developing countries, IDRC had provided grants directly to developing countries’ research centers, governments and academia, based on their submitted proposals (Bernard, 1988; King, 2008; McNab & King, 1987). Besides Canada’s IDRC, Nordic countries not only established research programs that could respond to the needs of the developing world but also created partnerships with other developing regions (Baud, 2002; Audenhove, 1998; Stokke, 1989, 2005; Pharo, 2003). It is important to note that, like the above-mentioned American foundations, not all of the projects of these research agencies linked universities in the developing world with Western universities (King, 2009).

In addition to the call for new partnerships and ownership in international projects, the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the building of new partnerships in international academic relations, as a result of changing geopolitical relations after the end of the Cold War as well as the intensification of the process of globalization (Crossley & Watson, 2003; Caron & Tousignant, 1999). For example, as Caron and Tousignant (1999) indicated, many Canadian universities began to establish new partnerships with institutions in regions and countries that were previously not considered their prime partners. Those regions and countries include central Europe, African countries (such as Rwanda), Chile, Haiti, Mexico, and Asian countries like Vietnam (Caron & Tousignant, 1999). Noticeably, as discussed earlier, the early 1990s also marked the transition period in Cambodian history, when the country began to be re-integrated into the world, through adopting a market economy with multiple-party politics. It is part of my study’s purpose to explore international academic relations in contemporary Cambodian higher education against the backdrop of the country’s changing geopolitics.

Also, closely related to, and in many ways, influenced by the globalization process and the changing geopolitical context since the late 1980s and early 1990s is the emerging discourse of the internationalization of higher education in many parts of the world (Knight, 2008; Altbach, 2006; de Wit, 2002; Maringe & Foskett, 2010; van der Wende, 2007; Teichler, 2004; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). Jane Knight (2008) defines the internationalization of higher education as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions [teaching, research and service] or delivery of higher education at the international and institutional levels” (p. 21). This definition shows that the concept of “partnerships” or “mutual benefits” in international educational cooperative projects is becoming more important than ever
before. As Chan (2004) and Knight (2008) have pointed out, such international collaborative projects have taken place for specific reasons, including building strategic alliances, promoting cultural understanding, building institutional images within countries and internationally, and improving the quality of higher education (further explained in the theoretical framework). One of the consequences of the intense internationalization process so far is that international cooperative projects through inter-institutional initiatives, although not a new phenomenon, have become increasingly common across the globe. This indicates that higher education institutions increasingly operate within the globalized world, and are no longer restricted within or by a particular nation or region.

**Persisting issues of inequality and dependency.**

Despite the changing forms and discourse of international academic relations over the last twenty years, the inequality of power relationships in inter-university collaborative projects between the North and the South remains an issue in many parts of the world. For instance, international higher education projects in many African countries during the 1990s and early 2000s still took the form of development assistance programs, in which much of the agenda and execution were dictated by northern partners, in spite of the language of “collaboration” (Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Binka, 2005; Boshoff, 2009; Buchert, 2002; Samoff, 1999; King, 2008; Habermann, 2008). Although many government agencies from developed countries, including Sweden’s SIDA, Norway’s NORAD, the United Kingdom’s DFID, and Japan’s JICA, redefined their aid policies through adopting different approaches, so as to achieve so-called genuine partnerships or equality, local knowledge and culture in the South still remained largely marginalized (Crossley & Watson, 2003; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; King, 1999, 2008). For instance, in terms of the capacity building approach, King (2008) made the point that:

> Capacity building for Southern partners is an assumption built into the agency justification for many of these partnership schemes, and hence the Northern partners are often associated with planning, design, review of draft material, advice on literature and on research publication. They become research advisors or research managers. But the Northern partners often don’t actually do any substantial research in the South. Or if they do, it may just be for a week or ten days of policy interviews in the Southern capital. (p. 10)

Moreover, development projects, including inter-university linkage programs, are still largely initiated by researchers and institutions in Europe and North America, although they are
approached and conducted with different forms of rhetoric. Buchert’s (2002) comparative case study on aid projects in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mozambique exemplified such a case. Her research revealed that new partnerships in the form of sector-wide approaches with the aim to promote mutual respect and a genuine partnership between the North and the South happened in effect more at the level of rhetoric than of implementation (Buchert, 2002). Not only was there a lack of strong cooperation among international aid agencies working in all the three studied countries, but those aid agencies also did not have much trust in the local capacity to manage the development programs (Buchert, 2002). To quote from her findings: “… the current situation can be characterized by strong agency direction, intervention, and the existence of a predominance of agency projects, rather than a co-ordinated programme which has been genuinely negotiated and expresses a compromise among differential views” (Buchert, 2002, p. 78).

Likewise, the demand-led research cooperative approach – an approach to promote equality and to ensure the responsiveness of the programs to the development need of countries in the South – is argued to have advanced more the interests and benefit of Northern institutions and researchers than their counterparts in the South (Samoff & Carrol, 2004; King, 2009; Nair & Menon, 2002, Crossley & Watson, 2003). Even the NIEO, whose aim was to reduce Western dominance over the developing world, had already been viewed as a failure by the late 1970s. This was in large part due to the lack of bargaining power of Southern countries in the United Nations and in other international organizations (Hveem, 1979; Laszlo et al., 1980). Also an issue, as Hveem (1979) explained, was that many countries in the North had no intention of helping their Southern counterparts, but instead, placed the responsibility for the issue of underdevelopment on Southern countries themselves. Hence, it is evident that inequalities and power asymmetries between institutions in the North and those in the South over the last sixty years following the decolonization period have, for the most part, remained a critical issue.

Crossley and Watson (2003) contended that the rhetoric of partnerships, mutual respect and genuine cooperation in development projects was not a matter of entirely new thinking, but had emerged since the late 1960s, pointing to the Pearson Report (1969) and the Brandt Report (1980, 1983) as examples. Despite such espoused rhetoric, the actual theory-in-practice had always been challenged and dominated by the positivist approach, which had been widely adopted, even until recently (Crossley & Watson, 2003). Similarly, King (1999) asserted that the so-called genuine partnerships developed in the 1990s had taken place in a rather selective manner. Simply put, aid agencies still chose their partners based on their preconditioned criteria.
Those criteria include “pro-proper economic growth strategies in the South; pro-democracy and pro-human rights policies; pro-gender and pro-equity policies; and a pro-environmental sustainability commitment” (King, 1999, p. 17). In fact, it has been argued that the lack of resources, the poor research capacity, the use of English as a lingua franca in higher education and the lack of strong academic traditions in the developing world have reinforced inequalities and dependencies in the world knowledge system (Altbach, 1998, 2006; Arnove, 1980; Odora Hoppers, 2000; Altbach et al., 1982). Hence, dependency theory, world systems theory and, in some cases, neo-colonial or center-periphery theory have continued to be widely used to study international university linkage projects between the North and the South (Canto & Hannah, 2001; Girot & Enders, 2004; Altbach, 2006; Odora Hoppers, 2000).

Also, although there has been a positive shift in the World Bank’s policy towards supporting higher education in the last decade, its funding for higher education remains minimal relative to its overall lending (Collins & Rhoads, 2010). Many of the World Bank’s staff still hold different ideologies, with some remaining in favor of supporting basic education, rather than higher education (Collins & Rhoads, 2010). The World Bank’s overall development approach – recently adopted along lines similar to those of bilateral aid agencies – in theory promotes a so-called “genuine approach” in the South, yet, in practice, is only an emulation of revised programs, theories and knowledge from the West (Ellerman, 2008). According to Ellerman (2008), the World Bank treats their partner organizations or institutions as “repeater stations or missionary outposts for the Correct Message being sent from the center rather than as potentially autonomous learning organizations” (p. 25). Hence, it can be concluded that from the late 1960s until recently, the World Bank’s support for higher education remained relatively marginal and its development approach is still economically driven and dominated by positivist thinking. To sum up, the existing literature at the global level suggests that relationships between institutions in developed and developing countries over the last sixty years have been bound by inequalities and dominance.

**International Academic Relations Theories**

This section discusses four major types of academic relations theories which have been widely used to understand international academic relations since the end of the Second World War. They include realism, (neo-)liberalism, neo-Marxism (dependency theory and world
systems theory) and the World Order Models Project theory (as related to cosmopolitanism). My purpose in presenting and juxtaposing the main arguments and limitations of these theories is to find appropriate analytical and theoretical tools for the study of international university partnerships in contemporary Cambodian higher education.

Realism.

In explaining international relations, realist scholars claim that a world order is shaped by individual nation-states, whose national interests are the primary concern in both domestic and international affairs (Morgenthau, 1967; Gilpin, 2004; Chernoff, 2007; Holsti, 1985; Kahler, 1998; Donnelly, 2000). Viewing the world as a system of anarchy with the absence of an international government, they assert that countries compete for power and try to acquire as many economic resources as they can. Despite their primary focus on nation-states as a unit of analysis, realists do not ignore the important role of non-state actors, including multinational firms, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, in the determination of international affairs (Gilpin, 2004). However, they acknowledge that these non-state actors are influenced by more powerful nations. An example of such was wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that manifested the dominance of powerful countries, like the U.S. and its allies, in the international affairs over other less powerful countries (Held, 2010).

For realism, countries exert their influence on others through the use of military force and/or soft power, such as knowledge and culture. International academic relations have been one of the common methods through which soft power has been used since the end of the Second World War. As discussed in section I above, from the 1950s until the late 1980s, developed countries used aid programs to serve their own interests, be they academic, economic, political, or social. Moreover, aid and financial assistance between the North and the South was shaped by the Cold War competition between the Soviet bloc and the nations allied with the U.S. (Altbach, 1977, 1998; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; King, 1990; Sehoole, 2008; Arnove, 1980; Forster, 1999; Mundy, 2007; Berman, 1979). Even non-colonizing countries, like Canada, also tried to promote their soft power through international academic programs. For instance, during the 1960s and 1970s, the Canadian federal government spent a lot of money on the Canadian Studies Program, which offered scholarships to foreign students to come and study about Canada (Trilokikar, 2010). Through knowledge and culture – the common forms of soft power – developed countries
could promote their political and economic interests at an international level (de Wit, 2002; Trilokikar, 2010).

The above discussion in section I also indicates that Northern countries greatly influenced the educational policy of international organizations, namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Again, this explains the dominant role of powerful nations in international affairs, including international educational development programs, as argued by the realists (and, as well, by neo-liberalist and neo-Marxists to be discussed next). Overall, international academic relations after the Second World War until the late 1980s (and one may argue even until now) can be effectively understood within the realist worldview.

(Neo-)Liberalism.

Both liberal and neo-liberal scholars focus primarily on world economic integration. Differing from the realist view, liberalism supports the establishment of international institutions with international rules, principles and mechanisms for the world economic and political system (Gilpin, 2004; Held, 2010; Mundy, 2007). After the Second World War, developed countries set up the Bretton Woods system, through which the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Construction and Development (now the World Bank) were founded. The underlying principle of liberalism is to reduce government’s control of the market so that everyone can participate in and gain benefits from the international trading system. The emergence of neo-liberalism in the 1970s led to the promotion of new ideas of privatization, free trade and open markets. With the intense process of globalization over the last two decades, those neo-liberalist concepts and principles have become pervasive and widely influential around the world. Interestingly, although liberal and neo-liberal scholars and practitioners give less importance to nation-states than realists, the world economic principles have been seen to be “based on such Western legal and economic ideas as the transparency of commercial dealings and limited state intervention in the economy” (Gilpin, 2004, p. 241). In other words, developed countries still play an important role in influencing world economic policies that are in favor of their own nations or corporations at the expense of the developing world. Moreover, international cooperation among countries has taken place only through common interests and ideologies (Gilpin, 2004; Mundy, 2007). Hence, like realists, liberal and neo-liberal scholars do
not seek to establish an ideal world government that can represent the interests of all countries, developed and developing alike.

Liberal and neo-liberal concepts began to influence higher education policy and practices in the 1970s and have become increasingly dominant over the last two decades, as a result of the globalization process (van de Wende, 2001; Mundy, 2007; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). For instance, the concept of trade liberalization has encouraged competition in higher education in terms of the recruitment of international fee-paying students as well as the import and export of higher education (Knight, 2008; Altbach, 2006; Teichler, 2004; Torres & Schugurensky, 2002). Some governments and higher education corporations have recently proposed, with success, to include higher education in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in order to reduce barriers in the higher education industry. This means the higher education sector has already become one of the main service industries in many developed countries, which have earned considerable profits. This, along with the notions of knowledge society and market economy, has led to the commodification, and commercialization of higher education almost everywhere by now. Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades (2004) describe the involvement of universities in the knowledge economy and for-profit oriented activities as “academic capitalism”. Hence, higher education in many parts of the world is no longer viewed as a public good but a private product.

The prevalence of neo-liberalism in education has also been manifested through such economic institutions as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which have played a vital role in influencing educational policy around the world. Since the 1970s, the Bank’s policies have focused primarily on promoting economic growth through investing in Education for All. Its recent attention to the higher education sector has been seen to be largely driven by the notion of the knowledge economy. Alongside the World Bank, the IMF has promoted the neo-liberal concept of privatization, especially through its Structural Adjustment Programs, in many parts of the developing world. As discussed earlier, both the Bank’s and IMF’s policies are usually part of the conditions for poor nations to receive major loans. Overall, within the liberal and neo-liberal frameworks, the role of universities in an international arena is to generate income, and help their own nation improve its economic viability and participate in the knowledge economy. It is important to recognize that in addition to promoting economic growth, the World Bank, along with UNESCO, also values education as a universal human right – a principle which is strongly embedded in cosmopolitanism.
Limitations of realism and (neo-)liberalism.

Although realism and (neo-)liberalism have been influential in international affairs and widely applied to the study of international academic relations in the second half of the twentieth century, and even until now, both paradigms have been much criticized for their inability to deal with global issues thus far. A good example of such is the failure of the use of military power by the US and its allies to counter terrorism as well as to bring peace to the world. Also, the post-World War Two international economic policy packages of the IMF, the World Bank and other Western leading economies have produced counterproductive results at the global level in some cases (Collins & Rhoades, 2010; Held, 2010). In other words, liberal economic principles have allowed developed countries to exploit poor nations, through such concepts as free trade and an open market. The recent economic recession in the US and Europe also points out that the Western liberal economic principles may not even be viable within Western societies. In fact, as David Held (2010) has argued, “The countries that have benefited most from globalization are those that have not played by the rules of the standard liberal market approach, including China, India and Vietnam” (p. 6). Another example of this is the success of the regionalization process of ASEAN countries, which have adopted their own approach to regionalization, including in the area of higher education, based on their cultures and histories. As Stubbs (2008) indicated, unlike the liberal approach of global governance developed by Western countries, ASEAN’s governance is rooted in Asia’s cultures and the region’s colonial and Cold War experiences.

In addition to the world economic and political issues, other problems have recently emerged, including environmental deterioration, which cannot be tackled by individual countries or groups, but demand strong cooperation among all those concerned. For instance, regardless of their different economic and political ideologies, all countries along the Mekong River, namely China, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand and Vietnam, have, over the past several years, come together to tackle the environmental issues in the region. Sustainable solutions to the problem also require the strong commitment of all relevant stakeholders, including the academic community, beyond the political leader groups of each country. Hence, neither realist nor liberalist paradigms can be seen as fully viable approaches to emerging world problems, particularly those of inequality and the persistence of domination and dependency in international academic relations.
Dependency and world systems theories.

One of the major forms of neo-Marxism is dependency theory, which was originally developed by economists and political scientists in Latin America in the 1940s and 1950s. The theory argues that the state of underdevelopment of developing nations has been brought about through their political and economic interaction with developed countries (Holsti, 1985; McLean, 1983; King, 1990; Atbach, 1977, 1998, 2006; Samoff & Carrol, 2004; Odora Hoppers, 2000; Hayhoe & Mundy, 2008; Carnoy, 1974; Crossley & Watson, 2003; Eckstein & Noah, 1985; Altbach et al., 1982; Collins & Rhoads, 2010). In particular, the former countries play a peripheral role in the world economic system controlled by and thus favorable to the latter, particularly Europe and North America. In this sense, dependency theorists reject the capitalist development theory, which maintains that development is a linear process and all countries, developed and developing alike, will undergo the same stages of development (Holsti, 1985; Carnoy, 1974). The fact that the world trade system was exploited by capitalist countries indicates it is impossible for developing countries to “duplicate the process of change which took place in the developed countries” (Carnoy, 1974, p. 53). Although it originated in the fields of economics and political affairs, dependency theory later became widely adopted by other fields. In education, the theory was first adopted by scholars, such as Martin Carnoy (1974), in the face of the increased educational inequalities and dependencies between the North and the South in the period following the end of the Second World War.

Framed within dependency theory, international academic relations between the North and the South are viewed as having been shaped by the asymmetrical world political and economic system, which is composed of two major different categories of nations – developed, or core, and underdeveloped, or periphery. Such inequitable relationships had been produced, reproduced and reinforced by past colonialism, post-independence economic activities and the location of educational and technological resources. The development of the countries at the core has taken place at the expense of those at the periphery (Holsti, 1985). With such international structural inequalities, the governments of developing countries have limited control over their national development plans. To quote from Holsti (1985):

The barriers to development are not internal, as liberal Western economists would have it, but derive from the structural characteristics of the global capitalist system, from the functional differentiation that occurred during the worldwide spread of capitalism. Hence, to talk of “national” development programs makes no sense since the persisting international structures vastly limit the range of national choice. The system is all-
predominant, and its needs must be served rather than those of any component units. (p. 66)

Hence, education, including higher education, in the developing world is dominated by Western concepts and models and, as a result, does not serve the social, economic, and political development of developing countries themselves. Through the lens of dependency theory, international university linkage projects have provided greater benefits to higher education institutions at the core than their peripheral counterparts.

It should be noted that center-periphery and neo-colonial theories—sub-theories of dependency theories— are also commonly used to study the power asymmetry between the North and the South. Center-periphery theory claims that there are centers and peripheries within individual nations in both the center and the periphery of the world (Galtung, 1975). In such a complex system, the centers at the center directly influence the third world centers, especially the elite groups, who adopt Western culture, speak a European language and follow Western governing systems (Galtung, 1975). These elite groups in the periphery gain great benefits from the system, and thus maintain better relationships with those at the center than the third world peripheries. For neo-colonial theory, the main focus is particularly on the foreign policies of developed nations that aim to maintain their domination over the third world countries. However, as Altbach (1977) indicated, developing countries have considerable choice not to enter into collaboration with their developed counterparts. To quote from him:

Foreign assistance, a key element in the neo-colonial policies of industrialized nations, need not be aimed at maintaining the dominant position of the “donor” nation but can be designed to meet development needs identified by the third world nations. Policy makers in the third world do not have to accept aid programs but often find it in their own interests to do so, or they are faced with such severe shortages that virtually any assistance seems helpful. (Altbach, 1977, p. 471)

Overall, dependency, center-periphery and neo-colonial theories discuss the inequalities and dominance between the North and the South, viewing economic and political factors as the core issues.

Closely related to dependency theory, world systems theory emerged as a response to the failure of development/capitalist theories in the periods following the decolonization era. Another form of neo-Marxism, the theory also discusses the increased inequalities and dependencies between developed and underdeveloped nations, against the backdrop of the world asymmetrical world economic and political system (Wallerstein, 1974; Arnove, 1980). However,
world systems theorists add the in-between category of semi-peripheries into their analysis. Wallerstein – one of the pioneering scholars to apply this theory in the social sciences – argued that to understand the complex asymmetrical world economic and political structure, one needs to look at the category of semi-peripheral countries or regions, which play an important role in maintaining and reinforcing the structural inequalities among countries in the world. According to him, “the existence of the third category means precisely that the upper stratum is not faced with the unified opposition of all the others because the middle stratum is both exploited and exploiter” (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 405). In line with Wallerstein’s argument, Forster (1999) asserted that, at the international level, many countries hold multiple roles, both as donors and as recipients of foreign aid. For instance such developing countries as Turkey, China, India, Israel, and Brazil, to name just a few, have been both recipients and donors of foreign aid for many years (Forster, 1999). The recent emergence of China as one of the world’s largest economies as well as the improvement of many other transition and emerging economies over the last two decades have challenged the dependency theorists’ idea that countries at the periphery cannot move within the inequitable world order.

With particular reference to higher education in the Southeast Asian region, China, India, Thailand, and Korea have recently been seen as emerging donors for such countries as Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar (NORRAG, 2007; Sato et al., 2011). China has also been seen as one of the major aid providers to higher education in the African region (King, 2008; Gillespie, 2001). In fact, since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, China has played its role as one of the donors at the international level. Thus far, assistance by China, Thailand and India, among others, to the least developed countries has been referred to as South-South collaboration. All this makes the world systems theory more appropriate and flexible than dependency theory in the study of the complexity of international academic relations within an unequal world system.

The recent emergence of those countries as new donors also suggests that the North-South or East-West distinction has become increasingly blurred, especially within the context of international development programs. In this study, while Japan could be included within the Northern group, along with France and the United States, South Korea only joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996 and became an official member of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD on January 1, 2010. Hence, hereafter, although the terms “North”, “South”, “East” and “West” will still be
used to refer to the issue of power dynamics at the global level, this study will also use the categories of “economically advanced or developed nations” when specifically referring to these four case study countries.

Limitations of neo-Marxism.

While dependency and world systems theories offer a critical lens to examine the inequality of power relationships in inter-university linkage projects between the North and the South, many scholars have argued that they are overly deterministic, overlooking factors other than economic ones (Hayhoe, 1989; Collins & Rhoads, 2010). As explained earlier, such a value-determined approach is mainly limited to the study of the world’s international economic and political system, in which inequalities were developed by past colonialism, and later, reproduced and reinforced by post-independence economic activities. Thus, the theories are less applicable to non-colonized societies, such as China, which had its own economic and political system when it began to be reintegrated into the world (Hayhoe, 1989). Plus, such socio-economic theoretical lenses would be incomplete for the study of higher education systems in such societies as China, which has been influenced by a persisting Confucian ethos (Hayhoe, 1989). Even in Cambodia – a post-colonial society – a Buddhist ethos has been strongly embedded within the society as well as within its educational system (to be further discussed later). Hence, dependency or world systems theory, as a theoretical lens, might provide an incomplete picture of the power dynamics in international collaborative projects in contemporary Cambodian higher education.

Emerging issues, including environmental deterioration, have also challenged dependency and world systems theories, which confine their focus mainly to world economic and political issues and domination. Also, the changing geo-politics and the intense process of globalization over the last two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union mean Western countries no longer dominate the world economic and political system. This has manifested itself in many ways, one of which has been the rapid economic development of countries in East and Southeast Asia over the last two decades (Held, 2010). According to the International Monetary Fund (2008), China alone, for instance, accounted for one third of the world economic growth in 2008 (as cited in Held, 2010). This indicates that over the last two decades, the world has been moving towards a multipolar political-economic system, a departure from the geo-political
situation of the Cold War with the two hegemonic, great powers of the United States and the Soviet Union (Held, 2010; Mundy, 2007). To quote from Held (2010):

> The trajectory of change is towards a multipolar world, where the West no longer holds a premium on geopolitical or economic power. Moreover, different discourses and concepts of governance have emerged to challenge the old Western orthodoxy of multilateralism and the post-war order (p. 3). At the same time, complex global processes, from the ecological to the financial, connect the fate of communities to each other across the world in new ways, requiring effective, accountable and inclusive problem-solving capacity. (p. 3)

Hence, to gain a complete picture of international affairs, including international academic relations, one needs to look beyond realism, (neo-)liberalism and neo-Marxism. In fact, in higher education, while realists and (neo-)liberalists associate the major role of universities with soft power and national economic interests, universities have always been global in their missions (Altbach, 1998). The WOMP theory and a cosmopolitanism paradigm, to be discussed next is, thus, most appropriate for the study of international academic relations in this contemporary world.

**World Order Models Project and cosmopolitanism.**

Another critical approach to looking at international academic relations, including the inter-university projects in the post-independence periods, is the World Order Models Project (WOMP) theory, which emerged in the mid-1960s and has been noted earlier (Hayhoe, 1989; Sakamoto, 1972; Wilkinson, 1976; Galtung, 1975, 1980; Mazrui, 1975). Like dependency or world systems theorists, WOMP scholars discussed the increasingly dominant role of industrialized nations in international academic relations, including the vertical international division of labor in terms of research and knowledge production and dissemination. However, expanding beyond the somewhat determinist character of traditional and neo-Marxist theories, WOMP scholars introduced a value-explicit approach to looking at the educational and technological transfer between developed and developing countries. They suggested that other factors, including culture and knowledge, were as important as the economic factor in creating foreign dominance or imperialism in developing nations (Hayhoe, 1989; Sakamoto, 1972; Wilkinson, 1976). For instance, France’s collaborative projects with Chinese higher education in the 1980s (Hayhoe, 1989) as well as with Cambodian higher education in the early 1990s, I would contend, were more culturally driven than economically- or politically-oriented. The aim
of the WOMP approach was to avoid “ethnocentric, culture-bound, value-biased research by bringing transnational, cross-cultural, trans-ideological perspectives from the academic community throughout the world to bear upon their topic” (Wilkinson, 1976, pp. 331-332). Its goal was rather to promote “peace, economic well-being, social justice and ecological balance” among all nations, developed and developing alike (Hayhoe, 1989, p. 91).

Besides, WOMP was an action-oriented program, which means in addition to just presenting the problems, WOMP researchers suggested means for reducing inequalities in international relations. With particular reference to higher education, two famous WOMP scholars, Ali Mazrui (1975) and Johan Galtung (1980), developed strategies to deal with cultural dependency and mechanisms to promote mutuality in international projects, respectively. Ali Mazrui (1975), who had done extensive research on education in Africa, claimed that African universities in the post-independence era acted as foreign multinational corporations, because they served the interests of Western countries, rather than those of African people. This was manifested in many forms, including the use of Western curricula, languages, and the influence of metropolitan universities over African universities, in terms of academic decision-making. He described such academic domination as cultural dependency. He formulated three strategies to deal with such cultural dependency in higher education. First was the strategy of domestication, relating the subjects within the curriculum of African universities to local culture and knowledge. He also suggested that a student’s mastery of a local language, history, social and cultural anthropology should be part of the requirements for university admission as well. Second was the strategy of diversification, calling for the development of a curriculum with a truly global orientation. In this sense, he suggested African universities should focus not only on Europe and Africa, but also on Indian, Chinese and Islamic civilizations. The last strategy was the strategy of counter-penetration, creating a unique ethos of scholarship able to make its own impact on world academic centers. Johan Galtung’s structural theory of imperialism as well as the conceptual framework he developed for multi-lateral action will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

In the broader field of international relations, the WOMP approach, which sees cultural and knowledge domination as being as important as economic and political forms of domination, might be seen to fall under the paradigm of constructivism or cosmopolitanism. Despite their minor variations, these two political theories share core epistemological assumptions and principles, so the discussion that follows will draw on and entwine scholarship from both paradigms. However, for the purpose of clarity, I will stick to the term “cosmopolitanism”. I opt
for this term, instead of constructivism, simply due to my study’s adoption of the analytical concept of mutuality – a framework developed by Johan Galtung and later enriched by David Held’s cosmopolitan principles.

Viewing world events or phenomena as socially and historically constructed, cosmopolitanism highlights the important role of people and their social interactions in creating meaning (Kubalkova et al., 1998; Held, 2010; Mundy, 2007). As Held (2010) puts it, this paradigm is concerned with “the ethical and political space which sets out the terms of reference for the recognition of people’s equal moral worth, their active agency and what is required for their autonomy and development” (p. 49). Hence, unlike realism, (neo-)liberalism and neo-Marxism, cosmopolitanism sees human values and dignity as more important than nation-states or other agencies. However, this does not necessarily mean ignorance of the important and constructive role of nation-states and other agencies. As Held (2003) indicated:

States can be conceived as vehicles to aid the delivery of effective public regulation, equal liberty and social justice, but they should not be thought of as ontologically privileged. They can be judged by how far they deliver these public goods and how far they fail; for the history of stats is, of course, marked not just by phases of corruption and bad management but also by the most brutal episodes. (p. 470)

Overall, the cosmopolitan approach accepts diversity and aims to promote mutuality and equality among nations and communities in the world. It should be noted that the development of the field of cosmopolitanism over the last thirty years has been influenced, to a great extent, by WOMP concepts and theories. For example, David Held’s four principles of contemporary cosmopolitanism share basic core characteristics with Galtung’s four mechanisms of mutuality. (Again, this will be further discussed in the theoretical framework in Chapter Four).

Although cosmopolitanism has yet to be widely used in international academic relations, the WOMP movement emerging in the 1960s and 1970s, and the rhetoric of new partnerships and ownerships emerging during the 1990s, indicate that the concept of cosmopolitanism in international academic projects has long been called for. As reviewed above in the literature on international development and university partnerships, many bilateral aid agencies from the North as well as the World Bank have proposed adopting a new code of conduct for themselves, highlighting the need to be respectful of knowledge and cultures originating in the South. This indicates that the idea of cosmopolitanism has already been widely discussed and accepted, at least at the rhetorical and policy level, although its application has been quite limited at the practical level. Hence, the cosmopolitan paradigm is most appropriate for my study, which
intends to examine the nature of international university relationships in contemporary Cambodian higher education.

**International University Relationships in Contemporary Cambodian Higher Education**

The two sets of literature above have offered me a broad critical framework against which I now can introduce, and critique literature on international academic programs in contemporary Cambodian higher education. As discussed in Chapter One, international cooperation in Cambodian higher education during the 1990s took the form of aid and technical assistance programs by Western countries. Among all donor countries, only France was willing to offer support to Cambodian higher education in a wide range of knowledge areas. The six public universities that the French government began to offer financial and technical assistance to were the Royal University of Phnom Penh (mainly the Department of French), the Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC), the Royal University of Law and Economics (RULE) (then the Faculty of Law and Economics), the University of Health Sciences (UMS), the Royal University of Fine Arts, and the Royal Agricultural University (Cuenin, 1999). Among them, the Institute of Technology of Cambodia (then named the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Higher Institute) received its funding package of almost US$18 million from the French government in 1994 (Duggan, 1997). At the ITC and the UMS, French assistance helped with the development and renovation of buildings, laboratories, and other teaching and learning facilities (Clayton, 2006). At other universities, French assistance was primarily concentrated on human resources development, with limited support for school facilities or equipment.

Noticeably, part of the French assistance was to support inter-university linkage programs between Cambodian and French universities, through which French professors and staff were sent to Cambodian institutions to help with teaching, curriculum development and administration. For example, French assistance for economics and law education led to the establishment of an inter-university agreement between the Royal University of Law and Economics and France’s University of Lyon II in the early 1990s (Cuenin, 1999). Also, many French cooperative projects in Cambodia during the 1990s were coordinated by the Association des Universités Partiellement ou Entièrement de Langue Française–AUPELF (the Association of partially or wholly French-language universities), the Alliance Française, and other French organizations. Through these organizations, many Cambodian professors and students were
offered scholarship opportunities to study at francophone universities in countries, such as Belgium, Canada, France and Vietnam (Clayton, 2006).

Likewise, in 1993, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded two university linkage projects with the National Institute of Management (now the National University of Management): The Georgetown University Management Education Development Project and the University of San Francisco Law Education Project (Clayton, 2006). There were also several other university-linkage projects in Cambodia during the 1990s under assistance from other countries, including Belgium and Australia. However, unlike France, which provided substantial assistance to Cambodian public universities in a wide range of knowledge areas, assistance by other developed countries was marginal and mainly focused on a particular area of knowledge. Overall, through university linkage programs with developed countries, many Western scholars were sent to Cambodian universities to help train teachers and researchers, provide lectures, and develop curricula. Some Cambodian scholars were also offered opportunities to study in those partner institutions as well.

Studies by Pit and Ford (2004), Clayton and Ngoy (1997), and Clayton (2006) used the neo-colonial framework to examine the relationship between Cambodian universities and foreign donors, especially during the early 1990s. As Pit and Ford (2004) pointed out, foreign assistance “is usually conditional on something (e.g. language, ideology, religion), and so NGOs [and other donors countries] have brought with them not only much-needed capital and technical assistance but also hidden cultural and ideological assumptions” (p. 344). For example, the University of Health Sciences and the Institute of Technology of Cambodia were required to use the French language as a medium of instruction when the French government began to provide them with full financial support (Clayton, 2006). They also lost a degree of autonomy, as the French took control of some aspects of administration. Although other donor countries did not directly set any conditions and were not as demanding as the French, nevertheless Cambodian universities usually made changes in response to the programs of the donor countries. For example, the National University of Management began to use English as its first foreign language, followed American curriculum and programs of study, and made other reforms in its twinning programs with American universities (Hebert, 1999). Such scenarios were typical at almost all public higher education institutions within the system.

There was a strong reaction by the government, institutions and students against foreign dominance over Cambodian universities at the time. At the policy level, the government
introduced a language policy in 1994 which made Khmer (the local language) the medium of instruction at all universities, with English and French to be used only for higher level research (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997). However, these interventions were not very effective, largely because of the government’s lack of resources as well as its continuous dependence on foreign assistance. In the case of the Institute of Technology of Cambodia, students even openly protested against the use of the French language in 1994. They wanted to study in English, because of its growing popularity in the country’s job market. However, the French government threatened to withdraw all its assistance if the institute (and other institutions) turned to English or even Khmer as a medium of instruction. The decision upset stakeholders in the higher education system, including the government, which could not do anything other than follow the requirements of the foreign donors. Hence, international cooperation in Cambodian higher education during the early 1990s took place under what could be described as a form of neo-colonialism, by the above authors.

Concerned about growing foreign dominance over the system, especially through aid and technical assistance, the government introduced the policy of the privatization of higher education in the mid-1990s. It allowed public universities to charge tuition and private universities to operate for the first time in the history of Cambodian higher education. Another purpose of the introduction of the privatization policy was to expand the system to accommodate the growing demand for higher education since the early 1990s (Pit & Ford, 2004). Until then, the system had been a public monopoly, with only nine higher education institutions. It had also been very selective, and elitist, with only a limited number of students admitted into higher education. All higher education institutions were also located in the capital city, with those in the provinces completely destroyed by civil wars during the previous decades.

In just over ten years after the privatization policy, the system had significantly expanded and greatly diversified to include 39 public and 62 private higher education institutions by 2012 (MoEYS, 2013a). It enrolled more than 216,053 students in 2011-2012 (MoEYS, 2013a), representing a sharp increase from 13,464 students in 1996 (World Bank, 2010). The system has offered specialized degrees at both undergraduate and graduate levels, “in nearly 100 fields ranging from foreign languages, health science, engineering, agriculture, tourism, business management to law and economics” (UNESCO, 2010, p. 26). Interestingly, student tuition fees have currently become the main source of income for all higher education institutions, public and private alike (Innes-Brown, 2006). Also, although the system has become less dependent on foreign aid and technical assistance, numerous forms of foreign cooperation in Cambodian
higher education agreements have emerged, mostly related to exchange programs and curriculum development.

Furthermore, international organizations, mainly the World Bank, which were more supportive of Cambodian basic education during the 1990s (Duggan, 1997), have recently played a more active role in the development of Cambodian higher education. For instance, in 2010, the World Bank funded a project on quality and capacity improvement of Cambodian higher education (World Bank, 2010). Also important is the fact that the last decade has seen more Cambodian integration into its geopolitical region as well as the world, unlike the period of the 1990s. The country became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1999 and a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2004. As a result of such regional and international connections, many Cambodian universities are now members of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and other international academic organizations. All this signifies the greater involvement of Cambodian universities in international collaborative activities with a variety of countries, including the four case study countries: France, the United States, Japan and South Korea.

**Lack of studies on Cambodia’s international university partnerships.**

Despite the growth of Cambodia’s higher education and its international collaborative projects with other countries over the last twenty years, there has been relatively limited literature on university cooperative projects between Cambodia and Western countries. Thomas Clayton, who has done extensive work on language policy in Cambodian higher education, has focused mainly on the aid conditions dictated by Western countries during the 1990s when Cambodian universities were heavily dependent on foreign aid (Clayton, 2006; Clayton & Ngoy, 1997). While he pointed out that many bilateral aid agreements during the 1990s linked Cambodian universities with Western universities, such inter-university cooperative programs were not thoroughly studied. The expansion of Cambodian higher education over the last ten years, as well as the changing geopolitics of the country and the world at large, have also impacted, directly and indirectly, the forms of and rationales for Cambodian international university collaborative programs with foreign universities – a phenomenon which deserves greater attention and thorough study.
In terms of power relationships between Cambodian higher education and Western governments, several studies, as mentioned above, have indicated the dominance of Western countries over Cambodian higher education through their aid packages. However, while Clayton’s (2006) study, for instance, indicated that several Cambodian universities were trying to resist the use of French language in higher education, such a reaction did not reflect the whole picture of power relationships between Cambodian universities and their French counterparts. In fact, as Hebert (1999) described, French professors who were sent from the University of Lyons to work at the Faculte de Droit (FdD) of the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) during the 1990s developed favorable professional relationships with Cambodian people. At the request of the Cambodian side, they were willing to incorporate the US-supported project into the RUPP/FdD collaborative program as well. However, the French government, which was the major sponsor of the program, objected to any compromise (Hebert, 1999). Hence, although Herbert (1999) did not elaborate on the relationships between Western governments and their universities participating in educational projects in Cambodia, it is obvious that some Cambodian universities developed better relationships with French universities and professors than with the French government which funded the projects. Likewise, the fact that there was no requirement for language policies in international projects with other Western countries should not lead to the conclusion that inter-university linkage projects with those countries were mutual. For instance, there might not have been any issue regarding the English language requirement for American projects at the National University Management largely because students and faculty were more inclined to study English as a foreign language, as it began to increasingly gain popularity in the country at the time. Hence, this cannot lead to the conclusion that equity and mutual benefits were established between Cambodian participants and those Western counterparts when the projects were initiated, planned and carried out.

Also an issue is that, at the global level, most existing literature on international academic cooperation, especially inter-university programs through aid and technical assistance, has rarely discussed thoroughly the relationship between Western universities and their governments in international projects. Instead, most studies tend to conclude that the international development policies of Western countries are well translated into practice by their participating universities in international projects in the developing world. Hence, any unjust conditions set by Western governments for aid and technical assistance to developing countries would lead to the inequality of power relationships between universities in developed countries and their counterparts in the
developing world. While this might be true in many cases, such an assumption overlooks the fact that most Western universities have a long tradition of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Hence, the policies implicit in aid and technical assistance programs that are usually designed by Western governments or their development agencies might not necessarily be followed by their universities participating in international projects in the South.

Two of the major projects in Canada-China educational collaboration during the 1980s and 1990s were a case in point. The first project was the Canada-China Management Education Program (CCMEP), which was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) with the purpose of promoting management education in key Chinese universities in the early 1980s. With the lack of any coordinating agency between CIDA and participating Canadian universities, the project could achieve only objectives at the institutional level set by institutions from both countries, not the goals set by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (Ryan et al., 1987). Canadian universities, like those in many Western countries, have enjoyed a strong tradition of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, and thus, their government has a limited role in imposing any policy on the universities, including their international activities (Trilokekar, 2009).

By comparison, the second project of the Canada-China University Linkage Program (CCULP), which was implemented in the late 1980s to enhance China’s human resources in key development areas, met the set objectives at both the institutional and national levels. Such achievements were partly attributable to an important role played by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) in translating national/government policy, especially with regard to international development priorities, into practice at the institutional level (Pan, 1995; Leng & Pan, 2013). Thus, the examples of CCMEP and CCULP programs indicate that it would be unwise to assume that Western governments and their universities have the same objectives at the international level. Therefore, power relationships between universities in the developing world, including Cambodia, and their Western counterparts, cannot be interpreted merely based on the international development policies of Western governments.

Another issue is that the use of neo-colonialism as a theoretical lens to understand Cambodian higher education (Pit & Ford, 2004; Clayton & Ngoy, 1997; Clayton, 2006) overlooks other factors that might, at the same time, influence such power dynamics. A very recent study by Maeda (2011) on international educational projects between Cambodia and Japan found that the cultural factor has played an important role in shaping the power relationships in
international projects between both countries. In particular, as her study points out, practicing the patron-client relationship – bound by the Buddhist ethos – Cambodian participants in international projects offer more decision power to Japanese participants, whom they consider superior as their donors. Hence, although Japanese participants were rather actively involved in the decision-making process and other initiatives, their Cambodian colleagues viewed such relationships as equal, creating a harmony in their educational relationships.

It is also interesting that, according to the same study, some Japanese participants who had previous international experience working in Africa noted a different form of power relationships between them and their African colleagues (Maeda, 2011). In this regard, Maeda’s study suggests two important things. First, it supports the previous argument in comparative education that the local context plays an important role in shaping power dynamics in international university projects between developed and developing nations. This means existing literature on university linkage programs in other developing countries, including that in the African region, might not be applicable to the Cambodian context. Second, although Maeda’s study was small in scope, focusing exclusively on Japan-assisted education projects in Cambodia, one can see that the cultural factor, in this case, the Buddhist ethos, is still very influential in Cambodian international educational projects. In fact, such a conclusion takes a similar line with a number of studies which have suggested that, from the 13th century until now, Buddhism has played a dominant role in Cambodian society (Ayres, 2000a; Kent & Chandler, 2008; Tully, 2005; Whitaker et al., 1973; Gyallay-Pap, 2007; Harris, 2005). Hence, Maeda’s study has offered a critical perspective for looking at the issue of power relationships in Cambodia, beyond neo-Marxist approaches.

One of the things that Maeda noted in her study, as key to developing a satisfactory experience between Cambodian and Japanese participants, was the shared practice of hierarchical relationships in the two cultures. In this sense, it would be unwise to make a general assumption from her study that the practice of the patron-client relationship would always lead to harmonious relationships between Cambodian participants and their foreign counterparts – a conclusion which tends to ignore the possible conflicts between Cambodian and foreign values and interests. The case in which the Cambodian government rejected the World Bank’s loan and advice regarding the establishment of the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) in 2003 exemplifies this case. According to Ford (2003), this issue was partly attributable to the tension between Cambodian hierarchical social practices and the concept of decentralization central to
Western liberal democracy. To quote from him, “… the notion of an independent ACC [suggested by the World Bank] challenged some well-established traditions of hierarchy and power [in Cambodia]” (Ford, 2003, 13). The protest against the use of French language in Cambodian higher education in the early 1990s was another example of the conflicting interests of Cambodian universities and the French donor. Overall, many studies have suggested that since its independence in 1953, the import of foreign ideologies/concepts into Cambodia, for the most part, has been a failure, due to the conflict of values (Gyllay-Pap, 2007; Harris, 2005; Peou, 2000; Ayres, 2000a).

When examined against the global literature, Maeda’s study is not alone in explaining the important role the local culture plays in shaping the power dynamics in international academic relations. For instance, Ruth Hayhoe (1989), in her theoretical arguments for the use of the World Order Models Project theory, indicated that Confucian values, deeply rooted in Chinese society, greatly influenced international education projects between Chinese participants and their Western counterparts during the 1980s. Also, as discussed above, when tracing the development of comparative education, Mark Bray (2003) noted that, since the 1990s, there has been an increased attention to and recognition of the cultural dimension of education in the works of many distinguished comparative scholars. Hence, it can be concluded that university linkage projects in contemporary Cambodian higher education can only be explored and fully understood within the Cambodian context and its culture. It is important to point out that Maeda’s conception of power dynamics in the Cambodian context might be different from the approach of insiders, like myself, who grew up and spent most of my life in the country. In this respect, her understanding of Cambodian values might be more neutral than mine; therefore, I need to recognize that my study has been shaped by my own personal and cultural values – an issue to be further discussed in Chapter Five.

In sum, there has so far been limited literature on Cambodian higher education that takes into account the context of international university linkage programs. The development and expansion of Cambodian higher education over the last ten years has not only allowed public universities to generate revenues from student tuition fees, and thus, reduced their dependence on foreign assistance, but also has increased their international activities. Of special interest are the various forms of inter-university cooperation through both inter-governmental and inter-institutional initiatives, with a variety of countries. As discussed above, the international literature on power dynamics in university cooperative projects between developed and
developing nations has limited applicability to the Cambodian context as well. Therefore, it is the purpose of my research to fill this knowledge gap by exploring the power dynamics in international university relationships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in developed nations, with France, the United States, Japan and South Korea as case study countries.

