

# Promoting Research Productivity at Cambodian Higher Education Institution from Leadership Perspective: The Case Study of ACLEDA Institute of Business

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## ABSTRACT

*Research productivity can be developed only if there is stakeholder involvement, especially from a leadership perspective. Thus, this study attempts to examine how institutional and leadership characteristics influence research productivity at a Cambodian higher educational institution. The study employed a qualitative approach, including document analysis, interviews, and focus group discussions in order to seek insights into research productivity at ACLEDA Institute of Business (AIB). Using theme-based analysis, the study has found that research productivity at AIB is currently at a very early stage of development – so-called infant stage, at which research articles are mainly produced by both lecturers and students. The study has also found that most of the institutional characteristics such as clear coordinating goals, research emphasis, culture, positive group climate, communication with professional networks, resources, sufficient work time, communication, rewards, brokered opportunities, decentralized organization, and assertive participative government do exist at AIB. However, there were some characteristics missing concerning the institutional factors, namely recruitment and selection, mentoring, and size, experience and expertise. More importantly, leadership characteristics such as scholarship, research orientation, capability fulfilling all critical leadership roles, and participative leadership do play important roles in promoting research productivity at AIB.*

**Keyword:** research productivity, institutional characteristics, leadership characteristics

## 1. Introduction

The Cambodian government has recently focused on research activities in order to make Cambodia become a knowledge-based society. According to the Royal Government's Rectangular Strategy (Phase IV 2014-2018), the Royal Government in the sixth Legislature of the National Assembly has emphasized “creating mechanisms to help weak students with concrete incentives, research, and development of new teaching and learning methods” (p.21). Likewise, as stated in the Cambodia Industrial Development Policy 2015-2025, the Royal Government also focuses on strengthening education quality for research development. In line with the strategy, as summarized in Heng (2020), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has developed several policies namely Policy on Research Development in Education Sector, Master Plan for Research Development in Education Sector, Policy on Higher Education 2030, and Education Research Council (a policy think tank). Furthermore, in order to promote research and publication, MoEYS has implemented two projects namely Higher Education Quality and Capacity Improvement Project (HEQCIP) and Higher Education Improvement Project (HEIP). These efforts have been initiated because research and publication in Cambodia falls behind several countries in the region (Barrot, 2017; and Heng, 2020).

More importantly, these efforts can be implemented effectively with the participation from all levels of stakeholders. According to Heng (2020), the macro or national level is responsible for policy formulation and ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation; the meso or institutional level is responsible for creating a conducive and supportive environment for promoting research culture; and the micro or individual level, referring to an individual academic or researcher, needs to have a strong commitment and intrinsic motivation to engage in research culture. The same study also noted that the micro could fully participate in the research culture only if there is emotional and financial support from the meso and macro levels. Sam and Dahles (2017) have suggested that stakeholder collaboration needs to be promoted by policymakers and institutional leaders in order to push research and development forward in Cambodia to respond to the global context of knowledge-based economy.

As cited in Cheetham (2014), research culture is crucial not only for a research-focused institution but also for a teaching-focused institution (Blackburn et al., 1991). Currently, many institutions globally are pressured to develop research culture and faculty research production (Youn & Price, 2009). One of the major forces is the institutional reputation, and research publication, especially citations per faculty, is one of the criteria for QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) world university ranking (Writer, 2021).

Promoting stakeholder collaboration at the macro level has currently been in place. Ngin and Kao (2017) remark that promoting a research culture among students and lecturers is one of the keys to producing skilled and innovative human resources in Cambodia. However, it is still a question at the institutional level, especially the role of leadership. Kian-Woon et al. (2010) have found research culture and research capacity to be limited in many universities in

Cambodia; and the study acknowledges the importance of academic governance and leadership in promoting research culture and capacity. Eam (2018) has also claimed that leadership plays an important role in the transitional period of research development in Cambodia. The study shows some evidence that leaders of some higher education institutions are the game changers who contribute to the development of research activities within their own institutions.

In order to respond to the abovementioned issue and rationale, this study attempts to examine how institutional and leadership characteristics influence research productivity at a Cambodian higher education institution by using the case of the ACLEDA Institute of Business (AIB). In order to shed light for the study, three research questions have been raised: What are the current institutional leadership characteristics of AIB? What are the current developments of research activities of AIB? And how do AIB's institutional leadership characteristics shape its research productivity?

