NEGOTIATING ACADEMIC IDENTITY AMID UNIVERSITY REFORM: A STUDY OF RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTEGRATION IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Vietnamese lecturers perceive and negotiate the integration of teaching and research under the impact of governance reforms on their academic identity. As traditionally teaching-focused universities transition towards research-intensive models, academics are increasingly expected to perform dual primary roles, not only as teachers but also as researchers. These expectations, however, often clash with long-standing institutional norms, cultural values, and established professional identities. While grounded in the Vietnamese context with specific attention to the teaching and research relationship, this research also speaks to broader ongoing debates in higher education: the impact of reforms on academic identity and their practice.

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of practice, particularly the concepts of habitus, field, capital, and hysteresis, this study investigates how academic identity is (re)shaped through interactions between structural imperatives, cultural influences and individual dispositions. An interpretivist qualitative approach was adopted, involving semi-structured interviews with lecturers in research-intensive universities in Vietnam. Thematic analysis was employed to explore their experiences, focusing on their responses to reform-driven changes in their academic identities, particularly in relation to their perceptions and practices of integrating teaching and research.

The empirical findings reveal that the entrenched primacy of teaching, rooted in Confucian heritage, socialist educational traditions, and hierarchical institutional cultures, continues to influence lecturers' professional identity and practice. While participants generally share beliefs in the potential benefits of the integration, multiple constraints hinder their ability to realise them in practice. Several challenges have been explored, including scepticism about the rationale for changes, ambiguity in research expectations, capacity constraints, and limited structural support. These tensions have led to a spectrum of responses to changes, ranging from passive resistance to subtle reluctance. The study also examines institutional shifts in resource allocation and priority-setting that disproportionately privilege research. This has resulted in several unintended consequences related to academic identity, professional, ethical, and emotional issues.

Evidence from this study demonstrates the analytical value of Bourdieu's theory of practice in illuminating the dynamics of academic life in the Vietnamese context, provided it is adapted flexibly and contextually. This study also extends the framework by demonstrating how culturally embedded dispositions interact with shifting structural logics in a post-socialist context. The analysis demonstrates that identity negotiation has been shaped not only by institutional change but also by symbolic hierarchies, historical trajectories, and culturally specific values. The study thereby extends and contextualises Bourdieu's theoretical framework to shed light on the realities of academic work in Vietnam, while simultaneously nuancing universalist assumptions embedded in dominant global higher education discourses.

In conclusion, this study provides insights into how academics in the Vietnamese context navigate their identities amid ongoing reforms. The discrepancies between the ideal of teaching-research integration and the lecturer's realities play a significant role in shaping lecturers' identity negotiation. Without attention to those issues, the push towards research-intensive models risks overburdening lecturers, undermining teaching values, creating identity tensions, and deepening inequalities rather than fostering meaningful integration. The present study underscores the necessity for policy interventions that ensure equitable opportunities and sustainable professional trajectories for all academic staff. The ultimate purpose is to create a healthier ecosystem where the reform-driven goals of increased research performance do not come at the expense of teaching quality and overall lecturer well-being.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
HE	Higher education
HEIs	Higher education institutions
HERA	Higher Education Reform Agenda
MAXQDA	Max (Weber) Qualitative Data Analysis
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
NVC	Nonviolent Communication
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
R&T	Research and teaching
RI	Research-intensive
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
ToP	Theory of practice
UK	United Kingdom
VHE	Vietnamese higher education

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STATEMENT ON THE USE OF LANGUAGE SUPPORT TOOLS

I acknowledge the use of Grammarly (https://grammarly.com) and Google Translate (https://translate.google.com) in a limited, accountable and manageable way to support the linguistic presentation of this thesis.

Scope of assistance:

- *Grammarly* helped identify minor grammatical, spelling, punctuation and typographical errors; improve sentence-level clarity and concision; suggest alternative word choices; and maintain consistency with UK English conventions (e.g., spelling, hyphenation, capitalisation and numerals). It also highlighted potential inconsistencies in in-text citations and reference formatting, which I manually checked.

- *Google Translate* supported the double-checking of English translations for Vietnamese excerpts quoted in the thesis. I used it to compare different expressions and to recheck the equivalence of meaning.

- These tools were not used to generate ideas, interpretations, arguments or structure.

I manually reviewed every suggestion and accepted only those that preserved the intended meaning.

DECLARATION

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Nguyen Thai Truong Le

Signature:

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview of the chapter

The first chapter of this thesis introduces the research by outlining the background and rationale. It begins with an overview of the broader reform agenda in higher education (HE), highlighting the global movements towards research-intensive (RI) universities and their influence on academic expectations. It then narrows the focus to the Vietnamese context, where governance reforms have led to significant shifts in how university lecturers are expected to perform and integrate their research and teaching (R&T) responsibilities. The chapter then identifies the research problem through both international and national lenses. It also briefly introduces Bourdieu's Theory of Practice[1] (ToP) as a conceptual tool for examining academic identity negotiation in reforming contexts.

This chapter then discusses the researcher's personal, professional, and academic motivations for conducting the study. It also clearly states the aims and research questions that guide the inquiry, followed by a clarification of the study's scope. It concludes by discussing the significance of the research in terms of its empirical, theoretical, and contextual contributions and by providing an outline of the overall thesis structure.

1.2. Research background

This study is conceived and conducted at a time when Vietnam is undergoing a historic wave of comprehensive reforms across multiple domains of national life. Vietnamese leaders have demonstrated strong political determination in modernising the country's institutional, economic, and social systems in pursuit of long-term development and global integration. In this context, education has been identified as a fundamental pillar for the country's progress, serving as a key driver of the transformation process and enhancing Vietnam's position in the global knowledge economy. When Vietnam enters a new era of development, innovation and reform in HE has become one of the most pressing topics. Policymakers are increasingly recognising the need for innovative thinking, institutional design, and operational practices to address contemporary challenges (Dang & Glewwe, 2018; Fry, 2009; The Vietnamese

[1] Note: A more detailed presentation and analysis of Bourdieu's ToP as the theoretical foundation for this study will be discussed in Chapter Four – Theoretical Foundation.

Government, 2025). A wide range of HE reforms has therefore been introduced, including strategic changes in governance structures, increased autonomy, and performance-based accountability. These reforms are not only responses to internal development needs but also strategic efforts to align with international trends and improve the relevance and quality of Vietnamese universities (Nguyen & Tran, 2019b; Sloper & Le, 1995; Tran et al., 2014).

The globalisation of HE has brought with it normative pressures to modernise and compete in a highly competitive academic world. In Vietnamese higher education (VHE), one of the most prominent policy directions has been the promotion of university autonomy, giving universities greater decision-making power in areas such as human resources, finance, and curriculum (Nguyen, 2020b; Nguyen, 2020c). This has been accompanied by a shift toward performance-based governance models and increased commercialisation, with universities seeking new revenue streams and engaging in academic commercialisation (Hayden & Thiep, 2007; Mai et al., 2020). In recent decades, the VHE system has also been shaped by global trends that promote international rankings, research productivity, and academic performance as key indicators of institutional quality. Vietnamese universities are increasingly expected to follow RI models, moving away from a tradition of being primarily teaching-oriented (Harman et al., 2010; Kamibeppu, 2009; London, 2011; Nguyen & Vu, 2015).

