Developing Employability Skills through Curriculum Design and Implementation: A Case Study of English Language Education in Cambodia

By

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Statement of Originality

I, CHEA Sathya, hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis and the material presented in this thesis is my original work except those indicated in the acknowledgement. I further declare that I have followed the University's policies and regulations on Academic Honesty, Copyright and Plagiarism in writing the thesis and no material in this thesis has been submitted for a degree in this or other universities.

Abstract

There is an increasing demand for a skilled and flexible workforce in Cambodia, as the country's economy has been increasingly globalized and knowledge-based. In this context, Cambodian university students need to possess various skills required by the labor market to facilitate their transition to work. Indeed, to upskill its labor force, Cambodia has incorporated employability skills development in its national policy on higher education. Thus, employability skills development has been an important topic for discussion in the country. However, the existing literature is insufficient to provide a comprehensive understanding of employability skills development in higher education. Most existing research on the topic focuses on classroom teaching and learning, but neglects curriculum planning and development. Moreover, research on how student engagement, which is considered essential in contemporary education, contributes to employability skills development is lacking. To fill these knowledge gaps, this study selects an English program at a renowned university in Cambodia as a case to examine how employability skills are developed through curriculum development and student engagement.

The present study employed a curriculum development framework, which were dissected into two connected frameworks. The first was the curriculum development stage, in which curriculum developers needed to screen both external and internal environmental factors to determine what knowledge, skills, and attributes to be incorporated into the curriculum and how to teach them. The second stage was the curriculum implementation, which, in the present study, was equated with the teaching and learning practices at the classroom level. In this stage, teaching and learning practices were assumed to enhance student engagement. Thus, a student engagement framework was employed.

This study employed a mixed-method design, in which a qualitative study was conducted to investigate the participants' perception of student engagement, its antecedents, and the list of employability skills the participants thought the English program at the Department of English taught. Based on the findings of this qualitative research, a quantitative study was developed and conducted test a model in which student engagement was assumed to mediate the relationship between classroom, institutional, and personal factors and employability skills development. The present study employed instruments that comprised 38 semi-structured interviews and a small-scale survey. Using purposive and snowball sampling methods, the study secured interview data from six management team members, ten lecturers and 22 senior year students and graduates. The interviews were conducted to gain the information regarding the experiences and perception of the three main stakeholders on the curriculum design and delivery at Department of English to ensure employability skills development. The survey collected data from a sample of 373 senior-year students. The questionnaire used was adapted from the Course Experience Questionnaire, with some additional questions generated from the results of the interviews and document analyses. The survey tested a model that assumed student engagement to mediate the relationship between institutional, classroom and personal factors and employability skills development.

Three findings emerged from the analysis of the interview data. First, the case program was responsive to labor market demand, which largely explained the emergence of employability skills in the curriculum. Second, employability skills were taught through a combined approach, which includes an implicit way that embeds skills in the core curriculum and an explicit way that refers to formulation of skills related stand-alone subjects. Third, student engagement was relevant to employability skills development and could be promoted by effective teaching and learning practices. This finding indicated that though student-centered approach was appreciated,

teacher-center approach was somewhat needed to ensure effective employability skills development. As for the survey findings, the mediational analysis confirmed the mediating role of student engagement in the relationship between various factors in employability skills development.

These findings provide insights into factors that influence employability skills development through curriculum design and delivery in higher education. The insight on the connection between employability skills development and student engagement reminds university curriculum developers and teachers to be sensitive to the balance between teacher-centered and student-centered methods.

Keywords: Employability skills development, higher education, curriculum development and implementation, student engagement, Cambodia

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List of Abbreviations

3P	Presage, Process, and Product
4Cs	Communication, Critical thinking, Collaboration, and Creativity
ACC	Accreditation Committee of Cambodia
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BED	Bachelor of Education
CareerEDGE	Career development learning, Experience of work and life, Degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, Generic skills, and Emotional intelligence
CE	Core English
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
CHEA	Cambodian Higher Education Association
CI	Confidence Interval
CLE	Constructivist Learning Environment
CoM	Council of Ministers
CoP	Community of Practice
CPA	Certified Practising Accountant
CRLT	Center for Research on Learning and Teaching
DHE	Department of Higher Education
DoE	Department of English
FLC	Foreign Language Center
GS	Global Studies

HEI	Higher Education Institution
IFL	Institute of Foreign Languages
IP	Integrative Pedagogy
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
KSAVE	Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Values, and Ethics
LS	Literature Studies
MCQ	Multiple Choice Question
MEF	Ministry of Economics and Finance
MIC	Middle Income Country
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport
MoLVT	Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training
NSSE	National Survey of Student Engagement
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PC	Professional Communication
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
QSA	Quaker Service Australia
R&D	Research and Development
SAT	Scholastic Assessment Test
SNCE	Supreme National Council of Education
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
USEM	Understanding, Skills, Efficacy belief, and Metacognition

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Increase in the Focus on Employability Skills

Graduate employability has become a hot topic for discussion and research in the field of higher education studies (e.g., Andrews & Higson, 2008; Barrie, 2007; Cranmer, 2006; Cumming, 2010; Finch et al., 2013; Kember & Leung, 2005; Lee & Chin, 2017; Nagarajan & Edwards, 2014; Venkatraman et al., 2017). Indeed, as nowadays technological and social changes can transpire very fast, the nature of a job can also change and thus possessing only technical or discipline-specific skills is no longer sufficient to ensure employment among university graduates (Fulgence, 2016). To make it worse, massification of higher education has led to degree inflation, as the ever-intensifying globalization setting has made it more challenging for university graduates to secure employment or higher earnings (Mok, 2016). At the same time, there has been a shift to the knowledge-based economy, and to thrive in such context, students need to possess a set of various skills that can be transferred to different positions and situations and that encourage lifelong learning. These skills thus enable them to effectively cope with the changes in the nature of the job and of the labor market and thus maintain their competitiveness and relevance.

1.2 Cambodian Higher Education and Employability Skills

In Cambodia, employability becomes core to higher education, because the country has been integrating into the international and regional communities and its economy has become more globalized, regionalized and knowledge-based. Specifically, the discourse of globalization and knowledge-based economy emerged in Cambodian higher education in the 2010s, as the opening up of the country has influenced its labor market significantly and has made international

contents an important element of the country's higher education (Oleksiyenko & Ros, 2019; Sen, 2019). At the same time, Cambodia achieved its integration into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economic community in 2015. This means that Cambodia has to brace itself for the effects of the free flows of goods and services and skilled labor within the ASEAN region. In response, technological development and transformation towards a knowledge-based economy have been placed on the top of the agenda for the national development (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2019). Higher education was also made an important body to propel this development, and the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) has generated three major policy papers to address such demand. They are the *Education Strategic Plans 2014–2018* and *2019–2023*, which emphasize the significance both technical and generic skills for the enhancement of the skills in the labor force (MoEYS, 2014a) and the *Policy on Higher Education 2030*, which aims to promote higher education quality to prepare Cambodian university students for the work and life within the era of globalization and knowledge-based society (MoEYS, 2014b).

In line with the policy to upskill the human resource, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport has urged universities to practice the outcome-based education approach, in which in each course, lecturers are required to mention what hard and soft skills students are supposed to learn. However, this is only effective on paper as the normal practice of lecture-based teaching still prevails; such a practice comprises the opportunity for students to actually learn soft skills as stated in the course syllabuses (Un & Sok, 2018). This is the heritage from the traditional teaching method embedded in the Cambodian culture of teaching and learning, which promotes the rote learning of *cpaps* and Buddhist scripts (Hansen, 2007). Students are not familiar with the student-centered active teaching and learning with collaboration on group projects as the core, so

they do not possess good skills to study in groups (Heng, 2012)To add another problem, the interviewees in Sam and Dahles (2017) have opined that the curricula at HEIs are not well developed and thus do not adequately respond to the changing job market, while they have also argued that teaching and learning activities are based mainly on theories, with few opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience. This had led to a serious challenge in teaching students employability skills.

Another major problem that hinders the development of employability skills among university students is the lack of university and industry linkages (Nith, 2013). The traditional divide between university and industry in Cambodia stems from of the French model introduced during the French colonization of Cambodia (Sam & Sijde 2014). University leaders, especially those from public institutions, are usually resistant to change, and in conjunction with bureaucracy, university and industry linkages are usually hard to achieve (Sam & Dahles, 2017). This lack of university and industry linkages has produced many repercussions on university students, major of which consists of the irrelevance of university curriculum to the labor market and the lack of internship or work placement opportunities students gain hands-on workplace experience, which are major hindrances to employability skills development. Students have to depend on themselves and their own network to look for such opportunities and to finally land a job after their graduation.

1.3 Importance of English Language Education in Cambodia on Employability

Cambodia has gone through changes in its foreign language use. French used to enjoy a predominant status since Cambodia had been under the French colonization for around 90 years. With social and political changes brought about by the Cold War and civil wars, Cambodia adopted Vietnamese and Russian as a foreign language used in the country from 1979 to 1989

(Clayton, 2000). In 1993, a general election was organized to end the enduring civil war with the supervision of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia. English language has also gained traction in Cambodia from then on after the country opened its door for the international donors and organizations, which use English in their work. It was noted that at the beginning of the 21st century English became "the language preferences demonstrated by most foreign [political, economic, and development] enterprises operating in Cambodia, English has become associated with the country's political, economic and development transitions" (p. 15).

English has become major foreign language literacy, which is one of the major employability skills, to contribute to the Cambodian national development (Moore & Bounchan, 2020). Clayton (2002) has noted four uses of English in Cambodia; English is used because of its comparative cheap cost, for its elite closure, for international communication, and for global economic integration. English language proficiency has become an important employability skill in the labor market for Cambodians to achieve upward mobility (Clayton, 2008). Azirah et al. (2014) provide a critical examination on the current status of English in higher education in Cambodia based on Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital," which they state "refers to the arrays of knowledge, skills, education, competencies, and advantages a person has, which might confer higher status, authority and power in society" (p. 500). As English has received such a pre-eminent status in Cambodia's labor market, Azirah et al. has noted an unusual phenomenon, in which Cambodia students who can afford it will do two degrees simultaneously, one of which is a degree in English. In so doing, they hope to gain a competitive edge in the labor market in that they have both the proficiency in their professional skills as well as their language skills. This has shown that English is an end and a means to employability itself. Initially, knowing English alone, with or without a bachelor's degree in English, can guarantee a well-paid job as an English

teacher, a translator and interpreter, and an administrative paper dealing with paperwork in English. However, as businesses in the country has started to diversify, students need to possess a professional degree, such as accounting, banking, law, medicine, and engineering, in addition to English proficiency in order to guarantee a well-paid job. English has shifted from being an end to being a means for employability as from learning English, students can also learn other important soft skills, such as communication, critical thinking, and problem solving skills.

As indicated in the previous paragraphs, English arrived in Cambodia because of international donors and organizations but the language has gained its popularity thanks to the global trend. Courtesy of globalization, English language demand has become a global trend in higher education institutions as English is deemed an important tool to enhance students' employability and competitiveness (Coleman, 2006). English is a lingua franca and is integral for developing countries to embrace global capitalism as well as higher education internationalization (Phan, 2018). The surging demand for English language clearly shows the links among language choices, international connectivity, and graduate employability. Important as they may see, there has been limited understanding in employability skills development in an English language program. Arguably, properly developed curriculum in an English higher education program can develop not only competence in English communication but also other important employability skills. To design curriculum properly, developers need to consider curriculum development and revision and curriculum implementation. It is therefore interesting to examine how the curriculum of a bachelor's degree program in Cambodia has been developed, revised, and implemented for employability skills development.

1.4 Debate on the Relation between Higher Education and Employability Skills

There is a debate on the relevance of employability skills development to higher education in the literature. One side, which argues against teaching employability skills in higher education, believes that the role of higher education is merely to provide liberal education. In line with this argument, the primary and intrinsic role of higher education is to produce well-rounded citizens, rather than on an instrumental role of equipping students with skills to enhance their employability chance (Bridges, 1993). In addition, education enables students to engage in a democratic-critical fashion that goes beyond learning knowledge and skills in classes. This idea conceives education as participatory and dialogic engagement of students, which lead them to both academic achievement and success as an active citizen (Zepke and Leach, 2010).

Some further argue that teaching employability skills poses two main threats to the identity of higher education. The first threat is the pressure on academic freedom derived from the emphasis on skills development (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). In this line of argument, the employability discourse is argued to narrow education competency training and to constrain academics to act as trainers and instructors (Morley, 2001). The second threat is the fact that skills development emphasis may add more burdens to university faculty, diverting their attention from research, which is one of the main missions of the university (Kreber, 2006). There is also a political aspect of the argument against skills development. Universities that focus on teaching employability skills to respond to the needs of the labor market only empower the suppression of students under the influence of the anti-intellectual capitalist force and thus assist in the maintaining of status quo, where inequality already prevails (Morley, 2001).

Despite the above criticism, some advocate that developing employability skills is important to higher education (e.g., Fahimirad, 2019; Nauta et al., 2009; Washer, 2007; World

Bank, 2000). For those who speak for developing employability skills, teaching those skills at universities does not mean an abandonment of liberal or general education is abandoned, and skills development is not necessarily detrimental to the notion of a liberal education. Instead, it can encourage innovation in teaching and curriculum design and thus enhancing content teaching (Washer, 2007). In addition, learning employability skills may help shape university students to become critical, active and therefore well-rounded citizens. From this perspective, no students can become well-rounded citizens without important such employability skills as critical thinking, public speaking and communication skills. Further, employability skills do not have to be taught independently and can actually be taught simultaneously with specialized skills and liberal education (Cranmer, 2006).

More importantly, one key role of contemporary universities is to produce workforce for the labor market (e.g., Fahimirad, 2019; Nauta et al., 2009). In this regard, endeavor to equip students with skills does not actually deviate from the missions of higher education. Indeed, university students do not spend their whole life on study. After graduation, they will leave universities and will look for a job in the labor market. So equipping students with practical employability skills at universities is important to facilitate their transition from education to work and provide leverage for students to begin their jobs without much difficulty.

To add to the debate, employability skills actually provide individual university graduates as well as the state with economic benefits. University students nowadays need to possess, in addition to technical skills, extra qualifications in the form of generic skills to gain an edge in the competition in the labor market (Brown et al., 2003). As Bridgstock (2009) notes, “enhancing employability among universities might make them appealing to multiple employers across multiple work contexts and disciplines” (pp.31–32). Teaching employability skills prepares

university graduates for the job, facilitates their transition from education to work and thus increases their employability. From an economic perspective, teaching employability skills at universities enable employees to perform well and thus improve their productivity (Nauta et al., 2009), and provide employees with versatility, which allow them to cope with change in their workplace and encourage lifelong learning. Therefore, they maintain and enhance their performance over time (ibid.). Meanwhile, developing employability skills can contribute to the collective economy of the country. Citizens with skills can increase their overall productivity and thus help lower the unemployment rate. In this regard, developing employability skills would improve national economy, and thus would improve public finance, as governments can collect more tax revenues from employees and businesses (World Bank, 2000).

Given the links between employability skills development and economic growth, there have been mounting interests and concerns from international organizations about helping university students develop employability skills. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) emphasizes the importance of investing in the development of employability skills of young people who are considered intangible asset to productivity and innovation (OECD, 1998). Employability also comprises one of the priorities of the United Nations for national policy action on youth employment (Matherly & Tillman, 2015). One of the four original pillars of the European Employment Strategy is employability, which remains a significant element of Europe 2020 and the Education and Training 2020 strategies (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014). Therefore, as discussed earlier, employability skills development has more merits than its drawbacks.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

The above debate not only illustrates the different perspectives on employability skills development in higher education, but also clarifies my stand that employability skills development has become an important part of higher education and should be incorporated into university curriculum. However, although researchers are aware of the importance of employability skills, the process of how the skills are developed and acquired at universities is under-researched. There is a dearth of knowledge of employability skills development (Chan et al., 2017), while the analysis of what teaching and learning practices can enhance the development of these skills is inconclusive (Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018). Meanwhile, existing research on employability skills development primarily focuses on students' rating of teaching practices and methods (e.g., Kember & Leung, 2005; Leung & Kember, 2013; Smith & Bath, 2006; Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018), taking the perspectives of only one category of stakeholders—the students—into account. Furthermore, there is limited knowledge on the process of employability skills development at a sub-institutional (e.g., departmental) level, where skills development begins, how skill are selected and incorporated into programs and courses, how skills are delivered, and how students acquire employability skills. In this regard, the present research fills these knowledge gaps by examining the process of employability skills development from a multi-level perspective, which includes the experience and perceptions of various key stakeholders (i.e., departmental management team, faculty members, and students and graduates) in the discussion.

Another gap in the knowledge of employability skills development is the lack of understanding about how students describe and rate their actual engagement in their skills-related learning. Indeed, learning outcomes derive from a match between teaching and learning (Chea & Shumow, 2017; Kember, 2009; Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018). Thus, to provide a comprehensive

understanding of how employability skills are developed through curriculum, students' engagement in learning should not be neglected. As Astin (1984) noted in his famous involvement theory, engagement involves the time and energy students spend on their academic endeavor, thus the more engagement exerted by students, the more benefits they can reap from their learning. Recent research shows the importance of student engagement on in student learning outcomes (e.g. Estévez et al., 2021; Heng, 2014; Lee et al., 2018). This finding reveals the integral role of student engagement in employability skills development.

1.6 Statement of Purpose

This study aims to address the above knowledge gaps by examining employability skills development from the perspectives of three groups of stakeholders in higher education: academic department managers, faculty members, and students and graduates. The inclusion of these stakeholders aims to form a triangular design that enables the researcher to compare and contrast their perspectives from three main higher education stakeholders. The comparison and contrast research design also allows the mutual validation of the data obtained from individual groups of stakeholders.

Many studies on employability skills have been conducted in business disciplines (business management, accounting, finance, human resource management and so on) (e.g., Fearon et al., 2020; Teng et al., 2019). Most of these studies were conducted within the contexts of Anglophone countries, such as the US, the UK, and Australia (e.g., Jackson, 2016; Rosenberg, 2012; Smith & Bath, 2006). Research on other academic disciplines in non-English contexts is rare. Thus, this study, which selects an English education program as a case in Cambodia, enriches the knowledge about employability skills development in non-business disciplines in non-English speaking contexts.

This study focuses on English education, as learning English is considered essential for employment in Cambodia. In the early 1990s, Cambodia went through a major political reform. A general election overseen by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was held. Afterwards, the country began to establish relations with the West. Consequently, there was an influx of aids from Western countries to Cambodia through various international organizations, which use English as their main communication medium. English has gained its prominence in Cambodia since then. In other words, English has become a major foreign language for employment. This makes English literacy one of the key employability skills in Cambodia and an important skill for the Cambodian national development (Moore & Bounchan, 2020). Given the opening up of the country, possessing a good command of English opens up many opportunities for students in the form of further study in native English countries and of ensuring successful application for jobs. Acknowledging the fact that English literacy is an important employability skill in Cambodia, the present study examined employability skills development in a Bachelor of English program at a major university in Cambodia.

Regarding the methodology employed in research on this topic, a substantial amount of studies has been conducted utilizing the quantitative research design, usually in the form of a questionnaire survey eliciting perspectives of employability skills from university students, graduates, faculty members, and employers (e.g., Kember & Leung, 2005; Leung & Kember, 2013; Smith & Bath, 2006; Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018). A limitation of this research design is that it restricts respondents' freedom to determine the meanings of employability skills because options are pre-determined by the researchers, whereas the concept of employability skills can be understood differently from different perspectives in different disciplines, professions and contexts. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues, this research thus

employs a mixed-method approach. While the qualitative enquiry provided more autonomy for respondents to express their perceptions of employability skills, the quantitative research enabled me to test assumptions generated from existing research.

This study examines the development of employability skills in the Bachelor of English program in the department of English (DoE) of a university in Cambodia through a mixed-method case study approach. In Cambodia, research on employability skills is scarce and its higher education faces great challenges in ensuring a high level of quality teaching and learning. Thus, a study on employability skills development in Cambodia is important, as it allows voices and experiences from a less developed country to be expressed and heard.

The present study also aims to construct and test a model of the relationships among teaching, student engagement in learning, and employability skills development. Despite focusing on employability skills development in English language education, this study aims to construct conceptual frameworks for understanding employability skills and employability skills development in higher education in general. In the survey, I assumed that the learning of employability skills would take place when students exerted effort, i.e., being engaged, in their learning (e.g., Amora et al., 2016; Astin, 1984) and that student engagement would serve to link the institutional, teaching, and personal factors found in the learning context (Kahu, 2013). This framework will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. In other words, student engagement was assumed to mediate the relationship between institutional, teaching, and personal factors and employability skills development. In light of these objectives, the present study aims to address the following questions.

1. How does the DoE management team describe and justify their decision to develop and revise the curriculum in the Bachelor in English that nurtures employability skills development?
2. What mechanisms do they utilize to ensure the delivery and acquisition of the target employability skills?
3. What are the perception and experiences of the DoE faculty members to implement the DoE curriculum for the delivery of employability skills in their teaching in the English program?
4. What are the perception and experiences of the DoE students and graduates in learning in the DoE curriculum in relation to the acquisition of employability skills?
5. How does learning in the form of student engagement mediate the relationship between institutional, teaching, and personal factors and employability skills as learning outcomes?

This study adopts a two-level approach to address to the five research questions. The first level focuses on issues about leadership and management at the sub-institutional (i.e., departmental) level to uncover how employability skills were selected, how the selected skills were integrated with education programs through curriculum design, and how the skills delivery and acquisition were ensured. The second level refers to student engagement in teaching and learning practices at the classroom level. This part of the study examines the experience of teachers and students in the process of employability skills development to exemplify the actual delivery and acquisition of the skills.

The two levels correspond to the two conceptual frameworks employed in this study. The first framework is devised based on the multiple-level model of curriculum development to

address how employability skills are integrated into the curriculum. In this conceptual framework, employability skills are integrated into the curriculum based on both external and internal factors. The external factors refer to broad factors such as socioeconomic and technological factors at the international and national levels, while the internal factors means those institutional and program levels (Khan & Law, 2015; McNeil, 2015). This framework is employed to answer Research Questions 1 and 2. The second framework is drawn from Kahu's (2013) student engagement framework and deals with curriculum implementation, which mainly refers to issues about student engagement in the present study. In this framework, student engagement, which is composed of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components, is considered a key factor positively influencing the acquisition of employability skills. In other words, active engagement leads to employability skills development. This framework guides me to answer Research Questions 3, 4 and 5.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of nine chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study. It explains the research purposes and outlines the research questions. Chapter 2 is a literature review that provides the context for the present study, defines key concepts, such as employability skills and student engagement, used in the study. It also reviews literature on employability skills development and student engagement. The literature review provides the conceptual components that constitute the two conceptual frameworks, which guide the development of the research questions and the data collection and data analysis in this study. Chapter 3 presents the methodology employed in this research. Specifically, it explains the mixed-method design, which includes a qualitative study that comprise 38 semi-structured interviews and a quantitative study that refers to a small-scale survey with 373 respondents. Chapter 4 reports the findings

generated from the interviews with the DoE management team, whereas Chapter 5 reports the results of the interviews with lecturers, students and graduates. Chapter 6 reveals the findings of the survey, which were generated through incorporates principal component analyses, correlation and multiple regression analyses and mediational analyses using PROCESS. Chapter 7 situates the findings in the conceptual issues about employability skills and student engagement, thereby addressing the gaps in the literature. Finally, Chapter 8 sums up the key findings of the study and explains the implications of these findings. It also makes recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study examined employability skills development in an English education program in higher education Cambodia. Therefore, I would like to start the literature review with an introduction to higher education in Cambodia. Cambodian higher education is a relatively young sector compared to that of other countries in the region as well as in the world. Worse, this less developed higher education system has experienced severe setbacks caused by the civil war and other social and political chaos in the country. The higher education system has suffered an enormous damage and has so far been recovering only sluggishly. Currently, Cambodia has been endeavoring for national development, and its higher education is expected to serve this function. This chapter examines the development of higher education in Cambodia in order to provide a background against which the necessity of employability skills development is validated. Higher education has encountered myriads of complications, leading to difficulty in education quality and governance, which further restrict employability skills development. Only institutions that are exposed to and are willing to adopt innovative curriculum, teaching and learning environment can turn their institutions into ones that keep updated with the teaching and learning approaches equipping their students with appropriate skills for the needs in the modern labor market. Thus, it is necessary to examine the historical and political and social status of the country as well as the education system in general in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the environmental factors.

2.1 A Brief History of Cambodian Higher Education

Cambodia was under the French protectorate between 1863 and 1953. The French played an important role not only in protecting Cambodia's territory from the invasion from the neighboring countries but also in preserving Cambodian culture and civilization and modernizing

Cambodian education. Normally, Khmer children were taught in pagoda schools. However, an education reform was then introduced by the French, who was in need of human resource to serve in their administration, through the modernization of the pagoda schools and the teaching and learning practices. The French also built one HEI very late in their reign over Cambodia. The National Institute of Law, Politics and Economic Sciences was established in 1947, a few years before Cambodia claimed independence in 1953. The medium of instruction in the institute was French, and the French model and curriculum and teaching approaches were utilized (Pit & Ford, 2004).

For many years after gaining its independence, Cambodia experienced another era of political stability, peace and prosperity, especially in industry and education. The country experienced drastic improvement in industrialization with the establishment of a major cement plant, jute, textile and cotton mills, sawmills and paper and plywood factories and, towards the end of the Sihanouk period, an oil refinery at Kompong Som (Tully, 2006). This means there was an increasing need of the labor force to fuel the development of the country, and thus the country was in great demand for more educated citizens. Prince Sihanouk, the then prime minister of Cambodia, took up a strong interest in higher education and national development, so he injected 20% of the national expenditure to the education budget (Ayres, 2000b). Subsequently, many schools, institutes and universities that provided higher education in Cambodia were established. The first university that offered a variety of higher education programs, rather than only one or two specialized field, was the Khmer Royal University (currently known as Royal University of Phnom Penh), which was established in 1960 (Sam et al., 2012).

In 1966, Cambodia had 37 higher education institutions and a total number of students of 7,360, spreading out in various major provinces of the country (Hang, 2016). Some universities, such as Khmer Royal University, provided a wide range of curricula with various majors, while some, such as Royal University of Agronomic Science and Royal University of Fine Arts, provided specific skill training. French was used as the main language of instruction in many universities. Teaching professions were highly regarded in the society. Many outstanding students were given scholarships to study in prestigious universities in Cambodia or pursue higher education abroad. Higher education was deemed a rare commodity during that time and was elitist in its system.

Cambodia did not enjoy this peaceful economic and social development for long. In the 1960s, the influence of Cold War dragged Cambodia into the Vietnam War. The national budget was in crisis, and so was the budget for the higher education sector (Vann, 2012). This budget constraint posed great challenges to the young higher education system, which was experiencing a rise in quantity and a trouble in ensuring quality.

When the Khmer Rouge reigned from 1975 to 1979, Cambodia was reformed into a totally agricultural society and education was deemed unnecessary. Many schools and universities were destroyed or used as prisons or warehouses. It is believed that over two million Khmers died from starvation, illnesses and massacre. Worse, knowledgeable people, scholars, teachers and professors were the massacre targets during the regime, and many of them were murdered or fled to other countries. 75% of higher education lecturers and 96% of university students were believed to be killed during the regime (Pit & Ford, 2004). This destruction was so severe. Thus, even after a few decades of peace, the Cambodian government has not been able to restore it completely yet.

When the Khmer Rouge was defeated, the then Cambodian government was not recognized by the international community. Cambodia received technical assistance only from Vietnam and former Eastern communist nations, in the Communist Bloc, to rehabilitate the country, and higher education was one of the top priorities (Clayton, 1999). It was believed that higher education could produce technicians and leaders in economics, politics and cultures, the positions that Cambodia was in dearth of and needed the most for urgent national restoration (Ayres, 2000a). With the government endeavors, eight HEIs were reopened during the 1980s to provide instruction in such fields as of agriculture, medicine, economics, business, engineering, social sciences, art and culture (Clayton, 1999). Vietnam and Russia were the two main countries to provide assistance in designing higher education curricula and thus many courses were taught in Vietnamese and Russian. Many students were also sent for training or to pursue higher education in Vietnam, Russian and the former communist bloc countries. Access to higher education was limited to only children of elite politicians and rich families (Clayton, 2000). The learning of the languages of Western countries, such as French and English, was prohibited. However, after the general election in 1993 and the collapse of the socialist economic system with the Soviet perestroika and the doi mói in Vietnam in 1989 (Clayton, 2000), Cambodia began to move toward the free market economy. Since then, English have begun gaining its popularity.

2.2 Globalization and Internationalization of Higher Education and National Development in Cambodia

This section examines the current features of internationalization in Cambodia's higher education. However, international influences are not completely new to Cambodia's higher

education. Different foreign models significantly influenced the development of the country's higher education system.

As mentioned in the previous section, during the French colonial period, Cambodian students were sent to study in France and Vietnam. After independence, universities in Cambodia were still modeled on the French system, and French was adopted as the medium of instruction. Later, during the republican period from the early 1980s, Cambodian higher education was significantly influenced by former soviet countries and Vietnam. Specifically, receiving aids from these countries, the Cambodian higher education system was turned to model on the Soviet and Vietnamese systems, and many Cambodian scholars were sent to study in these countries at that time. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cambodia turned to the Western world for aids.

These aids from the Western countries and international organizations have transformed Cambodian higher education, as they opened up the country to the international community and thus built an international network, which is essential to address the economic transformation and the changing labor market and to enhance global competitiveness in the global era (Mok, 2017). However, international aids (such as those from the World Bank and OECD) usually come with influence on national development agenda, rendering the discourse about the education-as-development that shapes education policies in aid recipient countries (Komatsu & Rappleye, 2019; Rappleye & Un, 2018). Consequently, the discourse has widely spread through these aid projects, and the idea of economization of education championed by the international organizations has dominated the discourses on education and development in the aid-dependent countries.

In Cambodia, there has been success from the World Bank to promote the use of higher education as an instrument for economic development. This constitutes international contextual factors of curriculum development in Cambodia (Chea & Lo, 2022). This emphasis on the importance of international connectivity to Cambodian higher education development is shared by Sam and Dahles (2017), who argue that international development agencies have acted as donors and consultants and have played prominent roles in shaping Cambodia's higher education sector and influencing the government's higher education policies and strategic plans. As a result, a consensus that higher education needs to play a significant role in sustaining economic growth has emerged in Cambodia (Peou, 2017). Such a consensus is reflected at the curriculum level, as university management and academic staff are aware of the importance of equipping university students with necessary competencies for employment and survival in Cambodia (Oleksiyenko & Ros, 2019; Chea & Lo, 2022)

The emergence of international connectivity explains why the government has placed a strong emphasis on globalization in its higher education policy since the 2010s. With this emphasis, higher education internationalization in Cambodia began to transpire itself, with a focus to build employability skills for Cambodia to prepare itself to open up the country for the flow of international labor force into the country. As a result, international contents have become an important element of the country's higher education (Sen, 2019; Oleksiyenko & Ros, 2019). MoEYS has written a document on the *Policy on Research Development in the Education Sector,* which aims to

> build the capacity of human resources in terms of knowledge, skills, ethics, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship to maximize the long term development of Cambodian society and economy in the globalization context.
>
> (MoEYS, 2010, p. 2)

With ambitions to upgrade its economic status, Cambodia has generated strategies for integration into regional and international communities. Higher education has then been entrusted with the upgrading and upskilling the students for the labor force. In 2015, Cambodia achieved one of its ambitions by integrating itself into the ASEAN economic community. This means that Cambodia started to allow free movement of goods, services, investment, and skills labor within the ASEAN region. To stay competitive, the Cambodian government has targeted technological development and transformation toward a knowledge-based economy as two integral components for national development (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2019). In conjunction with that, the MoEYS has also laid out various documents with aims to promote the necessary skills among Cambodian students to prepare themselves to join the labor market. One of the most important documents is the *Policy on Higher Education 2030*, which proposes to:

> build a quality higher education system that develops human resources with excellent knowledge, skills and moral values in order to work and live within the era of globalization and knowledge-based society.
>
> (MoEYS, 2014b, p. 3)

This document shows how important globalization and internationalization are to serve as drivers for quality improvement in higher education (Sen, 2019). In addition, this policy has also indicated the significance of international connectivity and employability skills development in Cambodia.

Despite emphasizing internationalization of higher education in the policy documents, there is a lack of a comprehensive strategic investment program and a strategy roadmap that shows the role of higher education internationalization in the national development (Tek & Leng, 2017). Further, the government's funding on higher education internationalization is limited. Thus, internationalization of higher education is mainly implementation via institutional policies

and practices and relies on funding from international partners. Each HEI has implemented its internationalization independently (Sok & Bunry, 2021).

Though internationalization at home is not effectively implemented, the imperative of internationalization is revealed by the increase of international education mobility. There is little information about student and academic mobility due to the poor records management. However, the available data shows that the number of outbound undergraduate students has soared dramatically to 5,469 students enrolled abroad in 2017 (see Table 2.1). Likewise, a small-scale survey shows that there was an increase in the number of outbound exchange students. The study indicates that nine public and private HEIs sent 1,396 outbound exchange students in 2016 (Mak, 2016). In the same survey, there were 961 inbound exchange and 134 foreign degree-seeking students, studying at the nine HEIs.

Furthermore, as reported by Sok and Bunry (2021), 12 out of 14 case HEIs have 49 foreign lecturers. Ten of them received 145 inbound exchange faculty staff. 151 faculty staff members were sent out for exchange from seven case HEIs. Totally, the number of foreign faculty was recorded at 600 out of a total of more than 10,000 faculty members (Un & Sok, 2018). Meanwhile, there is an increase in the number of faculty members who hold overseas qualifications. This increase is largely due to the government's policy of providing professional development for university lecturers and the overseas scholarship opportunities offered by foreign governments, such as the USA, Japan, Australia, the UK, China and Thailand (Sok & Bunry, 2021).

Table 2.1 Top countries of destination, 2009–2017

2009		2014		2017	
Number of students		Number of students		Number of students	
Thailand	984	Australia	728	Thailand	1,031
France	546	Thailand	692	Australia	908
Vietnam	388	France	611	USA	560
Australia	366	Vietnam	443	Vietnam	432
USA	347	USA	411	France	431

Source: Mak (2016; 2019).

2.3 Access to Higher Education

The school education sector in Cambodia includes six years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education, and three years of upper secondary education, at the end of which high school students have to take the national Grade-12-Leaving examinations to graduate and to gain admission to universities. High school exam passing rate was high at 86.48% in 2012 (MoEYS, 2013). However, due to the national reform in education 2014 that effectively eliminated the widespread cheating during the high school exams, the passing rate dropped dramatically to 60% in 2016, 63.84% in 2017, and 67.07% in 2018 (MoEYS, 2017, 2019). Students with top grades from high school exams are often eligible for government's scholarships to study at prestigious public universities, such as Royal University of Phnom Penh, University of Health Science, and Institute of Technology of Cambodia. Other students can pay to study at private universities, whose admission criteria vary. Some universities require students to take an entrance exam before the students are admitted into their programs, but most private

universities do not require any other admission criteria apart from a pass in the high school exams.

Access to universities up until 1997 was not quite open like that of the present day. Actually, Cambodia higher education was considered elitist from the French colonization period until the turn of the century. After the collapse of the destructive Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, the oldest university in Cambodia, Royal University of Phnom Penh, was reopened, and many other public HEIs followed suit from then on. In the 1990s, Cambodian education was going through a phase of dramatic progress. The number of high school graduates soared dramatically, but access to higher education was still limited as there was still a small number of HEIs in Cambodia and all of them were public institutions, which required candidates to go through a strict entrance exam. A large portion of Cambodian high school graduates were unable to pursue higher education (Vann, 2012). Cambodia was badly in need of more skilled labor that possesses higher qualifications in the form of tertiary education to help propel the economic growth. Meanwhile, according to Ahrens and McNamara (2013), university lecturers were lobbying for more private classes so that they can earn enough for a living, and thus the programs and education quality at those universities can be sustained.

In response to the problem, the government introduced two major policy changes with an aim to expand the higher education intake (Sam et al., 2012). First, the government allowed public HEIs to offer classes based on private tuition fee for non-scholarship students in a number of institutions. Second, the government launched a new reform, which permitted the privatization of higher education (Pit & Ford, 2004). As a result of this reform, the first private university, Norton University, was established in 1997. As recorded in Chet (2009), the total number of HEIs increased to 62 in 2009; and this number skyrocketed to 125 in 2018 (MoEYS, 2019).

These HEIs provide a range of higher education programs from two-year associate degree programs to doctoral programs.

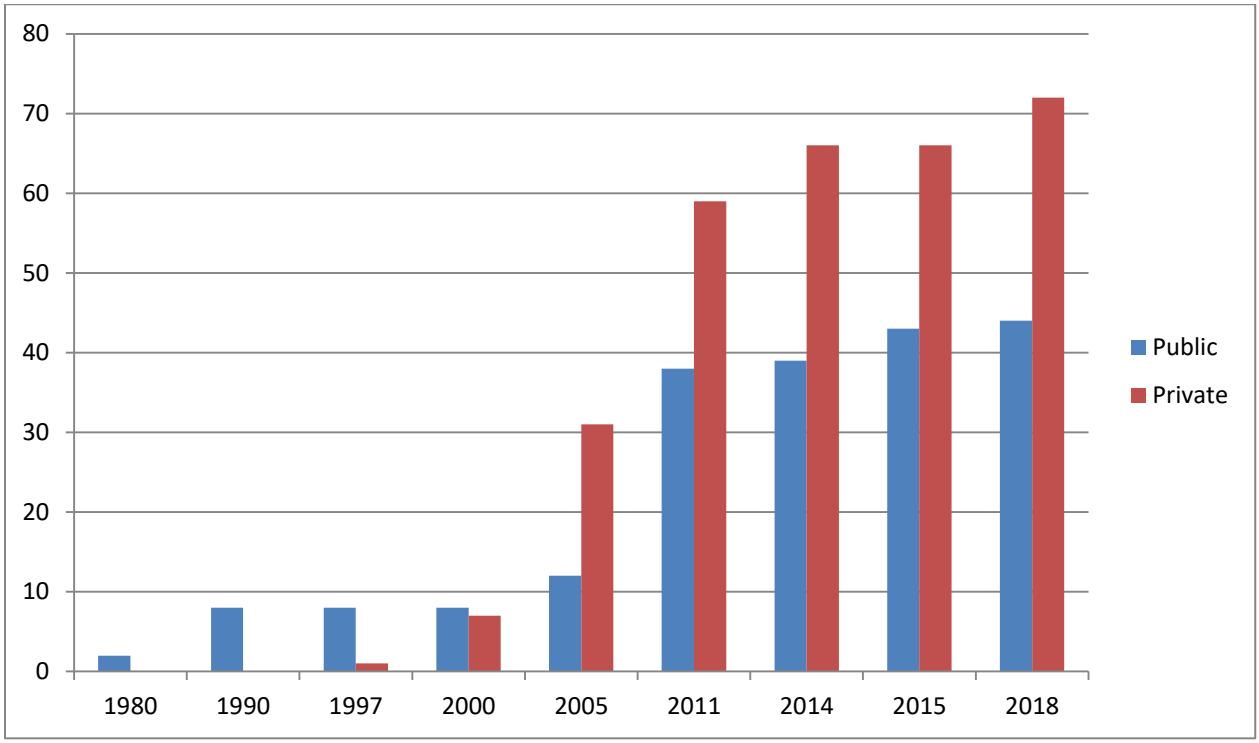

Figure 2.1 Number of HEIs between 1980 and 2018

Source: Department of Higher Education, MoEYS, cited in Un & Sok, 2018

Despite the privatization and massification of higher education that transpired by the late 1990s, access to higher education was still limited to disadvantaged groups such as low-income households, female students, and rural populations (Asian Development Bank, 2011). Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often cannot afford the tuition fees. Although the government had provided merit-based scholarships, they did not ameliorate the situation as much since students from disadvantaged backgrounds usually perform less well. Striving to mitigate the problem, the MoEYS established a nationwide policy to provide need-based scholarships, in addition to the merit-based scholarships. The need-based scholarships were provided to students

of poor families, female students, and students from remote areas in the form of tuition fee waivers. Consequently, more children of disadvantaged backgrounds were able to access higher education, and that enrolment opportunities for high school graduates from low-income families in rural area were catching up with those from wealthier families in urban areas (see Figure 4.2 below) (Chea, 2019).

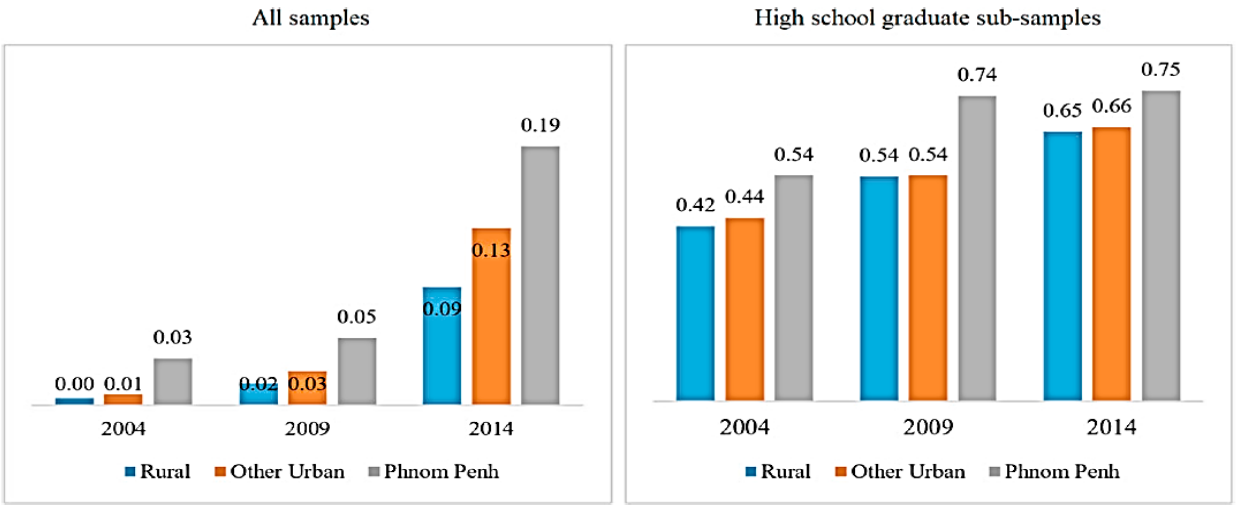

Figure 2.2 Predicted Probabilities of University Enrollment by Regional Area (Source: Chea, 2019)

In general, Cambodian higher education has reached the massification stage due to the dramatic proliferation in the number of public and private universities with affordable tuition fees, the rise in the living standards of Cambodia people in general, and the easy admission criteria that many universities have. For over a period of nearly five decades from 1980 to 2018, the number of universities has increased from two public universities to 48 public universities and 70 private universities. Universities are mostly concentrated in the capital city. Given that the tuition fee is affordable, university students in Cambodia prefer to do two degrees in different

fields at the same time. In other provinces, there are branch campuses of major universities. However, universities are concentrated in the urban centers and are unevenly located in the country.

Hoem (2011) comments, “There are enough HEIs to accommodate those born in the 1980s and 1990s, but quality of education needs to be improved” (quoted in Ahrens & Mcnamara, 2013, p. 2). The rapid expansion of higher education Cambodia has come unplanned and without proper quality assurance mechanisms in place. Thus, higher education quality in Cambodia is still very much questionable. Another major problem derived from the massification is the question of whether university graduates have adequate abilities to respond to the labor market needs. Rather based on the national needs, Cambodian universities develop and offer programs based on the demand from the students and their parents, who are ill - informed about the labor market needs (Ahrens & Mcnamara, 2013). Both private and public universities compete with each other to provide the same in-demand majors such as business, accounting, economics, English and information technology, the areas that are already saturated in the labor market (Sam et al., 2012), while some academic fields are underdeveloped (Noch, 2009, cited in Sam et al., 2012). Likewise, as noted by O‘Brien (2004), “Some observers….are concerned that unplanned changes within the sector are producing more graduates than the economy can absorb and that graduate skills are not matched to the needs of the country” (quoted by Ahrens & Mcnamara, 2013, p. 2).

2.4 Teaching, Learning, and Research at Higher Education

The expansion of the number of HEIs, especially private ones, might signify a positive progress in the sector. Nonetheless, researchers have had concern over the quality of higher education in Cambodia (Vann, 2012). Quality is a vitally important topic to discuss as this can determine how

much employability university graduates possess after their graduation. A good quality higher education should equip students with adequate skills and attributes to empower students and enable them to become active and productive citizens.

Quality of education is an issue, as private universities are profit-making institutions (Ford, 2006). While the quality issue exists in comparative terms (Mak, 2005), public HEIs are believed to be better in quality than private ones because they are much older institutions with better-established governance, structure and resources. However, this is just a contested belief as some private universities are also considered to offer quality education (Vann, 2012).