In response to the above research questions, the study follows three steps. First of all, the study analyzes key literature, namely policy, structure, and operating manuals and procedures of AIB. Secondly, the study conducts in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with key participants. Finally, the study discusses the key findings with the existing pieces of literature so that a meaningful conclusion can be made.

## **The Setting**

This study focuses on the institutional level, that is, the ACLEDA Institute of Business (AIB), which is a subsidiary institution of ACLEDA Bank Plc. AIB was recognized by the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in 2016 as a private higher education institution, which was transformed from ACLEDA Training Center (ATC).

This study selected AIB as the case among other 128 higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia because research activities have become one of the priorities emphasized by its management and leadership even though it is a newly established HEI. This study attempts to explore how institutional and leadership characteristics influence research productivity at AIB.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Definition of research productivity**

According to Ngin and Kao (2017), research productivity is composed of publications, citations, patents, research completions, and research funds. The administrators refer to the research productivity of the faculty as the number of publications produced by the faculty members; however, the faculty members argue that the assessment of research productivity should be based on “the quality of publications not the number of the publications” (Quimbo & Sulabo, 2014, p.1957). In short, “research productivity is defined as the product of research activities” (Caminiti et al., 2015, p.2). The research productivity can be measured at the early stage of research culture process, that is, gestation stage.

According to Olvido (2021), gestation or initiating, is a production stage which involves producing research and writing manuscripts. This stage requires the institutions to invest in capacity building for the faculty members and research production can be produced by both faculty members and students. The second stage is the expansion or developing, at which the institutions reach a stable phase, where a quality of research activity and output increases. Moreover, Olvido (2021) has found that paper presentations, dissemination, and publication of research articles exist at the expansion (flourishing) stage, and the publication of students' works is suggested to include in this stage as well. At the third stage, so-called the maturation, the research outputs benefit academia, community, and industry; therefore, research culture is fully developed, and research becomes evidence-based, influencing policies and introducing technology.

As a result, research productivity is one of the keys to increase institutional reputation as well faculty advancement (Dundar & Lewis, 1998). In order to increase research productivity, leaders have to play an important role in developing and implementing policy, encouraging teamwork, and motivating.

## 2.2 Leadership, individual, and institutional characteristics in promoting research productivity

Bland et al. (2002) describe that research productivity reaches the highest level when there is a relationship between individual characteristics and institutional characteristics, which are mediated by leadership characteristics. The below list shows that research culture and productivity can be fully developed through the interaction between individual, institutional and leadership characteristics (Bland et al., 2002).

### 2.3 Individual characteristics

According to Bland et al. (2002), the individual characteristics refer to the knowledge, skills, attitude and motivation of the faculty members within the institution. These characteristics include socialization, motivation, content knowledge, basic and advanced research skills, simultaneous projects, orientation, autonomy and commitment, and work habits.

### 2.4 Institutional characteristics

Cheetham (2014) remarks that the second characteristics are the institution ones, which are shaped by three main themes such as importance of collegiality, long-term goals, and already-present characteristics. Several studies support that institutional characteristics, especially a well-established one, play an important role in promoting the research productivity (Creswell, 1985; Dundar & Lewis, 1998; Bland et al., 2002). First, institutions that influence research productivity should recruit and select faculty members who are equipped with research skills and are motivated and committed to doing research. Second, there should be clear coordinating goals, which are shared among faculty members. Third, the institutions should emphasize research, which is equivalent to or even greater than other goals. Fourth, the institutions should emphasize a culture, in which research-related values and practices have been

shared among members. Fifth, the institutions should create a positive group climate, which is “characterized by high morale, a spirit of innovation, dedication to work, receptivity to new ideas, frequent interactions, high degree of cooperation, low member turnover, good leader/member relationships, and open discussion. Sixth, faculty members should be assisted by the mentors who are scholars. Seventh, there should be a communication with professional research network both inside and outside the institutions. Eighth, there should be enough resources such as funding, facilities, and especially human ones for supporting faculty members. Ninth, there should be sufficient work time for faculty members to be committed to doing research. Tenth, there should be large enough faculty members obtaining experience and expertise in order to produce research result. Eleventh, there should be clear communication channels so that all faculty members are kept informed. Twelfth, there should be equity and comparable rewards such as money, promotion, recognition, and new responsibilities. Thirteenth, faculty members should be offered brokered (professional development) opportunities regularly so that they can grow continuously. Fourteenth, the structure of the organization should be centralized and flat. Fifteenth, faculty members expect an assertive participative governance which clear and common goals are shared by assertive and participative leadership (Bland et al., 2002; Marchant, 2009; Cheetham, 2014).