These policy implementations have restructured the VHE system in ways that directly impact academic identities and expectations (Hai & Anh, 2021). Nevertheless, these shifts have not always been accompanied by adequate institutional support or cultural alignment. Many universities still lack the infrastructure, resources, and strategic alignment necessary to support academic research. Meanwhile, cultural values (e.g., Confucian tradition legacies) that continue to emphasise teaching as a noble and central academic function are deeply rooted in Vietnamese educational culture (Phuong-Mai et al., 2005). Traditionally, Vietnamese lecturers have been regarded as moral educators responsible for guiding and educating students. However, they are now also expected to become knowledge creators. These changes have created a HE context in which academics must adapt to new, complex, and sometimes contradictory expectations. These factors have been making the implementation of reform more complex and unpredictable (Doan, 2005; Hai & Anh, 2021; Hayden & Thiep, 2007; Mai et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2008; Pham & Goyette, 2019; Van & Hien, 2018).

1.3. Statement of the research problem

The elements mentioned above, such as the push towards research-oriented models, the introduction of university autonomy policy, and the influence of Confucian values, indicate the complex and dynamic environment in which Vietnamese university lecturers are situated. Within the context of national ambitions to develop RI universities, lecturers are now expected to embody dual roles that combine high-quality teaching with internationally recognised research productivity. While this aspiration reflects a global shift towards knowledge-based development, a set of tensions and ambiguities that are not easily resolved has emerged in practice (Le, 2016b; My, 2018; Tran et al., 2017a).

These challenges are not unique to Vietnam. The R&T relationship has long been a subject of critical debates in international HE scholarship. The common research topics have been concerns about the compatibility of these academic roles, their implications for academic identity, and the influences of institutional priorities (e.g., see Annala & Mäkinen, 2011; Arimoto, 2013; Brew, 1999; Halliwell, 2008; Hattie & Marsh, 1996; Kaasila et al., 2021; Robertson & Bond, 2005; Tight, 2016). However, in Vietnam, these issues take on distinctive nuances due to the national 'hybrid' reform agenda, institutional structures and norms, political influences, and cultural legacies. Understanding how lecturers perceive and respond to these changes, particularly how they negotiate academic identity under reform conditions, is therefore a matter of both academic and policy relevance.

There is also a need to examine these issues through an appropriate theoretical lens. Existing studies seem to have primarily focused on either structural shifts and institutional constraints or individual challenges. There is a need for further research to explore the experiences of lecturers and how they negotiate their academic identity under the impact of governance reforms. Bourdieu's ToP, which is widely employed in educational research for its capacity to link macro-structures with individual agency (e.g., see Collyer, 2015; Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008; Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017; Kloot, 2009, 2014; Margison, 2013; Mu et al., 2018), offers a promising theoretical framework for this inquiry. Nevertheless, its application remains limited in non-Western, culturally sensitive reforming contexts such as Vietnam.

Overall, the research problem may be outlined as follows. The Vietnamese leaders have been undertaking a fundamental and comprehensive reform to improve the quality and

competitiveness of the national HE system. One of the central components of these efforts is the transformation of teaching-focused universities into RI institutions, accompanied by an explicit redefinition of academic identities and responsibilities. University lecturers are increasingly expected to perform dual roles of R&T, often within institutional contexts that lack the structural and cultural foundations to support such integration. While these reform efforts align with broader global trends, they are heavily influenced by Vietnam's distinctive historical legacies, governance logics, and cultural norms, giving rise to unique challenges in role adaptation and integration, and identity negotiation.

Despite the growing body of literature on the R&T nexus and academic identity, there is a need for further understanding of how lecturers in changing and context-sensitive systems experience and respond to these evolving expectations. Additionally, many studies suggest that integrating R&T is inherently beneficial. This study argues that integration depends on context. In Vietnam, structural, cultural, and institutional conditions, such as a teaching-focused tradition, recent governance reforms, and cultural legacies, create significant challenges and variations. This research, therefore, examines how lecturers perceive and address these complexities, rather than assuming integration is uniform or automatically positive. Furthermore, while Bourdieu's ToP holds great promise as a theoretical lens for examining structural inequalities and institutional change, its application has often focused on the reproduction of existing hierarchies rather than the dynamic processes of individual adaptation and negotiation. There is also a need to explore how academic actors in non-Western reform contexts make sense of and navigate these shifts, not only as institutional subjects but also as agents who interpret and reconfigure their identities in practice.

This study aims to address these gaps by utilising Bourdieu's ToP to examine Vietnamese lecturers' perceptions and practices in response to the changes in academic identity, with the focus on the shifting balance between R&T. It yields insights that could contribute to a more context-sensitive understanding of academic identity negotiation under conditions of reform. In what follows, the research problem will be further discussed from three complementary perspectives: first, through a review of international literature on R&T tensions and academic identity dilemmas; second, by situating these issues within the VHE reform context; and third, by highlighting the theoretical need for a dynamic, context-sensitive application of Bourdieu's ToP to understand and analyse academic identity transformations in changing contexts.

1.3.1. R&T tensions and academic identity dilemmas in global HE

The changing relationship between R&T has long been a subject of intense debate in international HE (Hattie & Marsh, 1996; Tight, 2016). A significant body of literature (e.g., Arimoto, 2013; De Weert & van der Kaap, 2013; Harland, 2016; John & Fanghanel, 2015; Rostan, 2013; Santiago et al., 2013; Schimank & Winnes, 2000; Schwartzman & Balbachevsky, 2013; Teichler, 2014; Visser-Wijnveen et al., 2010; Wolhuter, 2013) has demonstrated how, in many countries, particularly those influenced by the Humboldtian tradition[2], research has increasingly been prioritised over teaching. There has been a tendency for universities to allocate greater resources to research, reward research productivity in promotion and tenure decisions, and aggressively recruit research-active academics who may have little or no pedagogical training (Shin et al., 2014; Elen et al., 2007). Furthermore, many academics do not receive pre-service pedagogical training or even desire to undertake teaching tasks when universities recruit them. In contrast to their relationship with their research and discipline, they often lack a close connection with their teaching profession. Many such academics identify more strongly with their disciplinary research communities than with their roles as teachers, leading to a marginalisation of teaching within their academic identity. Gradually, academics, especially in RI universities, are increasingly prioritising research, allocating more time to research, and consequently, teaching activities seem to be overlooked (Kaasila et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2014).