Summary

In this chapter, I have connected three bodies of literature in order to explore the critical tools I can use to examine the issue of power relationships in contemporary Cambodian higher education. The initial set of literature, primarily concerned with international development and international university partnership programs from the 1950s through to the present, has indicated that issues of inequalities and dependencies remain critical between developed and developing countries. To tackle the issues, efforts to promote “genuine partnerships” have been made and gained momentum since the 1990s, with many developed countries and their aid agencies working on adjusting their development policies accordingly. Part of these efforts has also been related to adopting new theoretical approaches, alternative to positivist and functionalist thinking, so that local views and knowledge in the South can be accepted and even accommodated in the world knowledge system. The second body of literature highlights the four theoretical approaches which have been dominant in international partnership programs in the post-World War II period. They include realism, (neo-)liberalism, dependency and world systems theories, and the World Order Models Project (as it relates to constructivism and cosmopolitanism). Against these two sets of literature, I have introduced and reviewed literature on Cambodian university partnerships over the last twenty years, which has been quite limited. The review of these three bodies of literature has allowed me to situate my study within the cosmopolitan paradigm – a theoretical lens that is most appropriate for the study of power dynamics in the Cambodian context.
Chapter Three: Context of the Study

Qualitative research methodology places strong emphasis on the importance of the context or the natural setting in understanding the issue(s) being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1994, 1998, 2003, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1989). As Lincoln and Guba (1985) put it, “realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, nor can they be fragmented for separate study of the parts (the whole is more important than the sum of the parts)” (p. 39). This is particularly true in case study research because the research problem and cases are selected based on their historical, political or cultural significance (Ragin, 1997, p. 31). Hence, it is the purpose of this chapter to examine Cambodia in its broadest context, and also its relations with the four case study countries. This chapter begins with the land and people of Cambodia, followed by an overview of its history. Next, I will look at various aspects of contemporary Cambodia, including its economic development, government and political system, socio-cultural system, education and international relations. In the international relations section, I will also discuss Cambodia’s economic, political and social-cultural ties with France, the United States, Japan and South Korea.

Land and People

Cambodia, officially known as the Kingdom of Cambodia, is one of the oldest states in the Southeast Asian region. The English word “Cambodia” represents the Khmer word “Kampuchea [កម្ពុជា]” or “Srok Khmer [[ស្រុកខ្មែរ]]”, meaning “the Land of Gold” or “Sovannaphum [សុវណ្ណភូមិ]” in Khmer. The word “Khmer [ខ្មែរ]” denotes the country’s official language. It is non-tonal, but has vowel distinctions, which is different from English. Its writing system is rooted in the Indic family, which spread from India into most Southeast Asian countries, including Cambodia, in the early centuries of the Christian era. “Khmer” also refers to people who speak the language.

Located in the southwestern part of the Indochinese peninsula, Cambodia covers 181,035 square km, ranking 8th among the ten Southeast Asian (SEA) countries in land size, larger than Brunei and Singapore. It borders Thailand to the west and northwest, Laos to the northeast, Vietnam to the east and the gulf of Thailand to the southwest. It has a tropical climate, with two
seasons: the monsoon or rainy season from May to November, during which 80% of the annual rainfall occurs, and the dry season from December to April. The annual average temperature is 27.7 degrees Celsius, with January the coldest month and April the hottest. The country is divided into 24 provinces and Phnom Penh, located at the confluence of the Mekong and Tonle Sap rivers, is the country’s largest and capital city.

Cambodia’s geographical features are characterized by the Mekong River, the Tonle Sap Lake (also known as the Great Lake), extensive floodplain and lowland areas at the country’s center, the coastal areas, and plateaus and mountain regions in the Southwest and Northeast of the country. The most fertile soil, especially in the vicinity of the Great Lake and the Mekong River, is conducive for rice cultivation, which has been and still is Cambodia’s major economic sector for centuries. The Great Lake – the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia – contains a source of biodiversity, and produces approximately 50-60% of inland commercial fish catch annually (McKenney & Prom, 2002). Cambodia is also rich in natural resources, including timber, gemstones, iron ore, manganese, and phosphates. The country’s jungles, mainly in the mountainous regions, are home to a variety of birds and animals. It is unfortunate, however, that recent illegal logging and pollution have placed these natural resources and the ecosystem under threat.

With an annual growth rate of 1.5 percent, Cambodia’s population reached 14.86 million in 2012, more than two thirds of whom are under the age of 30 (World Bank, 2013). This suggests that the full and proper engagement of this economically active population group in the society will be vital for the future development of the country, which is still recovering from a huge loss of human resources, caused by the horrible civil conflict in the 1970s-80s. The literacy rate for the population aged 15 and over was 80% in 2012, (86.3% for males and 74.3% for females) (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2013). Life expectancy at birth was 65.1 years in 2011 (63.5 for male and 66.5 for female), giving Cambodia a world life expectancy ranking of 141 among 192 studied countries (World Life Expectancy, 2014).

Cambodian society remains highly ethnically, religiously and linguistically homogeneous. Ethnic Cambodians or Khmers constitute approximately 90% of the total population, with the rest being Cham (Khmer Muslim), Chinese, and Vietnamese, among others. More than 90% of the populace, mostly Khmers and ethnic Chinese, believe in Theravada Buddhism, which is the state religion. However, the kingdom is tolerant of other faiths. Khmer is
the country’s official language, spoken by almost every Cambodian. Since 1993, the Cambodian constitution has adopted the motto of “Nation, Religion, King”.

![Figure 3.1. Map of Cambodia, by Province. Source: National Institute of Statistics (NIS) (2013).](image)

**Historical Overview of Cambodia**

In this section, I will offer a brief introduction to Cambodian history in five major periods: Pre-Angkorian Era (before 802), Angkorian Period (802–1431), Dark Ages (1431–1863), French Colonialism (1863–1953) and Cambodia since its independence (1953–the early 1990s).
Pre-Angkorian era (Before 802).

What is now known as Cambodia had long been inhabited, with some evidence suggesting this happened as early as 4,200 BCE (Chandler, 2008; Ledgerwood, Ebihara & Mortland, 1994; Corfield, 2009). However, the Khmer polity only came into existence in the early centuries of the Common Era, with the first empire of Funan established in around 180 C.E. Ruled by Fan Shih-Man (Chinese transliteration), Funan was recorded to have a strong military force and cover a wealthy trading port along the coast; it offered a warehouse “for goods in transit between India and China and was an outlet for products from the forested interior of Cambodia and Vietnam” (Chandler, 2008, p. 19). During the first eight Christian centuries, however, the Khmer polity was not a strong unified kingdom but, like the rest of Southeast Asia, “a collection of small states,” with all principalities competing for power (Chandler, 1983, p. 17). For instance, amidst the decline of the Funan empire in the 6th century, another kingdom, Chenla, which some historians suggest had been among the small states of the Funan empire, grew as a dominant kingdom (Corfield, 2009).

Important to note here is the influence of Indian socio-cultural values in the Southeast Asian region during the first Christian millennium (Chandler, 2008; Osborne, 2004). The process, commonly known as “Indianisation”, occurred in two ways, one of which was through “a relatively small number of traders and priest-scholars” who brought with them various aspects of Indian culture to the region (Osborne, 2004, p. 23). The other means of Indianisation took place through Southeast Asians who travelled to India and brought back with them Indian culture. In the Cambodian context, Indian influence was then quite dominant and manifested itself in the forms of language, arts, architecture, statecraft, and religious mythology. These socio-cultural aspects, although evolving over time, have remained an important part of Cambodian society even until today.

Angkorian period (802-1431).

A glorious era in Cambodian history was believed to commence in the year 802 when the monarch Jayavarman II built a new city in the northwestern part of Cambodia, known as the city of Angkor. In the same year, the King began the tradition of making himself the universal monarch in the Hindu cult, which established a line of the devaraja or god-kings (Chandler, 2008; Corfield, 2009). In his rule, the King was able “to unite the various small kingdoms and
principalities under a unified government, probably through military campaigns as much as through diplomacy, leading him to become their overlord” (Corfield, 2009, p. 5). This marked the beginning of the Khmer empire, which lasted from 802 to 1431 and was ruled by a total of 28 kings (Tully, 2005). In its heyday, particularly from the 11th to 13th centuries, Cambodia dominated and extended over much of mainland Southeast Asia, including the modern territory of Cambodia, southern Vietnam, Thailand and some parts of Burma (Osborne, 2004).

During the Angkorian era, records indicate that Cambodia was a highly developed society. According to the accounts of the Chinese envoy Chou Ta-kuan (Zhou Daguan), who visited the city in 1296 and spent nearly a year there, Angkor was then the richest city in Southeast Asia (Osborne, 2004). The rise of the Khmer empire is believed to have been attributable to a number of factors, including geographical location, religious practices and human talent (Osborne, 2004, p. 25). Located in the vicinity of the Tonle Sap Lake, the Angkor city could help reduce the pressure of being attacked by invaders, especially from the sea (Osborne, 2004). The rise and the fall of the water from the Tonle Sap Lake enabled the kingdom to produce between three and four rice crops per year, which could support the city’s population of up to one million, whose labor contributed to building numerous temples at the time (Zhou, 1987).

It is important to highlight that the 13th century represented a time of significant change in religion, demography, balance of power, and trade within the Southeast Asian region (Chandler, 1983). In Cambodia, King Jayavarman VII (1181-1218) began to adopt Theravada Buddhism, moving away from the past religious practices that had been mainly associated with Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. One of the many possible theories explaining Cambodia’s shift toward this new cult of Buddhism was “the increasing interaction between Khmer- and Mon-speaking residents of the Thai central plain, with the Mons being devotees of Theravada Buddhism” (Chandler, 1983, p. 68). From then until today, Theravada Buddhism has always been the state religion in Cambodian society, except for the Khmer Rouge’s regime, during which all forms of social institutions and services were closed and the population was decimated. The arrival of Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia also led to the emergence and spread of a pagoda education system, in which Buddhist monks (Luak Sang) taught Cambodian boys some carpentry skills and also reading and writing skills, particularly in relation to Buddhist teachings (Ayres, 2000; Tully, 2005; Whitaker et al., 1973). This form of education lasted until the early
20th century when France, in its rule over Cambodia, began to modernize pagoda education, in addition to its introduction of secular state schools to the country.

**Dark ages of Cambodia (1431-1863).**

The glorious Khmer empire came to an end in 1431 when Siam attacked and burned the Angkor city – the event which forced the Khmer King Ponhea Yat to move to Srei Santhor and then to Phnom Penh, which is the present capital city of Cambodia. The decline of Angkor ushered in a four-century period of what is commonly known as the Dark Ages in Cambodian history. The country became constantly subject to invasion by its rising neighbor Thailand (then Siam), and later, by Vietnam, which expanded in size and power from the 17th century on. The internal political strife in the 17th century, especially among royal family members, also contributed to the weakening of the Kingdom (Chandler, 1983; Tully, 2005). The most destructive time was during the 1830s-40s, when the country was on the brink of dissolution as a result of repeated attacks by its two neighbors (Chandler, 1983). It should be noted that despite the frequent conflicts between Cambodia and Thailand since the 15th century, cultural interactions and exchanges, including Theravada Buddhist practices, between the two societies, were also taking place at the same time.

**French colonialism (1863-1953).**

Another new chapter of Cambodian history began in 1863 when Cambodia became a French colony. Due to constant threats from Thailand and Vietnam, Cambodian King Norodom sought “protection” from the French, who had already colonized Vietnam and were then seeking to expand their influence in Southeast Asia. Even though France had a relatively limited interest in Cambodia, at least initially, compared to Vietnam and other parts of Indochina, it did have its own colonial agenda for the country. France learned that Cambodia had rich resources, and in addition, colonizing the latter would also be of geopolitical importance to French power in Cochinchina. As Osborne (1969) pointed out:

… the country [Cambodia] had bestrode the great Mekong River, seen by Frenchmen in the first days of their presence in Cambodia as a route to the richness of China. And its borders marched with Siam. The wish to restrict Siam’s expansion, and what were believed to be British interests working through Siam, dominated much of French thinking on Asia throughout the nineteenth century. (p. 176)
The so-called “protection” was turned into real imperialism in 1887, when France placed Cambodia under the Indochina Union, which also included three parts of Vietnam (Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina) and, later in 1893, Laos.

It should be noted that in the early 20th century France introduced a Western model of secular education to Cambodia, in order to modernize pagoda education, by bringing in new subjects, such as arithmetic, and geography (Fergusson & Le Masson, 1997; Tully, 2002). Along with the reforms in the temple schools, the French set up secular Franco-Khmer state schools in the capital Phnom Penh and in provincial towns (Gyallay-Pap 1989, p. 258). However, generally, France was seen to pay relatively limited attention to the overall development of Cambodian education. Lycee Sisowath, opened in 1935 as the country’s only secondary school at the time, was the only place offering education comparable to Western post-secondary trade schools or associate degrees, until the establishment of the National Institute of Juridical, Political and Economic Sciences in 1949 (Ayres, 2000a; Hayden, 1967; Tully, 2002).

Cambodia after independence (1953-the early 1990s).

Cambodia obtained its independence from France on November 9, 1953, following the defeat of Japan in the Second World War. This ushered in new periods of both prosperity, especially in the immediate post-independence times, and ravaging civil conflict, later in the 1970s and 1980s. Over a span of around sixty years, the country has gone through many different regimes, with varying forms of governance and ideologies, as shown in the table below.

Table 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ruling Government (Head of State)</th>
<th>Type of Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1953-1970</td>
<td>Sangkum Reastr Niyum (Prince Sihanouk)</td>
<td>Buddhist socialism/Monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-1975</td>
<td>Neo-Khmerism (Lon Nol)</td>
<td>Republicanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-1979</td>
<td>Democratic Kampuchea (Pol Pot)</td>
<td>Cambodian communism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-1991</td>
<td>People’s Republic of Kampuchea/State of Cambodia (Heng Samrin/Hun Sen)</td>
<td>Vietnamese communism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-1993</td>
<td>Cambodia under the United Nations Transitional Authority</td>
<td>Transitional Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1997</td>
<td>Coalition (Prince Ranariddh/Hun Sen)</td>
<td>Hybrid democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-present</td>
<td>Cambodian People’s Party (Hun Sen)</td>
<td>Hybrid democracy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first fifteen years after independence was commonly known as the “golden age” among older Cambodians who lived through the period. Prince Norodom Sihanouk – Cambodia’s post-colonial leader – aimed to modernize Cambodia by placing strong emphasis on promoting economic development. Under his government of the Sangkum Reastr Niyum (People’s Socialist Community) – the political movement which he established in 1955 – public infrastructure was built throughout the country, and people enjoyed peace and political stability. Noticeably, like many other post-colonial leaders, the Prince saw formal education as a way not only of building Cambodia as a modern state but also of getting away from French neocolonial dependency (Ayres, 2000a, 2000b; Clayton, 1998). Hence, 20% of the annual national expenditure went to the education sector, making primary and secondary schools spread throughout the country. For the first time, eight major public universities were established in the early 1960s to meet the need of the society. During the French colonial era, by contrast, the National Institute of Juridical, Political and Economic Sciences built in 1949 (now the Royal University of Law and Economics) had been the only post-secondary institution in the country.

In terms of his rule, Prince Norodom Sihanouk adopted the concept of Buddhist socialism, which “combined Buddhist notions of accumulating merit with loyalty to the monarchy and Marxist egalitarianism” (Ayres, 2000b, p. 449). While this ideology indicated the Prince’s intention to bring about social and economic development among Cambodians from all different walks of life, at the same time, it ironically reinforced the Prince’s absolute power in the Cambodian political landscape at the time (Peou, 2000; Ayres, 2000b). At the international level, the Prince adopted a neutral foreign policy, joining the Non-Aligned Movement, which was founded in 1961 by developing nations who were not formally affiliated with either the US or the Soviet bloc during the polarization of the Cold War. This neutrality policy was also influenced by Sihanouk’s following the Buddhist concept of the Middle Path (Suksamran, 1993).

The prosperity and political stability Cambodian people enjoyed after independence were short-lived. By the mid-1960s, Prince Norodom Sihanouk’s rule was increasingly challenged by educated Cambodians and the urban elite, who “began to voice more openly their frustrations about problems such as corruption, nepotism, and unemployment” in the country (Ayres, 2000, p. 449). The Prince was also criticized for his poor economic management, as well as his inability to deal with the Vietnam War, which began to spill over into Cambodia in the second
half of the 1960s. It was apparent that while his foreign policy was based on the Buddhist concept of the Middle Path or neutrality in name, he was leaning toward the left in practice (Suksamran, 1993). Not only did he break diplomatic ties with the US in 1965, but he also allowed the Communist Vietnam access to Cambodian territories to set up bases to fight against South Vietnamese, who were then supported by the US.

As a consequence of the growing sentiment against his rule, Prince Norodom Sihanouk was overthrown from power through a bloodless coup in March 1970 while he was travelling abroad. A pro-American government, led by General Lon Nol, was set up, declaring Cambodia “the Khmer Republic” (Chandler, 2008; Corfield, 2009). This political change marked the beginning of the two decades of protracted internal conflict in Cambodia. In particular, intense civil war erupted between the government of Lon Nol and those loyal to the Prince, who then became closely allied with the Khmer Rouge – a Cambodian community group initially supported by Northern Vietnam during the Indochina war with France and the United States. Alongside this internal conflict was the heavy bombing by the United States air force in many parts of Cambodia from 1969 to 1973, to disrupt the Viet Cong (Northern Vietnam troops) and the Khmer Rouge.

In 1975, the Khmer Rouge were able to overthrow Lon Nol’s government and declared Cambodia to be Democratic Kampuchea. This new regime, which ruled Cambodia for 3 years, eight months and 20 days, was seen as the most destructive in the country’s modern history. As Chandler (2008) described:

Many Cambodia’s institutions were destroyed or overturned, and the urban population, forcibly exiled from towns and cities, was put to work alongside everybody else (except for soldiers and CPK cadres) as agricultural laborers. The new regime abolished money, markets, formal schooling, Buddhist practices, and private property. In a headlong rush toward a socialist utopia, nearly two million Cambodians, or one in four, died of overwork, malnutrition and misdiagnosed diseases or were killed. (p. 7)

It was estimated that more than 80% of teachers, including university professors, were killed during the regime (Clayton, 1998). Khmer Rouge’s radical movement, with its intention to wipe out all traces of the previous society, was believed to be guided by Pol Pot’s concept of “socialism without a model”, which had been influenced, to a great extent, by Maoist communist ideologies (Ayres, 1999, p. 209). Overall, Cambodia had experienced massive physical, human and spiritual destruction by 1979.
On 7 January 1979, the Vietnamese army was able to oust the Khmer Rouge from the city and installed a new government, known as the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). The PRK faced considerable problems, as “the economy was shattered, society in chaos, and institutions of state all but destroyed” (Hughes & Un, 2011, p. 1). Educated people who survived the Khmer Rouge regime also left the country shortly thereafter. Leaning toward the socialist bloc, the PRK government “attempted to rebuild the Cambodian state, economy and society based on an imposed – although relaxed, compared with the Pol Pot years – version of Vietnamese-style socialism” (Hughes & Un, 2011, p. 2). Hence, a decade after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge’s regime, Cambodia remained ostracized from the rest of the world, with trade and aid embargoes imposed by Western countries. This is not to mention the fact that civil conflict remained throughout the 1980s between the PKR, who controlled the majority of Cambodian territory, and three major resistance forces who resided along the Cambodian-Thai border. These three groups included: (1) FUNCINPEC (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia), which was founded by Prince Norodom Sihanouk; (2) the KPNLE (Khmer People’s National Liberation), which was led by former Prime Minister Son Sann; and (3) the remnants of the Khmer Rouge troops.

The world’s changing geopolitics in the late 1980s had a great impact on Cambodia. In particular, toward the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union and Vietnam ceased their assistance to Cambodia in 1989 – the year in which Vietnamese troops were also withdrawn from Cambodia. With the support of the international community, four different Cambodian political factions, the United Nations and 18 other countries signed the comprehensive peace agreements in Paris on October 23, 1991. This led to the establishment of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) on February 28, 1991, whose operation began in March 1992 and ended in September 1993. Undertaking its biggest operation ever with a total spending of US$1.6 billion, UNTAC helped Cambodia with the formation of the new government, called the Kingdom of Cambodia, through the conduct of free and fair general elections in 1993, in which over 90% of registered voters turned out for the polls (United Nations, 2003). Prince Norodom Sihanouk also returned to Cambodia in 1991 and became the King (head of state) in 1993. Hence, the support by the United Nations and the international community completely changed the course of Cambodian modern history, ushering in a new era of peace, development and progress.
In the above brief historical outline, two key aspects need to be highlighted, which are relevant, in many ways, to the topic of the power dynamics in contemporary Cambodian higher education. First, the practice of social hierarchical order has been dominant in Cambodian society from the Angkorian era up to the present time. Even during the Dark Ages from the 15th to the 19th century, during which the kingdom was constantly attacked by its neighbors and weakened, kings still held dominant power and were widely respected among their people. Likewise, during the colonial period, France maintained the status quo of social hierarchy by promoting monarchy in its rule over Cambodia. In all the regimes after independence, despite different ideologies, power remained centered at the top. Such power relationships are believed to be influenced and shaped by the Buddhist practice of patron-client relationships – the key issue to be thoroughly examined in the later part of Chapter Four.

Second, since the decline of Angkor, Cambodia has never been able to build a strong and independent state. It has suffered from foreign invasion, colonization, and other forms of foreign intervention. A quick look back at its modern history indicates that Cambodia’s domestic politics from the 1950s through to today have been, and remain, greatly influenced by foreign countries competing for their own respective political influence and benefits. As Peou (2000) summarized:

The US supported the Khmer Republic, despite the fact that the regime committed atrocities and became authoritarian. While Beijing favored the establishment of a communist regime in Cambodia, Vietnam also tried to create a client Cambodian regime in its own ideological image. Until the mid-1980s, global and regional power rivalries between the various states, inside and outside of Southeast Asia, involved in the Cambodia war clearly worked to the Soviet-Indochina alliance’s geo-strategic advantage. (p. 154)

Hence, Cambodia’s modern period cannot be viewed and fully understood in isolation from its past history, which has, for the most part, involved its neighbours and other powerful countries. This reality helps frame Cambodian relations with the four case study countries – the background against which international university partnerships can be broadly, though not thoroughly, understood.

**Contemporary Cambodia**

This section discusses various aspects of contemporary Cambodia, two decades after the country began a transformation process in the early 1990s, moving from a centrally planned economy to a free market one, with multiple party politics. These aspects include the economy,
the government and political system, the socio-cultural structure, the educational system and international relations.

**Economy.**

In spite of all the challenges caused by the legacies of internal conflict in the preceding periods, Cambodia has enjoyed peace, prosperity and political stability over the past twenty years, except for a brief period of political violence in 1997. Following the free market economy, the country has remarkably achieved an annual GDP growth of between 7 and 8% since 1994, reaching US $14.04 billion in 2012 (World Bank, 2013). Its GDP per capita increased from US $251 in 1993 to US $946 in 2012. As shown in Figure 3.2 below, Cambodia’s overall good economic performance has been driven by four large areas, including industry, taxes, services, and agriculture, fisheries and forestry. Compared to other countries in the region, the inflation rate has been relatively low, averaging around 5.5% from 1995 to 2011 (Cambodia Development Research Institute [CDRI], 2013).

*Figure 3.2. GDP Distribution by Economic Activity in 2011.*

The garment sector, accounting for 75% of total domestic exports, has experienced steady growth over the years. Since the mid-1990s, the US has been the largest garment export market destination for Cambodia, capturing US $1.930 million (or 45%) of the total garment exports in 2012, followed by the EU (33%) and Japan (3%) (Ly & Aldaz-Carroll, 2013). The growth of this
sector has been attributable to the specialized privileged access, known as the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), to markets in those developed countries. Under the GSP schemes, import tariffs from such least developed countries as Cambodia are reduced or exempted if they follow major requirements set by market destination countries. Most investors in this industry are from Taiwan, China, South Korea and Malaysia. This sector has thus far become the major industrial employer in Cambodia, especially for women, and 25% of the total population in the country is reported to gain economic benefits, in one way or another, from it (Lum, 2009).

There is little doubt that the growth of the garment industry has led to an increase in the country’s import of fabric for garment production, which accounted for 29% of the total import volume in 2012, followed by petroleum (13%), motor vehicles (8%), and construction materials (3%) (Ly & Aldaz-Carroll, 2013). Other major imported products were medicines, food, cigarettes, fertilizer, beverages, electronics, and household items. Import partners included Thailand 27.1%, Vietnam 20.3%, China 19.5%, Singapore 7.1%, Hong Kong 5.8%, and South Korea 4.3% in 2012 (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2014). The country’s total import and export volume increased by 19% in 2012, reaching US $13.63 billion (Wang, 2013). However, with a large import value of US $8.14 billion, the county experienced a huge trade deficit of US $2.65 billion (Wang, 2013).

In terms of employment, the agricultural sector remains key, absorbing up to 55.8% of the total employed population in 2011, followed by the service and the industrial sectors at 27.3% and 16.9%, respectively (Ly & Aldaz-Carroll, 2013). Although in recent years, new industrial crops, including rubber and cassava, have emerged, rice remains the country’s leading crop. However, Cambodia still lacks resources to support agro-industry to improve the capacity of its farmers. Tourism, a key sub-sector of the service and industrial sectors, has also been a major source of employment for Cambodians. The country’s three most popular tourist destinations are the capital Phnom Penh, the World Heritage Site Angkor Wat in Siem Reap and the Sea Resort Sihanoukville, which have attracted almost 90% of international visitors so far (Sim, 2014). The top five sources of the total of 4.2 million international visitors in 2013 were Vietnam (20.3%), China (11%), Korea (10.3%), Laos (9.8%) and Thailand (5.3%) (Sim, 2014).

The country’s foreign direct investment (FDI) has also significantly grown, amounting to US $26,415 million from 1994 to 2012, as indicated in Table 3.2. China topped this list, with its cumulative investment in the kingdom amounting to US $9.142 billion over the period. This was followed by South Korea and Malaysia, with their cumulative investment of US $4.191 and US
$2.614 billion, respectively. Thus far, the growth of foreign direct investment has been largely contributed by Cambodia’s 22 special economic zones (SEZs), which have provided foreign investors with various incentives (CDC, 2013). Based on its overall good economic performance over the past twenty years, the government aims for Cambodia to become an upper-middle income country by 2030 and a developed country by 2050.

Table 3.2

Cumulative Amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Cambodia from 1994 to 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Amount in millions of US dollars (Percentage)</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>9,142 (34.6%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>4,191 (15.86%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>2,614 (9.89%)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2,429 (9.2%)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1,290 (4.88%)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1,281 (4.84%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>916 (3.11%)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>866 (3.27%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>732 (2.77%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HKG</td>
<td>697 (2.63%)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>617 (2.33%)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>404 (1.52%)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>303 (1.14%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>157 (0.6%)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>876 (3.31%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26,415</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CDC (2013).

No development is devoid of challenges, and Cambodian economic growth is no exception. First, heavy reliance on the garment sector as the major export suggests that the economy is still narrowly based, and thereby easily prone to international economic recession. The country’s economy itself has also been heavily dollarized, with the US dollar and the Cambodian riel freely circulating and interchangeable in the market. Economists argue this situation could make the economy easily vulnerable to external economic crisis, as in the case of the 2008-09 global recession (Hill & Menon, 2013). Development and investment have been concentrated in some geographical areas, including Phnom Penh, Siem Reap (the tourist site), the harbor town of Sihanoukville, and a few other places. This suggests the economic benefits have
not been proportionally and widely distributed. The backbone of the overall economy still depends on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), constituting approximately 95% of all enterprises in the country and accounting for half of all employment (Norodom, 2012).

In addition, while economic growth has improved people’s living standards, Cambodia remains one of the poorest nations in the world, and the most aid-dependent country in Asia. Over the last two decades, total foreign assistance has reached US $12.13 billion and has covered 90% of public expenditure. Figure 3.3 below lists the breakdown of foreign assistance by various donors as well as by the sector distribution from 1992 to 2011 (Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board of the Council for the Development of Cambodia, 2011). In 2009, one in five Cambodians still lived on less than US $1.50 per day and one in two on less than US $2 (CDRI, 2013). Food security remains a critical concern. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) global food security index, which covers the affordability, availability and quality and safety of food, ranked Cambodia 89 out of 107 countries in 2013 (EIU, 2013). The public health system remains not only in a poor condition but also inaccessible to many. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has reported that villagers usually have to sell their livestock and property to be able to cover their health costs (ADB, 2012).

Figure 3.3. Breakdown of Foreign Assistance by Donors as well as by Sector from 1992 to 2011. Source: Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board (CRDB) (2011).
**Government and political system.**

Under its 1993 Constitution (Article 10), Cambodia follows a constitutional monarchy, meaning the king reigns but does not rule. Also, unlike in the past in which the country’s kingship was hereditary, the Constitution stipulates that a king is selected from the royal family by a Throne Council, which consists of top religious and political leaders. At present, His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni, the son of the late King Norodom Sihanouk, is the King of Cambodia, acceding to the throne on October 29, 2004. He is the last line of devaraja (god-kings), which was first practiced by King Jayavarman II in 802. This suggests monarchy has been in existence in Cambodian society for more than 1200 years. Despite being currently less involved in the country’s political arena, the monarch has presented himself as an image of generosity, tranquility, and honesty, for the majority of Cambodians.

Article 51 of the Constitution stipulates that Cambodia adopts a liberal democracy with multiple-party politics, and that Cambodian people are the masters of their country. The country has held its national election every five years since 1993. It has a bicameral legislature, which consists of the National Assembly and the Senate. 123 members of the National Assembly are selected through the national election. The following table summarizes the election results since 1993.

Table 3.3

*Main Election Results Since 1993*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party/Party Alliance</th>
<th>1993 %</th>
<th>1998 %</th>
<th>2003 %</th>
<th>2008 %</th>
<th>2013 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FUNCINPEC</td>
<td>45.47</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodian People’s Party (CPP)</td>
<td>38.23</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>48.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Rainsy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights Party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noromdom Ranariddh Party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* 2013 figure interpolated; the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) was the result of the merger of Sam Rainsy Party and Human Rights Party in 2012.

While, constitutionally, Cambodia follows a liberal democracy, one should remember that from its independence until now, a real form of liberal democracy and free elections have yet to exist in the country, except for the 1993 national election organized by UNTAC. As Peou (2000) indicated, during the four different regimes from 1953 to 1991, none of the leaders “came to power through free and fair electoral contestation; none truly respected political rights or civil liberties” (p. 40). Apparently, one of the explanations for the failure of Western liberal democracy in Cambodia is the inherently hierarchical social practice or the patronage system, which has been deeply ingrained in Cambodian society for centuries and has been related to the Buddhist concept of patron-client relationships.

As Table 3.3 above indicates, while the Cambodian People’s Party ran second in the first national election, it could still maintain its share of power and, since 1997, has dominated Cambodian politics. Over the years, the party has been able to control all public institutions, including the National Election Committee (NEC), through “patronage politics,” which is defined by Leonard Wantchekon (2003) as “the transactions between politicians and citizens whereby material favors are offered in return for political support at the polls” (as cited in Un, 2005, p. 201). Such practices within the Cambodian context have created “a web that breeds corruption and breeches the rule of law” (Un, 2005, p. 228). Similarly, Ear (2011) also attributed the pervasive corruption in Cambodian society to the tradition of patron-client relationships, which have thus far promoted and maintained dependency and reciprocity within the country’s socio-political structure:

Perceptions of corruption emerge in part from the functioning of intra-elite patronage systems, running both vertically and horizontally, across and within ministries. These patronage systems have prompted a continual expansion in the number of positions in government, from one election to the next – creating one Prime Minister, seven deputy Prime Ministers, 15 Senior Ministers, 28 Ministers, 135 Secretaries of State and at least 146 Under-Secretaries of State, in 2003. (p. 72)

In this regard, Cambodia has been described to be moving from liberal democracy, implanted by the UNTAC in 1993, to the so-called “hybrid democracy”, suggesting that the idea of absolute power remains a common practice within, but also a critical concern for, Cambodian society (Un, 2005).
Socio-cultural system.

Cambodian society remains highly homogenous, with people of Khmer ethnicity constituting approximately 90% of the total population. The other ethnic groups include Cham (Khmer Muslim), Chinese, and Vietnamese, among others. More than 90% of the populace, mostly those of Khmer and Chinese ethnicity, believe in Theravada Buddhism, which is the state religion. Khmer is the country’s official language, spoken by almost every Cambodian. French was a dominant foreign language in the 1950s-60s, mainly due to the colonial legacy and influence. However, it has become less popular these days, after the disruption caused by civil war in the 1970s-80s, which had annihilated all the country’s institutions, including education. The world’s changing geopolitics since the 1990s, which has placed English in a more dominant and influential position as an international lingua franca, has also greatly contributed to the decline in the primacy of the French language in Cambodia as well as globally.

The national Constitution (Article 31) stipulates that “every Khmer citizen shall be equal before the law, enjoying rights, freedom, and fulfilling the same obligations regardless of race, color, sex, language, religious belief, political tendency, birth origin, social status, wealth or other status”. However, as in most Asian societies, social relationships in Cambodia are very hierarchical, and everyone has multiple roles, depending on their position, gender and age. Such unequal relationships manifest themselves in various manners, one of which is related to the language use. For instance, it would be inappropriate to address others, especially elders or teachers, simply by using the word “you”.

Also, while gender equality is emphasized within the Constitution, Cambodian society has held strong expectations of different genders. For example, women are culturally expected to take care of things within the home, including cooking, learning, and taking care of children. In contrast, men, who are considered the breadwinners of the family, work outside the home to earn income for the family. Interestingly, wives are usually the ones who manage the family budget. However, in recent years, wider access to education, the growth of a younger population, the inflow of foreign cultures through the media, and increased migration to the city as well as abroad due to job opportunities, have gradually reshaped the gender expectations and the society at large. As in other societies, such demographic changes in Cambodia and their resulting impact are more obvious in urban areas than in the countryside.
In general, the lives of most Cambodians have always been connected, in many ways, to Wat or Pagoda, and the Theravada Buddhist ethos is seen as embodying the key moral principles that the average Cambodian should follow in their life. In particular, the karma theory emphasizes the practice of achieving merit and avoiding evil deeds in one’s life. This concept is simplified in relation to everyday activities with the saying, “If you do good, you receive good; if you do evil, you receive evil”. Others explain this concept by putting it in the language of science, “Every cause has an effect”. Hence, to ensure good karmic consequences, every Cambodian is supposed to inculcate at least the five basic precepts of Buddhism, which include abstaining from taking life, from taking what is not given, from improper sexual acts, from telling lies, and from taking substances which cause intoxication and heedlessness. As such, Cambodian society values the importance of building peace within oneself, without causing harm to the welfare of others.

**Educational system.**

As pointed out earlier, pagoda education was the major form of schooling in Cambodian society from the late 13th through to the early 20th century, when the French began to introduce a new form of Western education. Hence, although secular education is currently the recognized form of schooling in Cambodia, the ultimate goal of education has been greatly influenced and shaped by Buddhist idealism. This is clearly stated in the purpose put forward for general education (grades 1 to 12), which is to allow the learners to progress in their knowledge of morality and in good character by enhancing their personal, intellectual and physical capacity and assuring their appropriate use of knowledge and fundamental skills” (MoEYS, 2007, p. 6). Simply put, education in Cambodian society emphasizes the importance of morality and personal growth, beyond skills development for employment.

As shown in the table below, the Cambodian educational system is divided into four levels: (1) pre-school education, generally for children from the age of three to five years; (2) six years of primary school (grades 1 to 6), (3) six years of secondary school (three years of lower secondary school and three years of upper secondary school), and (4) post-secondary education. National examinations at grades 9 and 12 have been conducted on a regular basis. According to Cambodia’s Constitution (article 68), “The State shall ensure for all citizens free primary and secondary education at public schools. Citizens shall receive schooling for at least nine years of
basic education [Grades 1 to 9]”. Outside the formal school system is the vocational training stream which offers students another pathway toward developing skills for employment. Overall, at present, the system is comprised of both public and private education.

Since the early 1990s, when the educational system began to be rebuilt, basic education has been the primary concern for both local and international communities. This has largely been driven by human capital development theory, which emphasizes that the rate of return on investments in basic education is larger than that in higher education. As a consequence, general education at all levels has significantly improved and expanded over the years, as shown in Table 3.4 below. For instance, in 2012-13, the net enrolment rate (NER) for primary education was
97%, meaning that the country has achieved universal access to the early level of basic education. The report by the MoEYS (2014a) also suggests that the gender gap in NER is no longer an issue, and that access has been widely expanded throughout the country, with the NER at the primary level in all provinces reaching more than 90%. In this regard, attention has recently been focused mainly on dealing with such pressing issues as drop-outs, repetition, and the poor quality of education.

Table 3.4

*Number of Schools and Student Enrollment in SY 2000-01 and SY 2013-2014*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School Year 2000-01</th>
<th>School Year 2013-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Schools</td>
<td>Student Enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-School</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>55,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>5,468</td>
<td>2,408,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Secondary</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>283,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Secondary</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>105,086</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Cambodian higher education.**

Along with the improvement of basic education, the higher education sector has significantly grown and expanded over the last 15 years, to include 39 public and 62 private higher education institutions by 2012 (MoEYS, 2013a). The system enrolled 216,053 students in 2011-2012 (MoEYS, 2013a), with a gross enrollment rate of 13%. This represented a sharp increase from 13,464 students in 1996 (World Bank, 2010). The system has offered specialized courses from the certificate to the doctoral level, “in nearly 100 fields ranging from foreign languages, health science, engineering, agriculture, tourism, business management to law and economics” (UNESCO, 2010, p. 26). Interestingly, student tuition fees have currently become the main source of income for all higher education institutions, public and private alike (Innes-Brown, 2006).

At present, Cambodian higher education is composed of three different types of institutions: academies, universities and institutes/colleges. Due to the historical influence of the French and Soviet models, these institutions have been under the supervision of numerous
government ministries, known as parent ministries, as indicated in Table 3.5 below. Parent ministries have thus far played an important role in initiating and enforcing the main regulations and making major decisions, for instance, on staff recruitment and promotion (Chet, 2006). The MoEYS is responsible for overall policy planning for all higher education institutions. Those policies include, but are not limited to, the credit and credit transfer system, Foundation Year (first year) programs, and the language policy in higher education. In terms of funding, the Ministry of Economy and Finance has the final decision on any budget plan proposed by public higher education institutions. The Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), established in 2003 under the Council of Ministers, is another government agency whose mandate is to manage the quality assurance-related issues in higher education.

Table 3.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of Higher Education Institutions by Ministry/Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Ministries</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of National Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Religious Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Economy and Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Public Works and Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Bank of Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of the Council of Ministers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: You (2012); Sen and Ros (2013); MoEYS (2013b).

It is important to note that in 1997, the government introduced a *Royal Decree on the Legal Status of Public Administrative Institutions (PAI)* – one of the key governance reforms,
whose objectives were “to reduce the financial burden on the Government, to shorten budgetary processes of public higher education institutions, and to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education to meet the requirements of the labor markets, and social and economic development” (Touch, Mak & You, 2014, p. 50). The governing board of institutions with a PAI status consists of representatives from the parent ministry, the MoEYS, the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MoEF), and the Council of Ministers (Figure 3.5 exemplifies a governance system of one of the public universities with a PAI status). By 2010, eight public higher education institutions were operating with a PAI status.

![Figure 3.5. An Example of a Governance System at One Public University with a PAI Status. Source: Touch, Mak & You (2014).](image)

While it is obvious that such governance reforms have offered public universities more autonomy in their daily management, the fact that the members of the governing board are from different ministries suggests the persistence of tendencies to centralization. Plus, the government still plays a key role in the appointments of all full-time faculty and staff in the public sector:

The rector is appointed by Royal Degree with a proposal for appointment sent by the Prime Minister to the King. The vice-rector and dean are appointed by sub-degree, proposed for appointment by the parent ministry to the Prime Minister. Vice-deans, heads of department, and heads of office are appointed by the parent ministry on the
recommendation of the rector of the university (Touch, Mak & You, 2014).

Hence, the above governance model not only manifests a kind of fragmentation or a lack of coordination among relevant government agencies (Chet, 2006; Sen & Ros, 2013), but also offers a glimpse into the inherently centralized or hierarchical nature of Cambodian higher education, particularly within the public sector – an issue which has greatly impacted the policy of higher education internationalization, as the findings in Chapters Six and Seven will indicate.

Besides these governance-related matters, Cambodian higher education has faced many other challenges, which need to be addressed, amidst the expansion and growth of the system. Since the 1990s, the country has only spent an average of 3 percent of its educational outlay on higher education (Un & Chuon, 2013). As indicated earlier, more attention has been focused on improving basic education, which has been argued to offer higher rates of return. Within the context of the lack of resources, the government tends to view higher education as “a private good” (Ahrens & McNamara, 2013, p. 51). Hence, despite significant growth so far, Cambodian higher education has limited sources of income, other than student tuition fees and, in some instances, foreign development assistance.

Also, many studies have suggested that there has been a mismatch between higher education provision and the labor market needs (Ford, 2006; MoEYS, 2009; UNESCO, 2010). For instance, in 2009, more than 40% of undergraduate students and 54% of master’s students in 2006-07 were enrolled in programs related to management science (MoEYS, 2009). These programs do not respond to the realities of the job market of the present economy, which remains narrowly based, with agriculture remaining the key sector. As a consequence, the system has experienced the problem of a high unemployment rate among university graduates, especially within the private sector, of up to 90% annually (Ford, 2006; MoEYS, 2014b). The tradition of rote learning, with a lack of critical thinking, in the curriculum is another concern. Above all, all higher education institutions have been mainly occupied with teaching and training, with research and graduate education remaining in a neglected condition.

This brief overview of the rapid development of Cambodian higher education as well as its challenging issues suggests that international collaborative activities between Cambodian universities and their foreign counterparts should be focused on areas other than programs related to business or information technology, which have already achieved significant growth and attention. Plus, international programs should also help promote research and graduate education – the areas which are still underdeveloped. Hence, this contextual background will
allow me to reflect on the degree of the responsiveness of the collaborative programs between Cambodian universities and universities in the four case study countries to the needs of the socio-economic development of Cambodian society, beyond the benefits participating universities have received so far.

Cambodia’s international relations.

Cambodia’s 1993 Constitution stipulates that the country follows a policy of neutrality and non-alignment. However, as the historical overview has suggested, since the country’s independence, there has been no clear line regarding the issue of alignment vs. neutrality in practice. Over the last sixty years, different regimes have aligned with different countries, depending on their ideology. Cambodia’s current international relation policies have also been shaped by its engagement in the regional and international communities. (Table 3.6 lists the key international organizations in which Cambodia has held membership). In what follows, I will briefly discuss Cambodia’s relations with ASEAN as well as with France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. My inclusion of ASEAN in this section is because Japanese support for the engineering university in Cambodia was very much related to Japanese assistance for the development of higher education in the field of engineering in the region.
Table 3.6

*Cambodian Membership in Major International Organizations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Organizations</th>
<th>Membership since</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Telecommunication Union (ITU)</td>
<td>1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations (UN)</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Civil Aviation Organization</td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Maritime Organization (IMO)</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Development Bank (ADB)</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Postal Union (UPU)</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Development Association (IDA)</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Finance Corporation (IFC)</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Labor Organization (ILO)</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Customs Organization (WCO)</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Trade Organization (WTO)</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Productivity Organization (APO)</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia-Pacific Telecommunity</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (as cited in CDC, 2012).

*Cambodia and ASEAN.*

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore. Over the years, ASEAN has expanded to include: Brunei Darussalam, joining on 7 January 1984; Vietnam on 28 July 1995; Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997; and Cambodia on 30 April 1999. Timor-Leste filed its membership application in 2011. With its ten member countries, ASEAN has a total land area of 4,435,617 square km, with a population of 616.614 million in 2010 (ASEAN, 2014). Where land area and population are concerned, Indonesia is the largest (1,904,569 square km of total area and a population of 251 million) and Singapore the smallest in the region (697 square km of total area and a population of 5.46 million) (CIA, 2014).
ASEAN has thus far achieved remarkable economic growth, with its total GDP reaching US $2.311 trillion and GDP per capita US $3,748 in 2012 (ASEAN, 2014). In the same year, its foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow was US $110.291 billion, and its total export and import volumes were US $1.254 trillion and US $1.221 trillion, respectively. Besides, it has expanded its economic, political and socio-cultural collaboration with other countries outside the region. For instance, ASEAN Plus three (China, Japan and South Korea) began in 1997 and has over the years broadened and deepened cooperation in a broader range of areas.

With its motto of “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”, ASEAN aims to promote economic, social, cultural, technical and educational cooperation among all its members. Since its inception, its key principles have centered on the sovereignty, independence and rights of every member state. The emphasis on non-interference in the internal affairs of other members suggests that, unlike the liberal approach of global governance developed by Western countries, ASEAN’s governance in its regionalization process is rooted in Asia’s cultures and the region’s colonial and Cold War experiences (Stubbs, 2008). Hence, there is no doubt that ASEAN’s approach has thus far received both criticism and compliments, depending on the angles at which one looks at it.