Table 1: List of Description of Individual, Institutional, and Leadership Characteristics

| Individual characteristics          | Institutional characteristics             | Leadership characteristics                          |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1.Socialization                     | 1.Recruitment and selection               | 1.Scholar   |
| 2.Motivation                        | 2.Clear coordinating goals                | 2.Research Oriented                                 |
| 3.Content knowledge                 | 3.Research emphasis                       | 3.Capability fulfills all critical leadership roles |
| 4.Basic and advance research skills | 4.Culture                                 | 4.Participative leader                              |
| 5.Simultaneous projects             | 5.Positive group climate                  |   |
| 6.Orientation                       | 6.Mentoring                               |   |
| 7.Autonomy and commitment           | 7.Communication with professional network |   |
| 8.Work habits                       | 8.Resources                               |   |
|                                     | 9.Sufficient work time                    |   |
|                                     | 10.Size/experience/expertise              |   |
|                                     | 11.Communication                          |   |
|                                     | 12.Rewards                                |   |
|                                     | 13.Brokered opportunities                 |   |
|                                     | 14.Decentralized organization             |   |
|                                     | 15.Assertive participative governance     |   |

Adapted from (Bland et al., 2005)

## 2.5 Leadership characteristics in promoting research productivity

The leadership characteristics, which include scholar, research oriented, capability of fulfilling critical leadership roles, and participative leader, are the connectors between individual and institutional characteristics.

Leadership has been central focuses for researchers over these last decades. According to Yukl (2013), leadership has been defined in terms of traits, behaviors, influence, interaction patterns, role relationships, and occupation of an administrative position. Rauch Jr and Behling (1984) define leadership as the process of influencing and organized group toward accomplishing its goals; as actions that focus resources to create desirable opportunities (Campbell, 1991); as the process of creating conditions for a team to be effective (Ginnett, 1996); and as the process of getting results through others and the ability to build cohesive, goal-oriented teams (Hogan, Curphy, Kaiser, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2018).

Even though individual is the active agent in producing research publication, they need to be supported and motivated from the institution, which is mediated by leadership characteristics (Cheetham, 2014 & Bland et al., 2005). They mainly share four main characteristics or behaviors. First of all, the leaders have to be *idealized influence* (Dubrin et al., 2006), who “have to be scholars who play role model as sponsor, mentor, and peer for other group members.” (Bland et al., 2002); Secondly they have to be *inspirational motivation* (Dubrin et al., 2006), who “have to be research oriented which can be the foundation for translating research mission to other group members.” (Bland et al., 2002); Thirdly, they have to be *intellectual stimulation* (Dubrin et al., 2006), who “are capable fulfilling critical leadership roles, namely managing people and resources, raising fund, advocating group, aligning mission and goals, and attending research activities conducted by individual and institution as much as possible.” (Bland et al., 2002); Finally, they have to be *individualized consideration* (Dubrin et al., 2006), who “have to use assertive and participative style of leadership. They have to hold frequently meetings, set expectations, make high-quality information, and vest ownership of project.” (Bland et al., 2002).

### 3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative method, which involves a document analysis, a focus group discussion, and an interview (Schindler, 2019). The document analysis is crucial in this study since it “provides background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development, and verification of findings from other data sources” (Bowen, 2009, p.30). The focus group discussion is very useful when inserting some activity-oriented questions adapted to the topic, and it potentially enriches data collection, reduce drops in attention, and eases in talking about sensitive and complex topic (Colucci, 2007). Finally, as cited in Sam (2017), the interview provides interaction setting for exploring experiences and perspectives of their partners (Schostak, 2005).