This overemphasis on the research dimension has prompted concerns not only within academic circles but also among students and the wider public (see Amaral et al., 2008; Clark, 1997; Shin et al., 2014). As early as the 1980s and 1990s, the so-called *incompatibility thesis* gained attention in the United States and elsewhere, suggesting that the demands of research detract from the quality of teaching. According to this view, the time and energy spent on research is time and energy taken away from teaching responsibilities, and vice versa. A greater interest in research often entails a lesser interest in teaching, as evidenced by the fact that when lecturers conduct research, they frequently neglect their students. Although primarily propagated by

[2] The Humboldtian tradition, originating from Wilhelm von Humboldt's reform of the University of Berlin in the early 19th century, emphasises the unity of R&T, academic freedom, liberal education, and the role of the university in society. This ideology has significantly influenced many Western HE systems and beyond (Schimank & Winnes, 2000). A further discussion of the 'Humboldtian idea' of the university and its relevance to contemporary debates on the R&T nexus will be presented in later sections.

outside critics, this oppositional view was still reflected in survey questions posed by academics in studies of lecturers' perceptions and practices. Some typical questions are: Are you interested in research or teaching? Do you spend your time in research or teaching? Which does your institution emphasise? (Clark, 1997, p. 241). Student complaints about absentee lecturers and low-quality instruction have also become more frequent, raising broader questions about the fundamental purpose of universities. Are they primarily centres for research or teaching? What are the roles and responsibilities of academic staff in contemporary HE systems? Does this phenomenon primarily arise in countries that are highly responsive to global rankings, or does it reflect a broader twenty-first-century trend worldwide? (Cummings & Shin, 2014).

These issues have been exacerbated by the global expansion of university rankings and the growing pressure on institutions to enhance their international visibility. It cannot be denied that high rankings are associated with institutional prestige, increased funding opportunities, and the ability to attract top academics and students (Abrizah et al., 2010; De Filippo et al., 2012; Kifor et al., 2021; Lee & Park, 2012). As a result, university leaders and policymakers are increasingly incentivised to pursue RI models of development (see Barnett, 2005; John & Fanghanel, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2014). It is a time when universities are eager to participate in the race to improve their university rankings, with a key criterion being the enhancement of research productivity indicators. High university rankings are considered collectively beneficial to both institutional (e.g., institutional reputation, attracting more potential scholars and students) and individual (e.g., academic reputation) aspects. Thus, it can be said that this is a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship (De Filippo et al., 2012; Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007; Van der Wende, 2003). This further motivates policymakers and university leaders to make the necessary shifts in governance to become RI universities, emphasising the research function with strong motivations and beliefs in, and values of, research (Breen et al., 2003; John & Fanghanel, 2015). While the value of research is unquestionable, problems arise when institutional policies conflate research quality with quantity of publications and enforce performance-based regimes that compel lecturers to produce knowledge regardless of conditions or capacity (Halse et al., 2007; Rostan, 2013; Schwartzman & Balbachevsky, 2013). In some contexts, this has led to superficial or even unethical practices. For instance, Heng et al. (2022) found that many Cambodian academics, under pressure to meet research quotas, paid *'lip service'* to research and published in low-quality or predatory journals as a means of fulfilling institutional requirements.

The challenge is not limited to external pressures. Several studies (e.g., Arimoto, 2013; Halliwell, 2008; Kaasila et al., 2021) have shown that even when lecturers recognise the value of integrating R&T, they sometimes struggle to do so effectively. For example, Hu et al. (2015) found that although lecturers are aware of their dual role of R&T and acknowledge the pedagogical benefits of research in their teaching, they seem not to know how to perform it successfully. Similar research findings (e.g., see Gillen et al., 2021; Heng et al., 2022; Tadesse & Khalid, 2022) report that university lecturers express uncertainties about how to incorporate research into their daily practice. This difficulty is compounded by institutional structures that offer little guidance or support for integrating lecturer roles. As a result, the R&T nexus remains poorly defined and inconsistently enacted in many academic environments. The misalignment between policymakers' expectations and academic staff's capacities continues to widen, particularly in institutions that were historically teaching-focused and are now transitioning toward RI models (Barnett, 2005; Shin et al., 2014; Tadesse & Khalid, 2022).

These issues are considerably salient for lecturers who have spent most of their careers in teaching-focused environments. For them, shifting expectations towards RI models leads to considerable transformations in their professional identity. As Harland (2016) notes, when R&T 'are brought together in the same institution and enacted within the same person, what Humboldt might have foreseen is that they would inevitably be experienced in different ways, simply because academics are merging what had previously been two clearly distinct tasks' (p. 470). This merging might not be only structural but also psychological. The habitus formed around the traditional teaching role might inhibit the ability, or willingness, of academics to internalise a new identity premised on research productivity and dual-function performance. In other words, the momentum of long-playing the dominant role of teaching might prevent lecturers from effectively adapting to the new dual role identity in the RI environments (Kaasila et al., 2021; Macfarlane, 2016; Van Lankveld et al., 2017).

Overall, the existing literature reveals a complex set of tensions surrounding the integration of R&T in contemporary universities. While efforts to combine these academic roles are often framed in normative terms, as mutually beneficial or even inseparable in theory, they remain considerably difficult to realise in practice. The gaps between institutional expectations, policy instruments, and individual academic realities highlight a need for further investigation, particularly in under-researched contexts.

1.3.2. R&T tensions and academic identity changes in the Vietnamese context

The R&T tensions and academic identity dilemmas discussed above acquire distinctive nuances when examined in the context of Vietnam, a country undergoing unprecedented reforms under the leadership of a state that is both socialist in ideology and increasingly market-oriented in practice. Along with other developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region, VHE has reportedly fallen short of meeting the country's expectations and demands for development. One of the main obstacles is that Vietnamese universities still primarily focus on the teaching function, while the role of scientific research remains significantly limited (Dang & Glewwe, 2018; Hai & Anh, 2021; Harman et al., 2010; Nguyen, 2007; Pham & Hayden, 2019). Over the past two decades, Vietnamese policymakers have made substantial efforts to transform the HE system, aligning it with global standards while responding to national development goals. Governmental strategies have explicitly aimed to reposition Vietnamese universities as engines of innovation, economic growth, and international competitiveness (Nguyen & Tran, 2019a; Tran et al., 2017b). Central to these reform agendas has been the elevation of research as a primary function of universities. In this transition, university lecturers are increasingly expected to take on dual academic roles, where the research role is no longer considered optional but mandatory and measurable (Gillen et al., 2021; Le, 2016b; Nguyen, 2020a; Phan & Doan, 2020; Tran et al., 2017a).

These strategic transformations were clearly articulated in the 2005 *Higher Education Reform Agenda* (HERA), which called for a fundamental reorganisation of HE governance, alongside an expansion of institutional autonomy and an emphasis on research productivity. Since its implementation, 'HERA has directly influenced how university teachers react to the reinforced research activity and how they think about their research engagement' (Le, 2017, p. 91). The implementation of HERA has been accompanied by a series of policy documents promoting world-class university status and international rankings (Ly, 2013; Nghi & London, 2010). For instance, Decision No. 36/2013/QD-TTg and Decision No. 69/2017/QD-TTg, issued by the government, outlined ambitious targets for Vietnamese universities to achieve high regional and global rankings. These reforms reflect global trends discussed earlier but occur within a unique socio-political context where state control remains strong, and reform trajectories are negotiated through a complex interplay of ideology, policy, culture and institutional adaptation (Harman et al., 2009; Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020; Kamibeppu, 2009; Le, 2016a; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Despite their alignment with global reform movements, these policy shifts have encountered considerable issues during implementation. Recent studies (e.g., Le, 2016b; Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021; Phan & Doan, 2020; Tran et al., 2017a) reveal that Vietnamese lecturers face significant challenges in adapting to their evolving roles. There has been a vague and varied understanding in lecturers' perceptions of the concepts of the RI university and R&T nexus (Gillen et al., 2021). Consequently, their actions in practice diverge from the initial expectations of policy planners, and they often lack intrinsic motivations to implement the changes. If they want to make the changes, they are unsure of how to perform them (Nguyen et al., 2021). Thus, playing the dual role of R&T becomes a burden for Vietnamese university lecturers. They complain that they do not have enough time to do both simultaneously. As a result, they must choose between the two, and most tend to place more weight on research, as their publications would benefit both themselves and their universities (Gillen et al., 2021). Others view research as an institutional obligation rather than an intrinsic aspect of their professional identity, leading to superficial or compliance-driven responses, such as publishing in low-quality journals or outsourcing research tasks (Nguyen et al., 2021; Pham & Hayden, 2019).