At the same time, there is still a lack of all forms of resources—human, physical and financial. Facilities, especially those in public HEIs, are old and outdated. Key resources such as textbooks and resource books are non-existent or obsolete. Many modern textbooks and resource books are found mainly in English language, creating access constraint to students whose English proficiency is still limited. Further, management personnel in Cambodian universities do not possess adequate knowledge in operating education institutions. Many of them run universities like business institutions (Un & Sok, 2018). Teacher quality is also a concern. Many academic staff in Cambodian universities are holders of bachelor's degree but are asked to teach undergraduate students. In addition, most of universities teachers do not have any teacher training (see Figure 4.3 below). Only a bunch of international universities in Cambodia have adequate financial resources to employ foreign lecturers who possess higher qualifications. Nonetheless, as these universities have to pay higher salary to these foreign staff, the higher tuition fee at these universities is higher and less affordable for students.

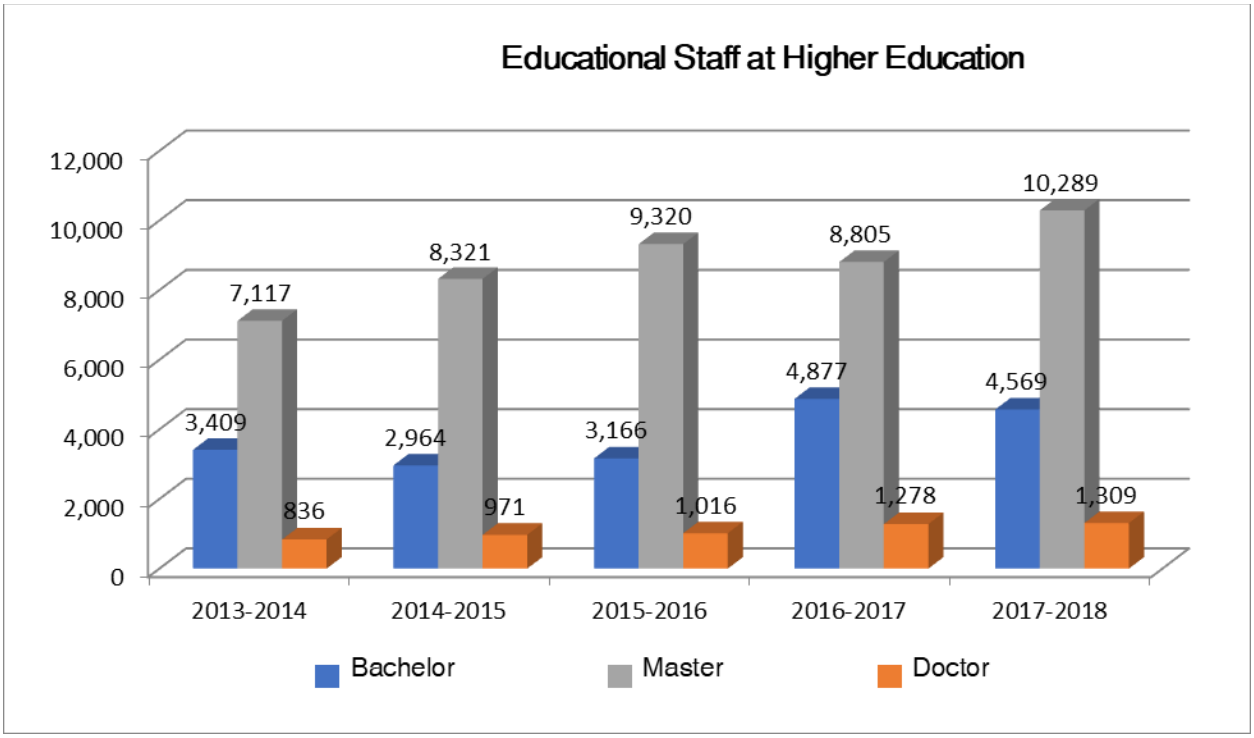

Figure 2.3 Comparison of Education Staff at Higher Education Level from 2013-14 to 2017-18 (Source: MoEYS, 2019)

The quality of students is also a concern. High school graduates are not well prepared for higher education. Cambodian education started out as weak and poor in quality as noted earlier with the poor quality of teachers and infrastructure (Sam et al., 2012). Teachers were poorly paid and the moral in the society had descended to its trough. Corruption was rampant ubiquitously in the country (Vann, 2012). A very salient form of corruption in education was in high school leaving examinations. Students would collect money among themselves and gave it to the invigilators in their rooms so that they were allowed to use cheat sheets for their examinations. The ramification of this action was serious as many of them would enter universities and continue this corrupted behavior, causing great peril to the quality of education in Cambodia. A serious reform to eliminate corruption during high school leaving exams was introduced by the Minister of

Education, Youth and Sport, Hang Choun Naron in 2014. The rules on anti-cheating, especially during the high school leaving exams, have been strictly reinforced since then.

Teaching and learning at high schools is mainly to get prepared for the national grade-12-leaving exams as these exams alone decide whether students can graduate and get admitted into renowned universities. In addition, the learning strategy is also a problem because it is still heavily influenced by the traditional teaching method embedded in the Cambodian culture of teaching and learning. The traditional curriculum was narrow, containing only the teaching of Buddhist scripts and *cpaps* (rules of behaviors or etiquette). There were no proper teaching methods and students relied only on rote learning, reciting Buddhist scripts and *cpaps* (Hansen, 2007). This had led to a grave concern in teaching and learning methods employed. The traditional teacher-centered and lecture-based teaching method and memory-based tests are very common at high schools as well as universities (Un & Sok, 2018), while rote learning is also popular among university students (Vann, 2012).

Another concern in HEIs is the lack of research, leading to paucity in innovation. There are many reasons for this lack of research in Cambodian HEIs. First, although the government has expressed its interest in strengthening research in the higher education sector, it has provided research funding. Thus, though there are some research projects funded by aid agencies, their number is small. Second, there are still a limited number of university lecturers proficient in research. Only 6%of university lecturers hold a PhD degree (Chen et al., 2007). Third, most HEIs are teaching institutions, which depend on tuition fees from the students for their sustainability. Consequently, university lecturers are remunerated based on the amount of hours they teach, and there is no fixed salary scheme, tenure track, or any other incentives for academic staff to do research. Hence, many of them choose to teach many hours in order to earn more

income, leaving themselves very little time for research. Many university lecturers do not care much about doing research, as it does not bring about financial benefits, compared to teaching. The lack of interest in research activities has led to outdated teaching and assessment methods and materials, and problematic attitude toward teaching and learning practices in higher education. Inappropriate teaching methods and assessment strongly affects how employability skills are taught, as literature has shown that active learning can facilitate the acquisition of employability skills (e.g., Kember, 2009; Kember et al., 2007; McNeil et al., 2012; Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018). In addition, analysis of needs of the students and the market and the strengths and weaknesses through research has also been rarely conducted. This affects how employability skills are selected to be taught to students. Further, the lack of research makes universities not well informed about the labor market needs. As a result, they are not able to provide their students with proper skills training (Khieng et al., 2015).

2.5 Funding and Financing Systems at Higher Education Institutions

Higher education in Cambodia receives one of the lowest funding in the region from the government. MoEYS spent only an average of 2% of its education budget on higher education in the 1990s, and this expenditure rose slightly to around 4% in 2013 and 9% in 2016. The public expenditure on education between 2009 and 2014 was averaged at around 1.7% of GDP, suggesting the expenditure on higher education was even smaller—a relatively low rate compared to the world average of 1%. Existing data indicates that higher education receives little in absolute terms. Approximately US$4.5 million was spent on higher education from 1994 to 1999. This expenditure stood at US$4 million in 2005, and it slightly increased to over US$10 million in 2012 before descending to nearly US$7 million in 2016 (Ting 2014; MoEYS 2016). Un and Sok (2019) indicated that a few large public HEIs located in Phnom Penh received the

government funding of some 10–30% of their annual expenditure, whereas 70–90% was covered by their self-generated revenues, mainly through the tuition fees from the students. By contrast, public HEIs in provinces received a larger allocation of the expenditure from the government as their incomes from the tuition fees and other sources were far less than those of their capital counterparts (Ting, 2014).

The majority of the share of the expenditure (55% for public and 53% for private) is on staff salaries. While private HEIs spend 15% on average of their budget on rentals, the public counterparts operate on public premises and thus are exempt from such rentals. With already a diminutive budget, there is limited fund remaining for libraries, laboratories, and student services. Another crucial area that receives inadequate funding is research and development (R&D) (Ting, 2014). As a result, capable faculty members seek their own R&D opportunities by involving as collaborators or consultants in projects funded by external sources (Kwok et al. 2010). However, with international aids targeting R&D directly, Cambodian HEIs has slowly been enabled to conduct more R&D activities. From 2010 to 2015, a World Bank-funded project allocated $5.5 million as competitive grants to selected HEIs for R&D activities, and 45 projects were conducted at 22 HEIs that received the grants. The Ministry of Economy and Finance has allocated $1 million each year since 2015 for MoEYS to use for R&D activities. Cognizant of the significance of R&D, HEIs themselves also allocate some of their self-generated revenues for research and innovation.

With little budget from the government, all public HEIs have to operate private programs in order to generate revenues for their sustainability. Nonetheless, in the past, higher education was considered public goods and was free for all. The Cambodian constitution requires that education from primary education to higher education be free. At that time there were no private

HEIs and public HEIs were operating courses free of charge. Therefore, with little funding from the government, HEIs had to depend on international aids for survival. It was reported that as late as 1996, university teachers earned only US$40 a month without even the most basic instructional support facilities and materials (Ahrens & McNamara, 2013). In order to earn enough for a living, university teachers had to moonlight in part-time jobs somewhere else, and because of the lack of job opportunities, some teachers even needed to work as motorbike taxi drivers (Ahrens & McNamara, 2013).

At the Foreign Language Center (FLC, currently Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) of Royal University of Phnom Penh), the project funded by the Australian Government was coming to an end in 1996. The end of the project means there was no more funding to support the teacher salaries, and thus it was difficult that at time to keep the well-qualified Cambodian lecturers who had completed relevant Master's degrees in Australia. To tackle the problem, the project advisory committee proposed that FLC should be exempted from the constitutional requirement of free education and be allowed to run private programs for incomes to support the programs and the staff in the center (McNamara, 1999). Following suit was the same proposal from university lecturers elsewhere, and they finally managed to lobby government leaders to gain approval for universities to be exempted from the free education policy in order to run private programs to collect fees for their university sustainability. Another reform emerged when the Prime Minister endorsed the opening of the first private university, Norton University, in 1997, after which the era of privation and massification of higher education came. However, these private universities do not receive any public financial support and depend mainly on student fees for their operational expenses (Un & Sok, 2018).

International organizations and partner countries have also been playing vital roles in financing the higher education sector in Cambodia through various grants and funded projects, mainly for capacity building and enhancing research productivity in Cambodia's higher education. For example, the World Bank has funded Higher Education Improvement Project, which is to tackle challenges in education quality, relevance, and equity and research in higher education in Cambodia (Dy & Ogunniran, 2019). The project also aims to two main HE components: promoting STEM and Agriculture education and research at selected HEIs and enhancing sectorial governance and project management (World Bank, 2017). UNESCO has helped promote research in Cambodia's higher education by providing advisory services for the establishment of research policy, technical assistance for conducting research, advisory services for researcher capacity building, and by encouraging Cambodian researchers to engage in international and regional education research (UNESO, 2010).

Foreign aids are another funding source for higher education. For example the French government has provided financial assistance to Cambodia to restructure its higher education system and their curricula. Three main universities, namely Institute of Technology of Cambodia, the University of Health Science, and the Royal University of Law and Economic Sciences, received direct assistance from France (Dy & Ogunniran, 2019). Australia has also had projects in Cambodia, one of which is the Australia–Cambodia Development Scholarship. This scholarship program aims to help the public sector in Cambodia by enhancing management and technical capacities. Another notable Australian project was the funding of the Foreign Language Center (presently Institute of Foreign Languages) of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, to operate a bachelor in English program. It is noteworthy that other foreign countries within and

outsides the region (e.g., the United States, Japan, South Korea and China) have established partnership with Cambodia and provided aids to its higher education.

2.6 Governance

The Cambodian higher education governance is fragmented, as there are various ministries taking charge of different HEIs (Un & Sok, 2018). As reported by Sen and Ros (2013), there were 97 HEIs under the supervision of 14 different ministries and agencies. There are no permanent bodies to coordinate the operational activities of these HEIs. The General Directorate of Higher Education of the MoEYS is composed of Department of Higher Education (DHE), which is in charge of undergraduate programs, and Department of Scientific Research, supervising graduate and postgraduate programs and research. DHE seems to play the coordinating roles with the HEIs under the supervision of other ministries inasmuch as the largest number of HEIs under its supervision. Nonetheless, the involvement of DHE is usually based on requests and associated with non-technical tasks such as selection of government-funded scholarship students. The Education Law established the Supreme National Council of Education (SNCE) to act as the coordinating body, but this council only exists in documents but has not been established.

The Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MoLVT) is the ministry with the second largest number of HEIs under its supervision. Albeit the name “Vocational Training”, the HEIs under its supervision also provide courses found in the programs of the HEIs under the supervision of MoEYS. This vague distinction has caused “a high level of competition, and difficulties in developing strong cooperation links between these Ministries. Understandably, this makes coordination of the higher education system very difficult for the government” (UNDP

2011, p. 43). The Education Law does not give lucidly distinguished roles between MoEYS and MoLVT, while there is no salient operational definition to differentiate between the academic and vocational/technical streams in higher education.

Another government body that is supposed to play a crucial role in higher education is the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), a young government agency established in 2003. ACC was put under the supervision of the Council of Ministers but was later switched to be housed under MoEYS after restructuring in 2014. However, although ACC has been established for two decades, it has done little in quality assurance and accreditation. It has so far accredited only the Foundation Year (Year 1) at HEIs. It has been perceived that the role t of ACC in upholding the quality of education at HEIs is questionable (Chet, 2009; Un & Sok, 2018; Vann, 2012). Rector Council of Cambodia, comprised of 18 public HEIs, with the task "to strengthen cooperation and development amongst and to improve education quality in Cambodian public HEIs" was established in 2014 (Un & Sok, 2018, p. 3). Higher education academics have placed their hope on this newly established council to strengthen the cooperation as well as the quality of education among different HEIs in Cambodia (Un & Sok, 2018).

In terms of freedom, public HEIs do not enjoy as much freedom as private ones. Public HEIs have a large amount of freedom in such crucial academic aspects as curriculum designs, mode of instruction, student admission and research policy, and awarding degrees. However, this is not the case in personnel and financial aspects. Public HEIs are provided with the freedom in recruiting and managing their own contract staff, both teaching and non-teaching. Nonetheless, most of the staff members are civil servants. Thus, their recruitment, promotion, and dismissal must abide by the Law on Common Statutes of Civil Servants, and their remuneration is determined and paid by the government, although some other benefits and extra time pay are

managed by the institutions themselves, depending on the revenues they can generate from the student fees.

The finance of public HEIs is rather under circumscription, as the financial management is centralized. Budget allocation from the government is implemented via line-item budgeting and political/historical funding model and must be approved by the Ministry of Economics and Finance and the supervising ministries of the HEIs. Expenditures and procurements need to comply with rigid rules and regulations, and thus there were reports on this red tape of slow fund disbursement and inflexible budget reallocation in principle (Un & Sok, 2019). Although HEIs enjoy far much more control over its own self-generated revenues, this stringent bureaucracy is still applied regarding the allocation and disbursement of fund to faculties and departments.

Dissimilar to their public counterparts, private HEIs are given more freedom, as there is no law on private higher education in Cambodia. Un and Sok (2019) asserted that private HEIs are operated as profit-oriented family businesses, much like private enterprises. Many of them have governing boards, but these boards are usually dominated by the shareholders and their members are usually selected or appointed pro forma with little rigor in selection. Furthermore, unlike public universities, private HEIs enjoy full autonomy in staff recruitment and remuneration, curriculum development, student selection, and financial management with virtually no oversight from the government. In 2004, private HEIs also gathered together to form an association called the Cambodian Higher Education Association, which has 98 members at present. Its mission is to strengthen private higher education quality through exchange of information and ideas and promotion of members' interests. However, there are queries about the presentation of this association and its role in quality enhancement in higher education, as some of its members are not HEIs (Feuer, 2016).

In sum, the governance of Cambodian higher education is fragmented and this fragmentation has threatened to paralyze the prospects of establishing an agreed national vision to introduce an effective policy framework to guide higher education development. This fragmented governance framework is relevant to employability skills developments, as learning outcomes in the form of employability skills may differ from one institution to another under the supervision of different ministries. All of these affect the quality of the graduates and how they respond to the labor market needs, which are a strong catalyst for national economic development.

2.7 Definitions of Employability Skills

Employability is a complex, elusive and multidimensional concept, which is difficult to define and measure, as people from different walks of life see the meaning of employability skills differently (Cranmer, 2006; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006),. In other words, employability skills are context-contingent and likely to vary among different disciplines, professions and organizations. However, researchers have made attempts to capture the essence of employability. Yorke and Knight (2006) explain employability skills as "a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy" (p. 5). This definition suggests that employability skills are related to both short-term and long-term employment outcomes. In this sense, employability skills not only enable college students and graduates to obtain a job easily (short-term) but also to perform well and thrive in that job (long-term). Nonetheless, the concept of employability skills is complex inasmuch, as employability skills themselves comprise many other skills.

Singh and Singh (2008) relate employability skills to generic skills with a wide range of applications in various job levels from entry-level worker to senior position. Generic skills are transferable and incorporate skills such as "information literacy, working with technology, written and verbal communication, working in teams and numeracy" (Bridgstock 2009, p. 37).

The World Bank (2013) provides an inclusive list of categories, with sub-categories, of possible employability skills. In essence, employability skills incorporate three major skills: cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioral, and technical. While literacy (both language and computer literacy) and numeracy are considered essential cognitive skills, there are other cognitive skills that refer to abilities to understand complex ideas, adapt effectively to the environment, learn from experience, engage in various forms of reasoning, and take corrective actions to resolve problems (World Bank, 2013). Socio-emotional skills, which are also known as behavioral or soft skills, comprise social, emotional, interpersonal, behavioral and attitudinal, Technical skills refer to discipline-specific skills, such as science, engineering, medicine, and so on.

Thus, employability skills include not only technical or discipline-specific skills, but also generic or transferrable skills. Generic skills, as the name implies, are the skills that are general and not restricted to a particular discipline. These skills are thus transferable to many occupational situations and areas (Bridgstock, 2009). In this sense, generic skills are equivalent to transferable skills, and these skills are essential for job attainment and performance. Discipline-specific skills are the technical skills traditionally included in university curricula with regards to particular occupational requirements. These skills are closely related to the domains, disciplines or subject matters. For example, a civil engineering graduate should possess the ability to design, manage and oversee various construction projects. While the word

"employability" might make the term sound relevant only to the ability to seek employment, employability skills are actually argued to also help students learn better and to pursue further education as well as lifelong learning (e.g., Jackson, 2016; Virtanen, & Tynjälä, 2018). Employability is also considered to be "often relevant to students' academic studies, to their working life and to their wider life as citizens and members of families, communities and societies" (Artess, et al., 2017, p. 16). In spite of the popularity of employability skills and their benefits, researchers have not reached conclusive agreement on how employability skills develop in the academic context (Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018).

2.8 Conceptualization of Employability Skills and Associated Terms

Before examining the concept of employability skills development, there is a need to gain an insight into the complex concept of employability skills and its associated terms of the nomenclature. In preceding section, employability skills are defined to comprise discipline-specific skills and generic or transferable skills. A myriad of different studies have been conducted using various terms of skills and competences/competencies in this nomenclature, namely as graduate attributes, soft skills, key/core skills/competences and 21st century skills. To clarify the meanings of employability skills, this section makes comparisons among the terms. Then, it examines how employability skills are conceptualized through different terminologies and establishment of categorizations.

The first attempt to distinguish skills was made by Becker (1964, cited in Suleman, 2018). According to Becker, there are two types of specific skills, which are equivalent to discipline- or domain-specific skills, and general skills, which are equivalent to generic skills. The term "generic skills", as the name suggests, refers to the skills that are non-discipline-specific and are acquired irrespective of the academic major (Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018). The

term is usually used to refer to higher order cognitive skills, which serve as a foundation for many other skills in different social and occupational settings (Bridges, 1993). This term is usually stated to be equivalent to the term transferable skills, but the latter term tends to provide an avenue for more emphasis on the fact that the skills can be transferred or simply used as effectively in various social and occupational contexts. Throughout literature soft skills are also considered as generic skills but are often used in the business and occupational contexts. Core/key skills are also generic skills but they are mainly emphasized as academic outcomes (Suleman, 2018). Likewise, the term graduate attributes are also stated as academic outcomes as well although this term also incorporates discipline-specific skills as well.

> Graduate attributes are the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution. These attributes include but go beyond the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future. (Bowden et al., 2000, para. 1)

In this sense, graduate attributes and employability skills seem to reflect exactly the same concept, as they both cover not only discipline-specific skills but also generic skills. Their differences are embedded in the additional information expressed in their uses. The term "21st century skills" is also used in literature on skills. This term is defined as skills or competencies that allow individuals to fare well in academic, social and occupational life. This term seems synonymous to generic skills. After all, these terms—employability skills, generic skills, transferable skills, core/key skills, soft skills, graduate attributes and 21st century skills—share a core meaning. These terms are used interchangeably in the literature (Bridgstock, 2009; Holland & Beckett, 2002). In this study, employability skills are used to cover the meanings of these

various terms. To explore the concept further, the next section elaborates on the uses and expressions of employability skills in the literature.

2.9 Employability Skills Frameworks

Although in some studies, skills are studied as individual skills, in some others, skills are examined as elements composed of in skills frameworks. The following studies examined skills as individual skills. Australia's Collaboration Council (2007) provides a framework of employability skills used in the Australian context, which consists of eight skills (each of the skills is defined by several descriptors): communication skills, teamwork skills, problem solving skills, self-management skills, planning and organizing skills, technology skills, lifelong learning skills, and initiative and enterprise skills. In a study from South Africa, Coetzee (2012) proposes a skills framework, which consists of problem solving and decision-making, critical thinking, writing and speaking (communication skills), proficiency in English, team work, interpersonal skills, research skills, information literacy and ethical awareness. Robles (2012) suggests that, in the US, top ten skills include communication, courtesy, flexibility, integrity, interpersonal skills, positive attitude, professionalism, responsibility, teamwork and work ethic. Singh and Singh (2008) consider communication skills, English language proficiency, information, communication and technology skills, interpersonal skills, ability to work as a team, leadership skills, problem solving skills, adaptability skills, risk taking skills, creativity skills and time management skills as key skills in their research on Malaysia. The list of skills can be further extended. However, several skills are considered key skills as they have repeatedly appeared to in numerous studies. These skills are communication skills, teamwork skills, critical thinking skills and problem solving skills. English language proficiency has emerged as an essential skill in various national contexts, especially developing countries, where English is the language used

in the workplace. Listing skills individually is helpful in that (1) all skills are explicitly seen and easily understood as they are mentioned separately, and (2) it provides a foundation for the categorization of individual skills to establish a skills framework.

However, attempts to capture skills as different sets or categories are more useful in that this can capture the concept of skills in a broader sense while making the description of skills look better-organized. Therefore, instead of listing skills individually, many studies in the literature categorize skills and establish skills frameworks. In these studies, individual skills are grouped into different sets, categories, or frameworks. For example, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia and Certified Public Accountants Australia (cited in Keneley & Jackling, 2011) has proposed a generic skills hierarchy that is composed of two main categories: cognitive and behavioral skills. Cognitive skills are further subcategorized into routine skills (e.g., computer literacy and report writing), analytical/design skills (e.g., analyzing and solving problem), and appreciative skills (e.g., thinking critically and innovatively), whereas behavioral skills consist of personal skills (e.g., acting strategically and thinking independently) and interpersonal skills (e.g., collaborating and discussing). Braun and Brachen (2015) devise items regarding generic job-related skills based on literature and then tested the items with a sample of 1,000 students in a German university. Their study reveals that through a confirmatory factor analysis eight conceptual skills areas were confirmed: planning and organizing work processes; promoting others; leadership; working autonomously with challenging tasks; information processing; numeracy; foreign language communications; and personal performance.

Binkely et al. (2012) establish the KSAVE (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Values, and Ethics) model as a 21st century skills framework. The framework consists of 10 skills categorized into four groups. The first category refers to ways of thinking, which covers (1) creativity and

innovation, (2) critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making, and (3) learning to learn and metacognition. The second category is ways of working, which include (4) communication and (5) collaboration (teamwork). The third category is tools for working, which cover (6) information literacy (includes research on sources, evidence, biases, etc.) and (7) ICT literacy. The fourth category is living in the world, which includes (8) citizenship – local and global, (9) life and career, and (10) personal and social responsibility including cultural awareness and competence. World Economic Forum (2016) introduces a core work-related skills framework with three main categories: abilities, basic skills and cross-functional skills. The abilities category consists of cognitive abilities (e.g., creativity and cognitive flexibility) and physical abilities (e.g., physical strength and manual dexterity). The basic skills category is composed of content skills (e.g., active learning and literacy) and process skills (e.g., active listening and critical thinking). The cross-functional skills category comprises social skills (e.g., emotional intelligence and negotiation), resource management skills (e.g., people and time management), systems skills (e.g., judgment and decision-making), complex problem solving skills, and technical skills (e.g., quality control and troubleshooting).

Various studies have conceptualized employability skills and have established conceptual frameworks to categorize the meanings of employability skills. For example, Robinson (2000) categorizes employability skills into three groups: basic skills (e.g., reading and writing), higher-order thinking skills (e.g., reasoning and creatively thinking), and personal qualities (e.g., self-control, integrity, and team spirit). In their USEM model, Knight and Yorke (2002) expand the meaning of employability skills to cover understanding (U), skills (S), Efficacy belief (E), and metacognition (M). This framework has its roots in social and cognitive psychology. Pool and Sewell (2007) argue that the USEM model failed to assist lay people in understanding what

exactly employability skills are, and they thus introduced a new model called CareerEDGE. This model consists of career development learning (Career), Experience of work and life (E), degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills (D), which is equivalent to the concept of discipline-specific skills/knowledge, generic skills (G), and emotional intelligence (E), which is referred to the ability to recognize and manage one's own and others' feelings. CareerEDGE is claimed to exert its impact on employability through reflection and evaluation, which involve self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem, three constructs with their roots also in psychology.

The employability skills framework established by the United States Department of Education (2017) categorizes employability skills into applied knowledge, effective relationships, and workplace skills, each of which is further sub-categorized. Applied knowledge comprises applied academic skills (e.g., reading and writing skills) and critical thinking skills (e.g., thinking creatively and making sound decisions). The category of effective relationship consists of interpersonal skills (e.g., teamwork and leadership skills) and personal qualities (ability to demonstrate responsibility and to work independently). Workplace skills are composed of resource management (e.g., managing time and money), information use (e.g., locating, organizing and analyzing information), communication skills (e.g., ability to communicate verbally and to listen actively), systems thinking (e.g., ability to understand and use systems), and technology use (e.g., ability to understand and use technology to conduct research or to make reports). The number of frameworks might keep going on, but what has been teased out from the literature is the fact that there is a tendency to conceptualize employability skills to surround more than the concept of skills alone. Employability, according to literature above, involves self-theories and management skills, which are to ensure that students can learn

to manage themselves in the face of challenges and continue to thrive on their own with the skills to manage their own learning and career. However, most of these studies are theoretical ones but do not provide empirical evidences to support their conceptual frameworks (Sumanasiri et al., 2015b). The current study thus took elements from these conceptualizations and frameworks into account when examining the concept of employability skills. One of the aims of this study was to uncover what skills were needed in the discipline of English education and how the skills were conceptualized into a framework. In doing so, the current study provided empirical evidences on employability skills concepts and frameworks by examining the structures of the concept of employability skills in the discipline of English language education.

2.10 Development of Employability Skills

There is a large body of literature to explore and explain the development of employability skills at different institutional levels. As this research focuses on (1) departmental/program level and (2) classroom level, this section reviews key literature on employability skills at these two levels. Existing literature considers teaching practices and methods at the classroom level, outside-class factors and the structure of an education program as a whole. Here teaching and learning activities at classroom level refer to those included in the core curriculum. The program level refers to the establishment, by the management team, of the departmental education program, which incorporates the core curriculum, and extra-curricular and other learning related activities.

2.10.1 Employability skills development at the program level

Employability skills can be developed at the program level mainly through curriculum development. Of course, teaching and learning is the core of a curriculum, but many other activities inside and outsides classes are also involved for employability skills development.

Generally, literature suggests that curriculum should involve adaptive teaching and learning, assessment, skill-embedded curriculum, and most importantly, work related activities.

Knight and Yorke (2003) conducted a prominent study of employability skills development in an education program. This study recommends four ways to enhance employability skills: work experience, entrepreneurship modules, career advice, and portfolios, profiles and records of achievement. According to the Knight and Yorke (2003), students need to accumulate work experience while they are doing their undergraduate study, while the program should also embed the modules that stimulate complex learning achievements underlying entrepreneurship. At the same time, career advice should also be provided to students, but the researchers also warned that the career advice could only work well when the core curriculum also involved the teaching and learning of employability skills as well. From portfolios, profiles and records of achievement, student can learn to reflect on their own learning achievements, collect and present supportive evidence, and manage priority areas to improve their own learning achievements.

Knight and Yorke (2003) also note that these four ways should be used as only additives to teaching and learning. Institutions should encourage the teaching and education environments that are conducive to good complex learning and employability skills development. Education programs developed based on this model are advantageous in that they add work-related learning as students are provided with the opportunities to go for internship and/or job placement that offers practical hands-on experience necessary to prepare students for the labor market. However, in this essence, some academic courses need to be reduced to give space for such a plan, and thus course planners and instructors need to carefully consider what courses to retain and what courses to keep to maximize both academic and professional benefits for the students.

A weakness in Knight and York's (2003) work is that it does not mention teaching and learning classes. Jackson and Oliver (2018) conduct a systematic review to examine adaptive learning programs for employability skills development, which include both teaching and learning and the role of industry in helping shape employability skills development. The thematic analysis of their review of adaptive learning programs for employability skills development revealed several factors that can help enhance employability skills development. Three of the factors are considered important and consistent with previous research and thus will be elaborated on. The first factor is related to employer involvement. Positive experience has been reported when university systems involve an interaction with the world of employment. In this sense, universities can collaborate with potential employers to design and revise an education program that boost employability skills among students. Embedded curriculum is the second factor. This topic has been mentioned in the earlier section of its significance in enhancing employability skills learning. Employability skills should be taught together with a particular content in an adaptive process. In this manner, employability skills can be learned in a context, making learning more meaningful and interesting. The last factor is learning strategies. A program that can encourage a great level of engagement and a large scope for active learning is effective for learning employability skills. Extra-curricular opportunities and work-based diaries are also parts of a program to provide more opportunity for skills learning.

Interaction with the world of work, embedded curriculum, and active learning strategies are all conducive for employability skills development. However, students should also be made aware of the learning outcomes of their academic endeavor; in other words, course programs should clearly state learning outcomes, the meanings of career development learning, work and life experience, and knowledge and skills students should acquire by the end of the programs.

Sumanasiri et al. (2015a) propose an employability framework that displays the relationship between learning outcomes and employability. In this framework, learning outcomes alone cannot guarantee employability, as the relationship between the two variables is considered to be moderated by university reputation. In other words, students with good learning outcomes should also graduate from a renowned university in order to have their employability enhanced. Learning outcomes are claimed to comprise five components: career development learning (e.g., how to identify job opportunities and self-presentation skills), work and life experience (e.g., work experience from internship or voluntary work, network building, and community involvement), degree subject knowledge, skills and understanding, generic skills, and emotional intelligence (ability to understand and manage one's own and others emotions and feelings).

The most comprehensive work that covers teaching and learning, assessment, embedded curriculum, skill development, and work-related activities is Coetzee's (2012) framework for developing student graduate attributes and employability in the economic and management sciences at the University of South Africa. The framework consists of 10 key principles regarding curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment design (Coetzee, 2012, pp. 131-148):

(1) A skills and attributes framework should be established and be explicitly stated as the learning outcomes a university desires to see in their graduates.

(2) Employability skills learning cannot be deprived of the learning context and discipline.

(3) Employability skills should be embedded into the main curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment design require commitment from teachers or a teaching team.

(4) Employability skills acquisition is a process, and students should be encouraged to monitor their progress over the period of time.

(5) Employability skills can be best learned in the student-centered teaching method, which enables students to be active learners in constructing new knowledge as well as be independent learners, and traditional rote-learning assessment should be avoided.

(6) Work-integrated learning (WIL) should be introduced for more practical work-related experience and knowledge.

(7) Student self-reflection is important for their learning.

(8) Education on career self-management and career development learning is strongly needed to enhance students' employability skills.

(9) Students should be provided with opportunity to develop career-related employability attributes, which Coetzee believes to be psychological attributes such self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

(10) As mentioned earlier, the learning of employability skills is a process, so to make it more effective, learning should be made into phased process with a continuum of levels with various modules.

The above literature review shows the many skills development frameworks at the curriculum level. They are context-sensitive, and thus there is no working skills development framework that can be generally used at this level. However, despite the differences in these frameworks, there are some common ideas emerged from these frameworks. Firstly, skills should be embedded in the core curriculum, rather than taught as a separate course, which, in this way, makes teaching employability context relevant and interesting. Secondly, teaching, learning and assessment need to provide chance for students to utilize the employability skills set as the target learning outcomes. Finally, collaboration with potential employers in the forms of work-

integrated learning and collaboration to design a learning program is favorable for employability skills development.

2.10.2 Employability skills development at the classroom level

There are studies examining employability skills development at the program and classroom levels. These studies focus on teaching practices. Lizzio et al. (2002) examined the relationship among university students' perceptions of the academic environment, their approaches to study, and learning outcomes (which included generic skills) in a university in Australia. The study was based on Biggs' (1989) 3P model: the learning environment and student characteristics (presage), students' approach to learning (process) and learning outcomes (product), with generic skills included. A questionnaire survey with 5,000 students across 14 faculties was conducted with prior academic ability and teaching environment as the presage variables. The results from structural equation modeling showed that while the teaching quality factor (good teaching, clear goal, appropriate assessment, and emphasis on independence) had a moderate relationship with generic skills, the workload factor had only a very small relationship with generic skills. This result emphasizes the importance of quality teaching (good teaching, clear goal, appropriate assessment, and emphasis on independence) on the development of employability skills.

Smith and Bath (2006) obtain similar results in their study. The study was conducted in a research-intensive university in Australia with first-year, final-year and postgraduate coursework students across various disciplines. Using multiple regression analysis, the result showed that Good Teaching had a small-to-moderate effect on employability skills, while Learning Community had a moderate effect, the strongest effect of all the four independent variables, on employability skills. The researchers concluded that learning communities that provide a chance

for students to enjoy social, interactive, and collaborative experience outside class time are deemed an influential factor for the development of employability skills.

Crebert et al. (2004) point to the significance of collaborative learning in developing employability skills through their case study of an Australian university. The study employs mixed methods, which involved focus group interviews with 11 graduates and six employers and a questionnaire survey with 664 graduates. The results from this study also show that teaching staff should make attempts to explicitly inform students of what employability skills they are supposed to deliver and how such delivery is implemented and how the learning outcomes are assessed in relation to these skills development. McNeil et al. (2012)'s study of medical students in an Australian university also point out that active and collaborative learning activities, such as group discussion, debates, presentations, role plays and assessment that is aligned with the expected skills learning outcomes provided the environment allowing for the nurturing of employability skills.

The impact of interactive and collaborative learning has become a prominent factor for employability skills development and results from other studies outside Australia have also pointed into this direction. For example, Kember and Leung (2005a) conducted a survey to examine the influence of active learning experiences on the development of employability skills among graduates of a Hong Kong university. Results from structural equation modeling suggest that the teaching factor (teaching for active learning and for understanding) had a moderate positive effect on all the employability skills (critical thinking, creative thinking, ability to pursue lifelong learning, adaptability, problem solving communication, and interpersonal skills), while the relationship factor (assistance from teaching staff and teacher-student relationship) has

a moderate positive effect only on working together variable (communication and interpersonal skills).

These results are reaffirmed in their other studies on employability skills development among Hong Kong university students (Kember, 2009; Kember et al., 2007; Kember & Leung, 2005b; Leung & Kember, 2006). For instance, a study of undergraduate students at a Hong Kong university uses structural equation modeling and qualitative method to illustrate how teaching methods are essential to develop employability skills. It shows that active and collaborative learning is more effective than rote learning in skills development (Kember & Leung, 2005b). Further, the study also reports that there is a mutual reinforcing correlation between teaching and teacher–student relationship. For example, good teaching can promote a good teacher–student relationship, which would encourage teachers to put more efforts to teach in return and thus would enhance their teaching quality. As a consequence, promoting a good teacher–student relationship is conducive to active and collaborative learning, which would ultimately facilitate the development of employability skills. Moreover, results also show that learning activities and assessment that encourage the use of employability skills are conducive to the development of those skills.

Virtanen and Tynjälä (2018) revealed salient pedagogical practices that could nurture the development of employability skills in the Finnish context. This study involved 123 university students from year 1 to year 6 in three different subjects: chemistry, physical education, and teacher education. Dependent variables were generic skills categorized in three groups creativity and innovation (resourcefulness, innovative, and creativity, and ability to operate in new situations), critical thinking, problem solving and decision making, and learning to learn or to use metacognition (continuing learning skills and self-assessment skills). Independent variables

comprise students' perceptions of the pedagogical practices formed into four categories: 1) forms of teaching and learning; 2) constructivist learning environment and integrative pedagogy; 3) clarity of assessment criteria; and 4) course learning atmosphere. Results from this study also confirm the influence of active and collaborative learning on employability skills development. In addition, results from the study also pointed to the negative effect of traditional teaching practices such as reading, lecturing and working alone and also that various forms of assessment such as self-assessment, peer-assessment and the giving and receiving of feedback should be encouraged.

All in all, different results have been obtained from various studies because of apparent different interests, experiences, and perspectives of researchers on the factors the influence the development of employability skills development at the classroom level. Nonetheless, despite the differences, some common results have also been produced. First, it seems conclusive that teaching methods that encourage active and collaborative learning are conducive to employability skills development. Second, assessment and feedback that focuses on active and meaningful learning impact employability skills development.

The literature review presented in this chapter identifies several gaps in the literature. First, most research utilizes a list of pre-determined skills extracted from literature in their study. While some studies provide a rationale for doing so and explaining the link between those pre-determined skills and their university learning outcomes, some do not provide any explanation at all. The problem is predetermined skills extracted from literature might not be congruent with the intended learning outcomes of the institutions where the research studies take place. Second, what makes using predetermined skills worse is the fact that many studies examined employability skills development in a multi-discipline context. Admittedly, employability skills

are skills which are considered to be relevant to various disciplines, but that does not mean that all the skills selected by researchers match the learning outcomes of all the disciplines in which they conduct research. Non-congruence between pre-determined skills and intended learning outcomes of the research setting might lead to inaccurate results. To tackle these problems, the present study proposes to conduct an empirical study to examine employability skills development in one discipline (i.e., English language education program) as opposed to a multi-discipline context. It also employs the qualitative approach to elicit the employability skills, which are aligned with the learning outcomes of the research setting.

The last knowledge gap is that previous research on skills development has mainly focused on eliciting students' description of the teaching practices. While research has concluded that active learning can enhance employability skills development and hinted that active learning involves active "engagement" (Coetzee, 2012; Kember, 2009), student's description of how their own engagement in learning affects employability skills development has been underexplored in the literature. To produce good learning outcomes, according to the involvement principle proposed by Astin (1984), student involvement should also be taken into account. There should be an interaction between student involvement and teaching factors that lead to particular learning outcomes. In this study, involvement is conceptualized as physical and psychological energy expended by students on academic tasks. Indeed, the learning process, which involves students' actual efforts in their own studies, is vitally important for learning achievement as it converts input into output (Amora et al., 2016; Astin, 1984). Thus, students' involvement is of great significance and student involvement employed as the mediator of the effect of teaching on learning outcomes is used as a theoretical basis of this study. Hence, students' actual involvement in their learning is examined. As "student involvement" and "student engagement"

are considered to be synonymous (Astin, 1984) or closely linked (Trowler, 2010), literature on student engagement is useful for examining employability skills development at the classroom level. Thus, despite the dearth in literature on the effect of student engagement on employability skills development, research provides evidences of the impact of engagement on general learning outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2004; Heng, 2014; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). As employability skills are included as a component of learning outcomes, I consider student engagement a key factor influencing employability skills development.

2.11 Definition of Student Engagement

Astin (1984) defines engagement as a student's exertion of mental and physical involvement in the academic experience. In this sense, engagement involves both physical and mental energy. Skinner and Belmont (1993) conceptualize engagement as effortful, active, constructive, and enthusiastic participation in academic tasks and considered engagement as a multidimensional construct. Reeve and Tseng (2011) then note that three components – behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement – are widely used to caption student engagement. Fredricks et al. (2004) provides clear definitions and examples of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement as follows.

(1) Behavioral engagement involves three components: positive conduct, involvement in learning and academic tasks, participation in school-related activities such as athletics or school governance. Some examples of behavioral engagement are abiding by the school rules, absence of disruptive behavior and truancy, exerting effort, on-task attention, and persistence.

(2) One dimension of emotional engagement is students' emotional reactions in the classroom, for example, interest, enthusiasm, and happiness, while the lack of such

engagement can cause boredom, sadness, and anxiety. The other dimension of emotional engagement involves identification or belonging with schools.

(3) Cognitive engagement is associated with investment in learning or self-regulation or being strategic. In another dimension, cognitive engagement involves psychological endeavor to go beyond the requirements, and a preference for new challenges. Some other examples of cognitive engagement include diligence, ability to tackle failure, and flexibility in problem solving.

Student engagement derives from a number of major antecedents. The nature of the challenge of academic tasks affects the level of student engagement. Tasks that are too easy or too difficult sap away student engagement. So tasks need to be set to a proper level of difficulty to encourage a high level of engagement from students. According to Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory, student relatedness, competence and autonomy also exert an impact on student engagement. Relatedness is the feeling that one is cared about and supported and belongs in a particular setting. Relatedness can be nurtured with the care and support in terms of relationship between student and teacher and between student and student. Student competence is the feeling of having control over success or failure and being confident and competent in doing academic tasks. A structure in the learning environment that is well organized and consistent needs to be established by the teacher. In this sense, students understand clearly what is expected from them and how to do the academic tasks set for them, with clear explanation and instruction from the teacher. Student autonomy is the feeling of freedom and ownership in doing academic tasks. The teacher can support student autonomy by encouraging students to choose academic tasks and participate in doing tasks with mutual respect and interaction among all students in class. Teachers who support student autonomy provide choice, encourage students to

take up their own interests, and offer rationales for academic tasks or activities (Cai et al., 2019; Deci & Ryan, 2012; Zhu & Mok, 2020).

2.12 Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

The renowned National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) has been widely used by many researchers to examine the concept of student engagement and its impact on academic achievement. This engagement instrument is based on a behavioral perspective, where engagement is seen time on task, social and academic integration, and teaching practices (Kahu, 2013). Carini et al.'s study (2006) used NSSE to examine the impact of student engagement on students' learning, which was conceptualized as critical thinking and grades, at 14 colleges and universities. The study showed that the influence of student engagement on students' learning differed across colleges and universities and that low-ability students benefited more from engagement, while student engagement had little effect for high-ability students.

Ko et al. (2016) examined the structural relationship between student engagement and learning outcomes at 32 universities in South Korea. Using structural equation modeling, the study found that college environment, student-faculty interaction, and class participation have significant effects on learning outcomes. The college environment exerts impact directly and indirectly through class participation and student-faculty interaction on academic achievement. Class participation influenced academic achievement directly and indirectly through student-faculty interaction.

The two studies above are examples of studies that employed NSSE to examine the effect of student engagement on academic achievement in multiple university disciplines. In fact, the use of a single instrument for many disciplines is problematic since evidence suggests that teaching and learning take different forms across disciplines (Laird et al., 2008). Focusing on one

academic discipline, Heng's (2012) study examined the relationships between student engagement and academic achievement of first-year university students in an English education program in Cambodia. In the study, he found that most NSSE engagement scales had positive relationships to academic achievement, as measured with English test scores. However, the researcher reported that student engagement in forms of out-of-class peer learning and extensive reading did not exhibit any meaningful influence on academic achievement, and he explained that first-year students in Cambodia were not familiar with out-of-class learning and reading.

Although NSSE is a popular instrument to measure student engagement, it has been argued to contain a major drawback. Kahu (2013) asserted that this instrument is based on the behavioral perspective of student engagement that incorporates only the behavioral and cognitive aspects of student engagement, leaving out the emotional aspect. This behavioral approach is thus deemed narrow, missing valuable information for a much richer understanding of student experience. In essence, this argument signals the importance of the inclusion of all the dimensions of student engagement in examining this concept.

Reeve and Tseng (2011) conducted a study on high school students in Taiwan to examine the dimensions of the student engagement concept. The researcher proposed a fourth dimension, agentic engagement, to the prominent three dimensions, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. With structural equation modeling, the study showed that student engagement can be a four-dimension construct: agentic, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. The study also revealed that agentic, emotional, and cognitive engagement significantly predicted academic achievement, while behavioral engagement had no significant effect on academic achievement.