#### 3.1 Key participants and relevant documents

The key participants include the Chairman of Academic Affairs Committee (AACO), Managing Director, Deputy Managing Director (DMD & CAA) in charge of academic affairs,



and editor in chief. The relevant documents involve policy, operating manuals and procedures for analysis.

### 3.2 Research tools

This study employed two useful tools in the qualitative methods. The first tool is an interview guide of the unstructured interview. According to Edwards and Holland (2013), the unstructured interview allows the interviewee to talk from their perspective using their frame of reference and ideas and meanings that are familiar to them. Moreover, the interview guide outlines the topics or themes to be covered during the actual interview (Esterberg, 2002), and the questions of the interview cover themes related to leadership and institutional characteristics, which mainly benchmark from Bland et al., (2005). The second tool is a focus group guide. According to Kelly (2003), focus group interview guide allows interviewer to lay out question design to achieve the richness of data during time together with participants. The study develops questions, which explicitly address the key themes with clear phrases and appropriate sequences.

### 3.3 Data collection

First of all, the study collected all relevant documents related to organizational productivity and chart, code of conducts, code of ethics, term of reference, recruitment and selection manuals, training and development manuals, performance appraisal manuals, and research manuals and procedures for bachelor's degree, master's degree, and AIB Research Series. Secondly, the study conducted unstructured interview with the managing director and deputy managing director. Last but not least, the study conducted focus group discussion with key participants from AIB, namely representative of the Board of Directors (BoD), who is the Chairman of Academic Affairs Committee (AACO), DMD & CAA, and the editor in chief.

### 3.4 Data analysis

To capture the insights of the institutional and leadership characteristics, the study first reviewed and analyzed all the relevant documents. The interviews and focus group discussions were then transcribed and coded based on themes and subthemes from each research participant. The subtheme on the current stage of research development at AIB was coded as TH01; and the relationship between institutional characteristics and research productivity, reasons for promoting research productivity, the roles of leadership in promoting research productivity, challenges in promoting research productivity, coping with the challenges, and strategies to promote research productivity including long-term and short-term planning relevance to research activities were coded as TH02, TH03, TH04, TH05, TH06, and TH07, respectively. Codes such as P1, P1, P3 and P4 were assigned for the four key research participants and exemplary quotes were used as the evidence for the explanation of the relevant themes.

### 3.5 Ethical consideration

In order to ensure integrity and ethical standard, the researchers sent the consent form to the key participants by indicating the confidentiality and voluntary participation. Before interviewing them, the researchers presented the consent form and asked permission from them to record the interview for in-depth analysis including note taking during the interview. Likewise, the researcher also asked permission from the participants to record the discussion session during the focus group discussion. Last but not least, the researchers analyze the data carefully in order to make sure that the findings are reliable and accurate.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Background of ACLEDA Institute of Business

The Vision of AIB is to be the leading business school with the highest quality standard to develop future generations to support the socio-economic development in Cambodia and the Region. Moreover, the mission of (AIB) is to provide learners with the superior quality of higher education services and professional training in business education so that they can develop their knowledge, skills, experiences, ethics and networking in order to enhance their professional future careers (AIB, n.d.-a).

Like his parent company, AIB is structured with a strong culture of professional ethics, quality, accountability and transparency. Five main functions of AIB are currently managed and lead by a managing director, namely Academic Department, Finance Department, Graduate School, Centre for Internal Training, and Centre for Entrepreneurship Training and Development. Practicing a good governance, Board of Directors (BoD) acts on behalf of the shareholder who is hundred percent owned by ACLEDA Bank Plc. BoD has to ensure that the executive body, headed by the managing director, performs his function well; moreover, BoD plays roles as strategic advice to the managing director so that the vision and mission can be achieved and as compliance and audit body to shareholder so that ethics and transparency can be maintained. Academic Affairs Committee is a technical arm of the BoD, to advise on the quality of teaching, learning, and research domains.

### 4.2 Research activity at AIB

Seventeen students of the first batch participated in thesis writing on finance and banking and all of them were successful in their final thesis defense. Currently, there are nine students of the second batch participating in thesis writing on mobile banking and Bakong payment system. AIB Research Series, Volume I, which is a double-blind peer review, has been successfully published in the Business Review of AIB's website. AIB is currently organizing the faculty members into team to produce research articles for the Volume II of AIB Research Series, which will be published in 2022. AIB's planning to organize an internal conference and



inter-university conference, which provide opportunity for the faculty members to present their papers and outreach the public.