In addition, the VHE system has been historically shaped by a teaching-centric model inherited from Confucian traditions and reinforced during the socialist period. Scientific research was largely conducted in separate research institutes outside of universities, and lecturers were primarily seen as teachers rather than researchers (Ly, 2013; Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021). Even after the promulgation of Decision 324-CT by the Chair of the Committee of Ministers (the present Prime Minister) in 1992, which aimed to integrate R&T institutions, the research capacity of most universities remained limited. Consequently, many lecturers continue to identify primarily with their teaching roles, while the cultural and structural conditions necessary for research engagement remain underdeveloped (Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Indeed, Vietnam's cultural context adds further complexity to the reform process. Beyond structural limitations, cultural foundations also play a critical role in shaping how reforms are experienced on the ground. As presented in previous literature, Confucian traditions continue to have a significant impact on educational practices and attitudes in Vietnam, emphasising stability, hierarchy, and deference to authority (Harman et al., 2010; London, 2010; Nguyen, 2008; Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021). These cultural norms may shape how reform policies

are received and enacted within academic institutions, potentially limiting open debates or contestations. In this setting, some scholars have argued that changes in academic expectations may be accommodated passively rather than actively negotiated (Pham & Hayden, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2021). However, there remains relatively limited empirical evidence on how these cultural influences interact with identity changes and professional role adaptations in the VHE context.

In summary, while VHE reforms share many features with international trends, such as performance-based governance, research intensification, and global ranking ambitions, they also present a unique background of historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics. The emerging R&T tensions and academic identity dilemmas in Vietnam cannot be fully understood without attending to these contextual specificities. Yet, despite the increasing concerns and policy focus on dual-role expectations, little is known about how Vietnamese university lecturers themselves perceive and respond to these changes. A significant gap remains in existing literature regarding the perceptions and experiences of Vietnamese lecturers, particularly in how they make sense of dual-role expectations, negotiate competing pressures, and reconstruct their academic identities in response to the reforms. Addressing this gap is both timely and necessary, particularly as Vietnam continues to pursue a vision of a globally competitive, research-driven HE system.

1.3.3. Using Bourdieu's ToP to study academic identity negotiation in changing contexts

Bourdieu's ToP, with its major concepts of habitus, field and capital, has become a widely used lens in HE research. Scholars have fruitfully applied his framework to examine issues of inequality, academic professionalism and culture, and institutional change in HE (e.g., see Apps et al., 2019; Boschetti, 2006; Bui et al., 2019; Costa & Murphy, 2015; Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017; Grenfell & James, 1998; Kloot, 2009, 2014; Marginson, 2013; Maton, 2005; Mu et al., 2018; Naidoo, 2004; Rowlands, 2017; Yang, 2014). His theory has provided powerful tools for analysing institutional power structures, symbolic hierarchies, and the reproduction of inequality in academic settings (Naidoo, 2004; Marginson, 2008). Scholars have applied Bourdieu's theoretical framework to examine how universities function as fields structured by competition for various forms of capital, e.g., symbolic, cultural, and social capital. These

studies have provided insights into how institutional hierarchies are maintained, how academic stratification occurs, and how individuals' trajectories are shaped by their inherited dispositions and access to resources.

More recently, Bourdieu's ideas have been utilised to examine academic identity and role tensions within higher education institutions (HEIs). Researchers have employed the concepts of habitus and field to examine the disjuncture between institutional structures and individual dispositions, particularly in contexts where universities are transforming (e.g., see Billot & King, 2015; Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017; Kloot, 2009, 2014; Maton, 2005; Mu et al., 2018; Naidoo, 2004; Rowlands, 2017). In the realm of the R&T nexus, recent studies have highlighted how the privileging of research over teaching reflects unequal distributions of capital and institutional priorities (Douglas, 2013). These analyses have highlighted how teaching-focused academics may be marginalised within RI environments, and how their professional identities are (re)shaped by structural constraints and symbolic recognition. It cannot be denied that such research has enriched the understanding of institutional priorities and identity tensions. However, they have seemingly tended to focus primarily on reproducing existing structures and perpetuating inequalities.

What might be underexplored is the potential of Bourdieu's ToP to account for the dynamic processes of identity negotiation and possibilities of transformation within changing institutional contexts. While Bourdieu himself acknowledged the potential for change through concepts such as *hysteresis*[3] (i.e., the misalignment between habitus and field during periods of transformation), this has received comparatively limited empirical attention in studies of HE (see Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017; Kloot, 2009; Maton, 2004, 2005; Mu et al., 2018; Reay, 2004b; Yang, 2014). These gaps suggest the need for a more contextually oriented application of Bourdieu's ToP that can shed light on how change occurs and is enacted by individuals operating within evolving educational structures.

Furthermore, while the contextual and cultural dimensions discussed above escalate the growing complexity of academic identities in Vietnamese universities, understanding how individual lecturers interpret and respond to these shifts requires a theoretical lens that can account for both macro-level structures and micro-level agency. For this purpose, Bourdieu's

[3] Note: This concept will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four – Theoretical foundation

ToP offers a particularly useful analytical framework. His conceptual framework has been widely used to examine the interplay between institutional structures and individual dispositions in educational settings. Within HE research, Bourdieu's framework has helped illuminate how academics negotiate status hierarchies, academic expectations, and institutional change (see Grenfell, 2014; Grenfell & James, 1998; Kloot, 2009; Maton, 2004). However, despite this growing interest, the application of Bourdieu's theoretical tools remains relatively limited in non-Western contexts, particularly in examining how academic identities are (re)shaped under reform conditions in systems like Vietnam's.

Vietnam represents a particularly rich and under-researched context for examining how lecturers perceive and respond to changing academic expectations under the pressures of reform. As mentioned earlier, Vietnamese universities are undergoing significant transformations, shifting from teaching-centric to RI models, with new forms of capital being prioritised. These shifts force lecturers to adapt to a restructured field in which research productivity is increasingly rewarded, while traditional teaching roles may become devalued. Yet, as Bourdieu (1990b) emphasises, such field changes do not automatically lead to a realignment of individual habitus. When the dispositions shaped by previous contexts no longer align with the new structures of the field, a hysteresis effect may occur, generating discomfort, ambiguity, or even resistance. This theoretical notion may be particularly useful in understanding why some Vietnamese lecturers may experience identity tensions, lack intrinsic motivations for research, or adopt surface-level responses to institutional pressures. In addition, the VHE system, characterised by its hybrid ideological foundations, Confucian legacy, and evolving market-socialist governance, may offer a unique empirical context to test the adaptability of Bourdieu's ToP beyond its traditional Eurocentric applications. Based on this theoretical framework, the current study examines how institutional norms around *'good academic practice'* become internalised and reproduced, even when they contradict lecturers' prior values or professional identities.