The Cambodian case has been seen as a good example of the successful role of ASEAN in dealing with the issues of its member states in an ASEAN manner. As indicated earlier, after the Khmer Rouge’s regime, Cambodia had become a broken society, with everything in the country demolished and four different political parties still competing for power diplomatically and also through civil war. According to Severino and Hong (2012), ASEAN became one of the major actors that helped to bring peace to Cambodia, especially in its own way:

ASEAN adopted a solid and united front throughout the long Cambodian diplomatic campaign. But ASEAN was also flexible enough to allow member states like Indonesia to attempt some initiatives, such as the informal cocktail parties, known as the Jakarta Informal Meeting (there were two JIMs), in which the four Cambodian factions met in informal settings for dialogues (p. 46).

This helped pave the way for negotiation that led to the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1991. In fact, the success of the Cambodian issue has been seen as the first in which ASEAN states showed their solidarity despite differing views. Overall, Severino and Hong (2012) have nicely summarized the key success of the ASEAN so far, as follows:

ASEAN has overcome various crises, such as the East Timor problem, the issues centered on Myanmar, the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, the 2008-09 global financial crisis, SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome], terrorism attacks, disagreements
attendant on the setting up of the ASEAN Regional Forum, the establishment of Asia
European Meetings, ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and the Republic of Korea) and the East
Asia Summit, the ASEAN Charter, the ASEAN Free Trade Area, the economic
arrangements with China, India, Japan, South Korea, Australia-New Zealand, a number
of border tensions, etc. (p. 46)

Building on past success, ASEAN leaders moved forward to set 2015 as a deadline for
the establishment of an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), one of the three pillars of
ASEAN’s Vision 2020. The other two pillars include a Political-Security Community and Socio-
Cultural Community. This suggests that building closer relationships among all member
countries is a key for future success.

Cambodia-France relations.

As noted earlier, Cambodia-France political relations developed out of 90 years of
colonialism. Upon Cambodia’s independence in 1953, the relationship between the two countries
was maintained and in fact, was improved “by the close bonds existing between King Norodom
Sihanouk, a francophone and Francophile, and leading French personalities, in particular General
Charles de Gaulle” (Jeldres, 2012, p. 134). Unfortunately, relations were interrupted in 1970
when Prince Norodom Sihanouk was overthrown from power in a coup and completely cut off
five years later when the Khmer Rouge came to power. Both countries renewed their formal
diplomatic ties in 1991, when Cambodia began to be reintegrated into the world community,
with France playing a role as one of the key mediators in bringing the protracted civil conflict to
a negotiated settlement throughout the 1980s.

France began its development assistance programs to Cambodia in various sectors in
1993, after the latter held its first national UN-supported election. The assistance, which
amounted to €270 (around US $364) million from 1993 to 2013 (French Agency for
Development [AFD]), has taken the forms of emergency aid, technical assistance, scholarships,
loans and donations (Olivier, Jourde, & Sudrie, 2009). In 2011, France, with its net assistance of
€18 (US $24.46) million, ranked 10th among all bilateral donors and 2nd among European
partners for Cambodia (France Diplomatie, 2013). To date, various agencies have played a role
in implementing French assistance projects in Cambodia, including the Agence Universitaire de
la Francophonie (AUF), the French embassy in Cambodia (Ambassade de France) and the
French Agency for Development (AFD).
In terms of higher education, as noted earlier, France was the only Western country to offer large-scale assistance to Cambodian higher education during the 1990s. One of the key emphases of such assistance was the use of the French language in higher education (Clayton, 2006; Pit & Ford, 2004). Such support was channeled through two key programs called the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) and the French embassy (Ambassade de France) program (further discussed in Chapter Six). In fact, Jeldres (2012) stated that unofficial relations between the two countries, in relation to educational support, had already taken place since 1989, not only …

… through the opening of an Alliance Francaise at that point the largest in Asia to teach the French language, but also offering specialized local training to civil servants and a one month’s training course in Paris for senior officials, including vice-ministers of new regime. Staffed by diplomats on secondment from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the guidelines of the new Cultural French Centre were simple: To re-establish French influence in Cambodia. By November 1991, the Alliance Francaise had 7,500 students enrolled, charging each of them a token fee of US $2.00 per semester. (p. 137-138)

Cambodia joined the International Organization of la Francophonie (IOF) in 1993 when it began to accept French large-scale assistance and still maintains its strong ties with La Francophonie until today, despite the gradual decline in French assistance.

In sum, France still has limited economic interests in Cambodia, accounting for only 1.14% of the total FDI from 1994 to 2012 (Table 3.2). Bilateral trade between the two countries amounted to €202 (US $274) million in 2011 (France Diplomatie, 2013). In 2011, the two major French exports to Cambodia were pharmaceuticals (37.4%) and food products (27%), while Cambodia’s major exports to France were garments and textiles (81%). Overall France-Cambodian relations have mainly been bound by culture, education, and politics.

**Cambodia-US relations.**

Cambodia-US political relations over the last sixty years have been described as experiencing “abrupt changes and reversal” many times (Thayer, 2012, p. 96). Established in 1950, the relations initially improved significantly, with the US offering Cambodia over US $400 million of economic aid and over US $83 million of military assistance from 1955 to 1963 (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010). However, Prince Norodom Sihanouk broke off diplomatic relations with the US in May 1965, due to the latter’s increasing military involvement in the Vietnam War. Diplomatic relations were restored in July 1969, and as indicated earlier, in
March 1970, the pro-American General Lon Nol overthrew Prince Norodom Sihanouk’s government in a coup in March 1970. From 1970 to 1975, the Lon Nol government received US $1.18 billion in military assistance and US $503 million of economic aid from the US (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010). Once the Khmer Rouge troops came into power in 1975, Cambodia-US relations were cut off again and not restored until 1991 when the US opened its embassy in Phnom Penh after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords. Hence, relations between the two countries are often described as “troubled”.

Since the early 1990s, the US, like many other Western countries, has played an important role in the rehabilitation process of Cambodia, having a political, economic and socio-cultural impact on the country. The USAID reopened its mission in Cambodia in 1992, focusing on helping with the development needs of Cambodia:

While the initial focus was on meeting basic human needs, USAID also developed programs to support the UN-sponsored move to establish a freely elected government. Improving health and education services also emerged as key concerns. From the outset, USAID funding was delivered primarily through contracts and grants to private voluntary organizations or international organizations, a pattern that continues to this day. (USAID, 2013, para. 1)

Also, over the years, US assistance has been diversified to adapt to the changing needs of Cambodian society. For instance, US assistance to Cambodia in 2012, which amounted to over US $70 million, was distributed in various sectors, including health, education, governance, economic growth and demining of unexploded ordnance (US Department of State, 2013). The total ODA provided by the US to Cambodia from 1992-2011 through bilateral mechanisms was US $776.32 million, accounting for 6.4% of the total US $12.13 billion Cambodia received during the period.

Interesting to note is that US assistance to Cambodian higher education has been relatively marginal. In particular, most of the education funding for the last ten years, which has reached up to US $26 million, has been focused on basic education, in particular in terms of improving access and quality (Embassy of the United States, n.d.). For instance, the Improved Basic Education in Cambodia (IBEC) – a five-year project funded by the USAID and operated through a US-based agency World Education, has supported 303 primary and lower secondary schools, through various activities, ranging from teacher training and scholarships for the poor, to local NGO capacity building (Embassy of the United States, n.d.).
Limited support has been provided to Cambodian higher education over the last twenty years. At present, the programs supported by the U.S. Department of State at the post-secondary level include Fulbright, Humbert Humphrey Fellowship, International Visitor Leadership Program, and Teaching Excellence and Award, among others. Through these programs, approximately 200 Cambodian students, teachers, and professionals are offered scholarship opportunities annually, either for their English language education or for their degree studies in the US (US Embassy/Phnom Penh). The US embassy in Cambodia has also supported some American professors to come and teach at several Cambodian universities, through the Fulbright Scholar and Specialist program. Hence, it is important to restate that collaborative activities between Cambodian and American universities have thus far taken place mainly through institutional initiation and support.

In terms of economic activities, as indicated earlier, the US has been the largest garment export market for Cambodia since the mid-1990s, absorbing over 90% of Cambodia’s total exports of textile and apparel items. Also, while Cambodian total export volume has increased from US $3.7 million in 1996 to US $2.46 billion to 2007, US exports to Cambodia, mainly road vehicles, machinery, and textile fibers, have remained relatively limited, reaching only around US $138 million in 2007 (Lum, 2009). Hence, due to Cambodian dominance of the trade volume between the two countries, one can see that the US still has limited economic interest in Cambodia. Rather, through its trade agreements, the US wants to have an ideological influence over Cambodia, especially in relation to political reforms. According to Thayer (2012), “Under the terms of the 1996 trade agreement with the United States, Cambodia’s garment industry was accorded preferential access to the US market in exchange for Cambodia’s compliance with international labor standards” and other issues concerning the development of democracy in the country (p. 98). Such conditions have been seen to be very influential, in many respects. For instance, “in 2005, garment buyers played a key role in applying pressure on authorities for the release of five activities: a union leader, a radio host, two human rights activists, and a lawyer, all of whom had been imprisoned for exercising their freedom of expression” (Ear, 2011, p. 78).

It should also be noted that while relations between the two countries have significantly improved, the US decided to suspend its direct bilateral assistance to Cambodia in 1997, except for funds for basic human needs (Thayer, 2012). This was in response to “disapproval of Prime Minister Hun Sen’s seizure of power in 1997 and concerns about ongoing strong-arm tactics” (Lum, 2009). US assistance was not resumed until ten years later in 2007, following the
Cambodian government’s release of “political prisoners and restoration of political liberties to opposition leaders” (Lum, 2009). Interestingly, the sanctions did not include Cambodia’s textile exports to the US primarily because “American trade unions successfully lobbied against sanctions as long as Cambodia met its international obligations” in the garment industry (Thayer, 2012, p. 98). Overall, it is clear that since early on, US assistance has been aimed at influencing political and economic ideologies in Cambodia.

**Cambodia-Japan relations.**

Diplomatic relations between Cambodia and Japan were established on February 21, 1954, immediately after Cambodia became independent of France. This was followed by a treaty of friendship signed between the two countries during the then Cambodian leader King Norodom Sihanouk’s official visit to Japan in 1955 (Chheang, 2009). Their relationship had significantly improved since then. Interestingly, Cambodia did not claim any reparation from Japan after its loss in the Second World War, but instead, offered it rice, through its bilateral assistance programs (Chheang, 2009). However, such relations were disrupted in 1975 when the Khmer Rouge took control of Cambodia and were only rebuilt in 1991 after the Paris Peace Agreements. Japan reopened its embassy in Cambodia in 1992 and the Cambodian embassy in Japan was reopened two years later.

Thus far, Japan has been one of the major actors to bring peace to Cambodia as well as to help rebuild the country. In particular in the early 1990s, for the first time after the Second World War, Japan sent its troops abroad [600 soldiers, along with 75 police] to help with the peace-building process in Cambodia, under the UN framework (McNulty, 1992). In addition, Japan held a number of meetings during those early days to bring together developed countries and international organizations to offer Cambodia emergency aid, focusing on “agricultural rehabilitation, improvement of the transportation networks, and funding for basic education” (Sudo, 2002). Japan was the largest bilateral donor, contributing up to US $91.8 million of the total emergency assistance of US $773 million Cambodia received in March 1994 (Sudo, 2002). Indeed, Japan’s political involvement in bringing an end to Cambodian conflict also marked one of the initial successful Japanese political engagements in ASEAN (Sudo, 2005).

Japan’s ODA to Cambodia in 2011 amounted to US $130.93 million, and comprised three types: loan aid (14%), grant aid (47%) and technical assistance (39%) (Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of Japan, n.d.). The assistance has been widely dispersed in Cambodia in a number of sectors, including social development, education, culture, economic, and politics, and has been based on Japan’s three pillars of propriety: "Strengthening of Economic Base", "Promotion of Social Development" and "Strengthening of Governance" (JICA, 2012, p. 1). Thus far, Japan has offered Cambodian students numerous scholarships through its Ministry of Education, as well as through JICA, the World Bank, and the ADB. However, large-scale Japanese support for Cambodian higher education only began in recent years, particularly in the field of engineering through a program which is part of the Japan-ASEAN educational collaboration. This program is called the AUN/SEED-Net program and will be further elaborated upon in Chapter Six.

Japan’s cumulative FDI to Cambodia from 1994 to 2012 reached USD $157 million (Table 3.2), ranking 14th among all foreign investment countries. Within the context of Japan’s excessive development assistance to Cambodia, this modest FDI volume in the country suggests that Japan’s relations with Cambodia are comprised of various dimensions, not limited to the economic one. Hence, it is interesting to look at the increased Japanese support for Cambodian higher education against this backdrop.

It should be noted that Japan’s relations with Cambodia can also be seen to reflect the former’s relations with the ASEAN region, which date back to 1973 with the establishment of ASEAN-Japan forum on synthetic rubber (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013). Such relationships have developed and progressed over time, and expanded to cover various areas, including economics, political dialogue, culture, education and tourism. Bilateral trade between Japan and ASEAN has increased to US $248 billion in 2011, making Japan the second largest trading partner with ASEAN, after China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, February 2013). Japan’s FDI inflows to the region also increased to US $18.8 billion in 2011, making ASEAN the second most common FDI investment destination for Japanese enterprises behind the European Union (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.). The accumulated amount of Japan’s ODA to all the 10 ASEAN countries from 1960 to 2011 accounted for 34.9% of the total ODA from the world to the ASEAN. Thus far, JICA has played an important role in Japanese international activities.

While economic interest in ASEAN constitutes an important part of Japan’s relations with ASEAN, Japan’s approach is relatively unique, compared to other developed countries: ASEAN and Japan place great emphasis on people-to-people contacts and cultural exchanges, particularly among the youths and intellectuals. Japan initiated two youth
exchange projects including the Japan East-Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) in 2007 and another youth exchange programme named “Kizuna” (which means “Bond”) project in 2012 which aims at promoting global understanding of Japan’s revival efforts in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. The projects are projected to benefit approximately 18,000 youths of ASEAN and Japan. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013, ASEAN-Japan dialogue relations, para. 4)

Hence, one could conclude that Japan’s relations with Cambodia and ASEAN have involved a wide range of sectors, including the economic, cultural, and political.

**Cambodia-South Korea relations.**

South Korea’s official relations with Cambodia were first established in 1970, but were cut off five years later due to the political chaos in Cambodia. Both countries only restored their relations in 1997, after Cambodia began to transform itself into a free market economy with multiple party politics. Interestingly, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) began its development assistance to Cambodia as early as 1991 – the year in which KOICA itself came into existence. Thus far, KOICA development assistance has taken place in two forms: (1) grant aid, covering a project implementation and consultation program, the Development Experience Exchange Partnership (DEEP); and (2) technical assistance, including research and studies, training programs and the dispatch of Korean experts and volunteers as well (Baek, n.d.). KOICA’s assistance to Cambodia, which accounted for approximately US $105 million from 1991 to 2013, covered 37 projects, including 2,218 Cambodian trainees going to Korea, and other activities, some of which have also involved Korean universities (Baek, n.d). In 2012, Cambodia received 5.7% of KOICA’s total ODA volume of US $230 million, ranking as KOICA’s third ODA recipient country, after Mongolia and Afghanistan (KOICA, 2013). In addition to grants, Cambodia also received loans for its development from South Korea. By 2012, the total amount of loans and grant aid had reached approximately US $500 million (Tim, 2013).

Thus far, KOICA assistance, which focuses on four sectors of agriculture and rural development, infrastructure, human resource development, and health, is aligned with Cambodia’s National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP). In education, KOICA’s support in Cambodia has been mainly related to building school facilities at the primary education level and also supporting vocational education at the upper secondary level. Its focus at the higher education level is still marginal, relative to France and Japan, and has been confined to the field
of Information and Communication Technology. For instance, through the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, KOICA funded a US one million dollar project (2013) to the Institute of Technology of Cambodia, as part of its project to build the ASEAN Cyber University among the CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) countries (Hort, 2012).

It is also important to note that since 2003, the South Korean government, through its Korea Overseas Volunteer (KOV) Program, has sent a certain number of volunteers each year to Cambodia, especially to help with the public sector, with the total number reaching 382 Korean volunteers through KOICA. Interestingly, these people usually go through a “local adjustment training program” for up to two months so that they will be able to “understand [the] socioeconomic, cultural and political situation in Cambodia” (Hort, 2014).

Thus far, South Korea has had a limited political role in Cambodia, compared to the US, France and Japan, which were among the 18 foreign countries which participated in the signing of the 1991 Paris Peace Accords to end the civil conflict in Cambodia in the early 1990s. Interestingly, however, compared to those three countries, South Korea has had strong economic activities with Cambodia, with its cumulative FDI volume from 1994 to 2012 reaching more than US $4 billion, as indicated in Table 3.2, second after China. Cambodia has also been the sixth largest investment destination for South Korea. There has been a huge trade deficit between the two countries. For instance, in 2012, South Korea’s import volume to Cambodia was US $900 million, while Cambodia’s export to its partner was only US $70 million (Cheang, 2013). So far, South Korea’s exports to Cambodia have included fabrics, autos, electronic goods and chemical product, while Cambodia’s exports to South Korea have covered crude rubber, shoes, garments and some agricultural products (Fu, 2013). It is also worth noting that since 2007, up to 25,000 Cambodian workers have been sent to work in Korea under the Employment Permission System (EPS). In 2012, Cambodia became the largest sender of foreign workers to South Korea under the program. This has greatly supported the Cambodian economy, since around US $80 million is sent back to Cambodia each year (Tim, 2013). Also important to note is that over the last decade, Korean culture has become the most influential foreign culture in Cambodia, and as Sun (2011) observed, “Most Cambodian teens nowadays have begun to adopt Korean style[s] in terms of fashion, hairstyle, make-up, clothes and even gestures” (para. 5). Overall, the economic dimension has been the key to the relations between Cambodia and South Korea.
Summary

This chapter has given an overview of the context of Cambodia, with the purpose of providing the background against which Cambodian university partnership programs with France, the United States, Japan and South Korea can be understood. I began with a brief history of the country, from the early Christian era, during which the Khmer identity was seen to emerge, through to the early 1990s, when Cambodia began to be reintegrated into the world community. This was followed by a description of various aspects of contemporary Cambodia, covering economic development, government and political system, socio-cultural structure, educational systems and international relations. As part of its international relations, I have described Cambodia’s broad relations with France, the United States, Japan and South Korea.
Chapter Four: Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This chapter presents both the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study. It will begin by introducing cosmopolitanism as a theoretical lens for looking at international academic relations. Then, two major analytical frameworks will be introduced: (1) the theory of internationalization, which will be used to understand the forms and rationales for international partnerships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea; and (2) the cosmopolitan concept of mutuality, which will be adopted to examine the power relationships in those programs. This study is based on the premise that the concept of power dynamics is also shaped by the cultural complexities of Cambodian society, particularly in relation to the tradition of the patron-client relationships, rooted in Theravada Buddhism. Hence, the last part of this chapter will be devoted to an analysis of how power has been perceived and (re)conceptualized over time in Cambodian society.

Cosmopolitanism as the Theoretical Framework

This study adopts cosmopolitanism as a theoretical lens for looking at the issues of power dynamics in international partnership programs between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. As a political theory, cosmopolitanism has a long history, with its origin commonly associated with the Stoic idea of a “citizen of the world” (Brown & Held, 2010; Brock & Brighouse, 2005; Held, 2003, 2010; Nussbaum, 2010; Brock, 2009). Such an idea, as elaborated by Brown and Held (2010), is associated with the argument that everyone is “part of a fraternity of mankind and that as a member of the cosmos he could not be defined merely by his city-state affiliation” (p. 4). This argument suggests that, since early on, cosmopolitanism has emphasized mutual benefits and equity among different communities. For centuries, however, the development of cosmopolitanism remained largely concerned with basic ethical, religious and legal principles (often referred to as moral cosmopolitanism), with only a loose connection to practical politics (Brown & Held, 2010).

The political philosophy of Immanuel Kant in the 18th century was seen to greatly effect “a more robust transition from a moral cosmopolitan orientation to an institutional position” (Brown & Held, 2010, p. 9). Kant, in his work *The Metaphysics of Morals*, talked about the need
to establish “cosmopolitan law and a universal condition of public right”, that could be applied to the issue of justice at the global level (Brown, 2010, p. 55). He also argued in his Perpetual Peace that “a cosmopolitan legal condition must not only be concerned with the rightful relations between individuals within states, but also with the rightful relations that should exist between state actors and their rightful treatment of all human beings” (Brown, 2010, p. 45). Such a political philosophy, obviously centered on the notion of global or international society, has had a significant impact on the recent scholarship of many well-known cosmopolitans, including Martha C. Nussabum, Onora O’Neill, Charles R. Beitz, Thomas Pogge, and David Held, among others. Hence, most contemporary cosmopolitan thought is related, in one way or another, to the idea of global governance, with some cosmopolitan scholars also suggesting the layout of what institutional designs or political institutions should be set up to ensure that the principles of moral cosmopolitanism are implemented for the benefits of everyone (Brown & Held, 2010). Charles Beitz calls this form of cosmopolitanism “institutional cosmopolitanism”.

While many modern cosmopolitans have advanced the notion of global governance in various ways, Pogge (1994) claimed that there are three common elements shared by all cosmopolitan positions: (1) individualism, meaning “the ultimate units of concern are human beings”; (2) universality, meaning “the status of ultimate unit of concern attaches to every living human being equally”; and (3) generality, meaning “persons are ultimate units of concern for everyone” (p. 89). Built on these key elements, cosmopolitanism, as an international relations theory, not only places strong emphasis on mutual benefits and equity in international relations, but also promotes international principles and mechanisms that transcend nation-states. As Brown and Held (2010) pointed out,

In contrast to traditional paradigms in International Relations, which have usually focused on states, the maximization of state interest, nationality, or securing power balances between states, cosmopolitanism, as a political theory, is based on “the acknowledgement of some notion of common humanity that translates ethically into an idea of shared or common moral duties toward others by virtue of this humanity.” (p. 1, cited from Lu, 2000)

It should be noted that the fact that cosmopolitanism focuses on the important role of each individual, their community and cultural values in international relations suggests that this paradigm shares epistemological assumptions with constructivism. Both paradigms have gained momentum since the 1990s, especially after the end of the Cold War, as a response to the failure of realism, (neo-)liberalism and neo-Marxism to deal with as well as to explain world issues. In
this regard, both paradigms are most appropriate for a study concerning the issue of mutuality in international relations, especially in this interconnected world. Therefore, my study adopts David Held’s concept of mutuality as one of its core conceptual frameworks.

**Conceptual Frameworks**

This section presents the conceptual frameworks of internationalization and mutuality. The first framework will help me explain the context in Chapter Six surrounding the rationales for the development of university partnerships in contemporary Cambodian higher education. The second framework of mutuality, which is rooted in Galtung’s structural theory of imperialism and Held’s cosmopolitanism, will enable me to gain deeper understanding of the power relationships in those partnership programs. Again, my study uses these two key theories as conceptual frameworks for understanding the Cambodian context, with the intention of exploring how far and why mutuality has taken shape, rather than just trying to prove or disprove theories of dependency, world systems, center-periphery or neo-colonialism.

**Rationale for international university partnerships.**

Since the 1990s, the discussion about international university partnerships, in the main, has revolved around the broad discourse of the internationalization of higher education (Knight, 2008; Altbach, 2006; de Wit, 2002; Scott, 1998; van der Wende, 2001). Knight (2008) defines internationalization as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions (research, teaching and service) and delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels” (p. xi). This definition suggests that the internationalization of higher education embraces diverse cultural and ethnic groups within a country. Furthermore, the internationalization of higher education emphasizes the building of strategic relationships and cooperation among countries (Knight, 2008; Altbach, 2006; van der Wende, 2001). This is reflected through such concepts as education or research cooperation, student or faculty exchanges, international curricula and joint programs. Hence, the internationalization of higher education is distinct from globalization, which refers to the flow of knowledge, economic goods, technology, cultures, people, ideas, values, etc. across borders – a process that leads to an interconnected and interdependent world (Altbach, 2006; Knight, 2008;
de Wit, 2002). Simply put, internationalization is one of a university’s strategic responses to globalization and one of the ways a nation reacts to the impact of globalization while, at the same time, respecting the individuality and culture of the nation (Knight, 2008; van der Wende, 2001).

Internationalization activities have been driven by four rationales: political, economic, social/cultural, and academic, as shown in Table 4.1 below (Knight & d Wit, 1995; de Wit, 2002; 2011). According to de Wit (2011), “these rationales are not mutually exclusive, they may vary in importance by country and region, and their dominance may change over time” (p. 245).

Table 4.1

*Rationales for Internationalization of Higher Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social/Cultural</th>
<th>National cultural identity</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Intercultural understanding</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Citizenship development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social and community development</td>
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<td>Political</td>
<td>Foreign policy</td>
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<td>National security</td>
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<td>Technical assistance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peace and mutual understanding</td>
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<td></td>
<td>National identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Regional identity</td>
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<td>Economic</td>
<td>Economic growth and competitiveness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Labor market</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Financial incentives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Providing an international dimension to research and teaching</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Extension of academic horizon</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institution building</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Profile and status</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enhancement of quality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>International academic standards</td>
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Source: de Wit (2002).

Building on these four rationales, Jane Knight (2008) argues that, “… an unmistakable blurring of rationales has occurred across categories, accompanied by less clarity on what constitutes, for example, a political or economic rationale. Neither do the four categories of rationales distinguish between national and institutional levels of rationales, which is becoming increasingly important” (p. 25). Thus, she introduces the emerging rationales at both the national and institutional levels. At the national level, they include human resources development, strategic alliances, commercial trade, nation building, and social/cultural development. At the
institutional level, she identifies international branding and profile, income generation, student and staff development, strategic alliances, and knowledge production.

Although Knight’s emerging rationales provide a fairly complete account of current internationalization programs, including university partnerships, the distinction between rationales at the institutional and national levels tends to suggest a diminishing role for the state in managing/controlling higher education. While this might be the case in Western countries as well as in many developing nations, Cambodian higher education remains centralized and politically controlled in many respects. For instance, all senior administrators in all public universities are nominated by the government, with close connections to a ruling political party. Such direct government influence is due to the fact that, during the 1960s, following its independence, Cambodia began establishing and expanding its higher education system based on the French/Soviet model (Pit & Ford, 2004; Clayton & Ngoy, 1997), in which various specialized universities were created under the direct supervision of relevant government ministries/agencies. Although the system has been influenced by other models in subsequent periods, including the Soviet and Vietnamese models in the 1980s, and the Anglo-American model over the last ten years, public universities remain under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education and other relevant ministries, known as parent ministries.

Also, the continued dominance of the government or state sector over its higher education institutions at present can also be explained by the Cambodian practice of hierarchical relationships, which is a main part of the thesis guiding this study. In the Angkorean period (802-1431), Cambodia followed a pattern of kingship and hierarchical social structure, with kings regarded as gods with absolute power (Ayres, 2000a; Chandler, 2008; Corfield, 2009; Kent & Chandler, 2008). Despite the various political systems Cambodia has gone through since then, this kind of a hierarchical power system remains dominant within Cambodian society (Ayres, 2000a; Ojendal & Antlov, 1998; Gyallay-Pap, 2007; Kent & Chandler, 2008). Therefore, one cannot ignore the role of the state in the development of present-day Cambodian higher education. For instance, many international university partnerships in Cambodia, particularly in the public sector, have thus far taken place through inter-governmental initiation.

In fact, Cambodia is not alone in its practice of power hierarchy, relative to other countries in the region. As Kent and Chandler (2008) indicated, throughout history, the power systems of many Southeast Asian countries were “unevenly distributed, concentrated in and emanating from potent centres, particularly kings, who manifested it in their ability to control the
physical and social world over which they held dominion” (p. 2). In spite of the various political reforms many countries have undergone since the Second World War, such social hierarchical norms remain a common practice, and are often referred to as part of the so-called “Asian values” (Ojendal & Antlov, 1998). In numerous ways, these values have been seen to be resistant to the development of Western liberal democracy in the region. Most political leaders, including Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and Mahathir of Malaysia, have claimed that “…societies in Asia had their own values and cultures and thus were not fit for liberal democracy” (Ojendal & Antlov, 1998, p. 527-528). Hence, one can never fully understand the development of higher education in the ASEAN region without looking at its core values, including the dominant role of the state.

Even within developed countries, the government remains actively involved in managing or developing policy for their higher education so that the sector is able to respond to the nation’s social and economic development (Harvey & Newton, 2007; Jones, 2010; Knight, 2008). It is widely accepted that, in this knowledge-based society, the role of higher education in producing research and innovation has been increasingly seen as the key to a nation’s success in competing against others. Hence, although the overall funding for higher education in many developed countries has recently decreased (Green, 1999), governments have usually adopted several supervision strategies, including quality control and performance evaluation, to ensure that the higher education system is accountable to the public, the government and society at large (Green, 1999; Harvey & Newton, 2007). Overall, one can see the increasingly vital role of the states in managing their higher education, in one way or another, in both developed and developing nations. Therefore, the four rationales elaborated by Hans De Wit (2002) are most appropriate for my study.

While internationalization theory provides an analytical framework for this study to look at the forms and rationales for Cambodia’s international university partnerships, it does not take into account the power imbalance between developed and developed nations. Moreover, although one of the rationales for internationalization is related to promoting social and cultural understanding among countries, de Wit (2002) points out that its purpose is to develop a nation’s soft power, mainly within the context of the U.S. and European countries. Such an approach falls under realism, which is not the intended theoretical frame for this study. To further explore and understand the power dynamics in Cambodia’s international university partnerships, my study employs the cosmopolitan framework of mutuality, to be discussed next.
It is instructive to highlight here that in higher education internationalization, “Rationales dictate the kind of benefits or expected outcomes those involved expect from internationalization efforts” (Knight, 2008, p. 25). Hence, rationales and benefits are related, but not necessarily the same. Especially, the former deals with the “why” question, thereby reflecting higher education policy and strategies, whereas the latter indicates how far international programs have responded to the expected needs of universities. Hence, it is common for one to be confused with the other, especially within the context of a lack of institutional or national guiding policy and strategies. Hence, in this study, my purpose in using the four rationales is to explore the policy context surrounding the development of international university programs in Cambodia at both the national and institutional levels. To put it another way, the use of the four rationales is a means, not an end in itself. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that that this study will not use the internationalization theory to its full capacity.

Mutuality.

The concept of mutuality is rooted in WOMP scholarship, particularly Galtung’s structural theory of imperialism. Galtung (1980) defines imperialism (or dominance) as “a type of relationship whereby one society (or collectivity in more general terms) can dominate another” (p. 107). He describes six types of imperialism, including economic, political, military, social, cultural, and communicative. However, all these dimensions are not necessarily interconnected. For instance, Japanese economic imperialism in many parts of the world after the Second World War was not accompanied by Japanese cultural imperialism. To quote from Galtung (1980):

Japan has had no message that has captured people’s minds, penetrated them, defined their general outlook on the world, and made them look to Tokyo as the source of goal setting and the ultimate meaning of life. There is no book, either black or red, emanating from the Japanese economic center, only material goods. (p. 110)

Galtung also discusses four mechanisms of imperialism or structural violence. They include: (1) exploitation, meaning a vertical division of labor which produces an asymmetrical distribution of the net benefits between researchers from the center and peripheral participants; (2) penetration, meaning the exploiters from the center are able to penetrate “under the skin” of the exploited, creating a bridgehead at the periphery; (3) fragmentation, meaning peripheral participants are separated from each other; and (4) marginalization, meaning peripheral
participants or researchers play only a subordinate role in creating new theories or knowledge. Contrasting with these four parameters of structural violence, Galtung proposes four opposite parameters as structural-oriented goals of international relations that together make up the concept of mutuality. They are equity, autonomy, solidarity and participation. In using Galtung’s framework to study international cooperation in Chinese higher education during the 1980s, Hayhoe (1989) nicely summarizes those four values, as follows:

  Equity suggests aims and forms of organization that are reached through full mutual agreement. Autonomy suggests a respect for the theoretical perspectives rooted in peripheral culture that would require center participants to gain a thorough knowledge of this culture. Solidarity suggests forms of organization that encourage maximum interaction among peripheral participants and growing links between them and their fellow researchers. Participation intimates an approach to knowledge that does not stratify in a hierarchical way but assumes the possibility of a creative peripheral contribution from the very beginning. (p. 134)

Again, WOMP theories, including Galtung’s structural theory of imperialism, emerged during the Cold War period when the world was politically and economically controlled by two hegemonic great powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Although WOMP scholars tried to reduce inequalities and dominance among countries, their work toward mutuality was ironically limited within a developed-underdeveloped dichotomy – largely dominated by Western countries. The collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s as well as the growth of many new emerging economies over the last two decades has suggested that the world is moving toward a multi-polar economic and political system. The increasingly important roles of such regional bodies as the EU and ASEAN have also challenged traditional approaches to looking at international relations. Emerging issues, like environmental deterioration, have also demanded new forms of collaboration among countries, regardless of their economic and political backgrounds and ideologies. Hence, my study will employ the concept of mutuality as a framework of contemporary cosmopolitanism, which might be seen an expansion of WOMP scholars’ earlier efforts.

David Held – one of the most distinguished contemporary cosmopolitans – has developed four principles of cosmopolitanism, complementary to Galtung’s concept of mutuality. In his first principle of egalitarian individualism, every human being, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, class and socio-economic backgrounds, is the ultimate unit of moral concern, not states or particular forms of human association (Held, 2003, p. 470). Claiming that equal moral values are worthy of being respected, this position accepts cultural diversity and differences among
countries and communities. This first principle is complementary to Galtung’s notion of autonomy. The second principle of reciprocal recognition implies that the status of equal worth should be acknowledged by everyone. With an equal stake in this universal ethical realm, everyone is to respect all other people’s status as a basic unit of moral interest (p. 470). This principle suggests that everyone follows the judgment about rules, laws and policies agreed upon by those concerned, and is thus related to Galtung’s concept of equity.

Held’s third principle of consent and fourth principle of inclusiveness and subsidiarity connote a democratic process in domestic and international affairs. The consent principle supports the basis of non-coercive collective agreement and governance and thus entails a commitment to everyone having an equal status in the decision-making process. As Held puts it, “interlocking lives, projects and communities require forms of decision-making which take account of each person’s equal status in such processes” (Held, 2003, p. 470). The last principle of inclusiveness and subsidiarity seeks to clarify the fundamental criterion of drawing proper boundaries around units of collective decision-making and the grounds on which they are based. At its simplest, it connotes that those significantly affected by public decisions, issues or processes should have an equal opportunity to participate, directly or indirectly through elected representation (Held, 2003, p. 471). Held’s third and forth principles expand Galtung’s notions of solidarity and participation. These principles do not suggest the elimination of the centralized system inherently existing in many societies (as opposed to the decentralized one). Rather, the idea is to find the right balance of power accepted in a particular context and society. The following is a refined framework of mutuality in international university relationships within the cosmopolitan paradigm.

**Equity.**

Framed under cosmopolitanism, the idea of equity is parallel to Held’s principle of reciprocal recognition, meaning the aims and forms of international university relationships are reached through mutual agreement and thus represent the interests of institutions from both developed and developing countries.
**Autonomy.**

Within cosmopolitanism, the concept of autonomy suggests participants from all sides learn and respect each other’s culture, values, system of knowledge, and belief system.

**Solidarity.**

A cosmopolitan notion of solidarity suggests growing interconnectedness among all Southern participants and institutions. Moreover, knowledge transfer has taken place without harmful interference by governments and other aid agencies, regardless of whether or not they are the sponsors of collaborative programs. This suggests that those agencies help higher education institutions achieve their academic and cultural missions, rather than simply use them for a nation’s economic and political interests.

**Participation.**

This concept assumes that Southern participants are treated equally in international projects, mainly in relation to knowledge production and the decision-making process, in both horizontal and vertical manners. Horizontally, they are involved in decision-making and producing knowledge, to the same degree as their foreign counterparts. Vertically, participants at the lowest level, either academic or administrative, are allowed opportunities to participate in the project as well as in making important decisions. For instance, faculty and students get involved in the project planning and initiation as well as in curriculum/program design. Participants at the institutional level also maintain good communication with those at the ministry level and are encouraged to attend regional meetings or conferences, so to speak. Hence, everyone is well-informed of any decision made by people at the upper level. In other words, there is a clear and unbroken line of communication from the top to the lowest level.

Again, while the fourth principle emphasizes the participation of people from the local/lowest level in the decision-making process, David Held acknowledges the existence of different forms of power structures among countries and communities. Thus, this principle suggests an accepted form of decision-making power considered appropriate in a particular context, without being restricted to the Western liberal model or the one employed by the other
side of the partnerships. In this case, the mutuality aspect of participation might exist on both sides, despite their different forms of decision-making practices (centralized vs decentralized).

Overall, there are two important points to note about the refinement of the concept of mutuality within cosmopolitan principles. First, more attention should be paid to the idea of “acceptable”, rather than “the same degree”, of each aspect of mutuality, with a notion that fits within the Western context of liberalism. The former is more flexible and suitable to the Cambodian context, in which acceptable relationships do not always or simply mean “exactly equal or the same degree” of power relationships. The second aspect to be taken into account is the acknowledgement of the role of a wide range of government and non-government agencies at the local, national, regional, and international levels. Translating this into the Cambodian context, for instance, one can see that international partnerships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the four developed countries have taken place through the initiation and support of various agencies, including the AUF, JICA, KOICA and USAID, among others. Cambodian university partnerships with Japanese universities have also arisen within the regional framework of ASEAN.

**Mutuality as a working hypothesis in the Cambodian context.**

In using this framework, my study assumes that international university partnerships in contemporary Cambodian higher education have manifested a strong degree of mutuality, as a result of three observations, which have already been discussed in the literature review chapter: French professors developed better relationships with Cambodian participants than did the French government during the 1990s (Hebert, 1999); the Buddhist ethos is still strongly embedded within Cambodian societies (Maeda, 2011; Kent & Chandler, 2008; Ledgerwood, n.d.; Peou, 2000; Harris, 2005); and after the system was privatized, Cambodian universities have become increasingly dependent on student tuition fees, reducing their dependence on foreign assistance. These three factors can be translated into three general assumptions for this study: (1) foreign professors and staff working in Cambodia may understand and be more willing to compromise with Cambodian participants than are their respective governments; (2) the Buddhist ethos, especially the notion of patron-client relationships, has created unique forms of equity and mutuality in the way in which Cambodians interact with their foreign counterparts; and (3) reduced dependence on foreign assistance as well as the emergence of new donors has
given Cambodian universities more bargaining power in international university projects, which in turn leads to greater mutuality. Hence, the four values of equity, autonomy, solidarity and participation provide an appropriate value-explicit frame for this study.

The following is the suggested framework of mutuality to be applied to the study of international university relationships in contemporary Cambodian higher education. The framework represents a coherent ideal, against which the reality of interactions in each of the three cases will be measured comparatively, to see how far and why one case may be closer to mutuality than another.

Table 4.2

*Refined Mutuality Framework within the Cambodian Context*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equity</strong></td>
<td>Aims and forms of international programs between Cambodian universities and their foreign counterparts in France, the United States and South Korea are mutually decided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomy</strong></td>
<td>Both Cambodian and foreign participants are willing to learn about and show respect for each other’s culture, values, system of knowledge and belief system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solidarity</strong></td>
<td>First, Cambodian participants are connected with one another within and outside their own institutions. They are also linked to institutions in other Southern countries in the same programs with institutions in the four case study countries. Second, knowledge transfer between Cambodian institutions and their foreign counterparts takes place with support from external agencies, including the governments or aid agencies of both countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>During the programs, Cambodian participants maintain good communication among themselves as well as with their foreign counterparts at all levels. In transnational or transregional programs, they are also allowed opportunities to attend international/regional meetings and/or conferences as well. Cambodian participants get involved in the decision-making process at the institutional and ministerial levels as well as at the regional/international level if the projects cover other developing countries. Cambodian participants contribute to knowledge production, to the same (or accepted) degree as their foreign counterparts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conceptions of power in Cambodian society.

Framed within the theoretical concept of cosmopolitanism and adopting a qualitative research methodology (to be discussed in Chapter Five), my study emphasizes the important role that cultural values play in shaping how Cambodian people view their cross-cultural relationships with foreign universities. In particular, it is based on the premise that the Buddhist ethos, particularly related to the practice of patron-client relationships, has influenced the degree of mutuality between Cambodian people and their foreign counterparts in the four case study countries. Therefore, it is the purpose of this last section to unpack the social-cultural practices Cambodian people have followed, particularly in relation to the notion of power.

Power conception and religious practices.

Many scholars have thus far looked at the Angkorean era (802-1431) as a key reference to understand contemporary issues surrounding the socio-political structure within Cambodian society (Chandler, 2008; Ayres, 2000a; Corfield, 2009; Kent & Chandler, 2008). During this period, the power system was asymmetrical, and shaped by Hinduism, which at some point coexisted with Mahayana Buddhism. As Higham (2001) explained,

The state was centred on a king imbued with divinity, who had around him a corps of aristocratic officials and advisers. In theory, the provinces, through a network of state and family temples, donated sufficient consumables and treasures to sustain not only the administration, but the ritual needs of the gods. (p. 151)

Higham’s explanation above, in line with many other scholars’ arguments (Ayres, 2000a; Gyllay-Pap, 2007; Ojendal & Antlov, 1998; Kent & Chandler, 2008), suggests two important elements of power practices at the time. First, the rulers, at that time the kings, were seen to have absolute power over the social, spiritual and physical world. For instance, as Ayres (2000a) indicated, there was a “widespread belief among the peasantry that it was the king who had determined the fertility of the soil and therefore the survival or otherwise of their crops” (p. 10-11). Second, although the political and social order was then greatly influenced by Hinduism, “the caste system, such as that in India, did not gain momentum in the country” (Ayres, 2000a). Instead, the power system was bound by the practice of “reciprocal relationships and dependencies” (Ayres, 2000a, p. 9). Despite the various political, social and cultural changes
Cambodia has gone through over the centuries, these two aspects have remained the core components of the power system in the country through until today.

The 13th century saw a major religious and cultural transformation in Cambodian society, with Theravada Buddhism beginning to take root in the country amidst the decline of the Angkorean period (Harris, 2005; Kent & Chandler, 2008; Ayres, 2000a; Chandler, 2008). According to Kent & Chandler (2008), the new religion was …

… brought to rural communities, presumably by missionizing mendicant monks”. The religion reproduced itself locally through the ordination of village youths who had strong local loyalties and became rich fields of merit. By the fourteenth century, if not before, a decentralized monastic system thus established itself kingdom-wide, making centralized power now subject to moderation by legitimate, alternate authorities among the commoners.” (Kent & Chandler, 2008, p. 3-4).

Since then, Theravada Buddhism has constituted a significant feature of Cambodian lives. Important to note is that the social and political hierarchy remained central in Theravada Buddhism, as in Hinduism. However, the shift of practice from the latter, in which power was concerned with gods or divine kings, to the former indicates that the notion of power had been reconceptualized accordingly, based mainly on the Theravada notion of karma.

The concept of karma or merit-making emphasizes that “an individual’s experiences are consequences of previous acts, including those in former incarnations” (Nissen, 2008, p. 275). This concept is well understood among Cambodians, as the saying goes, “If you do good, you will receive good; if you do evil, you will receive evil”. The practice of making merit “is also about gaining respect in the community by showing oneself to be trustworthy and unselfish,” through the act of giving and receiving (Ledgerwood, 2008, p. 159). At present, there are four common practices of making merit in Cambodian society, including: (1) being ordained as a monk, (2) adhering to Buddhist precepts, (3) observing ‘holy days’ (thngai sel), and (4) offering gifts to the temple and the monks (Ledgerwood, 2008, p. 149).

In the context of social relationships, the Theravada notion of karma “links social rank with merit accrued in previous lives” (Harris, 2005, p. 27). People are identified either as Neak Mean (a person who has) or Neak Kror (a person who does not have), depending on their status relative to each other. Ledgerwood (n.d.) notes that in this hierarchical order,

… everyone is ranked somewhere in the pattern – it is not fixed. People may rise or fall in social status over the course of their current life as well as over multiple rebirths. How well a person does – how free they are from suffering, and how effective they are at accomplishing what they set out to do – is linked to Buddhist notions of "merit." Through their actions, people gain or lose merit. The key is selflessness, or the extinguishing of
desire… The rich and powerful man is reaping the rewards of generosity and compassion in previous lives. (para. 3)

Interestingly, while such a social system divides people into various groups, the practice of making merit, through giving and receiving, binds them together (Ledgerwood, 2008). Hence, the social system within a Theravada ethos remains hierarchical and centers on reciprocal relationships and dependencies, as in the Angkorean era. This form of practice is called patron-client relationships (Scott, 1972, 1976; Ayres, 2000a; Edwards, 2008; Chandler, 2008; Nissen, 2008; Ledgerwood, n.d., 2008).