#### 4.3 The current stage of research development at AIB

Based on the document analysis and the interviews, the study found that the research activities at AIB is currently at the very early stage of development. Outstanding students are encouraged to write thesis and transform their theses into research articles, coauthored with their supervisors and co-supervisors. The faculty members have been formed into group, led by Technical Team Leader (TTL), to produce the research articles. Most of the research articles are reviewed before publishing at AIB Research Series.

#### 4.4 The relationship between institutional characteristics and the research productivity

The work environment of AIB is conducive for promoting research productivity because of the policy and practice, operating manual and procedure, supportive leadership, teamwork, supporting offices such as Center for Research & Innovation. P1 states,

*“The culture of work, which is (Start small and do well) at ACLEDA, is really fit with the development of research activity.”*

Furthermore, P3 states,

*“Our culture is teamwork and very supportive. We have developed operating manuals and procedures in order to set standards and guidelines for the organizational practices.”*

#### 4.5 Reasons for promoting research productivity

The current higher educational institution (HEI) focuses on three core missions, namely teaching, research, and entrepreneurship as stated by P4. Research and publications can help build the image of AIB and upgrade the capacity of the faculty members and the students. P2 states,

*“We want to differentiate AIB from many other HEIs in Cambodia. AIB focuses on research activity because it can broaden new-and-updated knowledge to faculty members and students and it can build the reputation.”* He continues, *“Many HEIs get success because of research ... research contributes to student’s decision making as well HEIs’ decision since new findings can improve current situation especially top universities such as Harvard and Chulalongkon.”*

More importantly, research and publications help categorize AIB into the top university ranking in the region and build bridge to the public, professional practice and community. This is in line with the mission of AIB. P1 states,

*“We want AIB to become a Research University in 2030. We want to see AIB to become top 500 university in Asia or top 200 university in Southeast Asia.”* He continues, *“We want AIB’s researchers to outreach to the public by presenting and publishing the papers. We want to see (PLC, which means Professional Learning Community) and (COP, which means Community of Practice) at AIB”*

#### 4.6 The roles of leadership in promoting research productivity

Leadership plays important role in promoting research productivity as it mediates the relationship between the individual and the institution characteristic. In order to promote the research productivity, the leaders, first of all, have to be scholar. The study found most of the top leaders of AIB meet this characteristic since they hold high qualifications. For instance, the Chairman of Academic Affairs Committee (AACO) is a very highly regarded as a scholar, holding Ph.D. from Japan, and publish several recognized research articles, journals and book chapters. At the top executive level, the managing director graduated in the field of Business Administration from a local university, and he has written thesis at his master program and dissertation at his doctoral program. He used to publish a research article on special economic zone at the university he graduated as well.

Secondly, the study found the leaders of AIB are inspired and motivated. They set high vision and mission for AIB and they work with the relevant managers to set clear mechanisms to achieve the long-term mission. For instance, Chairman of AACO proposed the Centre for Research & Innovation to lay out 10-years planning by breaking them into 5-year planning twice. In the first 3 years, the strategic priorities are concerned with the capacity development of faculty members and strengthening research publications. Chairman of AACO has spent at least twice a year conducting a research seminar or workshop.

Thirdly, the study found that most of the leadership characteristics of AIB meet the criterion of intellectual stimulation. The management team of AIB pay full attention to the research activity, especially participating in every research training seminar from the start to the end. Moreover, the study found that the leaders nominate the head and manager of each center/department/office based on their relevant qualifications, year of experiences, and good attitudes.

Finally, the study found the leaders of AIB use both assertive and participative style of leadership. They hold meetings frequently; for instance, EXCO conduct meetings to solve issues, initiate strategic priority, and assign new actions every week. The Centre for Research & Innovation has initiated a meeting with the assigned group of faculty members every week to ensure that they can produce the research article timely. The study also found there is a facilitating mechanism for the students who are going to write a thesis.