Given these complexities, the present study aims to contribute to a more context-sensitive application of Bourdieu's ToP, particularly in relation to academic identity transformation and negotiation. While Bourdieu's ToP has been employed to examine education reforms in various international settings, there is still a need for further investigation that explores how these concepts operate within rapidly changing, post-socialist, and culturally distinct environments,

such as Vietnam. The Vietnamese context thus presents a potentially valuable site, given the intersection of global reform pressures, institutional norms and cultural legacies.

Furthermore, this study places lecturers at the centre of the analysis. They are not simply implementers of reform but rather meaning-makers whose academic identities, alongside their perceptions and beliefs, shape how policy is enacted in practice. Despite being the key agents expected to realise institutional change, lecturers' voices and everyday struggles remain comparatively under-represented in both policy and academic discourse. This study, therefore, addresses not only a gap in theoretical application but also an empirical gap in understanding the experiences of Vietnamese lecturers. Rather than viewing lecturers as passive recipients of policy change, this study explores how they engage with shifting academic expectations, navigate competing institutional demands, and (re)construct their academic identities in practice.

Through these perspectives, the present study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of agency, adaptation, and identity negotiation in VHE. It aspires to make modest yet meaningful contributions to ongoing dialogues on academic identity, R&T relationship, HE reform, and the global relevance of Bourdieu's sociology of education.

1.4. Personal, professional and academic motivations for the study

This research is grounded in a deeply personal and professional commitment to understanding the experiences of university lecturers in Vietnam amid a period of profound educational reform. As a Vietnamese learner and researcher who has been nurtured by the national education system from childhood to undergraduate, and who has returned to work in HE in Vietnam, I bring to this study both a strong desire to contribute to the development of my home country and a sense of moral obligation to those who have contributed to my educational journey. This dual sense of responsibility, which is towards national evolution and the academic community that nurtured me, has shaped both the focus and spirit of this study.

Looking back on my school years, I have always considered myself fortunate to have had access to education and been guided by teachers who left a lasting imprint on my life. I often find myself saying, *"That teacher changed my life"*, and there are many names I could insert into that sentence. These teachers were not merely figures of authority, but individuals who offered

me companionship, guidance, encouragement, and compassion during pivotal moments of my growth. My gratitude for them extends beyond the cultural emphasis on teacher reverence found in Confucian-influenced societies, such as Vietnam. It is rooted in personal experiences, especially moments when I was listened to, supported, and seen. I still remember being consoled by my very first teacher, Ms Nhu, when I cried on my first day of school at the age of five. I recall the care with which my first-grade teacher taught me how to write, and the heartfelt advice my fifth-grade teacher gave me before I moved on to secondary school. In Grade 9, my homeroom teacher predicted to my mother that I would one day earn a doctorate. Throughout my adolescence, these teachers were present not only as instructors but as personal mentors who listened to my fears, encouraged my potential, and modelled integrity and commitment. Their impact on me was deeply personal and transformative.

Having benefited so much from these educators, I now feel a strong urge to revisit their voices, struggles, and reflections, particularly in a time of change when so much is being asked of them. This motivation crystallised during my return to Vietnam after completing my Master's programme in Education at the University of Glasgow. I took up a teaching role at a Vietnamese university at a time when the country, like much of the world, was grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic and the pressures of HE reform. Policy discourses were rich with visions of modernisation and internationalisation, but what was largely absent were the voices of the lecturers who were expected to implement these reforms on the ground.

During my professional engagement, I came to understand the kinds of burdens and anxieties that many lecturers were experiencing more profoundly. As a university lecturer myself, I have also encountered the tensions between R&T demands – two domains that are increasingly treated as performance indicators but rarely sufficiently supported in practice. Balancing heavy teaching loads, administrative responsibilities, and the expectation of publishing in international journals created a constant sense of pressure for many lecturers. I often found myself questioning whether it was even feasible to meet these standards in a meaningful way, given the current circumstances. This was not just my struggle. I observed comparable tensions in many of my colleagues, including my life partner, who also worked in academia and faced similar dilemmas. Despite our efforts to remain committed and optimistic, the lack of systemic support often left us feeling frustrated and disoriented.

These experiences made me acutely aware that the challenges posed by the dual role of R&T are deeply personal, structural, and identity-shaping. Some of my colleagues appeared overwhelmed by institutional demands, uncertain about their evolving roles, and fatigued by unrealistic expectations. A few of them, despite their strong commitment to the profession, eventually chose to leave academia. Meanwhile, public discourses often focused disproportionately on issues of academic misconduct and research ethics violations, with little attention paid to the structural constraints or silent struggles that many lecturers face. While there are undoubtedly problems within the system, there are also many decent and dedicated educators whose stories are rarely heard. I feel an increasing responsibility to amplify those voices, not to romanticise them, but to bring their experiences and perspectives to the forefront of the broader conversations on reform. These complex dynamics served not only as experiences but also as the initial analytical lens through which I began to frame my research focus on identity transformation and negotiation under reform conditions.

These reflections formed the core of my motivation to pursue this research. They are grounded in experiences and a deep desire to understand the professional lives of university lecturers better – people I once saw as mentors and now also see as colleagues. At a time when VHE is undergoing transformations driven by the emphasis on research intensification, performance-based evaluation, and global competitiveness, the lecturer identity is shifting in complex and sometimes painful ways. However, much of the existing literature has not sufficiently addressed how these changes are experienced by lecturers themselves.

I consider this study as a way of both giving back and moving forward – an academic endeavour rooted in personal gratitude, professional empathy, and intellectual curiosity. It seeks not only to examine academic identity tensions during a period of reform, but also to offer a more human-centred account of how those working within the system interpret, negotiate and respond to the changes. The long and often unpredictable journey of this PhD, marked by both theoretical exploration and personal reflection, has deepened my conviction that this is a worthwhile and necessary project. It also reflects an ongoing intellectual commitment to understanding how education reforms are enacted and managed from the inside out – not only through policy analysis but through the everyday experiences of those who live them. Further discussions on the potential influence of my background, values, and prior experiences on the research process (researcher reflexivity) will be discussed in Chapter Five – Methodology.

1.5. Research aims and questions

In light of the aforementioned discussions, the present study aims to explore how HE reforms in Vietnam impact academic identity, with a specific attention to their R&T integration. In particular, it examines how academic identities are negotiated within the structural, institutional, and cultural contexts of a reforming system, where new governance structures and performance pressures are transforming traditional academic norms and practices. The research is informed by Bourdieu's ToP, which provides a conceptual lens for analysing the interplay between institutional structures and individual dispositions.