In another study that included all the three dimensions of student engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement), Estévez et al. (2021) examined the relationships among student engagement, self-regulated learning and academic achievement in a primary school in Spain. The main result of the study revealed that all three dimensions of student engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement) displayed a positive relationship with academic achievement and self-regulated learning. In other words, students who had high engagement tended to obtain good grades and manage their time and study surroundings well; they were also strategic in seeking information and involved in little maladaptive behavior.

Indeed, in general, student engagement has been shown to have a positive impact on academic achievement, as shown in a meta-analysis by Lee et al. (2018). This meta-analysis also showed the overall effect size of each of the engagement dimensions: behavioral engagement, $r_{BE} = .350$ ($z = 108.688$, $p < .001$, $k = 55$, 95% CI = .344, .355); emotional engagement, $r_{EE} = .216$ ($z = 48.333$, $p < .001$, $k = 47$, 95% CI = .208, .224); and cognitive engagement, $r_{CE} = .245$ ($z = 43.968$, $p < .001$, $k = 31$, 95% CI = .235, .256).

To sum up, despite the myriads of studies having been conducted earlier on the impact of student engagement on academic achievement, there are still few studies that look into the impact of student engagement on the learning outcomes in the form of employability skills development. Most importantly, more research is needed to examine the role of student engagement as a mediator of the influence of curriculum development, revision, and implementation on learning outcomes in the form of employability skills. Therefore, I proposed two conceptual frameworks to investigate how curriculum development, revision, and

implementation affect student engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive), which then exerts influence on employability skills development.

2.13 Conceptual Frameworks

This study investigates the process of employability skills development from curriculum development and revision and curriculum implementation, which involves the teaching and learning. Curriculum is the foundation of teaching and learning, while a good curriculum involves good teaching and the creation of positive learning environment for learning (Khan & Law, 2015). This is to induce engagement of students and when students are engaged, they will learn the target learning outcomes. As a result, student engagement is the heart of the curriculum development model in the present study. The main curriculum model that guided the present study consists of three main stages: curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation (Lunenburg, 2011). This model was then dissected into two conceptual frameworks, which are the core frameworks for the present study, employed to examine employability skills development from the curriculum planning/revising to curriculum implementation. The first conceptual framework involves the curriculum planning/revision stage, while the second is curriculum implementation, which guides the examination of issues about student engagement.

In the first stage, to develop curriculum effectively, curriculum modeling should be utilized. Curriculum modeling is the establishment of guidelines for curriculum development and revision based on particular curriculum models (Lunenburg, 2011). Curriculum modeling is useful for curriculum development and revision which addresses Research Question 1. A prominent curriculum model is Tyler's four part model, which consists of 1) defining objectives of the learning experience, 2) identifying learning activities for meeting the defined objectives,

3) organizing of learning activities for attaining the defined objectives, and 4) evaluation and assessment of the learning experiences (Tyler, 1949).

Taba, a colleague of Tyler, later developed a seven-step model for curriculum development that is based on the modernism-scientistic tradition (Hunkins & Hammill, 1994). This model is inductive and nonlinear, which allows curriculum developers to enter the curriculum model at various points, reverse the order, or work on various curriculum components of the model concurrently (Lunenburg, 2011). These seven steps are 1) diagnosis of needs, 2) formulation of objectives, 3) selection of content, 4) organization of content, 5) selection of learning experiences, 6) organization of learning experiences, and 7) evaluation and means of evaluation (Taba, 1962). Though a considerable number of curriculum models were subsequently, this research focuses on these two curriculum models, as they are widely used by curriculum developers and are influential for curriculum development in both school and university sectors in different national contexts (Ornstein & Hunkins 2016).

According to the two curriculum models, defining the objectives of course is the most important stage in curriculum development. In higher education, the process of defining the course objectives begins with identifying graduate attributes (Khan & Law, 2015). As explained earlier, the identification is largely synonymous to the concept of employability skills. Indeed, employability skills have become significant in higher education, as Bridges (2000) indicates that that the government attempts to upskill the country's labor force to maintain its relevance and competitiveness in the labor market has mounted pressure on higher education institutions (HEIs) to place employability skills onto their curriculum agenda.

There are various factors affecting the importance of employability skills and curriculum design. These factors can be categorized into macro/external and micro/internal levels (O'Neill,

2015). The macro/external level involves influences from the international and national contexts, where universities concentrate their attention on connecting their education to workplace, thereby promoting their student employability and competitiveness in the labor market. Hall and Thomas (2005) note that "the purposes of higher education and its relative importance… linking education closer to the world of work …has become an increasing focus of attention" (p. 69).

At the micro/internal level, curriculum developers need to take into consideration social, historical, economic and political contexts in their institutions as well as the nature of the programs and disciplines and the resources they possess. For instance, employability skills are best developed in an active, student-centered learning environment (Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018), but curriculum developers need to be cognizant of the degree to which their teaching staff and students are familiar with this teaching and learning approach. If they are more familiar and comfortable with a teacher-centered teaching and learning environment with structured support from teachers, curriculum developers need to carefully plan for a gradual switch to the active, student-centered approach as abrupt change will stir up shock and resistance. In addition to teaching methods, what is also important in this level is student engagement in learning as no matter how good a teacher or a teaching method is if the students do not engage, the students will not learn (Amora et al., 2016). Therefore, a good teaching method is the one that is conducive for active student engagement in learning (Lizzio et al., 2002).

In addition to forming course objectives, another crucial consideration to take into account is the student learning experience. Positive learning experience is induced with appropriate pedagogical strategies. Some examples common pedagogical strategies include teacher-centered and student-centered or pedagogical strategies categorized as informal or less systematic (e.g., class discussion, presentations, lecturing, etc.) and formal or more systematic

(case-based learning, collaborative learning, project based learning, etc.) methods. After all the important factors are taken into consideration, a curriculum is then developed, composed of core curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Khan and Law's (2015) work also emphasizes the different roles played by core- and extra-curricular activities. While core-curricular activities are aimed to equip students with discipline knowledge and skills, extra-curricular activities are oriented toward enhancing students' generic skills. Overall, the current study has proposed an integrative curriculum model (see Figure 2.4) that is constructed from various models from literature (e.g., Khan & Law, 2015; O'Neill, 2015; Ornstein & Hunkins 2016); however, this curriculum model is still generic in nature and still has limited support from empirical research.

As presented earlier, curriculum modeling is important for curriculum development. In addition, Lunenburg (2011) suggests that a curriculum model reflects a cycle of three important stages curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation and revision. Whereas the multiple-stage curriculum development model involves various factors in environment, learning objectives as employability skills, and pedagogical strategies, it should be noted that these factors will evolve with time, and therefore curriculum revision and updates should also be carefully considered. Fullhan (2016) elaborated that curriculum revision should be made based on various considerations: local characteristics (e.g., community and education staff), external factors (e.g., government and other agencies) and public discourses (which are driven by advocacy from different stakeholders). This should go back to the factors to be taken into account during the curriculum development stage. Indeed, curriculum development is a cycle of various steps, where after a curriculum is developed, it is then implemented and evaluated. The feedback from the evaluation will later be used for curriculum revision, where the process goes back to its inception stage in the curriculum development.

The role of the leadership in the development, implementation and evaluation of a curriculum is also vitally important as good leadership will lead to quality curriculum development and revision, which then results in for good learning outcomes (Pfeffer, 2009; Quick & Normore, 2004). This part of the framework was employed to answer Research question 2 in examining the mechanisms the departmental management team mobilize ensure the implementation of the curriculum established. These mechanisms were reflected in the leadership and management roles that the departmental management team played. In the leadership roles, departmental leaders should envision the vision and missions for their department and establish mechanisms to achieve the vision and missions as reflected in curriculum development. In this process, the leaders should encourage participation from various stakeholders.

Khan and Law (2015) argue that a good leadership is the one "which is not traditional and theoretical, rather dynamic, pragmatic, participative, strategic, and most importantly, future oriented, socially inclusive and maintains high ethical standards" (p. 72). Good leadership is also when power is distributed within the school and community so that teachers are empowered in important areas (Crowther et al., 2000, cited in Jacobson, 2011). In other words, teachers should be involved in major decision making at school, so that they can express their voices and concern regarding the teaching and learning in their institution. When faculty members are encouraged to participate in leadership roles, they can take responsibility for decisions, monitor their own performance, adjust themselves to environmental changes, and collaborate to achieve common goals (Wageman, 1997). Another concept of leadership involves when to know what to do. A leader does not need to lead all the time as there are times when leaders lead, when they have to follow, and when they have to get out of the way (Sibley, 1998).

Some higher education leaders do not play a role only as leaders, but also as managers of the curriculum development and implementation. Management and leadership may be similar concepts, but they have some differences. Leadership involves establishing directions, developing new goals and aligning the organization and producing potential for change or failure, while management involves maintaining order, stabilizing work, controlling and solving problems, and producing standards, and ensuring compliance and consistency, predictability and order (Kotterman, 2006). Though this integrative curriculum development model is inclusive, it has yet to be tested. In fact, as there has been no empirical research using this model yet, what has been offered in the model is still generic and suggestions only. The current research thus conducted an empirical study to evaluate the significance of this curriculum development model.

The curriculum development model suggests the development of employability skills through careful curriculum design and good leadership and management. However, students are supposed to play a role in their own employability skills development as they are not passive receivers of knowledge and skills. Students exert their agency in the development of employability skills (Fakunle, 2021). In this context, agency refers to how students can actively and intentionally deal with in employability-related activities prevalent in the higher education structure. However, based on Giddens' (1984, cited in Tomlinson, 2010) structuration model, students' agency in employability is assumed to interact with the social structure they are in. Such factors such as social class, background, gender or ethnicity affect how students perceive their job prospect in the labor market. It is interesting to note that in the Cambodian high schools do not have good university major and career consultation for the students. In this case, students have to depend on themselves and their relatives or friends to select university majors and thus this goes on to influence students' employability at a later stage in life.

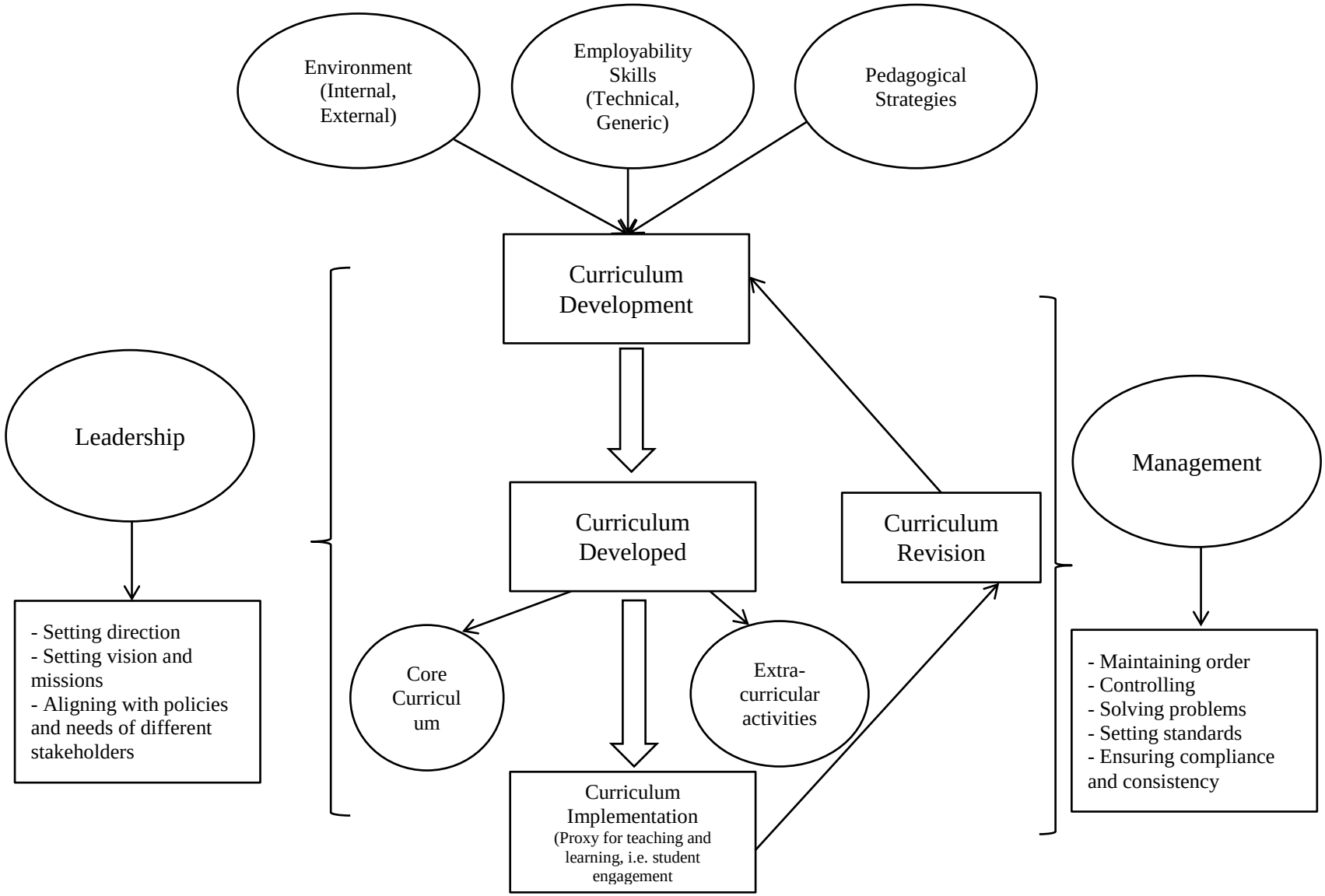

Figure 2.4 *An Integrative Curriculum Development Model for Higher Education*

The second framework (see Figure 2.5) involves the implementation stage of a curriculum, which involves the actual teaching and learning activities. According to Astin (1984), student engagement is the heart of academic achievement. No matter how good teaching materials, teachers and teaching approaches are, if students do not engage, they will not learn and there will not be any significant learning outcomes. Therefore, student engagement is the heart of the curriculum implementation and teaching and learning in the present study and thus was made the foundation of this stage of curriculum implementation, and higher education student engagement framework by Kahu (2013) was employed. This framework guided Research Questions 3, 4, and 5. In this level of study, qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized to complement each other to examine the complex concept of employability skills development together with its presumed antecedents in the model.

The core of this framework is student engagement, which comprises three dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. Student engagement was assumed to be the mediators between teaching factors and learning outcomes, which are employability skills. For example, it is believed that better quality of teaching would lead to a higher level of student engagement, which would then result in better learning outcomes. This mediation model is one of the main strengths in this research, as so far there has not been research that incorporates student engagement as a mediator of the relationship between teaching practices and employability skills development. How mediation transpires will be examined, analyzed, and tested thoroughly in Chapter 7.

As identified in Kahu's (2013) literature review, the antecedents of student engagement contain three levels: students or personal, classroom and institutional. Students' own characteristics such as motivation, interest, and background knowledge can affect student

engagement. Classroom factors that affect student engagement include teaching, workload and assessment, while institutional factors are curriculum, culture, policies, and regulations. These factors form key theoretical perspectives on student engagement and frame the empirical study in this research. As suggested by Kahu (2013), this framework provides a better understanding of student engagement and helps improve students' learning outcome, which refers to employability skills in this study.

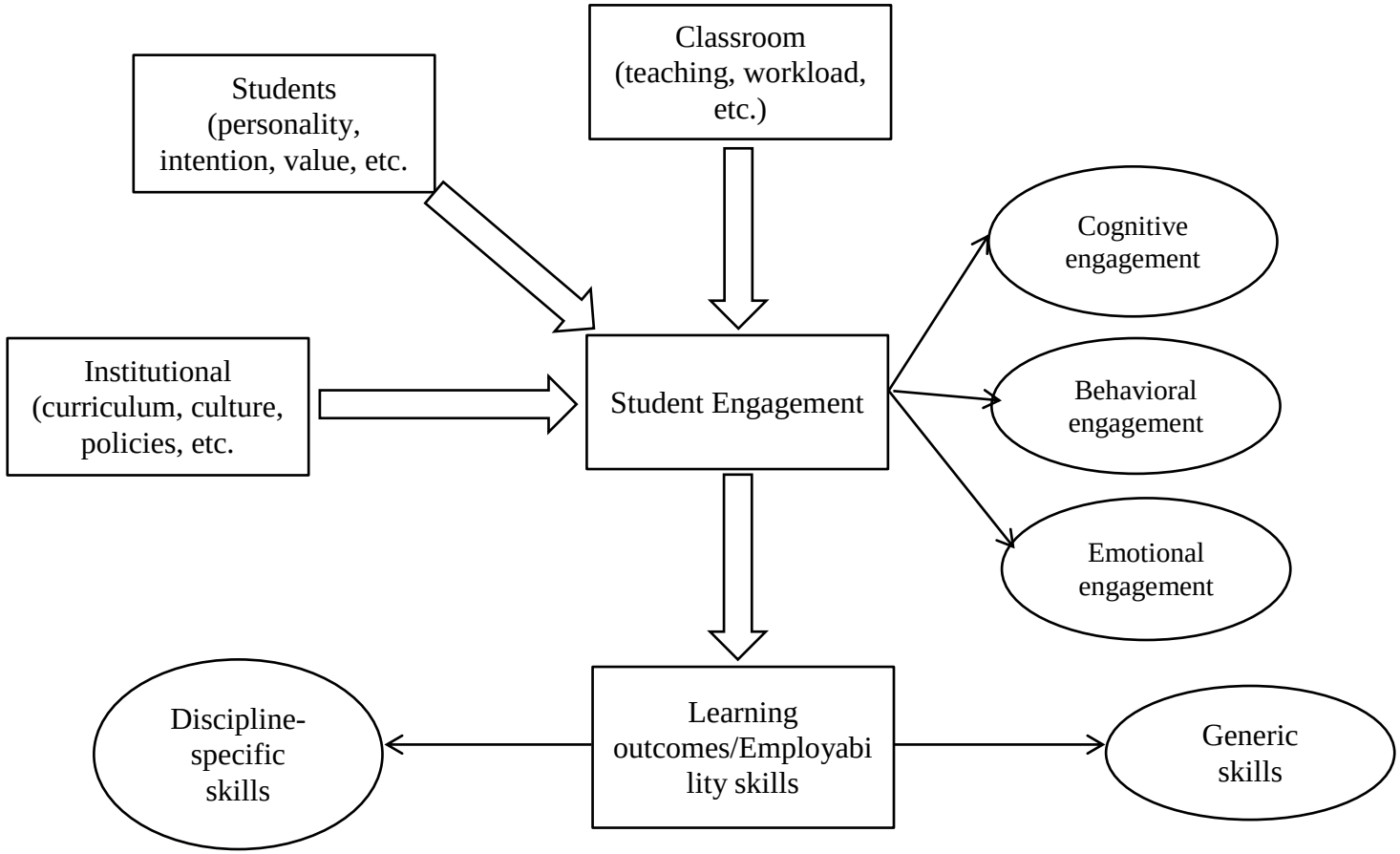

Figure 2.5 *Higher Education Student Engagement Framework Adapted from Kahu (2013)*

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design: A Case Study

This research employs a case study design. A case study shares many common ethnographic characteristics, including dynamic methods and application to various contexts and employing a variety of data collection methods to answer a range of questions (Parker-Jenkins, 2018). In this way, the research design allows researchers to collect in-depth rich data from a particular context that can be used to explore, describe, or explain a phenomenon.

However, to justify this research design, this section explains the philosophical foundation of case study to show how it suits the present research. Many researchers have contributed to the development of the case study approach, and they have used this design to serve different purposes, rendering various definitions of the case study design based on different researchers. For example, Yin (2018) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry of a contemporary phenomenon within a real world context or boundary. Woodside (2010), intending to provide a broader definition of a case study than that of Yin's, defines a case study as "an inquiry that focuses on describing, understanding, predicting, and/or controlling the individual (i.e., process, animal, person, household, organization, group, industry, culture, or nationality)" (p. 1). Mills et al. (2017) concluded that while differences in definitions exist, there are common features that can guide the application of a case study design: "the focus of a case study is the detailed inquiry of a unit of analysis as a bounded system (the case), over time, within its context" (p. 16). To synthesize these definitions as a working definition, this study considers case study as an empirical examination of a phenomenon consisting of a unit of analysis as a bounded system in a real world context.

This working definition explains how the case study approach is suitable for the current research, as employability skills development is context sensitive, and the topic is contemporary and underexplored in the Cambodian context. In other words, the case study design is useful in terms of providing an in-depth narrative and interpretation of the phenomenon of employability skills development from the three main groups of stakeholders' experience and interpretation in a bounded, real-world context (i.e., the case department). Moreover, it is worth examining the particular context of English language education, owing to its remarkable characteristics. The rationales for the choice of this context/research setting will be given in Section 3.3.

Furthermore, the case study approach is used because of several reasons that are related to the philosophical foundation of the approach. First of all, I developed my study based on the post-positivist approach that substantially informs the case study design. According to Mills et al. (2017) and Yazan (2015), this philosophical approach is associated with the seminal texts on case study by Robert K. Yin. Accordingly, post-positivists focus on objectivity, validity and the generalizability of the results when conducting case studies. It should be noted that analytic generalization, rather than statistical generalization, is the main focus of a case study in this camp. Analytic generalization is the generalization of a theory from one case to a broad variety of situations (Yin, 2018). For example, in Whyte's study (1943/1993, cited in Yin, 2018), it was found that there was a relationship between individual performance and group structure in a bowling tournament. Whyte commented that this kind of relationship may be observed in other group activities in other sports too.

Because of the focus on objectivity, validity and the generalizability of the results, post-positivists also believe in the nature of reality in that there are always errors in all measurement, so to circumvent errors, they utilize multiple methods (e.g., interviews, observations, document

analysis, etc.) with triangulation. The research design should be highly structured with well-established criteria for research questions, data collection, analysis and interpretation. These criteria are supposed to be carefully devised with reference to the literature review and the research theoretical framework.

Besides, four quality criteria (construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability) need to be taken into account throughout all stages of research. From the post-positivist perspective, in addition to multiple sources of data collection methods, both qualitative and quantitative data can be obtained through the data collection process, while the researchers with this philosophical view attempt to minimize subjectivity and biases. Another salient feature of the case study design from the post-positivist perspective is the seeking and rebutting of rival explanations (Yazan, 2015).

The current research is designed to align with Yin's post-positivist philosophical ground for two main reasons. First, this research approach is highly structured and encourages adherence to well-established literature review and conceptual framework. This feature guides me to examine the phenomenon of employability skills development in a highly structured manner. As the present research involves multiple levels of institution, a highly structured research design provides a clear roadmap for me to identify the research issues embedded in the complex real-world phenomenon and to collect relevant data. Second, this philosophical camp highlights the use of both quantitative qualitative methods in a case study. This emphasis on a mixed-method approach allows the use of different research tools for uncovering issues in the multiple-level research setting.

I commenced this case study with a thorough review of literature, which helped to establish a concrete conceptual framework that provided the structure and standards established

to guide the data collection, analysis and interpretation. Based on the post-positivist approach, the truth about a phenomenon under study (i.e., employability skills development in this study) was captured. However, the post-positivist camp also stresses in the inability of study instruments to capture the whole truth due to its inherent measurement error and biases formed by researchers themselves. Thus, various forms of data collection methods were adopted to capture the truth about employability development more comprehensively.

Hence, in addition to the utilization of the qualitative method, this study also uses the quantitative method. The rationale for the use of quantitative method is highlighted here because some researchers consider a case study as qualitative in nature (e.g., Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). Nevertheless, due to the given reasons, this case study is a "mixed-method case study". The utilization of the mixed-method design is mainly to address the methodological gap as identified in the literature review. Moreover, this constitutes a form of data collection using different methods. The use of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, in conjunction with the utilization of interviews, class observations, and document analysis emphasizes the strength of case study in the use of multiple data collection methods to enhance the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the study results.

In the present a mixed-method study, the qualitative study was conducted prior to the quantitative study. Document analysis and semi-structured interviews were conducted for the qualitative data collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the DoE management team, faculty members, year-3 and year-4 students and fresh graduates, while document analysis involved the examination of course syllabuses and assessment papers. In this stage, I aimed to elicit information related to the rationale for integrating employability skills into the curriculum, how the skills were selected and integrated into the curriculum, and how to

enhance student engagement, which was considered to exert an influential impact on the acquisition of employability skills. Information from the qualitative design was then used to inform the questionnaire design, the main data collection instrument for the quantitative design. This quantitative study aimed to test a model in which student engagement was hypothesized to mediate the relationship between the antecedents of student engagement (institutional, classroom and personal factors) and employability skills development. Mediational analyses with PROCESS (Hayes, 2017) were employed as the main analyses of this quantitative study.

3.2 Research Setting

The current study proposes to examine employability skills development in the Bachelor of English program of the DoE in a university which is located in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The case in the present case study is the Bachelor of English program at DoE. Contextually, this program has been affected by the endeavor of Cambodia's national development as the country was urgently in need of a labor force which is equipped with English proficiency to communicate with international organizations and donors, who were flooding into Cambodia to provide aids. Based on this demand, the program was shaped to enrich students with not only English proficiency but also key soft skills such as communication, in speaking and writing, critical thinking, teamwork, and problem solving skill. Institutionally, all these skills were placed into the vision and missions of the institution, which was then translated into curriculum and then on to a model for teaching and learning. At the micro level, students were, and still are, selected based on tests that assessed such prior skills, and only those who possessed sufficient proficiency would be admitted. Through the learning environment, students were also encouraged to employ skill-based learning, through group work, discussion sessions, presentation, and exercises that require higher order of thinking.

However, Cambodia did not have capable staff to run this program at DoE and thankfully, the country received aids from the Australian government to operate the program. The DoE was established in 1985 with an aid from an Australian non-governmental organization called the Quaker Service Australia (QSA) to provide training in English language. In 1993, the DoE was taken over by International Development Program Education, Australia and the University of Canberra as their joint project. The project was sponsored by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and lasted three years. The four-year BEd Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) was established and operated from then on. The program has been operated independently of the university that the DoE is part of.

The DoE is an academic department of a public university. This means that it is part of the public sector and receives funding from the government. Thus, it offers government-funded classes for fresh high school graduates. Owing to high demand for English language education and financial need, the DoE was allowed to run private classes for its bachelor program from 1997. To gain admission to the DoE, students have to take an entrance examination administered by the department. However, the entrance examination for students who apply for subsidized places was abolished the government. Currently, students who seek to study in funded places are admitted based on their results in the state high school examination.

The English program provided by the DoE is a renowned one in Cambodia, as each year thousands of students apply for it and sit the entrance examination. While all high school graduates are eligible to be enrolled in the private classes, only fresh high school graduates are eligible for the government-funded class. This arrangement exemplifies the privatization of higher education in Cambodia.

Graduates of the DoE are welcomed by employers, due to their good proficiency in English and possibly their other job-related skills. However, it is worth noting that most of the students enrolled in the DoE also study another degree at the same time. This phenomenon of pursuing two degree simultaneously is common, as Cambodian young people are keen to diversify their employment prospect, given the changing economic circumstance in the country (Peou, 2017).

The DoE has a vision to be a national leader in English language education and research with regional and international quality standards. To achieve the vision, DoE has laid out five missions: (1) to produce highly qualified graduates with marketable skills and disciplined character, (2) to promote patriotism, community service, and lifelong learning, (3) to meet increased market demand for IT-assisted TEFL education, research, and management, (4) to always provide stakeholders with satisfaction through high quality professional development and services, and (5) to build local, regional, and international partnerships. The education program, which comprises the core curriculum and extra-curricular activities, is established to be aligned with the vision and missions of the department.

The DoE provides a few courses for all the students to respond to its vision and missions. All courses are core courses and there are no elective courses (see Appendix A for all the subjects provided by DoE from year 1 to year 4). The DoE provides classes in three shifts: morning, afternoon, and evening, and the students DoE only study one shift (i.e., three hours per day and five days per week). It is the largest department in the university in terms of the number of students and teaching staff. In the academic year 2018–2019, there were a total of 2,178 students from year 1 to 4. There were 436 year-4 students who were doing four different majors: Bachelor of Education, TEFL, Bachelor of Arts in English for Professional Communication,

Bachelor of Arts in English for International Business, and Bachelor of Arts in English for Translation and Interpretation. Table 3.1 shows the number of students in the DoE. The number of students normally keeps decreasing from year 1 to year 4, indicating the dropout rate. There are also more female students than male. In addition, most of the students in the program were self-funded. This implies that the DoE is heavily relied on the students' tuition fees as tis funding source. Again, this shows the privatization level of higher education in Cambodia.

Table 3.1 Total Number of DoE Students, Years 1-4, in Academic Year 2018- 2019

Year of study		
	Year 1	759
	Year 2	556
	Year 3	427
	Year 4	436
Gender		
	Male	960
	Female	1,218
Learning shift		
	Morning	574
	Afternoon	647
	Evening	957
Funding source		
	Scholarship	179
	Self-funding	1,999
Total		**2,178**

During the study period, there were 39 full-time teaching staff and 20 part-time teaching staff in the DoE. Among the 59 teaching staff, there were two different types of teaching staff based on the nature of the contract: normal teaching staff (those who work under an employment contract with the government) and contract teaching staff (those who are hired directly by the department). All faculty members in this department are referred to as lecturers. Formally, there is no title of professor for academic staff in this university as well as in other universities in Cambodia, nor is there the tenure track system. The students and faculty are managed by a

management team of five members. These five persons work together to deal with academic and curricular and extracurricular activities that happen in the DoE, independent of the university. Despite enjoying academic freedom, DoE does not enjoy as much financial freedom. Like other public universities, the DoE is sustained mainly with the tuition fees from the private programs. Nevertheless, the finance is generally managed by the university, and this often affects the autonomous operation of the DoE. With little funding from the government, the DoE is normally struck with budget constraints for various important activities such as research, professional development for faculty members, and extra-curricular activities for students.

The organizational culture of DoE as well as that of the whole university is affected by in the national context. At the beginning, when the country was in need of a labor force capable of communicating in English, DoE was a place to teach English for communication. Therefore, the whole institution shaped its curriculum, staff, and teaching accordingly, and all the lecturers were supposed to teach English for communication to the students. However, after the turn of the century, the discourse of the 21st century skills start to appear with the main focus on 4Cs skills (communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity), the whole country demand a labor force with competencies. Education has also been economized as a means for national development. DoE also began changing its course, and move toward outcome-based education, focusing mainly on competency and skill development, especially the 4Cs of the 21st century skills. The culture (staff, teaching, and support) was also shifted accordingly.

3.3 Rationale for Selecting the DoE as the Research Site

The rationale for DoE to be chosen as a research site or a case is based on case characteristics. Specifically, cases in the case study design are not selected randomly (Denscombe, 2014; Seawright & Gerring, 2008) as a case study usually involves a very small number of cases; i

cases are selected based on particular criteria instead. Seawright and Gerring (2008) suggest seven criteria for selecting cases: typical, diverse, extreme, deviant, influential, most similar, and most different. Denscombe (2014) notes that cases should be selected based on the types of cases (typical, extreme, test-site for theory, and least likely) as well as on practical considerations such as convenience and intrinsic interest. Yin (2018) also mentions that a single case study is invaluable when it possesses one of the five characteristics: critical, extreme or unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal case.

Regarding the selection of the DoE as a case for the current study, there are a few strong rationales behind it. First of all, this case of DoE can be considered a common case and a case that constitutes a test-site for theory. A common case is a case that captures the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation (Yin, 2018). This can mean a case that provides the data that the researcher needs to explore, describe and explain the phenomenon under study. In such instance, rich data can be collected from the DoE regarding the concept of employability skills and the theorization of employability skills development as the DoE has regarded skills development as one of its missions, while there have apparently been endeavors from the management team and lecturers to work on delivering skills to their students in their efforts in constant revising and promoting its curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and teaching methods.

The DoE is also a typical case in which a phenomenon that appears in this case is similar to that found in other cases, making it representative (Denscombe, 2014; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). The DoE is the first department in the country offering a bachelor's degree program in English education. Many private English departments established later have used the DoE's curriculum as a reference source when designing their own curriculum. This makes the DoE somewhat representative of English language education in the country.

Lastly, as suggested by Denscombe (2014) and Yin (2018), there are practical considerations in the selection of the case. I used to work as a lecturer in this department, so I have access to the field. This facilitated me to conduct various types of data collection activities, such as interviews and class observations with different respondents: the management team, teachers and students. This also allows me to gain access to rich data that is useful in uncovering the concept of employability skills development in Cambodian higher education.

3.4 Participants and Sampling

There are different forms of triangulation, one of which is data source or participant triangulation. “Data source triangulation involves the collection of data from different types of people, including individuals, groups, families, and communities, to gain multiple perspectives and validation of data” (Carter et al., 2014, p. 1). With this form of triangulation in mind, I targeted three main types of stakeholders to collect data from: former and current members of the departmental management, faculty members, and year-3 and year-4 students and graduates.Year-1 and year-2 students were not included because they just began their study in the department and thus were assumed to have inadequate learning experience of employability skills in the program. Year-3 and year-4 students and graduates were selected because they were believed to be able to provide different types of data through a continuum of year levels which would be used for data source triangulation to explore how their experiences complemented or contradicted each other. Only fresh graduates were invited to participate in the research; fresh graduates were defined in the current study as those who graduated within the last two years when the data collection began. Fresh graduates furnish two benefits over year-3 and year-4 students and senior graduates. First, within two years, they should still be able to recollect the learning experiences at the DoE, compared to senior graduates. Second, all of them should

already be in employment or actively seeking for employment, so they should be better aware, compared to year-3 and year-4 students, of what skills they have learned from the DoE that make them employable in the labor market. All the interviews were conducted from late April to September 2020.

3.4.1 The qualitative enquiry into curriculum development

This stage of the study involved collecting data from semi-structured interviews with the DoE management team. I approached and received agreement to participate in the interviews from all the current management team members: the director of the institute (former DoE department head), department head, Master's program coordinator, and Bachelor's program coordinator. Two former DoE management team members also agreed to participate in the interviews. This gives a total of 6 interviews. The key themes for the interview were to identify the background of DoE curriculum and its development and revision throughout the period of over three decades. Participants were also asked why employability skills were integrated into the curriculum, how they were integrated and delivered to the students. I also elicited information vis-à-vis how the management team ensured the delivery of the employability skills through the curriculum implementation, i.e. teaching and learning.

3.4.2 The qualitative enquiry into student engagement

a. Selection of lecturers for interviews

Lecturers were selected based on their teaching performance as reflected in the rating in student evaluation of teaching. I contacted the department head for a list of high- and low-performing lecturers based on student evaluation. However, as the information is sensitive, I was only offered a list with names of high- and low-performing lecturers but without identification of who

had performed well and who had not. A point to note is that, in most cases, the lecturers identified as having lower performance had actually received good rating from students (rating ranging from 70% to 80%, which is considered good by the department). Only a few lecturers had received rating of below 70%, which is considered poor.

The list provided by the department head showed 22 lecturers who received the rating within the criteria. Some lecturers were not approachable because they rarely came to their offices or because they were part-time lecturers, who had other commitments. I invited all the 22 lecturers through email and phone calls to request their participation in my interview. 12 of them responded, and two of them declined to participate because of personal reasons. I ended up having 10 lecturers for interviews. During the interviews, to confirm my conjecture on their teaching performance, I asked these lecturer-participants to disclose their approximate teaching performance scores they had received from the student evaluation. As similar information emerged in later interviews, I realized that my data had reached saturation. Thus, I determined to stop further recruitment of participants.

b. Selection of year-3 and year-4 students and graduates

It was very difficult to find graduates to participate in the study. Covid-19 outbreak began in early March in Cambodia, and on 9th March the government announced the closure of all schools and universities in the country. It caused unusual difficulty for my recruitment of participants. I eventually managed to reach a few graduates, snowballed from them, and finally interviewed a total of nine graduates. Academic performance was adopted as a criterion to guide the selection of year-3 and year-4 students. I asked lecturers to recommend some high-performing and low-performing year-3 and year-4 students. I contacted ten year-3 students and ten year-4 students to participate in my interviews. 13 of them (eight year-3 students and five year-4 students) agreed

to participate. As the data had reached saturation, I decided to end my interviews with students at that point. To obtain the information about the students' performance, I asked each of them to fill in a background questionnaire (see Appendix D) before the interview, one item in which asked the students to list their approximate scores in various subjects.

3.4.3 The quantitative enquiry into student engagement

This stage involves the selection of year-3 and year-4 students for the questionnaire survey. As the present study is of a mixed-method design, a questionnaire survey was administered to students in addition to the interviews. The questionnaire contained four sections and took around 20 minutes for each respondent to complete. At first, I planned to administer the questionnaires in class and asked them to complete the questionnaires at the end of a session. However, because the university was closed and all classes were taken online, the questionnaire was made into a Google Form. The link of the Google Form was provided to some lecturers who then passed it onto their classes. All year-3 and year-4 students of a total of 869 students were targeted and the link to the Google Form was sent to them by their lecturers via Google Classroom and Zoom. 373 students (43%) completed the questionnaires.

Overall, the data collection process was somehow smooth as I used to work as a lecturer in DoE. However, I faced a few other challenges, besides the above-mentioned constraints caused by the spread of Covid-19 in the country, during my data collection process. First, the lack of research culture in Cambodia made it difficult to ask for volunteers to join research as participants did not see the values of research. They had to be asked repeatedly and reminded a few times before they were willing to participate. Contextually, many participants didn't understand the meaning of the word "employability skills" as they always thought about employment when they heard this word. Some students could not identify what employability

skills until asked directly such as “Do you think you have learned communication skills from your study at DoE?” Third, also, participants did not fully understand the concept of student engagement as they described engagement mainly as physical engagement, not emotional or cognitive. I had to interpret from various indirect questions for emotional and cognitive engagement.

Table 3.2 Numbers of Participants Participating in the Study

Qualitative	Management Team		Faculty Members		Students and Graduates	
enquiry into	Male	6	Male	8	Male	9
student	Female	0	Female	2	Female	13
engagement	Total	6	Total	10	Total	22

Quantitative	Year-3 Students		Year-4 Students	
enquiry into	Male	113	Male	38
student	Female	151	Female	71
engagement	Total	264	Total	109

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Employability skills development was the main concept under examination in this study, so the measure of the concept of employability skills was necessary. Employability skills were operationalized in this study as a combination of technical skills (e.g., grammar and vocabulary) and generic skills (e.g., critical thinking and communication skills) in English language education. A list of skills that students and graduates from the Bachelor of English program

should have was elicited from the interviews with some management team members, some lecturers, some students and graduates, and document analysis. This list of skills was then included into the survey questionnaire. To gauge the acquisition of the employability skills, self-reporting scales of these skills were provided and students were asked to rate their own skills development based on their own perspective.

The whole research process involved the collection of data with multiple data collection methods, which is the nature of the case study design (Creswell, 2007). This is consistent with the concept of methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation—a process of check and cross-check using different methods—is conducted to ensure the reliability of the data and also to enhance the confidence in researchers to interpret the data (Stake, 2010). There are two sorts of methodological triangulation: "across method" and "within method" (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). The across-method triangulation involves the employment of both quantitative and qualitative methods, while within-method triangulation means the use of only one method, either quantitative or qualitative, or more than one data collection procedure. In this study, methodological triangulation refers to the across-method triangulation in which both quantitative and qualitative methods are used. Quantitative data was collected in the form of a survey questionnaire. The within-method triangulation in the use of various qualitative data collection procedures, namely interviews, observation, and document analysis.

3.5.1 Qualitative data collection

The interviews in the current research were conducted with the management team members, lecturers, year-3 and year-4 students and graduates. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was semi-structured in nature. Some questions were devised by me to elicit responses related to the development of employability skills and learning experience, and further

probing and follow-up questions were devised on the spot and utilized to obtain more in-depth information. The interview questions were devised based on the conceptual frameworks (Figures 1 and 2). To answer questions 1 and 2, interviews with the management team members were conducted. The interview questions, which were guided by the conceptual framework, aimed to elicit information regarding what informed the management team's decision to integrate particular employability skills into the Bachelor's program and what mechanisms they employed to ensure an effective delivery of these employability skills (see Appendix B for the interview protocols).

To answer question 3, interviews with faculty members and document analysis were conducted. For interviews with faculty members, questions were formed to elicit information *vis-à-vis* the teaching quality, workload assigned, assessment, and teaching methods that encourage students to become independent and active learners in class as well as outside class. Again, these questions were guided by the conceptual framework. Classroom observations were also planned but were abandoned because the classes were taken online due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Document analysis was conducted to provide information from another angle of the data source. This type of analysis is usually employed as a means of triangulation in conjunction with other qualitative research methods (Bowen, 2009). Documents can serve as a concrete source of evidence of a phenomenon, and it can also contain information beyond its literal contents (Denscombe, 2014). Researchers do not just examine the face value of documents but they can also utilize their interpretation to derive rich information from the documents available to them. In this research, analysis of such documents as department policy and rules, course syllabuses and test papers was conducted. The analysis aimed to uncover the expected learning outcomes (employability skills included), assessment, workload and expected teaching and learning

activities and outcomes. All of these are consistent with the elements in the conceptual framework.

To answer question 4, interviews with year-3 and year-4 students and graduates were conducted. This information obtained from these interviews was triangulated with the data obtained from the interviews with faculty members and document analysis. Questions were devised to obtain data regarding such important aspects in the classroom as teaching quality, assessment and workload, and student engagement. In conjunction with that student's perception on their own engagement in academic tasks will be elicited from the interviews. All of these questions will align with the factors stated in the conceptual framework.

3.5.2 Quantitative data collection

To answer question 5, a questionnaire survey was conducted. The questionnaire contained four sections. The first section comprised background elicitation questions such as gender, classes, and English proficiency scores. The technical part of the questionnaire was constructed based on the framework adapted from Kahu's (2013) student engagement framework and the qualitative data. After the qualitative data was collected and analyzed, the student engagement framework obtained from the literature review was refined, and the variables for the quantitative design were determined. According to Kahu's (2013) framework, engagement is influenced by three main factors: institutional, classroom, and personal. This framework has no strong empirical evidence to support it yet, and so was one of the aims of this study.

The classroom factors were based on the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) (Ramsden, 1991). CEQ is a measure of students' rating of the quality of overall courses in Australian universities. The original CEQ consists of five factors, composed of Good Teaching (6 items), Clear Goals (4 items), Appropriate Workload (5 items), Appropriate Assessment (5

items), and Emphasis on Independence (6 items). This instrument was utilized in the study to examine the development of employability skills in a number of studies (e.g., Smith & Bath, 2006; Wilson et al., 1997). The current study adapted the scale of Good Teaching. Eight items were added to the Good Teaching scale, making the number of the items totaled at 14. These eight items were obtained from the qualitative data analysis and included such concepts of good teaching as lecturer's effort to make the class fun and interesting, to relate class lessons to the real world, to make lessons simple and easy to understand, to encourage students to work in pairs and in groups, and to build good relationship with students.

As from the framework, institutional and personal factors were also claimed to be influential but these factors were not covered in the CEQ. Therefore, I devised one scale each for the institutional and personal factors, again based on qualitative data analysis. The personal factors covered intrinsic interest to study and extrinsic interest to study from the perceived usefulness of the course and from their peers, and the ability to form a good relationship with their lecturers and peers. All the items in the classroom scales, i.e., Clear Goals (4 items), Appropriate Workload (5 items), Appropriate Assessment (5 items), and Emphasis on Independence (6 items), were maintained as they had been. All the items in these scales were jumbled to form one section and were measured on seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 7 (Totally Agree).

The third section of the questionnaire consisted of the student engagement construct. Engagement measures were constructed based on those developed by Chi (2014) and Reeve and Tseng (2011). The behavioral engagement scale consisted of 10 items and covered such concepts as listening and paying attention in class, working hard and putting sufficient effort, sharing opinion in pairs or in groups, doing homework and reading course material before and after

classes, asking teachers questions, and never giving up when facing difficulty. The emotional engagement scale consisted of five items and covered such concepts as “feeling interested” and “finding fun”, “not feeling stressed or bored” and “feeling curious”. The cognitive engagement was composed of nine items and focused on learning strategies such as “linking new information to the one that has been acquired”, “changing ways of thinking when facing difficulty”, “fitting different ideas together”, “generating own examples”, “stopping and thinking over” and “not being afraid of challenging tasks”. All the engagement scales were jumbled to form one section and were measured on seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 7 (Totally Agree). Appendix C provides a glimpse into the statements used to measure all these variables.

The fourth section in the survey questionnaire included employability skills as the outcome variables, with classroom factors and student engagement variables as the mediators. The employability skills section was constructed based on the data obtained from the qualitative data collection phase with consultation with the instruments used in existing research on these various topics. One of the main purposes of collecting qualitative data in this study was to gain an insight into the employability skills the Bachelor in English program intended to instill in students to help in the construction of the survey questionnaire. This data was obtained from the interviews with the management, lecturers, students and graduates, and document analysis. I did not aim to reinvent a new set of measures of employability skills. Instead, I aimed to accumulate a list of employability skills that were supposed to be the learning outcomes of the case English education program.