#### 4.7 Challenges in promoting the research productivity

Promoting the research productivity is still a major challenge. First of all, AIB is a newly established HEI and most of the faculty members at AIB have few experiences in research. They have problems in using statistical software. P3 states,

*“AIB is relatively new to higher education section, thus it is a bit struggling for building research culture. Several years ago, AIB used to provide several trainings on research, but it was less likely effective since there was a lack of mechanism to support faculty members to produce a research article.” He continues, “the faculty members have more than 10 years of*

*experience in a banking sector; however, the research task is new to them, especially their knowledge about research methods and statistical tools is limited.”*

Moreover, the budget of research was allocated based on the need of each department. Last but not least, the inclusion of research requirements in recruitment and selection process, mentoring, and size/experience/expertise are all missing.

#### 4.8 Coping with these challenges

Most of the challenges in promoting research productivity come from the individual characteristics. Therefore, in order to cope with these challenges, capacity building, resource allocation and facilitating process are needed. P1 states,

*“The management should arrange the faculty members based on their traits and capacity. For instance, the management should assign the maximum teaching hours (stated in the policy) to those faculty members who are good at teaching and teaching-focused; and assign a certain number of teaching hours (ranging from 6 to 10 hours) per week to those faculty members who are good at and willing to do research.”*

Furthermore, the study found that AIB has initiated workshop series on topics related to research, namely Introduction to Research Publications, How to Conduct Literature Review, Research Methodology, Quantitative Data Analysis, and From Hypothesis Building to Hypothesis Testing. P3 states,

*“We invite PhD Trainer from outside to conduct training seminars related to research topics to our faculty members as part of the capacity building.”*

Another remedy to cope with the challenge is that AIB has initiated research teamwork and facilitating process in order to inspire the faculty members to participate in producing research articles. P2 states,

*“We create a research team. Most of the Technical Team Leaders (TTL) lead and guide each research activity. We have delegated DMD & CAA to take this research responsibility. We have developed research manual for thesis writing and AIB research series. We have also delegate power to each relevant department/unit to do all this task.” P3 continues, “Even I, myself, have formed a group of three who are the management.”*

#### 4.9 Strategies to promote research productivity including long-term and short-term planning relevance to research activities

The study found that in order to promote a research productivity to reach the expansion stage, the management of AIB is going to lay out long-term strategy. AIB has created a research standard, conducted a capacity assessment and developed mechanism to build research capacity for the faculty members. P2 states,

*“The research operating manuals and procedures have been developed in line with AIB’s strategy. Moreover, the Center for Research & Innovation has been created in the purpose of supporting research activity.”*

Furthermore, P1 has laid out a road map for AIB to promote the research productivity and activities as follows:

- *Trainable (provide more training as part of the capacity building)*
- *Arrange the faculty members in a group who are good at research*
- *Initiate Inter-University Conference (with university partners)*
- *Strengthen quality research (evidence-based policy)*
- *Think Tank University (provides advice to MoEYS, government, and so forth)*

Moreover, P1 recommends AIB to establish a critical mass and to update the professorship title as the followings:

- *PhD holders with many years of teaching experiences (Professor who is good at teaching)*
- *PhD holders with Research experiences plus publications (Professor who is good at research)*
- *Master holders with ability to mobilize research grant (Professor who is good at developing proposal for grant)*

#### 4.10 Discussion

The research activity at AIB is currently at the very early stage of development, which research articles are produced by both lectures and students. Thus it is at the beginning of the initiating stage as mentioned by Olvido (2021).

Moreover, the key findings indicate that individual agents (faculty members) are motivated to participate in the research activity which is consistent to Bland et al. (2002); yet their research skills and knowledge of statistical tools are limited since they have more than 10 years of practical experiences in banking industry.

Through document analysis, interview and focus group discussion, the study found that a large amount of the institutional characteristics of AIB are consistent with (Bland et al., 2002), which can influence research productivity, namely clear coordinating goals, research emphasis, culture, positive group climate, communication with professional network, resources, sufficient work time, communication, rewards, brokered opportunities, decentralization organization, and assertive participative governance. However, the missing characteristics of the institutional factor are recruitment and selection, mentoring, and size/experience/expertise, which have already been stated in the solution to cope with challenges. The managing director has actioned DMD & CAA to integrate research requirements into the process of recruitment and selection new full-time faculty members. Moreover, the Chairman of AACO suggests to hire recognized, experienced researchers, adjunct professor, and visiting professors to mentor and share experiences to the full-time faculty member.