The research addresses two central questions:

1) *What have been the impacts of HE reform in R&T on Vietnamese academic identity?*

2) *Which constraints and enablers have affected Vietnamese lecturers' integration of R&T in practice, and in what ways?*

1.6. Scope of the study

The R&T nexus, academic identity, and HE reform are broad areas of scholarship, each encompassing a wide range of disciplinary, institutional, and cultural perspectives. To ensure conceptual clarity and analytical depth, this study has defined its scope through the following delimitations.

First, the study focuses on how Vietnamese university lecturers perceive and respond to the evolving expectations surrounding the integration of R&T within the context of ongoing governance reforms. Rather than evaluating teaching quality or research productivity in quantitative terms, the study seeks to investigate how academic identities are (re)shaped and practices are influenced by the structural and cultural conditions of reform.

Second, the research draws on qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews with lecturers working at public RI universities in Vietnam. These institutions were selected because they are at the forefront of the national agenda to develop RI universities and are therefore subject to stronger reform pressures. While the study refers to HE in general, its empirical focus

is confined to public universities and does not encompass other sectors such as colleges or vocational training institutions. Furthermore, the scope of teaching in this study is restricted to undergraduate education, as all selected participants were involved in undergraduate programmes at the time of data collection. The investigation does not aim to examine the experiences of students, senior university administrators, or policymakers, whose perspectives fall outside the scope of the current inquiry. The selection of these methodological elements and the rationale behind them will be elaborated upon in Chapter Five – Methodology.

Third, while academic roles and identities may also embrace other dimensions such as service, management, or administrative responsibilities, this study focuses predominantly on the dual roles of R&T. This focus reflects the centrality of these two responsibilities in current governance reforms. It aligns with the theoretical concern of the research in examining the tensions and negotiations between these core academic activities.

Fourth, the study is situated within the VHE context, which is undergoing significant transformation marked by increased institutional autonomy, performance-based evaluation mechanisms, and a growing emphasis on international research visibility. While the study engages with international literature, its empirical findings and theoretical analysis are grounded in the particularities of the VHE system. Accordingly, it does not aim to make generalisable claims across all national contexts.

Finally, the research is conceptually framed by Bourdieu's ToP, with a focus on the interplay among concepts such as field, capital, habitus, and hysteresis effect. The study aims to adopt a sociological rather than a psychological or managerial perspective on academic identity change. Its emphasis lies in understanding how agency and structure interact in influencing lecturers' experiences of reform, rather than offering prescriptive recommendations for institutional policy or management strategies.

By clarifying these boundaries, this inquiry aims to provide an in-depth and context-sensitive account of academic identity negotiation in reforming HEIs, while acknowledging the wider complexities of the field.

1.7. Significance of the study

This study aims to contribute to the field of HE research, particularly in the areas of academic identity, the R&T nexus, and HE reform. It is hoped that these contributions will provide insights into how HE reform is mediated through the professional lives of those responsible for implementing it. By foregrounding lecturers' voices, applying a carefully considered theoretical framework, and situating the analysis within a culturally and politically specific context, this study aims to add more understanding to both scholarly and practical discussions on the design and implementation of reform and academic identity related to R&T. Its significance can be clarified across three dimensions: empirical, theoretical, and contextual.

Empirically, the study seeks to provide insights into how Vietnamese university lecturers perceive and navigate the integration of R&T as part of their identity negotiation during a period of systemic transformation. By focusing on the voices of lecturers, who are comparatively absent from both national policy discourse and scholarly literature, this study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring their everyday struggles, dilemmas, and experiences. As stated before, rather than considering lecturers as passive recipients of reform, the chosen perspective is to view their situated agency and meaning-making in response to evolving academic expectations. This standpoint helps to illuminate how identity tensions are negotiated in practice and how institutional change is experienced at the micro level.

While the existing literature on the R&T nexus has expanded over the past decades, most of this body of literature has focused on Western contexts (e.g., Griffiths, 2004; Halse et al., 2007; Hordósy & McLean, 2022; Horta et al., 2012; Kaasila et al., 2021; Robertson, 2007; Taylor, 2007; Tight, 2016; Trigwell & Prosser, 2009), with relatively limited attention to how lecturers in non-Western systems perceive and negotiate their role changes and identity transformations. Recent work by Nguyen & Tran (2019b) begins to discuss this gap in the Vietnamese context, although it often focuses on system-level analysis or institutional strategies. This study instead focuses on individual lecturers' own perspectives and experiences, aiming to generate new insights into how reforms are interpreted and internalised by those expected to implement them. It is hoped that the current study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the context and to a much-needed empirical base in a context that remains under-researched.

Theoretically, the study engages Bourdieu's ToP as an analytical framework to examine dynamic interactions between structure and agency. It extends the application of key concepts, such as habitus, field, capital, and hysteresis, to explore how academic identities are (re)shaped within the context of institutional changes. Via the adoption of the concept of hysteresis, the research aims to offer a more nuanced account of how misalignments between institutional expectations and professional dispositions give rise to discomfort, ambiguity, and adaptive or resistant behaviours. It thus moves beyond static accounts of academic role conflict to foreground processes of identity transformation and negotiation. The study, therefore, hopes to make potential contributions to research on academic identities and professional practices in the context of HE by demonstrating the usefulness of Bourdieu's ToP as an analytical framework.

While Bourdieu's conceptual tools have been widely used in studies of HE not only by himself (e.g., Bourdieu, 1988, 1996) but also by other scholars (e.g., Barnett & Di Napoli, 2007; Collyer, 2015; Enders & Weert, 2009; Grenfell & James, 1998; Kloot, 2009; Marginson, 2013; Mu et al., 2018; Naidoo, 2004; Reay, 2004a; Rowlands, 2013, 2017; Rowlands & Gale, 2016, 2019; Rowlands & Wright, 2019; Jawitz, 2009), the application relatively remains static or Western-centric. This study extends the use of Bourdieu's ideas in a post-socialist, Confucian-influenced HE system. It demonstrates how these concepts can be mobilised not only to interpret structural inequalities, but also to illuminate the tensions and ambivalences of lecturers in navigating and adapting to changes.

Contextually, this research seeks to offer timely insights into Vietnam's ongoing HE reforms. It addresses the unique features of VHE, particularly the shifts towards institutional autonomy, performance-based governance, and internationalisation, within a hybrid system marked by Confucian traditions and post-socialist legacies. It also aims to provide contextual insights into how global reform discourses are interpreted and enacted within a distinctive national context. It is hoped that the research findings will provide helpful implications for policy by shedding light on the constraints and enabling conditions that influence lecturers' engagement with reform, thereby informing more realistic and grounded approaches to supporting academic work in transitional systems. While it does not seek to provide prescriptive or universal solutions, it highlights the importance of considering the experiences and voices of academic actors when designing and implementing reform agendas.

1.8. Organisation of the study

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. Each chapter opens with an overview that outlines its purpose, main themes, and its role within the overall structure of the thesis, if needed, also indicating its connections with related chapters. Then, there are sections and subsections that present the main content of the chapter. Each chapter concludes with a summary that highlights the key points and provides a transition to the subsequent chapter.