According to the report, the qualitative data, the technical skills obtained from the English program at the DoE included knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and the improvement of the four macro communication skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

As for the generic skills, knowledge and attributes, I combined the ones obtained from the literature and the ones most often reported by all the respondents during the interviews. These skills, knowledge and attributes were problem-solving, analytic, critical thinking, teamwork, confidence, communication, general knowledge, planning, brainstorming and organizing ideas, and research. The students were asked to rate their own acquisition of these employability skills on seven-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 7 (Totally Agree).

In sum, research questions 1 and 2 were addressed with semi-structured interviews with the management team members to identify the curriculum development/revision to include employability skills and their ways to ensure smooth implementation of this curriculum development/revision. Research questions 3 and 4 were addressed with semi-structured interviews with lecturers and students, this part was mainly to gain insight into student engagement, its antecedents (including good teaching, institutional and personal characteristics), and its consequence in the form of employability skills development. Finally, research question 5 was addressed with a survey questionnaire with the data obtained to validate the model where student engagement is assumed to me a mediator of the relationship between good teaching, institutional and personal factors with employability skills development.

Table 3.3 A Summary of Research Questions and Corresponding Data Collection Methods

	Question	**Participant**	**Data Collection Instrument**
Research Question 1	How does the DoE management team describe and justify their decision to develop and revise the curriculum in the Bachelor in English that nurtures employability skills development?	Management Team	Semi-Structured Interview
Research Question 2	What mechanisms do they utilize to ensure the delivery and acquisition of the target employability skills?		

Research Question 3	What are the perception and experiences of the DoE faculty members to implement the DoE curriculum for the delivery of employability skills in their teaching in the English program?	Faculty members	Semi-Structured Interview Document Analysis
Research Question 4	What are the perception and experiences of the DoE students and graduates in learning in the DoE curriculum in relation to the acquisition of employability skills?	Year-3 and Year-4 Students and Graduates	Semi-Structured Interview
Research Question 5	How does learning in the form of student engagement mediate the relationship between institutional, teaching, and personal factors and employability skills as learning outcomes?	Year-3 and Year-4 Students	Survey Questionnaire

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data was collected first and the information from it was used to inform instrument construction that would be used in the quantitative data collection. The qualitative data were coded and themes were formed from the codes. The coding process began from overall open coding of recurring themes in the data as compared to the research analytic framework, comprising employability skills, classroom factors and student engagement. Themes were then narrowed down and categorized into fewer more general themes. Data from the interviews with the management team were coded and categorized into themes with reference to the conceptual framework and research questions. Some examples of the themes were factors that inform their decision in introducing or revising the curriculum and other learning-related activities in the

department and what mechanisms were employed to monitor the delivery and learning process of the employability skills.

Data from the interviews with faculty members were coded based on themes related to their perspectives on the leadership and management of the DoE management team regarding the development of employability skills, their approaches to abiding by the expectations of the management team and the students in skills development, and their perspectives on effective teaching and learning practices for skills development. Data from the interviews with students and graduates were categorized into themes regarding skills they had acquired from DoE program, their perspectives on the quality of teaching and DoE overall environment, and their learning experience and engagement in their academic tasks. Document analysis was also conducted on the curriculum, course syllabuses, assessment papers, and rules and regulations of the DoE to examine how employability skills were taught and assessed explicitly and implicitly throughout the curriculum.

3.6.2 Quantitative data analysis

For the quantitative data, because the scales of student engagement antecedents (institutional, classroom, and personal factors), student engagement, and employability skills (technical and generic skills) were employed in the research context for the first time with some items added, principal component analyses, the results of which will be depicted in the Findings Section, were conducted on these scales to examine their dimensionality with regard to the measurement of the constructs. Basically, a valid scale for measuring a construct should be unidimensional, i.e., being composed of items that work together to measure the same construct. Cronbach's alphas were then calculated to account for the internal consistency of the measures.

Principal component analysis (PCA) is a type of factor analysis, exploratory in nature and employed to identify clusters of questionnaire items together under particular constructs. This is an exploratory method (Field, 2013). PCA assumes that the sample used is the population, and therefore it does not provide the possibility for the results to be extrapolated beyond that particular sample. Generalization can be done only if cross-validation from different studies using different samples produces the same results. The first step in doing PCA is to decide how many factors to extract and keep, and the current study employed the criteria that included the percentage of the total variance explained by each of the factors (50%), the scree plot, and the eigenvalues (greater than one) (Hair et al., 2014).

The next step is to decide on what rotation method to use. After factors have been extracted, it is possible to calculate the degree to which variables load on these factors (i.e., calculate the loadings for each variable on each factor). Loadings indicate how much variance of a construct can be explained by particular variables or questionnaire items. Generally, most variables tend to have high loadings on the most important factor and small loadings on less important ones. This situation makes the interpretation of the factor loadings complicated, so factor rotation is employed to discriminate between factors, facilitating the interpretation of the factor loadings. There are two types of rotation: orthogonal and oblique rotation. The term "orthogonal" means "unrelated". In this method, factors are rotated and kept independent or unrelated to each other, while the oblique method assumes that factors are related to each other.

The current study employed Varimax rotation, an orthogonal rotation method, as this procedure is deemed psychometrically sound and conceptually less complicated, compared to oblique rotation methods (Field, 2013). After factors are rotated, loadings can be calculated and, as the current study desired robust factors, loadings of less than 0.4 were suppressed and made as

the cut-off point. Loadings at this level are considered appropriate for interpretative purposes as it represents substantive values (Tran, 2020). Therefore, any items with loadings less than 0.4 or that cross load (with loadings of 0.4 or greater on more than one factor) were considered conceptually difficult for interpretation and thus were discarded.

After factor structures were examined, descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and correlations were obtained. Crobach's alpha values were also examined to check the internal validity of each construct obtained from the PCAs. Crobach's alpha is an internal consistency measure, expressed as a number between 0 and 1. Internal consistency is important for a scale or a test as it shows the extent to which all the items in that scale or test measure the same concept. Internal consistency is thus important for ensuring the validity of a scale or a test (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Cronbach's Alpha Rule of Thumb is when alpha is larger than or equal 0.9, the internal consistency is assumed to be excellent, when it is between 0.8 and 0.9, the internal consistency is assumed to be good, when it is between 0.7 and 0.8, the internal consistency is assumed to be acceptable, when it is between 0.6 and 0.7, the internal consistency is assumed to be questionable, when it is between 0.5 and 0.6, the internal consistency is assumed to be poor, and when it is lower than 0.5, the internal consistency is unacceptable (Habidin et al., 2015).

The last and main part of the analysis in the current study was to examine the mediating effect of student engagement on the relationship between engagement antecedents and employability skills. Mediation analysis is a technique used when researcher seeks to "understand, explain, or test a hypothesis about how or by what process or mechanism a variable X transmits its effect on Y. A mediator variable M is causally located between X and Y and is the conduit through which X transmits its effect on Y" (Igartua & Hayes, 2021, p. 2). In the

present study, mediational analyses were conducted, using the parallel multiple mediator model with PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2017), with institutional, classroom, and personal factors as predicting variables, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement as the mediating variables, and technical and generic skills as the outcome variables. The SPSS25 software package and PROCESS 3.5 Macro were used to conduct these quantitative data analyses.

The PROCESS macro has been widely used as a mediation testing procedure in the fields of social science. This procedure relies on bootstrapping, in which a large number of *n* new samples (e.g., 5000) is drawn randomly from the original sample, and then the indirect effect is estimated for each new sample (Zhao et al., 2010). The indirect effect can be determined to be significantly different from zero by the inference from the fact that the confidence interval of the bootstrap distribution does not contain zero (Hayes, 2017). The process procedure is considered a superior technique to the traditional mediation analysis technique Sobel Test (Baron & Kenny, 1986) for its non-reliance of the normal distribution assumption and its ability to accommodate an unlimited number of covariates added to the mediators, the dependent variables, or both (Tafesse, 2020).

CHAPTER 4: INTERVIEW FINDINGS: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND REVISION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the importance of the management in their leadership and managerial roles to bring out the department factors conducive for the development of employability skills among DoE students. Curriculum development and revision stages which involve the screening of external and internal environment are elaborated on. Furthermore, this chapter suggests that students can only acquire target employability skills if curriculum are effectively implemented and there is good teaching. Thus, various pedagogical factors, namely implicit and explicit teaching strategies and the teacher- and student-centered approaches, are included in the discussion. The chapter also discusses organizational factors, including working environment and collegiality, as they are considered prerequisite for smooth implementation of good teaching and learning.

4.2 DoE Curriculum Development and Revision: Perspectives and Experience from the Management

4.2.1 Environmental factors in DoE curriculum development

This part is to answer Research Question 1: *How does the DoE management describe and justify their decision to develop and revise the curriculum in the Bachelor in English that nurtures employability skills development?* A vital element in curriculum development is the establishment of program objectives or learning outcomes. In the present study, curriculum development and revision are based on the international and national contexts (macro level) and institutional level (meso level). According to Khan and Law (2015), learning outcomes in higher

education, in the form of graduate employability skills, are derived from the screening of the environment, consisting of external and internal environmental factors. External factors include international and national contexts, the labor market, and the education sector, while internal factors comprise institutional factors, such as history, customs and traditions, culture, operations, people, strategies, and structures of the institution. These show the importance of the macro- and meso-level factors on curriculum development and revision.

This concept of environment screening also applied when the DoE curriculum was first designed. Based on the information from the DoE Information Booklet, the original DoE curriculum was designed in 1993 with consultants from a university in Australia under the project funded by AusAID. Its objectives were to produce teachers of English and to equip Cambodian labor with English proficiency during a time when Cambodia was in need of a labor force proficient in English language. This was because Cambodia received a significant amount of aid from Western countries and international agencies during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and these agencies use English in their work in the country. English speakers are needed greatly for establishing cooperative relations with international partners during the period (Clayton, 2002; Moore & Bounchan, 2020). As a result, the influx of international organizations not only brought international aids but also job opportunities In other words, this context of post-conflict transitions gave rise to the soar of demand in English language which was seen as “a life-skill required to excel at both education and work in the Cambodian society” (Hashim et al., 2014, p. 510). A manager explained this environmental factor:

> In the past, we only had teacher training. After graduation, students preferred to choose positions in government departments, universities and high schools. (Manager 2)

However, the situation has changed since the country underwent economic liberalization, sustained growth and inflows of foreign investment and the expansion of higher education in the 1990s. This changing situation brought more uncertainties for Cambodian young people moving into working life, and urged them to adopt a "skill-complementing" or "skill-diversifying strategy" (Peou, 2017). Thus, the manager noted that:

> The situation changed in 2000. Since then, we have had other specializations… such as BA in English for Tourism and Hospitality and BA in English for International Business. Later, one lecturer completed his Master's degree and returned to help establish the Translation and Interpretation program. (Manager 2)

In fact, the program underwent the first major revision in the program when two majors—English for Tourism and Hospitality and English for International business—were introduced in 1997. This change was made in accordance with the government's approval to the privatization of higher education in Cambodia in 1997 to increase access to higher education throughout the country. English for Tourism and Hospitality and English for International Business were the first batch of private programs operated by the DoE to respond to the national needs for more skilled labor. Later, English for Professional Communication was launched to cater for the increasing needs for English for Work Skills.

It is noteworthy that the demand for English in Cambodia was aligned with the growth in the demand of the language worldwide. Internationally, English has gained reputation in a globalized world and become a common feature in a standardized global curriculum (Meyer et al., 1992). Thus, Tsui and Tollefson (2007) indicated, "Globalization is affected by two inseparable mediational tools, technology and English; proficiencies in these tools have been referred to as global literacy skills" (p. 1). Consequently, while English has been increasingly used as the medium of instruction in HE in many non-English-speaking contexts (Tollefson &

Tsui, 2004), the language has become the lingua franca in Southeast Asia through its status as the official language of ASEAN (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Despite the changing environment, the revision of the program was carefully introduced. The DoE conducted some formal studies prior to introducing major revisions in the specializations in Year 4. Two managers noted:

> The Tourism program only ran for a few years. Then it died, because not many students were interested in it. … I don't know why the Tourism program [was not successful]. Certainly, we didn't have enough students to sustain the program. As for the Translation and Interpretation program, we conducted a needs analysis, of which the results showed that students were interested in the program. (Manager 2)

> We began the International Business and Tourism programs in 1997. Then, we started the Translation and Interpretation program, and later the Professional Communication program. As far as I know, we conducted market research with our students. We provided them with a list of specializations for them to choose to study in Year 4. (Manager 6)

Formal tracer studies were conducted together with formal and informal needs analyses with both lecturers and students. Obviously, specializations were provided based on the expertise of the lecturers and the interest of the students. This shows how institutional factors played an important role in DoE curriculum revision. However, one major challenge is the lack of financial resources and expertise, leading to a limited number of tracer studies as well as formal needs analysis having been conducted. This is a common challenge in the education sector in developing countries. Nevertheless, the DoE has tried to deal with such a challenge and has contacted other stakeholders for its curriculum revision. These are comments from three managers:

> We conducted research to inform our management. I don't think the research is systematic. But at least it responds to the social trends, such as the integration of Cambodia into the ASEAN community. We carried out analysis (of the changing environment). But we lacked large- and medium-scale research. (Manager 1)

> After the one [tracer study] in 2006, we didn't conduct any more study. We had informal meetings with our alumni who held prominent positions in Chip Mong, Manulife and Prudential. They gave us ideas about the shortcomings in our curriculum. Of course, they knew our curriculum well. So we received useful feedback from them. For example, they mentioned 21st century skills, which mainly refer to 4Cs, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. (Manager 2)

> We conducted a needs analysis, partly a tracer study. But technically speaking, it was not a really formal needs analysis. We have many reasons for curriculum revision. We also look into the labor market. We want to equip students with language proficiency as key skills. That's the main reason for our curriculum revision. We always look into the needs in the labor market, but we don't have any formal needs analysis. We lack the connection from the academic to the industries. (Manager 3)

Different sources of information were used to inform the decision made by the management; these included available research, social trends, and, most significantly, the labor market. Despite the lack of expertise to conduct formal studies on the labor market in Cambodia, the DoE has the luxury of a large pool of alumni, many of whom hold major positions in private companies in Cambodia. The DoE management team reported that they often took the opportunity to have a chat with alumni in formal and informal social events and tried to seek out what the DoE could improve in order to meet the needs in the labor market. One major notable example was the feedback from the alumni that DoE students needed to improve their 4Cs of the 21st Century skills: collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. There are 12 skills listed as 21st century skills that students need in order to succeed in their careers in this Information Age. These 12 skills are categorized into three groups: learning skills, literacy skills, and life skills. It is argued that the learning skills, which consist of the 4Cs, are the most important among all the 21st Century skills (Stauffer, 2020). 21st Century skills are a form of employability skills.

As seen in Manager 3's quote above, the DoE apparently lacked the connection with industries. Curriculum revision was conducted based mainly on personal observation, experience and perspectives and informal information gathering from alumni. This might have affected how

employability skills were selected and integrated into the curriculum. In fact, employers' involvement in curriculum development is considered beneficial for employability skills development in students (Cranmer, 2006). Without such an involvement, employability skills produced as the outcomes of the curriculum might not meet the demand in the job markets. The failure to understand the labor needs in industries derives from the lack of research at universities, and this problem does not exist only in DoE but also in many universities in Cambodia. Cambodian universities make the lion share of their earnings from tuition fees. So, with little funding for research, they would rather focus on teaching than on research. Likewise, with little salary, many university lecturers have to take up part-time jobs at many universities in order to earn a living. This contextual factor undermines their research capacity (Sam et al., 2012).

4.2.2 Employability skills in the DoE curriculum

Apart from the environment factors, what employability skills to be included in the curriculum is another matter for higher education curriculum developers to consider. This part of the present study elaborates on how institutional factors (meso level) affect curriculum development and revision. This section presents the analysis of the DoE curriculum obtained from the Program Information Booklet. Students at the DoE spend the first year studying foundation courses with Core English and Writing Skills, as the specialization courses, and such general courses as math, sociology, history, culture and civilization, and environment, all of which are taught in Khmer, the native language of Cambodia. The first year is called foundation year. Then, Year 2 and Year 3 are the common years for students to hone their English proficiency before they choose their specialization in Year 4. Because courses in Years 2 and 3 are supposed to equip students with

English proficiency and other important skills, the courses in these two year were the most important for the examination in the present study.

In these two years, students were taught five subjects: Core English, Writing Skills, Literature Studies, Global Studies, and Critical Thinking (which were introduced in 2018). Core English and Writing Skills are the two subjects that teach English skills directly such as grammar, vocabulary, reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Based on the DoE Information Booklet, the two subjects also aim to equip students with generic skills such as writing skills, general communication skills, teamwork skills, problem solving, and presentation skills. Literature Studies and Global Studies are the subjects that teach English in a content-based manner, and English is taught indirectly through reading texts. Based on the DoE Information Booklet, Literature Studies and Global Studies also aim to equip students with generic skills such as critical thinking, critical reading, communication, cultural literacy, and thematic knowledge. The subject "Critical Thinking" is definitely intended to teach students critical thinking skills to enable students to interpret, analyze, and evaluate ideas and arguments that they see in the academic setting as well as in real life.

The DoE Information Booklet also showed that the hard skills the DoE English program aimed for the students to learn included the four basic macro skills in English (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) and proficiency in English grammar and vocabulary. Information from the course syllabuses and the interviews with the management team, faculty members, and students and graduates also showed exactly the same skills as technical skills of the program, so the only dissimilarity among all the sources of information is the difference in generic skills mentioned. In Year 4, there are four specializations for students to choose from, including Teaching English

as a Foreign Language, English for Professional Communication, English for International Business, and English Translation and Interpretation.

Overall, the generic skills that the program was supposed to equip the students included critical thinking skill, analyzing skill, general knowledge, and research skills. Generic skills stated in the syllabuses in each course included skills related to communication, teamwork, critical thinking, analyzing, working independently, sharing ideas with others, searching and synthesizing information, reflection, and summarizing and paraphrasing; and attributes such as creativity and flexibility, general knowledge, confidence, academic integrity and ethics, and sense of responsibility.

To provide a more comprehensive review of the issues, perspectives from lecturers, senior-year students and graduates were compared and contrasted with those from the management. Interviews with lecturers, students, and graduates revealed that common skills that were mentioned by them, including communication, teamwork, research, critical thinking, general knowledge, confidence, and sense of responsibility. Interestingly, students mentioned some skills and attributes that were not mentioned in the course syllabuses or by the lecturers, and these skills and attributes included challenging the stereotype, tolerance of differences, working under pressure, and time management (see Table 4.1). Apparently, all of these were picked up by the students during their learning journey when they had to work in groups and when they were assigned many tasks to do with pressing deadlines.

Another curriculum revision conducted by the DoE was the emphasis on learning and practicing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for both the faculty staff and students. The DoE was chosen to participate in a blended learning project conducted by the Department of Higher Education (DHE) of the MoEYS, Cambodia, in collaboration with a

Table 4.1 List of Skills Reported by Participants to Be Taught in the DoE English Program

Technical Skills	Generic/Soft Skills		
	Course Syllabuses	Lecturers	Students
1. Grammar 2. Vocabulary 3. Reading 4. Listening 5. Speaking 6. Writing	1. Communication 2. Teamwork 3. Critical thinking 4. Analyzing 5. Working independently 6. Sharing ideas with others 7. Searching and synthesizing information 8. Reflection 9. Summarizing and paraphrasing 10. Creativity and flexibility, 11. General knowledge 12. Confidence 13. Academic integrity and ethics 14. Sense of responsibility	1. Communication 2. General knowledge 3. Teamwork 4. Research 5. Critical thinking 6. Problem solving 7. Analyzing 8. Creativity 9. Time management Leadership Punctuality 10. Autonomy 11. Respect 12. Confidence	1. Research 2. Critical thinking 3. Teamwork 4. General knowledge 5. Communication 6. Analyzing 7. Problem solving 8. Flexibility and adaptability 9. Creativity 10. Responsibility 11. Challenging the stereotype 12. Tolerance of differences 13. Working under pressure 14. Time management 15. Punctuality 16. Confidence 17. Commonsense 18. Citizenship

university in Hong Kong. The project was funded by UNESCO. That was the first time DoE engaged in such an online project but the department managed to perform well and has continued the project on their own after the funding was exhausted.

> There is a new development in the program, which is about technology. I can briefly introduce the background of this project. In 2016, I think it was from the MoEYS, and universities decided to include the word "ICT". So then there was a request from the Department of Higher Education for us to start blended learning as they had collaboration with a university in Hong Kong. (Manager 2)

This project turned out to be very useful for the DoE during the pandemic outbreak of Covid-19. Though the university was closed and teaching and learning activities moved online, the lecturers did not find it difficult to conduct their teaching online because many of them had already had some experience teaching via blended means (Manager 2). This has also indicated that the DoE has tried to keep up with the trend, ahead of many other HEIs in Cambodia, to involve in the use of technology in teaching and learning, an endeavor to enhance an important employability skill. From blended learning, students get to learn to use information and communication technology (Poon, 2013), in conjunction with several important skills such as self-management, independent, autonomous, and reflective thinking (Namyssova et al., 2019). All of these are essential skills in the labor market in this modern technology era.

4.2.3 Expected pedagogical strategies

Another important meso-level factor in curriculum development is the formulation of the pedagogical strategies expected by the management to be employed by the faculty staff in order to achieve the objectives set during the curriculum development stage. This concerns how employability skills are taught in the curriculum. The first main discussion about the teaching of employability skills is whether employability skills should be taught implicitly, with skills

embedded in the core curriculum, or explicitly, with skills taught in stand-alone courses. In this English program, the DoE taught English proficiency, i.e., English grammar, vocabulary, speaking, writing, reading, and listening, directly through two main subjects: Core English and Writing Skills, and these English skills were also explicitly assessed in various tests. However, the DoE had developed a practice of teaching generic skills implicitly with such skills as communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and analytic skills embedded in class tasks and activities, especially in Literature Studies and Global Studies. T managers noted:

> Critical thinking was taught in Year 2 but it was embedded in the activities. Before we made critical thinking as a stand-alone course for Year 3, we embedded it in Literature Studies already. For students who learn critical thinking, we quire them to read feminist ideology and Marxist ideology, and we teach Maslow's needs hierarchy. We've got all of these but the subject is not named "critical thinking". It is called Literature Studies, in which we've already embedded critical thinking. (Manager 2)

> While our program focuses on language skills, we have integrated many 21st century or soft skills with our subjects. Our program is different from science programs, in which there is no chance to combine soft skills with subject knowledge. So they need to have subjects specifically designed for teaching soft skills. However, we don't have to teach these skills specifically… [For example] students need to do group projects in which they can learn teamwork and communication skills. (Manager 6)

Generic skills have been deemed important for the English program at the DoE, and thus these skills have always been embedded in the DoE curriculum from the inception of the program. Nonetheless, in 2018, a stand-alone course, Critical Thinking, was introduced in Semester 2 of Year 3 as the DoE management received feedback from DoE alumni that DoE graduates still needed to improve their 4C skills: collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. The DoE does not have the resources to conduct analysis into this phenomenon to verify the feedback received, so, depending on the feedback, the DoE management made changes to the curriculum by trying to introduce explicit teaching of employability skills, beginning with critical thinking. Two managers reported the decision to have critical thinking taught explicitly:

> When students learn critical thinking through literature, they use only stories as a basis for their analysis. We want students to know critical thinking as it is. We want students to use critical thinking to analyze social situations. So we moved Critical Thinking, which was taught in Year 4 in the Professional Communication specialization, to Year 3 as a common course for the students of all majors. (Manager 2)

> Sometimes, we need to explain theories in critical thinking. And when lecturers only teach critical thinking through analyzing situations and stories, students don't understand the concept and theories of critical thinking in general. (Manager 6)

It is obvious from the above two quotes that the management believed students should be taught critical thinking, what critical thinking is, and what theories are involved with critical thinking, in addition to the application of critical thinking in various contexts. In this way, critical thinking is taught and assessed explicitly. However, there is no guarantee that the DoE is going on the right track in changing from implicit to explicit teaching of critical thinking, and possibly other generic skills, but the DoE was sensing the pressure to present to the stakeholders in an obvious way that the department was trying to explicitly teach employability skills. Another main reason for this change to explicit teaching is that lecturers might lack understanding of how to teach these embedded skills.

> In the first three years in our general program, we embed soft skills in various subjects. We taught soft skills in Global Studies and Literature Studies. But teaching soft skills also depends on lecturers. If they think they need to teach only vocabulary or technical words, terms or concepts, which are not related to 21st century skills, it's difficult for the management. In this way, these teachers do not teach soft skills as the management wants them to. It's difficult for us to control the teaching because we have a big pack of faculty members. Some lecturers just graduated, and some with a lot of experience. Some lecturers understand what soft skills to teach, but some don't. (Manager 3)

Explicit and implicit teaching reflects the two ways that the DoE management expected to see in DoE lecturers' teaching. Explicit teaching was employed to teach core English skills, which were considered the technical skills of the discipline. These skills included the four macro skills—reading, listening, writing, and speaking—and grammar and vocabulary. Explicit teaching

consists of lectures, exercises, and direct assessment. Implicit teaching was used mainly to teach generic skills. In this approach to teaching, skills were taught indirectly through class activities, thinking and application exercise, pair or group work, and class discussion. Offering a language program, the DoE has a pedagogical culture that requires more student-centered, active, and meaningful teaching and assessment. That means lecturers should employ a variety of tasks for students to become active and spend little time on giving lectures.

> I think lecturers need to divide their sessions into two parts: one for lectures to explain key points of the contents to be taught and the other for the students to practice. Without practice time, students won't be engaged. Students need to be active to learn, so they need to, for example, write, discuss, edit their work, and submit what they've written. The most important part of the teaching and learning journey is practice. (Manager 1)

DoE lecturers were also expected to be able to employ a learning- and learner-centered approach to teaching that provides more time for students to practice various activities, with little emphasis on time spent on lectures and explaining lessons. As reflected in the observation criteria, lecturers were expected to use various activities to engage and motivate students and provide support and intervention to enhance student learning. Lecturers were also expected to show enthusiasm and care for students during their sessions, while they were asked to try to engage as many students in the class as possible, rather than focusing only on a particular group of students. Table 4.2 below shows the expected teacher characteristics, teaching quality, and classroom management in the class observation rubrics.

Table 4.2 Expected Teacher Characteristics, Teaching quality, and Classroom Management

The Teacher
1. Is the teacher on time, well-prepared, appropriately dressed and professionally behaved? 2. Is the teacher enthusiastic, patient, confident, helpful, and caring for the students' learning? 3. Does the teacher give chances to students to share their concerns and listen / respond to the concerns carefully? 4. Does the teacher use appropriate positive reinforcement (praises, rewards, etc.)? 5. Does the teacher speak loudly, slowly and clearly making sure every student can hear or listen to him or her? 6. Does the teacher intervene appropriately and supportively to help maximize the students'
Teaching
1. Is there a clear, positive start to the lesson? 2. Does the teacher review language points the students have already learned? Is the lead-in relevant to the theme of the lesson? 3. Does the teacher teach the lesson carefully and clearly checking along the way to make sure the students learn from the techniques / activities? 4. Does the teacher give the students a lot of practices related to the concerned macro-skill(s) around the theme of the lesson? 5. Are the students motivated and interested in the lesson? Does the teacher apparently put any effort in making these possible? 6. Are all the students given reasonably equal opportunities to contribute to the lesson? 7. Is the lesson too fast, too slow or just right? Do the students apparently learn the least they should do from the teaching? 8. Does the teacher use various questions which require / to promote different levels of thinking? 9. Does the teacher correct the students appropriately for the existing context? 10. Is there a clear, positive end to the lesson? Was a conducive learning environment created in the lesson / teaching?
Classroom Management
1. Do all the students understand what they are supposed to do before they start working on an

assigned task? Is the instruction appropriately given / demonstrated / checked?
2. Does the teacher ask different students to answer his or her questions? Does the teacher try to let the students practice as much as necessary?
3. Does the teacher try to use the students' names? Does the teacher have / try to build a good rapport with the students?
4. Does the teacher manage class time effectively? Is the teacher appropriately flexible with time to make the students learn most?

4.3 Mechanisms to Ensure Curriculum Implementation

4.3.1 Shared responsibility in curriculum revision

This section is to answer research question 2: *What mechanisms do the management team members utilize to ensure the delivery and acquisition of the target employability skills?* The response to this research question is associated with how the management team plays the leadership and management roles to oversee the curriculum implementation. Leadership means setting directions and goals for the institution and making change based on actual and future international, national, and local change, whereas management is associated with monitoring compliance and consistency and controlling and solving problems (Kotterman, 2006). The DoE management reported that the team valued shared responsibility and ownership of curriculum revision, in which lecturers' voices regarding how and what to revise were usually allowed. In fact, the management members reported that they would often encourage lecturers to introduce any change to the curriculum as long as the teaching and learning can improve.

> We depend on the lecturers for the revision of the curriculum because the management team can't do it on our own. We can coordinate the change, but the major decision was based on the lecturers. We encourage them to initiate the revision, and we discuss with them and make compromises. (Manager 5)

> I think, for our department, many reforms have been initiated in staff meetings. The staff meeting serves as a forum for the lecturers to raise ideas, and the management picks up these suggestions and then make decisions. I think most of our curriculum revisions have

> come from the requests from lecturers. I dare give credit to our lecturers for their input. Without that, there'd be a loss of major voice. (Manager 1)

> The revision is usually bottom-up. But now the management team only can help provide ideas related to regulations because we know a lot of routines and procedures of how tasks are conducted. For example, if lecturers want to introduce something new, such as blended learning, they wanted to go off-campus for 50% but we knew it was impossible based on the regulations, so we asked them to have only 4 weeks off-campus sessions. But now, after the outbreak of Covid, lecturers can have 50% off-campus sessions. Normally, we provide guidance on procedures on how to do something new. (Manager 2)

Encouraging involvement from lecturers is a very important way to ensure low resistance to change and high participation to implement curriculum revision because this enhances senses of ownership and responsibility among lecturers and their willingness to cooperate. Another way to share leadership responsibility that the DoE had been practicing was the assignment of various subject coordinators. Lecturers took turns to volunteer to hold the position of subject coordinators without any financial return. Volunteering to take part in subject coordination, responsibility sharing, and delegation of leadership roles is not common in many other universities in Cambodia, where all the power centers around managers only. Manager 2 mentioned the roles of subject coordinators:

> First, they [subject coordinators] call for meetings among subject lecturers to make syllabuses and assessment schemes and items to include in tests. We'd ask subject lecturers to have meetings with their coordinators and they'd make a report on what successes and challenges they have. These are their roles in our department. In some institutions, a coordinator can be very powerful. But, this doesn't work in our department. Lecturers only volunteer to work, for example, to convene a meeting and stuff. (Manager 2)

These were the major roles of the subject coordinators, which mainly included convening meetings of all the subject lecturers and preparing course syllabuses and annual reports. However, they also played important roles in suggesting, initiating and guiding curriculum revisions in a form of shared responsibility.

> They [subject coordinators] help a lot. First, they discuss with other lecturers on the assessment in each subject they're responsible for. Because of the curriculum revision, we need to know what to do for the assessment in each revised subject. So lecturers share ideas in meetings with the coordinators and they convey these ideas to the head of the department with support and agreement from other lecturers. (Manager 4)
>
> In general, before the management team decides to revise something, we discuss with the coordinators and the subject lecturers. For example, in the case of ASEAN Studies, which we decided to include in semester 2 of Year 3, we discussed for two years with all Global Studies lecturers in both Years 2 and 3. We spend a lot of time before we decide to introduce something new. The decision making doesn't depend on the management team. We just facilitate meetings between the coordinators and lecturers, so that the meetings go smoothly in the curriculum revision process. (Manager 6)

Of course, although the management team has had teaching experience, they possess expertise in some subjects only, but not in all of them. In addition, they are occupied with management and administrative tasks, so allowing lecturers to take leadership roles in the form of subject coordinators has proven effective in sharing and delegating the academic workload from the management.

4.3.2 Ensuring departmental factors for smooth curriculum implementation

Employability skills were set as the targeted learning outcomes in the curriculum during the curriculum development and revision stage. However, without effective implementation, those targeted employability skills would not be delivered successfully. The DoE management reported that they adopted a variety of practices to oversee the teaching and learning activities in the department so that employability skills development was well achieved. The first practice, which is the common to be employed, was the direct monitoring of teachers through student evaluation of teaching and teaching observation. Student evaluation is important for teaching and learning as it provides a means for students to participate in the teaching-learning process, which can promote the level of instruction (Pincus, 2006). At the DoE, student evaluation in which

students were asked to rate the teaching of the lecturers was conducted once per semester, twice per academic year. Student evaluation of teaching is a very common tool to monitor teaching as it can gather useful feedback from students, and it is an easy-to-use and affordable tool, especially in a resource-constrained institution like the DoE. The DoE management combined student evaluation with class observation to monitor and improve the teaching at DoE. The practice of complementing student evaluation with another method to measure teaching performance is suggested in Wallace et al. (2018), as this can enhance the validity of the student evaluation of teaching.

In addition, student evaluation can provide positive impacts in bringing about academic staff commitment to excellence in instruction when it is mainly used to serve formative purposes. Universities should assure their faculty staff that student evaluation should not be used for punitive purposes but instead used for lecturers to be observed and reflect on their teaching to improve the course design and delivery (Ratele, 2006). The DoE reported to adopt this adaptive practice as the information from student evaluation is mainly used to inform lecturers of their strength and weakness, and no lecturer had been punished based on this. Instead, the DoE provided support for lecturers, especially those who received low ratings. Lecturers who had received low ratings would be observed, and based on the observation and the students' comments in the evaluation, the management would provide consultation sessions with those lecturers for them to improve their teaching. Lecturers, especially those who had received low ratings from the student evaluation, were invited to participate in various professional development opportunities, although such opportunities were actually quite limited.

> We've got an evaluation, in which students can express their opinion on lecturers' teaching. In theory, the management team randomly observe lecturers. But lately, as we've been too busy, we skip classroom observation. But that doesn't mean that we eliminate it. We observe new lecturer recruits and lecturers who have received low

> ratings from the student evaluation. We also have discussion sessions with lecturers who have problems with their teaching and need help from us. (Manager 6)
>
> We've got a community of practice. There's quite a community spirit. There are experienced teachers and Year 4 students who are about to go to their practicum. Many practitioners come together. There are people from abroad such as from the United States and from locally, such as from Siem Reap, you know, and a community of practice is conducted in many different places such as in Siem Reap and Kampot provinces. Also, we try to invite lecturers who receive low ratings from the student evaluation to join. (Manager 3)
>
> For professional development, we've asked lecturers to volunteer to share experience in workshops and we also encourage lecturers to join professional development programs, such as CamTESOL Conference. But the problem is that this doesn't give them financial benefit, not many lecturers are interested. (Manager 4)

Targeted employability skills can be delivered through quality teaching, which can be monitored and controlled through student evaluation, class observation, and feedback on teaching drawbacks. Professional development was among the priorities in the DoE. Nonetheless, because of the shortage of financial resources, the DoE was unable to organize many in-house professional development sessions for their lecturers to address their specific needs and problems. DoE lecturers were offered the opportunity to join CamTESOL conference, which is the biggest English language conference in Cambodia, but only several lecturers were provided the financial support to join the conference due again to the budget constraint. Nonetheless, the conference is an international conference, and thus the themes and content of the conference might be too broad and does not address the specific academic problems encountered by DoE lecturers.

Student evaluation, class observation, and professional development are ways to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of teaching quality at the DoE. Teaching quality is definitely vitally important for the delivery of target employability skills. Another way to obtain enhanced quality of teaching and employability skills development was the promotion and maintenance of

the environment and culture for lecturers to help each other through sharing teaching materials and experience among lecturers who teach the same subjects.

> I think we still have the culture of sharing among our faculty staff. I often see them sitting and discussing how to teach, despite not being in formal meetings. People can communicate via chat through Facebook or Telegram nowadays. I think it is okay. We don't have the problem. (Manager 6)

Sharing teaching experience and material is a form of collegiality established at the DoE. Ensuring such collegiality among lecturers was an achievement for the DoE, as this helps the faculty staff to help each other and stay focused on teaching to reach the objectives set by the department, while they also help each other improve their teaching and thus the development of targeted employability skills can be attained. Strong collegiality among the faculty staff not only facilitates the sharing of ideas, experience, and materials but also critical dialogues among the faculty members, which can lead to high-quality teaching and research (Sahlin, 2012). The main reason for such rapport to establish was the recruitment of lecturers to the DoE. The majority of DoE lecturers were DoE fresh graduates and alumni, so DoE lecturers reported that they knew each other and the culture of the department well. This was extremely beneficial for ensuring a positive working environment in the department.

> I think new recruits can blend in very quickly because they've got experience of being students here. Lecturers who don't study at our department as students won't work for long because this job is tiring as it is demanding. Our new lecturers now work really hard. (Manager 2)

> I think the reason for our lecturers to have a close relationship is, I recognize, because our lecturers used to study here. This means we're from the same culture, we study in the same environment. So when lecturers come to teach, they're already familiar with the environment. If they go to work somewhere else, they have to start in a new environment. Our lecturers used to be students of other lecturers, so from generation to generation, they know each other well. (Manager 6)

As mentioned above, the DoE managed to ensure a positive teaching and learning environment through shared leadership and collegiality among the faculty staff. This environment is also conducive for achieving the learning outcomes of the department, i.e. the target employability skills set by the department. Another significant factor that contributed to employability skills development was the departmental endeavor to enhance student engagement in learning as well as in the labor market. As mentioned earlier, the DoE emphasized active teaching and learning, while they also had an assessment scheme that kept students engaged throughout each academic year. The DoE valued both formative and summative assessment, both of which were helpful on their own.

Summative assessment can provide information about scores and grades to both the students and teachers, who would use this information to understand the achievement from their own teaching and learning, while summative assessment can also prepare students for taking various standardized tests throughout their life, including SATs, TOEFLs, and employment tests. Formative assessment can provide on-going feedback on a student's learning, so teachers can adjust their teaching accordingly. Formative assessment also encourages on-going and constant involvement from students in their own learning, rather than spending a large amount of time revising only before summative tests. The management team reported the various forms of formative and summative assessment employed by the DoE to enhance student engagement and learning. Various assessment tasks were employed to gauge students' performance. Ongoing assessment, such as presentations, short quizzes, written assignments, class discussion, and homework, were considered formative assessment, while the final exams were considered summative assessment. The management team further elaborated on both ongoing formative assessment and final summative assessment:

> We've worked with our lecturers [to ensure student engagement]. Our lecturers give marks to class participation. Some give 5% for class participation and some others add morality and both account for 10%. In that case, engagement means some manners such as the way they talk. So what we do at the department is to work with our lecturers on assessment policy, for example, giving 5% for class participation. And we're on formative assessment, rather than summative assessment, giving 60% to on-going assessment and only 40% for final exam. (Manager 2)

> A good point is that we try to adopt a learning-driven approach in teaching. And we have, we have a good assessment policy, to come to think of it, not too bad, not too shabby. We've got on-going assessment and both formative and summative assessment. Thinking about it, I think although it's not the best ideal situation, the management is aware that our teachers have a good understanding of their students in general. (Manager 3)

> For me, to engage students, first, we should have group work, such as presentation, role plays or research because it can help students to know each other better. But teachers must also follow up with the students, say, after two weeks to check their progress and if they have any problem. Students can work with each other in group work, sharing parts and responsibility. This can improve their understanding of each other and they become very cooperative. (Manager 4)

Apart from assessments, the DoE also tried to engage the students through various extra-curricular activities. Similar to other universities, the DoE provided a number of workshops on various academic topics such as how to learn vocabulary, how to do presentations, and how to get prepared for tests. Because research was considered a demanding subject, workshops on various topics related to research were provided regularly to Year 3 students. All these workshops were organized by the lecturers with administrative support from the DoE management team and DoE Learning Support Unit. The department also has a debate club, the signature club of the DoE with meeting sessions on Saturday, and students with good academic ability can join to hone their debate, argumentative and public speaking skills.

> We've got workshops for the students. But our students are busy. They don't study only at our department. Most of them do another degree at another university. So we try to adapt our time. Sometimes we provide workshops during lunch time. We've got a Learning Support Unit to help. The unit helps contact lecturers to conduct workshops. They also help with registration and so on. Besides, we've also got a debate club for students. (Manager 2)

The management observed that lecturers and students were so occupied with their teaching and study that they had little time to join workshops provided by the department (Manager 2). However, understanding the significance of extra-curricular activities, the DoE was still committed to such endeavors. They tried to adapt their time and topic based on students' time and convenience. When asked about workshops related to vocational skills, the management team responded that they were aware of that too, but they were unable to provide any due mainly to the lack of resources and expertise.

4.4 Summary

To sum up, this chapter responds to research questions 1 and 2 by examining why and how the DoE developed and revised the curriculum for enhancing employability skills development and how the DoE management fulfilled its roles to ensure successful implementation of the curriculum for employability skills development. The investigation has shown the importance of environmental factors in curriculum development and revision, which conforms to the theoretical assumption suggested by Khan and Law (2015) and O'Neill (2015). Employability skills were carefully integrated into the curriculum as these skills are considered important for students when they enter the labor market. For example, the focus in the latest revision was on the 21st century skills that referred to the 4Cs: communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. These skills were taught in a variety of teaching pedagogies. Mainly, hard skills were taught explicitly through lectures, explicit exercises and assessment, while soft skills were taught implicitly through active teaching consisting of active group discussion, application and thinking exercises and assimilation activities.

The DoE had the culture for active and student-centered teaching and learning, which encouraged active and autonomous participation from the students, rather than a passive teacher-

centered environment that focused lectures and closed-ended activities. In addition, assessment consisted of a good balance between memory-based items and application and thinking items as well as between on-going formative assessment, which kept the students engaged throughout the semester, and final summative assessment. Furthermore, the DoE had a robust collegiality among the faculty staff that allowed for the environment conducive to intellectual cooperation, helping each other and sharing in order to enhance the quality of teaching to achieve the objectives set by the department. Finally, the shared leadership culture in the department allowed for the faculty staff to take control over a large portion of the curriculum and its revision, leading to little resistance and stronger cooperation in implementation curriculum revision, and a strong understanding between the management and the faculty staff.

CHAPTER 5: INTERVIEW FINDINGS: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Introduction

Student learning is important for the development of employability skills. Student learning can be expressed in terms of student engagement, and active engagement encourages active learning, which then leads to the development of employability skills. This is derived from the second conceptual framework of the present study based on Kahu's (2013) student engagement framework that is assumed to be the curriculum implementation at the classroom, teacher, and student levels (micro-level). According to Kahu's (2013) framework, student engagement is influenced by three main groups of factors: classroom or teaching factors, institutional factors, and personal factors. This chapter discusses how these factors—classroom, institutional, and personal—affect student engagement, which then enhances employability skills development, with the data elicited from two key stakeholder groups: DoE lecturers and year-3 and year-4 students and graduates.

5.2 Lecturers' Perspectives and Experiences with Employability Skills Development in Teaching

5.2.1 Institutional factors affecting teaching and student engagement

This section tackles Research Question 3: *What are the perspectives and experiences of the DoE faculty members to implement the DoE curriculum for the delivery of employability skills in their teaching in the English program?* The answer to this question drew on the framework adapted from Kahu's (2013) framework of higher education student engagement. The framework mainly proposes that student engagement, which is translated into their actual learning, is influenced by three main factors: personal, teaching, and institutional. Therefore, this section mainly discusses

the perspectives and experiences of the DoE faculty members on how institutional factors and teaching factors impacted student engagement. The concept of institutional factors in this study was confined to the departmental level as the case in the current study was defined as the DoE. Before exploring what the DoE faculty members do to enhance student engagement, it is necessary to gain an understanding into what lecturers perceive student engagement to be. All the participating lecturers agreed that student engagement was necessary for the acquisition of employability skills. However, they produced various explanations of the term student engagement.

> For me, I think engagement means students being involved in the activities. For example, they are involved in discussion and warm-up activities. They also need to be involved in reading exercises. To check whether they are engaged or not, we can ask them to do reflection or quizzes. (Lecturer 1)

> I think engagement is a two-way process. For example, the teacher tries to get the students to get involved by using activities or tasks attempting to promote learning, and the teacher gets responses back from the students. If the learners don't really respond to the prompts to the tasks, that means they don't engage. That's it. For me, engagement means the teachers set tasks and the students give responses to those tasks. (Lecturer 2)

> When students are engaged, they first listen and then they respond. Engagement also means the students pay attention in that session. Then they interact with their classmates in groups or the whole class. (Lecturer 10)

For these lecturers, engagement seems to cover only the behavioral aspect including behavioral participation in listening and answering questions and paying attention in class. However, engagement might also involve cognitive and emotional aspects, in addition to the behavioral one (Fredricks et al., 2004). Some other lecturers captured the cognitive aspect of engagement in their explanations as well as the fact that engagement can go beyond activities in classes.