**Patron-client relationships.**

According to Carney (1989), the concept of patron-client relationships “originated in anthropological studies which have used it to describe certain intratribal and/or intraregional relationships between leaders and followers. In such settings, tribal chiefs, or patrons, dispense particular favor to their subjects, or clients, in return for loyalty.” (p. 43). Later, the concept has been widely used to refer to personal or informal relationships, which take the form of “unequal exchanges between the wealthy and powerful and the poorer and dependent” (Ledgerwood, n.d.). What binds these relationships together are reciprocity and dependencies (Scott, 1976; Ledgerwood, n.d.; Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1980; Carney, 1989). With great power, influence and resources, “a patron is expected to protect his client and provide for his material needs whereas the client reciprocates with his labor and his loyalty” (Scott, 1976, p. 169). With all these characteristics, patron-client relationships gain “the legitimacy of dependency”, something which Western societies might view as corruption or exploitation (Scott, 1976).

For centuries, patron-client relationships have been seen as a common institutional pattern of societies in the developing world (Scott, 1976; Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1980). In the context of Southeast Asia, Scott (1972) argued the Marxist’s class conflict model and the primordial model, which view the class system as a source of conflict between the rich and the power, did not work. To quote from two of his examples:

In Thailand, primordial demands many help us discern the basis of dissident movements in North and Northeast Thailand, but neither primordialism nor class analysis explains the intricate pattern of the personal factions and coalitions that are at the center of oligarchic Thai politics. (p. 91)
Ethnicity and class do carry us far in explaining racial hostilities and intra-Chinese conflict in Malaya, but they are less helpful when it comes to intra-Malay politics or to interracial cooperation at the top of the Alliance party. (p. 92)

According to him, the hierarchical orders in those peasant societies were reciprocal and dependent, with both patrons and clients benefiting from the system, although the former might, in many ways, exploit the latter. Hence, the model of patron-client relationships was, and continues to be, relevant and appropriate to the study of the socio-political structure in Southeast Asian societies, including Cambodia (Scott, 1972, 1976). In should be noted that in Cambodia’s modern history, Prince Norodom Sihanouk was among those who made use of the concept of “Buddhist socialism” to legitimize his rule in the country, as already discussed in Chapter Three.

**Mutuality and patron-client relationships.**

Mutuality, within the frame of patron-client relationships, fits well with the concept of “acceptability” in the cosmopolitan framework. Hence, in the Cambodian context, my study would suggest that foreign participants are expected to play a more active role than their Cambodian counterparts in international partnership programs. As patrons, the former are viewed as having more resources, including advanced technology and knowledge, than the latter, as clients. Therefore, based on the Theravada Buddhist notion that wealth needs to be redistributed in order to earn merit, foreign participants are expected to take leadership in, provide support for and contribute more resources to the collaborative programs. This pattern of relationships could still create harmony between participants from both sides, thereby manifesting mutual benefits.

At the same time, however, a line needs to be drawn between mutuality as an acceptable harmonious relationship and the imposition of foreign cultural values and control – an issue of concern that has been highlighted in the literature review chapter. The former pattern acknowledges and respects the role of local agency and cultural values, meaning Cambodian participants are still engaged in the partnership programs (Maeda, 2011). However, the latter pattern tends to ignore the engagement of the local Cambodians or overlook the cultural differences between Cambodia and other countries, as exemplified by the World Bank’s failure to initiate the establishment of an independent Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC) in 2003 (Ford, 2003) as well as the overall failure of the introduction of Western democracy in Cambodia thus far (Gyallay-Pap, 2007; Harris, 2005; Peou, 2000). To sum up, within the patron-
client practice, the fact that foreign partners are expected to take a more active role should not be taken to mean that they are free to impose their models or ideologies, which is viewed as unacceptable by the Cambodian side.

Summary

In this chapter, I have begun by arguing that with its emphasis on equity and mutuality, cosmopolitanism is the most suitable theoretical framework for the study of power dynamics in the Cambodian context. Then, I have introduced two key conceptual frameworks, one of which is related to internationalization theory. While this framework is key to understanding the factors driving international university partnerships in contemporary Cambodian higher education, it does not take into account the power imbalance between developed and developing nations. Filling this gap, the second conceptual framework of mutuality has been adopted to examine power relationships in those international partnership programs. This concept, rooted in WOMP scholarship, has been refined within Held’s cosmopolitanism, so that it could not only respond to the world’s changing geopolitics, but also fit the Cambodian conception of power. In this respect, I have concluded this chapter with a discussion of the Theravada Buddhist notion of karma, which has, for centuries, influenced and shaped the practice of patron-client relationships in Cambodia. Set in this cultural context, my study contends that mutuality and equal benefits in Cambodian university partnerships might take a different form from those in Western or other societies, whose cultural and historical contexts differ.
Chapter Five: Research Methodology and Research Design

Following the discussion in Chapter Four of the theoretical and conceptual framework of mutuality, this chapter deals with the study’s research methodology and design. It will commence with restating the purpose of the study and the research question and sub-questions, followed by an overview of the constructivist paradigm in which a qualitative research inquiry is situated. The chapter will then proceed to provide a description of various aspects of the case study research design, which covers the sampling method, research sites, data collection, and data analysis strategies. At its conclusion, the chapter will discuss the ethical consideration as well as the limitations of the study.

Study’s Purpose and Research Questions

This study aims to explore the power relationships in international partnership programs between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. In particular, it is designed to answer the following research question and sub-questions:

**Key research question.**

To what extent are Cambodia’s international university partnership programs with each of the four economically advanced countries characterized by mutuality?

**Two sub-questions.**

A. What are the rationales for international university partnerships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea?

B. How do Cambodians view their experience in those international university partnerships?
Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology is situated within the philosophical assumptions of constructivism – a paradigm or worldview which emphasizes that people “create subjective meanings of their experiences and the world that are negotiated within the social, cultural and historical context in which their lives are embedded” (Winston, 2012, p. 113). This paradigm adopts a relativist ontology, meaning that “realities are constructed, multiple and holistic” and a subjectivist or transactional epistemology, meaning “the inquirer and the ‘object’ of the inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). The axiology of constructivism is not value-free, but value-bound, suggesting that there is no neutrality in any inquiry under this paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Silverman, 2000; Berg, 1995, 2000; Creswell, 1998, 2003, 2009). As such, a researcher’s own values, beliefs, prejudice and judgment are explicitly stated, thereby greatly shaping the overall process of a research study. With all these characteristics, the aim of any inquiry under this paradigm is not to generate “a nomothetic body of knowledge in the form of generalizations”, but rather “to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of ‘working hypotheses’ that describes the individual case” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 38).

Creswell (2003) notes that constructivist researchers “focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (p. 8). In this study, the constructivist paradigm has not only informed my qualitative research design but also influenced my adoption of the theoretical approach of cosmopolitanism, which has been discussed in the preceding chapter.

Guided by the constructivist paradigm, this study follows a qualitative research methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lapan, Quartenroli, & Riemer, 2012; Creswell, 1994, 2003, 2005, 2013) to uncover the context surrounding the issue of mutuality in international partnership programs between Cambodian universities and universities in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. Creswell (1994) describes a qualitative study as “an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (p. 1-2). In this approach, the researcher usually relies on “the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes …” (Creswell, 2005, p.
This essential feature of building or deriving meaning from collected data is called an inductive process or “emic” inquiry, which is primarily based on insiders’ (participants’) perspectives. This process is in contrast to an “etic” science of the quantitative approach, in which reality is constructed from an outside perspective. Overall, there are various strategies of qualitative research, including phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative research and case study. My study follows the qualitative case study design to look at the power relationships in international university partnerships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the four economically advanced countries.

**Rationale.**

Qualitative research methodology is most appropriate for this study because it enables me to study in depth the issue of mutuality in contemporary Cambodian higher education. As discussed in Chapter Two, the existing literature at the global level can offer some, but not complete, insight into Cambodian international university partnerships, which have been shaped, and thus, can only be explained by the country’s own historical, socio-cultural, economic and political context (King, 1975; Bereday, 1964; Crossley, 1990; Crossley & Watson, 2003; Arnove & Torres, 1999; Bray, 2003). As Crossley and Watson (2003) argue, “In an increasingly interdependent world, lessons learnt in all contexts can thus be usefully shared, but the insights gained are unlikely to lead to universal answers, since cultural and contextual differences need greater attention than has often been acknowledged to date” (p. 102). Likewise, professor Edmund King (1975) claims that human society emerges out of personal, social and cultural interaction, and with reference to education, there is no universal pattern of knowledge. According to him, analysis of any system of education cannot be divorced from its own cultural, social, political and economic context. Therefore, the adoption of qualitative methodology in this study has enabled me to give close attention to the Buddhist practice of patron-client relationships, which are deeply rooted in Cambodian society and have greatly influenced how Cambodian people perceive power dynamics in their academic interactions with their foreign counterparts.

Second and related to the first point is that I have chosen qualitative inquiry because it offers me an alternative to the dominant positivist epistemological and methodological strategies which abound in the literature on international academic relations. As also previously discussed
in the literature review, the failure of most international collaborative projects between the North and the South in the periods following the decolonization era has been attributable to positivist thinking – a paradigm or worldview which tends to ignore the indigenous beliefs, values and culture in the developing world. Crossley and Watson (2003) challenge this practice by asserting that research studies need to “look further outwards beyond conventional borders and, where appropriate, into other intellectual, professional and cultural territories and worldviews” (p. 117). Their argument is in line with the post-modernist view, which, without going to the extreme, suggests that multiple ways of knowing exist in this heterogeneous world, and thereby, deserve equal attention (Paulston, 1998; Rust, 1996). This means, in the educational context, researchers need to look beyond the positivist or functionalist worldview, which has so far been widely adopted by aid agencies and other Western academic institutions. Hence, the qualitative methodology represents the most appropriate alternative methodological choice for my study.

**Case Study Research Design**

Within the qualitative approach, this study utilizes a case study research method to examine the issue of power dynamics in contemporary Cambodian higher education (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984, 1989, 2014; Creswell, 2009, 2013; Merriam, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Gerring, 2004). Merriam (2009) defines case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 46). Similarly, as McMillan & Schumacher (2001) put it, this approach is a kind of qualitative inquiry in which “the data analysis focuses on one phenomenon, which the researcher selects to understand in depth regardless of the number of sites or participants for the study” (p. 398). In this approach, the case to be studied is “bounded by time and activities, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time” (Creswell, 2009, p. 227). The main purpose of the qualitative case study is “to elaborate a concept, develop a model with its related subcomponents, or suggest propositions” built from the data collected rather than deduced from prior theories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Like other approaches of qualitative inquiry, the aim of case study inquiry is not to make generalizations of the findings. As Stake (1995) observes, “We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases” (p. 4). Interestingly, however, Yin (2014) notes that, “Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions, and not populations or universes” (p. 21).
Case study research is commonly classified either as a single case study or as a multiple case study. According to Creswell (2013), in the former approach, “the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate the issue”, while in the latter, “the one issue or concern is again selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue,” meaning “the researchers might select for study several programs from several research sites or multiple programs within a single site” (p. 99). Moore, Lapan and Quartaroli (2012) point out that,

Multiple case studies and multiple site case studies are usually designed for purposes of comparison and sometimes referred to as comparative case studies. Whether at one or multiple sites, multiple cases are considered to be examples of the same type of case sharing common characteristics. (p. 247)

Hence, my study fits well in the multiple case study design, with France, the United States, Japan and South Korea each treated as cases to explore the issue of power dynamics in contemporary Cambodian higher education.

**Research sites.**

In case study research, site selection is as important as case selection, because an appropriate selection enables researchers to gain deep insights into the phenomenon of a researcher’s interest (Yin, 1989; Stake, 1995). With this in mind, I chose to carry out my study at three Cambodian universities located in the capital city of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from December 2012 to April 2013. These universities, hereafter referred to by the pseudonyms of University A, University B and University C, respectively represented public specialized higher education institutions, public comprehensive higher education institutions, and private higher education institutions with English as the medium of instruction. These universities were purposefully selected based on their characteristics as outlined below, so that the study could understand the issue of power relationships in Cambodian higher education, particularly with developed countries. In this respect, they should not be seen as case studies in themselves but as aspects of context.
University A.

Specializing in engineering education, University A was established in 1964 with support from the Soviet Union. However, French was then the language of instruction, largely due to French colonial legacies. Like other public universities founded in the 1960s, the university went through the country’s different political regimes, including the most destructive Khmer Rouge period from 1975 to 1979. During the 1980s, the school used Russian as the language of instruction, due to Cambodia’s political ties with the Eastern bloc countries. Its rehabilitation process, especially with French support, only took place in the early 1990s when Cambodia began to be reintegrated into the world. It has thus far been one of the public universities to have received large-scale assistance from the French government.

However, since the early 2000s, French assistance for the university as well as for Cambodian higher education more generally has gradually declined, with such countries as Japan stepping in to offer both technical and financial assistance. Japan’s increasing support, especially through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), has paved the way for English to be used alongside French, which has been the major language of instruction at the university for two decades. In this study, therefore, University A provides an example of two major cases of partnerships between Cambodian universities and universities in France and Japan. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has lately offered some support to the university, especially in the field of information technology. Nonetheless, there have thus far been few partnership activities between the university and its Korean counterparts. Nor have there been any collaborative activities between the university and its American counterparts from the early 1990s until the time of this study. This university was selected to represent the majority of public higher education institutions in Cambodia, which are specialized, although a number of them have recently diversified their courses and programs of study to respond to the growing demand for higher education in the country.

University B.

Founded in 1960, it is the oldest and largest public university in Cambodia. It has three campuses, all of which are located in the capital city of Phnom Penh, and managed and governed by one centralized system at the main campus. My data collection took place on all three campuses but I will refer to University B as a whole, rather than separate the campuses, in this
study. This university was chosen to be representative of Cambodia’s public comprehensive universities, and it is, in fact, the only public comprehensive higher education institution in the country that offers programs in the liberal arts, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Important to note is that both universities A and B offer only master’s degrees at the graduate level.

The university has established partnerships with universities across the globe, including the four case study countries. Hence, in this study, it will explain the context in which power dynamics have been negotiated with various foreign counterparts. At the university, Khmer is the major medium of instruction, with English, French, Japanese and Korean studied as foreign languages and also used for further research. It is also interesting that there are French, Japanese and Korean language departments at the Institute of Foreign Languages, which focus primarily on language training and have been supported, directly and indirectly, by the government of each country. The English department there also performs the same language functions, but it has never been associated with US assistance.

In addition, the university hosts two major centers, the Cambodia-Japan Cooperation Center (CJCC) and the Cambodia-Korea Cooperation Center (CKCC), which were founded in 2004 and in 2013, respectively. While the role and functions of these centers are beyond the scope of my study, I will discuss them in the findings chapters only as far as they are relevant to university partnerships.

**University C.**

Unlike Universities A and B, which had gone through the country’s different political changes, University C was founded in the late 1990s, a few years after a policy of higher education privatization was first introduced to the country. Remarkably, over the last ten years, it has grown and expanded to become Cambodia’s most prestigious private university, adopting the American model of higher education and using English as the medium of instruction. Since its inception, the university has been closely linked to universities in the English-speaking world. Among the four case study countries, it has the most collaborative programs with American universities, followed by South Korean partnerships. In addition, it has several collaborative programs with Japanese universities, but relatively limited activities with French universities or aid agencies.
At present, University C operates on six campuses and offered various programs from the certificate to the doctoral level. The university has thus far been seen as the largest English language university in Cambodia, and probably in Asia too, running more than 700 English classes per day (general English programs). It also has a subsidiary of a bilingual (English and Khmer) high school, which offers education from grades 7 to 12. The following table summarizes the main characteristics of the three participating universities, which clearly show that they each tend to be unique in their own way. This has offered the study a broad context within which to look at the issue of power relationships.

Table 5.1

*Characteristics of Each Participating University*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University A</th>
<th>University B</th>
<th>University C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Public Specialized)</td>
<td>(Public Comprehensive)</td>
<td>(Private Comprehensive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Establishment</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus</td>
<td>1 (in Phnom Penh)</td>
<td>3 (in Phnom Penh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs offered</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>A wide range of programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree Level</td>
<td>Bachelors &amp; Masters</td>
<td>Bachelors &amp; Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student enrollment in degree programs (School Year)</td>
<td>3,956 (2012-13)</td>
<td>More than 12,000 (N/A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Staff (School Year)</td>
<td>214 (2012-13) - 19% with a Ph.D - 47% with a Master’s</td>
<td>335 (N/A) - 5% with a Ph.D - 84% with a Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium of Instruction</td>
<td>Mainly French, supplemented by English and Khmer</td>
<td>Mainly Khmer at the bachelors level and English at the Master’s level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The number (1239) at University C includes both teaching and administrative staff.

Important to note is that it was originally planned to cover another private university using Khmer as the medium of instruction in this study, which is typical of the majority of Cambodian private higher education institutions. Therefore, these four types of institution (specialized public, comprehensive public, private with English as the medium of instruction and
private with Khmer as the medium of instruction) would embody various aspects of the context of power relationships in Cambodian higher education, since they are broadly representative of the four main types of institution in the system. However, the private university which I had approached during the fieldwork had no significant partnership activities with universities in any of the four case study countries. My personal observations as well as my informal conversations with several people concerned with Cambodian higher education revealed that, for a number of reasons to be discussed later in the findings, the vast majority of Cambodian private universities had relatively few partnership activities with universities in the developed world, including the four case study countries. In consultation with my thesis committee members, I decided to focus my study solely on universities A, B and C. In fact, my inclusion of Japan as a case in this study was also a change made at the beginning of my field work, when I found out that it had recently offered huge assistance to higher education in ASEAN countries, including Cambodia, especially in the engineering field. Such adjustments and flexibility were possible in this qualitative case study and are, in effect, common and strongly encouraged throughout the qualitative case study inquiry process so that researchers can gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Sidani & Sechrest, 1996; Ragin, 1997). Ragin (1997) neatly elaborates on such a shift in qualitative case study research below:

The qualitative researcher’s specification of relevant cases at the start of an investigation is really nothing more than a working hypothesis that the cases initially selected are in fact alike enough to permit comparisons. In the course of the research, the investigator may decide otherwise and drop some cases, or even whole categories of cases, because they do not appear to belong with what seem to be the core cases. (p. 30)

In addition to universities A, B and C, data collection also took place simultaneously at other sites, all of which are located in the capital city of Phnom Penh. They included the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), the Department of Higher Education, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), and the UNESCO office in Cambodia. Selection of those organizations and their participants was made mainly through recommendations by my initial interviewees. The purpose of these interviews – some with foreign experts working in Cambodia – was to gain insights into the broader context of Cambodian higher education. Their views also helped me refine my interview questions and concepts with participants at the institutional level, during the data collection process. When it came to data analysis on the issues of power dynamics, however, I drew mainly from the perspectives of Cambodian participants at the three universities.
Sampling strategy.

This study used a purposive sampling method to the select research sites, which have just been discussed, and participants for interviews (Creswell, 2005; Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003; Patton, 1987; Moore, Lapan & Quartaroli, 2012). In this method, “sample units are chosen ‘purposefully’ for the ability to provide detailed understanding” and “[p]urposive samples are designed to be as diverse as possible, including all key groups and constituencies, and units are selected on the basis of ‘symbolic representation’ – because they hold a characteristic that is known or expected to be salient to the research study” (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003, p. 107). This sampling method is most suitable for qualitative case study research because “data sources, participants, or cases are selected by how much can be learned from them” (Moore, Lapan & Quartaroli, 2012, p. 253). Therefore, researchers are able to get rich information about the case(s) being studied.

While there is a host of purposive sampling options in qualitative research, my study, by design, adopted the snowball or chain sampling approach, especially for participant selection (Patton, 1985, Merriam, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Berg, 2000). Snowball sampling – also known as chain or network sampling – refers to “a strategy in which each successive participant or group is named by a preceding group or individual” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 403). Similarly, as Merriam (2009) puts, “this strategy involves locating a few key participants who easily meet the criteria you have established for participation in the study” and “as you interview these early key participants you ask each one to refer you to other participants” (p. 79). Therefore, “[b]y asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases” (Paton, 1985, p. 56).

The adoption of the snowball sampling technique was most effective in this study. With my limited knowledge about participants at the three universities and at other organizations, I began my research by approaching the Research office at University A and the International Relation offices at Universities B and C. Once I was in touch with initial participants, whose contact information I had obtained from those offices, I asked them if they could recommend people whom they thought had been engaged with international programs with universities in France, the US, Japan and South Korea. I kept asking this, as my research progressed, and thereby was able to get connected with more and more participants. At Universities A and B, for instance, I managed to interview a few faculty who had fresh memories of French support back
to the 1990s and well recalled the changing trend of French assistance over the last twenty years there.

Moreover, at University B, through the snowball sampling method, I was able to interview a number of faculty in the Social Work program, of which I had no knowledge at all in the beginning. This program turned out to be one of the most active partnerships in this study. While its bachelor’s program was created with huge technical and some financial support from the University of Washington, its Master’s program emerged a few years later as a result of the university’s collaborative effort with South Korea’s Ewha Womans University. In addition to their connecting me with other faculty and staff within the university, my preceding participants at the university had wider networks and thus recommended to me a number of prospective interviewees at various organizations concerned with higher education in Cambodia. They included the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Department of Higher Education, the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia and the UNESCO office in Cambodia. Hence, this snowball sampling method proved to be very effective in my study.

**Participant recruitment.**

Recruitment of participants occurred when I visited the three participating universities. However, before I could directly approach my prospective interviewees, it was important that I sought institutional consent from the “gatekeepers,” referring to people with the authority to provide entrance to a research site” (Creswell, 1998, p. 60). This was due to the fact that “institutions” are the basic unit of analysis of my study, so I needed institutional permission to gain access to participants in a variety of programs and at various levels, ranging from faculty to senior administrators, including university rectors/vice-rectors. The other reason was related to the social-cultural factor. Social hierarchical relationships are highly valued in Cambodian society, so it is considered appropriate and polite for researchers to ask for permission from people at the higher level first. As an insider with a clear understanding of the context, I needed to seek institutional consent from all the three participating universities, although I already had good personal and professional connections with several people, especially at University B.

After several weeks, written institutional consent (see Appendix A) was approved and signed by the rector of University B and the president of University C. At University A, however, the rector provided verbal consent through the research office coordinator, who was
delegated authority to help with my research there. With institutional consent from each university, I approached “key informants” for contact information for senior administrators and faculty involved in international programs with universities in the four case study countries. Key informants, according Creswell (1998), refers to people “who provide useful insights into the group [prospective participants] and can steer the researcher to information and contacts” (p. 60). In my study, the five key informants included the Research Office coordinator at University A, the International Relations officer at University B, the International Relations coordinator at University C, and two foreign staff working at University B. Not only did they offer me rich contextual information about Cambodian international partnership programs, but they also recommended many key potential participants, with most relevant experience to my study. This is one of the factors that ensured the trustworthiness of my study.

Next, I made phone calls to virtually all individual participants to invite them to participate in my research project. In the Cambodian context, phone calls are more appropriate and accessible than emails. Only five participants, three of whom were foreign experts working in Cambodia, were invited through email. When contacting all participants, both through email and by phone, I explained to them my dissertation project and the type of information that would be sought through the interviews. It should be highlighted that I originally planned to interview at least two senior administrators (rector/vice-rector and international relations office coordinator) and eight faculty (two from each of the four cases) at each participating university. However, the proposed plan was adjusted for several reasons. First, as indicated above, only University B had collaborative programs with universities in the four case study countries. In comparison, University A partnered mainly with French and Japanese universities. At University C, there were no partnership activities with French universities. In terms of experience, most participants had been involved in partnership activities with more than one country. For instance, many interviewees at University A had experience both with France and Japan. Some went to France as exchange students, and later decided to pursue their graduate studies in Japan. Upon their completion, they returned to work as a faculty at the university and got involved in partnership activities with not only Japan but also other countries. This was also common at University B.

In fact, participants’ multiple and broad experiences offered this study rich information and comparative views about Cambodia’s international partnership programs. Moreover, the fact that all participants at Universities A and B were former students provided the study with deep
insights into the changing trend of partnership programs between their respective institutions and foreign universities.

Data collection.

The ontological and epistemological positions of qualitative research emphasize the importance of context and the interactive relationship between the researcher and the researched (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2005). This means qualitative researchers study things in natural settings, adopting various methods of data collection that allow them to uncover the realities and/or to create an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Marshall and Rossman (2011) list four commonly adopted data collection methods in qualitative study, including “(1) participating in the setting, (2) observing directly, (3) interviewing in depth, and (4) analyzing documents and material cultures, with varying emphases” (p. 137). In my study, data were collected mainly through interviews, supplemented by documents.

Personal interviews.

This study’s primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews (Berg, 2000; Merriam, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Creswell, 2005). According to Merriam (2009):

In this type of interview either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions. Usually, specific information is desired from all the respondents, in which case there is a more structured section to the interview. But the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. (p. 90)

This method of data collection enables participants to “best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell, 2005, p. 214). This means that, while my interview questions were guided by the concept of mutuality developed by Johan Galtung and David Held, the flexible nature of the semi-structured approach allowed my participants to express themselves in their own frame of reference.

All my interview questions were open-ended, (see Appendix B) which is characteristic of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Berg, 2000; Merriam, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). To obtain more information from my participants during
interviews, I used follow-up questions or probes, which are defined as “responsive, follow-up questions designed to elicit more information, description, explanation and so on... and are usually verbal, but non-verbal probes – such as pause, a gesture, a raised eyebrow – are also highly effective” (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003, p. 148). According to Arthur and Nazroo (2003), probes are:

… an essential feature of qualitative data collection, and vital to ensure full exploration of the issues under investigation. They are used to generate comprehensive accounts of the dimensions or factors involved in an issue, for detailed exploration of a particular attitude, motivation, behavior and so on, to check views on some features across the whole sample or to generate examples or illustrations. (p. 124)

In fact, I found using open-ended questions with probes helpful in contexts, like Cambodia, in which most participants were not familiar with the key terminology used in my research. For instance, using the direct translations into Khmer of such terms as internationalization, globalization, cosmopolitanism, or mutuality would have limited participants’ views on the issues. Without attached context, some specific terms would also mean the same thing in my language. Hence, most of my questions were instead simplified, with probes used to further elicit participants’ views. This characteristic of the semi-structured interview constituted an important part of the interactive process of my data collection.

Overall, I completed 44 in-depth interviews with senior administrators and faculty at three Cambodian universities and with policy-makers at other organizations concerned with higher education in Cambodia. All interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face with each participant. In this situation, they felt encouraged to speak freely and candidly about their experience. The interviews were digitally recorded, and lasted between 40 and 120 minutes. I also took field notes alongside during each interview. Afterwards, I wrote down my personal reflections.

Almost all interviews were conducted in Khmer, except for four English interviews with foreign staff working in Cambodia – two at University B, one at the MoEYS and another at the UNESCO office in Cambodia. My choice of the Khmer language with all Cambodian participants was to ensure consistency, since many of the participants did not have a good command of English. The other reason for using Khmer was due to the important role it plays in social interactions within Cambodian society. As indicated previously, Cambodian people highly value hierarchical relationships, with the use of words varying depending on sex, age, social status, wealth, and other factors. For instance, there are certain words considered appropriate for
me to use with elders, teachers, and senior administrators. Hence, I felt it was important to use the Khmer language with all Cambodian participants so as to give them respect and, at the same time, build a healthy rapport with them.

**Documents.**

The other source of the information I obtained during my fieldwork was documents. As Creswell (1995) indicates, documents can help researchers gain better knowledge of “the central phenomenon in qualitative studies,” with text data “ready for analysis without the necessary transcription that is required with observational or interview data” (p. 219). In my study, documents were collected when I visited my interview participants at the three universities and at other organizations. Those documents included policy papers, collaborative reports on interaction with each country, and lists of Memoranda of Understanding between each university and their foreign counterparts. Information related to the characteristics of each university was also collected through each university’s website. In addition, I exchanged several emails with JICA’s offices in Thailand and Cambodia to ask for their reports related to the AUN/SEED-Net.

**Challenges.**

During my fieldwork, I experienced several challenges, one of which was related to seeking institutional consent. First, it took me several weeks to obtain permission from all participating universities. This was because public universities remain political, centralized and bureaucratic in many respects. People at the department or lower level do not have jurisdiction over the signing of MOUs or over giving permission to researchers. They do not often participate in any study without prior permission from their seniors. This, along with the fact that research is still in its infancy, made my seeking institutional consent a bit longer and more complicated than expected.

Another difficulty I encountered during my fieldwork was my limited access to documents. In the Cambodian context, school reports and other official documents are not often put in the public domain or released to researchers, due in large part to reasons of confidentiality. Hence, it was difficult to track the recent and past reports on partnership programs. Some documents were obtained, primarily based on accessibility and availability. This in turn made the
analysis of the four case study countries necessarily uneven, which is another limitation of this study. For instance, there was so much information available online about the AUN/SEED-Net program, that it was convenient for me to explore Japan’s university partnership programs with its Cambodian counterparts. By contrast, I had limited access to any French reports or documents available online. The fact that I do not speak French may also have limited my access to documents in French.

Scheduling the interviews was also another issue. This was not related to participants’ lack of commitment, but more to their tight schedules. Almost all Cambodian participants worked at two or three places at the same time, so as to earn a decent salary to support their families. As a result, my interview schedules became a bit disorganized. At some times, I had three individual interviews per day, while at others, I ended up interviewing only one or two people within a whole week. As an insider-researcher, I felt sympathy for the participants and thus had to be flexible with their timing. In this regard, I found my knowledge of the local context very helpful for overcoming all the challenges in the field.

Data analysis.

Data analysis is a process of “preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making interpretation of the larger meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2003, p. 190). As Stake (1995) indicates, this is an ongoing process, without any “particular moment when data analysis begins” (p. 71). In this respect, I began interpreting my data even while I was in the field conducting interviews and collecting documents. At this stage, however, my analysis was unstructured and informal, taking place mainly in the form of personal reflections or memos I wrote after each interview. The in-depth analysis process only occurred once I finished my data collection.

Unlike quantitative inquiry, there are a variety of approaches to analyzing qualitative data. As Spencer, Ritchie and O’Connor (2003) point out,

… there are no clearly agreed rules or procedures for analyzing qualitative data. Approaches to analysis vary in terms of basic epistemological assumptions about the nature of qualitative enquiry and the status of researchers’ accounts. They also differ between different traditions in terms of the main focus and aims of the analytical process.” (p. 200)
Thus, as they further explain, the qualitative data analysis process is both challenging and exciting, requiring “a mix of creativity and systematic searching, a blend of inspiration and diligent detection” (Spencer, et al. 2003, p. 199). In this study, I approached my analysis by transcribing interviews, coding data, and conducting constant comparative analysis.

**Transcription and coding.**

All interviews, English and Khmer alike, were transcribed directly into English. To find the appropriate equivalent meanings for Khmer words, expressions, and ideas in English was quite challenging. Hence, I needed to go through the transcriptions at least three or four times to make sure that my translations kept their original meanings and ideas. This stage also alerted me that I would need to be careful at the next stage of interpreting the data. The transcripts, field notes, personal reflections, memos and collected documents were then coded. Coding is defined as the “process of making notations next to bits of data that strike you as potentially relevant for answering your research questions” (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). While there are various approaches to coding, I coded my data based on the study’s guiding theoretical concept of mutuality, as suggested by Silverman (2000). Coding based on themes is very suitable for case studies, like this one, because researchers have a clear picture of what they want to explore and understand from the case(s) (Stake, 1995). Overall, this stage is very important when beginning data analysis because it helps “the researcher sort and organize the data, just as file folders can help with organizing a stack of papers” (Moore, Lapan, & Quartaroli, 2012, p. 263).

**Constant comparative analysis.**

The analysis of this study followed the constant comparison method to organize and analyze all the codes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2001; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Fram, 2013). Initiated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), this method has been widely used as a means of deriving grounded theory. As they put it, the method “is concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (but not provisionally testing) many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems …” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 104). According Glaser and Strauss (1998), four steps of the constant comparison method include: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category; (2) integrating categories and their
properties [subcategories]; (3) delimiting the theory; and (4) writing the theory (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 339). This analytical process helps reduce “the database to a small set of themes or categories” on which a new theory is built or generated (Creswell, 1998, p. 151). Overall, the initial purpose of the constant comparison method put forward by Glaser and Strauss was to discover new theories and knowledge, based solely on participants’ perspective.

However, in this multiple case study, the constant comparative approach was used simply as a tool for processing data, rather than a method for Grounded Theory. As an analytical tool, the approach enables a researcher to integrate his or her conceptual and theoretical framework, or simply put, an etic position, while, at the same time, maintaining an emic perspective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Fram, 2013). Combining the etic and emic views together, which Yin (1989) calls an analytical strategy of “relying on theoretical propositions,” the researcher is able “to focus attention on certain data [that are relevant to research questions] and to ignore other data” (p. 107). Therefore, this makes it convenient for the researcher to proceed to “a thematic analysis across the cases, called a ‘cross-case analysis’, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case,” instead of beginning analysis without any concepts (Creswell, 1998, p. 63). Hence, in this study, all the codes and categories were developed and analyzed in relation to the theoretical concept of mutuality developed by Johan Galtung and David Held. It should be noted that throughout the process, I used the qualitative data analysis software program of Nvivo to assist me in coding and retrieving data as well as in developing a diagram (Figure 7.1).

**Research ethics.**

This study strictly followed all the ethical requirements of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) of the University of Toronto, approved on October 9, 2012 (see Appendix C). This ethical protocol is required for all studies involving human subjects in order to ensure “that participants are fully informed and that they consent to voluntarily participate in the research (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012, p. 37). I began my research by seeking institutional consent at each participating university. When approaching my participants, I always made it clear to them that although I had acquired their names from the International Relations Office/Research Office, I was the one who selected them as my study’s participants, mainly due to their relevant experience regarding international projects. This was to ensure that they did not feel any pressure to participate. I explained to each of them the purpose of my study,
how data would be collected and used, and how much time the interview would last. Once they agreed to participate in my study, I asked each of them to sign the consent form, which was in the Khmer language, before the interview process (see Appendix D). In addition to all the details about my research process as well as the ethical aspects mentioned in the consent form, I explained these to all participants verbally before beginning the interviews to make sure that they understood my ethical responsibility as a researcher as well as my study purpose. Moreover, I sought their permission to tape-record the interviews. Another important ethical procedure, to which I have paid considerable attention, was anonymity. To ensure that the identities of all my participants are protected, I have used pseudonyms for all of them in my writing, as the table below shows. It should be noted that all the names used in this study to refer to people, other than participants, are also fictitious.

It is important to acknowledge that the three universities examined in this study are among the elite higher education institutions in the Cambodia context, and are unique in their own way, as discussed earlier, so it is possible that they could be identified. However, I approached my discussion and analysis in the findings chapters in ways that ensure the personal identities of each participant will not be revealed.
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**Note.** The majority of administrators, including the senior ones, also teach at the same time.
Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the experience of Cambodian participants in international projects. Foreign participants in the same projects could hold different views of power relationships from those of their Cambodian colleagues. In addition, the selection of the study’s theoretical framework has been influenced by my own cultural values and academic training, and hence, other studies on the same issue of power dynamics in Cambodian higher education might produce different findings if they adopted different theoretical perspectives. Also, this study is limited to bilateral inter-university linkage programs, through the Memoranda of Understanding signed between Cambodian universities and their foreign counterparts in France, the US, Japan and South Korea. Recently, Cambodian universities have participated in various forms of international projects with a variety of developed countries.

Another limitation is the extent to which this study can explain the power relationships over the last twenty years. Most interviewees were only directly involved in recent partnership programs. It was very difficult to track down people who had been involved in international projects in the 1990s or even in the early 2000s, most of whom had already left their institutions and were working somewhere else. Hence, even though I could interview many participants who had studied and worked at Universities A and B since the early 1990s, more and extensive research needs to be carried out to gain a solid understanding of the changing trend over the past twenty years. In addition, methodologically, case study research should involve more diverse sources of data collection, to gain deep understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). However, in view of time constraints, my study covers only interviews and documents. Field observations of their negotiations at the beginning or during the implementation process of each partnership, for example, would offer deeper insights into how power dynamics are manifested between Cambodian and foreign participants. Overall, the findings of this study are limited to the Cambodian context, and thus, any generalization to the context of power relationships in international projects in other developing countries needs to be made with caution.
Summary

I have begun this chapter by discussing the constructivist paradigm, within which qualitative case study inquiry is situated. Then, I have introduced various aspects of the qualitative case study design. Those aspects have covered site selection, sampling strategy, participant recruitment, and data collection and analysis methods. It was also important for me to explain that, throughout my study, I fulfilled all the ethical requirements by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) of the University of Toronto. I have ended this chapter by pointing out all the limitations of my study.
Chapter Six: Forms of and Rationales for International University Partnerships

This first findings chapter aims to present the overall context surrounding the development of international partnership programs between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. I will begin by introducing the analytical structure I used to examine my data across three levels: institutional, national and regional/international. Following this frame, I will discuss various forms of Cambodian university partnership programs with each case study country. Comparisons across the four cases will then be made, based on a number of characteristics, including the pathways by which international university partnerships have emerged, funding, collaborative activities, and the motivations of each country to support these programs.

In this chapter, data were drawn from various sources, including face-to-face interviews, policy documents, email exchanges, and the websites of participating universities and of other relevant agencies. Online resources, in particular, offered useful information about statistics and general forms of international education programs between Cambodian universities and those in the four case study countries. It is important to restate that the comparative description and analysis in this chapter, as well as throughout the study, were mainly done from Cambodian perspectives.

Framing the Analysis

In Chapters Six and Seven, I analyze and discuss the findings across three levels: institutional, national and regional/international, as indicated in Figure 6.1. As the study revealed, a number of international university partnerships at the three participating Cambodian universities have been developed, in one way or another, out of broad educational assistance at the national, regional and international levels. For instance, Cambodian-French university partnership projects at Universities A and B were built upon initial people-based and institutional connections through the AUF assistance programs in Cambodia and in other French former colonies since the early 1990s. In the same vein, many collaborative programs between Cambodian and Japanese universities at University A were established out of extensive Japanese assistance to the ASEAN region (the AUN/SEED-Net program) and therefore, cannot be explained in isolation from the national and regional agencies concerned. Simply put, the
involvement of the French and Japanese governments, respectively, in the extensive networks of the AUF and the AUN/SEED-Net suggest the development of international university partnerships out of the intertwining of bilateral relations within the context of multilateral networks.

In addition, this study’s findings showed that numerous international collaborative activities between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the four case study countries have thus far taken place at the individual/department level, outside of formal institutional agreements or MOUs – a practice which has been long adopted and is still highly valued by many participants, who saw these as being just as important as the formal institutional agreements. Hence, it is imperative that I discuss the findings in such a way as to provide the full picture of each case of international university partnerships.

Figure 6.1. Analytical Frame Indicating the Pathways by which International Partnerships between Cambodian Universities and Universities in the Four Case Study Countries Have Emerged.
Overview of Cambodian Partnership Programs with the Four Case Study Countries

As seen in Table 6.1, French universities have only established partnership agreements with Cambodian public universities, including 10 with University A and 14 with University B. Interestingly, Japanese universities have collaborative programs with all three Cambodian universities, while American and South Korean universities only have partnerships agreements with Universities B and C. It is important to note that the partnership programs listed in Table 6.1 were not all active at the time of this study. Therefore, when presenting the forms of international university partnerships with each country, I will only explain in detail programs that were commonly pointed out by the study’s informants during the interviews.

Table 6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>University A</th>
<th>University B</th>
<th>University C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>10 partners</td>
<td>14 partners</td>
<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td>The United States</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>11 Partners</td>
<td>17 partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>7 partners</td>
<td>10 partners</td>
<td>3 partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>29 partners</td>
<td>8 partners</td>
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</table>

*Note.* The number of MOUs was obtained from the school reports and websites of each university over the period February to April 2013.

Partnerships with French universities.

As showed in Figure 6.1, all Cambodian-French partnership programs at Universities A and B were developed, in one way or another, out of the existing network of the French educational assistance to both universities through the AUF (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie) program, which commenced in 1993, and also through the French embassy program (commonly referred to in French by most participants as the Ambassade de France program), which began a few years after the AUF began its engagement. As noted earlier, France was the only country to offer large-scale assistance to Cambodian universities throughout the
1990s, and its support was part of the bilateral relations between the two countries. According to what a foreign official working at the MoEYS recalled, French assistance aimed to respond to Cambodia’s request for help to “rebuild a higher education system that could contribute to Cambodia’s transition from a command economy to a market economy…” (O1).

Although gradually in decline in recent years, French cumulative assistance to University A, through the AUF and the Ambassade de France, has been quite substantial, and much more than that for other public universities, including University B. The assistance has covered scholarships for Cambodian students to pursue their graduate studies in France (and also in Belgium, which is another key member of the AUF); financial support for online journals, for foreign faculty to come and teach at the university, and for research equipment and school facilities; curriculum development; and an annual funding package for joint research projects. In addition, the French government has offered the university a French coordinator to provide overall support and advice.

It should be noted that once it became a member of the AUF in 1993 – the year in which France commenced its huge development aid to Cambodian higher education – University A needed to follow all the AUF’s requirements, including switching from Russian to French as the only medium of instruction. During the interviews, many faculty saw this language requirement as quite demanding, compared not only to other Cambodian higher education institutions, but also to other universities in the region:

I learned that universities in Vietnam and Laos are also members of the AUF but they can use their local language and English as well. However, this is not the case at our institution. We have to use French. English can only be used alongside, in recent years. Still, French remains the major language and all students have to write their final projects at the end of their programs in French, except for some cases in which they are allowed to do it in English. (UA3)

Although, throughout the interviews, no one directly explained the case, the dominance of senior leadership by the French side could be the major reason behind the strong support for the French language. University A was managed by the French side from 1993 when French assistance commenced until 2003, when the management was handed over to the Cambodian side. A lot of the participants saw in the period thereafter a key shift toward more involvement in the Anglophone system, especially the AUN/SEED-Net program, to be discussed later. Overall, the official time frame of extensive French assistance at University A was from 1993 to 2004.
Likewise, University B was a member of the AUF from 1994 to the mid-2000s. However, only the French language department and five other science programs were actively involved with the AUF: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Geography, and Biology. Unlike University A, where French programs were the only option, the five programs at University B had then adopted two systems of learning: the Francophone system, whereby students chose to study French as a second language, and the Anglophone one, which allowed students to opt for English as a foreign language (UB16). Several interviewees who were then Francophone students and now work as faculty at the university claimed that AUF’s assistance to those departments covered scholarships for Francophone students, free access to periodicals and journals, and some support for staff salary and school facilities. However, the overall French assistance at University B was relatively marginal, compared to the AUF’s substantial support for University A over the same period.

The aforementioned context is important because all Cambodia’s university partnerships with France at both Universities A and B arose, in one way or another, from initial connections built through the AUF and the Ambassade de France programs. In particular, most collaborations were established through human connections, either French professors who came to teach in Cambodia or Cambodian students and faculty who went to France for their graduate study/professional training. Many Cambodian participants shared the common view that their respective institutions and those French partner universities were also members of the AUF, so they decided to move forward to establish formal institutional agreements because they wanted to maintain and improve their good relationships with each other. Indeed, most of the activities listed in the university-to-university partnerships had already taken place under the support of the AUF or the Ambassade de France. It is for this reason that, during the interviews, most participants tended to discuss both AUF’s and French university partnership activities altogether.

Thus far, French-supported programs have been limited to public universities, although several private universities have approached the French government for support. This support has gradually declined since the early 2000s. The foreign official at the MoEYS mentioned that Cambodia, with its GDP growth hovering between 7-8% over the last two decades, is no longer the major priority of French international assistance, which has recently been directed to the least developed countries in West Africa. He also went on to point out that “Cambodian universities are now able to survive and develop on their own” (O1). Many Cambodian faculty expressed a similar view, with one of them stating that, “No one helps us forever, so at some point, they [the
French] will stop and let us walk by ourselves” (UB18). Another faculty member at University A noted that the decline in French assistance took place a few years after Cambodian public universities, including his own university, introduced the fee-paying program that has allowed them to create another source of income (UA3).

The recent decline in French assistance to Cambodian higher education, through both the AUF and the Ambassade de France, has had a negative impact on university partnership activities between the two countries. Many collaborative projects at University A were already gone at the time of this study and in some departments, including the Water Resources Department, AUF’s support was limited to only a few scholarships for Cambodian students to study in France. Throughout the university, current university partnership activities mainly involved technical assistance, joint research projects, student and faculty exchange programs and scholarships for graduate studies in France, all of which were taking place on a smaller scale than before.