This structure of presentation and logic of argumentation is also similarly applied, where necessary, within the sections and subsections of each chapter. The intention is to enable readers to engage more effectively with the relatively large amount of content in this thesis. Nevertheless, this approach does not always achieve the intended outcome for several reasons. One potential risk is that the researcher may overuse structural signposting, thereby losing the balance between clarifying the structure and argument and overcomplicating or repeating specific points (Carter et al., 2012). Throughout the process of drafting and finalising this doctoral thesis, every possible effort, resource and consideration has been devoted to minimising these side effects. It is hoped that the structure and organisation of the thesis adopted here will support the effective communication as intended.

The organisation of the thesis is presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction. The first chapter of the thesis provides an overview of the research background, identifies the research problem, and clarifies the aims, scope, and significance of the study. It also presents the research questions, outlines the researcher's personal and professional motivations and introduces the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Vietnamese Higher Education and the Dynamics of University Governance Reform. This chapter aims to offer contextual foundations by outlining the historical development and policy landscape of VHE. It examines the development of the VHE system, the introduction of university reform policies, and the implications of governance reforms for academic identity and practice. It also outlines the shift towards institutional autonomy, performance-based governance, and the national aspiration to build RI universities. The chapter situates these developments within the global trend of HE reform and identifies their implications for academic identities.

Chapter 3: Literature Review: The Research-Teaching Nexus, Governance Reform, and Academic Identities. Chapter Three reviews three interrelated bodies of literature that inform the study: (1) the relationship between R&T in academia, (2) the construction of academic identities and roles, and (3) changes in HE governance and their impact. It synthesises key ongoing debates (e.g. whether R&T are complementary or in conflict) and identifies potential gaps in existing literature.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Foundation. This chapter introduces Bourdieu's ToP as the conceptual framework of the study. It explains core Bourdieusian concepts, e.g., field, capital, habitus, and the hysteresis effect, and justifies their relevance to the research. The chapter argues that Bourdieu's theoretical framework is well-suited to bridge the structural and individual levels of analysis, as it enables an understanding of how institutional reforms interact with lecturers' dispositions and practices. Chapter Four thus equips the study with 'thinking tools' for examining how lecturers perceive and negotiate identity changes, emphasising that one must consider both the (objective) reform context and the (subjective) experiences of academics.

Chapter 5: Methodology. This chapter explains the methodological choices of the study, including the qualitative research design, participant selection, and data collection procedures. It also discusses the rationale for utilising semi-structured interviews, outlines the approach to data analysis, and reflects on the researcher's reflexivity, trustworthiness of the study, methodological limitations, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 6: Findings. This chapter presents the empirical findings in three main themes: (1) lecturers' beliefs about the complementarity of R&T, (2) the tensions between these roles, and (3) the impacts of the shifting resources and priorities on academic identity and professional practice. These themes are supported by interview excerpts and analysed through a thematic lens. It examines how lecturers perceive the R&T nexus, the tensions they encounter in integrating R&T, and the influences of reform-related pressures on their academic identity and practice.

Chapter 7: Discussion. Chapter Seven offers a critical interpretation of the findings through the lens of Bourdieu's ToP and relevant literature. Instead of restating the findings, this chapter seeks to interpret their significance by examining the social, cultural, and structural mechanisms

that shape lecturers' experiences and responses. It also draws on relevant scholarship to locate the findings within broader theoretical and empirical debates concerning the R&T relationship, academic identities, and governance transformations in HE.

Chapter 8: Conclusion. The final chapter summarises and synthesises the study's key findings in relation to the research questions and reflects on its broader significance. It discusses the implications and recommendations for theory, policy, and practice, particularly regarding academic identity and the integration of R&T in transitional HE systems. The chapter also outlines the study's limitations and offers suggestions for future research. In closing, it offers reflective insights into the research journey and provides concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER 2: VIETNAMESE HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE DYNAMICS OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE REFORM

2.1. Overview of the chapter

This chapter aims to provide the contextual foundations for the study. It situates current VHE within its broader historical, political, cultural, and institutional landscape. It then seeks to clarify how macro-level structures, which are both enduring and evolving, have shaped the conditions under which academic identities and expectations are assigned, contested, and transformed. The current chapter, by offering this contextual discussion, sets the foundation for the next chapter, which reviews international and theoretical scholarship on academic identities and the R&T nexus, thereby positioning the Vietnamese case within wider debates in global HE research.

The present chapter comprises six sections. *Section 2.2* outlines the historical and political evolution of VHE, emphasising the legacy of socialist planning, state control, and institutional fragmentation. *Section 2.3* then examines the longstanding influence of cultural values, such as Confucian tradition and collectivism, on both the institutional and individual levels. Next, the trajectory of governance reforms, with particular attention to Vietnam's policy ambition to establish RI universities and the challenges of policy borrowing and local adaptation, will be discussed in *section 2.4*. Following that, *section 2.5* examines how these reforms have reconfigured the professional expectations placed upon lecturers, particularly the shift from teaching-centric models to a dual mandate that emphasises the research dimension. Finally, *section 2.6* briefly introduces Bourdieu's concept of *field* to conceptualise VHE as a contested space of power, capital, and identity negotiation, offering a theoretical lens through which the dynamics of reform can be interpreted[4].

2.2. Historical and political foundations of VHE

In this study, it is essential to begin with an examination of the historical and political foundations of the current system in order to understand the dynamics of contemporary reform

[4] Note: A more detailed presentation and analysis of Bourdieu's ToP, particularly the concept of *field*, as the theoretical foundation for this study, will be discussed in Chapter Four – Theoretical Foundation.

in VHE thoroughly. The current part serves this purpose within the broader structure of Chapter Two by providing the contextual background upon which subsequent cultural, structural, and institutional analyses will be built. Specifically, this section sheds light on the influence of ideological legacies, the role of Party-state control, and the evolution of post-*Đổi Mới*[5] reforms, as well as the structural fragmentation that continues to govern the system. These foundations not only inform how universities are governed and how reforms are being implemented, but also set the stage for understanding how academic identities are experienced and negotiated. By tracing these deeply rooted contextual components, this section helps explain the historical, political, and social elements, constraints, contradictions, and patterns that define the current landscape of VHE.

2.2.1. Historical legacies and ideological influences

The historical development of VHE has been shaped by a complex interaction of ideological, cultural, and political forces. These forces continue to exercise a profound impact on the structure, purpose, function, and operation of Vietnamese universities today. These influences have produced a system that is both historically rich and ideologically complex, yet institutionally fragmented and normatively conflicted (see Dang & Glewwe, 2018; Do & Do, 2014; Do & Lap, 2016; Harman et al., 2010; Le & Hayden, 2017; Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020; Hayden & Thiep, 2010; Nguyen, 2020a; Nguyen & Vu, 2015; Phan & Doan, 2020; St. George, 2010; The World Bank, 2008b). Understanding these legacies is crucial for making sense of the contemporary challenges associated with implementing HE reform, negotiating lecturer identity, and integrating R&T.