More importantly, the study found leadership characteristics of AIB play crucial roles in promoting research productivity, which are in line with (Bland et al., 2002). Members of Strategic Board and Chairman of AACO are very recognized scholars. Even the managing

director obtains expert power (Marchant, 2009) and he used to write thesis from master to doctoral programs. Also, the research activity is one of the major ambitions of the shareholder. In the Business News Category of AIB's website, the research articles on business, economy, technology, and so forth have been posted regularly (AIB, n.d.-b). The Chairman of AACO wish AIB to become a university in 2030 and a research university in 2050. Both the Chairman of AACO and the managing director envision research at AIB to be evidenced-based policy and think tank to MoEYS/relevant stakeholders in the field of business and banking. The Chairman of AACO is very inspirational motivation (Dubrin et al., 2006) who inspire and motivate executive body to participate in research. Both the managing director and DMD & CAA are intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration as they are good at allocating resources, aligning mission and goals, attending every research activity, holding frequently meetings, and set high expectation. These are consistent with (Dubrin et al., 2006 ; Bland et al., 2002).

## 5. Conclusion

The study explores the influence of institutional and leadership characteristics on research productivity at a higher education institution, especially from the practice of ACLEDA Institute of Business (AIB). By adopting the model of (Bland et al., 2002), the study employed document analysis, interview, and focus group discussion of the qualitative method. The key participants are the Chairman of AACO, the managing director, the deputy managing director in charge of academic, and the editor in chief of AIB Research Series. The study collected policy, strategy, research operating manual and procedures of AIB and analyzed them into themes. Then the study compared these themes with the findings from interview and focus group, and synthesized with the existing pieces of literature.

The study found that the research at AIB is currently at the very early stage of development – so-called infant stage, in which research articles are mainly produced by both lecturers and students. The study has shown that faculty members are motivated to participate in the research activity even though their research skills and knowledge of statistical tools are limited. They have lots of practical experiences in banking industry rather in academic setting.

The study has also found that the institutional characteristics such as clear coordinating goals, research emphasis, culture, positive group climate, communication with professional network, resources, sufficient work time, communication, rewards, brokered opportunities, decentralization organization, and assertive participative government do exist at AIB. However, there have remained some characteristics which have been found missing concerning the institutional factor, namely recruitment and selection, mentoring, and size/experience/expertise. Despite this, these characteristics have been identified as the solutions to overcome the challenges.

More importantly, the study has indicated that leadership characteristics such as scholarship, research orientation, capability fulfilling all critical leadership roles, and participative leader do play important roles in promoting the research productivity at AIB.

## 5.1 Implication of the study

Most of the institutional and leadership characteristics play the important roles in promoting the research productivity at AIB; however, there are still missing some of the characteristics. Therefore, the study suggests the following:

- AIB should develop long-term, medium-term, and short-term strategic plan in order to promote research culture to reach the expansion stage and build research ecosystem at AIB.
- AIB should conduct capacity assessment among faculty members so that the result can help pinpoint those who are prioritized to be invested in capacity building.
- AIB should integrate research capacity in the job requirements for the recruitment and selection process of full-time faculty.
- AIB should hire adjunct professors and visiting professors who are very experienced and recognized in research, especially members of Strategic Board, to coach and mentor AIB's faculty of members.
- AIB should update the qualification requirements for promoting professorship title to the faculty members, namely assistant professor, associate professor, and professor.
- AIB should allocate annual budget plan for research so that faculty members are motivated to participate in producing the research articles.
- AIB should create a platform such as research conferences/ conference proceedings/ workshops which allow faculty members to share their experiences and research findings.

## 5.2 Research limitations and future research

The study focuses only at the institutional and leadership characteristics at a higher education institution in building the research productivity, especially from the real practice at AIB. It is hard to generalize the whole picture of research productivity at the higher education institutions (HEIs) in Cambodia. The study suggests including an in-depth study on the individual characteristics at AIB and expand the scope of the study on the institutional and leadership characteristics in promoting research productivity at other HEIs in Cambodia.



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