Likewise, AUF’s support at University B had already gone, so few university partnership activities between the two countries were currently maintained in all the science departments, except for the master’s program of mathematics, in which several French partner universities still directly supported the university by sending their professors to help with teaching and strengthening the program. In the French language department, AUF assistance was also limited to several exchange program activities, scholarships for graduate studies in France, and some technical support. Overall, at both Universities A and B, the listed French partnership agreements, as shown in the table above, were not all active at the time of this study, with many of them nothing more than agreements on paper. Throughout the study, all participants with French experience indicated that they were not aware of any French collaborative program that took place at the institutional level without any prior connections built through either the AUF or the Ambassade de France program. Simply put, almost all partnership agreements with French universities at both Universities A and B were signed during the period in which French assistance through the AUF and the Ambassade de France was active. Hence, it can be concluded that French-Cambodian university partnership programs involved, in various ways, the governments of both countries as well as an international organization, affiliated with France and other French-speaking countries, namely the AUF.
Partnerships with American universities.

As shown in Table 6.1, Universities B and C, respectively, had 11 and 17 partnership agreements with their American counterparts. Unlike French-Cambodian university partnerships, the vast majority of which have been supported by extensive French assistance at the government and international level, those American-Cambodian partnerships have been supported by or through foreign partner universities, with limited involvement from any external agencies. University C, in particular, has been able to form numerous collaborative programs with its American counterparts through the personal and professional connections of its faculty and senior administrators, most of whom are foreign-educated. Such partnerships have involved student and faculty exchange programs, short-term training for Cambodian staff, and scholarships for Cambodian students. However, not all 17 partnerships listed in the table were active at the time of this study, with many of them being on and off. This is because University C, like the majority of Cambodian higher education institutions, has limited resources to contribute to its international activities. In other words, its American partners are usually the major providers of financial and technical assistance in their partnerships. Hence, in what follows, I will elaborate upon only the programs which were frequently discussed during the study.

The Center for Community Service Learning, which was developed through the partnership program between University C and California State University-Fullerton (CSUF), was regarded as one of the most successful American programs at the university, and thereby, was commonly cited by almost all participants at the university during the interviews. Upon the signing of a partnership agreement in 2002, both Cambodian and American partners applied and received a grant of US $124,419 from USAID in 2003 to establish a community service learning center at University C, which ran between April 2003 through to 2005 (Higher Education for Development, n.d.). In its early stage, especially in May and later in August 2003, the program supported a number of students, faculty and staff from University C for a short visit to the United States to learn about the concept of service learning. Upon their return, the Center for Community Service Learning was established in the same year. During the project, faculty from CSUF were also sent to University C to offer several workshops regarding how to embed the concept of service learning into course syllabus and teaching pedagogy. As a consequence, [University C] implemented its first-ever service-learning course with students in an environmental science course each providing 10-12 hours of service to local agencies.
working with children affected by HIV/AIDS. Service learning activities also focused on literacy, health care, and human rights. (Higher Education for Development, n.d.)

In addition to this service-learning project, there have been other partnership activities between the two universities, including student exchange programs. It should be noted that USAID support for University C is not common within the Cambodian context. While the rationale behind such support, especially from the American perspective, is beyond the scope of this study, two officials at University C claimed that their strong connections with American academics and also with the US embassy in Cambodia were some of the key motivations for the USAID to support the service-learning project. However, one of them did acknowledge that there has thus far been little support from the US government for Cambodian higher education institutions, and even when it has existed, the general preference has been toward collaborating and supporting the public sector (UC1). For instance, each year, the US government has sent several American professors through the Fulbright program to teach in several Cambodian public universities, rather than the private ones (UC1).

The university’s partnerships with Troy University as well as with Bridgewater State University were also oft-cited throughout the study by participants there. However, at the time of this study, those partnerships were still limited to faculty or student exchange activities, with the twinning program being at the planning stage. In these partnerships, student exchanges lasted around two weeks. For faculty exchanges, one or two foreign scholars came to University C, for a period of up to six months or longer, to teach (either voluntarily or paid by their home university) and, at the same time, conduct their research related to Cambodia. As indicated earlier, in view of resource constraints, it is a lot more common for American faculty and students to come to University C, than the other way around. In the case that any Cambodian faculty or staff goes to the US, it is the American partners who cover the cost. University C could offer only an in-kind contribution, including accommodation, transportation, and food, among others. As for the proposed twinning programs with its American partners, University C requested that Cambodian students pay the same fees (local fees) as American students. Besides the partnerships with these three universities, partnerships with other American universities were not very active at the time of the study, and were thus referred to only occasionally by Cambodian participants.

At University B, the most active American-Cambodian partnership discussed by participants was the newly established bachelor’s program of social work. Back in the early
2000s, an American professor from the University of Washington’s (UW) School of Social Work was doing her research in Cambodia, and realizing the need of a social work program in the country, she approached University A to establish the first social work degree program there. Both universities entered into an agreement in 2004, with three phases designed to develop the new program. The first phase, which had already been completed, focused mainly on supporting 5 young Cambodian scholars during their master’s degree at the UW, with the first one from 2006 to 2008 and the other four from 2007 to 2009. These five graduates had already returned and were currently working as the faculty in the Social Work Department, which was opened in 2008. In addition to her teaching, the first graduate also took on the role of program coordinator. It should be remembered that prior to then, there was no social work degree-level program in Cambodia. In 2012, the department graduated its first batch of 22 students.

Thus far, funding has been a big challenge for this partnership. In its early stage, the American professor who has been active in the program approached many international organizations, including the USAID, the Asia Foundation, UNICEF and the German Technical Cooperation, for financial support (UWSW, 2009). While they “were enthusiastic about the aims of the Partnership and provided letters of support, in the end, none provided any financial backing” (UWSW, 2009, p. 2). With dedication, she explored all other possible means of financial support to get the program moving forward:

Close to half a million dollars was needed for tuition and fee support, housing, food, books, airfare, bus fare, and medical insurance for the 5 students. Incredibly over 190 individuals made either a one time donation or multiple over the three year endeavour. (UWSW, 2009, p. 2)

By November 2012, the total amount of donations from various sources had reached more than US $700,000 (UW, 2012). The University of Washington itself supported the partnership by charging Cambodian students fees at the local rate.

Phase II of the partnership “focuses on organizational development of the new SW Department and curricular development of the new Bachelor’s program” (UWSW, 2009, p. 1). In this phase, the emphasis has shifted toward “providing mentorship to support faculty and organizational development” (UWSW, 2009, p. 4). In particular, while the five Cambodian graduates were the key faculty in developing courses and curriculum and managing the entire program, UW faculty have provided technical assistance and advice. This partnership remained active at the time of the study, with both parties putting in a lot of effort to improve and
strengthen the program. Another Cambodian was sent to the University of Washington for a Master’s degree at the time of this study.

In recent years, the partnership has expanded to include student and faculty exchanges and a few joint research activities. Due to the lack of financial support, however, so far only two or three students from the US have been able to come to Cambodia every year, but not vice versa. It is worth noting that the current bachelor’s program in social work admits only students through the scholarship programs, meaning those students do not have to pay tuition fees. In the context of the lack of government support, this suggests that the program remains dependent on the American side not only for technical support but also for exploring funding sources. To be sustainable, the department plans to increase its admission quota by setting up a fee-paying stream in the very near future. This is also the answer to the increasing demand for professionals in the area of social work in Cambodian society, as many participants expressed.

As initially planned, Phase III of the partnership would be focused “on creation of MSW [master of social work] program” (UWSW, 2009, p. 1). It is interesting, however, that University B and South Korea’s Ewha Womans University established a partnership supporting a Master’s program, which was opened in 2009 (to be elaborated upon later in the section on Cambodian-Korean University programs). As the study revealed, such a decision to collaborate with a South Korean partner was made by senior administrators, and had thus far received both positive and negative reactions from faculty in the bachelor’s program – this issue will be further discussed in the mutuality chapter. Overall, the American partnership model at University B, especially in the social work program, is similar to Community Service Learning at University C in that they both focused on skills training of local people – an approach that most Cambodian interviewees believed would ensure the long-range sustainability of the program.

Other American partnerships at University B have taken place on a smaller scale, with many of them being on and off, partly because of the university’s lack of resources to contribute to those international programs. At the same time, a number of collaborative activities at both Universities A and B have taken place at the individual and faculty level, without any formal international agreement. Thus far, there have been relatively few partnership activities, formal or informal alike, between University A and American universities. During the interviews, several faculty at the university explained that there was a lack of interest from senior leadership in establishing partnerships with American partners. Their views were not surprising because, as noted earlier, University A was strictly managed by the French side almost up to the mid-2000s.
Many faculty also believed that there was little interest on the part of the US universities and government to partner with and support Cambodian universities and students, particularly in the hard sciences. One faculty made the following observation:

... Even looking at the American Fulbright program, you would see that there are not many scholarships for Cambodians. They are not interested in supporting the field of engineering. It is rare to see students from our institute get American scholarships. The American government is more interested in supporting the social sciences, because it is related to American ideologies and also it is less expensive. (UA4)

A foreign staff working at University B expressed the same view that “the US is more interested in influencing Western ideologies, especially democracy and the free market in Cambodia” (UA19). Hence, the lack of partnership activities between University A and American academics has been attributed to the limited interest from both sides. Indeed, UA4’s comment above reflects the fact that it is costly to create partnerships in the field of engineering. Therefore, it would be a big financial challenge for universities themselves to collaborate without any external support.

**Partnerships with Japanese universities.**

As shown in Table 6.1, University B had 10 partnership agreements with Japanese universities at the time of this study, followed by Universities A and C, each with 7 and 3 partnership agreements with their Japanese counterparts, respectively. However, as the study revealed, the overall Japanese collaborative activities at University A were much larger in scale and intensity than those at Universities B and C. This is because those projects have taken place under the ASEAN University Network/Southeast Asia Engineering Education Development Network (AUN/SEED-Net) program, mainly supported and coordinated by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The program arose at the initiation of the former Japanese Prime Ministers Hashimoto and Obuchi at the Japan-ASEAN Summit in 1997 and the ASEAN-Plus-Three Summit in 1999, respectively. With the aim to develop well-qualified human resources in the engineering field in ASEAN, the AUN/SEED-Net program has built strong networks among leading engineering higher education institutions in the region and in Japan. Two phrases (Phase I: 2003-2008 & Phase II: 2008-2013) were already completed and Phrase Three (2013-2018) began on March 11, 2013. At present, the network consists of 26 higher education institutions selected by each country from the 10 ASEAN countries and 14
leading Japanese supporting universities selected by the Japanese government (AUN/SEED-Net).

With engineering as the target field, the AUN/SEED-Net program has placed strong emphasis on building the link between university and industry in the region:

Being the academic network for leading engineering institutions in the ASEAN region, the AUN/SEED-Net should focus on higher-level collaboration with industry such as collaborative research activities. Based on its promotion, the AUN/SEED-Net supports Member Institutions in conducting activities related to industry, or promoting the establishment of closer linkage between Member Institutions and local or Japanese industry in the region. Some activities are closely related to the community and can be conducted in a tripartite manner between the university, the industry and the community. [AUN/SEED-Net]

To build human resources in the engineering field, the AUN/SEED-Net programs support students to pursue their Master’s in nine engineering fields in the ASEAN host countries, namely Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Those fields include: Chemical Engineering (at De La Salle University), Civil Engineering (at Chulalongkorn University), Electrical and Electronics Engineering (at Chulalongkorn University), Environmental Engineering (at University of Philippines-Diliman), Geological Engineering (at Gadjah Mada University), Information and Communication Technology (at King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology, Ladkrabang), Manufacturing Engineering (at University of Malaysia), Materials Engineering (at Universiti Sains Malaysia), and Mechanical and Aeronautical Engineering (at Institute of Technology Bandung). At the doctoral level, there are three options for students: (1) doctoral degree programs at Japanese universities; (2) doctoral degree sandwich programs, in which students study both at host institutions in ASEAN and at Japanese universities; and (3) doctoral degree programs at two Singaporean universities. The main purpose of supporting these graduate students is that they would become future faculty upon returning to their respective countries. While Japan has been and still is the major financial provider for the program, many member institutions in ASEAN have helped with some cost sharing and made some contributions. These may include tuition fees, accommodation, necessary facilities, travel allowances, office space/expenses, and so on (JICA officer in Bangkok).

In recent years, the AUN/SEED-Net has become the largest foreign-supported program at University A. Such huge JICA assistance has thus far covered various activities, ranging from joint research projects, professional training, faculty development activities (workshops, conferences, etc.), scholarships for graduate studies in other ASEAN countries and in Japan, to
the development of research and school facilities. Interestingly, from 2011 through the time of
the study, three ongoing projects with a value of US $9.3 million were taking place at University
A, focusing on upgrading lab equipment and facilities and the capacity development of the
university. The breakdown of these three projects was a Cultural Grant Aid (equipment) value of
US $0.5 million, a Grant Aid (Equipment and Facilities) of US $6 million, and a Technical
Cooperation Project (equipment and capacity building) of US $2.8 million (JICA officer in
Bangkok). Much of the assistance went to three departments, including Electrical and Energy
Engineering, Industrial and Mechanical Engineering, and Geo-Resources and Geotechnical
Engineering. University A requested support for these three departments when initially
approached by JICA to participate in its program. While the Department of Geo-Resources and
Geotechnical Engineering is a new program, the other two departments are short of resources.

It is through this extensive scholarly network that University A – the only Cambodian
engineering public university – has been connected to many universities in ASEAN and Japanese
universities. Hence, Cambodian-Japanese university linkage programs have constituted only a
small portion of JICA’s huge financial assistance to the university under the umbrella of
AUN/SEED-Net. In fact, as in the French program under the AUF, international activities under
Cambodian-Japanese university partnerships at University A were already part of the
AUN/SEED-Net program. University A and their Japanese partners had also been members of
the AUN/SEED-Net. University A formed formal institutional partnerships with individual
Japanese universities to improve and maintain their relationships: as one faculty explained, “It is
easy to work together when it comes to joint research projects” (UA9). The connections were
usually built through the alumni of the doctoral programs with their former professors.
Therefore, these Cambodian-Japanese university partnerships were also similar to French-
Cambodian university partnerships in that they were built upon existing close associations of
human agency through the AUN/SEED-Net programs.

Cambodian-Japanese partnerships at Universities B and C were relatively small in scale
and were supported by the Japanese side, without any assistance from external agencies. In this
form of partnership, relationships between Cambodian and Japanese academics were first
initiated and built at the faculty or departmental level, before formal institutional partnerships
were signed. These partnerships have thus far involved mainly faculty and student exchange
programs, graduate scholarships for Cambodian students, and a few joint research activities. At
University B, the partnership with Nagoya University’s Graduate School of International
Development was among the several Japanese programs that were active at the time of this study. It had been built out of, and maintained over time by close associations between Cambodian and Japanese scholars. At the time of this study, the Director of the Development Studies of University B and a Japanese professor at Nagoya University, who had formerly been a student and supervisor, were the key actors in the partnership. This partnership has thus far involved both joint research and student exchange activities. Each year, the Japanese professor has come to Cambodia for his own research projects, some of which have been jointly conducted with the Director of the Development Studies program at University B. Also, he has normally brought with him around 10 Japanese students through the exchange programs, which usually last approximately between two weeks and one month.

According to this study, however, the common activities in most Japanese-assisted programs throughout University B have been confined to student exchange activities. This is due to the fact that not many students have accepted graduate scholarships offered by Japanese universities, which have covered only tuition fees. Overall, at the time of the study, as in the case of the French and American programs, not many of the Japanese programs at University B were active. In fact, as one faculty there explained, “Japanese partner universities would also need to apply for external funding from the Japanese government as well as from MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) for bigger projects including research collaboration. Therefore, those projects are active only when they receive the external grants” (UB3). None of the participants at University C mentioned any active collaborative programs with Japanese universities during the interviews.

**Partnerships with Korean universities.**

Similar to American-Cambodian university partnerships, most Cambodian-Korean university partnerships at Universities B and C have taken place through individual and institutional initiation and support, with limited involvement from external agencies. These programs have mainly covered student exchange activities, and scholarships for graduate studies in Korea, although a few partnerships also provided support for a computer lab and for Korean faculty to come and teach in Cambodia. Compared to the three countries above, however, various types of Korean universities have thus far approached their Cambodian counterparts for collaboration, ranging from elite public universities to small private religious ones.
One of the interesting Korean partnerships commonly referred to during this study is the joint Master’s program in social work between University B and Ewha Womans University, which was opened in 2009. The MOU between the two universities was initiated and planned in 2005, and signed two years later. In this program, all faculty are Korean professors from Ewha Womans University, who usually have come to Cambodia for short periods of time, approximately ten days or two weeks, to teach. Students and professors communicate through email and Skype. At the time of this study, the Korean side was also helping its Cambodian counterpart with building a computer lab so that in the near future, the e-learning format could be adopted to facilitate teaching and learning in the master’s program (UB2).

Unlike the American-assisted bachelor’s program, this joint Master’s program had been mainly run by the Korean side, especially in terms of curriculum development and teaching. On the Cambodian side, there was one person to help coordinate the program, mainly in the administrative area. He was the only person who had been to Ewha Womans University for his Master’s degree and later (at the time of this study) for his Ph.D. Hence, in the social work program at University B, there were two different models of university partnership: (a) the American-supported bachelor’s program, in which all teaching was done by Cambodian faculty who were sent to the US for their graduate studies and (b) the Korean-supported Master’s program, in which all faculty were Koreans. It should be noted that unlike the bachelor’s program, which had thus far admitted only scholarship students, the joint Master’s program, like other graduate programs at the university, was tuition fee-based, and therefore, had another source of income, in addition to assistance offered by the Korean side.

Other Korean programs at University B have mainly covered student exchange activities at the undergraduate level and graduate scholarships from Cambodian students to pursue their studies in Korea. Unlike Cambodian collaborative programs with the other three countries, most Cambodian-Korean university partnerships have taken place without any close prior connections between academicians from the two countries. An official who had been extensively involved in partnership activities with Korean universities claimed that, for the most part, Korean universities, whose knowledge about Cambodian higher education was limited, sought information from their embassy and/or the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) in Cambodia when searching for Cambodian partners (UB4). Noticeably, KOICA spent a grant aid of US $7.5 million on the establishment of the Cambodia-Korea Cooperation Center (CKCC) on the campus of University B, which was opened in 2013 with the aim to strengthen relationships.
between the two countries. The center had become another repository of information about Cambodia, including its higher education, for Korean universities. According to UB4, these agencies, closely linked to their own government, have oftentimes directed Korean universities to the public sector, with University B the most popular destination.

In fact, in connection with the establishment of the CKCC at University B, there was an interesting anecdote told by an official at University C:

Years ago, the Korean government supported us to establish the Korean Center here, through the partnership agreement between Silla University and our university [University C]. The Center grew well and our relationships with Korean universities also improved. However, the Korean government stopped supporting it and gave it to the public sector. [The interviewee explicitly mentioned University B in his interview.] The center is now defunct… (UC1)

This means, like governments in the other three countries, the Korean government has placed emphasis on supporting the public sector. Hence, the number of Korean programs at University C was much smaller than at University B.

It is important to highlight that University C, with its strong English programs, had thus far sent around seven Cambodian students every year, through the exchange program, to teach English at the undergraduate level at its Korean partner, Pusan National University. In return, those students were offered an opportunity to pursue their master’s there, with a few of them able to continue to the doctoral level. However, as the study revealed, many of the listed programs were off at the time of this study, mainly due to the limited resources both sides could contribute.

As another official at the university explained,

Korean universities themselves need to apply for funding from their government too. When they get the money, the partnership activities become active. If not, then the program becomes inactive and we have to wait until they have the money again… (UC2)

Thus far, there had been no Korean university partnership program at University A. However, it is interesting that the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) had lately supported Universities A and B, particularly in the area of information technology. At University A, for instance, KOICA provided funding worth US $1 million to build the multimedia laboratory, which was part of its larger project of promoting e-learning systems in CLMV ASEAN countries (2010-2103), namely Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam – the four least-developed countries in the region. Likewise, KOICA also offered support to various programs at University B, including the program of Information and Communication Technology. Cambodian participants at both universities claimed that there was no doubt about
South Korea’s support for the discipline of computer science, due to its advancement in this area.

O1 offered an overview of Korean education assistance in Cambodia, as follows:

KOICA’s involvement in the development of Cambodian higher education has been relatively marginal and confined to the area of computer science at Universities A and B. As part of this project, they also want to support the development of the e-learning system in Cambodia as well as in the Southeast Asian region, which is growing fast... However, KOICA’s assistance for the Technical and Vocational Training has recently increased significantly...

The focus on vocational and technical education is beyond of the purview of my study, however.

**Cross-case comparisons.**

Now, I will juxtapose and make a cross-case analysis of university partnerships with the four case study countries, based on a number of characteristics, as shown in Table 6.2 below. All these characteristics, taken together, reflect the broad forms of university partnerships with the four case study countries. First, the pathways by which university partnerships at the three participating universities emerged can be classified into three types, the first of which was through both existing human and institutional connections. This was the case for all French programs at Universities A and B, which were built on the prior relationships between faculty and students from both sides who had participated in the AUF and/or the Ambassade de France programs. Cambodian universities and their French partner universities had also been members of the AUF before they formed their linkages. Japanese partnerships at the engineering university also fell on this pathway, with academics from both sides already participating in the AUN/SEED-Net program supported by JICA. This pathway reflects the establishment of university partnerships through bilateral relations within the context of multilateral networks. It should be restated here that the decision of University A to establish institutional partnerships with French and Japanese universities was not a requirement of the AUF or the AUN/SEED-Net program.
### Table 6.2

**Summary of Key Characteristics of University Partnerships across the Four Cases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Cambodia Partnership Programs with Universities in</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways</td>
<td>* Existing human and institutional connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject areas</td>
<td>* A range of knowledge areas, but more sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common collaborative Activities</td>
<td>* Student and faculty exchange programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Innovation of school facilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Faculty development programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language of Communication</td>
<td>* Mainly French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>* Mainly supported by the AUF and the Ambassade de France programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation of each government</td>
<td>* Cultural and language influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodian participating universities</td>
<td>* Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*. This thematic comparison was developed from the interview findings.

The second pathway for establishing university partnerships was mainly through existing human connections, which characterized most Japanese and American partnership programs at
Universities B and C. As pointed out earlier, these programs were driven by personal and professional connections at the faculty and departmental levels. Unlike those in the first category, in which partnerships were sponsored by such external agencies as the AUF and JICA, these second-pathway programs were mainly supported by or through foreign partner universities, through bilateral institutional agreements. Interestingly, both the first and second pathways share a common bottom-up approach, in that Cambodian participants at the faculty/departmental level had already developed close associations, either formal or informal, with foreign academicians, and were thereby well aware of the purposes and activities of the proposed university partnerships.

The third common pathway reflects a top-down approach to university partnerships that were germinated at the institutional level without any prior human connections between local and foreign academicians. The majority of Cambodian-Korean programs fell under this category, because various types of Korean universities had directly approached their Cambodian counterparts for partnerships. For the most part, Korean universities sought information about Cambodian higher education from the KOICA office or the Korean embassy in Phnom Penh. It should be noted that in most programs in the public sector, regardless of their pathway, it was foreign participants who first initiated contact with their Cambodian counterparts, either at the department, faculty or institutional level.

In terms of funding, all forms of university partnerships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the four countries were mainly supported by foreign partners, be they institutions, governments or international development agencies. Due to a lack of resources, the Cambodian side could offer only in-kind contributions, including accommodation, transportation, and food, among other things. In this regard, it was a lot more common for foreign students and faculty to have come to Cambodia in such collaborative activities as faculty and student exchange programs, than the other way around.

Comparisons across the four case study countries also indicate the commonality that university programs supported by foreign governments and/or their development agencies have put more emphasis on establishing relationships with public universities, mainly due to bilateral relations at the national level which highlight the need to help the public sector. For example, the foreign official at the MoEYS claimed that:

Generally speaking, foreign assistance through bilateral cooperation between Cambodia and other countries focuses mainly on the public sector. Private universities have also
approached the French government for help, but we [the French] refused. For instance, the president of [University K] approached us to support its health program; however, with our limited resources, we could only support the public one. It is our official policy about bilateral cooperation to involve the state and public institutions in our international activities. (O1)

It should be noted that the case of the USAID-supported program of Community Service Learning at University C is not common within the Cambodian context. As indicated earlier, University C has a strong connection with American academics and also the US embassy in Phnom Penh. Many of its senior administrators are Cambodian returnees who received their higher education degrees from and worked in the US for years.

Although this lies beyond the scope of this study, the government-supported programs at the three universities also shed some light on each country’s motivation for supporting Cambodian higher education, at least from a Cambodian perspective. For instance, participants in the Japanese programs at University A shared a common view that Japan’s large-scale support for the AUN/SEED-Net program had been partly driven by the country’s foreign direct investment (FDI) growth in Cambodia and in the ASEAN region at large. As UA1 indicated, “Japan wants to develop a skilled labor force to support its firms in Cambodia which have recently increased to more than 100. Another 100 Japanese companies are also coming to our country soon” (UA1). Every Cambodian interviewed at University A claimed that Japanese companies need a highly skilled workforce, so they have to improve the quality of human resources first before moving their industry to Cambodia. This view was also shared by O1, when asked about the differences among the international development programs with the four case study countries. Hence, improving the quality of higher education institutions in Cambodia as well as in other ASEAN countries would provide skilled human resources to support Japanese economic expansion in the Southeast Asian region and beyond.

In a similar manner, South Korea’s university partnership programs, although not directly related to South Korean economic activities per se, were commonly viewed by Cambodian participants to be closely tied to South Korea’s economic expansion in Cambodia and in the region. Especially, they claimed that the South Korean government has encouraged its universities to expand their international activities with foreign universities, including those in Cambodia. The purpose was to promote mutual understanding that could help pave the way for economic collaboration between Korea and Cambodia as well as other countries in the region. The following quote summarized this trend well:
South Korea understands our country’s context very well. When I was in Korea, they told me that fifty years ago, Korea was like the present Cambodia. There were many social issues, including corruption. They understand and are very flexible about our context. They support our education and that in ASEAN, in order to build understanding between Korea and ASEAN. It will be easy for their firms to come do business in Cambodia and the region. Now, there are already many Korean companies here. It is now second after China [in terms of foreign direct investment]. (UB10)

The above statement not only reveals the common view among Cambodian participants about the motivation of Korean programs, but also suggests interesting points about the differences between Japanese and Korean programs in Cambodia. In particular, many Cambodian-Korean university projects took the form of cultural influence which would eventually support future economic expansion of South Korea in Cambodia.

By comparison, while Japanese-supported collaborative programs, especially in the engineering field, were seen to be directly related to Japanese economic expansion in heavy industry in Cambodia and in ASEAN, throughout the study, none of the participants saw Japan as an exploiter of Cambodian resources or expressed any concern over Japanese economic imperialism. Instead, they tended to view Japanese programs positively as generous supports for improving Cambodian higher education, which would in turn build and strengthen the Cambodian economy to move forward. In particular, when asked to reflect, within the economic context, on programs with France, Japan and South Korea, one faculty member at University A made the following comment:

Japan is the largest economy, compared to France and Korea, and it will stay here to support us in the future. They help us build skills suitable for Japanese heavy industry, which is coming to our country. This is important for our country to grow… Although South Korea has a huge investment volume in our country now, it has focused mainly on light industry, and its investment has been related to mobile companies, garments, real estate, etc. (UA6)

This view is supported by the fact that Japan was, at the time of this study, the only country willing to provide large scale assistance to University A.

Even in small programs at Universities B and C, which were directly supported by Japanese partner universities, Cambodian participants saw exchange programs, including some cultural activities, positively, as a means of exchanging and promoting mutual understanding of cultures between the two countries. Simply put, none of the participants were concerned about either Japanese economic or cultural imperialism over Cambodia. This was different from South
Korean educational collaborative programs, which were clearly seen as a form of cultural penetration.

The French government’s support tended to have a political and cultural dimension, since France was Cambodia’s former colonizer. As UA1 pointed out, France wants “to promote its language and culture in its former colonies, including Cambodia”. Likewise, another faculty member explained that, “France gives us assistance to help its language and culture to survive within the global community” (UA4). He further indicated that, without such support, it would definitely disappear due to the changing worldwide trend toward English – a view that was shared by all other participants at University A. Although French assistance has significantly declined since the early 2000s, those involved in the AUF-supported programs before still wanted to maintain their relations with French partners. They noted that France was the only country to help Cambodia during the 1990s when others paid little attention to it – this issue is also related to the Buddhist notion of expressing gratitude to donors, and therefore will be further discussed in the mutuality chapter.

Interestingly, while at present, the American model of higher education has been very influential around the world, and many Cambodian universities are also trying to adopt its patterns and ideas with varying degrees of success, the US government’s support for Cambodian higher education has been marginal, and in this study, was limited to supporting the Community Service Learning program at University C. As several participants claimed, the US has so far been more interested in spreading democracy and neo-liberalism in Cambodia. All participants at University A claimed that, since the early 1990s, there had never been any collaborative program with American agencies or universities. Policy makers at the national level also claimed that they were not aware of any American support for Cambodian higher education, particularly in the engineering field.

Table 6.2 also indicates that collaborative activities in Cambodian university partnerships with France, the US and Japan have covered a wide range of activities at both undergraduate and graduate levels. In comparison, most Cambodian-South Korean programs have involved student exchange activities and graduate scholarships for Cambodian students. However, in partnerships with the all four case study countries, joint research, in general, has still been relatively limited, despite JICA’s effort to promote it through the AUN/SEED-Net program. Overall, it is important to note that the number of university partnerships does not explain much about the scope and intensity of the actual collaborative activities between Cambodian universities and foreign
universities. Moreover, there have been many partnerships which have taken place outside the formal framework of agreements or MOUs between the three Cambodian universities and universities in the four case study countries.

**Rationale for International University Partnerships**

In the above section, one of the key findings was that, in virtually every instance, it was foreign partners that first initiated contact, at various levels, with Cambodian higher education institutions for collaborative activities. This raises the question of what factors have driven Cambodian universities to participate in those international programs – the first sub-question of this study. Hence, it is the purpose of this section to explore the motivations for Cambodian universities to enter into such partnership activities with their foreign counterparts, including those in the four case study countries. However, my purpose in exploring the rationale is not an end in itself, but a means toward understanding the overall policy context of Cambodian higher education. Therefore, in this study, I approached this issue by looking at the motives for the three Cambodian universities to participate in international collaboration programs in general, without being specific to any particular country. Also, during interviews with all participants, I always asked questions, both direct and indirect, about the policy itself.

To tackle the first sub-question, I framed my analysis within the four aspects of the internationalization rationale: academic, economic, socio-cultural and political. To reiterate de Wit’s (2002) and Knight’s (1999) points, when analyzing those rationales, one needs to be aware of the diversity of different stakeholder groups in higher education, which hold different priorities and may have differing emphases in relation to the rationales (p. 99). Therefore, it is important to remember that the findings of this study’s rationales are predominantly from the institutional perspective, although I brought into the discussion, where appropriate and relevant, the viewpoints of several policy-makers from the Ministry of Education and other concerned agencies. As the findings of this study suggest, an academic rationale was dominant at those participating institutions, while other rationales only sporadically appeared during the interviews.

It is also instructive to highlight that in higher education internationalization, “Rationales dictate the kind of benefits or expected outcomes those involved expect from internationalization efforts” (Knight, 2008, p. 25). Hence, rationales and benefits are related, but not necessarily the same. In particular, the former deals with the “why” question, thereby reflecting Cambodian
higher education policy and strategies, whereas the latter indicates how far international programs have responded to the expected needs of Cambodian universities. During the interviews, the majority of Cambodians confused rationales with benefits, and in fact, mentioned the latter when first asked about the former. The confusion among Cambodian participants points to the lack of a policy of internationalization – an issue to be reflected upon at the end of this chapter. The benefits will be discussed within the context of mutuality in the following chapter.

**Academic rationale.**

In this study, those who talked about the rationale for internationalization commonly cited various academic aspects as the key motivations for their respective institutions to participate in international university partnerships. Those aspects included enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and research, acquiring new knowledge and skills, achieving international academic standards and improving profile and status:

... We think our institution is the best in the country. However, we are still far behind others in the region and internationally. We are still short of teaching and research equipment. We need to collaborate with others so that they can help strengthen our capacity. (UA3)

... Collaborating with foreign universities will provide our faculty and students with the opportunities to gain updated knowledge about their teaching and learning and also improve their research skills. (UB3)

... The more partnerships we have, the better our image will be in our country and internationally. (UC2)

While those aspects of academic rationale were commonly discussed by faculty and administrators across the three universities, the ideas of building an institutional profile and image as well as of enhancing international standards of education were only indicated by participants at University C. For instance, adding to the above statement by UC2, another official at University C claimed that:

... We follow the California State University curriculum and one of our policies is not to compete with others but with ourselves in order to improve and achieve international standards of education... We have to reach out to increase our international activities. We employ staff from everywhere who can teach in English. We have partnered with many institutions in the US, Asia, Europe, etc... (UC1)
Throughout the study, all Cambodians at University C shared the common view that their institution had a strong internationalization policy, thereby approaching their international collaborative activities with clear strategies, such as using English as the medium of instruction and hiring faculty from around the globe. Hence, it was common that various aspects of academic rationale emerged during these interviews, including those related to international image and reputation. It should be noted that, throughout the study, many Cambodians did mention international image and reputation as one of the benefits of international collaborative programs. For instance, as UB4 pointed out, “… before they [the foreign partners] did not really know our students; however, after we had sent our students to Korea, they knew our school and wanted to have more collaboration with us...”.

During the interviews, either explicitly or implicitly, Cambodian participants at the three universities commonly discussed the academic rationale, alongside the poor condition of Cambodia higher education, especially the great scarcity of both human and financial resources:

We lack almost everything. Even though we have private programs to support the salary of our staff, we do not have money to buy modern equipment for our teaching and research. We need to seek support from our foreign partners. And when they give us money, we still need their technical assistance. Most of our faculty are young and have limited research experience... (UA3)

While the above issues of the lack of human and financial resources were widely discussed throughout the system, officials at the national level tended to be more concerned with the development of research and graduate education:

At present, only 7% of Cambodian academicians hold a Ph.D. This is relatively low, in comparison to the neighboring countries: 15% in Vietnam, 25% in Burma and 30% in Thailand. Hence, university collaboration will help local universities to improve their research and also to run their Ph.D. programs. (O1)

Our research is still at the infancy stage, far behind that in other countries. We are still learning to walk, so we encourage local universities to collaborate with foreign ones so that they can build their research capacities. (O4)

There is little doubt that research and graduate education tend to be expensive and need a lot of human resources to build, so foreign support, in any form, is indispensable.
Economic rationale.

Albeit less commonly mentioned, three aspects of an economic rationale emerged in this study, the first of which was related to the creation of a skilled labor force for Cambodia to compete locally and regionally. The following comments were made by two officials, one at the institutional level and the other at the national level:

Now we live in an era of globalization and ASEAN Economic Integration is coming [in 2015]. There will be a flow of labor and economy in the region. As higher education institutions, we have to do something to make our students competent. We need to participate in international activities, either sending our students and faculty abroad or inviting guest speakers to come here… (UC2)

We have to be ready for ASEAN Economic Integration [in 2015]. Our graduates will have a chance to go and find a job in other countries in the region. Hence, I encourage local universities to increase their international activities in any form and our government should support the process. (O3)

Throughout the study, only these two explicitly talked about how international activities lead to the development of a competent workforce, necessary for Cambodia to participate in the region and the world. However, it is important to recognize that this aspect of the economic rationale tended to be implicit, and in most cases, built upon the academic rationale. For instance, it was quite common to hear participants stating that building human resources would help improve the development of Cambodian society. Also, several participants expressed their concern about the lack of a capable workforce to participate in the ASEAN economic integration. One of them made the following comment:

We are not ready to participate in it [ASEAN economic integration] – the flow of labor means everyone can come to our country to work and we can go there. However, our labor is not qualified to compete in the job market in ASEAN, so there will be more [skilled workers] coming than going. They are better off than us… (O5)

Hence, in many ways, the development of a skilled labor force has already been among the key concerns for Cambodian policy-makers, suggesting improving the quality of Cambodian education, through international collaboration, could lead to economic growth and competitiveness.

The second economic-related rationale was concerning with earning income from both local and international students. Interestingly, this aspect was not necessarily related to international university partnerships per se, but was seen to be built on the academic aspects of
an institutional profile and image as well as international standards of education, as expressed in
the following statement:

    Because of our good image and quality, we are able to attract students from many
countries, including those in the ASEAN region, as well as Korea, Japan, and even
Australia. They all come here as fee-paying students. This is very important for us,
because we are a private institution, and we need to earn income to support ourselves…
We use English and our tuition fees are also relatively low, compared to other countries
in the region. These are our competitive edges to attract both local and international
students… (UC1)

While UC1 was the only person that pointed out this aspect of an economic rationale throughout
the study, other participants at University C also claimed that there were international students
who came to study in various programs at their institution as fee-paying students. At University
B, however, only one participant mentioned that there was a small portion of international
students, who usually came to study the Khmer language there (UB1). No one at University A
ever discussed anything about international students during the study. Hence, there is little doubt
that, due to the poor condition of Cambodian higher education in general, it is still difficult for
Cambodian universities to attract international students to increase their income. However, it is
important to highlight that tuition fees, especially from local students, have become the major
source of income for both public and private universities in Cambodia.

    The last aspect of an economic rationale was concerned with the connection between
industry and higher education provision and research. An official at University A explained this
trend, as follows:

    Right now, we are working on a major policy to increase our activities with factories,
especially applied research, so that the development of higher education and industry can
go hand-in-hand… Many of these projects are under JICA’s support. (UA2)

In reflecting upon university partnerships within the context of a university-industry rationale,
one needs to remember that, due to limited resources, the idea of producing research and
innovation, more specifically applied research for the economy, is still beyond the capacity, if
not the thought and planning, of the majority of Cambodian universities. Hence, throughout the
study, even at University A – the major engineering university in Cambodia where applied
research in the field of engineering has recently been increased – only the above participant
pointed out the connection of research and innovation to the development of the local economy,
as a rationale for international university partnerships. Interestingly, many participants there did
mention the benefits of international programs for research and innovation – an aspect to be
further elaborated upon in the next chapter. Overall, unlike the academic rationale, which was discussed widely by both faculty and officials at the institutional and ministry levels, the economic rationale was mainly expressed by several policy-makers.

**Socio-cultural rationale.**

In this study, several participants at the university level saw international activities, including international university partnerships, as a means to develop Cambodian students’ international and intercultural competence:

In this age of globalization, our students need to broaden their understanding of the world. We have exchange programs to send our students abroad for a short time and to welcome foreign students here. (UC2)

… We have a strong internationalization policy. We try to learn from the US, which is a cosmopolitan society. We want our institution to be a melting pot, like the California State System. Therefore, we have many foreign partners, employ many faculty from everywhere and admit many international students… (UC1)

In addition, two participants specifically talked about how important international activities were to bringing in a new culture of learning to Cambodia:

I think we need to have more collaboration and opportunities to send our students and faculty abroad so that they can expand our learning and teaching experience. Our students can also change their study habits, from rote learning to being critical. (UB16)

… The concept or culture of “doing research” is relatively new in our society. We rarely discuss or consult with academicians when we encounter problems in everyday life. Instead, most of us, including high-ranking people, normally go to fortune-tellers to seek their advice… Therefore, we need to send the younger generation abroad so that they can be exposed to new ways of learning and seeing the outside world. They will bring back new thinking to help develop Cambodia and its higher education… (O3)

Overall, like the economic rationale, not many participants directly talked about the socio-cultural rationale as a motivation for joining international university partnerships. However, it was quite common to hear about the benefits of international university partnerships with regard to socio-cultural aspects. Plus, the above socio-cultural rationale could also be interpreted as an academic one since it referred to student learning process and mental development.
Political rationale.

No one in this study directly mentioned any aspects of a politically motivated rationale for Cambodian universities to participate in international collaborative programs. However, it is important to highlight that two lecturers at University C talked about how Cambodia could contribute to building the world’s peace and prosperity, especially through Buddhist teaching. One of them reflected upon this approach through his exchange experience at Troy University:

Our education here focuses on morality, and we want to share with the world our approach toward world peace through Buddhist practice, which is built from within ourselves first. This is different from Western countries, including the US, where peace is built through bringing people from around the world together… During my exchange, I was invited to several classes to give lectures about Buddhism… (UC6)

Throughout the study, this was the only view connected with the political aspect of international university activities, raised by two lecturers in Buddhism at University C. Hence, it was not surprising that this aspect of Buddhism was not discussed at the other two universities. However, what is important to highlight is that this participant’s comment is well consistent with the vision and philosophy of University C:

[University C] envisions a world at peace, where non-violent means are used to resolve conflicts beginning with individuals, societies, governments, and extending to the community of world leaders in the context of international relations. (University C’s website)

… [University C] strives to deliver quality education that is attainable by, and responsive to the needs of the people of Cambodia and that of the global community. We place special emphasis on quality research based education, studies of peace, conflict resolution, development, moral and ethical conducts as well as social responsibility. (University C’s Website)

Such a Buddhist-related aspect, however, was not really found in any mission or philosophy of the other two participating universities. Therefore, it can be concluded that although not commonly expressed by the majority of participants, Cambodia’s contribution toward peace building through international programs could be seen as a political rationale especially at University C. Since Theravada Buddhism is Cambodia’s institutional religion, spreading its key concepts and philosophy, apparently, means bringing Cambodian cultural values and ideologies to bear in a way that has influence at the international level. In this regard, the motivation for sharing the Buddhist approach of building peace and mutual understanding through international university activities can also be viewed as a social-cultural rationale.
Overall, the academic rationale was the key motivation or prime goal for all the three Cambodian universities to participate in international academic partnerships with foreign universities, including those in the four case study countries. Apparently, the dominance of this rationale was mainly due to the fact that data were drawn mainly from people at the institutional level, which is the major focus of the study. Other rationales were also expressed, but mostly only by participants at University C and several other government actors. As the study revealed, however, the four rationales are not mutually exclusive, but related to each other, in one way or another. This means each rationale is not an end in itself.

Analysis

To end this chapter, I now examine two key themes emerging from the discussions on the rationales for international university partnerships in contemporary Cambodian higher education. They include: (1) the lack of an internationalization policy at both the national and institutional levels, and (2) the “open approach” to international university partnerships – a concept which is tied to the Buddhist notion of the middle path.

**Lack of internationalization policy at both the national and institutional levels.**

First of all, throughout the study, only participants at University C expressed various types of rationale, explicitly stating that internationalization activities were at the core of the university’s mission. Those at the other two public institutions talked mainly about the academic rationale and, in fact, seemed to confuse rationales with benefits, especially when first asked about the former concept. My argument here is that their confusion was mainly due to the lack of policy planning at both public universities, especially in relation to internationalization, rather than because of their lack of involvement in internationalization activities themselves. In fact, all participants in this study had been involved, in one way or another, in many international projects so far. In particular, when examining the interviews in depth, including the rationale statements above, I found that it was common that many people at both Universities A and B made comparisons between Cambodian and foreign systems. Hence, international activities were not new to those participants, but rather the big issue was the lack of a clear guiding internationalization policy.
This argument about the lack of policy was well supported by almost all participants at both public universities, who plainly claimed that an internationalization policy at their respective institutions remained virtually absent:

The institute [University A] is short of policy and funding package to support collaboration with foreign universities. Everything is supported by foreign partners who come here to help us. (UA7)

Thus far, we have never done outreach to foreign partners – we wait until they come and collaborate with us. With Japan, for example, they are coming here and requesting that we join their networks. (UA9)

We do not have any clear vision and action plan for our international activities and, for the most part, we wait until they [the foreign partners] approach us. Otherwise, we would not initiate anything. (UB3)

Likewise, when asked if there was any government policy regarding international university partnerships, the majority of participants said “no”, while others responded that they were “not sure” if there was any written policy, largely because in practice they were not aware of any government policy or support program for international activities.

In reflecting upon this policy issue, I triangulated the interview findings with collected documents and found out that discussion on internationalization remains marginal on the policy agenda at the national level. The most important and recent policy document was the Policy on Research Development in the Education Sector (MoEYS, 2010), promulgated in 2010, with only two of its strategies somewhat suggesting the need for Cambodian universities to enter into international partnerships with foreign universities:

Strategy 3: Cooperative Research:

- Foster cooperation between research institutions, both private and public, and national and international researchers (p. 3)

Strategy 6: International Cooperation:

- Provide opportunities for Cambodian and international researchers to work together.
- Encourage national and international cooperation through exchanging research results and expertise.
- Promote cooperation among research institutions and universities. (p. 3)

However, these aspects were not elaborated and therefore not well translated to the institutional level. This was reflected by the fact that throughout the interviews, the majority of faculty and administrative staff at the three universities were unaware of any national policy regarding
international university partnerships, or internationalization in broader terms. This speaks back to the issue of the lack of various forms of rationale for university partnerships, especially at Universities A and B, and by extension, within the public higher education sector. Therefore, within the context of the lack of national policy and financial support, each institution tended to approach internationalization in ways that reflected its own resources, experience and realities. This was different from University C, where all participants claimed that their institution had a clear strategic internationalization policy.

