

Understanding Cambodian academics' research engagement: A qualitative case study

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Engagement in research is crucial for university academics to fulfil their tripartite roles related to teaching, research and service. While there is an increasing body of work investigating how academics relate to research in general, studies that examine research engagement practices of academics in developing countries remain limited. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by investigating Cambodian academics' research engagement. Data derived from in-depth interviews with 20 Cambodian academics show a limited level of engagement in academic research and much of this is in the form of externally commissioned research. The academics' pervasive interest in generating extra income through teaching and moonlighting and the absence of clear academic career paths at both national and institutional levels are major barriers to their research engagement. The findings of this study point to an underdeveloped and under-productive research environment, which potentially prevents Cambodia from enhancing its competitiveness in the global knowledge economy and realising its aspirations to transform itself into a knowledge-based society. The study concludes with implications for future research.