> For me, student engagement means students are involved with tasks assigned by lecturers. And critical thinking is also part of engagement. After class, students can spend time reflecting on what the lecturers explain to them and then they write out their work such as homework or assignments. (Lecturer 6)

> I think there are two levels of student engagement. For example, we assign the students for group discussion and after they discuss, they do reflection. This is what I call engagement. This should involve a process that allows the students to reflect and try to understand what's right and what's wrong and they can make comparisons. (Lecturer 7)

> I think engagement can happen both inside and outside classes. In-class engagement happens when the students present something new from the lecturers. They must pay attention and take notes. And when they don't understand, they ask questions. They also have to work actively in doing exercises in class. Outside-class engagement happens when the students read extra reading or do assignments set by the lecturers for them. (Lecturer 8)

Student engagement takes many forms and dimensions and it is not surprising that some lecturers could not capture all these forms. After all, the behavioral dimension of student engagement is the most common among all because it is the easiest to observe. As mentioned earlier, student engagement is influenced by a number of factors (Kahu, 2013). The first factor to examine in this section is the institutional factor, which comprises culture, environment, policies, etc. Robinson and Timperley (2007) suggested institutional factors have a substantial impact on learning outcomes through the promotion of teacher learning and development.

Based on the interviews with the faculty members, the DoE provided several institutional factors that were conducive to quality teaching and teacher development. Lecturers reported that the management team members were helpful, friendly, and approachable. They were willing to listen and help lecturers who had problems, listen to suggestions offered by lecturers and provide freedom to lecturers in their teaching.

> I think the management members help a lot. I had a mental problem, and they gave me encouragement and new ideas. They also give me a lot of freedom. They provide consultation related to administrative work and teaching. When a lecturer receives a low rating from the student evaluation, they provide encouragement to him/her. They are approachable most of the time. (Lecturer 1)

> Some lecturers just abandon it when they face problems. But I don't. When I face a problem that I cannot solve, I always seek help. I reach out to the management, and they find something new to give advice to me on. (Lecturer 10)

Apart from the roles of the management team, the lecturers also commented on the positive working environment and collegiality in the DoE. As mentioned earlier, most DoE lecturers are DoE graduates and alumni, so they reported a good knowledge of the DoE working environment, culture, and collegiality, since the lecturers know each other and the department well. This information was once again reported by the lecturers through the interviews:

> To be honest, it's the first time teaching here. Before I also taught part-time in smaller schools. When I started work here, I felt first of all that there were certain rules and regulations. But I am quite happy with the working environment because I work with people I know before and some lecturers are quite open and welcome, so I am quite happy about that…. In my first teaching year, I think my generation was doing something related to research. I got to know them during our time in the debate club, so I felt close with them from then. I was lucky to work in a team with them, and I keep saying this because we were having not only good collaboration but also fun in teaching together. (Lecturer 2)

Sharing teaching experience and materials was reported to be common among lecturers teaching the same subject. In addition, lecturers reported to also enjoy the culture that encouraged teaching development through professional development. Despite the limited budget, the DoE tried to promote professional development, sending lecturers to various local conferences, the most prominent of which was the renowned annual CamTESOL conference. The DoE also had in-house professional development workshops for lecturers, and recently, there was an initiative by the department head to establish the Community of Practice (CoP) for DoE lecturers and lecturers and teachers of English in some other universities and schools across the country. This is the information obtained from the CoP Facebook page, "IFL CoP (Community of Practice) is a group of lecturers and teachers working together to share their best practices and raise any issues

or concerns regarding their teaching to deepen their knowledge and expertise in the area by interacting on an ongoing basis. We are a supportive group of practitioners by sharing and solving problems and solutions together." A lecturer mentioned her experience going through professional development as a DoE lecturer:

> We've got CoP for professional development. The topics covered in CoP are suggested by teachers who participate in it. Some examples of topics include teaching reading, research skills, and so on. In addition to CoP, the management team also organizes in-house departmental workshops for lecturers too. And once a year, we've got the CamTESOL Conference. (Lecturer 1)

Despite the management's effort for professional development for lecturers, apparently, the DoE has much room for improvement, especially in providing in-house workshops for lecturers as these workshops address specific problems faced by the lecturers in their teaching, compared to CoP and an international conference like CamTESOL, which deal with broader themes. Fortunately, DoE lecturers are all well-trained with teaching methodology, and they help each other by sharing teaching experience and materials.

In addition to the professional development opportunity that the DoE provides for their lecturers to ensure quality teaching to promote students' learning outcomes, the participant lecturers also reported that institutional factors were important in influencing students' learning outcomes and student engagement. They suggested that the institutional factors were influential in four ways. First, the participant lecturers reported that the DoE possessed competent faculty staff. Second, the regulations and discipline of the DoE was reported by the participant lecturers to be among the best that require the students to engage actively all the time. Third, the selection of students based on an entrance exam was necessary to make the student recruitment a stringent process and ensure the selection of only qualified students, emphasizing the prominent status of the DoE, as compared to some Cambodian universities that accept students without a proper

screening process. Last, the curriculum, despite a language education curriculum, was reported to tackle English language proficiency and soft skills such as communication and critical thinking skills (Lecturer 7).

> I think, first, our lecturers are all qualified. They have good knowledge, discipline, and sense of responsibility. They also possess proper teaching methodologies. Second, our students also have high ability. They've taken the entrance exam. Another factor is probably our management team. When we've got a problem, they can help us. Moreover, our regulations are strict, especially with attendance and assessment. So most of our students are able to get good jobs after they graduate from our department. (Lecturer 1)

> Our faculty staff is well-disciplined with their work. They pay enough attention to their teaching. Both the quality and competence are unquestionable. Our curriculum is good because all the subjects focus on language, such as writing, speaking, and reading, as well as subjects to promote critical thinking skills. (Lecturer 7)

> I think students can learn hard skills related to the use of English language. Compared to students at other universities, our students have better proficiency. Students also learn soft skills. Our department has strict regulations, which help maintain students discipline and responsibility for their study. Students also learn to be respectful and responsible when working in groups. There are also many activities that encourage students to become independent and to be able to apply what they learn in class to actual work. (Lecturer 8)

These quotes can lead to a conclusion that DoE institutional factors that include quality teaching staff, strict regulations and recruitment process, and curriculum that teaches both technical and soft skills have been successful in equipping students with necessary employability skills that promote both student academic performance as well as chance to gain employment upon graduation.

5.2.2 Lecturers' perspectives and experiences with student engagement

One of the most influential impacts on student engagement is the classroom factors, which include teachers, teaching activities and tasks, and assessment. Good teachers are vitally important in ensuring student engagement and learning outcomes (employability skills). DoE

lecturers reported what they perceived good teachers should be. The most common characteristics mentioned by the lecturers during their interviews include (a) knowledge of the contents; (b) knowledge and ability to use various teaching techniques and materials; (c) putting effort to engage all the students in the class as much as possible; (d) ability to understand, care about, and build relationship with the students; (e) flexibility based on situations and types of students; and ability to provide timely and proper feedback to the students; and (f) approachability both inside and outside class when the students have questions. The reports from three lecturers below illustrate these characteristics:

> To well engage the students, first, the teachers need to spend time with the students both inside and outside class. And, to be able to build a good relationship with my students, I often ask them if they've got any questions, and if not, I'll ask my students questions. And I've got different activities, with some as games. I encourage them to ask a question and asking questions is a score for class participation. As for teaching, a good teacher needs to be well-prepared and knowledgeable. (Lecturer 1)

> First, they need to have a good knowledge of what they teach. They need to have various techniques of how to teach the subjects and contents. We can't use the same techniques. We have to be flexible based on each situation. Moreover, teachers should understand their students a lot. And when students ask questions outside class time, we should spare some time for them in order to make them feel comfortable with us. This can build relationships with the students, rather than having a class where the teacher and students do not feel connected. (Lecturer 7)

> Based on my experience, first, we need to know when we should talk and what to teach each day. When the students have questions, we can answer their questions well. This shows them that we're well-prepared, so the students are encouraged to listen to us and become more interested. Moreover, teachers should possess a good knowledge of various teaching techniques and materials as well as confidence. And, they should show respect towards fellow teachers and the students. (Lecturer 8)

Being good teachers is one thing, but ability to employ various teaching techniques, tasks and activities is another. During the interviews, DoE lecturers were also asked to share their perspectives and actual experience in using various techniques, tasks, and activities to enhance student engagement. Two lecturers reported the importance of setting directions for students

from the beginning of the course and each session and explicitly inform them of those directions and expectations, while also trying to engage all the students as much as possible with interesting and relevant examples, tasks, and activities. Students were also asked to do higher-order thinking tasks, which were also interesting, fun, and challenging, in pairs or in groups. Students were also asked to express their opinion on their own learning in the form of writing reflection and informal evaluation of the course. Below are the reports from the two lecturers:

> First, I think the purposes of our lessons need to be made clear from the beginning because when the students know what they are going to learn, they become interested and want to develop those skills. And, second, everyone can relate what we teach to real life. Third, it's about the techniques that we use. We need to find the techniques that both the teachers and the students can engage with each other, such as questions and answers or group work or tasks that challenge the students to generate ideas. (Lecturer 3)

> As far as I understand, we need to understand the students' interest and focus on their interest, so we can avoid irrelevant points as much as possible. Students can become active when we work with their interest. For me, before I teach, I share my PowerPoint presentation slides with the students. I set directions of what to do that week and assign them weekly activities to do. They can read and write a reflection on that article. This is how to engage their mind. (Lecturer 5)

Apparently, lecturers reported that fun, interesting, relevant and challenging tasks and activities that involve pair or group work could activate student engagement in class. In addition, one lecturer reported that it is important to provide independent discovery learning where students were provided with the opportunity to do tasks in groups and discover how to do these tasks by themselves (Lecturer 7). Another lecturer reported running warm-up activities at the beginning of each session can provide students with prior knowledge and their interest, while it is important to focus on higher-order thinking tasks rather than memory-based ones (Lecturer 9). They further noted:

> Personally, when I ask the students to do writing work, I rarely provide them with sample standard writing. I just ask them to write and then we use their works for analysis. I want

> them to try by themselves first…. For me, when I teach vocabulary, I don't give handouts to them. I ask them to work by themselves first. I ask them to find definitions of the highlighted words in the book and discuss them with their friends. I do the same for grammar. I don't explain much. Most of the time, I ask them to learn by discovering. (Lecturer 7)

> For good teaching for CE as well as other language subjects, students need to learn to use the language that they learn, so a good class means a class that allows active use of language. So in the class, we see that students are active in communicating with each other using the language that they learn and the use of the content that they learn in speaking and writing. (Lecturer 9)

The basic principle of good teaching is to start with warm-up and state clear objectives, and then involve students in main tasks and activities before assigning closing activities. Warm-up techniques are very important for teaching at the DoE. Students need to have their background knowledge and motivation to engage triggered at the beginning of each lesson and that is when warm-up activities come into play. Class, pair or group discussion is very common for a warm-up activity, and the lecturers then state the objectives and directions for the lessons before commencing the main tasks, which consist of lectures, lesson explanation, practice exercises, group discussion, and so on. Then the lecturers wrap up with the summary of the lesson and a brief question-and-answer session. Another salient facet of teaching activities and tasks is the challenge they bring to the students. Preferably, students should be assigned to do plenty of tasks that are challenging enough but not too difficult, and students should not be made to feel that they are put under too much duress to study, which can actually backfire.

> The most important thing is how the lecturers teach. We can't give only rules for students to memorize. Sometimes, we need to provide them with activities such as exercises that challenge the students to think. When they engage in those activities, they begin to think. Therefore, how the lecturers introduce activities play an important role for students. (Lecturer 7)

> Normally, in our department, we've got a lot of work for them to do. Because there are many subjects, so there are many tasks, so whether they want or not, they have to study to

> pass. They have to do all these tasks: assignments, class work, tests, etc. All of these make them become independent learners. And every day I reinforce what has been said at the beginning of the semester. (Lecturer 9)

> I think the element that motivates the students to engage is the fact that we shouldn't make them feel that they've got too much to do. Moreover, we need to look at whether what we assign them to do matches the objectives. I assign some exercises for them to do during class and some at the end of the class. Some work is assigned as individual and some as group work. (Lecturer 10)

From the three quotes above, it can be concluded that challenging tasks make students learn through thinking, and this is an adaptive learning process as students can also navigate through these challenging tasks and activities in pairs or in groups, thereby enhancing the teamwork skills and independent learning habits. However, it should be noted that while challenging tasks and activities triggers students' interest to learn, lecturers need to make these tasks and activities fit the level of the students as too difficult tasks or when students feel that they are overloaded with too many tasks will only discourage students instead. Also, tasks assigned should be clearly explained and match the objectives of the course, so that students can have a clear direction in their learning.

It is also interesting to note that it is necessary that lectures and lesson explanation constitute a key part of a session. However, lectures and lesson explanations can also be made interesting to maintain a high level of active engagement among the students. Mainly, lecturers need to understand their students and their reactions during lectures. Lecturers cannot lecture the whole time alone without students' interaction, while they should also try to connect lectures to real life through examples. DoE lecturers reported their perspectives and experience on how to give good explanations and lectures that maintain a high level of student engagement.

> For the content subjects, the lessons are a bit more abstract. The subject such as Ethics is a bit theoretical, so some students are not interested. This type of lessons is so

> philosophical, which not many students are interested in. In Moral Thinking, I speak 70% of the time in English and 30% in Khmer. We need to be flexible because if the students don't understand, they won't engage. (Lecturer 5)
>
> I think this depends on the subject and topic. But in general, good teaching means teachers make it short and easy to understand with adequate examples for the students. Further, during our lecture, we can select a student to express their opinion. Also, I usually give handouts for the lecture before class, and I often make them feel insecure if they don't read. For example, I might ask a student to answer a question from the assigned reading. If he/she can't, the class can give him/her a fun punishment. (Lecturer 7)

From these two quotes, it is understood that lecturers need to engage their students prior to and during lectures. Pre-lecture discussion can be helpful in this sense. In addition, the use of native language can serve as an alternative to make the lectures understandable and personalized. Students might feel more comfortable when the lecturers use the native language sometimes to explain complex concepts or key terms.

The last element in the classroom factors that influence student engagement is assessment. Assessment is vitally important for learning and teaching as it informs both the lecturers and the students of the learning progress. Assessment leads to engagement since one of the most important parts of learning is to get scores. Similar to what reported by the management team, DoE lecturers also reported both forms of assessment: formative and summative. These two types of assessment keep the students engaged and pressured throughout the semester. The assessment scheme for each subject is comprised of 40% for semester examinations and 60% for on-going assessment, which include short quizzes, progress test(s), semester assignment (usually group work), homework, and class participation. The assessment is also strict and consists of many different parts. There are also both passive and active elements in the assessment. Passive elements include such items as close-ended exercises in form of multiple-choice questions and memory-based items, while active elements require the student to use opinion and thinking

skills. Below is an example of a progress test in Literature Studies in Semester 1 of Year 2 (LS201) of the academic year 2019-2020.

Table 5.1 Specifications table of Progress Test 1 of LS201 of the academic year 2019-2020

Sections	Contents	Items	Marks
I	**Vocabulary in Context**	15	15 (21.4%)
II	**Multiple-Choice Questions**	15	15 (21.4%)
III	**Quotation Interpretation**	3	15 (21.4%)
IV	**Character Analysis**	2	10 (14.3%)
V	**Critical Thinking Questions**	3	15 (21.4%)

Table 5.2 Examples of the Items in Progress Test 1 of LS201 of the academic year 2019-2020

I. VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT (15 MARKS)

Instruction: *Choose the best option to replace the underlined word in each sentence below. Write A, B, C, or B in the boxes provided.*

1. There is nothing so ***humiliating*** as looking so poor in the middle of a lot of rich women.
   A. offensive B. embarrassing C. shameless D. remorseful

2. The thieves looked ***covetously*** at the shiny new motorcycles left unattended by anyone.
   A. greedily B. frenziedly C. ecstatically D. ghastly

II. MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (15 MARKS)

Instruction: *Read the following questions and choose the best answer for each question. Write A, B, C or D in the boxes provided.*

THE NECKLACE

1. In this story, what does the "necklace" symbolize?
   A. Beauty B. Wealth and status C. Illusion D. Materialism

2. Which of the following is a SITUATIONAL IRONY in *The Necklace*?
   A. "I shall look absolutely no one. I would almost rather not go to the party."
   B. But with a violent effort she overcame her grief and replied with a calm voice, wiping her wet cheeks: "Nothing. Only I haven't a dress so I can't go to this party. Give your invitation to some friend of yours whose wife will be equipped better than I shall."
   C. Instead of being happy, Mathilde flung the invitation to the ball from Minister of Education and Madame Ramponneau petulantly across the table.
   D. "You must write to your friend," He said, "and tell her that you've broken the clasp of her necklace and are getting it mended. That will give us time to look about us." She wrote at his dictation.

III. QUOTATION INTERPRETATION (15 MARKS)

Instruction: *Read the following quotations carefully and explain the IMPLICATION of each. Write your answer in FULL sentences.*

1. "Mr. Pope, you are of course quite sure you saw it in the first place?" – *Poison*
2. "Why, darling, I thought you'd be pleased. You never go out, and this is a great occasion. I had a tremendous trouble to get it. Everyone wants one; it's very select, and very few go to the clerks. You'll see all the really big people there." – *The Necklace*
3. "We are collecting this money for you and your kind, Richard Gregory. If your Daddy can give fifteen dollars you have no business being on relief." – *Not Poor, Just Broke*

IV. CHARACTER ANALYSIS (10 MARKS)

Instruction: *Circle ONLY TWO characters from the given list in the box. Compare and/or contrast the two of them by providing THREE similarities and/or differences. Write your answer in FULL sentences.*

Mme. Loisel	Richard	Harry Pope
M. Loisel	Richard's Teacher	Timber
Mme. Forestier	Mrs. Mallard	Dr. Ganderbai

V. CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS (15 Marks)

Instruction: *Read the following questions carefully and write your answers in FULL sentences.*

1. Mme. Loisel had high expectations in life. Do you think her expectations were a blessing OR a curse to her and her family? Explain your answer with TWO examples from the story. *(5 pts)*
2. Why did Richard attempt to top up the amount of money of Helene's dad's money for the

Negro Payday? Give TWO reasons with evidence from the story to support your answer. *(5 pts)*

3. In Poison by Roald Dahl, what do you think the title "poison" refer to? Explain your answer with evidence from the text. *(5 pts)*

Based on these sample test items, this progress test contains various items that tap both passive and active knowledge of the students. Part 1 tests student's knowledge of vocabulary in context, while part 2 tests student's comprehension of the stories taught in the course. These two parts, which account for around 43% of the whole test, assess passive memory-based and comprehension knowledge of the students. Parts 3, 4, and 5, which account for about 57% of the whole test, allow more freedom to students to answer questions employing their analytic and critical thinking skills of characters and contexts in the stories taught in the course. The conflation activities and tasks of passive and active learning appear common in everyday class activities, tasks, and assessment. Below are some comments from three lecturers to elaborate more on DoE assessment:

> Normally, I don't tell the students in advance if I'm going to give a quiz. So they have to study before coming to class. If they don't get a good score for the quiz, they'll feel disappointed. Therefore, on-going assessment is very helpful. But it's inevitable that there are students who only try to study hard when the semester exams are coming. (Lecturer 3)

> I think assessment plays an important role for student engagement since students will try hard for any work that gives them marks. I observe that our assessment requires students to use their thinking skills but not many students can do it well. But for Core English, this subject contains grammar, so, of course, there are many memory-based items. (Lecturer 4)

> Our assessment is strict and difficult, so the students have to study hard. Also, we've got various forms of assessment such as writing, listening, and speaking, so from doing this assessment, the students can improve a lot but assessment items like multiple choice questions are not so useful. Moreover, we've got group work or assignments that require

> the students to read and do a lot of research, so the students can learn a lot from it. (Lecturer 8)

DoE lecturers reported their belief in the importance of on-going assessment in ensuring on-going engagement from the students. Lecturers tried to make the assessment as authentic and useful as possible, and they provided various forms of assessment. A good form of assessment is the one that comprises a good balance of passive and active elements. The DoE has made achievements in ensuring that their lecturers employ both elements in their assessment. However, many lecturers still complained that the assessment contained more passive elements than the active one. Some lecturers reported their perspective and experience on how to adjust the assessment to make it more active by focusing more on alternative assessment, such as group projects, presentation, role plays, and simulation, and by trying to maximally reduce memory-based items from their tests.

> In content courses, I don't normally focus so heavily on exams. I prefer alternative assessment. For example, I assign my students projects to design material. For me, this kind of assessment is more important than tests. If we look at our course syllabuses, we've got quizzes, progress tests, and final exams accounting for 70-80% and assignments for only 10%. I don't think tests have a good effect on learning effectiveness. They just make the students feel more scared and more prepared. (Lecturer 5)

> I think the assessment that can promote critical thinking and practical skills is the one that requires students to read, analyze, and evaluate, for example, the writing of an author, or it can be a task that requires them to apply theory to daily life. For them to speak and express their opinion, this is good because they have the opportunity to read and reflect, so when they graduate and have a job, they can communicate well with others; this is better than learning by memorizing answers to multiple choice questions. But I think our assessment is quite limited because I prefer the type that allows the students to use practical skills. (Lecturer 6)

> For me, when I teach Critical Thinking, most of the time, I don't require the students to memorize the names of fallacies; instead I just have multiple choice questions for types of fallacy. In the progress test, I ask them to analyze arguments. I have different steps for them to do, but I don't require them to memorize the fallacy names. Our society now is

> different from before. Learning by memorizing is not necessary. Memory-based items should not be used often. (Lecturer 10)

This weakness in assessment is actually apparently widely known in the DoE. Many lecturers have been complaining about the fact that the assessment does not cover all the aspects of skills and active elements of learning. Nevertheless, lecturers have faced a serious challenge of time spent on marking students' papers. Close-ended questions, such as multiple choice questions or gap filling exercises, are easier to mark than open-ended questions, such as critical thinking questions. DoE lecturers have to teach many classes in order to meet their financial needs, and hence they have so much marking burden for them to do that they reported to opt for items that were easy to mark.

> We give tests as a way to check and it depends on the feasibility of the work. For example, we can mark quizzes with multiple choice questions faster than those with open-ended items. This means less burden for teachers. Some activities can be used in class but cannot be used in tests because it takes so long to mark.… But for speaking, we can't make progress tests for it because we have to test them one by one, so it takes a lot of time, so we don't have enough time to do it. It's pressure for teachers who want to make good assessments that need a lot of time. So the problem is whether we have enough time for such test items or not. (Lecturer 9)

Good assessment that encourages the development of employability skills is the one that requires students to actively do an activity or to actively think. Such active assessment items are difficult to mark because the answers to these items are usually subjective, and thus it is very much time consuming to mark such test items. Lecturers also need to take into consideration the time they use to teach and the time they use to mark students' papers, and, of course, in Cambodia, lecturers need to teach many classes to earn a decent living.

5.3 Lecturers' Perspectives on Out-of-Class Engagement

The section 5.2 discusses classroom factors that influence student engagement. This section discusses student engagement outside class. There are two types of such engagement: academic and occupational. Out-of-class engagement is also important for developing employability skills among university students. As mentioned earlier, the DoE management team reported a number of extra-curricular activities to boost student engagement and learning; these activities require participation from the lecturers too. Likewise, DoE lecturers also reported various extra-curricular activities, and they expressed their perspectives on them.

> I think there's much more we can do such as providing more workshops and organizing more events. But because our resources are limited and we also don't have many participants. But I still think we should try to do what we can. Even if there are only 10 students participating, that means we've got 10 more students who can learn better. I acknowledge that some students can go to find opportunities outside school, but not all the students can do that. (Lecturer 3)

> I think we've got a few [workshops] only related to pronunciation and vocabulary, but that was a long time ago. For year-3 students, they have research workshops, and for year-4 students, they've got orientation workshops for teaching practicum. In general, we still face many problems with workshops. First, the students don't have lots of motivation. Second, they have limited time because they do two degrees at the same time, so they might not have time to participate in our workshops. Another factor is peers. Some students don't come to workshops because their friends don't. Also, there's the institutional factor. It's difficult to find trainers and we've got a limited budget as well. (Lecturer 6)

These two quotes above obviously illustrate the dilemma the DoE has faced in providing extra-curricular activities in the form of workshops for the students. Apparently, the DoE understands the importance of workshops as a form extracurricular activity to enhance students' learning, and thus the management has tried to arrange as many workshops as their capacity allows them. Nevertheless, because of the lack of resources and expertise, the DoE management has managed mainly to provide academic workshops such as learning vocabulary, pronunciation and research skills. The range of workshops provided lack diversity, especially in career development for

students. Another dilemma is how to design workshops that can attract a large number of students to participate. Most of the students do two degrees at the same time, with the English degree as their secondary degree, while some others also have part-time and full-time jobs. These already sap away their energy and enthusiasm to participate in DoE workshops. Therefore, workshops need to be made very interesting, relevant, and important to their study and career.

However, it is worth noting that the dearth of workshops provided was not perceived as a serious problem as the lecturers reported that the main curriculum already prepared students adequately for the labor market in English language proficiency and vocational skills, especially in the field of teaching, the signature major of the DoE. Notwithstanding, DoE lecturers reported that the students needed to improve their soft skills through gaining practical experience from volunteering and internship since the soft skills they learn from the academic setting are not sufficiently practical.

> I think in terms of technical knowledge to work, I agree that they've got enough of such knowledge. But for other skills such as communication with people and problem solving, I think they can only learn these skills when they have real life experience. (Lecturer 8)

> No, I don't agree [to the idea that says that students should not be involved in volunteering or internship]. In class, they learn such skills as critical thinking, speaking, and presentation, but these skills are still limited because of time constraints. So I don't think they learn enough from class. They should find extra opportunities to learn those skills from practical experience, rather than depending only on learning in class. (Lecturer 6)

5.4 Lecturers' Perspectives and Experience in Summary

All in all, the idea from Kahu's (2013) framework of student engagement is that institutional factors and classroom factors play vitally important roles in enhancing student engagement, both inside and outside class, which ultimately leads to the acquisition of both technical and generic skills. The interviewees indicated that the DoE provided several departmental factors, such as collegiality and supportive and friendly work environment, which were conductive to teaching as

well as establishing an active learning environment for the students. The faculty members possessed both the knowledge and skills in teaching, as they were all well-trained with teaching methodologies and the subjects they were in charge of. Hence, they were knowledgeable at striking a balance between passive and active learning and assessment to enhance both active and passive engagement of the students. Passive engagement derives from lectures, lesson explanation, close-ended and memory-based exercises, while active engagement comes from class, pair, group discussion, opinion-based questions, application questions, simulation and reflection work.

The lecturer participants recognized the DoE's attempts to provide extra activities for both teachers and students. However, because of the paucity of human and financial resources, the numbers of workshops provided were considered insufficient. Yet, the lecturers suggested that this should seriously affected the quality of teaching in the DoE, as they believed that their students were equipped with adequate capacities to secure jobs upon graduation.

Finally, the lecturers expressed concerns about students studying another university degree in other disciplines, while they were reading English at the DoE. The lecturers worried that this could reduce the students' time, energy, effort, and attention on studying at the DoE, given that many of the students considered learning at the DoE as supplementary to studying at other universities. Nonetheless, the lecturers also acknowledged that doing two degrees at the same time might increase the employability of those students and thus enhance their competitiveness in the labor market.

5.5 Students' Perspectives and Experience with Employability Skills Development

The last stakeholder group invited to participate in the interviews in the current study was Year 3 and Year 4 students and fresh graduates. Their perspectives and experience in learning employability skills in the DoE and its curriculum were elicited to supplement the information obtained from the lecturers and the management team. The data from this group was used to answer Research Question 4: *What are the perspectives and experiences of the DoE students and graduates in learning in the DoE curriculum in relation to the acquisition of employability skills?*

The current study assumes that students' learning can be reflected via student engagement. Consequently, to respond to the research question, the current study also drew on the framework of higher education student engagement adapted from that of Kahu's (2013). Again, in this framework, student engagement is influenced by institutional factors, classroom factors, and personal factors—personal factors can be best elicited from the students themselves. Another very important element of the student engagement framework is the outcome of student engagement, which is conceptualized as employability skills in this study. Again, this element can be best obtained from the students.

5.5.1 Employability skills acquired by students

Year 3 and Year 4 students and graduates reported a number of employability skills they believed that had developed from learning at the DoE. For technical skills, students reported their improvement in language proficiency in grammar and vocabulary as well as the four language macro skills: speaking, writing, reading, and listening (e.g., Year 3-Student 1). For generic skills, the participants reported an increase in the confidence to speak and express ideas, which are

elements of communication skills (e.g., Year-3 Student 2). Other frequently reported generic skills were critical thinking, teamwork, analyzing skills. Besides these skills, students also reported improvement in general knowledge and various attributes such as ability to work under pressure, punctuality, flexibility, responsibility, and commonsense (e.g., Year 4 Student 1 and Graduate 5). Below are quotes from the participants to illustrate this point.

> There are many skills I think I've learned. For soft skills, before in class I didn't like talking a lot or expressing any ideas, but now I feel that I want to speak more, feel more confident, and like to express ideas with my classmates. Moreover, I like helping others and also learn communication skills. For hard skills, I've learnt language skills such as the ability to use new words that I've never seen before. In year 3, there's research which is totally new to me. (Year-3 Student 2)

> I think I've learned a lot. We've got critical thinking, a skill allowing us to be able to think deeply. Moreover, I joined the Debate Club, which required me to read a lot. For soft skills, I've learned how to work in groups as I meet classmates with different personalities, so I've learned to be flexible to do work successfully on time. For the learning strategies, I've learned to read for Global Studies and relate what I read to the real world, so, what's important is I try to read a lot. (Year-4 Student 1)

> I think I've learned a lot from teamwork, teamwork skills. Before college, I never worked in a team in high school but after I entered college, I learned from, like, group work. We learnt to be more responsible and to work under pressure, sometimes. And it also helped develop our critical thinking skills as well. (Graduate 5)

The DoE curriculum also teaches students to use English for communications in an international context. Students reported that they had the confidence and no difficulty communicating with foreign colleagues and supervisors (e.g., Year-3 Student 7 and Graduate 9). They also reported they had learned these skills from Global Studies and Literature Studies in the DoE curriculum, which exposed them to different reading articles on various cultural contexts, especially those in the Western world. In addition, students also reported that many DoE lecturers who had graduated with a degree from a foreign country served to share their knowledge and experience in teaching, learning, and living in a foreign country (e.g., Year-3 Student 7 and Graduate 9).

> I've never had any difficulty [communicating with foreign colleagues] because at the DoE, we've got Global Studies, which teaches language related to culture. Apart from that, our lecturers have had education abroad, so they can tell us about culture in foreign countries, in European countries and the countries they've been to. (Year-3 Student 7)

> I once went to an exchange program in Vietnam. Participants were from ASEAN countries, and we were able to communicate with each other well. As for work effort and skills, I can say we were about 70-80% comparable. For now, I work with some Singaporeans. What is taught in these two subjects [Global Studies and Literature Studies] makes me aware of morality and culture. In other words, these two subjects teach us, what should I say, to know what these nationals are like. (Graduate 9)

It is worth noting that while some students were able to identify generic skills they thought they had acquired, some students did not realize what skills they had acquired and had to be asked indirectly before they were able to realize they had had the opportunity to learn those skills in their study at the DoE. This has validated the concern of the DoE management team regarding whether to teach generic skills explicitly with stand-alone subjects.

5.5.2 Students' perspectives and experience with the institutional factors affecting student engagement

Students reported a number of institutional factors that they believed influenced their engagement to learn. Similar to what was mentioned by the DoE management team and lecturers, students reported the quality of the faculty staff, rules and regulations, and assessment as the main factors that encouraged them to engage in their learning at the DoE. Apparently, students generally appreciated the knowledge and commitment of the faculty staff, who possessed both the skills and experience in teaching and the strict rules and policies regarding learning at the DoE. Again such strict rules and policies are important because Cambodian students are not exposed to such academic rigor from their high schools.

> First, it's the quality. All the subjects are also good. The curriculum allows students to learn a lot. Teachers are full of experience and they encourage students to learn with good teaching methods. The teaching is fun and thus students like learning. Rules and policies are strict and the environment is generally acceptable. (Year-3 student 5)

> First, all the lecturers has high commitment, so we must be responsible for the work assigned by our lecturers. Thus when we go to work, we've got this habit in us. The curriculum is also good because we've got critical thinking and general knowledge, which allows us to become well-rounded students. Lecturers are also full of experience and have got education from abroad. (Year-4 student 1)

Apparently the two quotes above indicated that students also appreciated the DoE curriculum that was composed of many useful courses for students to study, and it also exposed students to many tasks and activities that encourage students work hard. Students also reported the prevalence of the student-centered approach in the departmental culture as well as the challenging learning environment to propel students toward hard work and fruitful pay-off from their study.

> First, the DoE has the curriculum and system that encourages student-centered activities. Thus students must study hard if they don't want to fail. The environment in the DoE is challenging both inside and outside the classroom. The major factor is lecturers, who are all competent and experienced. No matter how good a curriculum is, if lecturers do not have enough experience, students' learning will not be good. So lecturers play a very important role. (Year-4 student 4)

> For me personally, the environment is completely different from what I had before. First, the student-centered approach is very helpful. Although I struggled, when I studied in the student-centered approach, I had so many discussion activities. It was a different culture for me but very helpful. It makes me feel confident in speaking. (Graduate 8)

However, there were also complaints related to the weakness of the DoE to be improved to enhance students' learning. Mainly, as mentioned earlier, as a department in a public institution in a developing country, the DoE faces constraints on both human and financial resources. The budget from the government is meager and the DoE mainly survives from the tuition fees. Students reported outdated materials and books and a paucity of modern materials to support

teaching and learning such as computer labs, access to the Internet, and liquid-crystal display projectors.

> There are also many constraints. I study in the evening shift, so I have many challenges as I have to study a lot [He does another degree in the day shift]. I want the lecturers not to overload us with work. Also, some of the contents are out of date. For example, in Literature Studies, some stories are out of date. But there are some other good points about these because they allow us the opportunity to learn to analyze. Some contents are updated but there's not much to learn. (Year-4 student 3)

> I don't think there are any. But I want our department to have courses on technology because some students are really far behind. They can't afford modern technology and they don't have the opportunity to learn. So more training on technology is really good. The technology at the DoE is not good. (Year-4 student 4)

Obviously, the report from the students has been consistent with the information obtained from the lecturers and management team regarding the positive institutional factors and the constraints, which were mainly financial ones, the DoE has faced. All the three stakeholder groups have agreed that the DoE possesses competent teaching staff, good curriculum, positive teaching methodology, and strict rules and regulations. Although these positive features are commonly found in universities in developed countries, in Cambodia, such positive features are highly appreciated by the students as they do not experience such a learning environment at high school or in some universities.

5.5.3 Students' perspectives and experience with student engagement in classroom

Again, the main elements in the classroom influence included characteristics of a good teacher, teaching activities and tasks, and assessment. First, students were asked to describe characteristics of a good teacher based on their experience studying at the DoE. Of course, teachers are the agents for curriculum implementation, so no matter how good a curriculum is, if the teachers are not skillful enough to carry out the curriculum, desired results will not be

obtained (Atencio & Ratnam-Lim, 2017). Good teachers who display ability to employ various teaching activities and tasks and assessment can engage students well in their sessions, and this engagement later induces the acquisition of employability skills. DoE students reported that most of their lecturers were experienced, knowledgeable, and skillful in teaching as they were well-trained with teaching methods. The characteristics of good lecturers that DoE students reported from their experience of learning with those lecturers included three main characteristics such as teaching competence, ability to build relationships with students, and personal characteristics.

Teaching competence is very important and contains many elements, and the students and graduates reported this competence to include ability to manage lessons and class; being knowledgeable about and skillful in the contents they were in charge of, ability to select and use a variety of new, fun, and challenging activities; ability to provide clear instructions on tasks and activities; ability to give clear, direct, and short explanation of lessons; and ability to provide timely feedback to students.

> I like Literature Studies and Critical Thinking. First, it's fun to learn in these classes because the lecturers can make their classes fun, so I don't feel bored. Their explanations are short and easy to understand, with many practice exercises. There are new and interesting activities that allow students to share ideas in group. Students can move around in class working in pairs or groups. (Year-3 student 1)

> He lectures a lot. He is very knowledgeable about each lesson he teaches. His explanation is clear and he usually brings fun into his lectures too. He is also strict, so he can manage his class well. He can also bring fun to class. I never feel his lectures boring. He uses PowerPoint slides to present his lectures. I feel that his lectures are tiring. But I like his clear and detailed explanation. And he gives a lot of work for students to do, and he usually gives us timely feedback. (Graduate 7)

Of course, teachers' competence is a vitally important element in teaching and engaging students their learning, but other factors can also add value to teaching and learning. The students also reported that good teachers were able to build relationship with students, and this could be done

by trying to understand the students, knowing your students and "calling their names" to participate in class activities, and appreciating the works of the students from all ability levels, especially low-performing students to encourage more participation from them.

Finally, the students also reported that personal attributes of the lecturers were also important as these attributes could help connect the lecturers with their students and make their class interesting, and these attributes included voice and tone in talking to the students, being friendly and open to questions, approachability, and enthusiasm in class. Interestingly, age was also considered a significant factor as the students reported that they felt closer to the lecturers with a younger age than those with an older age. This may be due to the fact that young lecturers might share a large amount of common interest with them, so their activities and materials might also appeal more to their interest as well.

> I think good teachers have many tasks for students. Some have games in class that are fun and they try to understand the students. For some activities, they call students' names to answer the questions and to do the exercise. In Critical Thinking, there are a lot of team work activities. The teacher is also open and not so strict. He allows us to ask any questions. I think age might also be a factor. That may be because of different thinking. Young lecturers understand the students better, so they can improve students' learning. (Year-3 student 6)

> I see that students have different personalities, and many are not brave enough to share ideas. Only a few can, and they seem to always speak in class. So I think good lecturers should encourage all the students to speak, and the most effective way is to call out the names. From my own experience, when the students and lecturers are close to each other, they can express more ideas. When they get along well with their lecturers, they are more willing to express their ideas because they know their lecturers are also open to their ideas too. Lecturers' personalities are also important. In class, if lecturers look happy, that's a good first impression. (Year-4 student 5)

As seen from the two quotes above, obviously, just like any other students, DoE students prefer fun and interesting activities, so to make classes fun and interesting, lecturers need to understand their students well, emphasizing the need to build relationships with the students. Also students

prefer abundant practice time with pair and group work, which means teacher talking time should be reduced to the minimum. Also, students would prefer teachers to try to encourage each student to engage and speak in class. Again, relationship with students is important as when students feel close to teachers and that their teachers show no judgment on the way they share their opinions, they are more likely to engage and speak more.

The examples earlier show how lecturers could engage students in their class. However, at the same time, the students also reported instances where lecturers failed to arouse student engagement, causing boredom and pressure instead.

> I don't engage much in Research Methods. The lecturer's teaching is not interesting because of his tone. It makes me feel sleepy, and sometimes I can't catch what he says. Moreover, his subject is difficult, so I can't understand the subject well. There's also a lot of pressure during his class. Not enough time is given to assignments. Global Studies is even more difficult than Research class. His teaching is too long and he spends too much time explaining each lesson. (Year-3 student 1)

> For me, I think he [Research lecturer] tries to engage us, but he doesn't have much time for us because he's in the management. And now he's busy with organizing the practicum, so he only assigns us to work without proper explanation. And the subject is new to me. For Global Studies, I don't engage much because I'm not interested in the subject and the way the lecturer teaches is not interesting. He only gave a handout on vocabulary one week before class and asked us to do it. He didn't even teach the lesson but he gave us a quiz on it. He taught the lesson later. Recently, we've got online classes, and he teaches one unit one week [3 hours]. It's too much for me. I can't catch up. (Year-3 student 6)

The two quotes above have shown three main problems in teaching. First is the problem of assigning too difficult tasks. If teachers understand their students well, they should know which tasks are challenging and which are too difficult for them. The second problem is related to the provision of proper guidance before doing a task, especially for a test. Lecturers need to be able to properly determine when to only give minimal guidance and when to provide more support. In the case of assessment, because of the involvement of scores, lecturers should realize that scores

can make students feel nervous as they consider scores important for their study journey, so lecturers need to be very careful in providing sufficient direction and explanation before administering a quiz or a test. Third, long lectures, which do not allow adequate time for student interaction, can sap away student engagement in class. The students interviewed reported a variety of ways lecturers could do to make their lectures and explanation interesting so that they kept students' engagement in the classes.

> Teachers should combine teacher-centered and student-centered elements at 50/50. To help the students, the teachers should provide some key guidance and explanation. This teaching should be related to real life. There should also be some fun and games. Students should be asked to express their opinion as well. But teachers need to clarify main parts of each lesson, so that students can understand fast. Reading alone doesn't help much. (Year-3 student 6)

> When giving a presentation, he [Literature Studies lecturer] would actively ask the students what's this and what's that, not giving them the answers first. In LS class, even when he gives lectures or summaries of stories, the students still actively engage. He would ask questions to keep the students actively thinking. (Year-3 student 8)

As mentioned earlier, one of the most important characteristics of a good teacher is the teaching competence, which refers to the ability to choose tasks and activities that enhance student engagement and learning. Also, a good teacher should know how to strike a balance in how to integrate the student-centered and teacher-centered elements in each of their class. In other words, they should be actively cognizant of when to provide a large amount of scaffolded instruction and guidance and when to resort to minimal support to enhance student's autonomous learning and development of generic skills. The student participants in the present research reported various experiences and perspectives of good teaching activities and tasks that arouse and maintain their engagement. Generally, students reported they liked new and innovative tasks that were different from lectures and controlled practice exercises, such as working on multiple choice questions and gap filling exercises. Some examples of new and innovative tasks included

learning-related games, teamwork, discussion questions, simulation and role plays, and activities that promoted critical thinking and that allowed students to apply what they had learned into practice. Free control practices, such Gallery Walk, which was a form of poster presentation, were also reported by the students to be very useful and interesting.

> It is based on each subject. For example, there's a game related to learning such as word matching. Students have to listen to the lecturer and collaborate in groups to win this game. In another example, the lecturer assigns us a speaking activity or some discussion questions for us to share ideas. Role plays are also fun. It promotes out-of-the-box thinking. In another class, the lecturer assigns us tasks that allow us to apply theory we learn into practice. (Year-3 student 2)

> I think Core English has interesting activities. The lecturer assigned roles for us to talk about various issues related to language teaching. At that time, he taught us a lot of useful language use and arguments related to each role. It was on what language to use and how to use our tones, so the class was really active. (Year-4 student 2)

The two quotes above have shown that in order to stimulate student engagement, a lecturer needs to use a variety of teaching activities in a session. Preferably, these activities allow for active involvement and interaction from students, and some examples of these activities include educational games, speaking activities, group discussion, role plays, and application of theories into practice. Lectures might be helpful for learning content knowledge and class rules and discipline, but such lectures do not encourage active engagement from students.

In general, classes contain both active and passive activities and tasks. Active classes provide opportunity for active activities such as group and class discussion that are conducive to the development of generic skills such as communication and critical thinking, while students are also engaged with open-ended, opinion-based, and application-based questions. On the other hand passive classes involve listening to lectures and doing close-ended and memory-based questions, the answers to which can be found directly from the textbooks. Active classes are good for developing generic skills while passive classes allow the chance for students to learn

content knowledge. Generally students reported that they enjoyed active classes more than passive ones. Freeman et al. (2014) noted from their literature review that "active learning engages students in the process of learning through to an expert. It emphasizes higher-order thinking and often involves group work" (pp. 8413-8414). Although group work can facilitate active learning, student engagement, and generic skills development, the student participants in the current research reported mixed experiences on group work they had encountered. Below are comments from two students on their positive experience of working in groups:

> I think, first, we can get many ideas from our team members. Second, if we get along well, we can work faster and more effectively. We've got the chance to talk to different students in class, so we can build our relationship. Without group work, like classes at my other university, I'd know only the people who sit near me. (Year-3 student 7)

> For me, I think in group discussion, we talk to our teammates. So we feel unrestrained. We're not afraid to talk. We don't care whether our opinion is judged. I mean, we don't care about people judging our opinion. We learn from each other. This teammate has an opinion and that teammate has another. So we can learn from each other in group discussion. (Graduate 6)

It is obvious that in group work, students get the chance to talk to each other, so they are not so nervous to talk as when they talk in class when they feel that the lecturers will judge their opinion. Moreover, they learn to deal with different people with different opinions, so they can also learn new ideas from their classmates. However, many participants also reported problems that they encountered during group work that can obstruct learning and cooperation. The main problem is some students stay in the group but do not engage much. They may be new to the group members, or they may feel inferior if they are put in the group with the students who they think have better academic scores than them. There may also be conflict in ideas and time.

> And in the classroom activity, for group work on much more close-ended questions, the student who has high scores is usually the one who speaks the most. The other students might not feel confident enough giving out their answers, so they just stay silent. In open-

> ended discussion, it depends on the students. If they've got ideas and experience on that topic, they'll more actively engage. (Year-3 student 8)
>
> Group work has benefits. We learn to communicate with our group members. When there's conflict in ideas, we can discuss and try to compromise. This is what helps students to learn. For my own experience at work, I don't stick only to my ideas. I need to understand other people's ideas. However, there are also difficulties. In general, in a group, there are people who are passive and do not involve much. When we call for a meeting, there's a conflict in the schedule. Some don't get involved when the deadline is close. (Graduate 7)

Problems, such as a sense of inferiority and conflict in ideas and schedules, are inherent in group work as when there are many people involved, for it is inevitable that there are conflicts in ideas, time, and ability levels. Nonetheless, when students can overcome these challenges, they will turn these challenges into the opportunity for them to learn the skills to deal with different people and group work problems. Therefore, assigning students to work in groups offers many merits if the lecturers can control its shortcomings. Students also reported two different ways to deal with group work problems. First is related to whether students should select their own group members or they should allow the lecturers to assign groups for them. Second is the benefit of a long-term group versus a short-term group.