The issue of the lack of policy in the public sector, as represented by Universities A and B, offers deep insights into the emergence of a new wave of foreign educated Cambodians and the key role they play in the development of contemporary Cambodian higher education. To restate what I have just pointed out, all participants at University C well understood the concept of internationalization throughout the interviews and asserted that they had been encouraged, with support, to get engaged in various international activities. Those participants viewed the Western-educated founder and senior administrators of the university as the key actors in developing this policy:

Dr. Kem Dara [the founder of the university] was educated in the US and has a clear vision and strong commitment regarding the development of our university… He is open to new ideas and always gives chances to educated Cambodians… (UC1)

The above statement was clearly consistent with the fact that the university had adopted an American-style curriculum, used English as the medium of instruction and hired faculty from around the world.

By comparison, the management system at Universities A and B remained relatively bureaucratic, without clear strategic thinking or a guiding policy regarding international activities. As many participants indicated, one of the reasons for this was that many senior administrators and professors were educated in the 1980s and had limited international experience:

…. The older generation is still in the majority in my department. They are a major hindrance and it is very difficult to do international activities, because they do not see their importance. We have to wait until they retire, probably in 10 years or more… (UB1)

Usually, the school has no money to contribute to any international activities – all foreign professors and our international activities (conferences, seminars, etc.) are supported by foreign donors, including JICA, AUF, etc. Here, even if we have a paper and topic for presentation and publication, we have to think first whether we have enough money to pay for ourselves or if there is any foreign sponsor. Our school never gives us any
financial support. I have never received any support from the school for conferences or other international activities. People here, especially those in the administration, still do not see the value of international activities. (UA7)

In this regard, a foreign participant at University B used the term “old educators” when differentiating them from the younger generation (UB20). In fact, a Cambodian participant who had been a faculty member at University B and was working at another organization in Cambodia at the time of this study stated that international activities at University B had been mainly facilitated and supported by foreign scholars, with Cambodian senior administrators not very active, especially in terms of developing strategies or finding any sources of support:

At [University B], it is an organization represented by Sister Mary that always helps facilitate international activities. Without her support, most of the assistance would have gone somewhere else. Like my scholarship, she was the one who explored funding. We are too much dependent on foreign assistance. We need to be more independent. All institutions in Cambodia in general have to initiate and build their own center of internationalization, with changing mindsets… At [University B], what would happen when her organization stops helping us? They are not here forever. (O5)

Hence, the lack of institutional internationalization policy at public universities can be seen to be attributable to the poor leadership of “old educators”. Several participants at University C strongly agreed with the statement by O5, with one of them even claiming that “people in the public sector do not really know how to use resources even if they own them” (O1).

Adding to the issue of the lack of policy was the politicized nature of the public sector – a common problem within the whole public system, not just at Universities A and B. As pointed by O3:

… Many university rectors or presidents are too political, not scholars... Some who do not have much academic experience are not receptive to new or different ideas. They cannot plan the academic system for people under them… Even worse, they are the ones who usually communicate with the Ministry of Education, so this creates issues for the whole system. And in Cambodia, if there is any political change, institutional leaders will be changed [according to the new political party], and this will affect the higher education sector.

Interestingly, this participant went on to acknowledge that, in recent years, the government had tried to replace “old political people” with more academicians at many public higher education institutions. In addition, it had begun to institutionalize “a participatory approach” when designing a new national educational policy, by inviting senior administrators from both public and private institutions to attend. In this regard, he expressed his optimism that the younger generation would play an instrumental role in changing the system for the better in the future.
To sum up, one can see that University C has a strong internationalization policy, due in large part to the role of new scholars who brought in new ideas as well as the greater autonomy it has enjoyed as a private institution, relative to the other two universities. However, this should not lead to the conclusion that the private sector has more internationalization activities than the public one. As indicated in Chapter Five, University C is relatively unique in the Cambodian context. For instance, it is among the few universities which have well adopted and implemented the American model of higher education, with English as the medium of instruction. A large number of its academic and administrative staff are also educated Cambodians.

“Open approach” to international university partnerships.

Throughout the study, it is interesting that, regardless of whether they had an internationalization policy or not, the three participating universities were very open in terms of establishing partnerships with foreign universities. The following were the commonly shared views among Cambodian participants, when asked if they had any choice of or preference for any particular countries or institutions:

... We do not discriminate against any country. The more collaborations, the better. We have accepted all who come to help us. (UA1)

… [University C] is very open. We collaborate with various universities around the world. (UC1)

There is little doubt that their “open approach” toward their international activities has been largely driven by the great scarcity of resources, which has been the central issue facing the development of Cambodian higher education so far. Plainly put, Cambodian universities remain in a relatively poor condition and, without any government support, will accept all kinds of assistance by foreign partners, especially through international development programs. However, looking beyond this economic reason, one can see that their “open approach” has been consistent, although this was not explicitly stated in the policy of each university, with the Cambodian foreign policy of neutrality – a concept which has been related to the Buddhist practice of the middle path. Indeed, as indicated earlier, University C’s mission, philosophy and curriculum have been strongly influenced by Buddhism. Hence, it could be concluded that the forms of and policies on international university partnerships in contemporary Cambodian higher education have been shaped by the Cambodian practice of the middle path. This concept
connotes that the best approach to life is to avoid taking the extreme; in this context, this would mean holding a neutral and fair view towards all countries.

A note should be added here that, while the three universities have followed an “open approach” in their international activities, there have been several factors that have influenced their decision of whether to enter into partnership agreements with institutions from particular countries. The first is related to academic differences, including curriculum, language of instruction, and even the model of higher education:

We cannot collaborate with French universities because here we use English as the medium of instruction. (UC1)

Some schools have different systems and curriculum from us… They do not use English as a medium of instruction in their programs, so it is very difficult to collaborate with them. (UC2)

Some schools want to develop twinning or joint degree programs with us. This has been a challenge because, in our country, degrees have to be signed by both the Minister of Education and our rector. This is different from a foreign system in which degrees are usually signed only by a university rector... Also, we use Khmer as the medium of instruction in most undergraduate programs, so it is very difficult to collaborate with institutions in the English-speaking countries. (UB1)

As shown in the third quotation, the poor English proficiency at the bachelor’s level at University B was one of the shortcomings that prevented the university from entering into international collaborative programs.

The above statements not only reveal the barriers created by the different forms of higher education programs, but also the different socio-cultural norms in which higher education from different societies operate. In particular, while higher education institutions in most Western societies have a strong tradition of institutional autonomy, Cambodian universities are still centralized in many respects, one of which is that higher education degrees have to be officially signed both by the Minister in charge and by a university’s rector. Even within a university, a partnership agreement or MOU of any kind with foreign partners has to be signed by the university’s rector. This centralized system has created issues concerning the establishment of international collaborative projects. For instance, any change to cope with foreign programs, or even to accommodate new courses, would be challenging. As UB1 complained, “It takes some time for any academic program to be reorganized and modified. Even restructuring the elective and core courses within our university would have to go through the Ministry of Education and also the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia [ACC]”. In relation to this, O3, who had been
involved in the development of policy in Cambodian higher education for many years, was strongly against such a centralized practice within the academic sector. He even used the term “bad culture” to describe some forms of unnecessary involvement of senior government officials in the internal affairs of the university: “The Prime Minister or other high-ranking officials are always present during the graduation ceremony at all universities or at the school level, public and private alike. It really is a ‘bad culture’ and politicians should not be related to academics in such a way” (O3). Obviously, this common practice suggests the acceptance of the inherently hierarchical socio-cultural system of the society, in which power has been centered at the top.

Another factor which has hindered the establishment of partnerships between Cambodian and foreign universities is the quality gap between the two parties. This issue is not a key concern for programs in social sciences, but a big challenge for engineering programs. As one faculty member at University A explained:

We do not have any formal agreement with my school in Japan, but I am now working on it with my supervisor. I have already requested it of my professor so that he can seek approval from his school. It is difficult to sign MOUs with well-known universities, like Tokyo University. Our quality is far behind them. (UA6)

Hence, due to this challenge, many partnerships, especially within the public sector, have taken place at the personal/departmental level, rather than with any official institutional MOU or agreement.

Third, Cambodia’s foreign policy itself has also impacted institutional decisions on whether or not to collaborate with any particular country. For instance, UC2 mentioned that:

The government, through the Ministry of Education, makes clear its strong support for the One China policy, so we have few relationships with Taiwanese universities. Each Cambodian university is required to report their partnership activities to the Ministry of Education on a regular basis.

Except for this case, however, he was satisfied that there has been little government involvement in the international affairs at his university. In sum, Cambodia’s foreign policy is open to all countries. One should be reminded that the decline of French support at Universities A and B was due to the changes in French international assistance, as well as the international trend toward the Anglophone model of higher education, rather than Cambodian universities’ discriminating policy.
Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the broad context surrounding the development of international programs between Cambodian universities and their partners in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. The first part of the chapter was devoted to an overview of the forms of those university partnerships. In the second part, I have explored the rationales for Cambodian universities to enter into international collaborative activities with their foreign counterparts. With much data drawn from participants at the institutional level, it was common that the academic rationale stood out as the key motivation for Cambodian universities to enter into international activities with foreign universities. Against the backdrop of this rationale, I have ended this chapter by discussing two key themes, the lack of an explicit internationalization policy in Cambodian higher education and the “open approach” toward international collaboration – an idea which is related to the Buddhist practice of the “middle path”. Overall, the purpose of this chapter was to set the background context for the following chapter on mutuality.
Chapter Seven: Degree of Mutuality

The preceding chapter has explored various forms of and rationales for international university partnership programs between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. One of the key findings was that the development of those international programs had taken place within the context of the lack of a developed policy on internationalization at either national or institutional level, especially in the public sector, as well as of insufficient human and financial resources. Most programs at the three Cambodian universities were mainly supported by foreign universities, governments and other development aid agencies, most notably the AUF and JICA. Cambodian universities could make only in-kind contributions to partnerships. Against this backdrop, this chapter will examine the issues of mutuality in those international university partnerships. In particular, it seeks to answer the question of how far Cambodia’s international university programs with the four case study countries are characterized by mutuality. The comparative analysis of the four cases will be made along the lines of the four aspects of mutuality (Figure 7.1): equity, autonomy, solidarity and participation (Galtung, 1975, 1980; Held, 2003, 2010). I will end this chapter by reflecting critically on the mutuality findings, based on the Cambodian socio-cultural context. Specifically, I intend to see how the Cambodian conceptions of power are constructed, and the extent to which these conceptions have influenced and shaped Cambodian universities’ relationships with their counterparts in the four case study countries.

Data in this chapter were drawn primarily from interviews with Cambodian participants at the three universities in this study. Additionally, I supplemented the analysis with sources from the websites of the three universities and other relevant organizations, whenever appropriate. It is important to restate that the number of participants from each university was not even, with more than half from University B, a comprehensive public university. Plus, although the central focus of this study is on university-to-university relationships, the discussion will cover other forms of collaborative activities with the four case study countries.
Equity

This study found that most international programs between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, the United States and Japan manifested a strong degree of equity. As discussed in Chapter Six, all French and Japanese partnership programs at University A were built through existing personal and institutional connections under the extensive networks of the AUF and the AUN/SEED-Net. Academics from both sides already had solid and close relationships with each other before they moved to establish formal institutional relationships. Indeed, as Cambodian participants explained, such university collaborative activities, listed in the MOUs as exchange programs, joint research projects, or graduate scholarships, had already been operational with the financial support from the AUF and JICA. In this regard, it was apparent that Cambodian and foreign academics were well aware of the aim and modalities of institutional partnerships. Hence, when asked if there was any conditionality imposed or requirement set by their foreign partner universities within these two networks, the common answer from all Cambodians was “no”.

The degree of equity was also strong in Japanese and American collaborative programs at Universities B and C, in which existing professional and personal connections between
Cambodian and foreign academics, especially at the department or faculty level, were the major starting point. This means in general, participants from both sides had been engaged in each collaborative program from the very beginning and therefore, were well aware of the purpose of and what to expect from the partnerships. Two officials at University B made the following the comments:

Our relationships with Nagoya and other Japanese universities were built by our faculty [including the participant himself] who had been to Japan for their graduate studies. Usually, upon their return, they still maintained their relationships with their former supervisors or professors there, through joint research and other collaborative activities. Institutional partnerships were created later… Well, we know what we want to do and what we want to get from the partnership. (UB3)

I had a good personal connection with a professor (and also his family) from Chiba University (Japan)... And with regard to the collaboration, he first told me he wanted to help the handicapped people in Cambodia, but I explained to him about the situation in Cambodia and could turn his interest to come and help with programs here at [University B]. He then agreed and we signed an MOU. His university helped provide us with some facilities, supported joint research projects, and offered some scholarships for our students at the graduate level… (UB1)

Similarly, a faculty member at University C, who was also a civil servant at a government ministry, explained that, “I have connected [University C] with many partners in South Korea, China and also in the US, through the relationships established under the projects in which I worked with them at the [Ministry of A]” (UC3). Interestingly, he further noted another approach with which he could also draw more partnerships to University C, especially in circumstances whereby there were no prior connections:

... For other programs, I start with personal connections – I meet them [foreign professors or researchers] at conferences, workshops, or training, and we then share business cards. I invite them for lunch, we chit chat to get to know each other more and see if we have some shared interests. Then, I ask if they are interested in working with [University C]. I later report and discuss with our president about the partnership we could have. They [the foreign faculty or researchers] have to talk to their university too. After that, if both parties agree, we sign the MOU and implement the project… (UC3)

All the above statements (UB3, UB1 and UC3) suggest two means by which partnerships were created. One was that Cambodia’s collaborative programs with their American and Japanese counterparts at Universities B and C adopted a bottom-up approach, in which those at the grassroots level were actively involved in the partnership programs from the very beginning to learn about each other. The other was the finding of the common interests of each partner when they initially met, despite their lack of prior knowledge of each other. However, the second
instance was more common at University C, due to its comparatively strong internationalization policy, relative to Universities A and B. Overall, these two means suggest that both Cambodian and foreign sides paid considerable attention to learning about each other and knew what they would expect from the partnerships during the planning phase.

In fact, many Cambodians pointed out that the American and Japanese sides stressed, as part of their main priority, that the aim and modalities of their university partnerships should respond to the needs of Cambodian society. For instance, all five Cambodian faculty in the social work program interviewed claimed, with high respect, that Professor Susan – the American professor who had been very active in supporting the program – had conducted several surveys, with University B and also by herself, to find out what the real needs of Cambodian society were regarding the establishment of the new program of social work, during the planning stage.

Participant UB2 made a similar comment:

Before we ran the program, we organized a workshop with our foreign partner, and we invited participants from various stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations in Cambodia. We did a survey to find out what were the local needs from the programs. Their inputs were very important for us to develop the curriculum of the social work program.

Hence, in general, like Cambodians in French and Japanese collaborative programs at University A, those involved in Japanese and American programs across Universities B and C did not mention any major conditions set by foreign partners, especially when the programs were initiated and planned. The general conclusion that can be drawn is that the aim and modalities of Cambodian partnerships with universities in the three case study countries were mutually reached.

Nonetheless, looking beyond university-to-university relationships, many Cambodians at University A pointed out one major condition strongly attached to the AUF’s assistance – the use of the French language as the medium of instruction. One faculty member made the following observation:

AUF is very tough with the French language. It is an organization that supports the use of the language, so all AUF-funded projects have to be in French. Other projects supported by the French government are very flexible, not that strict. For example, missionaries and projects through Ambassade de France can also use English. (UA4)

Interestingly, he went on to make a straightforward comment that JICA barely set any conditions, including language, in all its collaborative activities with the university – a point that was commonly agreed upon by all Cambodian participants there.
Despite such a difference in the language requirement, all participants at University A acknowledged that all programs by both the AUF and JICA responded well to the needs of the university and of the society at large. For instance, UA1 commented that, “France came to help us when all assistance from the Soviet Union was completely cut off in 1989”. In fact, the foreign official at the MoEYS claimed that France came to support University A as well as other Cambodian public universities, as a response to the request then made by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Likewise, it was University A that requested JICA to help three departments (Geo-Resources and Geotechnical Engineering, Electrical and Energy Engineering, and Industrial and Mechanical Engineering), when the latter approached the former to participate in the AUN/SEED-Net program. In this regard, examining beyond the university level, equity also existed within JICA-supported programs, whereas the aim and modality of the AUF programs tended to be impacted by the attached language requirement. At this point, it is important to recognize that AUF represents the organization of French-speaking countries at large, rather than France per se, although much of its assistance to Cambodian universities has been the result of bilateral relations between France and Cambodia. In fact, the statement made by UA4 clearly indicated that such programs as the Ambassade de France have been very flexible, with English used whenever appropriate and needed. Therefore, it may be going too far to generalize that there was a language conditionality in all programs assisted by the French government.

Compared with educational collaborative programs with these three countries, many South Korean programs at University B manifested a relatively limited degree of equity. As pointed out in Chapter Six, various types of South Korean universities had, in recent years, approached Cambodian universities for partnerships, with both sides having no prior connections with each other. According to many Cambodians, this became an issue because those Korean universities usually came with their own agenda and approaches to collaboration, which University B was not fully aware of when signing an agreement. There were two equity-related issues commonly mentioned by Cambodian participants, the first of which was related to the mismatch of the collaborative programs between the two sides. As Participant UB4 explained,

Those senior administrators involved in the signing of the MOUs did not really know Korean universities, many of which are religious universities. They accepted most of them, but we are the one who need to deal with those universities later, not them [the senior administrators].
This participant went on to claim that people at the top did not care much about the quality or the type of school when they signed an MOU. Plus, they rarely looked at or checked the details of the partnerships; for instance, “many MOUs just say ‘cultural exchange’, without any elaboration of the expected activities” and “… my graduate scholarship was listed under ‘exchange programs’ and I don’t know why” (UB4). Her complaint about senior administrators’ lack of detailed knowledge of Korean partners was shared by several of the Cambodians interviewed who were involved in Korean programs. In fact, this issue was consistent with the critical comment made by a foreign faculty member who had worked at the university for years:

… Since I am a native speaker, the university normally asks me to help check with the language whenever there is an MOU or agreement with foreign universities. One clear thing is to make sure that there is no obligation for the university to pay anything… (UB20)

Hence, it can be concluded that senior administrators, especially those involved in the MOUs, paid little attention to the intricacies of their foreign partners as well as to their intention, other than what was written on paper, including the financial responsibility. Many MOUs tended to list all collaborative activities in a very broad sense, without such agendas as religion explicitly stated. As a consequence, a number of issues arose, including partnerships with poor quality universities, or religious institutions with different programs or courses. To quote from UB4:

I experienced this myself when I went to Korea for an exchange program in 2004. It was a religious school, so they did not have many good subjects for me to choose. They even tried to persuade us to believe in their religion. Sometimes, they tried to catch me early in the morning in front of my dorm. It was really annoying.

This participant further emphasized that the mismatch of programs between the two sides “had a negative impact on student learning, especially in relation to courses to be transferred when the students were back” (UB4). In fact, this equity-related issue also reflects the lack of participation of faculty and staff at the grassroots level on the Cambodian side when the MOUs were initiated and signed – the issue to be further discussed later with the participation aspect of mutuality.

The other equity-related issue commonly pointed out by participants during this study was concerned with the development of the Master’s program in social work at University B. As mentioned in Chapter Six, this program was run by the Korean side, separately from the bachelor’s program. All Korean faculty usually flew in to teach for a certain period of time, and often communicated with their Cambodian students through email and Skype. All Cambodians
in the bachelor’s program, who strongly opposed the establishment of this joint partnership with the Korean side from the time of the planning stage, expressed their concern that the lack of participation from the Cambodian side would not only affect the quality of education, but also could affect the sustainability of the program. This is not to mention the different models of social work programs within one single department: the American-supported bachelor’s program and the Korean-supported Master’s program. When asked about these two programs, one participant in the bachelor’s program made an interesting comment about the lack of what she called the “empowerment model” in the Master’s program, in comparison to the American one:

    Our American partners help us by empowering us. They are our mentors, but treat us like colleagues, not students. So we are the ones who make all the decisions from the beginning. This is really the approach of social workers. We work on the social justice process, which is to empower the local or indigenous people. So, if foreigners fly here to teach us, it would be called domination... (UB13)

Other faculty in the bachelor’s program voiced their similar concerns over the dominance of the Korean side in the Master’s program, claiming that their international university’s approach to social work activities was ironically contradictory to the theories or approaches of social work – that is, “local empowerment”.

    Participant UB2, who was among those who strongly supported and had been involved in managing the master’s program on the Cambodian side, argued that, “They came here to help us, so if we did not accept it, then we would lose our chance. They would have gone somewhere else…” His statement, while undoubtedly indicating Korea’s generous assistance for Cambodia, showed at the same time that the Cambodian side seemed to have limited bargaining power to negotiate when the program was initiated. In this case, one could see that the aim and the modality of the Korean joint Master’s program with University B were not fully agreed upon by all Cambodian participants. Put another way, knowing that its Cambodian counterpart needed foreign support, the Korean side seemed to impose its own model of collaboration. Apparently, it had been well aware that the bachelor’s program already existed, and it seem evident that creating the master’s program without the participation of those in the bachelor’s program would definitely create issues in the department.

    Interestingly, during his interview, participant UB2 himself admitted that he had to deal with people in the bachelor’s program who had strongly opposed the establishment of the master’s program from the very beginning. He also acknowledged that the program being managed and taught solely by the Korean side would somehow affect its quality. However, he
was optimistic that everything could be improved later, claiming that he had done his best to make sure that the program could respond to the needs of Cambodian society. For instance, he pointed out that during the planning stage, the university did hold a workshop to bring all relevant stakeholders to provide input to the development of the master’s program before it was opened. His view, although not clearly expressed during his interview, was consistent with what was elaborated upon on the university’s website:

In January 2009, EWU supported [University B] in conducting a workshop to gather all local and international stakeholders’ comments on the drafted Master’s program of Social Work curriculum at [University B]. Attending the workshop were 60 participants from various NGOs and government agencies working in the field of social work and social welfare in Cambodia. Reflecting comments from the stakeholders, the curriculum was finalized. (University B’s website)

In this respect, while the aim and the form of the program might not be fully agreed upon, on the Cambodian side, it was obvious that the program was intended to meet the realities of Cambodian society. A note should be added here that Cambodian senior administrators at the university also shared the blame for creating the issue of having two different models within one program, since they made the decision to move forward to form partnerships with the Korean side despite strong opposition from all the faculty in the bachelor’s program. As part of their decision, they should not have played down the fact that the partnership with the University of Washington had in its strategic plan the establishment of a master’s program of social work in its phase III, as pointed out in Chapter Six.

At University C, however, no one complained about any issue related to the aims and modalities of partnership programs with Korean universities. This could be explained by the fact that the university, with its strong internationalization policy and experience, had been able to deal with foreign universities in a much better way than other Cambodian higher education institutions. The lack of discussion on equity-related issues at the university might also be partly because there were almost four times fewer South Korean programs at University C than at University B. This was not to mention the fact that some partnerships were not active at the time of the study.

Overall, the study shows that, in most cases, Cambodian partnerships with France, Japan and the US have manifested a strong degree of equity. This is mainly attributable to the fact that most of them took a bottom-up approach, meaning the Cambodian side, especially those who took part in the collaboration, knew the overall agenda of their foreign counterparts, whether
explicitly or implicitly stated in the agreements. By comparison, most South Korean-Cambodian university partnerships took a more top-down approach, meaning the relationships began with formal MOUs, followed by people at the faculty/department level. This created equity-related issues because Cambodian participants, whose knowledge of their foreign partners was limited, were oftentimes unaware of the intention or the nature of the collaborative programs, other than what was written on paper.

While the degree of equity varied among all programs with the four case study countries, all Cambodian participants, in general, acknowledged that those international university partnerships offered the Cambodian side a wealth of benefits, ranging from developing new knowledge and skills and improving research capacity, to building new programs. For instance, the social work program at RUPP was the first degree-granting program in this field in Cambodia. This was also the case for Community Service Learning at University C. Many engineering programs at University A have also needed foreign assistance to enhance their quality.

**Autonomy**

This study revealed that, for the most part, there was a strong degree of autonomy in Cambodian university partnerships with France, Japan and the US, suggesting that foreign participants showed respect for and were willing to learn about Cambodian culture. As indicated earlier, most programs with the three countries developed out of prior relationships at the individual/faculty level. Interestingly, almost all foreign scholars from these three countries who had directly been engaged in such collaboration activities were those with research interests related to Cambodia. They had been to the country numerous times, so they understood the local context and culture very well. For instance, Professor Susan who had supported the establishment of the social work programs at University B had many research projects related to Cambodia and her passion for and interest in helping the country had developed over the years. Many Cambodians also pointed out that some American and Japanese professors whom they had been working with in joint research projects helped teach at their respective universities, whenever they visited Cambodia for their fieldwork. Hence, one could see that the long period of time foreign scholars spent in Cambodia helped deepen their research interest in and understanding of the country and culture – the key aspect leading to the high degree of autonomy
in the projects supported by France, the US and Japan. It should be noted, however, that while many participants at University A claimed that their relationships with French professors and universities had been long and deep, not many French professors and researchers had come to Cambodia in recent years, due to the decline of support from the AUF and the Ambassade de France programs.

Cambodian participants who had been to any of the three countries for exchange or for their graduate studies similarly claimed that, during their stay in the host country, foreign academics always appreciated their differences in terms of cultural values and knowledge and also offered support to help bridge any gap these differences may have caused. For instance, in relation to experience in France, one participant made the following comment:

Even though I have a strong background within the French system at University A, I still faced a number of challenges when pursuing my graduate studies in France, including language, culture and courses which were new to me. Nonetheless, all of my professors were very helpful and supportive. I could approach them any time … (UA3)

Likewise, participant UB14 at University B, who was a Francophone student at the university and later went to France with the support from the Ambassade de France program, asserted that, “Most of my French professors knew Cambodia and its culture very well. They have strong networks with other Cambodian universities through the AUF”. Obviously, this statement reflects the point that long-term relationships built through the extensive network of the AUF were key to mutual cultural understanding between academics from both sides.

Those who went to the US for their graduate education also expressed similar sentiments about the support they received at American universities:

Our way of learning is different from the US system. We were taught to listen to our teachers, rather than researching and exploring. [However] in the US, we have to read a lot, to speak in the class, and to be critical when speaking or writing something. The University of Washington was very supportive and also helped us to adapt to the new academic environment there. (UB13)

Other Cambodians at Universities B and C appreciated the emphasis on inter-cultural learning within the US academic system. Interestingly, a lecturer of Buddhism at University C made an observation, based on his six-month exchange experience (as a visiting scholar) at Troy University, that American universities enrich and expand their cultural understanding by bringing different groups of people onto their campuses (UC6’s quotation in Chapter Six). The other monk participating in this study, who was also a lecturer at University C and the second to be sent to the US through the same program, shared a similar view to his colleague, adding that
the partnership between University C and Troy University was, in fact, driven by the latter’s strong interest in learning about Cambodian culture, especially Buddhism:

The president of Troy University had personal connections with our staff, and when he came here to visit [University C], he saw monks and thus became interested in learning more about Buddhism and Cambodian culture. He told our chancellor that Troy University is internationalized and wanted to bring monks there through exchange programs. (UC7)

During their time at Troy University, the two Cambodian lecturers in Buddhism had been invited to several classes to give lectures about Buddhism, its philosophy and its role in Cambodia as well as in Southeast Asia. Even off-campus, they both felt respected by others, with one of them noting that,

That is a Christian society, so I looked weird and people kept asking me who I was, whenever I met them. I told them I am a Buddhist monk and they became more curious about our culture and Buddhism… People there are very open to learning about us and others… (UC7)

Likewise, those Cambodians who went to Japan for their graduate studies claimed that they received strong support from their Japanese professors, with one of them making a short comment that, “Japanese culture is different from ours, but I found the academic environment conducive to learning and my relationships with all my professors were smooth. We used English to communicate, so everything was fine” (UA8). However, similar to many other Cambodians who had been to Japan, he claimed that outside the academic community, it would be helpful if international students could speak Japanese, because Japanese people in general do not speak English. Overall, no one really pointed out any major issues with regard to cultural conflict or dominance in their relationships with these three case study countries.

A note should be added here that the exchange programs with these three countries usually lasted around two weeks, with the longest ones up to a month, so in general, it would be quite challenging for students from each side to develop a deep understanding of each other’s cultural values. Plus, it was a lot more common that foreign students were able to afford to come and learn about Cambodia and its culture, than the other way around, due to the lack of financial support from the Cambodian side. The other important note to make is that, compared to Universities A and B, University C had a Homestay program to help accommodate foreign students during their exchange period in Cambodia. According to several participants, its purpose was to help them learn about Cambodian culture and language.
Compared to programs with the other three countries, the degree of autonomy in Cambodian-Korean university partnerships tended to be quite limited. First, a number of Cambodians who had been to Korea for their graduate studies complained that there was limited room for inter-cultural development in the host country, with relatively few Koreans willing to learn about foreign cultures, especially those from the developing world. To quote from one of the Cambodian faculty who went to Korea for his Master’s degree,

I feel that, in Korea, the environment forced us to adapt to the local culture, either when you worked in the lab or when you hung out with them. You felt the pressure to follow them… I had also been to Europe for one year as an exchange student, but I felt the culture there was very open, which was different from in Korea… (UA10)

Another faculty member at University B made a similar comment, saying that, “Korean culture is different from ours. It is a bit difficult to understand them, because what they do and what they say are usually different. They also saw themselves as superior, so they did not often listen to others…” (UB11). At the same time, however, he went on to acknowledge that, “… my Korean professors were very helpful. Whenever I experienced problems, I could approach them…” (UB11). It should be noted that, in general, those Cambodians who shared the view that the academic environment in Korea was less receptive to foreign cultures, norms and ideologies were those who had limited exposure to Korean culture and language before they went to South Korea.

Interestingly, two Cambodian faculty members at University B, who had strong backgrounds in Korean language and culture, seemed to have experienced relatively few cultural issues. As one of them talked about his exchange experience in his last year of the undergraduate Korean language program, “I graduated from Korea and I did not have any problem with culture. I understand Korean culture very well. I think we are Asians so it is easier for us to understand each other’s culture” (UB8). Apparently, his major was Korean language studies, meaning he had already been well exposed to Korean culture and values before going to Korea. Similarly, UB4, who had been to South Korea several times both as an exchange student and later a graduate student, mentioned that after working with South Koreans for quite some time, culture and language were no longer an issue for her.

Indeed, the above comment also indirectly suggests that limited knowledge of the Korean language could be the key barrier to interacting with Korean people – a point which tended to be reinforced by comments made by Cambodians in programs other than Korean studies. As participant UB11 complained, “Many Korean students are not good at English, but speak Korean
most of the time, even in the class or in the lab. And they do not really care about foreigners, especially those from the third world”. All this clearly shows that only Cambodians with good knowledge of the Korean language expressed few issues regarding a conflict of cultural values with Korean counterparts. This lack of cultural conflict seems to have a more negative, rather than positive, connotation in the sense that it was the Cambodian side that learned to adapt to Korean culture during their stay in the host country, rather than the other way around. This means that Korean-Cambodian international university collaborations manifested a limited degree of autonomy, compared to the other three countries.

It is interesting that, beyond university partnerships, the study revealed that many Koreans who had come and worked at the Korean language department at University B, especially under the financial support of KOIKA and the Korean embassy in Cambodia, were well aware of and showed great respect for the local culture:

Most Korean staff here usually went through Khmer language training for at least one month, so they learned about Cambodian culture at the same time. Now, we have one Korean lecturer from KOIKA [a two-year contract – supported by KOIKA], one from Ewha Womans University [a six-month contract – supported by KOIKA], and one from the Korean embassy [a two-year contract – supported by the Korean embassy in Phnom Penh]. We have found it easy to collaborate with them so far. (UB8)

In this regard, the significant conclusion regarding the degree of autonomy in Cambodian relationships with universities in the four case study countries is that spending longer time together is beneficial to the development of the degree of autonomy in both countries. This has been the case with many partnership programs with France, Japan and the US. Just as with equity, human connections are thus key to the establishment of autonomy in international university partnerships. By comparison, the degree of autonomy in South Korean university partnerships with Cambodian universities tended to be quite limited. However, KOIKA, with its extensive experience at the international level, has placed great emphasis on the importance of understanding the local culture and values.

**Solidarity**

Various aspects of solidarity emerged in this study, including competition among Cambodian participants, growing interconnectedness, strong support from external agencies, and knowledge dissemination.
**Strong competition.**

This study showed that in most collaborative activities with the four case study countries, there was strong competition among Cambodians, and in some cases, with foreign students at the international level as well. Plainly put, only the few brightest Cambodians were offered opportunities to go abroad, either through exchange programs or for their graduate studies:

Usually, for the AUF-supported scholarships, we go to France and Belgium. Only the top first and second students from Cambodia are allowed the opportunity to compete for this scholarship. At the regional level, we also have to compete with students from Laos, Vietnam, etc. During my time, only two students from Cambodia were selected and offered the scholarship. I was one of them. (UA5)

I went to Korea through the exchange program signed between [University B] and a Korean university. I had a good academic performance here – got top score in my program [Korean language studies]. There were exams to compete with other outstanding students here too. Also, I had to pass an interview, which was managed by our Korean department… (UB8)

I got my master’s from Indonesia through the AUN-SEED/Net – in the field of mechanical engineering… I was able to get the scholarship because at the time I was an outstanding student in my department. I pursued my PhD in Japan, directly after I finished my masters… (UA8)

While strong competition was common across the four case study countries, in several instances, as in the case of the social work program at University B, relevant experience in the field and individual strong commitment were the key selection criteria for scholarships. As participant UB5 mentioned,

I was the first to get the scholarship in 2006, two years after the MOU between the two universities was signed. Professor Susan was the one who managed the scholarship recruitment, which was through her networks in Cambodia. She looked at my experience, my English proficiency…

The other four Cambodian faculty members in this program expressed similar views about these selection criteria, indicating that there was no formal competition open to the general public.

During the study, little was discussed about Cambodian universities competing with one another to get involved in international programs across the four cases. Undoubtedly, this was partly due to the fact that most bilateral programs, which were directly supported by foreign universities, tended to be relatively small in scope and emerged out of existing relationships between academics from both sides. Also, even in larger projects, funded by the AUF or JICA, there was relatively limited competition among public universities, the majority of which
remained specialized in their own disciplines. For instance, when approached by JICA to join the AUN/SEED-Net program, the Cambodian MoEYS selected University A, which is the only public engineering university in the country.

Despite the lack of competition among Cambodian universities, all government-supported assistance programs by the four case study countries have been directed mainly to the public sector, as indicated in Chapter Six. Even some American universities, like the University of Washington, would prefer helping public universities. According to participant UB5, “Professor Susan was helping us [University B], because it is a public university. She told us that *it would be sustainable to work with the public sector*” [emphasis added]. Another Cambodian faculty member expressed a similar view, adding that, “… although [initially] a lot of people tried to take her [Professor Susan] to the private sector and told her that the public sector was not good, she said she wanted to work with the public sector and improve the bad system” (UB12).

However, such an idea was challenged by an official at University C, who said that, I am very disappointed because foreign governments tend to support public universities, rather than private ones. For example, the Korean center here was initially funded by the Korean government, but is now defunct. The Korean government wants to help the public sector instead, so its assistance was turned to [University B]. (UC1)

As he further explained, the reason that those countries want to help the public sector was never fully justified. However, he was happy that the relationships between his university and other Korean partners, which had been established through the center, were still maintained, although the Korean center was no longer operational. Overall, the governments of the four case study countries have supported their university collaborative programs mainly with Cambodian public universities.

An important note to add here with regard to the solidarity aspect of competition is the cross-case comparison between AUF- and AUN/SEED-Net-funded programs, when it comes to either graduate scholarships or research projects at the regional level:

… JICA is funding a lot of projects here and Japanese funding is much easier to receive than AUF’s money. Usually, JICA accepts and gives funding to most of our research proposals. However, there are many competitors from other countries in AUF-funded projects, which are also relatively marginal, compared to JICA’s money… As a whole, I also think we are not very clear about the goal or purpose of the AUF’s research proposal. JICA’s research proposal is more focused and clearly articulated. (UA6)
Overall, the general consensus among all Cambodian participants at University A was that JICA has a large funding package for the university to improve its research and teaching capacity, so almost all projects submitted by Cambodian researchers were accepted.

**Growing interconnectedness.**

The second theme of solidarity to be discussed is concerned with the interconnectedness among Cambodian participants or researchers (the individual level), or institutions (the institutional level), and between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in other parts of the developing world (the regional/international level). In reflecting upon this aspect of solidarity, one needs to examine the nature and scope of each international partnership program with the four case study countries. For instance, little was discussed about the growing interconnectedness among Cambodian scholars across institutions, in any partnership programs which were directly supported by universities in Japan, the US and South Korea. Apparently, those programs were relatively small in scope, and took the form of a single agreement between Cambodian and foreign universities.

However, there was growing interconnectedness in Cambodian international university programs under the support of the AUF and JICA, which had established connections, respectively, among French speaking universities and among universities in the ASEAN region. For the AUF-supported programs, for instance, in order to apply for research funding, Cambodian universities/scholars had to find partners both in other developing countries, including Laos, or Vietnam and in developed countries, like Belgium or France. Also, according to two faculty members, one at University A and the other at University B, AUF had offered Cambodian students a number of scholarships to pursue their master’s degree in several French-speaking African countries. To quote from one of them, “I went to Tunisia for my master’s, which was supported by the AUF… I think the AUF wants to connect together all French-speaking countries which were its former colonies…” (UB14).

In the same manner, the Japan-supported AUN/SEED-Net program has linked University A with other universities in the ASEAN region, especially through graduate scholarships, joint research projects, and conferences, among others. Many Cambodian alumni of the program said that they remained actively engaged in the network upon their return home, because JICA has funded a number of projects to maintain connections among its alumni. At this point, there are
two important aspects to note, one of which was that similar to the AUF, JICA also required University A to work with ASEAN and Japanese partner universities when it comes to joint research projects – an approach that has clearly promoted solidarity among institutions in the developing world.

The second aspect worth highlighting is that it is this Japan-supported network that began to expand the Anglophone-based networks for University A. One faculty explained:

… now, I am also working on a joint project with alumni from other ASEAN countries. The AUN/SEED-Net program has built strong networking among institutions in the ASEAN countries, most of which are our new partner institutions. There is an annual conference in all areas supported by the program. It keeps involving us all the time. Now they have the AUN/SEED-Net journal and I now participate as a reviewer. Its headquarters is at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. (UA8)

Prior to joining the network, however, the university had confined itself to the Francophone academic circles. In this regard, many interviewees there expressed a high level of satisfaction with the Japanese approach to its international activities. One faculty who obtained his master’s and doctoral degrees through this network claimed that, without JICA’s support, it would be difficult for universities in Cambodia, and in other less developed ASEAN countries, to directly approach foreign universities in economically advanced countries, like Japan, for partnerships, due to the huge disparities in their academic quality and resources (see UA6’s quotation in Chapter Six). Even within the ASEAN region, higher education systems vary widely among countries. Hence, this Japanese modality has not only promoted more collaborations among ASEAN countries but also help bridge the quality gap between institutions in the very poor ASEAN countries and those in Japan, using more advanced ASEAN institutions as bridges.

Moreover, many interviewees saw JICA’s strategic model of supporting graduate education in the ASEAN region as beneficial. One faculty member nicely elaborated Japan’s approach, as follows:

… Their money is limited, so they cannot send a lot of students to Japan. By sending them to ASEAN host countries, a lot of people will have opportunities to study abroad. Students who finished their master’s degrees in ASEAN countries have two options for their PhD: they can go directly to Japanese universities or they do their PhD in ASEAN countries, plus Japan, through the so-called sandwich programs. (UA6)

As such, all participants at University A asserted that the AUN/SEED-Net has not only expanded their academic circles, but also offered a lot of opportunities for Cambodian students and faculty to go abroad. By 2013, the total number of faculty (with either a master’s or Ph.D.) graduating
from English-speaking institutions equaled that of those educated at French speaking institutions (53 vs. 52).

There was also growing interconnectedness in the AUN/SEED-Net program between University A and the industrial sector in Cambodia. To reiterate what was explained in Chapter Six, the AUN/SEED-Net program is aimed at connecting higher education institutions, especially in the area of engineering, with industry in the region. This goal was well translated into practice, especially when faculty were applying for research funding from JICA:

When we apply for a smaller project, JICA only requires us to find a Japanese partner [usually a professor], but for a larger one, which is worth up to US $50,000, then we are required to find a local firm related to our proposal, in addition to a Japanese partner. (UA9)

The growing interconnectedness between industry and higher education also reflects the wider dissemination of knowledge in Cambodia – a concept to be further discussed later.

Besides the growing interconnectedness developed through these larger networks of the AUF and AUN/SEED-Net programs, it is worth noting that such smaller programs as the Community Service Learning project at University C have also paved the way for expanding connections between the university and many other American universities, beyond its initial partner of CSU-Fullerton. In particular, many American universities within the CSU system, some of which already had an MOU with University C, decided to take part in the joint service-learning program. In fact, a Cambodian official at the university explained that CSU-Long Beach had become even more active than CSU-Fullerton, and had sent their students for community-service learning in Cambodia every year, from the very beginning.

**Support from external agencies.**

The third aspect of solidarity is the strong support from external agencies from both sides in international university programs. First, on the Cambodian side, the majority of participants claimed that, in general, they had gained strong support from the MoEYS, as exemplified by UA5’s comment:

The Ministry of Education has played an important role in supporting us and always helps facilitate the process. In fact, JICA first approached the MoEYS about the AUN/SEED-Net program and the MoEYS referred the program to us. They usually direct foreign partners, in this field of engineering, to University A.
Plus, as discussed in Chapter Six, although there was no national policy or financial support for higher education internationalization, the government, for the most part, did not interfere in any collaborative activities at the institutions. This created an enabling environment for international partnerships on the Cambodian side.

Likewise, on the foreign side, such agencies as the AUF and JICA have played a significant role in supporting their respective universities at the international level. Technical and financial support from these agencies was seen as indispensable, as already indicated throughout the study. Even KOICA, which has played a limited role in supporting university-to-university collaborative programs, has acted as a repository of knowledge about Cambodian higher education for Korean universities to use to find their Cambodian counterparts for partnership.

Interestingly, programs with these four countries have also involved, in one way or another, their respective embassies in Cambodia. For instance, as participant UC1 explained, representatives from the US embassy to Cambodia were usually invited to join any activities which involved American counterparts. It was through this network that University C and its American counterparts were able to obtain funding from the USAID for their community service learning program. Similarly, it was acknowledged that while the US embassy did not offer any financial support to the social work program at University B, it had offered support by connecting Professor Susan to many donors to the program. Likewise, the Korean embassy to Cambodia had thus far helped Korean universities with advice on Cambodian higher education in Cambodia. As the study has already indicated, French and Japanese embassies were involved in the programs of the AUF and the AUN/SEED-Net, respectively.

In spite of all the positive comments about those relevant external agencies, some Cambodians pointed out a few challenges at the administrative level during the interviews. First, many people in the public sector still did not see the value of and, thereby, offered limited support to, international activities. This was explained by the following comments:

Usually, the school has no money to contribute to any international activities – all foreign professors and our international activities (conferences, seminars, etc.) are supported by foreign donors, including JICA, AUF, etc. Here, even if we have a paper and topic for presentation and publication, we have to think first whether we have enough money to pay for ourselves or if there is any foreign donor. Our school never gives us any financial support. I have never received any support from the school for conferences or other international activities. People here, especially those in the administration, still do not see the value of international activities. (UA7 – Quote from Chapter Six)
… with a growing demand for the social work program, we are planning to offer continuing education (short-term training) in this field. However, it has taken so much time just to get it out. People at the top keep delaying, by saying this and that, without giving any clear reason. (UB12)

This issue was particularly prevalent in the public sector, because, as indicated in Chapter Six, many senior administrators were those educated in the 1980s and did not see much value in international activities.

The other related issue was the bureaucratic nature of the public sector, which, in some instances, delayed communication across levels. As participant UB5 complained:

We are a public institution, so sometimes we feel pressured between two different systems: the government and our foreign partners. Dealing with our government has been very slow because of the centralized nature of the public system. This is different from the Western context, so we need to explain to them about all these issues …

She went on to point out that the American partners, who acted as mentors to all faculty in the program, clearly understood the Cambodian context and always listened to their reasons when there was a delay of any decision or any miscommunication.

**Knowledge dissemination.**

This study found that knowledge and skills from partnership programs with the four case study countries had been disseminated in Cambodia in various manners. As already pointed out, many projects focused on helping Cambodian universities to create new programs and disciplines as well as building up Cambodian universities through training the trainers as well as improving research capacity. As no one mentioned any brain drain issues during the interviews, it can be convincingly concluded that the majority of, if not all, Cambodians who had been abroad for their graduate studies returned and worked as faculty in their respective fields. This clearly suggests that all knowledge had been widely disseminated in each related field and beyond.

There is little doubt that teaching is the common approach through which knowledge has been widely shared, even beyond academic circles. For instance, almost all the 22 students who first graduated in 2012 from the social work bachelor’s program were offered jobs in various organizations in Cambodia. To quote from one faculty member, “What they are doing now is to produce social workers in all social departments, including schools, hospitals, NGOs, etc.” (UB9). Participant UB2 also explained how the new knowledge in the area of social work was
regularly exchanged with various stakeholders: “... We have had our workshops every year since the [social work] program was established, so that we can share experience and also get connected with various stakeholders, including NGOs” (UB2).

Likewise, it can be inferred that knowledge from the Japanese and French programs at University A has thus far been widely disseminated in Cambodia due to the fact this is the only public elite engineering university in the country. When talking about employment, participant UA1 was very proud, claiming that all graduates from the university always got good jobs in industry, companies, private universities, and other sectors in the country. This was also the case of many programs at Universities B and C, where participants always talked about the benefits of each program to their respective university and the society at large. For instance, with the new program of the Community Service Learning center at University C, an increasing number of students and faculty had bought into the idea of “voluntarism”, meaning that knowledge has been translated well from the theoretical to the practical level:

We have developed the service-learning program, which means there is a “volunteer mentality” among our staff and students. Before we had the program, it would be very difficult to involve students in the community, because they would always question the benefits of doing so. Nonetheless, now an increasing number of students have become more involved in and value such volunteer activities. We mostly send our students to children’s organizations. This actually could prepare our students for their future career. (UC8)

The quote also reveals the fact that although the concept of voluntarism is not new within the Cambodian context, the connection between higher learning institutions and the local community has been relatively limited. As mentioned earlier, almost all higher education institutions have been mainly occupied with teaching or training. In this regard, the way that knowledge has been disseminated could also establish and reinforce relationships between higher education and the community, which is related to the solidarity aspect of growing interconnectedness.

At the same time, many participants pointed out several factors which hindered the transfer or dissemination process of knowledge itself within the Cambodian context:

Well, I studied library management, so if you think about copy and paste, it is impossible. First, we cannot adopt it in terms of technology. Second, we do not have staff with the capacity to offer library service here. Third, we do not have money to buy materials, so internal design for group reading and other related activities are difficult to apply here. We try to apply only some ideas here. (UC5)

They are far ahead of us, so some areas in the field of science are not applicable to our country’s context. Even when I was a student there [in Japan], I found it quite
challenging to find Cambodia-related topics for my research in the field of telecommunication. Right now, we can only apply some basic concepts in the field in our teaching. (UA9)

It was evident that the lack of financial and human resources, which has been discussed throughout the study, was seen by most participants as the major problem hindering the knowledge dissemination process within the Cambodian context.

**Participation**

There are two aspects of participation to be discussed: one is related to Cambodia’s contribution to knowledge production in each field and the other to Cambodia’s participation in decision-making processes. With regard to the former, the study showed that Cambodia has depended largely on its foreign counterparts in all areas of knowledge, in both social and natural sciences. Its higher education system only began to be rebuilt in the early 1990s, after the mass destruction caused by two decades of internal political chaos. Hence, all Cambodian higher education institutions have undoubtedly been the chief beneficiaries of their international collaborative projects. Participant UB12 commented that “Cambodia is entirely dependent on them [the US] in terms of theories, and all research studies and literature in this field are from Western societies”. Plus, insufficient financial and human resources have placed Cambodian higher education in a poor condition, in which the production of basic research in the sciences and engineering remains marginal. Cambodian higher education institutions have been largely engaged in applied research.

Interestingly, among the few things Cambodian universities could contribute to their international partnership programs was its practical experience of reconstructing the country after the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge regime. University C, in particular, has a Peace and Conflict Studies Institute, which is located within the Faculty of Social Sciences and International Relations, and has many collaborative research projects with universities in Asia, Europe and North America. At the time of this study, one of the center’s partnership programs, which involved the University of Wisconsin and another German partner university, was related to digitalizing archive materials on the role of the UN and Cambodia itself in the peace-building process in the country in the 1990s. According to participant UC5,

… Now I am also working on the archival project on the peace building process of the UNTAC in Cambodia after the civil war. We will seek funding from the UN and the
project to be stationed at the Southeast Asian collection there [University of Wisconsin]. The digitalized documents will take the PDF format and be put online to be available to the general public.

She further explained that the purpose of the project was to share the Cambodian experience with other post-conflict societies.

Indeed, University C has been relatively unique, compared not only to Universities A and B, but also to other Cambodian higher education institutions, in that it has a strong focus on Buddhist principles in teaching and learning. To reiterate what the two lecturers in Buddhism who had participated in this study claimed, Cambodia’s approach toward building peace is different from a Western one: “For Cambodia, we start building peace from ourselves first, then our family, community, country and then we reach out to others and the world… Our education here focuses on developing morality, respect and humbleness in our students…” (UC7). Hence, it is in the area of peace studies, through both its past experience of atrocities and Buddhist philosophy, that Cambodia could contribute to knowledge production.

Overall, however, Cambodian universities have been heavily dependent on their foreign counterparts for new knowledge and innovation in every discipline. As such, in terms of faculty exchange programs, most Cambodian faculty could only go to other countries to teach the Khmer language, as in the case of University B’s relationships with several Japanese universities, or to present their research findings about a particular issue, as in the case of University C’s partnership with Bridgewater State University.

While Cambodia has had limited contribution to knowledge production and theory in every field, in its international university collaborations, knowledge transfer between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, Japan and the United States had taken place in a mutual and respectful manner. At the outset, programs with the three countries placed a great deal of emphasis on training Cambodian graduate students and faculty, who would later play a role in teaching and research upon their return to Cambodia. For instance, before the establishment of the Department of Social Work at University B and the Community Service Learning Center at University C, the American partners had trained Cambodians through graduate studies and various programs of short-term visits in the US, in addition to providing them with technical assistance. The purpose was to make sure that the Cambodian side would be able to manage those programs in the future. Such an approach was well supported and accepted
by Cambodian participants, many of whom claimed to be the masters of their own local context. To quote from a faculty member in the social work program:

Knowledge that we learned could not be applied directly to our country. For example, it is cold in the US, so they have to wear a winter coat; however, we could not use this in our society. This means we have to think about the Cambodian context. In social work, even the same theory cannot be applied without looking at the socio-cultural setting. We can hardly just copy and paste. (UB9)

Sharing a similar view, another faculty member in the program stressed that foreign knowledge needed to “be filtered by local faculty” to meet with the local demands as well as to minimize any potentially negative effects (UB12). In this regard, many faculty indicated that they were selective of Western materials they used for their teaching, choosing only readings and theories that are applicable and relevant to social issues in Cambodia.

Even in their teaching, when adopting some forms of Western pedagogical practices, including group work, assignment, research, and so on, these young scholars paid a great deal of attention to the issue of sensitivity to the local culture. Apparently, all this was quite challenging for them, most of whom had no teaching experience before going to the US for their graduate studies. However, they all claimed that their American counterparts, including Professor Susan, had provided them with various forms of technical support along the way so that they could handle all issues in the future. As one faculty member mentioned:

… Here, we work closely with our mentors in every subject. They keep giving us advice. It took me years to be able to work on my own in terms of developing a course syllabus and teaching. They teach us to challenge and update our readings and syllabus. We keep looking for something new in our teaching. (UB12)

Another faculty member who expressed a similar view added that, “… They [American professors] teach us how to expand our networks in the field and also to deal with various types of client. They helped us develop a fee-based program so that our program could sustain itself in the future…” (UB15). Overall, these young scholars had been extensively trained so that they could play an instrumental role in the establishment of new programs and disciplines as well as in the transfer of knowledge through teaching and research.

Likewise, the AUF and Ambassade de France programs had offered a number of graduate scholarships to Cambodian students, all of whom needed to sign an agreement to come back and work as faculty at their respective institutions in Cambodia. In relation to this approach, an official at the MoEYS claimed that “the French government demanded that Cambodian students who received their education in France would need to come back to Cambodia to help build their
country” (O1). In the same manner, the purpose of the AUN/SEED-Net is to train “young graduates and teaching staff from other Member Institutions to acquire master’s degrees and doctoral degrees in a Sandwich program with Japanese Supporting Universities” (AUN/SEED-Net). Hence, one of the significant conclusions here is that France, the United States and Japan shared a common pattern of knowledge transfer, which highlights the importance of training Cambodian trainers, so that they can play a role in the establishment of any new programs or disciplines.

In fact, at the time of this study, French and Japanese programs at University A were helping the university to move toward building and strengthening the doctoral programs and research capacity. One faculty member claimed that,

… France is helping us to develop doctoral programs using our faculty. Since we are young scholars, the doctoral programs will use a “co-supervisor” system, one Cambodian faculty member and one French professor at our partner university. The aim is to make sure that Cambodian faculty will be able to earn supervision skills to run the doctoral program in the future. (UA9)

Such a modality of using in-house scholars to build research and graduate education also existed in Cambodian-American university partnership programs. For example, the US-supported joint program in social work at University B had three phrases in its strategic plan, beginning with training local Cambodians in Phase I and then developing the program in Phase II, before moving toward establishing graduate education in Phrase III.

In terms of research collaborations under the support of the extensive networks of the AUF and the AUN/SEED-Net, Cambodian participants claimed they were actively engaged in the whole process, from choosing the topics and carrying out the study to writing reports for publication, as discussed earlier. In most research publications supported by the AUN/SEED-Net, many Cambodians claimed that they were the main authors. Hence, clearly seeing this modality of knowledge transfer, Cambodian participants viewed their foreign counterparts from France, the US and Japan as mentors who only played a facilitating role. This suggests that knowledge transfer with these three case study countries took place in an interactive, rather than a passive or imposed, manner.

It should be noted that compared to programs with France and the US, not to mention South Korea, JICA tended to have compromised its requirements based on the local context, to ensure that Cambodian faculty and researchers could participate in the programs. This was reflected by the fact that most of the research proposals had been accepted and funded by JICA.
To promote knowledge production, especially in applied research, JICA had also established a journal under the AUN/SEED-Net program so that their alumni could participate both as researchers and as reviewers. It is because of this reason that recently an increasing number of faculty at University A had become more interested in JICA’s projects than in the AUF’s ones.

In fact, the Japanese approach was highly praised by the Cambodian Minister of Education during his speech at the Handover and Official Inauguration Ceremony at University A:

Under [the] name of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and myself, I recognize the excellent technical support that the project with Japanese GrantAid and JICA to [University A] will continues to modernize all necessary equipment including the training of trainers, knowledge and technology transfer and an exchange of faculty staffs from/to [University A] and Japan that make more availability of [University A] to enlarge the process of learning by direct applying to the field of practices. (MoEYS, 2013c, emphasis added)

Participant O1 also expressed that, compared to the other three countries, Japan had focused on promoting action research that could address development issues facing Cambodia:

… Japan’s cooperation is also very interesting. It focuses on applied research to deal with the local Cambodian problems by training Ph.D. candidates. Those scholars will be trained in Japan, but they still have to work on problems related to Cambodia for their research. (O1)

Therefore, these two statements well support the view of many Cambodian participants that Japan wants to strengthen Cambodian academics through building the in-house capacity to manage new programs. Overall, despite their varying degrees of support and approaches, universities and agencies from France, the United States, and Japan placed a strong emphasis on using local Cambodians in the process of knowledge transfer.

With regard to the other participation aspect of decision-making, universities from these three case study countries followed the participatory approach with their Cambodian counterparts, allowing them to make all major decisions about their collaborative activities. One faculty member at University B made the following comment:

In our program, we followed the decentralized system and everyone has taken responsibility for their part. In general, all the decisions are made by five of us… Our foreign partners provide us with skills, technical support and salary for our staff. Some of them also act as our mentors. Usually, they just give us advice – they do not dominate us. They respect us and it is up to us whether we want to take their advice or not. (UB9)
In the interviews, Cambodian participants were well aware that such a participatory approach would enable all foreign-supported programs to be sustainable in the future. None of the participants, including those who went to these three countries, pointed out any serious issues regarding decision-making. Even in terms of scholarships, in most cases, the Cambodian side was allowed autonomy to select outstanding students and faculty to participate in partnerships with the three countries. There were only a few instances in which foreign partners were engaged, as in the case of the social work program at University B. This was mainly because of the lack of local experts in the area to make proper decisions. Also, such foreign engagement was accepted and, indeed, highly appreciated by all Cambodians in the program.

In comparison to these three case study countries, the degree of participation in Korean-Cambodian university partnerships seemed to vary, depending on each individual program as well as its particular circumstances. First in terms of knowledge transfer, especially in the case of the master’s program in social work, Korean professors flew in to teach Cambodian students, so there was a lack of participation on the Cambodian side. Again, all Cambodian faculty in the social work bachelor’s program were very critical of the lack of so-called “local empowerment” – the term in the field of social work which all five participants from this faculty frequently used during the interviews. To quote from one faculty member:

… I know they are helping us, but there is no empowerment model in the program. It is one-way, which is different from our two-way relationships with the US… We need to send our staff to learn and come back to take a role in managing the program. The local people can take the lead. It is better than just allowing them to come here and teach – following them without really knowing what they and you yourself are doing. You cannot copy the whole system from other countries and paste it here. They can destroy us one day. We have to localize knowledge so that it works within our context. *A good program is not the one with foreign experts or names – it is one that will be sustainable.* (UB15, emphasis added)

Another faculty member even pointed out that, “… they usually fly to teach here, so they set the schedules based on their availability, rather than the reality here” (UB12). All this suggests the Korean modality in the joint master’s program was conflicting with the social work approach. It should be noted here that, in this program, the Korean side had thus far trained one Cambodian student at the Master’s level, and later, at the Ph.D. level (at the time of this study); however, his involvement in the program had been limited to providing logistical support.

Interestingly, there was a similarity of Korean approaches in the establishment of the Master’s program in social work and the Department of Korean language studies at University B.
When the latter program began to offer Korean language bachelor’s degrees in 2007, all faculty were Koreans, supported by KOICA and the Korean embassy in Cambodia. Nonetheless, the leadership and management of the department were gradually transferred to the Cambodian side over the years. By the time of this study, there were four Cambodian faculty in the program, all of whom were former students in the department. Participant UB2 explained a similar modality in the joint master’s program in social work:

… We will be able to manage the program in the future. I think in three years, they will let us get more involved in running the program – then, they will start to withdraw, for example, 20% or 30%... I think, by then, our Ph.D.s would be able to help with teaching. Then, we can run the master’s program ourselves.

This means Korean programs also emphasized the involvement of local scholars in running the programs in the long run.

Moreover, the study revealed that South Korea also wanted those Cambodians who went to Korea to come back and help their country. As UB4 pointed out,

There is one case - one student wanted to stay there when he/she went to Korea through the exchange program. Because of that case, now they put more emphasis on learning, making sure that students who go there will have to come back after the completion of their study. It was long ago – now we do not have that problem.

Hence, it can be concluded that, like universities in the other three countries, South Korean universities aimed to support local leadership and ownerships of programs in the future. However, their approach to international collaborative activities was a bit aggressive and tended to ignore the important role of local people, especially in the early stages of the knowledge transfer process. This, along with the fact that most relationships were established without any prior connections between the two sides, could easily cause a lot of disappointment among the relevant stakeholders. At this point, it is important to point out that, during this study, many Cambodians in the bachelor’s program in social work, who were very critical of the Korean joint master’s program, acknowledged that they had not been directly involved in that program, so their views were only from one side. As one of them said, “I can be biased because I am in the bachelor’s program…” (UB15)

As for decision-making, many Cambodians who went to Korea claimed that while the country’s academic system was “decentralized,” with all kinds of decisions made by the majority, their opinions were not often accepted. As explained earlier, the environment in Korea tended to be less receptive to different opinions from the outside. However, two faculty members
expressed positive sentiments about how decisions were made in their Korean language department, with one of them indicating that:

All decisions have to be made through a meeting, which is held once every month – on Saturday of the first week of each month. We discuss the curriculum, including what to teach. They usually seek our advice about student learning and other things. (UB8)

Also, when asked about who in the department had the final decisions regarding the selection of students for exchange activities and graduate scholarships, UB4 pointed out that,

Usually, we are the ones who recruit students… We are the ones who decide and they never reject those we send. For example, KOICA and the Embassy send us information about scholarships, and after the selection, we let them know about the candidates. We have complete autonomy over that.

Hence, it can be concluded that there were varying degrees of participation in Cambodian-Korean partnerships at University B. At University C, participation-related issues in Cambodian-Korean collaborative programs were not discussed by any participants. Again, this was largely due to the limited number of those partnerships at the university.

In fact, while the above discussion has provided insights into some issues concerning the lack of the participation aspect in some Cambodian-Korean programs, it is important not to overlook the related concerns expressed by the Cambodian side. In particular, at University B, those who were in the senior position of making decisions did not involve or pay enough attention to the views of people at the grassroots level, as in the case of the joint master’s program in social work, when they moved forward to establish collaboration with a Korean partner even though there was already a plan for establishing such a program by expanding another existing partnership. One faculty member even said the process was not transparent:

… It is not the right time to have the master’s program. I do not know what is behind the scene, but when we were in the US, [University B] signed an agreement [in 2007] with Ewha Womans University to establish the master’s program. When we returned they already had it… I have no knowledge about the income of the master’s program. (UB15)

Interestingly, he went on to reflect the issue of the lack of participation in general, at both the national and institutional levels, through the theoretical lens of social work:

… According to the theory, those relevant or vulnerable to any policy decision should be given a chance to get involved. However, look at the reality in our society – those people are not allowed such an opportunity. There is no chance for them at all. For me, I can offer advice to the Ministry [without specifying which one]. In the US, professors can lead their students to the parliament to challenge a policy. However, we cannot do that here in Cambodia. (UB15, emphasis added)
While his reflection speaks to the reality of Cambodian society, his quotation concerning the lack of transparency in the joint Korean program hinted that earning income might be one of the motivations for those in the senior position to open the master’s program. Unlike the bachelor’s program in which all students were supported by the school, meaning they do not pay anything, enrollment in all master’s programs at the university was based on tuition fees. Throughout the study, however, none of the participants stated this financial motivation explicitly.

Also an issue on the Cambodian side was that they did not keep those at the department or faculty level well-informed or updated about various forms of MOU. This issue tended to be discussed across various departments at University B:

We only knew that our department has agreements with foreign universities, when we were approached by them... We need to understand our internal system well before we cooperate with others. We do not know what is happening inside, so how could we collaborate with others? We need to know how many collaborative programs we have and who our partners are, so that we can prepare and plan the partnership activities much better. Good communication would make better progress. (UB4)

[University B] does not inform us about any MOU… (UB3)

The international relations office should have a clear plan and provide us with an update about collaborative information with foreign universities and allow us to join… (UB17)

My informal conversations with a few coordinators of other programs at University B also revealed the issue of the lack of communication between faculty and people in senior positions. All this, along with the fact that many senior people were not very much concerned about the details of the MOUs, other than the financial obligations, had a negative impact on the degree of mutuality.

**Critical Reflection: Looking beyond the Existing Framework of Mutuality**

In this section, I will reflect on two interrelated factors which have influenced and shaped the notion of “power” in international university programs between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the four case study countries. The first aspect is related to the cultural factor, in particular the Buddhist practice of the patron-client relationship. This practice manifested itself in various manners, including an acceptance of a more dominant role for foreign participants, dependence on them, an acceptance of their conditions and gratitude for their
assistance. The second aspect to be reflected upon will be concerned with the importance of human agency in international relations.

**Patron-client relationships.**

Throughout the study, while university programs with such countries as France, the United States and Japan manifested a strong degree of mutuality, the Cambodian side, in many instances, tended to allow foreign partners to take the lead in their collaborations. For instance, it was the American professor (Susan) that took the lead in getting the social work program started, and even in recruiting the five Cambodians for graduate training in the US. As UB5 pointed out, “Once the MOU was signed, Professor Susan was the one that managed the scholarship recruitment. She explored her networks in Cambodia to search for Cambodians with commitment and work experience in the area of social work.” That statement was reiterated by participant UB2, who made a blunt comment about his own limited knowledge of the selection process of those five Cambodian participants, who had not been faculty of the University B at the time:

I was helping with the establishment of the program, but I did not know how she [Professor Susan] recruited all the five people… Later, after the selection process was completed, those people had to sign an agreement with our university that they would come back and work as the faculty in the new program…

Even at the time of this study, Professor Susan remained active and was the one who explored all possible sources of external funding to help improve and sustain the program. Likewise, such leadership taken by foreign partners manifested itself in the joint program in Community Service Learning between University C and CSU-Fullerton. According to participant UC8, it was the American side who had worked hard to apply for funding from the USAID, upon the signing of the MOU. In a similar manner, University A’s participation in the AUN/SEED-Net program was made at JICA’s invitation. It was also the case that a large number of small university-to-university collaborations were initiated by foreign counterparts. All this suggests that, in many instances, Cambodian participants gave more leadership and initiative to their foreign partners.

Nonetheless, relatively few participants expressed any concerns or dissatisfaction with their partners in France, the United States, and Japan, regarding their leadership. The common explanation for such an acceptance was that many Cambodians viewed their foreign partners as
knowledgeable and experienced, especially in their relative fields, and also as donors who came and helped Cambodia. At this point, it is important to point out that toward the end of each interview, I usually asked all participants to reflect on their overall experience with all or any of the four case study countries: *Overall, do you think the relationships between your institution and institutions in France, the US, Japan or South Korea are equal?* While there was a mix of answers of “Yes” and “No”, it is interesting that many Cambodians thought their relationships with foreign partners were, in the main, acceptable. Even participant UB4, who was very critical of the Korean approach toward university partnerships, claimed that:

Well, to be honest, from my experience, they are donors and we are recipients, so the relationship is not equal. They are always above us. Sometimes, when they ask us to do something, we have to follow them… However, we have to look at the fact that *we are the one who receives a lot of benefits from the partnerships.* I know that they expect something from us too, but I still think we benefit more than they do… *(emphasis added)*

Apparently, the above statement indicates that foreign partners deserve to be respected, since they are donors. Important to note is that, despite the use of the term “partnership” or “collaboration”, the majority of Cambodians frequently used the terms “recipients” and “donors” during the interviews to describe their relationships with foreign participants. This implies that they accepted the inherently hierarchical relationships in Cambodia’s international university programs with foreign universities.

Also, during the study, the notion of being loyal and expressing gratitude to donors from these countries not only affected the degree of mutuality but also the future forms of university partnership with foreign countries. For instance, most participants at both Universities A and B wanted to keep or to reestablish their partnerships with French universities, when asked during the study if existing relationships with France would ever completely disappear in the future:

… France was the one who helped us in the 1990s – when no one cared about us at the time – so we cannot give up French partners. *It is not morally right* to do so, although we need to establish relationships with other countries, at the same time, so that we can improve our research and teaching capacity. *(UA5, emphasis added)*

Although French aid has recently dropped, I think France will still support us. In the future, if we seek their assistance again, they will step in to do so. We have good relationships with each other. Look, the French Prime Minister also came to attend our grandfather King’s [Noromdom Sihanouk] funeral, so France will never abandon us… Collaboration is not a competition. We should keep our relationships with France and other countries: The more collaborations, the better for our country… *(UB18)*
While the two quotations above reflect common sentiments among many Cambodians about showing their gratitude to France for its previous educational support, they were made by the two participants (UA5 & UB18) who, during their interviews, referred to Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen’s strong support for French programs and language during his speech at University A. The following is an excerpt from the related speech given by the Prime Minister during the Graduation/Degree Conferment Ceremony and the Inauguration of the New Building and Achievements at University A on February 28, 2012:

Well, since no Anglophone country showed up and offered help [in the early 1990s], who could we call for assistance? There was no one else but France and France it was… I often raise it with French Ambassadors whenever I had the opportunity and today as we have the presence of the Ambassador, I urge that the French do not abandon [University A]. They may consider that [University A] is the heritage that Cambodia and France joined hands to give life to it in the most difficult time. (Cambodia New Vision, 2012, para. 5 & 6)

It can be concluded that, over the years, Cambodians, including their Prime Minister, had developed a positive attitude toward France – a factor that has, to a certain extent, affected and shaped how they viewed their relationships with French universities or French partners in general. In fact, University A also still maintains its strong ties with Russia, due to its support for the university in the 1960s and again in the 1980s. To quote from an official at the university:

Even though now we have new friends, including Japan, we still need to keep old friends, unless they say they do not want to work with us anymore. France has the best relationships with us and they keep providing us with assistance… Also, although Russia no longer supports us, we are still grateful to the Russian government that provided us with huge assistance in the 1980s. Whenever there are any special occasions or big events here, we always invite the Russian Ambassador or any senior people from the Embassy to join us. I think Russia itself feels very close to us and one day will come back again even though they cannot afford to do so now. This was because [University A] was established with support from the Soviet Union in the 1960s. (UA1)

Related to the idea of expressing gratitude was the dependency mentality among many Cambodian participants. It has been discussed throughout this study that many Cambodians, as exemplified by UB18’s comment above, still regarded their foreign counterparts as donors whom they could approach for assistance. Indeed, this was one of the reasons that some participants thought that collaborations with France should be maintained:

We should keep France as part of our network – we could seek their assistance whenever needed. Recently, we have applied for a World Bank research project, so we have asked for support from our French partner to help us. The project has been accepted now. I think without their support, it would have been very challenging for us. (UA4)
Overall, these aspects of dependency, accepting foreign leadership, and gratitude for foreign assistance explain the continuing dominance of the practice of patron-client relationships in international partnerships in Cambodian higher education. Within this frame of power relationships, foreign donors are regarded as patrons and deserve respect by Cambodian participants, who see themselves as clients. In return for the benefits (in this case, educational assistance) they have received, the clients should remain faithful to their patrons, including France, the United States, Japan and even South Korea. Through this socio-cultural lens, it can also be interpreted that, over time, Cambodians might be less critical of, and become increasingly receptive toward, foreign leadership and dominance. This certainly affected the degree of mutuality with the four case study countries.

It should be noted here that this notion of paying gratitude to France and the AUF, as well as, more recently, other countries, including Japan as one of the key donors, has posed an ongoing discussion about the future role of the French language, especially at University A. In particular, while all Cambodians at the university acknowledged the French assistance as indispensable and showed their willingness to maintain collaboration with French universities, they seemed to have different views about the future role of the French language or even the French academic system as a whole. To quote from one of them:

In terms of language use here, there was a debate during the school meeting, with some people preferring to switch to English, while others argued that we should keep French and use both languages as we are doing now. I think even our rector cannot answer this question. (UA3)

Moreover, although the future of the language policy per se is not clear, many participants were certain that the trend was obviously toward the English language, as well as the Anglophone system. This was reflected by the following two comments:

France helped us a lot. However, I do not like the French system, and the French language is also difficult to learn. I like English and I found switching to English was easy for me. When I was doing my doctoral degree in France, I talked to my supervisor, and he allowed me to write in English… I think only a small portion of students here want to study French. (UA3)

The French system is exam-based, very challenging and competitive. Although you work hard, you could still fail. It is difficult to get good grades. I remember when I was a student here, the overall grades of everyone, including outstanding students, were quite low. This became a problem because when we applied for a scholarship abroad, it was difficult to compete with students from the Anglophone system, in which it is easy to get a GPA of 4. From what I know, [in the Anglophone system] if you work, you will pass… That is why now, in my teaching, I am not very strict with my students, especially in
terms of grading. I usually include student presentations and other class activities as part of my evaluation. I do not just use the exams… (UA5)

It can be concluded that, on the one hand, the Cambodian practice of patron-client relationships has greatly influenced and shaped how Cambodian academics viewed their relationships with their counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. As such, many Cambodians wanted to keep their partnership activities with French academics, although French assistance had gradually declined. On the other hand, the academic trend was clearly toward the Anglophone system, with English becoming increasingly popular and being used by many other aid agencies.

**The role of human agency.**

Indeed, the notion of the patron-client relationships cannot be explained without looking at the role of human agency – the other aspect I am going to discuss here. As the study revealed, not all forms of foreign partnership modality were accepted by Cambodians. For instance, as already discussed, many participants expressed their disappointment with the Korean partnership modality, especially in the management and running of the master’s program in social work, without the engagement of local people – the approach which they saw as lacking “local empowerment”. Also, the Korean top-down approach, which began with formal institutional agreements, was very much criticized by the Cambodian side. All this suggests the lack of strong or intimate connections between academics from both countries. As a consequence, many Cambodian-Korean university partnerships had manifested a limited degree of mutuality.

By comparison, university partnerships with France, the United States, and Japan were built upon existing solid human connections and trust, thereby manifesting a strong degree of mutuality. Many participants claimed that they were involved in other collaborative activities with universities in the four case study countries, outside the formal institutional agreements. Some even argued that they valued their personal relationships more than the institutional agreements:

Some MOUs were just signed but there was not any activity, so we usually worked through our existing networks, like the AUF, the AUN/SEED-Net, or our personal connections... (UA3)
I have worked on many projects with scholars from Japan, Thailand, England, the US, etc. Many of these activities do not have any university agreement… Some MOUs only exist, but there has been no activity. (UB3)

Interestingly, participant UB3 went on to compare his relationships with American and Japanese scholars, saying that, “So far, I have had joint research projects with both American and Japanese professors, but the relationships flow better with the Japanese side, because of the close connection with my former supervisor…”. Likewise, an official at University C also gave his view about how personal connections and the interests of foreign partners greatly affected partnership programs:

I think, in all collaborative programs, we have the same criteria, principles and expectations. However, whether relationships can be close or not depends on the person who works on the projects. If the person is active and enthusiastic, then we can work faster and more closely. If the person in charge is concerned about us, writes us an email, comes and visits us to learn more about us, or comes here and organizes a seminar with us, then, the projects will be active and close. For example, one school in the US, the first person who was in charge was very active – then, when the next person came – the project became inactive and was suspended for a while. Hence, I think we have the same policy, but every relationship depends on each individual’s interest. (UC2)

Another interesting example about human connection was that while the US government has offered limited support to Cambodian higher education, University C was able to obtain funding from the USAID to support its Community Service Learning program. Participant UC1 explained that, “… The US government is also interested in supporting the public sector. However, [University C] is able to work with the US projects, mainly due to our close connections with the US Embassy and others in the US”. In fact, there have been many other academic activities supported by or through the US embassy in Cambodia, including the American corner program. Similar to UC1’s comments, other participants at the university claimed that University C had very good relationships with the US embassy. Representatives from the embassy were usually invited whenever there were any important events or activities at the university.

The above discussion clearly suggests that the cultural practice of patron-client relationships and close human connections had greatly impacted the degree of mutuality between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the four case study countries. These two aspects were inextricably intertwined in that the pattern of patron-client relationships could only manifest itself within the context of trust which had been developed over time through solid human ties. Hence, reflection on the cultural aspect and human agency has led to a convincing
conclusion that, in this study, a strong degree of mutuality was mainly interpreted and seen as “acceptable harmonious relationships” by local Cambodians, rather than as “exactly equal or on the same degree level” in terms of power relationships, as commonly perceived in the global discourse or within Western societies. Important to note, however, is that in the practice of patron-client relationships, a line should be drawn between the idea of “acceptability” of power inequality and “dominance or imposition”. The former pattern of power relationships, as manifested in most Cambodian programs with France, the United States and Japan, focused attention on “local engagement or empowerment”, which tended to be overlooked by the latter pattern, as in the case of many Cambodian-South Korean partnership programs.

**Mutuality within the broad geopolitical context of power inequality.**

The critical reflection regarding the interpretation of “mutuality” as an acceptable harmonious relationship within the cultural frame of patron-client relationships indicates that power inequality existed in Cambodian international university partnerships, including those with France, the United States and Japan, even though they manifested a strong degree of mutuality. Such inherent power asymmetry was shaped, in many ways, by the past and present geopolitical context of Cambodia’s relations with each country. First of all, despite the fact that the majority of Cambodians made positive comments on their partnerships with French universities, their discussion during the interviews was, for the most part, shaped by the “former colony-colonizer” discourse, indicating that many Cambodians had already felt inferior to their French counterparts, even before they entered into university partnerships with them. As a consequence, for instance, University C did not consider forming any partnership with French universities, as participant UC1 explained, saying that, among other reasons, “…they [the French] are a bit arrogant because they were our former colonizer. They always demand we use the French language”. Such an inherent power inequality might also have partly influenced University B not to renew their formal collaborative agreements with the AUF and the French embassy, which ended in the mid-2000s – the period during which the university had become increasingly engaged in collaboration with universities in the anglophone world.

Likewise, inherent power asymmetry in Cambodian programs with American universities can hardly be denied, with the terms “donor” and “recipient” widely used by those interviewed for the study. In general, there is also a huge quality gap between higher education systems in the
two countries. Hence, whenever an opportunity for collaboration with American universities arose, it was more likely than in the case of France that Cambodian universities might have been willing to compromise their expectations and agenda, although no participants directly acknowledged this power imbalance during the interviews. In fact, during his interview, participant UB2 tended to suggest an approach to dealing with such an issue of foreign power dominance through increasing partnership activities with a wide range of countries. In case of the social work program, he claimed that:

The US side seemed to be resistant to our partnership with the South Korean university because they felt superior to others. They think most Korean professors graduated from the US. For us, they are both good, so we could benefit from all of them. They could compete with each other… (UB2)

However, in this study, the degree of power inequality in American-Cambodian programs seemed to be less obvious than that in French-Cambodian programs, which were predominantly discussed within the “former colony-colonizer” context. Plus, those American universities had their own agenda in international collaborative programs with Cambodian universities, quite independent of their government or the USAID, while French universities worked, in many ways, closely with the AUF and the French embassy in Cambodia. In this regard, during the interviews, not many Cambodians brought Cambodian-American bilateral relations into the discussion; these relations have been characterized by both conflict and cooperation over the last sixty years.

By comparison, while Japanese-Cambodian university partnerships also took place within a donor-recipient context, Cambodian participants did not express any negative views towards Japan, which was instead regarded as the most generous donor for Cambodia since the 1990s. This is clearly indicated by UA6’s quotation in Chapter Six, which shows that unlike other countries, whose support for Cambodia has been in various ways influenced by their geopolitical interests in Cambodia, Japan has helped Cambodia move forward and its assistance has tended to have had few conditionalities. This means Cambodian-Japanese programs, in any form, have been seen to be part of the larger effort of both countries to improve and maintain their healthy and friendly relations.

Partnership programs between Cambodian and South Korean universities also took the form of donor-recipient relationships. Interestingly, while South Korea and Japan could be easily classified together as Asian donors, the former’s relations with Cambodia, including in the area of education, have been largely driven by the economic factor, and therefore, are not as profound
as the latter’s relations with Cambodia. Compared to the other two case study countries, however, South Korea has developed closer and stronger relations with Cambodia over the years. Many Cambodian informants, including UB10 (see quotation in Chapter Six), even pointed out that South Korea understands the Cambodian context quite well due to its earlier experience as a developing nation. Hence, within the context of geopolitics, one might expect that Cambodian universities would have the best relationships in their partnership programs with their Japanese counterparts, followed by, in order, their South Korean, American and French counterparts. Nevertheless, as the study revealed, many Cambodians viewed most university partnership programs with France, the United States and Japan as highly mutual, meaning the cultural factor and the close human relationships played a more important role than geopolitical interests in shaping the degree of mutuality.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has dealt with the central research question of the study, which focuses on the issues of mutuality in international partnerships between Cambodian universities and universities in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. The discussion was framed along the lines of the four aspects of mutuality: equity, autonomy, solidarity and participation. According to the findings, Cambodian university partnerships with their French, American, and Japanese counterparts manifested each aspect of mutuality, whereas the degree of mutuality varied among Korean-Cambodian university partnerships. For instance, not many Cambodians were well aware of or agreed upon the aims and modalities of the Korean partnership projects when they were formulated. Some Cambodians who had been to Korea for their graduate studies asserted that the academic environment in the host country was less receptive to foreign ideas and values, thereby limiting the opportunity for intercultural exchange. Above all, the study revealed that Korean universities’ approach to international relations was seen to be somewhat aggressive, and seemed to, in many instances, ignore the important role of human agency early on. This had a negative impact on the degree of mutuality in international programs between the two countries. Interestingly, the study pointed out that those Korean academics working in Cambodia had a broad knowledge of the local culture and language, and had developed good relationships with their Cambodian counterparts. Overall, all participants acknowledged that, despite their varying degrees of mutuality, all programs with the four countries had greatly
contributed to the development of Cambodian universities, with far-reaching benefits to the society.

At the end of this chapter, I have examined, in considerable depth, how the Cambodian tradition of patron-client relationships has influenced and shaped the degree of mutuality between Cambodian universities and universities in the four case study countries. Through this cultural frame, it is clear that many Cambodians saw their foreign participants as experts in their fields and as those who came and helped them. In return for their support, foreign partners deserved respect and gratitude from the Cambodian side. This tradition of patron-client relationships was built upon solid human connections which had been developed over time. In this regard, the strong degree of mutuality in Cambodian university partnership programs with their French, American and Japanese counterparts were largely due to the strong human ties between the two sides. Based on the cultural and human agency aspects, I argue that the degree of mutuality in the Cambodian context was more related to the degree of “acceptable harmonious relationships”, rather than an exactly equal balance in terms of power dynamics.
Chapter Eight: Discussion and Implications

At the end of every research journey comes the key question of “So what?” – what lessons can be learned and what practical and theoretical implications can be drawn. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, I will summarize all the findings in relation to each sub-question, followed by various practical recommendations for Cambodian universities and government, and also for foreign universities in the four case study countries. Second, I will revisit Galtung’s structural theory of imperialism and Held’s cosmopolitanism, from which a theoretical implication will be drawn. At the end of this chapter, I will briefly provide some recommendations for future research in order to address the study’s limitations, which have already been presented in the methodology chapter. However, before jumping to the discussion on the findings and implications, it is important to begin with the overall context of this project.

This study set out to explore the issue of power relationships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in four developed nations: two Western and two Asian. The use of the terms “Western” and “Asian” conveys an inherent assumption that those partnership programs may not necessarily manifest the same type of power relationships, due to their cultural and contextual differences. Indeed, as explained in Chapter One, the different conceptions of power between Cambodian society, where I grew up and spent most of my life, and the North American context, where I have pursued my graduate studies, were part of the reason behind my interest in starting this dissertation project. Along with this personal observation, my professional training in the field of Comparative Education has, since early on, convinced me of the commonly held view in the field that “context matters” (King, 1975; Bereday, 1964; Crossley & Watson, 2003; Armove & Torres, 1999; Bray, 2003).

My strong belief about the importance of the local context and culture has greatly shaped the whole process of this study. When examining and critiquing practical and theoretical literature in Chapter Two, I argued that existing studies at the global level about the persistent issues of power inequality and dominance in educational development programs between developed and developing nations do not offer a full explanation for the Cambodian context – a society with its own culture and history, as elaborated in Chapter Three. Plus, several studies on the relevant issues of power dynamics in Cambodian higher education followed the neo-colonial approach, ignoring the long-standing Cambodian tradition of patron-client relationships, which is completely different from Western conceptions of power (Chapter Four). In this regard, the
structural theory of imperialism of Johan Galtung and cosmopolitanism of David Held are seen as the most appropriate theoretical lens for my study. In addition to discussing the economic and political disparity and inequality between developed and developing nations, both theories are also concerned with the dominance of knowledge and culture, thereby highlighting the important role of human agency in bringing about peace and mutual benefit. Essentially, my adoption of Galtung’s and Held’s theories has influenced my methodological choice of qualitative research methodology (Chapter Five).

This study was carried out at three Cambodian universities from December 2012 to April 2013. As an insider researcher familiar with my own local norms and culture, I was able conveniently to get connected and interact with all prospective participants. It is important to point out that I was a student during my undergraduate studies and later a lecturer at one of the participating universities. Despite being abroad for many years for my graduate studies, I still maintain good personal and professional connections with many faculty and administrators there. Some of them were willing to participate in this study, while others helped get me connected to other participants within the university and at other organizations. However, personal and professional connections were not in any way part of my decision to select the university or participants for my study. Rather, like at the other universities and organizations in this study, the recruitment process was made based on each individual’s experience and involvement in international partnerships.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that, as an insider, I have brought certain values and bias into this study. Having said that, my professional training in the field of Comparative Education and all the constructive comments from my professors throughout this journey have allowed me to have a more balanced view when dealing with such a sensitive topic as power dynamics in different contexts.

Interviews were the major form of this study’s data collection, supplemented by documents from various sources, both printed and online. During the fieldwork, I also interviewed policy-makers or staff at the Cambodian MoEYS, the Department of Higher Education, and the UNESCO office in Cambodia, among others. The inclusion of these relevant stakeholders allowed me to see the broad picture of Cambodian university partnerships with their counterparts in the four study countries. Collected data were later transcribed, coded, analyzed and interpreted, based on the constant comparison of qualitative methodology. Overall, the study was framed to answer the following key question: **To what extent are Cambodia’s**
international university partnership programs with developed countries characterized by mutuality?

Two research sub-questions were developed, as follows:

1. **What are the rationales for international university relationships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea?**

2. **How do Cambodians view their experience in international university cooperative programs?**

Revisiting the Research Questions

**Rationales for international university partnerships.**

This first sub-question was proposed in order to understand the broad context surrounding the development of international university collaborative programs in contemporary Cambodian higher education. Hence, to answer this question, I began by examining various forms of international programs with each country, followed by the rationale from the Cambodian perspective, as a means to reflect on the issue of policy at both the national and institutional levels.

**An overview of partnership programs with each case study country.**

The study has indicated that almost all French-Cambodian university partnerships were established out of the extensive programs of the AUF and Ambassade de France, both of which took place from the 1990s through to the early 2000s. However, French assistance for Cambodian higher education has gradually declined, mainly due to Cambodian economic growth over the last twenty years. This has negatively impacted university relationships between the two countries, which had been supported by those extensive networks. Current partnership activities have been limited to graduate scholarships for Cambodian students, some joint research projects and other forms of technical support.
According to most participants who had been involved, in one way or another, in French educational collaborations, culture and language influence have constituted an important dimension of French educational support for Cambodian higher education. Additionally, due to the colonial ties between the two countries, a political motivation was seen by some participants to be behind the French assistance. Nonetheless, no one in this study pointed out the economic aspect as part of the relations between the two countries. The findings were consistent with the discussion in Chapter Three, which has shown that, other than cultural and political relations, France’s accumulative FDI inflow to Cambodia from 1994 to 2012 accounted for only 1.14% of the latter’s total FDI volume.

American-Cambodian educational partnerships have taken place mainly at the institutional level, with limited involvement and support from US development aid agencies. Most partnerships have been relatively small in scope, compared to projects supported by the AUF or JICA, and confined mainly to programs in the social sciences, which are, by nature, a lot less expensive than those in engineering or natural sciences. The US’s lack of support for Cambodian higher education is not surprising, given that much of its educational assistance to the country, amounting up to US $26 million for over the last ten years, went to basic education, focusing particularly on improving access and quality (Embassy of the United States, n.d.).

As in the French case, none of the US-Cambodian university partnerships could be connected, either directly or indirectly, to any US economic investment activity in Cambodia. Instead, some participants observed that the US was particularly interested in influencing such Western ideologies as liberal democracy and neo-liberalism in Cambodia. As discussed in Chapter Three, the former was the largest garment export market for the latter since the mid-1990s, absorbing over 90% of the country’s total export of textile and apparel items. However, it is Cambodia that has dominated the trade volume between the two countries. For instance, in 2007, Cambodia’s total export volume to the US was US $2.46 billion, whereas the US export volume to Cambodia was only US $138 million. By providing Cambodia with access to its market through the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), the US government has in return expected Cambodia to improve its nascent democracy. Such attached conditions have always been reinforced through continuing US involvement in various human rights and politically-related issues in the country thus far.

Cambodian-Japanese university collaborative programs, especially at the engineering university, were the largest in scale and intensity, compared to collaborative programs with the
other three countries. They had taken place within the extensive regional network of the AUN/SEED-Net program, supported by the Japanese government. Those collaborative programs have covered a wide range of activities, including scholarships for graduate studies, curriculum development, joint research projects, and support for school facilities. Besides this JICA-assisted program, however, Japanese-Cambodian university partnerships at the other two universities were comparatively small, and focused mainly on student and faculty exchange programs, scholarships for graduate studies and some joint research activities.