> I think the lecturers should assign the groups for us because if they allow the students to choose their own groups, it's also difficult for us to decide. Students often work with their peers who have obtained high scores, not with those with lower scores, so low-performing students will find it hard to get into a group. So generally, lecturers will give us lucky draws to select group members. I think it's fair for all. (Graduate 7)
>
> For me, in a long-term group, we can have more time to talk to each other about our project. We understand each other better and take responsibility for our part. In short-term groups, it's difficult because we keep changing groups and group members. Then it's hard to get to know new members. And it's difficult to learn from each other. (Year-3 student 4)

Apart from the experience in group work, students also mentioned the benefit of challenge of tasks and activities on their learning. Challenging tasks can make students engage in their

learning and also encourage them to gain satisfactory results. Two students reported on the level of the task challenge at the DoE:

> To encourage student engagement, first, teachers can assign challenging activities or group work for students to compete in but in a friendly way. Challenging and friendly competition can make students try to study hard and have fun in their learning. (Year-4 student 4)

> We can see that our peers at the DoE have a culture of working hard and that creates an environment of working hard dealing with challenging tasks. But it is helpful although I struggled because my English was not so good. But I'm satisfied with my hard work when I see good results from it. (Graduate 8)

Of course, proper challenges can propel students' learning forward as elaborated in Input Hypothesis put forward by Krashen (1981), which hypothesizes that second language learners can improve their learning when they are exposed to input that is one step beyond their current stage of linguistic competence. This is true in that students can acquire new knowledge and experience when they are put out of their comfort zone.

However, students should not be made to feel that the tasks are too difficult for them or that the tasks are not useful or related. This actually means if students feel that the tasks are too difficult, they will feel discouraged and nervous. This is especially true when students feel that they are being judged or assessed for scores.

> This subject [Research Method] is very difficult for me. When I started, I didn't know anything about research at all. I didn't even know what literature review was, what to read, and how to read. All in all, after one year studying this subject, I don't know what research is for. I don't think I can get much from the subject. I think it's useful for Master's and PhD students. But I don't know how we can use research in real life. (Graduate 3)

> I think debate is not engaging. In CE, we've got a debate. Some students don't like debate. For debate, students are assigned to work in a group of three. Then they are put in the middle of the class to have a debate. Students feel nervous to sit in the middle of the room, being watched and judged. (Year-4 student 2)

Of course, pressure can make students learn but students need to know the rationale behind this pressure and if they find the tasks are not meaningful to them, they will not actively participate. Also, some students do not like to be put in the center of attention when their speaking is judged by the audience, so teachers need to understand their students. As a result, when lecturers have public speaking or public debate in class, they should not force students to participate as this can discourage them and thus lower their engagement.

The last influential classroom factor that impacts student engagement is assessment. As mentioned earlier, the management team and lecturers reported the use of both formative and summative assessment to keep students engaged in their learning throughout the academic year. The proportion of the assessment is allocated appropriately between both forms of assessment with various assessment tools, including short quizzes, progress tests, writing assignments, presentations, role plays, class participation, homework, and final semester exams. The assessment also requires both individual and group work, while it also contains a balanced integration of both active and passive elements of learning. Of course, students reported the benefits of engagement in assessment for scores as they believed students needed to be given a proper amount of pressure to study.

> I think ongoing assessment at the DoE is good. It's got score for class participation, so it encourages the students to participate in class. Students cannot just sit passively. They have to be active in class in order to get scores. It's normal that students want scores, so there should be a bit push for the students to become active in class. That also applies to quizzes and tests. They encourage the students to study hard at home. Without scores, students might not do self-study at home. So they help a lot. (Graduate 7)

However, students reported they valued on-going assessment more as it kept them engaged in their learning in the whole academic year. On-going assessments like group discussion and role

plays were more appreciated than the final exams. They reported preference for active engagement in group work. Below are quotes to illustrate these points:

> I think if possible, they should increase the proportion of the on-going assessment. Because I think without on-going assessment, students will not study. They only try hard when the exams are coming. On-going assessment makes the students learn lessons better. Students also work in groups, so they discuss, share responsibility on parts to do and combine each other's parts to make a complete work. (Year-4 student 4)

> In Literature Studies, we've got role plays. I think they make students work in groups. Also students learn to use technology, such as how to take pictures, and make and edit videos. Although these are not so related to what we learn at the DoE, it helps students learn something new and learn lessons in-depth. (Graduate 6)

From my experience as a lecturer at the DoE, in an aspect of the assessment, progress tests and final semester exams at the DoE contain both memory-based items and critical and application items. Memory-based items test students on contents and technical knowledge, while critical and applications questions provide opportunity for the students to get exposed to higher-order thinking tasks, so they have the opportunity to hone their generic skills in those areas. Another interesting aspect to note about assessment is the fact that it encourages students to form groups to study outside class, especially in preparation for the final semester exams. This further teaches the students the value of group work and collaboration for important tasks, while at the same time students can learn to form useful learning strategies and test preparation skills such as note-taking, responsibility sharing in groups, notes exchanging and comparing, and group lesson revision.

> When I was a student, I usually had a study group to prepare for exams. We gathered together to help explain lessons to each other. We asked each other questions, such as for Literature Studies. We helped each other find answers to questions. Mostly it was for exam preparation. It was too much to learn by ourselves. Sharing parts made it easier to remember lessons. We learned better this way. (Graduate 7)

> I sometimes study in groups. But I go with my best friend, who I've studied with since high school. I have known him for a long time, so I basically usually discuss things with

> him only. It's a different learning style, I guess. Many students review using worksheets, for example. They do exercise in class and do it again outside class. They work on the worksheets that lecturers give us. But for me and Ratha [his best friend], we review our lesson notes and exchange our notes, which contain main points that I and he note down. We share those. I think it's a different learning point of view. (Year-3 student 8)

Many students do two university degrees at the same time and also engage in volunteer work, internship, and part-time and full-time jobs, so Year-3 student 4, for example, reported that he did not have enough time to form groups to study apart from when he is prepared for exams since exams account for a large proportion of 40% of the semester score.

5.5.4 Students' perspectives and experience with out-of-class engagement

Student engagement inside class is very important for students to acquire both hard skills and soft skills to form their employability skills. However, students also engage in learning employability skills outside class as well. DoE students and graduates reported their perspectives and experience on participating in extracurricular activities, volunteer work, and internship and jobs. These out-of-class engagement activities are optional, students still opted for these activities, and this reflects how student agency plays a role in enhancing students' employability. With the current context in Cambodia, where English is a very important foreign language, a means for communication at work, many students who can afford it, decide to do two bachelor's degrees at the same time as ways to stack employability skills.

Consistent with the information provided by the management team and lecturers, students reported the opportunity to join extra-curricular activities provided by the DoE. Nonetheless, there seems to be little information to offer, which obviously shows the paucity of such activities provided by the DoE, the information also mentioned by lecturers. The most popular extra-curricular activity provided by the DoE was reported by the students to be the participation in the

debate club, which had a session every Saturday. However, not anyone can join the debate club as members are selected based on academic merits. Also, as mentioned earlier, many students do two degrees at the same time, so they do not want to engage in an extracurricular activity on a regular weekly basis. They prefer once-off events such as workshops, while requesting workshops on career development topics, in addition to the academic workshops provided. Two students expressed their opinion on this matter as below:

> I will join, but I can't say I'll join all the workshops because I'm doing two degrees now. I'm studying in year 4 in the morning in the Medical Doctor program at University of Health Science, so I need to go to hospital in the afternoon. So I don't have much time. (Year-3 student 6)

> For the debate, I didn't join because I didn't have enough time. I know debate is really important for us to improve public speaking or research. But I can only join workshops, especially in year 4. I think it's useful to join workshops. We learn many things from class but we can get extra lessons from workshops. I think there should also be workshops related to soft skills. We can invite speakers with experience to share their professional experience, rather than academic one. (Year-4 student 3)

Consistent with what mentioned by the lecturers, students do not engage much in extra-curricular activities at the DoE, while the DoE do not have adequate resources to provide a wide variety of extra-curricular programs, in addition to the academic topics that the faculty members have expertise at. By contrast, it is not surprising that the DoE students still maintain a satisfactory level of employability skills development as noted by Seow and Pan (2014) in their literature review that there has still been mixed evidence on the impact of extra-curricular activities on academic performance. However, students reported preference for internship, volunteer work, and part-time and full-time jobs, as a form of out-of-class engagement for them to obtain essential generic skills for their future career. The DoE provides practicum opportunities for year-4 students in the Bachelor of Education program to gain some teaching experience before their graduation, but the DoE does not provide or require internships for the students in other

majors. Students have to depend on themselves to find volunteer and internship opportunities. It is unquestionable that internship and volunteer work provides many benefits in terms of the opportunity to get exposed to real life work experience. Volunteering and internship is very useful as it provides students with real life experience in workplaces. Graduate 6 expressed her opinion on her internship experience:

> Internship helped me a lot. I spent so much time doing internship, so I also learnt a lot about how work was conducted and what the working environment was like. I also got to know the working environment is different from the academic environment, so I felt accustomed to all of these when I got my job. I know some of my friends who focused only on study. When they graduated and got a job, the working environment was new to them and difficult for them. (Graduate 6)

Volunteering and internship teach generic skills in a practical context while students can also build professional network for their future career. Generic skills learned from universities are academically oriented since these skills are placed in the academic context. Volunteering and internship allow students to learn and convert academic generic skills into workplace skills employed in a practical context, while, importantly, students can also build professional networks for their future career, an opportunity that is non-existent in the academic context.

> Teamwork in class and at work is different. At work, I'm the youngest. I'm working with more experienced colleagues. They've got a high sense of responsibility. In class, we're young, so we don't take responsibility as seriously. Tasks are more difficult at work than in class because I've got more pressure…. When I was an intern, I studied and worked at the same time, so it prepared me for my future job. Moreover, from internship and volunteering, I've got to broaden my network as I've got to know many more friends and colleagues. Broadening my network is a type of self-improvement. (Graduate 6)

Volunteer work, internship, and jobs tend to enable students to become professionally mature and well-planned about their future goals. Graduate 9 noted how experience at volunteering and internship provided him the opportunity to see the characteristics of the work, so that he managed to plan his future well.

> I think volunteer work and internship are really useful, but I see that some students overdo it. They don't have a clear plan of what they want to do in the future. For me, when I decided to join the debate club, I thought of what I could do later, whether it'd match my future plan. I volunteered at Eva. They had research activities. For example, they had a research project on how to raise cattle efficiently to reduce expenses. The project won an award on Leadership Skills. We learned to design questions, and this helped me build my soft skills. (Graduate 9)

Although volunteering and internship provide many benefits for students, especially for practical employability skills development, a student raised her concern regarding such activities (Year-3 student 7). In her opinion, students who have received outstanding academic performance should focus more on their study than doing volunteering work or internship, but those who do not perform well should try to build the resumé through volunteer work and internship.

> I've got two opinions on this [doing volunteering and internship]. If a student does well in his/her study and doesn't have any financial problem, he/she should continue learning without caring much about looking for volunteer work or internship. But if that student doesn't perform well, he/she should try to gain new experience from work. Some work is related to what he/she learns at university, so such work will broaden their horizon and allow them to learn new things. This will enable him/her to learn better. (Year-3 student 7)

This student seemed to hold a different view on learning and work experience. She might believe that outstanding students are smart people who will benefit more from maintaining their excellent grades from their study as this will also become a bridge for them to obtain employment after graduation even with little or no work experience. She might feel so herself because she is also working while studying, and this has shaped her belief that it is not difficult to find a job after graduation if students perform well enough academically, and especially if they graduate from prestigious universities.

5.5.5 Personal factors

An interesting point that can uniquely be obtained from the interviews with the students and graduates is the various personal factors that students reported. Students reported that they were more likely to engage when they had background and basic knowledge of the subject prior to the study and also when the subject they studied was within the area of their interest. These are quotes from two students to illustrate these points:

> For me, first, I personally like these two subjects [Core English and Literature Studies]. Second, I like how the lecturers teach. They just made it easy for us to understand. They made us active in class activities. I personally don't like the teacher-centered environment. (Graduate 3)

> I think I engaged a lot in Writing Skills in year 1 because of my personal factors. I had a good basic knowledge in English grammar because I studied a lot of grammar in high school. So I was interested in the subject. I always asked questions when we did practice exercises. (Graduate 7)

Interestingly, Year-3 student 4 reported that he would engage a lot with his lecturers because he did not have much time to study by himself as he also had to work. This student had low performance and also had a full-time job. This response clearly indicates that some students cannot manage their time well when they also engage in full-time jobs. Also, another problem is that some students have low English proficiency, so it is difficult for them to catch up with the classes. This type of student needs a great amount of support from the lecturers. Below is the quote to illustrate this point:

> If I don't engage a lot, I can't catch up because this subject requires a lot of reading but I don't have much time to read because I also have to work. I need to engage a lot with the teachers. I pay attention when they explain lessons. I don't have much time to read, so I need to pay a lot of attention listening to them. (Year-3 student 4)

Some students, however, reported the reasons for them not to engage or enjoy learning. Likewise, they also mentioned interest and background knowledge to be factors that thwart their

engagement. In addition, they also mentioned the difficulty level and perceived usefulness of a subject. In other words, if a subject is perceived to be too difficult and not so useful, students are least likely to engage in that subject. Below are some quotes to illustrate these points:

> Some students don't have prior knowledge related to that lesson, so they don't have ideas to share because the subject is new to them. That's why they don't engage much. (Year-4 student 1)

> This subject [Research Method] is very difficult for me. When I started, I didn't know anything about research at all. I didn't even know what literature review was, what to read, and how to read. All in all, after one year studying this subject, I don't know what research is for. I don't think I can get much from the subject. I think it's useful for Master's and PhD students. But I don't know how we can use research in social life. (Graduate 3)

> To be honest, I didn't enjoy classes because I didn't perform well. My English was not so good. It was so tense. I had nothing to share. Even when I had to do a presentation, I had nothing much to share with the class. Some students read a lot, so they had a lot to share and they seemed to enjoy the classes. But not for me. But then I started to enjoy my study little by little when I saw my progress from one year to another. (Graduate 8)

Quote 3 from Graduate 8 is an interesting case to observe. She was a scholarship student who received excellent grades in her high school exams. That was the reason why she was offered the scholarship to study at the DoE. However, while her overall grades were very good, her grade for the English subject was not. This is a case where the admission criteria to the DoE and other universities should be carefully (re)examined. However, this student reported that she tried to study hard and enjoy studying when she saw her progress from one year to another. This might be because he was an outstanding at high school, so she should have possessed positive learning habits and attitudes toward learning, which could help her learn in a new major fast, despite the initial difficulty.

5.6 Summary of Students' Perspectives and Experience in Employability Skills Development

This chapter has shown a number of significant findings from the perspectives and experience of year-3 and year-4 students and graduates regarding their engagement and employability skills development. The current study indicated that students reported confidence in the improvement in employability skills, including English proficiency, generic skills, such teamwork, communication and critical thinking skills, and attributes such punctuality, working under pressure, and confidence. As reported by the participants, these skills were taught through class tasks and activities, rather than from stand-alone courses. For example, in a Literature Studies class, students were asked to work in groups to analyze a quote from a character in a story and connect the analysis to life in the real world. Students doing this activity could practice working in groups as well as practice using communication and critical thinking skills. Participants of this group also reported that the skills they had learned from classes were different from the skills used at work because of the different contexts and people involved. Notwithstanding, these academic skills served as the foundation for the students to learn professional skills and adapt quickly to the work.

One of the main premises of the current research is that active learning induces active student engagement, which then leads to the acquisition of employability skills, and therefore, student engagement is the core concept to have examined. The participants were asked about institutional factors that affected their engagement in learning. Apart from strict rules and regulations, the DoE's competent teaching staff is seen as a strength, as they were considered to be knowledgeable, experienced and helpful, and especially. In fact, most of the staff had undertaken postgraduate study in more developing countries, which served as a great asset in

their teaching. However, the students also reported that the provision of extracurricular activities and career development programs for outside-class student engagement was insufficient in the DoE because of the financial constraints. This weakness forced students to look for career development programs in the form of volunteer work and internship on their own. Students resort to their own agency when the university fails to provide them employability opportunities in addition to academic ones. This shows that students are active agents themselves and this is the result of the environment around them, especially their peers.

The most important factor that affected student engagement and employability skills development was the classroom factors. The student participants believed that good teachers should possess teaching competence, namely the ability to introduce tasks and activities, which are relevant and interesting. This ability is important to the relationship between teachers and students, as the students saw it as an evidence of the teachers' understanding of and care for their students. The student participants also reported that enthusiasm and approachability are characteristics of a good teacher. For tasks and activities, the students preferred active and collaborative learning, in which students can work in groups on discussion and thinking questions. Nevertheless, the tasks and activities need to be adequately challenging for them to learn. Tasks and activities should be a step beyond students' current level for them to improve their knowledge and skills. In collaborative learning, the students reported various problems with working in groups such the feeling of inferiority and conflict in ideas and schedules, but they also said that lecturers should control how students work in group with mechanisms to check the collaboration in the groups, so that students can contribute fairly and really actively work with each other. With preference for active learning, the student participants indicated boredom in a class where the lecturer spent too much time talking alone with little or no interaction with the

students. However, despite their preference for active learning, the students also reported that they put a large amount of effort on tasks and activities that they could obtain scores from, regardless of whether the tasks were passive or active.

The last factor that impacted student engagement and employability skills development was the personal factors. Prior background knowledge, prior English proficiency, perceived usefulness and relevance of a subject and personal interest were indicated as the personal factors that could determine how much students put effort into their study.

CHAPTER 6: SURVEY FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

The current study was conducted with the mixed-method design. The qualitative study was conducted to elicit information regarding student engagement, the antecedents of student engagement, which include classroom, institutional, and personal factors, and the outcomes of student engagement, which are the employability skills. Information from the qualitative study was then employed to establish questionnaire items to form scales to measure the concepts of student engagement, classroom, institutional and personal factors, and technical and generic skills. These scales were then validated using the quantitative study. The main use of the quantitative study was to test a model that was obtained from the qualitative study. This model postulated that classroom, institutional and personal factors affected student engagement and that this led to the acquisition of both technical and generic skills. In other words, student engagement was assumed to act as a mediator between the relationships of classroom, institutional and personal factors and employability skills development.

Reporting the findings of the small-scale survey, this chapter aims to respond to Research Question 5: *How does learning in the form of student engagement mediate the relationship between institutional, teaching, and personal factors and employability skills as learning outcomes?* The predictors used in the analyses were “Good Teaching”, “Clear Goals”, “Appropriate Workload”, “Appropriate Assessment”, “Emphasis on Independence”, “Institutional Factor” and “Personal Factor”, while the mediating variables were behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, and the outcome variables were technical and generic skills. As mentioned in Chapter 3, principal component analyses were conducted on the scales first to explore items that formed the unidimensionality of constructs. The items for Good

Teaching (14 items), Clear Goals (4 items), Appropriate Workload (5 items), Appropriate Assessment (5 items), and Emphasis on Independence (6 items), which were adapted from CEQ, were put into the factor analysis together. Principal component analyses were conducted with the examination of the percentage of the total variance explained by each of the factors, the scree plot and the eigenvalues (greater than one) (Hair et al., 2014).

6.2 Principal Component Analysis of the Classroom Factors

The initial principal component analysis (PCA) conducted on these 34 items revealed a structure of eight factors, explaining 55.97% of the total variance. The scree plot was ambiguous, showing an inflexion point at the fourth factor and another at the seventh factor. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) obtained from the analysis was 0.86 suggesting "meritorious" sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974), while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity revealed adequate correlations among the variables (sig. <.05) (Hair et al., 2014). The Varimax rotation indicated that two factors contained adequate loadings from only two items. Based on Norusis (2006), each factor needs at least three items to become a sustainable factor. Therefore, a second PCA was conducted with seven factors specified. The second analysis also revealed two factors containing only two items, so a third analysis was conducted with six factors fixed to be extracted. This solution from the third analysis showed that three items had factor loadings of less than 0.4, while two other items had cross-loadings of around 0.4 on two different factors. Therefore, these five items were discarded, and a fourth analysis was conducted with 29 items (see Table 6.1 for the items that were removed from the classroom factors).

Table 6.1 Items that were Removed from the Classroom Factors

3rd analysis
Items with loadings smaller than 0.4 1. GT1 4. My lecturers assign students to work in pairs or in groups most of the time. 2. IN3 16. There are few opportunities to choose the particular areas you want to study. 3. AA5 42. My lecturers seem more interested in testing what you've memorized than what you've understood. Items with cross-loadings 1. AA3 12. Feedback on student work is usually provided ONLY in the form of marks and grades. 2. CG2 23. The lecturers here make it clear right from the start what they expect from students.
4th analysis
Items with loadings smaller than 0.4 1. GT7 28. My teachers spend so much time talking in class most of the time. 2. GT9 34. My lecturers here normally give helpful feedback on my progress.
6th analysis
Item with loadings smaller than 0.4 1. WL4 32. We are generally given enough time to understand the things we have to learn. Item with cross-loadings 1. AA1 7. To do well on this bachelor's course, all you really need is a good memory.
7th analysis
Items with loadings smaller than 0.4 1. IN6 37. This bachelor's course has encouraged me to develop my own academic interests as much as possible. 2. GT13 44. My lecturers here show no real interest in what students have to say.

GT = Good Teaching, IN = Emphasis on Independence, WL = Appropriate Workload, AA = Appropriate Assessment, CG = Clear Goals

The fourth analysis showed that two items had loadings lower than 0.4, so these two items were dropped for the fifth analysis. The result from the fifth analysis with 27 items indicated that two factors contained only two items, so a sixth analysis was conducted with five factors specified. The result from the sixth analysis showed that one factor contained only two items, one item had a loading of lower than 0.4, and one item with a cross-loading. Hence, a seventh analysis was conducted with four specific factors and the two problematic items deleted. In this seventh analysis, two items had cross-loadings, so these items were removed, and an eighth analysis was conducted. This four-factor solution with 23 items did not contain any items with loadings lower than 0.4 or items with cross-loading. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) obtained from this analysis was 0.84 suggesting "meritorious" sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974), while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity revealed adequate correlations among the variables (sig. <0.05).

The final four-factor solution is presented in Table 6.2 below. The first factor is Good Teaching. This scale originally consisted of 14 items, but four items were eliminated during the PCA. Descriptive analysis showed the scale had M =5.67, SD = 0.68, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.87. For the Appropriate Workload scale, one item was removed, and the scale of the four remaining items revealed M = 4.63, SD = 0.88, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.76. For the Emphasis on Independence scale, only three items were retained, while one item from the Clear Goal scale ("You usually have a clear idea of what the department and your teachers expect from you.") also loaded on this scale, instead. Conceptually, holding a clear idea of what is expected from the students can be viewed as a strategy employed to become independent learners, so this item did

not seem to be conceptually different from independent learning. The scale for Emphasis on Independence was found to have M = 4.89, SD = 1.07, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.6. The last factor of the solution contained a combination of two items from the Clear Goal scale, two items from the Appropriate Assessment Scale, and one item from the Emphasis on Independence scale, which was "There's very little choice in this bachelor's course in the ways you are assessed." Obviously, this item could fit in the Appropriate Assessment scale well as the wording implied. Goals and assessment are often interrelated because the most important way to check whether goals have been achieved is naturally through assessment. As such, the new factor was name "Goal and Assessment", and this scale had M = 3.74, SD = 0.82, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.55. The alpha values of two scales in this study, i.e. Emphasis on Independence and Goal and Assessment, were low, but considering the use of these scales for the first time in a new context, these scales were considered acceptable, with the rule of thumb by Cronbach (cited in Habidin, 2015) stating that only alpha smaller than 0.5 is unacceptable. However, any interpretation of the results and generalization to different populations and contexts from these scales should be conducted with caution.

Table 6.2 Four-Factor Solution Reflecting the Classroom Factors

Items/Factors	Items Loadings	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Good Teaching		5.67	0.68	0.87
GT5 15. My lecturers are good at explaining things to us.	0.751			
GT6 22. My lecturers can make lessons simple to understand.	0.734			
GT3 10. My lecturers are usually approachable and helpful.	0.712			
GT12 41. My lecturers can build good relationships with students.	0.694			

GT10 39. My lecturers here work hard to make subjects interesting.	0.671			
GT4 14. My lecturers here often motivate students to do their best work.	0.654			
GT11 40. My lecturers usually encourage students to do a lot of work in class rather than just listen to lectures.	0.651			
GT8 31. My lecturers often make their classes fun .	0.595			
GT14 71. My lecturers often make me aware of the knowledge we learn in class and how the knowledge is applied in practice.	0.592			
GT2 5. My lecturers often make a real effort to understand difficulties students may be having with their work.	0.583			
Factor 2: Appropriate Workload		4.63	0.88	.76
WL2 20. The workload is too heavy.	0.897			
WL1 19. It seems to me that there is too much work for us to do.	0.877			
WL3 21. The large amount of work to do in this course means you can't understand it all thoroughly.	0.637			
WL5 47. There's a lot of pressure on you as a student here.	0.596			
Factor 3: Emphasis on Independence		4.89	1.07	0.6
IN4 25. Students have a great deal of choice over how they are going to learn in this bachelor's course.	0.803			
IN5 29. Students here are given a lot of choice in the work they have to do.	0.708			
IN1 6. We often discuss with our lecturers how we are going to learn in this bachelor's course.	0.478			
CG1 13. You usually have a clear idea of what the department and your teachers expect from you.	0.417			
Factor 4: Goal and Assessment		3.74	0.82	0.55
CG3 27. It's often hard to discover what's expected of you in this bachelor's course.	0.629			
CG4 33. The aims and objectives of this course are NOT made very clear.	0.619			
IN2 11. There's very little choice in this bachelor's course in the ways you are assessed.	0.586			
AA2 8. It would be possible to get through this bachelor's course just by working hard around exam times.	0.535			
AA4 24. My lecturers here frequently show that	0.487			

they don't want to know about their students.			

GT = Good Teaching, IN = Emphasis on Independence, WL = Appropriate Workload, AA = Appropriate Assessment, CG = Clear Goals

6.3 Principal Component Analysis of the Institutional and Personal Factors

The PCA on the institutional and personal factor scales followed the same process as done on the classroom factor scales. The first PCA with a total of nine items showed three factors but two factors contained only two items, so a second analysis was conducted with two factors specified. The two-factor analysis showed that two items contained cross-loadings, and thus they were discarded for a third analysis to be conducted. The result from the third and last analysis with seven items indicated that all the remaining items had loadings of over 0.4 and there were no cross-loadings. This two-factor solution accounted for 47.86% of the variance. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) obtained from this analysis was 0.72 suggesting "middling" sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974), while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity revealed adequate correlations among the variables (sig. <0.05).

The final two-factor solution is presented in Table 6.3 below. The first factor is Institutional Factor, consisting of three items of the Institutional Factor and one item of Personal Factor, which was "I study hard because I can feel that most of my classmates study hard." After all, the pressure from classmates can be considered environmental and thus institutional in nature because the department has an entrance exam to select students for the program, and this entrance exam can make sure that the department has selected diligent students, and this causes the diligent learning environment for all the students. Descriptive analysis showed this four-item scale had M = 5.2, SD = 0.89, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.53. For the Personal Factor scale, three items remained, which had M = 5.79, SD = 0.71, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.51. The alpha values of these two scales were low, but considering the use of these scales for the first time, these

scales were considered acceptable, with the rule of thumb by Cronbach (as cited in Habidin, 2015) stating that only alpha smaller than 0.5 is unacceptable. However, any interpretation of the results and generalization to different populations and contexts from these scales should be conducted with caution.

Table 6.3 Two-Factor Solution Reflecting the Institutional and Personal Factors

Items/Factors	Items Loadings	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Institutional Factors		5.2	0.89	0.53
PF2 17. I study hard because I can feel that most of my classmates study hard.	.73			
IF1 18. All the subjects in the curriculum help students learn well.	.66			
IF2 26. DoE Departmental culture encourages students to learn.	.59			
IF4 38. The campus environment is good for learning.	.55			
Factor 2: Personal Factors		5.79	0.71	0.51
PF4 36. I have a good relationship with my lecturers.	0.78			
PF1 9. I am interested in studying for a bachelor's degree in DoE.	0.71			
PF5 43. I have a good relationship with my classmates.	0.49			
Items Removed Items with cross-loadings 1. IF3 30. DoE Departmental policies allow students to study hard. 2. PF3 35. I find the classes in DoE useful.				

IF = Institutional Factors, PF = Personal Factors

6.4 Principal Component Analysis of the Student Engagement Construct

The next PCAs were conducted for the engagement scales with a total of 25 items initially. An initial PCA conducted revealed that the solution contained six factors. Two items were deleted because they had loadings lower than 0.4 and three had cross-loadings. Two factors contained only two items, so a second analysis was conducted with 20 items and with five factors specified. The result of the second analysis showed that two items had loadings lower than 0.4 and one item had cross-loadings, so these three items were discarded. One factor was also shown to be composed only of two items, so a third analysis with 17 items was conducted with four factors specified. Again, the third analysis showed that one item contained only two items, so a fourth analysis was conducted with three factors specified. This fourth and last PCA with 17 items showed no problem of neither small loadings nor cross-loadings and that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) obtained from this analysis was 0.8 suggesting "meritorious" sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974), while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity revealed adequate correlations among the variables (sig. <0.05).

Table 6.4 Items that were Removed from the Engagement Scales

1st analysis
Items with loadings smaller than 0.4 1. Behavior 4 58. I usually work hard when we start something new in classes. 2. Behavior 5 61. I normally read course materials before and after classes. 3. Emotional 3 53. When we work on something in classes, I feel interested.
Items with cross-loadings 1. Cognitive 1 47. I try to make all the different ideas fit together and make sense when I study. 2. Cognitive 8 65. As I study, I normally keep track of how much I understand, not just if I am getting the right answers.

2nd analysis

Items with loadings smaller than 0.4

1. Emotional 5 57. When I am in classes, I often feel curious about what we are learning.
2. Emotional 6 70. I often enjoy learning new things in classes.

Items with cross-loadings

1. Cognitive 2 49. I prefer doing challenging tasks in my classes.

Behavior = Behavioral Engagement, Cognitive = Cognitive Engagement, Emotional = Emotional Engagement

The final three-factor solution is presented in Table 6.5 below. The first factor is Behavioral Engagement, consisting of six items, four items short of the original scale. Descriptive analysis showed this scale had M = 5.29, SD = 0.86, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.79. The second factor was Cognitive Engagement, which contained five (out of nine) items from the original scale and two items from the Behavioral scale, which were "I normally ask questions to lecturers for clarification of new materials." and "I often share my opinion in pair or group work." These two items involved the use of strategies for learning to gain understanding of contents and materials to be covered, so these two items fit well with the Cognitive scale. This seven-item Cognitive Engagement scale had M =5.23, SD = 0.68, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.67. The third factor was Emotional Engagement scale, which had the smallest number of items of three out of the total number of original items of six. This scale had M = 4.34, SD = 1.03, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.62. The alpha values of Cognitive and Emotional Engagement scales were not high, but were considered acceptable, with the rule of thumb by Cronbach (as cited in Habidin, 2015) stating that only alpha smaller than 0.5 is unacceptable. However, any interpretation of the results and

generalization to different populations and contexts from these scales should be conducted with caution.

Table 6.5 Three-Factor Solution Reflecting the Student Engagement

Items/Factors	Items Loadings	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Behavioral Engagement		5.29	0.86	0.79
Behavior 1 48. I try very hard in all classes.	0.77			
Behavior 2 66. I often pay attention in all classes.	0.77			
Behavior 7 67. I often listen carefully in all classes.	0.76			
Behavior 10 48. I usually do the homework for all classes.	0.68			
Behavior 9 59. Even when I face difficulty, I never give up putting effort on studying.	0.6			
*Behavior 6 64. I RARELY put enough effort into studying the materials for classes.	0.54			
Factor 2: Cognitive Engagement		5.23	0.68	0.67
Cognitive 5.56. When I study, I normally try to connect what I am learning with my own experiences.	0.69			
Cognitive 4.54. I often make up my own examples to help me understand the important concepts I study.	0.67			
Cognitive 9.68. When doing schoolwork, I usually try to relate what I'm learning to what I already know.	0.65			
Behavior 8.69. I normally ask questions to lecturers for clarification of new materials.	0.51			
Cognitive 6.62. Before I begin to study, I often think about what I want to get done.	0.47			
Cognitive 7.63. When I'm working on my schoolwork, I stop once in a while and go over what I have been doing.	0.44			
Behavior3	0.42			
Factor 3: Emotional Engagement		4.34	1.03	0.62
*Emotional 1 60. Classes often stress me out.	0.77			
*Emotional 4 55. When in my English classes at DoE, I usually feel bored.	0.77			
Emotional 51. Classes are often fun.	0.61			

*Behavior = Behavioral Engagement, Cognitive = Cognitive Engagement, Emotional = Emotional Engagement, * These items were reverse-coded before the analysis.*

6.5 Principal Component Analysis of the Employability Skills

The last PCA to be conducted was for the employability skills scales, comprising technical and generic skills. 18 items of the employability skills scales were put together into the PCA, and the result from this first analysis revealed three factors. One factor contained only two items, so another PCA was conducted with two factors specified. The result from the second analysis showed that three items, namely General Knowledge, Speaking, and Written Communication, had cross-loadings, so they were discarded before a third PCA was conducted. The third and last PCA indicated an excellent two-factor solution with no cross-loadings or loadings lower than 0.4. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) obtained from this analysis was 0.92 suggesting "marvelous" sampling adequacy (Kaiser, 1974), while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity revealed adequate correlations among the variables (sig. <0.05). The final three-factor solution is presented in Table 7.6 below. The first factor was the Generic Skills scale, consisting nine items with M = 5.63, SD = 0.72, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.9, while the second factor was the Technical Skills scale, composed of six items with M = 5.54, SD = 0.83, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.85.

Table 6.6 Two-Factor Solution Reflecting the Institutional and Personal Factors

Items/Factors	Items Loadings	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Generic Skills		5.63	0.72	0.9
Dealing with new problem	0.77			
Analytic skill	0.77			
Problem solving skill	0.75			

Critical thinking	0.74			
Teamwork	0.68			
Organizational skill	0.66			
Planning skill	0.64			
Creativity	0.6			
Spoken communication	0.55			
Factor 2: Technical Skills		5.54	0.83	0.85
Reading	0.8			
Vocabulary	0.8			
Listening	0.75			
Grammar	0.71			
Writing	0.66			
Research	0.55			

6.6 Correlation and Regression Analyses

Before the mediational analysis, which was the main analysis of the study, was conducted, some preliminary analyses were conducted. First, Pearson-Correlation analysis was conducted with the newly formed factors discussed in the section above as the variables, which were Good Teaching, Appropriate Workload, Emphasis on Independence, Goals and Assessment, Institutional and Personal Factors, Behavioral, Cognitive, and Emotional Engagement, and Technical and Generic Skills. Table 7.7 below shows the correlation matrix reflecting the relationships among these 11 variables.

Good Teaching had a positive relationship with both Technical ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$) and Generic Skills ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that good teaching led to the acquisition of both technical and generic skills. Emphasis on Independence was also positively related to both Technical ($r = 0.24$, $p < .01$) and Generic Skills ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$). In this context, it means that when students were made to become independent learners, it was likely that they would acquire both technical and generic skills well. Appropriate Workload was shown to be negatively related to technical skills ($r = -0.17$, $p < 0.01$) but not generic skills ($r = -0.1$, $p > 0.05$). This

Table 6.7 Correlation Matrix

	GT	IN	WL	GA	IF	PF	Beh	Emo	Cog	Tech
IN	0.49**									
WL	-0.09	-0.07								
GA	-0.25**	-0.11*	0.25**							
IF	0.54**	0.47**	-0.01	-0.12*						
PF	0.55**	0.28**	-0.09	-0.16**	0.34*					
Beh	0.38**	0.25**	-0.06	-0.23**	0.165**	0.45**				
Emo	0.58**	0.37**	-0.35**	-0.25**	0.351**	0.49**	0.49**			
Cog	0.45**	0.35**	-0.07	-0.11*	0.245**	0.36**	0.59**	0.54**		
Tech	0.44**	0.24**	-0.17**	-0.12*	0.216**	0.46**	0.47**	0.47**	0.46**	
Gen	0.59**	0.42**	-0.10	-0.2**	0.412**	0.49**	0.49**	0.51**	0.49**	0.64**

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*
GT = Good Teaching, IN = Emphasis on Independence, WL = Appropriate Workload, GA = Goals and Assessment, IF = Institutional Factors, PF = Personal Factors, Beh = Behavioral Engagement, Emo = Emotional Engagement, Cog = Cognitive Engagement, Tech = Technical Skills, Gen = Generic Skills

result suggests that when students perceived workload to be inappropriate, they would not learn technical skills well. Goal and Assessment was reported to have negative relationship with both technical ($r = -0.12$, $p < 0.05$) and generic skills ($r = 0.2$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that when

students felt that the goals of the course were not clear and that the assessment was not appropriate, it was likely that they would not learn either technical or generic skills well. Institutional Factors were found to be positively related to both technical ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$) and generic skills ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$). The result suggests that positive institutional factors would lead to acquisition of both technical and generic skills. Personal Factors also had positive association with both technical ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$) and generic skills ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.01$). The result suggests that positive personal factors would facilitate acquisition of both technical and generic skills. All the engagement variables showed positive correlation with both technical and generic skills, $r = 0.47$ and $r = 0.49$ for behavioral, $r = 0.47$ and $r = 0.51$ for emotional, and $r = 0.46$ and $r = 0.49$ for cognitive, $p < 0.01$. This result indicated that the more students engage in their learning (behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively), the higher chance is for them to acquire employability skills.

Multiple regression analyses were then conducted with Good Teaching, Emphasis on Independence, Appropriate Workload, Goals and Appropriate Assessment, and Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement. Multiple regression analysis is used to determine the overall fit of a model, i.e., how much variance is explained by the predicting variables. This analysis technique also allows researchers to examine the relative contribution of each of the predicting variables to the total variance explained of the outcome variable (Field, 2018). The first regression analysis in this study was conducted with Technical Skills as the outcome variable. The model explained 39.7% of the variance of Technical Skills, $R^2 = 0.397$, $p < 0.001$. An examination of predicting power of each predicting variable revealed that Behavioral Engagement ($\beta = 0.197$, $p < 0.01$), Cognitive Engagement ($\beta = 0.182$, $p < 0.01$), Personal Factors ($\beta = 0.187$, $p < 0.01$), and Good Teaching ($\beta = 0.176$, $p < 0.01$) explained the largest variance of

Technical skills, while Appropriate Workload (β = -0.125, p < 0.01) still had a significant negative effect on Technical Skills even after controlling for the other predicting variables. The other predictors became statistically non-significant in this regression model.

Table 6.8 Regression Analysis with Technical Skills as the Outcome Variable

	B	Std. Error	β	t
GT	.219	.079	.176**	2.767
IN	-.052	.048	-.055	-1.077
WL	-.097	.036	-.125**	-2.699
GA	.050	.046	.049	1.083
IF	-.038	.049	-.040	-.781
PF	.222	.063	.187**	3.524
Beh	.222	.063	.197**	3.534
Emo	.115	.068	.105	1.691
Cog	.239	.076	.182**	3.159

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
GT = Good Teaching, IN = Emphasis on Independence, WL = Appropriate Workload, GA = Goals and Assessment, IF = Institutional Factors, PF = Personal Factors, Beh = Behavioral Engagement, Emo = Emotional Engagement, Cog = Cognitive Engagement, Tech = Technical Skills, Gen = Generic Skills

The second regression analysis in this study was conducted with Technical Skills as the outcome variable. The model explained 49.7% of the variance of Technical Skills, $R^2 = 0.497$, $p < 0.001$. An examination of predicting power of each predicting variable revealed that Good Teaching (β = 0.259, p < 0.01) and Behavioral Engagement (β = 0.218, p < 0.01) were the most influential predictors, while Cognitive Engagement (β = 0.18, p < 0.01) and Personal Factors (β = 0.126, p < 0.01) also remained statistically significant after controlling for the other predictors. All the other predictors became non-significant.

In summary, both regression analyses indicated that after controlling for the other predictors, only Good Teaching and Behavioral Engagement showed the largest influence on

Table 6.9 Regression Analysis with Generic Skills as the Outcome Variable

	B	Std. Error	β	t
GT	.262	.059	.259**	4.396
IN	.057	.036	.073	1.553
WL	-.023	.027	-.037	-.867
GA	-.011	.034	-.013	-.311
IF	.046	.037	.059	1.241
PF	.122	.047	.126**	2.594
Beh	.198	.047	.218**	4.184
Emo	.023	.051	.026	.446
Cog	.191	.056	.180**	3.390

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
GT = Good Teaching, IN = Emphasis on Independence, WL = Appropriate Workload, GA = Goals and Assessment, IF = Institutional Factors, PF = Personal Factors, Beh = Behavioral Engagement, Emo = Emotional Engagement, Cog = Cognitive Engagement, Tech = Technical Skills, Gen = Generic Skills

both Technical and Generic Skills. This suggests that good teaching and positive behavioral engagement leads to the acquisition of both technical and generic skills. Cognitive Engagement and Personal Factors also remained statistically significant in both analyses although its effect was not as large as that of Behavioral Engagement. This also means that positive cognitive engagement and personal factors lead to the acquisition of both technical and generic skills. On the other hand, Appropriate Workload had a significant negative effect on Technical Skills but no significant effect on Generic skills, suggesting that the perception that the workload is not appropriate leads to the poor acquisition of technical skills. All the other predictors were not shown to have statistically significant effect on either Technical or Generic Skills, after controlling for the other predicting variables.

6.7 Mediational Analyses

One mediational analysis using the PROCESS procedure was conducted for each predicting variable and each outcome variable via all the three mediating variables. The first mediation analysis was conducted with Good Teaching as the predicting variable, Technical Skills as the outcome variable, and all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) as the mediators. The hypothesis for this mediational analysis was that good teaching should affect the acquisition of technical skills through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Statistically, the main aim of the analysis was to test whether the indirect path from Good Teaching to Technical Skills was significantly different from zero. The indirect effect was tested with a percentile bootstrap estimation approach composed of 5,000 samples and at 95% Confidence Interval (CI), conducted with the PROCESS macro Version 3.5 (Hayes, 2017).

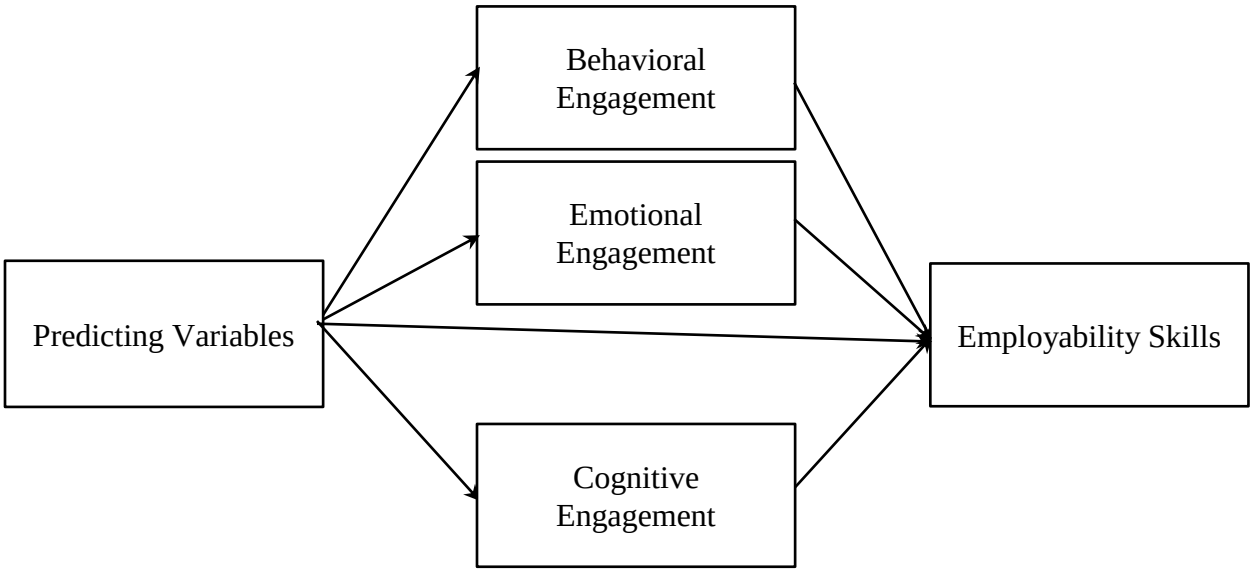

Figure 6.1 *Proposed Model to be Tested for the Direct and Indirect Effects of Predicting Variables on Employability Skills through Engagement*

6.8 Technical Skills as the Outcome Variable

6.8.1 Effects of good teaching on technical skills

The result from the analysis showed that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Good Teaching on Technical Skills. The total effect of Good Teaching on Technical Skills was 0.559, $p < 0.01$, and the direct effect was 0.213, $p < 0.01$. The total indirect effect, which derived from the subtraction of the direct effect from the total effect, was 0.346 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.248 to 0.454, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of specific indirect effects indicated that all the indirect paths from Good Teaching to Technical Skills through all the three engagement variables were statistically different from zero, with the effect through the Behavioral Engagement at 0.11 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.044 to 0.186, through the Emotional Engagement at 0.139 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.051 to 0.247, and through the Cognitive Engagement at 0.97 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.01 to 0.188. This result revealed that Good Teaching affected Technical Skills via Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement. To put it simply, good teaching leads to active behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which then results in the acquisition of technical skills.

6.8.2 Effects of emphasis on independence on technical skills

The same analysis process was conducted to examine the effects of Emphasis on Independence on Technical Skills. The result from the analysis also indicated that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Emphasis on Independence on Technical Skills. The total effect of Emphasis on Independence on Technical Skills was 0.216, $p < 0.01$, and the direct effect was -0.005, $p > 0.05$. The total indirect effect

was 0.221 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.15 to 0.301, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of specific indirect effects indicated that all the indirect paths from Emphasis on Independence to Technical Skills through all the three engagement variables were statistically different from zero, with the effect through the Behavioral Engagement at 0.059 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.021 to 0.108, through the Emotional Engagement at 0.095 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.046 to 0.156, and through the Cognitive Engagement at 0.067 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.02 to 0.122. This result revealed that Emphasis on Independence affected Technical Skills via Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement. To put it simply, teachers' endeavor to make students become independent learners inspire active behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in students, which then leads to the acquisition of technical skills.

6.8.3 Effects of appropriate workload on technical skills

The next mediational analysis was conducted to examine the effects of Appropriate Workload on Technical Skills. The result from the analysis also indicated that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Appropriate Workload on Technical Skills. The total effect of Appropriate Workload on Technical Skills was -0.15, $p < 0.01$, and the direct effect was -0.08, $p < 0.05$. The total indirect effect was -0.07 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.13 to -0.013, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of specific indirect effects indicated that only the indirect path via Emotional Engagement was significantly different from zero at -0.057 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.099 to -0.021. The indirect effect via Behavioral Engagement was -0.007 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.036 to 0.017 and via Cognitive Engagement was -.008 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.033 to 0.012, which contained zero. This result revealed that Appropriate Workload negatively affected Technical Skills via Emotional Engagement. To put it simply, students' perception that the

workload is not appropriate or too difficult will discourage them emotionally, and this leads to poor acquisition of technical skills. There was not sufficient evidence to show that the perception of whether the workload was appropriate affected the acquisition of technical skills through behavioral or cognitive engagement.

6.8.4 Effects of goals and appropriate assessment on technical skills

The last of the classroom factors was Goals and Appropriate Assessment, and a mediational analysis was conducted to examine its effect on Technical Skills. The result from the analysis also indicated that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Goals and Appropriate Assessment on Technical Skills. The total effect of Goals and Appropriate Assessment on Technical Skills was -0.133, $p < 0.05$, and the direct effect was -0.003, $p > 0.05$. The total indirect effect was -0.136 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.201 to -0.076, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of specific indirect effects indicated that only the indirect paths via Behavior and Emotional Engagement were significant different from zero at -0.049 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.084 to -0.018 and at -0.067 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.119 to -0.028, respectively. The indirect effect via Cognitive Engagement was -0.021 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.055 to 0.0004, which contained zero. This result revealed that Goals and Appropriate Assessment negatively affected Technical Skills via Behavioral and Emotional Engagement. To put it simply, students' perception that the goals are not clear and the assessment is not appropriate or too difficult will discourage them from actively engaging behaviorally and emotionally, and this leads to poor acquisition of technical skills. There was not sufficient evidence to show that the perception of whether the goals were clear or the assessment was appropriate affected the cognitive engagement of students, i.e. the way they thought.

6.8.5 Effects of institutional factors on technical skills

According to Kahu (2013), apart from classroom factors, institutional factors also exert influence on engagement and then on the learning outcomes, so institutional factors were put into the mediational analysis. The result from the analysis showed that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Institutional Factors on Technical Skills. The total effect of Institutional Factors on Technical Skills was 0.199, $p < 0.01$, and the direct effect was 0.018, $p > 0.05$. The total indirect effect, which derived from the subtraction of the direct effect from the total effect, was 0.18 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.115 to 0.255, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of specific indirect effects indicated that all the indirect paths from Institutional Factors to Technical Skills through all the three engagement variables were statistically different from zero, with the effect through the Behavioral Engagement at 0.04 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.009 to 0.084, through the Emotional Engagement at 0.088 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.042 to 0.147, and through the cognitive engagement at 0.052 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.014 to 0.101. This result revealed that Institutional Factors affected Technical Skills via Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement. To put it simply, positive institutional factors (such as good curriculum and positive culture, policies, and environment) tend to lead to active behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which then results in the acquisition of technical skills.

6.8.6 Effects of Personal Factors on Technical Skills

Following Kahu's (2013) framework, this study includes personal factors (such as students' interest, perception of the usefulness of a course, and ability to build relationship with their teachers) the mediational analysis, as these factors exert influence on engagement and then the learning outcomes. The result from the analysis showed that taken as a set, all the three

engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Personal Factors on Technical Skills. The total effect of Personal Factors on Technical Skills was 0.556, $p < 0.01$, and the direct effect was 0.269, $p < 0.01$. The total indirect effect, which derived from the subtraction of the direct effect from the total effect, was 0.287 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.2 to 0.384, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of specific indirect effects indicated that all the indirect paths from Personal Factors to Technical Skills through all the three engagement variables were statistically different from zero, with the effect through the Behavioral Engagement at 0.093 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.019 to 0.174, through the Emotional Engagement at 0.11 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.039 to 0.189, and through the cognitive engagement at 0.083 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.023 to 0.152. This result revealed that Personal Factors affected Technical Skills via Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement. To put it simply, positive personal factors (such as students' interest, perception of the usefulness of a course, and ability to build relationships with their teachers) tend to lead to active behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which then results in the acquisition of technical skills.

6.9 Generic Skills as the Outcome Variable

6.9.1 Effects of good teaching on generic skills

The first mediational analysis to be conducted was the one with Good Teaching as the predicting variable and Generic Skills as the outcome variable. The result from the analysis indicated that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Good Teaching on Generic Skills. The total effect of Good Teaching on Generic Skills was 0.58, $p < 0.01$, and the direct effect was 0.345, $p > 0.01$. The total indirect effect was 0.235 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.162 to 0.322, which was significantly different from zero. An

examination of specific indirect effects indicated that only the indirect paths via Behavior and Cognitive Engagement were significant different from zero at 0.092 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.043 to 0.155 and at 0.09 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.032 to 0.16, respectively. The indirect effect via Emotional Engagement was 0.052 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.011 and 0.122, which contained zero. This result revealed that Good Teaching positively affected Generic Skills via Behavioral and Cognitive Engagement. To put it simply, good quality of teaching will make students engage behaviorally and cognitively, and this leads to the acquisition of generic skills. There was not sufficient evidence to show that good teaching affected the acquisition of generic skills through emotional engagement.

6.9.2 Effects of emphasis on independence on technical skills

The same analysis process was conducted to examine the effects of Emphasis on Independence on Generic Skills. The result from the analysis also indicated that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Emphasis on Independence on Generic Skills. The total effect of Emphasis on Independence on Generic Skills was 0.306, $p < 0.01$, and the direct effect was 0.141, $p > 0.05$. The total indirect effect was 0.165 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.106 to 0.23, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of specific indirect effects indicated that all the indirect paths from Emphasis on Independence to Generic Skills through all the three engagement variables were statistically different from zero, with the effect through the Behavioral Engagement at 0.05 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.018 to 0.092, through the Emotional Engagement at 0.057 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.019 to 0.099, and through the Cognitive Engagement at 0.058 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.021 to 0.103. This result revealed that Emphasis on Independence affected Generic Skills via

Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement. To put it simply, teachers' endeavor to make students become independent learners inspire active behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in students, which then leads to the acquisition of generic skills.

6.9.3 Effects of appropriate workload on generic skills

The next mediational analysis was conducted to examine the effects of Appropriate Workload on Generic Skills. The result from the analysis also indicated that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Appropriate Workload on Generic Skills. The total effect of Appropriate Workload on Generic Skills was -0.083, $p < 0.05$, and the direct effect was -0.008, $p > 0.05$. The total indirect effect was -0.075 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.131 to -0.017, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of specific indirect effects indicated that only the indirect path via Emotional Engagement was significantly different from zero at -0.051 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.092 to -0.019. The indirect effect via Behavioral Engagement was -0.011 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.036 to 0.008 and via Cognitive Engagement was -0.012 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.035 to 0.008, which contained zero. This result revealed that Appropriate Workload negatively affected Generic Skills via Emotional Engagement. To put it simply, students' perception that the workload is not appropriate or too difficult will discourage them emotionally, and this leads to poor acquisition of generic skills. There was not sufficient evidence to show that the perception of whether the workload was appropriate affected the acquisition of generic skills through behavioral or cognitive engagement.

6.9.4 Effects of goals and appropriate assessment on generic skills

The last of the classroom factors was Goals and Appropriate Assessment, and a mediational analysis was conducted to examine its effect on Generic Skills. The result from the analysis also indicated that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Goals and Appropriate Assessment on Generic Skills. The total effect of Goals and Appropriate Assessment on Generic Skills was -0.175, $p < 0.01$, and the direct effect was -0.056, $p > 0.05$. The total indirect effect was -0.118 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.175 to -0.068, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of specific indirect effects indicated that all the indirect paths from Goals and Appropriate Assessment to Generic Skills through all the three engagement variables were statistically different from zero, with the effect through the Behavioral Engagement at -0.044 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.074 to -0.018, through the Emotional Engagement at -0.048 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.087 to -0.018, and through the Cognitive Engagement at -0.027 and a 95% bootstrap CI of -0.059 to -0.004. This result revealed that Goals and Appropriate Assessment negatively affected Generic Skills via Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement. To put it simply, students' perception that the goals are not clear and the assessment is not appropriate or too difficult will discourage them from actively engaging behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively, and this leads to poor acquisition of generic skills.

6.9.5 Effects of institutional factors on generic skills

According to Kahu (2013), besides classroom factors, institutional factors also exert influence on engagement and then on the learning outcomes, so institutional factors were put into the mediational analysis. The result from the analysis showed that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Institutional

Factors on Generic Skills. The total effect of Institutional Factors on Generic Skills was 0.285, $p < 0.01$, and the direct effect was 0.154, $p < 0.01$. The total indirect effect, which derived from the subtraction of the direct effect from the total effect, was 0.132 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.077 to 0.192, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of specific indirect effects indicated that all the indirect paths from Institutional Factors to Generic Skills through all the three engagement variables were statistically different from zero, with the effect through the Behavioral Engagement at 0.034 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.008 to 0.071, through the Emotional Engagement at 0.049 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.017 to 0.09, and through the cognitive engagement at 0.048 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.019 to 0.089. This result revealed that Institutional Factors affected Generic Skills via Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement. To put it simply, positive institutional factors (such as good curriculum and positive culture, policies, and environment) tend to lead to active behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which then results in the acquisition of generic skills.

6.9.6 Effects of personal factors on generic skills

Based on Kahu (2013), besides classroom factors and institutional factors, personal factors (such as students' interest, perception of the usefulness of a course, and ability to build relationship with their teachers) also exert influence on engagement and then on the learning outcomes, so personal factors were put into the mediational analysis. The result from the analysis showed that taken as a set, all the three engagement variables (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) mediated the effect of Personal Factors on Generic Skills. The total effect of Personal Factors on Generic Skills was 0.474, $p < 0.01$, and the direct effect was 0.227, $p < 0.01$. The total indirect effect, which derived from the subtraction of the direct effect from the total effect, was 0.248 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.179 to 0.323, which was significantly different from zero. An examination of

specific indirect effects indicated that all the indirect paths from Personal Factors to Generic Skills through all the three engagement variables were statistically different from zero, with the effect through the Behavioral Engagement at 0.082 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.025 to 0.149, through the Emotional Engagement at 0.076 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.022 to 0.138, and through the cognitive engagement at 0.09 and a 95% bootstrap CI of 0.043 to 0.142. This result reveals that Personal Factors affected Generic Skills via Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement. To put it simply, positive personal factors (such as students' interest, perception of the usefulness of a course, and ability to build relationships with their teachers) tend to lead to active behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which results in the acquisition of generic skills.

6.10 Summary

Table 7.10 summarizes the main findings on mediational analyses conducted with Classroom factors (Good Teaching, Emphasis on Independence, Appropriate Workload, and Goals and Assessment), Personal and Institutional factors as the predictors, student engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) as the mediators, and employability skills (technical and generic) as the outcome variables.

Table 6.10 Mediation of Effects of All the Predicting Variables on Technical and Generic Skills via Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagement

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Good Teaching on Technical Skills					Good Teaching on Generic Skills			
Dir	.213	.067	.081	.345	.345	.050	.248	.443
Indir	.346	.053	.248	.454	.235	.041	.162	.322
Beh	.11	.037	.044	.186	.092	.029	.043	.155
Emo	.139	.051	.045	.247	.052	.034	-.011	.122 *(ns)*
Cog	.097	.045	.010	.188	.090	.033	.032	.16
Emph on Independence on Technical Skills					Emph on Independence on Generic Skills			
Dir	-.005	.045	-.095	.084 *(ns)*	.141	.035	.073	.209
Indir	.221	.038	.15	.301	.165	.032	.106	.23
Beh	.059	.022	.021	.108	.05	.019	.018	.092
Emo	.095	.028	.046	.156	.057	.021	.019	.099
Cog	.067	.026	.02	.122	.058	.021	.021	.103
Appropriate Workload on Technical Skills					Appropriate Workload on Generic Skills			
Dir	-.082	.036	-.153	-.011	-.008	.028	-.064	.047 *(ns)*
Indir	-.072	.03	-.13	-.014	-.075	.029	-.131	-.017
Beh	-.007	.013	-.036	.017 *(ns)*	-.011	.011	-.036	.008 *(ns)*
Emo	-.057	.02	-.099	-.021	-.051	.019	-.092	-.019
Cog	-.008	.011	-.033	.012	-.012	.011	-.035	.008 *(ns)*

Goals and Assessment on Technical Skills					Goals and Assessment on Generic Skills			
Dir	.003	.046	-.087	.093 *(ns)*	-.056	.035	-.126	.014 *(ns)*
Indir	-.136	.032	-.201	-.076	-.118	.028	-.175	-.068
Beh	-.049	.017	-.084	-.018	-.044	.015	-.074	-.018
Emo	-.066	.023	-.119	-.028	-.048	.018	-.087	-.018
Cog	-.021	.014	-.055	-.0004	-.027	.014	-.059	-.004
Institutional Factors on Technical Skills					Institutional Factors on Generic Skills			
Dir	.018	.044	-.069	.105 *(ns)*	.154	.034	.088	.220
Indir	.181	.036	.113	.255	.132	.03	.077	.192
Beh	.040	.020	.009	.086	.034	.016	.008	.071
Emo	.088	.028	.041	.149	.049	.019	.017	.09
Cog	.052	.022	.014	.101	.048	.018	.019	.089
Personal Factors on Technical Skills					Personal Factors on Generic Skills			
Dir	.269	.059	.153	.385	.154	.034	.088	.220
Indir	.287	.047	.2	.384	.248	.036	.179	.323
Beh	.093	.039	.019	.174	.082	.031	.025	.149
Emo	.11	.038	.039	.189	.076	.030	.022	.138
Cog	.083	.033	.023	.152	.09	.026	.043	.142

Note: BootSE = Bootstrap Standard Error, BootLLCI = Bootstrap Lower Limit Confidence Interval, BootULCI = Bootstrap Upper Limit Confidence Interval, Dir = Direct effect, Indir =

Total indirect effect, Beh = Behavioral Engagement, Emo = Emotional Engagement, Cog = Cognitive Engagement, ns = non-significant

The findings of this survey showed that good teaching led to increased student behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which resulted in the acquisition of technical skills, while this same predictor affected only behavioral and cognitive engagement, which facilitated the acquisition of generic skills. On the one hand, emphasis on independence, personal and institutional factors all could increase the level of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, which then led to the acquisition of both technical and generic skills. On the other hand, when students felt that the goals and assessment of the course were not appropriate, they would have low behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, and this led to poor acquisition of both technical and generic skills. Lastly, when students felt that the workload of the course was not appropriate, they would have low emotional and cognitive engagement, and this led to poor acquisition of both technical skills, while inappropriate workload negatively affected only cognitive engagement, which then resulted in poor acquisition of generic skills.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the development of employability skills in light of the concepts of curriculum development, curriculum revision, and student engagement. The processes of curriculum development and revision involve consideration of various factors at different levels (Khan & Law, 2015; O'Neil, 2015). International and national contexts, such as the demand for skills in the international and national labor markets, are seen as environmental factors that play a role in influencing curriculum development and revision. Curriculum implementation involves teaching and learning at the classroom level. This study employs the student engagement concept to explain curriculum implementation, as student engagement is assumed to reflect students' learning. Chapters 5–7 depict the findings from the present study based on perspectives and experiences from the three main stakeholder groups (i.e., managers, faculty members, and students/graduates), in conjunction with a statistical model to test for the mediation among various variables with the use of the quantitative approach. This chapter continues the discussion but focuses on the issue of employability skills development through curriculum development and revision and student engagement based on main themes derived from the findings chapters. Employed as a guide for the discussion are the three simplified research questions: (1) why is employability skills development the focus in the curriculum development and revision? (2) How does the management team ensure the delivery and acquisition of employability skills? (3) How are employability skills taught? Information from the literature review, semi-structured interviews, document analysis and survey is put together to inform the discussion presented in this chapter.

7.2 Curriculum Development and Revision and Employability Skills

7.2.1 External influence on employability skills development

Chapter 5 has revealed how employability skills development has become an emphasis in curriculum development and revision of the DoE of a renowned university in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The analysis presented in Chapter 5 has indicated that the inclusion of employability derived from the consideration of various factors at international, national, and institutional levels, consistent with the theoretical assumption of curriculum development as suggested by Khan and Law (2015) and O'Neil (2015). In the study, the English curriculum was examined for its ability to equip students with both English proficiency and employability skills. The curriculum was originally designed by Australian experts to provide English teacher training because of the surge in the demand of English proficiency in the labor market as international aids, donation and investment were bringing international organizations and companies to Cambodia. That was a giant leap in curriculum development in Cambodia at that time and an excellent stepping stone for shaping a well-wrought curriculum.

The curriculum was revised later based on the need for diversifying skills in the labor market inasmuch as skill gap and skill mismatch have transpired after the massification and privatization of higher education (Peou, 2017). The emergence of the discourse on the 4C skills (i.e., communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity) of the 21st century skills as a result of information gathering with DoE alumni who were holding major positions in the private sector has indicated the significant roles played by national and foreign companies to influence the decision for curriculum revision. This signals the influence of external stakeholders, especially employers, on the decision to specifically and explicitly incorporate employability skills in higher education (Sam & Dahles, 2017; Nghia, 2018).

The results of the present study echo Bridges (2000) who notes that universities have received external pressure to contribute to boosting workforce skills and competences, pushing employability skills onto the curriculum agenda. Likewise, these findings are also in alignment with the concept of economization of education, in which education is asserted to serve a salient role in economic development and in which globalization is stated to exert influence on national education policy (Dale, 1999, 2005; Morris, 2015).

7.2.2 Validation of employability skills

One of the main gaps in literature the present research proposed to fill in was to validate a set of employability skills. Existing literature shows many models of employability frameworks, but not many of them are supported by empirical research. In the present study, the participants were asked about what employability skills the DoE equipped students with. The list was then validated through a principal-component factor analysis (Chapter 7), of which the result has shown that employability skills are composed of two distinct factors: technical skills and generic skills (Table 7.6). Dealing with new problem, analytic skill, problem solving skill, critical thinking, teamwork, organizational skill, planning skill, creativity, and spoken communication loaded nicely in the category of the generic skill factors. The category of technical skill factors include reading, vocabulary, listening, grammar, writing, and research, all of which are taught explicitly in the bachelor of English program at DoE.

Communication skill is a popular skill that appears in most of the literature on employability skills, but, in the present study, only spoken communication loaded on the list of generic skill factors, while written communication loaded on both lists of the generic skills and technical skills factors. This is not surprising that written communication were considered to be both technical and generic skills. Although general communication skill is considered a generic

skill in the present case, writing is taught in a stand-alone course, making it also a technical skill in the bachelor of English program. In another case, general knowledge also loaded on both technical and generic skills. Similar to the case of written communication, general knowledge is also generally considered a generic skill. Yet this skill is taught explicitly in Global Studies and thus was deemed a main course in the bachelor of English program.

7.2.3 Implicit and explicit teaching of employability skills

As suggested by O'Neil (2015), international and national factors affect curriculum development and revision. In addition to these macro-level factors, curriculum developers also need to consider what pedagogical strategies are appropriate for employability skills development, before the actual curriculum implementation (Khan & Law, 2015). Findings about implicit teaching by embedding skills in the curriculum has shown signs of success, as students stated they were able to acquire a number of employability skills (see Chapter 5). The move to explicit teaching was made by the DoE because of the pressure from the labor market of the supposed lack of 4Cs of 21st century skills. This is a mechanical reaction from the DoE management who lack access to scientifically informed evidence for their decision, but the management has also pointed out that some of the lecturers do not understand well the embedded skills intended to be taught to the students. Given this reason, the management showed concern over whether the target employability skills were effectively delivered and corresponding actions were taken.

This move has then resulted in the introduction of an integrative approach with a combination of implicit and explicit teaching of employability skills. This is actually supported by a study by Cranmer (2006) who argues that employability skills can be taught implicitly with the skills embedded into courses or explicitly in stand-alone courses. Literature has revealed different takes on implicit and explicit teaching. The advocates of implicit teaching and learning

argue that a deliberately fostered culture or interaction, without the need to explicitly inform students of what they learn, can already shape future behaviors of students (Alsubaie, 2015). In other words, putting students to work in groups in classes already equips students with adequate knowledge and skills to manage peer relationships and teamwork roles when they enter the workplace (Fraser et al., 2019).

However, the supporters of explicit teaching raise their arguments otherwise. In her book "A Connected Curriculum for Higher Education", Fung (2017) opines that all programs should enable students to become explicitly cognizant of what knowledge and skills they learn, so that they can use those knowledge and skills for professional work and for their future lives in the society. Moreover, if the teacher did not assign marks to a task, students would not put adequate effort on it (Bedwell et al., 2014). This suggests that students tend not to pay attention to skills that are taught implicitly and thus they do not acquire those skills.

Apart from considering whether employability skills should be taught implicitly or explicitly, curriculum developers also need to consider the appropriate teaching pedagogy to be employed for teaching employability skills. Findings of the current study indicated that the DoE management preferred the student-centered approach to the teacher-centered approach (see Chapter 4). This influenced the way DoE lecturers taught and the way DoE students learned, and this will be discussed in more detail in the section below, in conjunction with other departmental factors that influence curriculum implementation.

7.3 How to Ensure the Delivery of Employability Skills

This section discusses mechanisms that are put in place to ensure employability skills development. As shown in Figure 2.4 in Chapter 2, which explains the theoretical assumptions of curriculum development, revision, and implementation, the management team plays leadership

and management roles to ensure the implementation of the curriculum after it has been developed and revised. As discussed in Chapter 5, the management team tries to involve the faculty members in some major decision making. The management team involves the faculty in curriculum revision, allowing them to express their voices in such change. Involving faculty has been shown to enhance students' learning outcomes as well as to empower lecturers in important areas (Crowther et al., 2000, cited in Jacobson, 2011). Practically, the management team does not possess expertise in all the areas in the curriculum, so they need to involve lecturers who have practical teaching experience as well as expertise in each area to help make decision on curriculum revision.

The DoE management team forms leadership roles for lecturers to volunteer to participate in micro-management on each subject of study, thereby sharing and delegating responsibility to lecturers. These groups of lecturers then discuss with their peers within each subject of study to evaluate each course, and later make suggestions on what revision to make. Subsequently, the management team works with lecturers to examine these changes and adjust the curriculum accordingly. This is an example of how lecturers are allowed to participate in major decisions in curriculum revision. Allowing the chance for lecturers to take part in important decisions and promoting open communication is a form of effective leadership (Bryman, 2007). At the same time, ensuring involvement of lecturers in curriculum revision is a way to ensure willingness to participate in curriculum change as lecturers are the implementers of the change. In so doing, lecturers can feel senses of ownership and responsibility when implementing curriculum revision.

Apart from allowing lecturers' voices in curriculum revision for smooth curriculum implementation, the DoE management team performed management roles directly and indirectly.

The direct management involves formal student evaluation of teaching and teaching observation, while indirect management involves development of curriculum and extra-curricular activities, fostering culture of diligence among students, and the recruitment of students and faculty members. The present study shows that the student evaluation of teaching can be conducted to monitor the delivery of the program goals by the faculty staff. To validate and make the student evaluation more effective, the DoE management conflates student evaluation of teaching with teaching observation as instruments to gauge teaching performance. This is a way to enhance the mutual validity of both instruments. Moreover, the results obtained from the teaching observation and student evaluation are used for formative purposes in order to provide feedback to lecturers of the positive and negative aspects of their teaching, not as punitive measures. This is an adaptive practice to monitor teaching performance, supported by Ratele (2006). This non-threatening use of teaching observation and student evaluation of teaching is the reason why the participating lecturers have reported they have adequate support from and positive relationship with the management team.

In addition to teaching observation and student evaluation, the mechanism employed to ensure adaptive institutional factors is also important. The quantitative data analysis has revealed that positive institutional factors render active engagement from students in their learning and this leads on to the acquisition of both technical and generic skills. Institutional factors in this case include peer diligence on learning, curriculum, departmental culture and environment. From the qualitative data analysis, institutional factors include the quality of the faculty staff, rules and regulations, and assessment. From the quantitative data analysis, institutional factors include peer characteristics, departmental curriculum, culture, and environment. These findings are consistent with the those of previous studies, which show that student engagement and learning outcomes—

as employability skills in the present study—are influenced by institutional factors, such as curriculum and assessment (Barnett & Coate, 2005), structural characteristics and campus culture (Pascarella, 1985), and course design (Farrel & Brunton, 2020).

The present study assumes that active engagement induces employability skills development. This assumption leads me to make five observations, which show how favorable institutional factors facilitate active engagement. First, the curriculum is designed to incorporate various courses to achieve similar ends. For example, "Core English" is to teach English directly, "Global Studies" is to teach English in context, and "Literature Studies" is to teach English through literary stories and classics. All of these courses teach English directly through reading, grammar and vocabulary lessons and exercises. Moreover, in these courses, students read and then work in groups to discuss answers to grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension questions, analyze characters and plots in stories and connect them to real life, debate on various issues from reading texts, and collaborate to answer critical thinking and application-based questions. Hence, all of these courses teach not only English proficiency, but also essential generic skills such as critical reading, critical thinking, analytic skills, and collaboration.

Second, careful recruitment of students ensures diligence and competitiveness among students. All students have to go through a stringent entrance exam to be admitted into the program at the DoE. The DoE is metaphorically seen as Harvard in Bachelor's Degree in English program in Cambodia. Thus, most of the students who apply to study there are among the top in the country. As a result, they possess good learning habits and strategies and passion for learning, and this has established an adaptive learning environment that is conducive to learning and that encourages students to try hard in their learning. This is supported by the study by Sullivan et al. (2006), who suggested that the learning environment can affect the level of student

engagement. In other words, if students were put in an environment where students displayed indifference to their study, they would not put enough effort in their study, whereas if they were put in a diligent and competitive environment, students would also become diligent and competitive. Students would try hard and persevere in their learning if they were put in an environment where their peers were assiduous learners.

Third, the recruitment of the faculty staff is even more important than the recruitment of students. Teacher recruitment is very important, as recruiting qualified teachers would strongly affect students' learning outcomes, and strong collegiality and university culture and environment would maintain teachers' commitment to teaching and a high retention rate (Krasnoff, 2014). Lecturer recruitment at the DoE has been shown to be effective, as many talented DoE alumni want to join the DoE as lecturers. The present study has shown that recruiting alumni has several advantages. The DoE is a well-regarded English department in Cambodia, and it has a strong curriculum, which develops students' English proficiency and which equips students with knowledge of teaching methodology, and thus students who graduate from the bachelor of TEFL program at the DoE possess adequate ability to teach without going through pre-service teacher training. More importantly, as alumni, these DoE lecturers demonstrate good understanding of the institutional culture and environment, and they know each other well. These promoted a strong collegiality among their faculty members, with which faculty staff were willing to help each other, share teaching materials and experience and collaborate in developing teaching and research materials. Besides, being familiar with the culture, environment and people at the DoE allows these DoE lecturers to effectively collaborate with newly recruited recruits and senior staff members.

Many researchers have argued against recruiting alumni as lecturers, a term called academic inbreeding or termed neutrally as homegrown academics (Horta et al., 2022). The major drawbacks of homegrown academics include a lack of mobility, support of status quo, nepotism, particularism, and parochialism, a lack of input of new ideas, and a low research productivity (Altbach et al., 2015). However, as mentioned in the same research (Altbach et al., 2015; Horta et al., 2022), homegrown academics possess a strong alma mater identity, have good relationship with the senior faculty, and understand the institutional culture well. In the case the present research, the sampled department does not intentionally recruit its graduate. This has to go back to the history of the department. At the beginning, the department was under an aid from the Australia government, who set out to initiate and develop an English education program at the department to respond to the surge in the demand for English language. Also, the Australian experts were sent to train Cambodian academics so that they had adequate capacity to operate the program once the project expired. The norm of recruiting graduates has started from there. The scenario in the sample department is consistent with the work of Altbach et al. (2015), who stated that some countries do not have sufficient national labor market for academic jobs. Padilla (2008) also mentioned the historical and cultural tradition as a valid reason for academic inbreeding. The DoE has produced the most qualified graduates for teaching positions, and thus although the department always opens its vacancies for the general public, at the end only the DoE graduates were recruited based on their academic merits, clearly not because of nepotism.

Another important institutional factor that can enhance employability skills development is providing extra-curricular activities for students to engage beyond learning from classes. However, there was a conflict in perspectives on this issue. While the DoE management stated that they had been trying to provide many extra-curricular activities for their students, the

students and faculty staff reported that there were not adequate extracurricular activities and out-of-class activities, especially career development programs. The dearth of career development programs was in large part due to the lack of connection between universities and the labor market, a common phenomenon in higher education in Cambodia that can lead to irrelevance of knowledge and skills acquired by university students, skill mismatch and skill gaps (Chet, 2009; Khieng et al., 2015).

In the present study, all the participants acknowledged the importance of career development programs, such as volunteering and internship, as a way to equip students with necessary workplace skills. The findings on the benefits of career development programs are consistent with the literature on this topic (e.g., Jackson & Oliver, 2018; Knight & Yorke, 2003; Sumanasiri, Yajid & Khatibi, 2015). Nevertheless, what is different in the present study is that students in Cambodia promote their own employability by doing two different bachelor's degree programs at the same time. Notwithstanding, whether engaging in internship, volunteering, or two bachelor's degree programs, students encounter a number of obstacles that they struggle to overcome, such as time management, diversion of attention, and stress and pressure. Therefore, students should be careful when they decide to engage in these extra commitments in order to avoid underperforming in both academic and career development endeavors.

Despite students reporting their satisfaction of their study at DoE and their improvement of skills, all of these did not seem to come from DoE curriculum or management alone. In fact, there are many factors that contributes to DoE achievements as they are these days. First, the curriculum was already well-developed by Australian experts from the beginning when no other private English programs were in the country. DoE gained its competitive advantage from then, beating all the later competitions. DoE has a working and learning culture and environment that

is a heritage from the Australian system. They had a thorough recruitment of all the students and lecturers and because of its reputation, only top students and lecturers apply. DoE is at the top again in terms of talent recruitment in both the teaching staff and the students. Last but not least is the main weakness of DoE in its inability to connect with industry. Of course, DoE is a department and does not have much authority over industrial linkage, which is the job of the university. DoE fails to provide enough professional development for both its lecturing staff and students, who have to depend on their own means seeking for such opportunities for growth.

7.4 The Concept of Student Engagement

Curriculum implementation is reflected in the teaching and learning activities that occur on a daily basis. The current study employs the concept of student engagement to represent the teaching and learning activities. This study stands on the premise that active learning triggers active engagement, which then affects the acquisition of both technical and generic skills. As a result, the concept of student engagement constitutes the core of the examination in the present study. According to Kahu (2013), student engagement is the result of three main factors: institutional, classroom, and personal factors, while student engagement leads to the acquisition of employability skills as the learning outcomes. Before elaborating on the relationship between these variables and student engagement, it is necessary to understand the concept of student engagement. Student engagement contains many facets. The current study shows via principal component analysis that student engagement consists of three dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. This finding is consistent with the large amount of earlier research on the dimensions of student engagement (e.g., Estévez et al., 2021; Fredricks et al., 2004; Kahu, 2013; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Synthesizing data from interviews with the various groups of

participants, this study exemplifies the different forms (i.e., academic, social and professional) and degrees (i.e. from passive to active) of student engagement in the case program.

It is also important to examine the participants' perception of student engagement in relation to these three dimensions of the concept. When the faculty staff, students, and graduates were asked to define engagement, they usually described engagement as doing activities as assigned, listening and paying attention, and responding to questions. This description captures only the behavioral aspect of student engagement. This situation is understandable, since behavioral engagement is the most observable. In addition, many students spend a large amount of their energy conducting rituals, procedures, and routines without demonstrating much understanding of them (Newman, 1992). Another reason for why behavioral engagement is more commonly stated is due to the fact that behavioral engagement is implicitly seen as a proxy for emotional and cognitive engagement (Axelson & Flick, 2010). In fact, it is the conceptual complexity of student engagement itself that makes it difficult for laypeople to define, because, as Axelson and Flick (2010) noted, student engagement is "tangled semantically as well as conceptually" and "theoretically messy" (p. 41). However, the absence of emotional and cognitive engagement from the definitions provided by the participants does not mean that the students did not demonstrate any form of this engagement. In fact, they did mention emotional engagement as in the form of interest, fun, and boredom (a form of disengagement), and cognitive engagement such as engagement in critical thinking and application-based activities.

Besides the conceptual elements, the current study also reveals the levels of student engagement. Students do not simply engage fully or not engage at all, but they function at different levels of engagement (Schlechty, 2001, cited in Groccia, 2018). As examined in Chapter 6, this study follows this multilevel approach to student engagement and terms the

highest level “active engagement”. This type of engagement involves all the three dimensions of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. In other words, in a class in which students are actively engaged, students can be seen as behaviorally active, students have fun and enjoy the class, and they engage in the tasks and activities that require higher-order thinking. Higher-order thinking skills can be found in tasks that are conceptual or theoretical in scope (Jones & Palmer, 2017). Students display active engagement in active tasks such as role play, group discussion, debate, and application-based practices that require collaboration and higher-order thinking. Active engagement facilitates the acquisition of both technical and generic skills.

The lower level is “passive engagement”. Students engage in tasks that do not require higher-order thinking, strong emotion, or interaction with other students, such as doing gap filling or multiple-choice questions in grammar and vocabulary exercises, practicing drills, and listening to lectures. This study has shown that although these activities are a form of passive learning in nature, students still engage in these activities, as they believe these activities are useful to prepare them for tests. This finding on the different levels of engagement is consistent with the suggestion by Fredricks et al. (2004) suggestion about qualitative differences in the level of student engagement. Behavioral engagement ranges from doing tasks that follow the rules to involving in a student committee, while emotional engagement ranges from liking to identification with the institution, and cognitive engagement can be simple memorization ranging up to the use of cognitive strategies in learning for deep understanding and mastery. While passive engagement might enable students to learn content knowledge, it is counter-productive to the learning of generic skills.

This study also shows that engagement is composed of three main types: academic, social, and professional. Academic engagement involves students’ engagement in learning, and

this can take place in class or outside class. Social engagement happens when students interact with others, who can be their peers or teachers. Similar to academic engagement, social engagement can take place in class, such as working in groups and asking teachers questions, and outside class, such as participating in such university events as culture day and charity event (Zhoc et al., 2019). Finally, professional engagement usually takes place outside class, where students engage in career development programs, such as internship and volunteer work, from which students can practice employability skills and learn to build their network. All these types of engagement are very important for employability skills development. While academic and social engagement allow students to develop their academic and social employability skills, professional engagement allows students to learn practical, workplace employability skills and to transform academic and social employability skills into workplace employability skills.

Another significant finding from the current study is the dimensionality of the construct of employability skills. This research employs a mixed-method case study for providing freedom to the participants to express their perspectives regarding employability skills development in the Bachelor's degree of English at the DoE. Results from both the qualitative and quantitative studies have revealed the students and graduates acquired the employability skills they wanted from the English program at the DoE. Principal component analysis has revealed that employability skills contain two distinct constructs: technical and generic skills (see Table 7.1 below for details). These skills are academically oriented, as they are taught and practiced in the academic context. However, these academic skills also enable students to acquire the professionally oriented skills and adapt to the working environment fast.

Table 7.1 Employability Skills from Bachelor's Degree in English at Department of English

Employability Skills from Bachelor's Degree in English	
Technical Skills	**Generic Skills**
Reading	Dealing with new problem
Writing	Analytic skill
Listening	Problem solving skill
Grammar	Critical thinking
Vocabulary	Teamwork
Research	Organizational skill
	Planning skill
	Creativity
	Spoken communication

7.5 The Mediating Power of Student Engagement

The current study hypothesized that student engagement acted as a mediator to link the effect of various classroom, institutional, and personal factors on employability skills development (Kahu, 2013). As shown in existing research, active learning leads to active engagement, which is asserted to enhance employability skills development (e.g., Kember, 2009; Kember et al., 2007; McNeil et al., 2012; Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018). This study looked into three main factors that can trigger active engagement. One of the findings indicates that being a good teacher or good teaching is an important factor for active engagement. Information obtained from both the faculty staff and students and graduates reveals that good teaching involves two important elements: teaching competence and ability to build relationships with students (see Chapter 7).

This finding is further supported by the result from the quantitative data analysis in which "Good Teaching" that involved "teaching competence" and "ability to build a relationship with students" was one distinct construct distinguished from "Emphasis of Independence", "Appropriate Workload", and "Goals and Assessment".

Table 7.2 Items for Good Teaching Construct after Principal Component Analysis

1. My lecturers are good at explaining things to us.
2. My lecturers can make lessons simple to understand.
3. My lecturers are usually approachable and helpful.
4. My lecturers can build good relationship with students.
5. My lecturers here work hard to make subjects interesting.
6. My lecturers here often motivate students to do their best work.
7. My lecturers usually encourage students to do a lot of work in class rather than just listen to lectures.
8. My lecturers often make their classes fun.
9. My lecturers often make me aware of the knowledge we learn in class and how the knowledge is applied in practice.
10. My lecturers often make a real effort to understand difficulties students may be having with their work.

From the qualitative data, the teaching competence to render active engagement involves the ability to mobilize various techniques and materials in teaching, which are fun, interesting, and relevant to students, ability to provide clear instruction and explanation, ability to provide timely

feedback, and ability to induce interaction from students through various activities that require collaboration and higher-order thinking, rather than only rote learning, memorization, drills, and lectures. This finding is consistent with the definition provided by the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT), defining active learning as "a process whereby students engage in activities, such as reading, writing, discussion, or problem solving that promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class content" (CRLT, 2016, quoted in Jones & Palmer, 2017, p. 109). In addition, Columbia University (2016) explains that active learning means being mentally engaged, conducting hands-on tasks, and/or involving in discovery, inquiry, investigation, and interpretation.

Although literature has strongly supported active learning as beneficial for employability skills development (e.g., Kember, 2009; Kember et al., 2007; McNeil et al., 2012; Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018), Palmer and Jones (2017) warned against the utilization of the teaching method with disregard for the sort of teaching approaches students have encountered in their previous learning journey. It is advisable to try to steer away from excessively teacher-centered instruction. Nonetheless, teachers should seriously consider whether their students still need scaffolded tasks and well-functional support structures and whether their student-centered method, characterized by minimal guidance, really works with their students (Kirschner et al., 2006). This study has also shown that some students complain that they feel that their lecturers do not provide them with enough support and explanation because of the use of the student-centered approach.

As shown in Chapter 5, despite their overall preference for active learning, student-centered approach, both lecturers and students still prefer the teacher-centered approach in some occasions. Students believe that they can learn material better with lecturers' explanations, and

this will prepare them better for tests if the explanation is clear and skillfully delivered. Indeed, Scruggs (2009) has noted that students prefer the teacher-centered approach in performance-based classrooms and that this kind of teaching approach may produce higher overall student achievement. Tests and scores are definitely very important for students, and that is the reason why many students still prefer the teacher-centered approach, especially when it comes to test preparation.

This has brought concern as students still prefer the teacher-centered approach and rote learning. This inquiry-less teaching and learning environment can be a result from the education system designed during the time when Cambodia received a large influence from the Soviet Union and Vietnam. One of the main legacies from these systems is that the lecturers who had received training in Soviet and Vietnam had limited capacity for critical inquiry and international engagement, the two most important elements for Cambodia to make global competition for economic and educational powers (Oleksiyenko et al., 2018). Teachers are considered authoritative figures, so asking teachers questions might be seen as a challenge and thus rude. In this sense, students have become infantilized as students are expected to be spoon-fed with knowledge from their teachers without having to produce their own perspectives on such spoon-fed knowledge (Bataeva, 2019).

Encouraging active learning is conducive for employability skills development. While higher-order thinking is one characteristic of active learning, another important characteristic is students' collaboration in group work (Freeman et al., 2014). The result from the current study shows that group work is a common characteristic in learning at the DoE. In class, students work in groups for group discussion, games, debate, and group presentation and assignments, while outside class, students meet with their group members to discuss how to do their group

assignment and form ad hoc groups to help each other revise for semester exams. In this sense, students have the opportunity to work in both collaborative and competitive groups. The combination between collaboration and competition in groups has benefits that are supported by group work literature. Adding competition in collaborative group work can prepare students for professional programs (Attle & Baker, 2007). In a competitive environment, cooperation enables students to contribute to collective goals and this can exert very positive effect on student learning (Dyson & Grineski, 2001), while Tauer and Harackiewicz (2004) found that students improve their intrinsic motivation when working in a cooperative group with inter-group competition, which further leads to proliferated motivation, enjoyment, and performance.

Notwithstanding, it is worth noting that just putting students in a group does not make group work. In the present study, students reported that they did not receive proper support from their lecturers on how to work in groups. Actually, assigning students work in groups is not always effective when there appears a dearth in support and facilitation (Rafferty, 2013). Assigning group work with little or no preparation to assist students with how to complete the tasks in groups is actually problematic and may instead diminish learning opportunities for students. The finding from the current study also indicates that when working in groups, students usually encounter problems such as feeling of inferiority, conflict in ideas and time, and unequal contribution (see Chapter 6). These group work challenges are reiterated in Rafferty's (2013) study which examines students' experience in group work in an MBA program in the US. Heng (2014) also reported that Cambodian students faced challenges in working groups, as they were still influenced by traditional modes of learning which put little emphasis on independent learning such as group work.

Challenges in the form of various conflicts are an inherent trait of group work, when many different people are involved. However, once students can deal with these challenges, they can turn them into learning opportunities for them to acquire various teamwork skills. Both the participating lecturers and students reported that in group work students learn to work independently and to deal with various people, and from this students learn to discover and interpret information themselves, to express themselves and give feedback to their peers, and communication and negotiations skills, and ability to deal with differences in personalities, opinions, and time schedules, all of which help boost students' thinking and social skills. This is consistent with the benefits of group work suggested by Smith et al. (2005).

Using various interesting activities and assigning students to work in groups are important elements in good teaching, which is a way to ensure active engagement, which then leads to the acquisition of employability skills. Again, as this study stands on the premise that active engagement leads to the acquisition of employability skills, factors, such as good teaching, that affect student engagement would also trigger the employability skills development. Another way to ensure employability skills development through active engagement is the ability to build a good relationship with students. Students reported that they formed a liking for teachers who "knew them by their names", who showed enthusiasm in their teaching, and who were friendly and approachable. Teaching competence and building relationships are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. In order to introduce fun, interesting and relevant topics, teachers need to understand the students, and this can be done by getting to know students well through building a good relationship with them. In return, when students see that their lecturers are competent, they will like them better. Relationship between teachers and students has been shown to be an important

factor for students' learning in various studies (e.g., Kember & Leung, 2005; Kember et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2005).

From the quantitative data analysis, good teaching, which is composed of teaching competence and ability to build relationship with students, was found to have the largest, among all the other classroom factors, significant positive effect on the development of both technical and generic skills, and its effect was mediated via behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. In other words, good teaching leads to active engagement behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively, which then results in the acquisition of technical skills, and good teaching inspires active behavioral and cognitive engagement, which then leads to the acquisition of generic skills. These findings have provided empirical support for Kahu's (2013) student engagement framework that puts student engagement in the center of the relationship chain between teaching factors and learning outcomes, which are employability skills in this case.