Japanese economic expansion was seen to be the major driving force behind JICA’s large-scale support for the engineering programs in Cambodia as well as in the ASEAN region. While Japanese cumulative FDI inflow to Cambodia was only around 0.6% of the country’s total FDI from 1994 to 2012, it was strongly argued in the study that the Japanese strategy focused on skills training first, before moving in and expanding its heavy industry in Cambodia and in other parts of the region. Considering that Japan’s FDI inflow to ASEAN reached US $18.8 billion in 2011, making ASEAN the second largest investment destination for Japanese enterprises, it can hardly be denied that there is a strong link between growing Japanese support for the engineering field and its economic expansion policy in the region – a fact which was pointed out by all participants involved in the AUN/SEED-Net program. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that Cambodia and Japan have developed strong and comprehensive relationships in various areas, beyond the economic sector. For instance, Japan has been the largest bilateral donor for Cambodia, with its assistance amounting to US $2.1 billion from 1992 to 2011. Plus, throughout the study, no one saw Japanese educational programs as a form of cultural penetration, but rather, as a form of cultural exchange and understanding.

In recent years, various types of South Korean universities have approached their Cambodian counterparts for partnerships. However, those programs have been mainly related to student exchange programs and graduate scholarships for Cambodian students. In a few instances, Korean universities also helped support the development of new programs at a public university. It is interesting that, as with Japan, Cambodia’s relations with South Korea have been viewed in light of growing South Korean economic interest in the country – an argument which can also hardly be rejected, given that South Korea’s cumulative FDI inflow to Cambodia reached more than US $4 billion from 1994 to 2012 – the second largest after China (CDC, 2013).
However, unlike Japanese-Cambodian projects in the field of engineering at University A, which were closely linked to the Japanese industrial sector, relatively few Korean-Cambodian educational programs had been directly related to any Korean economic policy. Rather, those programs were seen to be part of Korean cultural penetration into Cambodia, which would eventually support Korean economic expansion. This study’s observation was consistent with the fact that, over the past ten years, Korean culture has increasingly become the most popular foreign culture in the kingdom. As Sun (2011) observed, “Most Cambodian teens nowadays have begun to adopt Korean style[s] in terms of fashion, hairstyle, make-up, clothes and even gestures” (para. 5). Hence, there has been a strong link between cultural and economic penetration in Cambodian-Korean relations.

It is not surprising that all the four case study countries have different policies in their relations with Cambodia, based on their respective national interests as well as their economic, political and historical contexts. The approach to higher education internationalization in each country may also have changed over time (de Wit, 2011), although in recent years, economic motivation has increasingly become one of the common factors influencing governments in many developed countries to get involved, directly and indirectly, in higher education internationalization, including support for international university partnerships. For instance, through higher education internationalization, many OECD countries expect to:

- produce a skilled workforce with global awareness and multi-cultural competencies;
- use public higher education funds to promote national participation in the global knowledge economy; and
- benefit from trade in education services. (Henard, Diamond & Roseveare, 2012, p. 9)

Hence, at the global level, there is a complexity of motivations for developed countries to participate in international educational activities. This is not to mention the different rationales at the institutional level in those developed nations. Therefore, any generalizations about the reasons for the four case study countries to support Cambodian higher education need to be made with caution.

In summary, large-scale international university programs with all the four case study countries have been influenced and shaped, to varying degrees, by the geopolitical interests of those countries. A conclusion about the future trend of university partnerships with these countries could be drawn, as follows: As their economic relations with Cambodia continue to thrive, Japan and Korea will expand their educational partnership programs with Cambodian universities, possibly in a wide range of knowledge areas, with many of them increasingly
supported by JICA and KOICA, respectively. While the number of Cambodian-American partnership projects may also rise in the future, they will still be mainly in the areas of the humanities and social sciences, with limited support from the US government or its development aid agency, which have always expressed only a minor interest in supporting Cambodian higher education. Obviously, the decline of French assistance for Cambodian higher education as well as the waning popularity of the French language in the country and globally suggests that French-Cambodian collaborative activities could become marginal, if not completely disappear, in the future. Hence, one of the first implications proposed by this study is that France and also the AUF should consider adjusting their international development strategies so that they can be responsive to the changing geopolitical realities of the world, beyond language and culture per se. The policies should accommodate English, which has already become the major international lingua franca. Indeed, the existing close relationships between academics from both countries could obviously be an advantage for French universities to renew or improve relationships with their Cambodian counterparts.

The study has also revealed that Cambodian universities’ relationships with universities in France, the United States, and Japan took a bottom-up approach, meaning strong ties had already been built between academics from both sides before they moved to create formal institutional partnerships. Additionally, most programs with the three countries tended to cover a broad range of activities, including curriculum building, capacity development of staff and faculty, and joint research, among others. By comparison, most Cambodian-Korean university partnerships took a top-down approach, with many Korean universities approaching their Cambodian counterparts, especially within the public sector, for partnerships. Compared to those in the other three countries, Cambodian-Korean university programs were relatively new and mainly covered student exchange activities and graduate scholarships to study in Korea.

**Rationales for university partnerships.**

Following the four rationales of de Wit (2002) and Knight (1999) as its first conceptual framework, the study has shown that the academic rationale was the dominant one for all the three universities to participate in international programs with foreign universities, including those in the four case study countries. In particular, the academic aspects of institution building and improving the quality of learning, teaching and research were commonly discussed by the
majority of participants, suggesting that Cambodian universities remained in a relatively weak condition. Furthermore, it was revealed that research and graduate education in Cambodia remained underdeveloped or not up to scratch. Hence, international university partnerships were one of the means to help Cambodian universities improve and move forward. In this study, other forms of rationale were only sporadically discussed by senior administrators at University C – a private university with English as the medium of instruction.

Within the policy context, the lack of other rationales at Universities A and B, as opposed to University C, further indicated the widely recognized problem of the lack of strategic policy within the public sector, at both the national and institutional levels. To put it another way, the MoEYS and public universities have followed a laissez-faire approach in their higher education internationalization, and therefore, it was common that international programs were, for the most part, initiated by foreign partners. The lack of policy has been seen to be attributable to a number of factors including the lack of resources, the centralized and politicized nature of the public sector, and above all, the dominance of the so-called “old educated” Cambodians, who still saw little value in international activities.

By comparison, University C had a very strong internationalization policy, with its senior administrators even advising, during the interviews, that all Cambodian universities need to position themselves within the context of global or regional development, for example, within the growing interconnectedness of ASEAN, instead of being bound or limited by the national boundary. Apparently, as a private institution, the university has a rather independent capacity to set its own policies and strategies. People in positions to influence policy, mostly foreign educated, were described as very receptive to new ideas in developing long-term visions for the university. This was seen as an instrumental factor guiding the university’s internationalization policy and strategies.

**Issues of mutuality.**

The central purpose of this study was to examine the issue of power relationships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. The study adopted the mutuality concept in Galtung’s structural theory of imperialism and Held’s cosmopolitanism as a conceptual framework. This concept is made up of four aspects, including equity, autonomy, solidarity and participation. In terms of equity, the
study found that the aim and modalities of Cambodian university partnerships with France, the
United States, and Japan were mutually reached by both sides. By comparison, the degree of
equity in many Cambodian-South Korean programs was limited, with many Cambodians
unaware of or, in some instances, disagreeing with the aims and forms of the partnerships.

Cambodian programs with France, the United States, and Japan manifested a high level
of autonomy, with participants from both sides showing respect for each other’s culture and
knowledge system. Apparently, this was mainly because those relationships were built on
existing personal connections at the department/faculty level. By contrast, the degree of
autonomy in South Korean-Cambodian programs was relatively limited, due to the lack of prior
relationships, especially at the grassroots level. Furthermore, many participants saw the academic
environment in Korea as less conducive to intercultural understanding, since not many Koreans
feel receptive to foreign cultures. Interestingly, Korean professors and staff working in
Cambodia under KOICA’s assistance had a good knowledge of the local culture and language.

As for solidarity, the study indicated that it was competitive for Cambodian students and
faculty to participate in international programs with the four countries, since only the brightest
were offered scholarships abroad. It was interesting that among all the four countries, Japan was
described as being flexible and prepared to compromise its requirements based on the realities of
each ASEAN country, including Cambodia, so that young scholars would be able to join and
contribute to JICA’s programs. Also notable was that large programs under the AUN/SEED-Net
or the AUF have greatly expanded the academic circles for Cambodian universities regionally
and internally. Above all, programs with the four countries have received general support from
external agencies on both sides.

As for participation, due to the legacy of two decades of political unrest and conflict,
Cambodian universities had limited contribution to knowledge production in every field in their
joint programs with the four countries. Nevertheless, the knowledge transfer process with
France, the United States, and Japan took place in a mutual and interactive manner. Clearly, this
approach reflected the three countries’ emphasis on training the trainers – an approach that was
highly valued by the majority of participants. Many Korean approaches to knowledge transfer
were noted as being quite aggressive, ignoring the importance of human relationships, especially
at the beginning.

Despite their varying degrees of mutuality, however, all programs were seen as beneficial
for the development and improvement of Cambodian higher education. In particular, while the
The majority of those programs covered a wide range of disciplines, ranging from the liberal arts to science and engineering, relatively few collaborative activities were related to management science and information technology – the areas of study which have already over-expanded, thereby causing a number of issues within the system, including a high unemployment rate and poor quality of education (Ford, 2006; MoEYS, 2009; UNESCO, 2010). Hence, a high employment rate was one of the benefits discussed by participants in the study. For instance, almost all the 22 students in the first graduating class of the bachelor’s program in social work at University B were offered jobs in various organizations in Cambodia soon after their graduation in 2012.

**Practical implications.**

**For Cambodian higher education institutions.**

The lack of an internationalization policy and strategies within the public sector was a key issue in this study. Most university partnerships were mainly initiated and designed by foreign universities or governments. This was one of the factors which had a negative impact on the degree of mutuality, especially when the foreign agenda or approach was in conflict with local interests, as in the case of some Korean-Cambodian programs. Therefore, it is recommended that each Cambodian university should no longer take international activities for granted, especially at the policy level, and begin taking the initiative by approaching their partners, instead of waiting for things to happen. In doing so, they should identify their own strengths and weaknesses for collaboration, rather than mainly seeking foreign assistance. In this regard, they should learn from the experience of University C, which has been able to capitalize on Cambodian cultural knowledge of Buddhism as well as its past experience of dealing with conflict and building peace, as part of their contribution to international collaboration.

In addition, international activities should be embedded in each university’s long-term vision and planning. The conflict of interest among different groups in the Social Work department was a case in point that showed the lack of clear planning by policy-makers when approaching issues of internationalization. While it may be wise, especially at the moment and from a financial point of view, to have two programs supported by two different partners exist alongside each other, such a decision could, more or less, affect the future sustainability of the
whole department. Above all, policy-makers at each university should be aware that any kind of policy or planning at the institutional level should not be done in isolation, but within the national context of development, so that higher education can respond to the realities of the society.

The involvement of younger scholars, especially those with overseas experience and new ideas, should be encouraged at both planning and implementation levels, in order for public universities to move forward. At this juncture, there is a positive indication in that the majority of participants across the three universities were young Cambodians in their late 20s and 30s, who were very enthusiastic about partaking in international activities. As the study has suggested, most university relationships built through personal connections between Cambodian scholars and their colleagues in France, the United States, and Japan, including their former supervisors or professors, were able to ensure a high degree of mutuality. This means the use of younger scholars, at full capacity, to expand university partnerships would be a wise approach for Cambodian universities.

Furthermore, it is recommended that before entering into any partnership agreement with foreign universities, each local university should first learn about its prospective partners and pay attention to the overall purpose of the proposed collaboration beyond what is written on paper. The comparability between programs as well as the similar interests shared by faculty from both sides should also be taken into account, to avoid any possible issue of mismatch in the partnerships. One way of doing so would be to involve faculty and staff from the grassroots level in the decision-making process because, for the most part, they will be the ones to work directly with foreign counterparts later. According to the findings, the sustainability of as well as the mutuality in most programs cannot be obtained without strong people-to-people ties.

**For Cambodia’s MoEYS.**

Throughout the study, while the MoEYS has been very supportive of the development of international academic collaborations at each university, the lack of strategic system planning or, to put it another way, the adoption of a laisser-faire approach, was a key concern voiced by many participants in the study. While, at present, any forms of foreign assistance appear to be useful, due to the lack of resources in Cambodian higher education institutions, the government should be more aware and concerned about the fact that international activities are largely driven by the
geopolitical interests of foreign donors. As international collaboration is one form of knowledge or policy transfer across different societies, what would happen if the inflow of foreign knowledge and programs took place in areas which were not relevant or practical to the realities of Cambodian society or at the cost of local culture? In fact, the issue of a mismatch between higher education provision and the local demand is not a new phenomenon, but has always plagued Cambodian higher education throughout its history, both at present and in the 1960s when the higher education system began expanding (Ayres, 2000a; Huon, 1974; Ford, 2006; MoEYS, 2009; UNESCO, 2010). This issue of the lack of relevance and practicality of foreign knowledge and policy is not unique to Cambodia but is a common phenomenon in the developing world, which Crossley and Watson (2003) have attributed to the “uncritical” process of knowledge and policy transfer.

In addition, the lack of support and initiative at the ministry level was another key concern. This was not surprising given that, since the early 1990s, the main focus has been and is still on improving basic education and the country has only spent an average of 3 percent of its educational outlay on higher education (Un & Chuon, 2013; MoEYS, 2014b). To be competitive in the knowledge-based economy, the government should consider reallocating its national funding so as to increase support for the higher education sector. Indeed, in the Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018 (MoEYS, 2014b), the government set a goal to increase the funding for the higher education sector up to 20% by 2018; however, it remains to be seen whether this will be done, due in large part to the government’s lack of its own resources.

Also, the lack of funding was widely discussed by most participants as the key issue affecting the development of the higher education sector so far. One policy maker who had been engaged in the system for years revealed that there was a funding package for research from the government; however, there was an issue of transparency whenever each program was implemented:

… I am not very comfortable with how policy is carried out and how funding is allocated. For example, the government has USD $100 million [his own example] for research, but instead of identifying the key problems for research, the government will begin with finding researchers. Thus, even though the researchers do not produce any significant outputs, they still get the money. There is no clear tracking system to figure out how research grant/money is allocated or how many publications they are required to produce… (O3)

Hence, all these issues need to be taken into serious consideration for planning if the system is to expand its international activities so as to move forward.
At the same time, all new policies need to be developed and applied in a transparent manner, so that they will not add more problems to the already inadequate system – a concern which was expressed by policy-makers at both national and institutional levels. Particularly, policy should be implemented as a guide, rather than be imposed. For instance, one suggestion offered by a Cambodian staff member at the Department of Higher Education who was engaged in the World Bank’s project at the time of this study was that every university should still have their own choice and autonomy, but the government should have a clear plan of support for programs which are necessary for the economy and the country. She explained this by providing a metaphor based on her experience in the US: “In the US education system, it is up to you, whether you want to be a good child and get the money or an independent child and walk on your own” (O2).

For foreign universities.

In this study it became evident that the issue of mutuality in Cambodian university partnerships with the four countries was largely impacted by the international experience of those foreign partners. There is little doubt that French, American and Japanese universities have long been involved in the internationalization business, and therefore, their approach to international academic collaboration has already reached a level of maturity. With this experience, their university partnerships have adopted a bottom-up approach, highlighting the importance of strengthening people-to-people relationships. By comparison, the emergence of South Korean universities as donors is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although South Korea itself began providing international aid quite early, in the mid-1960s, while receiving huge foreign assistance at the same time, its rising status as one of the key emerging donors has only occurred over the last two decades, alongside its phenomenal economic growth (Kondoh, 2013). KOICA was established on April 1, 1991 with a mission to “maximize the effectiveness of Korea’s grant aid programs for developing countries by implementing the government’s grant aid and technical cooperation programs” (KOICA, n.d.). Korea only became an official member of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on January 1, 2010. Hence, it may have been unavoidable that South Korean international university activities, which were top-down by nature, have experienced some challenges, as discussed in this study, although their significant contribution to the
development of Cambodian higher education can hardly be denied. One of the suggestions drawn from the comparison across the four countries is that South Korean universities, or universities from any emerging economy with limited international experience, should give attention to establishing human connections in their international activities, especially from the start.

In fact, many South Korean universities could turn these challenges into opportunities by improving and expanding their existing partnerships with Cambodian universities. In recent years, with an increasing number of Cambodian graduates who have scholarships offered by both the Korean government and universities, one of the best approaches for Korean universities, and for Cambodian universities as well, is to build partnerships using those existing human networks, instead of starting from scratch. They also need to be reminded that it takes time for a partnership to grow and reach the level of maturity.

The study has also shown that Japan has recently placed an emphasis on connecting all flagship engineering universities in the ASEAN region in its large-scale international development program. This modality, which has been seen to be very successful, provides benefits to both sides. While Japan could expand its economic activities and relations in general with the region, there has been an increasing interconnectedness among all ASEAN universities, bridging the gap in terms of quality and also models of higher education (Francophone vs Anglophone) – a factor which has greatly contributed to the solidarity among Southern institutions. As many Cambodian participants pointed out, it would have been difficult for Cambodian universities to directly approach their counterparts in Japan without this network. One key implication here is that ASEAN as a group has more bargaining power with developed countries than does each of its individual members. This means Cambodian universities as well as those in other less developed member countries should make wise use of ASEAN as an avenue not only to expand their academic networks but also to negotiate their power relationships, in the region and internationally.

Revisiting Galtung’s Structural Theory of Imperialism and Held’s Cosmopolitanism

In exploring the issues of mutuality in the Cambodian context, I found Galtung’s structural theory of imperialism and Held’s cosmopolitanism complementary. First, Galtung’s discussion on the role of nation-states in shaping this unequal world is still relevant, in that Cambodian programs with large-scale support from each case study country were related to the
geopolitical interests of those countries. In particular, although it examined the issues from the perspective of Cambodians, this study has provided a convincing conclusion that while Japanese and South Korean support for Cambodian higher education has been driven by their economic interest in Cambodia, France and the US have been more interested in cultural and political penetration.

In addition, this study also reinforced Galtung’s argument that all forms of penetration or dominance are not necessarily interconnected, as exemplified by the Japanese case. To quote his statement again:

“Japan has had no message that has captured people’s minds, penetrated them, defined their general outlook on the world, and made them look to Tokyo as the source of goal setting and the ultimate meaning of life. There is no book, either black or red, emanating from the Japanese economic center, only material goods.” (Galtung, 1980, p. 110)

His statement above remains true, since no one in this study saw Japanese partnerships, in any form, as a means of cultural dominance. By comparison, South Korean educational projects with Cambodia were seen as a form of cultural dominance, closely tied to economic penetration, which was their underlying purpose.

On the other hand, Galtung’s concept, bound mainly by a North-South conception, ignores the role of such regional bodies as ASEAN in international academic collaboration. As this study has suggested, however, this body has been very successful in supporting JICA’s programs of the AUN/SEED-Net. Also, while KOICA’s activities with ASEAN were beyond the scope of this study, many Cambodian participants mentioned that this Korean international aid agency is following the pattern of JICA in its growing collaboration with ASEAN. Therefore, it is clear that relationships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the developed world are not simply confined to the North-South framework, but have increasingly become complex and involve different actors across various levels: institutional, national, and regional. Indeed, while not many Cambodian participants directly discussed any ASEAN members, other than Japan, as donors in the JICA supported program, other countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, have obviously played a dual role, acting as host countries for graduate studies in the region while, at the same time, receiving assistance from Japan. Also, as mentioned earlier, South Korea was an aid recipient country after the Second World War, but has done exceptionally well in its economic growth and has been able to transfer itself to an emerging donor over the last few decades.
To sum up, the world is no longer defined by a North-South distinction, as seen in Galtung’s conception, but has increasingly become complex – a fact which has been well discussed in Held’s cosmopolitanism. Hence, Galtung’s and Held’s theories might be seen as complementary, offering this study a critical lens to examine various forms of international partnerships between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the four countries included in this study. The discussion above also suggests that, unlike neo-Marxist advocates, who focus mainly on economic and political inequality and dependency in international relations, both Galtung and Held see issues of cultural and knowledge dominance as important. Moreover, they both propose an ideal framework of mutuality, with an emphasis on the role of human agency in international academic relations, if the world is to move toward peace and mutual benefits. The findings of this study clearly illustrate the core value of this framework, indicating that the strong degree of mutuality in Cambodian programs with France, the United States and Japan was largely attributable to the close relationships between the Cambodian and foreign sides.

Additionally, Galtung’s and Held’s mutuality framework proposes that the role of universities at the international level is not necessarily limited by national policy or interests. In this study, while the AUF-supported programs were very demanding, in terms of using the French language, French professors and universities were more flexible and, in many instances, allowed Cambodian students even to complete their final projects in English. In general, this study’s findings have added new insights to the existing literature on the relevant issues within the Cambodian context. As discussed in Chapter Two, previous studies by Clayton and Ngoy (1997), Clayton (2006), and Pit and Ford (2004) were framed within the neo-colonial lens, indicating that collaborative activities with France, especially through the AUF and the Ambassade de France programs, as well as with other developed countries during the 1990s, had occurred mainly in an imposed manner. While my study did not totally reject those findings, it added a cultural and human aspect into the discussion, showing that Cambodian relationships with France, the United States and Japan, especially at the personal and institutional levels, were, in many respects, mutual and supported by the local Cambodians.

While Held (2010) proposes the cosmopolitan mutuality framework for an ideal world, he acknowledges that, “Just as there is not one form of liberalism or one single way to conceptualize democracy, there is not one unified or monolithic understanding of cosmopolitanism” (p. 14-15). This statement implies that his mutuality framework should not be
seen as the only model for the world, thereby opening space for the inclusion of different viewpoints regarding how mutuality, or in broader terms, power relationships, are conceptualized. In this regard, I have furthered my discussion and analysis to examine how Cambodians construct their power relationships in international programs with the four case study countries.

Digging into the socio-cultural context has confirmed the dominance of the patron-client practice in Cambodian relationships with foreign universities. Patron-client ties are defined as personal or informal relationships which take the form of “unequal exchanges between the wealthy and powerful and the poorer and dependent” (Ledgerwood, n.d.). What binds these relationships together are reciprocity and dependency (Ledgerwood, n.d.; Scott, 1976; Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1980; Carney, 1989). With great power, influence and resources, “a patron is expected to protect his client and provide for his material needs whereas the client reciprocates with his labor and his loyalty” (Scott, 1976, p. 169). With all these characteristics, patron-client relationships gain “the legitimacy of dependency”, something which Western societies might view as corruption or exploitation (Scott, 1976).

In this study, the patron-client tradition manifested itself in a number of ways, including an acceptance of a more dominant role of foreign participants, dependence on them, an acceptance of their conditions and gratitude for their assistance. In particular, many Cambodian participants saw themselves as clients who needed support from foreign partners, whom they regarded as patrons with more resources (assistance), advanced knowledge and technologies. Based on the Theravada Buddhist notion that wealth needs to be redistributed to make merit, Cambodian participants would expect foreign participants to take the lead or initiative in, provide support for and contribute more to international collaborative programs. In return, the clients would be more grateful and loyal to their patrons. As the study has revealed, this kind of practice was built on close and long-term relationships between Cambodian and foreign counterparts. Hence, it was evident that due to this trust at the personal or human level, Cambodians tended to view their academic relationships with France, the United States and Japan in a positive sense, although their foreign partners took the lead and initiative in many instances. Essentially, the manifestation of this hierarchical power practice speaks to the dominant role of Buddhism in Cambodian society. In fact, the study has indicated that the Cambodian “open approach” to international university collaborations has been shaped by the Buddhist practice of the “middle
The path”, meaning that, for the most part, Cambodian universities do not discriminate against institutions from any country.

This study has to acknowledge Maeda’s (2011) research, which was among the few studies to directly discuss the role of patron-client relationships within the context of international educational collaboration. Despite its several limitations as pointed out in Chapter Two, her study on Cambodian-Japanese power relationships, along with relevant literature from other disciplines (Gyallay-Pap, 2007; Harris, 2005; Peou, 2000, Ojendal & Antlov, 1998; Kent & Chandler, 2008; Ledgerwood, n.d.) reinforced my belief about the persistence of this form of power dynamics in Cambodian society. Nonetheless, this study’s findings challenge Maeda’s notion that Cambodian participants are rather passive, dependent actors in international development programs – a conclusion which tended to suggest that a uni-directional form of knowledge transfer would be acceptable to Cambodians. As the findings of this study reveal, although Cambodians accepted the reality of unequal power relations with foreign counterparts, they wanted to participate in all stages of partnership programs, claiming that two-way knowledge transfer would be the only approach to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the partnerships.

Furthermore, this study has found that the practice of patron-client relationships was built on strong and close human ties between Cambodians and their foreign counterparts. This finding conflicts somewhat with Maeda’s (2011) research, which showed that the commonality of power hierarchy between the Cambodian tradition of the patron-client relationships and Japanese Confucian culture was the key to the development of harmony in relationships between these two sides. In this study, however, while both Japanese and Korean cultures are Confucian-based, most Japanese-Cambodian educational partnerships manifested a stronger degree of mutuality than the Korean-Cambodian ones. Also, Cambodians developed mutual relationships with their counterparts in France and the US, in spite of their different forms of culture. This finding emphasizes the idea that, in international programs, strong human connections play a more important role in ensuring mutuality than simply the commonalities of cultural patterns. Essentially, such differences between Maeda’s and my study’s findings have opened a space for future research to explore.
Theoretical implications.

The adoption of Galtung’s structural theory of imperialism and Held’s cosmopolitanism to explore the issues of power dynamics in Cambodian higher education exemplifies a study that employs a Western-based theory within a non-Western context. Hence, in selection of any Western-derived theory for a study, one needs to begin by examining the underlying or normative values (to borrow Holmes’ concept [1981]) of the non-Western society to see if the chosen theory is culturally and contextually appropriate, and could allow the study to examine in depth the issue of concern. As Crossley and Watson (2003) point out,

Certainly, we can see how the field of comparative and international education has done much to demonstrate the dangers of overtly positivistic assumptions, and the uncritical international transfer of educational policy and practice from one context to another. We do, however, suggest that this critique also applies more to the contemporary transfer of educational theory and research methodologies than is often recognized. (p. 141, emphasis added)

In the Cambodian case, Buddhism has been a dominant religion since the 13th century and has manifested itself in almost every aspect of Cambodian life. Therefore, one cannot ignore this core normative value when studying any issue within the Cambodian context. In this study, I have therefore moved beyond dependency, neo-colonial and center-periphery theories, to adopt a WOMP theory and cosmopolitanism as a theoretical framework.

Second, a point which is related to the first, one should never assume or expect that the theoretical frame one selects is complete or inviolable, without looking beyond its existing framework. Drawing on several studies by Weber (1948), Holmes (1981) and Hayhoe (2007), in her article “Made to Be Broken – Universal Theories as Ideal Types”, Hayhoe (2011) suggests that universal theories should not be used merely to prove particular points, but rather to explore how far they have validity or work in different contexts. Clearly, this suggestion shares a view with many post-modernists, including Rolland Paulston, who argues that researchers should “recognize, tolerate or even appreciate the existence of multiple theoretical realities and perspectives” in their study (Paulston, 1992, cited by Rust, 1996, p. 32). Hence, with reference to normative values, it is evident that the tradition of patron-client relationships, deeply rooted in the Buddhist notion of merit-making, has shaped how power is constructed within Cambodian society. This means most Western theories of power dynamics, largely driven by the notion of liberal democracy, would, by nature, be in conflict with the Cambodian social hierarchical order. In this regard, in my study, I have offered a reflection based on the practice of patron-client
relationships to complement the discussion of the degree of mutuality by Galtung and Held. Based on this cultural reflection, the concept of mutuality within the Cambodian context is viewed more as the degree of “acceptable harmonious relationships”, than as a matter of exact equality or the same degree of power dynamics, as commonly portrayed within the global discourse. Overall, I used Galtung’s and Held’s framework to test how far it could reflect the degree of mutuality in the Cambodian context, rather than simply trying to prove or disprove it.

Suggestions for Future Research

As discussed in Chapter Five, this study has several limitations which future research could rectify. First, its sole focus on the viewpoints of Cambodian participants suggests that the findings are not only incomplete but also biased toward the Cambodian side. To gain deeper insights into, and indeed, a more complete picture of, those international partnerships, future research should also cover the perspective of participants from those four countries. It would also be useful to complement this study’s findings by examining in considerable depth the broad higher education programs of those four countries with Cambodia, especially within the wider context of their foreign policy.

The examination of Japanese-Cambodian academic relations within the context of the AUN/SEED-Net programs, mainly based on Cambodian perceptions, also means it would be misleading to generalize the findings to Japan-ASEAN relationships as a whole or even in the context of education at the regional level. To fully understand the role of JICA in supporting the development of higher education in the region, future research should look at other political and socio-cultural dimensions of Japan-ASEAN relations. Moreover, critical perspectives of participants from other ASEAN countries as well as from Japan should be included.

Above all, I have argued throughout the study, as also revealed by the findings, that Cambodian normative values, especially the Buddhist ethos, have influenced and shaped Cambodian viewpoints about the issues of mutuality in international programs between Cambodian universities and their partners in the four countries. This argument, shaped by my own personal cultural values, has greatly influenced the whole process of the study. Hence, it would be interesting if future research on the same issue could be done by an outsider researcher.
Final Thoughts

As a small country, Cambodia has never been able to rebuild itself as a strong and “independent” nation-state since the collapse of the Khmer empire (802-1431). Particularly, its internal affairs have always suffered interference, in one way or another, from its larger neighbors as well as by other powerful countries, which have always tried to benefit from Cambodia’s position in geopolitics. Within the context of this study, most large-scale partnership programs between Cambodian universities and their counterparts in the four countries have been driven and shaped, although to varying degrees, by the geo-political interests of those countries. Hence, it would be naïve to assume that nation-states are no longer relevant in international relations, including international university partnerships.

At the same time, however, as Held (2010) has pointed out, the world has become increasingly interconnected, and emerging issues, including environmental problems, have called for cooperation among all countries, regardless of their different religious and economic ideologies – a situation that has gradually challenged, theoretically and practically, traditional approaches in international relations. Therefore, to ensure social justice and mutual benefits, there needs to be a move away from the purely economic and political interests of nation-states to accept the different values of every community. In The Clash of Civilization (1993), Samuel Huntington also indicated that “the conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating civilizations,” thereby claiming an understanding of different cultural values and knowledge systems would be the only solution (p. 25). The findings of this study strongly support this direction, indicating that despite the different motivations of each foreign university and country to support Cambodian higher education, at the end of the day, it is people-to-people relationships that determined the degree of mutuality as well as the overall success of those programs.
References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Institutional Consent Form

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dear <Name of University Rector >

My name is Phirom Leng and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Currently, I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation on the nature of power dynamics between Cambodian universities and universities in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. In particular, this study examines the four cases comparatively to see how far and in what ways each case is characterized by mutuality. The study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ruth Hayhoe.

The study examines, from Cambodian perspectives, how far international projects between Cambodian universities and their foreign counterparts in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea have manifested mutuality. There are two points of data collection in my study that require your institutional consent: access to organizational documents relating to international university linkage programs, Memorandums of Understanding, and other relevant policy documents; and access to key informant interviews of personnel at your institutions. Interview participants will be formally recruited based on their consent and their experience in international projects with universities in each country. All participation will be voluntary and at no point will participants be judged, evaluated or put at risk of harm. All participants may withdraw at any time without consequence. All interviews will be audio-taped only with the permission of the individual participants. This letter is to request your consent for me to collect data through documents and interviews on or between <dates> at <location>.

Participation in this study can benefit your organization in the opportunity it provides to investigate the consequences of international university linkage programs with developed countries, namely France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. The findings will enable your institution to determine the kinds of international collaborative programs which best serve the needs of Cambodian society. At the same time, your institution could use the findings to identify its own potential to contribute to international collaborative projects, as a form of dialogue, rather than one-way dominance by their more economically developed colleagues. With limited literature available on this topic within the Cambodian context, this study intends to fill in gaps in the scholarly literature and help the academic and development communities gain a deeper understanding of North-South collaborative programs in higher education in the Cambodian context.
The identities of the participants will be kept anonymous, although I would like to report the names, locations, and dates of the interviews in my study. Individual anonymity is guaranteed should the data collected be used in subsequent publications or public presentations.

All the data collected from the interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored in a locked cabinet at my home. It will be used for the purposes of a PhD thesis and perhaps for subsequent research articles. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. Upon completion of the study, the research will also be hosted online and participants will be notified of the URL in order to have access to the final results.

If your organization voluntarily agrees to allow me access to the involved research units, please sign the letter below. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. My supervisor, Dr. Ruth Hayhoe, is also available for questions regarding my study. Our contact information is below. Dr. Hayhoe and myself will be the only individuals with access to the collected data. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

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If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study please contact the Ethics Review Office at the University of Toronto at 416 946 3272 or, ethics.review@utoronto.ca

By signing below, <Name of University Rector/Vice-rector> is willing to allow the researcher to conduct interviews and collect documents at <name of organization> between <dates>. <Name of University Rector/Vice-rector> has received a copy of this letter, and it is fully aware of the conditions above.
Name: ________________________________________________________________

Position: _____________________________________________________________

Signed: ____________________________ Date: ________________

Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.
Appendix B: Questions for Open-ended Interviews

English Version

A. For Senior Administrators (Rector/vice-rector & International Office Director)

General:

1. What were the driving forces behind your institution’s establishment of international collaborative programs with foreign universities?
2. What factors have influenced your choice of a particular country and institution in international collaborative programs?
3. What are the common forms of collaborative programs in general (research collaboration, exchange programs, curriculum development, etc.)?
   a. What are the common forms of collaborative programs you have with French universities? With American universities? With Japanese universities? And with South Korea universities?
   b. Who initiated those collaborative programs (institutions themselves, or a third party, including the government and/or any foreign/international aid agency)?

Mutuality:

Equity:

a. Which side took the lead in the project planning and initiation process? (This question also indicates the degree of participation)
   b. Do you think the programs represent the interests of both parties? Why or why not?

Autonomy:

a. Were there any cultural barriers (language, communication, etc.) between you/your institution and your colleagues from France? From the US? From Japan? And from South Korea?
   b. (In case the project was funded/initiated by a third party) What do you think about the role of the third party?

Solidarity

a. Does your partner institution have similar programs with other institutions in Cambodia? And with institutions in other developing countries?
   b. (If yes), how often and in what ways does your institution get connected with them?

Participation:

a. What has your institution contributed to the collaborative programs?
   b. During the programs, who played an important role in the decision-making process?
   c. Are you usually well-informed of projects planning and other forms of decision-making by people at the top (at the ministry level and at the regional level)?
Overall:
   a. Overall, do you think the programs have manifested equity or dominance by your foreign partners? Why?
   b. If you could make a decision again, would you still want to collaborate with institutions in those countries?
   c. For future success of international projects between Cambodian universities and foreign universities, what would you suggest?

B. For Faculty

General:
   1. Why did your institution choose to collaborate with universities in France/the US/Japan/South Korea?
   2. What benefits have you and your institution gained through those partnership programs?
   3. What are the challenges you and your institution have thus far experienced in those partnership programs?
   4. Why do you think those foreign institutions want to collaborate with your institution?

Mutuality:

Equity:
   a. Which side took the lead in the project planning and initiation process?
   b. Do you think the programs represent the interests of both parties? Why or why not?

Autonomy:
   a. Were there any cultural barriers (language, communication, etc.) between you/your institution and your foreign colleagues (from France/the US/Japan/South Korea)?
   b. (In case the project was funded/initiated by a third party) What do you think about the role of the third party?

Solidarity:
   a. Does your partner institution have similar programs with other institutions in Cambodia? And with institutions in other developed countries?
   b. (If yes), how often and in what way do you and your institution get connected with them?

Participation:
   a. What has your institution contributed to the collaborative programs?
   b. During the programs, who played an important role in the decision-making process?
   c. How often are you allowed to get involved in the decision-making process at the ministry, regional, or international level? (in case the project was initiated by a third party)
   d. Are you usually well-informed of projects planning and other forms of decision-making by people at the top (and also at the ministry and regional levels)?

Overall:
   a. Overall, do you think there is mutuality in projects with French/US/Japanese/South...
Korean universities?

- If you could make a decision again, would you still want to participate in international university projects with France/the US/Japan/South?
- For the future success of international projects between Cambodian universities and foreign universities, what would you suggest?

C. Staff at Other Organization Concerned

1. Is there any policy regarding HE internationalization since the 1990s? And international university relationships, in particular?
2. Do you know if there are any collaborative programs between Cambodian universities and universities in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea that have taken place through the Ministry/government initiative?
   - Why did/do they approach the ministry, instead of dealing directly with institutions?
3. What are the common forms of those relationships?
4. What have the Cambodian side gained from those projects?

Mutuality

Equity:
- In those projects, who usually take the lead in the project planning and initiation process?
- Do you think those projects usually present the interests of both parties (Cambodia and foreign counterparts)?

Autonomy:
- In your view, are there any cultural barriers between Cambodian participants and those in France, the US, Japan and South Korea?

Solidarity:
- Do you know if there have been any links among those Cambodian participating institutions, and also between them and institutions in other developing countries, especially under the same programs?

Participation:
- During the process, is the Cambodian side normally allowed to participate in the decision-making?
- What could the Cambodian side contribute to international collaborative programs?
- What kinds of institution usually participate in international collaborative programs (public, private, elite, etc.)?

Overall:
- Overall, do you think projects with those countries are characterized by mutuality or foreign dominance?
- Over the last twenty years, have you noticed any changes or development in university relationships between Cambodian universities and universities in France, the US, Japan and South Korea?
c. What suggestions do you have to ensure the future success of international projects between Cambodian universities and their foreign counterparts?

**Khmer Version**

**A. For Administrators**

សំណាងទូឬទេ:

១ តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យមានការបង្កើត <name> បានធ្វើការការការបង្កើតនៅប្រទេសខ្មែរបាន?

២ តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យមានការបង្កើតនៅប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិបាន?

៣ តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យ <name> មានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

- តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យ <name> មានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

- តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យ <name> មានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

- តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យ <name> មានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

ការបង្កើតទី២:

១ តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យមានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

២ តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យមានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

៣ តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យមានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

៤ តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យមានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

៥ តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យមានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

៦ តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យមានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

៧ តើអ្នកមន្ត្រីមាតិកាវិទ្យាល័យមានការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ដូចជាសាធារណៈអ្នកជែះសម្រាប់ការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យសមារណ៍ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិទៅដល់ប្រទេសខ្មែរ បាន?

ប្រយោជាងឈ្មោះ:

១ ប្រយោជាងឈ្មោះ <name> មានការប្រការការបង្កើតជាតិសកលវិទ្យាល័យ <name> ទៅដល់ប្រទេសអន្តរជាតិ
បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការ: 
១ ប្រាកដប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់
២ ប្រាកដប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់
៣ ប្រាកដប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់

B: For Faculty

ប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ : 
១ អ្នកដឹកនាំការបង្កើតៗនឹងហាងប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់
២ អ្នកដឹកនាំការបង្កើតៗនឹងហាងប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់
៣ អ្នកដឹកនាំការបង្កើតៗនឹងហាងប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់
៤ អ្នកដឹកនាំការបង្កើតៗនឹងហាងប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់

ដូចជំនួស: 
១ ដូចជំនួស បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់
២ ដូចជំនួស បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់
៣ ដូចជំនួស បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់
៤ ដូចជំនួស បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់ បោះវង្កាហ្វេរិយាការៈេវេកូនប្រការសន្តិភាពដោយរូបសំខាន់
Appendix C: Ethics Approval

UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, RESEARCH

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 28181

October 9, 2012

Dr. Ruth Hayhoe
OISE/UT: DEPT. OF THEORY & POLICY
STUDIES IN EDUC.
OISE/UT

Mr. Phiom Leng
OISE/UT: DEPT. OF THEORY & POLICY
STUDIES IN EDUC.
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Hayhoe and Mr. Phiom Leng,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "International university partnerships in contemporary Cambodian higher education"

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: October 9, 2012
Expiry Date: October 8, 2013
Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB’s delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

[Signatures]

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe
REB Manager

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
McMurtrie Building, 12 Queen's Park Crescent West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8 Canada
Tel. +1 416 946-3273 • Fax. +1 416 946-5360 • ethics.review@utoronto.ca • http://www.research.utoronto.ca/research-administration/ethics/
Appendix D: Individual Consent Form

English Version

OISE
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

To the participants in this study,

My name is Phirom Leng and I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Currently, I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation on the nature of power dynamics between Cambodian universities and universities in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. In particular, this study examines the four cases comparatively to see how far and in what ways each case is characterized by mutuality. The study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ruth Hayhoe.

This study will be carried out in Cambodia, focusing on its international university programs with universities in France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. Data will be collected through both documents and interviews at four Cambodian universities and at the Ministry of Education as well. The study will interview a minimum of two senior administrators (university President or Vice President and international relations coordinator) and six faculty at four different Cambodian higher education institutions. The collected data will be used for the purposes of a PhD thesis under the supervision of Professor Ruth Hayhoe, Department of Leadership, Higher & Adult Education, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. It may also be used for subsequent research articles. Dr. Hayhoe and myself are the only researchers with access to the collected data.

Participation in this study can benefit your organization/the Ministry in the opportunity it provides to investigate the consequences of international university linkage programs with developed countries, namely France, the United States, Japan and South Korea. The findings will enable your organization to determine the kinds of international collaborative programs which best serve the needs of Cambodian society. At the same time, Cambodian institutions could use the findings to identify their own potential to contribute to international collaborative projects, as a form of dialogue, rather than one-way dominance by their more economically developed colleagues. Policy-makers at the Cambodian Ministry of Education could use the findings to evaluate their role in international academic relations. With limited literature available on this topic within the Cambodian context, this study intends to fill in gaps in the scholarly literature and help the academic and development communities gain a deeper understanding of North-South collaborative programs in higher education in the Cambodian context.

Our interview should last between 45 and 90 minutes. I would like to tape our interview, with your permission. If you would prefer that I not tape our session, please let me know before our
interview. The questions will focus on the rationale for international collaborative programs at Cambodian universities. I am also interested in examining if those programs have manifested mutuality or dominance by foreign participants. As the interview proceeds, I may ask questions for clarification or further understanding, but my part will be mainly to listen to you speak about your views, experiences, and the reasons you believe the things you do. After the interview, I will write brief notes that will be used to assist me in remembering the surroundings of the interview (i.e., characteristics of the site). However, for the confidentiality reason, these will be given a factitious title or name in the transcription of the data and not mentioned by name or title in the dissertation or in any publication.

I got your contact information from the international relations office at your organization and I’ve found your expertise and affiliation with <Insert Name of Organization> is of interest to me and my study. However, participation in this study is voluntary. During our interview, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions that you are not comfortable answering. You may at any time refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the interview process. If, after our interview, you decide to withdraw from my study, please contact me and I will destroy my notes and all data collected. At no time will value judgments be placed on your responses nor will any evaluation be made of your effectiveness in your organization.

It is the intention that each interview will be audio taped and later transcribed to paper. In order to keep the interview anonymous, in my personal notes I will assign a number to you that will correspond to your interviews and transcriptions. If you wish, I can send you your transcript in order for you to add any further information or to correct any misinterpretations that could result. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons cannot be identified. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

If you would like to have summary of the study results sent to you upon the completion of the study, please check here:

The tape and transcripts will be kept in a safe location in my home office for further analysis. Only my supervisor and myself will have access to the tapes and transcripts. Your identity will be kept confidential and not used in the final study, in publications or presentations.

Upon completion of the study, I plan to post the research on a website. When that time comes, I will notify you of the URL, so that you have access to the final results.

Please feel free to share this information letter and website with your supervisor and/or others in your organization.

My contact information as well as the contact information of my advisor and the ethical review board at the University of Toronto is as follows:

Phirom Leng
PhD Candidate, Higher Education Program
Department of Leadership, Higher & Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 6th Floor
If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study please contact the Ethics Review Office at the University of Toronto at 416 946 3272 or, ethics.review@utoronto.ca

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Phirom Leng

By signing below, you are indicating that you are voluntarily willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: ________________________________
Signed: ______________________________ Date: ____________________
Please initial if you agree to have your interview audio taped: _____
Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.
បទសម្រាប់ការរួមការរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

ករចូលរួមការចូលរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

កំពុងការរួមការរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

ការសម្រាប់ការរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

ការសម្រាប់ការរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

ការសម្រាប់ការរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

ការសម្រាប់ការរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

ការសម្រាប់ការរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

ការសម្រាប់ការរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

ការសម្រាប់ការរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

ការសម្រាប់ការរួមការសិក្សាថ្នាក់បណ្តាញ 

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