Another important classroom factor that affects student engagement and employability skills development is the workload. The present study has shown that both the lecturers and students appreciate tasks and activities that are challenging enough for students to think and discuss with their friends. Challenging tasks keep students engaged in class. This finding is consistent with the concept of Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1981) and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). These two renowned theories posit that students can develop their learning, when they are exposed to materials that are one step beyond their current level and receive proper guidance or "scaffolding" from a more competent peer. However, students should avoid to feel too much pressure, as the result from the quantitative data analysis suggests that if students feel that a course is too difficult and they cannot see why the course is taught, they would not engage much in this course; consequently, it would lead to poor

acquisition of both technical and generic skills. Again, the key to selecting tasks of an appropriate difficulty level is to get to know students well, so that lecturers can understand the level of knowledge their students are at.

Table 7.3 Items Reflecting Students' Perspectives on the Appropriacy of the Workload

1. The workload is too heavy.
2. It seems to me that there is too much work for us to do.
3. The large amount of work to do in this course means you can't understand it all thoroughly.
4. There's a lot of pressure on you as a student here.

The last classroom factor that affects student engagement and employability skills development is assessment. The findings from the current study reveal that, in order to keep students engaged throughout the academic year, various forms of on-going formative assessment and final summative assessment should be administered. From the quantitative data analysis, course goals and assessment should be made clear to the students from the beginning and proper guidance and instruction on how tasks in the assessment should be offered, so that students do not feel nervous. Despite being the weakest predictor of both technical and generic skills, goals and assessment was found to exert its effect on employability skills through all the three engagement variables: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. In other words, clear goals and assessment would cause active engagement from students, and this engagement would lead to the acquisition of both technical and generic skills. This is consistent with what Rust (2002) noted about the assessment that if no scores are attached to a particular task assigned to students, many of them will simply not do it or only do it perfunctorily.

Table 7.4 Items Reflecting Students' Perspectives on the Assessment and Goals

1. It's often hard to discover what's expected of you in this bachelor's course.
2. The aims and objectives of this course are NOT made very clear.
3. There's very little choice in this bachelor's course in the ways you are assessed.
4. It would be possible to get through this bachelor's course just by working hard around exam times.
5. My lecturers here frequently show that they don't want to know about their students.

The present study also shows that what students like about assessment is the fact that they can receive feedback from their teachers (see Chapter 6). It is reasonable that students like receiving feedback because this lets them know that the lecturers really care about their work and they can understand their strengths and weaknesses from the feedback provided, and thus feedback improves later performance and the acquisition of employability skills as the learning outcomes. Indeed, feedback is considered as a way to promote learning and facilitate improvement for three main reasons (Lam et al., 2011). First, feedback allows students to compare their performance with their learning goals. Second, feedback enables students to gauge how much effort is needed for effective performance. Third, feedback shows students their strengths and weaknesses so they can adjust their learning strategies accordingly.

In addition to the classroom factors, Kahu's (2013) engagement framework states that institutional and personal factors also play an important role in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes, which are represented as employability skills in the present study. As institutional factors have already been elaborated in the early sections in this chapter, this section focuses on the results related to personal factors.

The findings from the quantitative data analysis have shown that personal factors are the second most influential variables after good teaching, and its effect on both technical and generic skills is mediated through engagement (Chapter 6). In other words, positive personal factors make students actively engage in their learning and this then triggers the acquisition of both technical and generic skills. From the qualitative data analysis, personal factors are composed of prior learning experience, English proficiency level, interest, self-efficacy and persistence, and time management, while from the quantitative data analysis, personal factors include relationship with peers and lecturers and personal interest. This finding is consistent with the literature examining each of these personal factors individually (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Chea & Pel, 2013; Chea & Shumow, 2017; Deci & Ryan, 1987).

7.6 Key Finding Highlights from Qualitative and Quantitative Studies

This section serves as highlights of the findings from the qualitative and quantitative studies. Overall, the main differences is that the qualitative research provided in-depth and more diverse information, compared to the quantitative research, which was mainly used to construct structures of the concepts in the research such as the antecedents of students engagement, student engagement, and employability skills. The quantitative research was also used to test a model of mediational role of student engagement as well. The qualitative and quantitative studies in the present study were employed to supplement each other weaknesses, rather than to be compared with each other. Several major complementary features were also spotted between the two research designs in the present study. First of all, the quantitative research revealed only three dimensions of student engagement, i.e. behavioral, emotional, and cognitive, while the qualitative research showed that student engagement was composed of more than just the three

dimensions. Student engagement could come in the forms of academic, social, and professional student engagement and in different degrees, i.e. active and passive. All of these dimensions and types of student engagement affected employability skills development in teaching and learning. Second, items for classroom factors, personal and institutional factors, student engagement, and employability skills were all elicited from the qualitative interviews, and these items were then put into quantitative analyses to form structures of these various constructs. Third, in terms of the connection between curriculum development, curriculum implementation, and employability skills development, the quantitative research showed that there was really relationship between classroom, institutional, and personal factors on employability skills development through student engagement, and the qualitative research showed that curriculum development was the overarching structure that controls this relationship.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.1 Key Findings of the Study

With the goal of examining the development process of employability skills from the curriculum development stage to the curriculum implementation stage, this study has addressed two main gaps in literature on employability skills development. The first is the lack of the investigation of employability skills development from the curriculum/program level to the classroom teaching and learning level. Such investigation shall require involvement of multiple stakeholder groups, including the departmental management, lecturers, and students. Many previous research studies collect data only from students or lecturers. As a result, the present study involved three main stakeholder groups: the management, lecturers, and students and graduates as a way to examine employability skills development from the departmental level to the classroom and personal levels to provide more in-depth information on how employability skills develop through curriculum development, revision, and implementation.

The second gap is the lack of the examination into the role of student engagement in employability skills development. It is a general fact that students perform well only when they engage, and if they do not, they would not perform well, no matter how good the course materials and teachers are. The present study employed student engagement as the main factor to explore and premised that student engagement mediated the relationship between institutional, classroom, and personal factors and employability skills development.

This study aims to tackle five objectives to address the two gaps mentioned above. The first is to examine why and how employability skills were taught at the case university. The present study has revealed external contexts of international and national labor market needs have become the driving forces to propel the concept of employability skills into curriculum

development and revision. In Cambodia, the national needs to integrate into the international communities, competitiveness in the international and national labor market, and the focus on knowledge economy are examples of some major drivers to the demand for employability skills.

With respect to how employability skills are taught, the present study has shown that employability skills are mainly taught implicitly with these skills embedded into various courses of the curriculum. However, there has been a tendency to teach employability skills explicitly in stand-alone courses as the department in the present study has demonstrated that they feel insecure about whether the students can acquire the skills that are taught implicitly, and there has been demand from the labor market for them to be clearly aware of what skills are taught in the department curriculum. Nonetheless, there has still been adequate information that favors a particular teaching mode, implicit or explicit teaching, over another. In addition, the present study has shown the individual merits of teaching skills implicitly and explicitly.

The second objective is to investigate how the management team can establish mechanisms to ensure employability skills development after the curriculum has been developed and revised. This study reveals that institutional factors affect students' employability skills development as the learning outcomes indirectly through lecturers and directly through enhancing student engagement. Specific expectations for the lecturers to deliver their lessons in a student-centered environment that facilitates active learning are prevalent, and lecturers are all well aware of this. Recruitment of lecturers is important because lecturers need to be able to blend in and understand well the workplace environment, culture, rules and regulations, and most importantly how to build collegiality with other lecturers. All of these will encourage lecturers to collaborate well with each other and help and share teaching materials and experience to maintain and enhance the quality of their teaching. Although in general, lecturers deliver their

teaching well with the expected student-centered approach, at the same time, they provide a teacher-centered learning environment on some occasions where they think students need well-structured support.

Another important factor is the use of student evaluation of teaching and teaching in a non-threatening fashion and instead as informative tools to help improve lecturers' teaching, rather than punitive measures. With regards to student engagement, conducive institutional factors include the curriculum that contains various subjects and various teaching methods, both formative and summative assessment that is neither too difficult nor too easy and that contains both passive and active elements, and the learning environment that encourages students' peer learning and diligence.

The third objective is to elicit lecturers' perspectives and experience on their teaching in the curriculum with regard to student engagement enhancing and employability skills development, while the fourth object was to examine students'/graduates' perspectives and experience on the same matter. The fifth objective was to test the model of the relationship between classroom factors, student engagement, and employability skills, and this model was informed and constructed based on the results obtained from the data collected to address objectives three and four. In this respect, the main premise of the present study is that active student engagement means active learning, and this can lead to the acquisition of employability skills, both technical and generic skills.

Before the main analyses were conducted, some preliminary investigations were carried out on the concept of student engagement, its antecedents, and employability skills, which are assumed to be the results of student engagement. First, the current study has compiled a list of employability skills that are composed of technical and generic skills, and the list was validated

through principal component analyses. Technical skills obtained from the DoE English program include reading, writing, listening, grammar, vocabulary, and research, while the generic skills include dealing with new problems, analytic skills, problem solving skills, critical thinking, teamwork, organizational skill, planning skill, creativity, spoken communication.

In addition, data about student engagement has also been obtained. All the three dimensions of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement were obtained from the interviews, and these three dimensions were validated in principal component analyses. Student engagement can also be seen based on levels: active and passive, and types: academic, social, and career development. All these different dimensions, types, and levels impact the acquisition of employability skills. While it is important to know that student engagement leads to employability skills development, what is also equally important is to examine how student engagement varies. The present study confirms that three main factors, i.e., classroom, institutional, and personal factors, affect student engagement.

From the data collected to address objective three from lecturers' perspectives and experience and objective four from students/graduates' perspectives and experience on student engagement and employability skills development, this study has indicated that at the classroom levels, employability skills are taught via active engagement and learning. Good teaching has been shown to be the most influential factor that exerts positive impact on employability skills through behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, while workload and assessment have both been shown to affect employability skills negatively through student engagement. These findings were validated by the model testing using mediational analyses to address objective five. The findings have emphasized the role of student-centered teaching with interesting and relevant activities to encourage interaction from students in enhancing employability skills

development. However, lecturers should not belittle the teacher-centered approach as the current study also suggests that this approach is still preferred by some students and lecturers in some occasions. In performance-based classes, where marks and grades are involved, students seem not to care much about meaningful active learning, and instead, they tend to focus more gaining information from the lecturers as this information will help them obtain good scores in tests and exams.

A vitally important element to enhance teaching is to build relationship with students. When students feel close to and cared for by their lecturers, they will actively engage in class, and this active engagement leads to the acquisition of employability skills. In teaching, lecturers should expose students challenging workload and regular continuous formative and summative assessment throughout the whole academic year. However, students also need to be made to feel that workload and assessment are not too difficult and appropriate and that contain clear instruction. Inappropriate workload and assessment with unclear guidance and instruction lead to poor engagement and ultimately poor acquisition of employability skills. Again, these findings were validated by the model testing using mediational analyses to address objective five. Another important characteristic to note about active learning is the collaboration of students in group. It should be noted that only putting student in groups does not make effective group work. Students need to be given clear guidance and support, and the group work needs to monitor from time to time to ensure effective collaboration in groups.

Personal and institutional factors also play a role in exerting impact on employability skills development via student engagement. This has provided further empirical support for Kahu's (2013) on the antecedents and outcomes of student engagement. The significance of personal factors has emphasized the importance of strict admission process to ensure that

students fit the learning programs at universities. By contrast, the significance of institutional factors has indicated that universities should put endeavor to guarantee such positive factors as competent faculty staff, curriculum, assessment, environment and culture, and rules and regulations, all of which are rarities at universities in developing countries, such as Cambodia. Also, these findings were validated by the model testing using mediational analyses to address objective five.

Yet, there is a caveat that readers should take into account from the findings of the present study. It should be worth noting that this study is a case study conducted in an English language education program. Although the findings have shown statistical significance, these findings cannot be generalized to the whole population in other universities or other disciplines. As Mills et al. (2017) noted "Embedded within YIN's (2014) case study design are the hallmarks of a postpositivist approach to research: seeking rival explanations and falsifying hypotheses, the capability for replication with a multiple case study design, the pursuit of generalizations (if required), minimizing levels of subjectivity, and the use of multiple methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis" (p. 10). Hence, it necessary replications should be conducted to broaden the scope of the research as well as the generalizability of the findings.

8.2 Implications

8.2.1 Methodological implications

Previous studies on employability skills development depended mainly on either quantitative (e.g., Kember, 2009; Kember et al., 2007; McNeil et al., 2012; Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018) or qualitative approach (e.g., Barrie, 2006; Kember, Hong, & Yao, 2017). Studies relying on quantitative approach usually involve the use of predetermined skill sets and thus limit the freedom of the participants to express their views on employability skills lists. By contrast,

though qualitative approach provides the participants with freedom to express their opinions about employability skill lists, this approach does not allow the researchers to validate the model of employability skills development or to generalize the results from the sample to the population.

The main research design employed in the present study is the case study design, in which the DoE program was used as the case. This methodological approach allowed me to gain an in-depth insight into one particular discipline, which is English programs, instead of many disciplines, as pointed out as a gap in literature. The skills presented in the programs that were supposed to be acquired by the students were listed through allowing individual participants to have the freedom to express their opinion on what skills DoE programs are supposed to equip students with, with follow-up questions to gain more information. This is an inherent strength of the case study design when the scope of a study is narrowed down to only a single case.

In addition to the case study design, to provide a comprehensive picture of employability skills development in Cambodia, this study adopts a mixed-method case study approach, which involves three groups of stakeholders (i.e., management, lecturers, and students and graduates) in conjunction with documentary analysis in a form of methodological triangulation. The data collection procedures in the present study followed what Creswell (2012) calls the "exploratory sequential mixed methods design" (p. 543). In this approach, the qualitative data is collected first to explore a phenomenon, and then collecting quantitative data to explain relationships found in the qualitative data. "A popular application of this design is to explore a phenomenon, identify themes, design an instrument, and subsequently test it. Researchers use this design when existing instruments, variables, and measures may not be known or available for the population under

study" (Creswell, 2012, p. 543). Another round of qualitative data can be conducted to refine, extend or explain the general picture.

This study addressed the methodological gap on the topic of employability skills development by employing a mixed-method design with methodological triangulation to provide freedom to the participants to express their views on what skills that had been taught and learned. With various stakeholder groups, I could compare the perspectives of these different stakeholder groups on employability skills development and put the different perspectives and experiences together with the results from the document analysis to tease out the similarities and differences in their understandings of what and how employability skills were developed. Finally, these employability skills were then categorized into two main factors (i.e., technical and generic skills) based on the principle component analysis, a form of quantitative data analysis. The mix-method deign in the current study constitutes a significant addition which fills a gap in the literature on employability skills development.

The use of mixed-method design with document analysis and participation from multiple stakeholders is important in examining the complex development process of employability skills from the program/curriculum level to individual students. The comparison of the perspectives and experiences from the various stakeholder groups has made the data analysis go beyond the mere description level (Silverman, 2011), as such methodological use has allowed me to investigate the phenomenon of employability skills development from authentic experiences of the various stakeholder groups and this has enabled me to compare, contrast and synthesize all the information provided by these different stakeholder groups to tease out similarities and differences in the information obtained with regard to employability skills development. Data collection from various sources and stakeholder groups has also enabled me to understand the

theoretical issues of employability skills development, which will be elaborated on in the next section.

8.2.2 Theoretical implications

The curriculum development and revision model and student engagement model are the two models that guided the present study, and thus there are various theoretical implications derived from the study. First, this study has reaffirmed the theoretical assumptions proposed by Khan and Law (2015) and O'Neil (2015) regarding curriculum development and revision. These assumptions vividly point out the significance of both external factors (e.g., the labor market needs) and internal factors (e.g., institutional culture and environment and the capacity of the teaching faculty) in curriculum design and delivery. However, the present study has shown that, in the process of curriculum development and revision, the university management and curriculum developers need to rely mainly on feedback from the labor market and other external factors. This insinuates that a university is willing to adapt their institutional environment, curriculum and the capacity of their teaching faculty for accommodating the needs from the labor market. As a result, these external factors have shown to be vitally important to inform curriculum developers, when they develop and revise their curriculum. Universities that have sufficient resources can conduct formal studies and observations of the external factors before making decision on curriculum change, while some universities that encounter financial difficulty need to rely on personal experience and observations and/or feedback from alumni in this process.

The second framework that guided the present study is the concept of the significance of students' involvement, which is synonymous to student engagement, in their study as suggested by Astin (1984). In Kahu's (2013) theoretical framework, student engagement consists of three

dimensions: behavioral, emotion, and cognitive. The present study also furthers Kahu's (2013) explanation of student engagement in higher education, as it has validated the theoretical assumption that student engagement can be categorized into not only the three dimensions (i.e., behavioral, emotional, and cognitive), but also various levels (i.e., passive and active) and different types (including academic, social, and career development). More importantly, the present study reveals that active engagement activates active learning and affects the acquisition of both technical and generic skills.

This study reaffirms the theoretical assumptions about the inter-correlations between classroom, personal and institutional factors, student engagement, and employability skills development. The findings have validated the theoretical assumption that student engagement plays a mediational role on the influence of institutional, classroom and personal factors on employability skills development. In other words, simply said, this theoretical implication has revealed that institutional factors (i.e., good teaching, curriculum, departmental environment and culture) and personal factors (i.e., background knowledge and personal interest) can induce active behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement from students, and active student engagement leads to the acquisition of employability skilss.

8.2.3 Policy implications

The findings of this study have also contributed to two policy implications. At the national level, employability skills have entered the education policy documents as a necessary tool to propel national development. Therefore, universities need to serve as the suppliers of these skilled workers. The present study has indicated the importance of an integrative approach to employability skills development through explicit and implicit teaching of the skills, while the research results have also echoed the significance of active, student-centered teaching and

learning approaches that facilitate group work. The case university department has a positive environment that encourages the practice of active and student-centered teaching and learning. This has emphasized the results from previous research on the merits of active learning to encourage employability skills development.

However, many other universities in Cambodia still depend on passive and teacher-centered teaching and learning. This phenomenon was emphasized in the work of Leng et al. (2021) which reports that the Cambodian sociocultural values of education is not applied in real teaching at universities, causing a disconnection between purpose, pedagogy and content, as many Cambodian universities still perform only teaching functions with an emphasis on teacher-centered pedagogical approaches. This situation is extremely worrying as such traditional teaching impedes important employability skills development. In this essence, policy makers and academics need to reinforce the use of active teaching among all universities in Cambodia, bringing about the alignment between policy set at the national level, which looks to upskill the national labor force, and the actual teaching and learning practices in classes so that employability skills development can be enhanced to a satisfactory level.

Another policy implication refers to the importance of career development programs (e.g., voluntary work and internship) to developing employability skills. Though these career development programs are important, the case university department was not able to fully support them, as there was lack of connection between universities and industry. This lack of connection also made it difficult for universities to send their students to the industries that match the skills that the students are taught. As a result, policy makers and academics need to join hands to encourage universities to build more connections with industry in order that they can link their curricula better to the industrial needs as well as to allow for more internship

opportunities for university students. Indeed, university–industry cooperation is important for employability skills development, as it requires the provision of programs combining learning and working place applications, the integration of professional knowledge with authentic application, and the provision of opportunities for students to acquire tacit knowledge inherent in the workplace (Bektas & Tayauova, 2014). Key skills for employability derive from a combination of explicit or technical knowledge and tacit or generic knowledge. Both explicit and tacit knowledge is well achieved through exposure to an organization, and one of the best forms of such exposure is through university–industry cooperation, in which students are assigned to do internship in authentic workplace environment (Lubbe Prof, et al., 2021).

8.2.4 Practical implications

This study has three practical implications for university curriculum developers, management team and faculty staff in the sampled program, while the research results might be also used in other programs with careful attention to the difference in context. First, curriculum developers should incorporate employability skills as one of the main criteria in curriculum development and revision. In this age of globalization and knowledge economy, employability skills are essential for keeping students competitive in the labor market.

The findings in this study have indicated that external factors have put pressure on HEIs to teach employability skills and this might have compromised the internal control of these institutions. Notwithstanding, HEIs should be flexible and adaptive enough to embrace this change, as change is inherent in today's society. HEIs are supposed to develop well-rounded citizens. Thus, they should teach employability skills, as possessing these skills is considered to be an important element of well-rounded citizenship (Labaree, 1997). In addition, education can enhance participatory and dialogic engagement in students in a democratic-critical manner

(Zepke & Leach, 2010), because some employability skills, such as critical thinking and communication skills, are the key to make this engagement possible.

As a result, enhancing students' competitiveness and productivity in the labor market is a function that universities should perform (Fulgence, 2016). However, the scope of employability skills in the curriculum should be carefully considered. The current study has revealed that, given the financial constraint, curriculum developers in universities in developing countries have to depend on personal perspectives and experience, literature and informal information gathering to identify strengths and weaknesses of their graduates.

Second, employability skills can be taught explicitly in stand-alone courses and implicitly with these skills embedded in various courses in the curriculum (Cranmer, 2006). Whether teaching employability skills explicitly or implicitly is more effective is still debatable. Notwithstanding, no matter whether skills are taught implicitly or explicitly, curriculum developers and teachers should take one point into consideration. Skills development is a continuous process throughout the curriculum rather than a 'bolted-on' or 'one shot' process, and thus they cannot be taught without other subjects and have to be consistently reinforced (McEwen, 2010). Likewise, as Coetzee (2012) rightly points out, to make learning meaningful, employability skills should be taught in a context. In this essence, when revising and developing curriculum, curriculum developers and teachers need to think carefully about the learning contexts in which their lessons bank on. Without learning contexts, learning employability skills would not be authentic and meaningful and thus can bore students.

In considering how employability skills can be taught, curriculum developers and lecturers should consider what pedagogical strategies or class activities are appropriate. Curriculum developers and lecturers should consider factors that lead to good teaching, which, as

shown in this study, refer to the abilities of introducing fun and useful lessons together with activities that encourage collaboration and interaction among students, and of building a good relationship with students. Good teaching would lead to active engagement and active learning, which then enhance the acquisition of employability skills. However, though the traditional forms of teaching (e.g., reading, lecturing and working alone) had a negative correlation with the learning of generic skills (Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018), the findings of this study show that such traditional learning activities still have merits in class. Curriculum developers and lecturers need to consider what pedagogical strategies that students have been exposed earlier as well.

Indeed, many student participants still found solace in the teacher-centered approach, especially when it involves preparing them for tests. Students do not mind what approach their teachers employ as long as they can obtain a high score in tests. In addition, many university lecturers still felt more comfortable teaching in the teacher-centered environment. At least this holds true in Cambodian teaching culture at university and school levels (Hansen, 2007; Un & Sok, 2018). While the use of a student-centered approach to activate active learning can be conducive to employability skills development, we cannot change the teaching methods immediately without considering students' prior learning experience. Lecturers need to carefully evaluate their own teaching situations to find out when to provide structured support for students and when to offer only minimal guidance to allow for more students' own learning and interaction time to promote their independent learning.

Group work is an important characteristic of active learning. The present study also shows that for group work to be effective, lecturers should consider how to assign students into groups. Ventimiglia (1994) suggests that for students to experience cooperative and collaborative learning, teachers should attend to the formation, composition, and dynamics of the group, the

assessment and the design of the group tasks. The student participants in this study suggest that lecturers should randomly assign students in groups. They are concerned that if students are allowed to choose their own group members, then high-performing students will not choose low-performing ones, leaving them out of the opportunity to improve themselves by working with more competent peers. Actually, randomly assigning students to different groups is likely to form heterogeneous groups. Classroom content taught with heterogeneous groups through cooperative learning strategies can induce positive student interactions to pursue team goals (Dyson & Grineski, 2001). Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 5, students prefer long-term groups to short-term groups in that long-term groups allow them time to get to know and become accustomed to each other. They tend to know, accommodate to, and work with each other better in long-term groups than when working in short-term groups. This idea of long-term groups is consistent with Bacon et al. (1999), who state that group work is maximized when students are assigned into groups early in the semester to leverage prolonged group interaction.

In addition, good teaching needs to involve good assessment and the ensuing feedback. This study also suggests that students should be kept engaged throughout the whole academic year. This can be done by administering regular formative on-going assessment in conjunction with final summative assessment, rather than the use of only one or two tests only per semester or academic year. At the same time, students need to receive appropriate feedback from their lecturers. Lam et al. (2011) also argues that it is not the frequency of feedback that improves learning but it is actually the quality of feedback. To add to the quality of feedback, Fritz et al. (2000) suggest that students should be asked to reflect on the feedback provided and then to put effort into adjusting their work based on the feedback provided. Students' lack of engagement in the feedback they receive means no learning or improvement.

Another finding from the present study that is worth noting is that personal factors are also vitally important for learning and employability skills development. Personal factors are usually fixed factors that are difficult to modify. Therefore, this emphasizes the importance of admission process to recruit students into a higher education program. Universities should carefully select students with appropriate personal factors. Otherwise, students who do not have adequate personal factors will fail to perform. This would be a waste of time and money for those students, while it also affects university reputation if these students are allowed to graduate when they do not achieve the goals of the program.

Finally, this study have shown that various career development programs at universities, such as volunteer work and internship, help build students employability skills, confidence, and networking. The case DoE had difficulty with sending their students for volunteer work and internship, as it has limited connection with employers. However, the students from the department are well recognized in the labor market, so it is usually not difficult for them to land both volunteer and internship opportunities. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the concern here is the lack of connection between universities and the industry in general in Cambodia. This makes it difficult for universities to find partners from the industry for volunteer and internship and job opportunities for their students. Thus, as said, a national policy is needed to encourage university-industry collaboration. However, apart from the government's policy, initiatives at the institutional are also important. In other words, universities need to be more proactive in building partnership with the industry. As Venturewell (2019) notes, while the main benefits of university industry collaboration helps in productivity in university research, this kind of collaboration also facilitates volunteering and internship opportunities for university students as well as job opportunities at partner companies after students graduate.

8.3 Limitations

The current study has encountered two major limitations. First, the current study was conducted in an English language education program, where communication skills (like speaking and listening) are the core subjects. Given that communication competences are considered important employability skills, employability development is embedded in English language education. Furthermore, the communication skill training also facilitates the mobilization of a student-centered and active learning approach. These findings are possibly less relevant to scientific disciplines, such as engineering, information technology, health science, etc., where teacher-centered lectures are often employed. This limitation makes the findings about student engagement less suggestive.

Second, the quantitative findings of this study (i.e., the Cronbach's alpha values) are statistically significant but show a rather weak correlation. The possible reason for this is that the interpretation of the scales is different in the sample case where students are from a different major, studying English as a foreign language, not their native language, and taking a different discipline. Low Cronbach's alpha values can attenuate the strength of these scales, so any interpretation of the findings from the current study should take this into consideration. I would encourage replication of the current study using the scales that I have employed in the present study to further examine their validity and reliability properties.

8.4 Future Research Directions

Employability skills development is an international agenda for HEIs (Bridges, 2000). However, this case study is limited to the institutional and curriculum levels. In international and national contexts, future research should be conducted to investigate employability skills development at the national policy level, especially its implications for the labor market. Indeed, employability

skills development will remain to be an important research topic in the Cambodia context. Although there has been a national policy on enhancing employability skills of Cambodian labor force, universities in the country have not been able to produce adequately skilled labor force for the labor market due to the misalignment among purpose, pedagogy and content in higher education (Leng et al., 2021). Future research on the national policy thus can look into what challenges universities have faced in trying to implement this policy. In addition, future research can also examine how resource—both human and financial—can be distributed to universities to facilitate employability skills development.

As previous research on employability skills development (e.g., Kember, 2009; Kember et al., 2007; McNeil et al., 2012; Virtanen & Tynjälä, 2018) has rooted for the use of active learning and student-centered approach, the present study has shown that Cambodian students enjoy learning in active learning and student-centered environment when performance is not scored. However, they prefer the teacher-centered approach and rote learning as much when tests and scores are related. Future research should take a deeper look into the mobilization of both the active learning, student-centered approach versus the teacher-centered approach in Cambodia and Asia more generally. Indeed, there are continuing debates on the mobilization of both student-centered and teacher-centered approaches, each of which has its own merits and drawbacks (Serin, 2018; Westwood, 2008).

Examining employability skills development in different types of institutions is another possible future research agenda. This study was conducted in an English studies department of the oldest public university in Cambodia, which received considerable support from donors and international organizations, especially in curriculum development and teaching expertise training. Therefore, the DoE was recognized as a leading HEI in the area of English language

teaching and learning and English language teacher training. However, private institutions in Cambodia do not enjoy such privilege in the form of support from international donors and organizations. They have to rely on their own means to obtain resources for curriculum development and teaching recruitment and training. This has put them at a disadvantage in designing the curriculum and recruiting and providing training to their lecturers for employability skills development. Obviously, different contexts should possess different institutional vision and missions as well as different resources and expertise, which can affect the acquisition of employability skills. In this regard, further research on the implication of the funding model and the resulting organizational goals for curriculum design and delivery can provide insights into employability skills development in higher education in Cambodia.

In the same vein, future research can be conducted to examine employability skills development in non-language programs. The key principle to guide language learning is the teaching of language for communication purposes, and hence language teaching is readily conducive to active learning and student-centered methods. To extend the scope further, future research can cover employability skills development in other academic subjects. In essence, different academic disciplines provide different contexts and environments for teaching and learning as well as different priorities on employability skills. Different pedagogical strategies employed by the institution of such disciplines are also different from language subject, which heavily focuses mainly on communication skills.

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Appendix A: All the Subjects Provided by DoE from Year 1 to Year 4

	Description
Core English (Years 1, 2, and 3)	As the name implies, this is the main subject of the whole program with the contents designed to equip students with the four macro skills in English—reading, listening, writing and speaking—as well as English grammar and vocabulary.
Writing Skills (Years 1 and 2)	In this subject, students are taught both academic writing (such as paragraph and essay writing) and functional writing (such as writing CV and cover letters and graph interpretation).
Global Studies (Years 2 and 3)	This is a content-based subject. English language is taught with reading texts on various topics, such as sociology, education, economics, agriculture, etc. students can improve their English language proficiency as well as general knowledge and skills.
Literature Studies (Year 2 and Semester 1 of Year 3)	In this subject, English language is taught through various prominent literary works, such as Oliver Twist, Romeo and Juliet, etc. Students are supposed to develop various literacy skills.
Critical Thinking (Semester 2 of Year 3 and Semester 1 of Year 4, BA)	Once was taught only in year 4, this subject was introduced in the second semester of year 3 in academic year 2018-2019, supplanting Literature Studies. Critical thinking skills are taught as a bolt-on subject with various class activities.
Introduction to Research Methods (Year 3)	Students are taught the basic concepts of research methods, both qualitative and quantitative. Students are required to produce a research proposal in semester one and an entire research report developed from

	the semester-1 proposal in semester 2.
Teaching Methodology (Year 4, BEd)	This is the core subject in the Bachelor of Education (TEFL) program. Essential and practical lessons, such as how to design lesson plans, classroom management, how to design teaching materials, etc., on TEFL are taught to students, who conduct their teaching practicum in semester 2.
Applied Linguistics 4 (Year 4, BEd)	This subject deals with theories in TEFL and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). This subject was taught in year 4 but was then renamed and made into two different subjects in semester 1 (Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching and Theories of Language and Language Learning) and as Second Language Acquisition in semester 2 of academic year 2018-2019.
Foundations of Education 4 (Semester 1 of Year 4, BEd)	This subject provides a variety of topics related to education in general, extracting concepts from educational psychology, educational sociology, etc. This subject was taught in both semesters in year 4 but then had its sessions reduced to only semester 1 of year 4 and renamed and dissected into two different subjects (Educational Psychology and School and Society) in semester 2 in academic year 2018-2019.
Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching 4 (Semester 1 of Year 4, BEd)	This is a new subject introduced in semester 1 of academic year 2018-2019. This course aims to provide teacher trainees with the knowledge and awareness of the approaches and methods used in foreign/second language teaching.
Theories of Language	This is a new subject introduced in semester 1 of academic year 2018-

and Language Learning 4 (Semester 1 of Year 4, BEd)	2019. This course aims to inform course participants of language and its basic components, characteristics of language learners and teachers, and introductory linguistic terminology.
Second Language Acquisition 4 (Semester 2 of Year 4, BEd)	This is a new subject introduced in semester 2 of academic year 2018-2019. This course introduces students to major aspects of second language acquisitions theories. The course topics cover various factors that influence the successful acquisition of another language.
Educational Psychology 4 (Semester 2 of Year 4, BEd)	This is a new subject introduced in semester 2 of academic year 2018-2019. This course introduces students to 'how people learn' and other various topics in educational psychology such as human growth and development, socialization, intelligence, and learning diversity.
School and Society 4 (Semester 2 of Year 4, BEd)	This is a new subject introduced in semester 2 of academic year 2018-2019. This course introduces students to issues surrounding education in society. The course reveals the complex relationship between schools and the larger society of which they are a part.
Proposal Writing (Semester 1 of Year 4, BA)	This course is taught in semester 1 of year 4 in the Bachelor of Arts program. This course aims to enable students to understand the fundamental elements of a grant proposal such as the objectives, problems addressed, methodology, evaluation, budget and cover letter.
Advanced English (Year 4, BA)	This course is a version of Core English but is taught in year 4 in the BA program. This course aims to provide students with the opportunities to further enhance their English proficiency in the four macro-skills, including reading, listening, speaking and writing.

Introduction to Globalization (Semester 1 of Year 4, BA)	This course introduces students to definitions of globalization, its many facets, complexities, paradoxes, controversies, and effects. The fast-paced, rapidly changing, interconnected and inequitable context of globalization has a tremendous impact on cross-cultural or intercultural communication today.
Communication Skills (Year 4, BA)	This course aims to enrich the learners' knowledge of communication beyond general settings and centers its focus on communication at the workplace. They will improve their oral and written communication skills through preparation and presentation of written and oral information.
Report Writing (Semester 2 of Year 4, BA)	This course aims to enable students to plan and write reports in a professional manner. It focuses on the key elements of writing and of presenting reports such as preparation, writing, editing, proofreading and presentation.
Introduction to Ethics (Semester 2 of Year 4, BA)	This course is designed for advanced students to improve their linguistic competence and awareness of ethics and to practice their critical thinking skills.
Intercultural Communication Skills (Semester 2 of Year 4, BA)	This course introduces students to the process of communication between and among individuals from different cultures or subcultures. This course helps students become more effective in personal and professional interactions through better understanding of various cultures and their communication norms and expectations.
Introduction to	This course aims to build necessary skills in the learners so that they can

Translation (Semester 1 of Year 4, BA)	perform their written translation with good quality. Such skills as terminology management, English and Khmer languages, use of online dictionaries, etc. will be emphasized throughout the semester.
Introduction to Interpretation (Semester 2 of Year 4, BA)	This course introduces students to consecutive and simultaneous interpreting techniques encompassing active listening, note-taking, coping tactics and stress management while rendering interpreting services in both informal and formal forums.
International Business (Year 4, BA)	This course is designed to provide students with the knowledge of English used in business contexts. It enables students to identify and to effectively use their English for various business sub-disciplines, including management, production, marketing, finance and so on.

Appendix B: Interview Protocols

Interview Questions for Managers

1. What have you done to prepare your students for employment in the labour market? Are there any challenges?
2. How do you base on your decision to develop and revise your curriculum?
3. To extent does your curriculum focus on teaching employment related skills? If so, what are they? Why? If not, why not?
4. How are these skills relevant to employment?
5. How are these skills taught?
6. What are your expectations for the teaching in the department?
7. What has your department done to ensure student engagement?
8. How far are your teachers supportive of student engagement?
9. How far are their teaching, tasks, and assessment conducive to student engagement? Are there any challenges?

Interview Questions for Lecturers

1. What skills do you deliver in your courses?
2. Why are these skills? How far are they relevant to employment?
3. How are these skills taught?
4. To what extent are students engaged in your teaching and learning activities? How are they engaged?
5. How would you describe the factors making students engaged in class?
6. Is student engagement relevant to skills development? If so, how? If not why not?
7. How would you describe “good teaching” or “good teacher”?

8. Is there enough support for lecturers? If so, what support do you gain? If not, what support do you need?
9. To what extent do you agree that students should be engaged in non-academic activities?

Interview Questions for Students and Graduates

1. What skills have you learnt in your courses? Are they enough?
2. How far are they relevant to employment?
3. How are these skills taught?
4. To what extent have you been engaged in the teaching and learning activities? How have you been engaged?
5. How would you describe the factors making students engaged in class?
6. Is student engagement relevant to skills development? If so, how? If not why not?
7. How would you describe “good teaching” or “good teacher”?
8. Is there enough support for students? If so, what support do you gain? If not, what support do you need?
9. To what extent do you agree that students should be engaged in non-academic activities?

Appendix C: Questionnaire Items

Personal Information

1. Your Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female
2. Your class: _____
3. Your estimated score in overall English proficiency (over 100 points): _____/100

Overall experiences in BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAM at DoE (NOT A PARTICULAR CLASS)

Instructions: This is a survey to gain your perspectives and experiences in your study in the WHOLE BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAM at Department of English, NOT IN A PARTICULAR CLASS. Please select the answer the best reflects your perspectives and experiences.

4. My lecturers assign students to work in pairs or in groups most of the time.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Neutral	Mildly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Note: All the subsequent statements were measured on a 7-point Likert scale like in Statement 4.

5. My lecturers make a real effort to understand difficulties students may be having with their work.
6. We often discuss with our lecturers how we are going to learn in this bachelor's course.
7. To do well on this bachelor's course, all you really need is a good memory.
8. It would be possible to get through this bachelor's course just by working hard around exam times.
9. I am interested in studying in the bachelor's degree in DoE.
10. My lecturers are approachable and helpful.
11. There's very little choice in this bachelor's course in the ways you are assessed.
12. Feedback on student work is usually provided ONLY in the form of marks and grades.
13. You usually have a clear idea of where you're going and what's expected of you.
14. My lecturers here often motivate students to do their best work.
15. My lecturers are good at explaining things to us.
16. There are few opportunities to choose the particular areas you want to study.
17. I study hard because I can feel that most of my classmates study hard.
18. All the subjects in the curriculum help students learn well.
19. It seems to me that there is too much work for us to do.
20. The workload is too heavy.
21. The large amount of work to do in this course means you can't understand it all thoroughly.
22. My lecturers can make lessons simple to understand.
23. The lecturers here make it clear right from the start what they expect from students.
24. My lecturers here frequently show that they don't want to know about their students.
25. Students have a great deal of choice over how they are going to learn in this bachelor's course.
26. DoE Departmental culture encourages learning of students.
27. It's often hard to discover what's expected of you in this bachelor's course.

28. My teachers spend so much time talking in class most of the time.
29. Students here are given a lot of choice in the work they have to do.
30. DoE Departmental policies allow students to study hard.
31. My lecturers make their classes fun.
32. We are generally given enough time to understand the things we have to learn.
33. The aims and objectives of this course are NOT made very clear.
34. My lecturers here normally give helpful feedback on my progress.
35. I find the classes in DoE useful.
36. I have good relationship with my lecturers.
37. This bachelor's course has encouraged me to develop my own academic interests as far as possible.
38. The campus environment is good for learning.
39. My lecturers here work hard to make subjects interesting.
40. My lecturers encourage students to do a lot of work in class rather than just listen to lectures.
41. My lecturers can build good relationship with students.
42. My lecturers seem more interested in testing what you've memorised than what you've understood.
43. I have good relationship with my classmates.
44. My lecturers here show no real interest in what students have to say.
45. There's a lot of pressure on you as a student here.

Student Engagement Questions

46. I try very hard in all classes.
47. I try to make all the different ideas fit together and make sense when I study.
48. I usually do the homework for all classes.
49. I prefer doing challenging tasks in my classes.
50. If what I am working on is difficult to understand, I change the way I learn the material.
51. Classes are fun.
52. I share my opinion in pair or group work.
53. When we work on something in classes, I feel interested.
54. I make up my own examples to help me understand the important concepts I study.
55. When in my English classes at DoE, I feel bored.
56. When I study, I try to connect what I am learning with my own experiences.
57. When I am in classes, I feel curious about what we are learning.
58. I usually work hard when we start something new in classes.
59. Even when I face difficulty, I never give up putting effort on studying.
60. Classes often stress me out.
61. I normally read course materials before and after classes.
62. Before I begin to study, I often think about what I want to get done.
63. When I'm working on my schoolwork, I stop once in a while and go over what I have been doing.
64. I rarely put enough effort for studying the materials for classes.
65. As I study, I keep track of how much I understand, not just if I am getting the right answers.

66. I often pay attention in all classes.
67. I listen carefully in all classes.
68. When doing schoolwork, I try to relate what I'm learning to what I already know.
69. I normally ask questions to lecturers for clarification of new materials.
70. I enjoy learning new things in classes.
71. My lecturers often make me aware of the knowledge we learn in class and how the knowledge is applied in practice.

Discipline-Specific Skills Development

72. I feel my grammar knowledge has improved a lot from this bachelor's course.
73. I feel my vocabulary knowledge has improved a lot.
74. From this course, I have more confidence in my reading skills.
75. From this course, I have more confidence in my listening skills.
76. From this course, I have more confidence in my writing skills.
77. From this course, I have more confidence in my speaking skills.

Soft Skills Development

78. This bachelor's course has helped me to develop my problem-solving skills.
79. This course has sharpened my analytic skills.
80. This course has improved my critical thinking skills.
81. This course has helped develop my ability to work as a team member.
82. As a result of doing this course, I feel more confident about dealing with unfamiliar problems.
83. This course has improved my written communication skills.
84. This course has improved my spoken communication skills.
85. This course has enhanced my general knowledge about various topics.
86. This course has helped me develop the ability to plan my own work.
87. I can brainstorm and organize my ideas better.
88. From this course, I have improved my research skills (searching for reading materials, writing research objective, collecting data, etc.).
89. From this course, I have improved creativity in generating new ideas in writing and speaking.

Appendix D: Background Questionnaire before the Interview

1. Full name:
2. Years of study at DoE: from _____ to _____
3. Volunteer and/or work experience (both part and full time)

4. Approximate overall scores (an average of all the year levels)
   A. WS: /100
   B. CE: /100
   C. LS: /100
   D. GS: /100
   E. RM: /100

Appendix E: Consent Form for Lecturers

Research Title: Employability Skills Development in Higher Education: A Mixed Methods Case Study in Cambodia

- I…… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves describing and explaining the process of teaching and delivery of employability skills as well as having my class observed by researcher.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the PhD thesis, conference presentation, and published papers.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the researcher's computer, which is password protected, until the exam board confirms the results of the researcher's thesis.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalization, I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact the researcher to seek further clarification and information (researcher's email: sathyachea@gmail.com).

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

[redacted]

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Signature of researcher Date

Appendix F: Consent Form for Students

Research Title: Employability Skills Development from the Perspectives and Experiences of Three Stakeholders: A Mixed Methods Case Study in Cambodia

- I…… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves describing and explaining the process of learning and acquisition of employability skills.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the PhD thesis, conference presentation, and published papers.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the researcher's computer, which is password protected, until the exam board confirms the results of the researcher's thesis.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalization, I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact the researcher to seek further clarification and information (researcher's email: sathyachea@gmail.com).

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant Date

Signature of researcher
I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

[redacted]

---------- ----------
Signature of researcher Date

Appendix G: Consent Form for the Management Team

Research Title: Employability Skills Development in Higher Education from the Perspectives and Experiences of Three Stakeholders: A Mixed Methods Case Study in Cambodia

- I…… voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves describing and explaining the establishment of the program and curriculum as well as leadership and management practices.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the PhD thesis, conference presentation, and published papers.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the researcher's computer, which is password protected, until the exam board confirms the results of the researcher's thesis.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalization, I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact the researcher to seek further clarification and information (researcher's email: sathyachea@gmail.com).

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

[redacted]

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Signature of researcher Date

Appendix H: Form to Request the Permission to Enter to Research Site

Letter to Request Permission to Conduct Study

Date: 09/03/2020

Dear Dr. KEUK Channarith
Head of Department of English

This is a letter to request permission to conduct a research study at the Department of English, IFL, RUPP. I am currently a PhD candidate at the Education University of Hong Kong, and am in the process of writing my PhD thesis entitled "Employability Skills Development in Higher Education: A Mixed Methods Case Study in Cambodia."

I hope that the department management will allow me to recruit year-3 and year-4 students, faculty members, and the management team from the department to participate in my semi-structured interview and to anonymously complete a questionnaire in relation to the examination of employability skills development in your department. Interested students, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed and returned to me. I would like to assure you that all participation will be voluntary, and no participant will be pressured in any way to participate in my research. There will not be any risk in any form involved in participating in my research.

If approval is granted, year-3 and year-4 students, lecturers, and the management team members will be invited to a semi-structured interview, and, in addition, year-3 and year-4 students will also be invited to complete a survey in their classroom with the consent to be sought from the class lecturer in charge in advance. Each interview will last around 60 minutes, while the survey process should take no longer than 20 minutes. The results from the interviews and survey will be kept completely confidential. No costs will be incurred by either your department or the individual participants.

Your approval for me to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Should you have any query regarding my research and data collection, you may contact me at my email address: sathyachea@gmail.com.

If you agree, kindly sign below.

Signature of Head of DoE Date: _____

_____

Sincerely,

CHEA Sathya

PhD Candidate
The Education University of Hong Kong