Vietnam's intellectual tradition can be traced back to the establishment of *Quốc Tử Giám* (the Imperial Academy) in the 11th century, often regarded as the country's first institution of HE. From its inception, VHE was deeply embedded in the Confucian worldview, which conceptualised education not as a site of independent inquiry but as a more moral-political project (Harman et al., 2010; London, 2010). In this tradition, knowledge was valued primarily for its role in cultivating ethical behaviour, maintaining social order, and serving the state.

[5] *Đổi Mới* (in Vietnamese), literally meaning *'Renovation',* refers to the series of economic and political reforms launched in Vietnam in 1986 aimed at transitioning from a centrally planned economy to a socialist-oriented market economy. These reforms have had significant implications for various fields, including HE (Gillen et al., 2021).

Education served as a mechanism for producing loyal and virtuous bureaucrats, with examinations heavily focused on classical texts and moral reasoning. Teachers were not viewed as researchers or generators of new knowledge, but rather as conveyors of moral wisdom, tasked with transmitting established truths and values (Doan, 2005; Kim, 2009). This early foundation helped to entrench a cultural system of hierarchy, conformity, and reverence for authority within educational institutions, which continues to influence the essences of academic identities in contemporary education in Vietnam (see Chen, 2015; Dennehy, 2015; Nguyen, 2008; Nguyen et al., 2006; Phuong-Mai et al., 2005).

During the period of French colonial rule (1858 – 1954), the Vietnamese general education system underwent significant structural changes, yet it remained subordinate to political ambitions. The French introduced a Western-style schooling system, primarily aimed at producing a small elite cadre of civil servants to serve the colonial administration. HE opportunities were extremely limited and designed to reproduce colonial hierarchies, with the French language and culture positioned as superior. Research was not institutionalised as a core university function, and intellectual autonomy was neither encouraged nor protected. Instead, universities had been operated as sites of cultural assimilation and administrative training. This colonial model reinforced an instrumental and top-down approach to HE governance, whereby universities were seen as appendages of the rulers rather than autonomous communities of scholars (Gillen et al., 2021; London, 2011, 2022).

Following the end of colonial rule and the division of the country, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North aligned itself with the Soviet Union and adopted a socialist model of education. After reunification in 1975, this model was extended nationwide. The Soviet influence on VHE was significant and pervasive, particularly in shaping institutional structures and epistemological orientations. Universities primarily functioned as teaching institutions, while scientific research was assigned to a parallel system of state-run research institutes. This structural division, combined with the centralised planning structure of the socialist state, entrenched a rigid separation between *'knowledge transmission'* and *'knowledge creation'*.

Given the circumstances, university lecturers were expected to focus on pedagogy and ideological training, not on conducting research. Decisions regarding curriculum, staffing, and institutional governance were made at the ministerial level, with little space for institutional

autonomy or academic self-determination (Doan, 2005). Moreover, the Soviet legacies also contributed to a continued view of the lecturer as a civil servant rather than an independent scholar. They were positioned as ideological agents of the state, tasked with socialising students into socialist morality and political loyalty. The role of research was downplayed, and academic promotions were often based on seniority and political reliability rather than scholarly merit and achievements. These norms, deeply embedded in institutional practice, have proven remarkably durable, even as policy discourses have shifted towards global competitiveness and research performance in recent decades (Dang & Glewwe, 2018; Gillen et al., 2021; Le & Hayden, 2017; Harman et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2021; London, 2010, 2011, 2022; Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021).

It is essential to note that these diverse historical layers, such as Confucian, colonial, post-colonial, and socialist, have not replaced one another linearly. Rather, they have accumulated and intermingled over time, producing a *'hybrid'* institutional structure and culture that is both normatively contradictory and structurally incoherent (Harman et al., 2010; London, 2010). On the one hand, the Confucian emphasis on moral education and teacher authority continues to shape classroom dynamics, academic identities, and expectations (Kim, 2009). On the other hand, the colonial and socialist traditions have left legacies of centralised governance, low research engagement, and limited institutional autonomy. These layered legacies have contributed to what some scholars describe as a unique phenomenon of VHE reform (Doan, 2005; London, 2011, 2022).

Consequently, the reform aspirations of the 21st century, particularly the push towards developing RI universities, must be examined against this specific contextual background. Vietnamese universities are not starting from a neutral baseline, but rather operating within a historically and ideologically shaped field characterised by deeply rooted assumptions about the purpose of education, the mission of universities, the nature of knowledge, authority, and the academic profession. These elements continue to influence how HE reforms are implemented at the institutional and individual levels, and further impact the academic identity transformation and negotiation (Hamano, 2008; Harman et al., 2009, 2010; Harman & Bich, 2010; Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020; Kamibeppu, 2009; Nguyen & Vu, 2015). This institutional field, marked by top-down state control and ideological embeddedness, is further examined in the following section.

2.2.2. Party-state control and centralised governance structure

As in other sectors, the VHE system has operated within a highly centralised political structure under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). As one of the few remaining socialist one-party states, Vietnam maintains a tight nexus between political ideology and institutional governance, in which universities are expected not only to fulfil academic functions but also to serve broader socio-political purposes (London, 2010, 2011, 2022; Tran, 2014). Understanding this governing framework is crucial in situating the boundaries and possibilities of reform implementation, particularly for those who aim to enhance institutional autonomy or redefine academic identities.

At the core of Vietnam's governance model lies the overarching authority of the CPV, which retains ultimate control over all state functions, including education. While the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) functions as the primary regulatory body for HE, its operations are embedded within a wider network of party-state institutions. Strategic decisions related to policy formulation, leadership appointments, budget allocations, and curricular frameworks are subject to both ministerial procedures and the oversight of party organisations at multiple levels. In practice, this results in a dual structure in which institutional autonomy is circumscribed by political supervision. Provincial governments, through their Departments of Education and Training (DOET), play an administrative role in implementing national policies at the local level. However, they also operate under party leadership (Dang & Glewwe, 2018; London, 2011, 2022; Phan & Doan, 2020).

The influence of the CPV is not limited to high-level policymaking; it extends deeply into the internal governance of universities. Within each institution, a party cell operates parallel to the university's formal leadership, often handling substantial power over key decisions. Party-appointed secretaries may hold equal or even greater authority than rectors/heads/deans in practice, particularly when issues of political sensitivity or personnel management are involved. Institutional leaders are typically selected not solely based on academic achievements or managerial capacity, but also on their political credentials and alignment with party priorities. This governance model reflects a longstanding tradition of top-down control in the Vietnamese education system, one that prioritises political stability, ideological conformity, and administrative order (Hayden & Thiep, 2010; London, 2011, 2022; Nguyen & Vu, 2015).

Despite periodic calls for innovation and academic excellence, the system remains heavily reliant on bureaucratic procedures and ministerial oversight. National policy continues to influence key aspects of university operations (e.g., the approval of curricula and student enrollment targets, staff recruitment and salary structures). For a long period, universities have been expected to implement government directives rather than initiate strategic transformations of their own (The World Bank, 2008a, 2008b; Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020).

In recent decades, contemporary HE reforms have introduced the ideology and language of *autonomy* into policy discourse. Key legal documents, such as the 2012 Law on HE and its amended version in 2018, have articulated ambitions to grant universities greater self-determination in academic, organisational, and financial matters. However, many scholars (e.g., Dang & Glewwe, 2018; Dao, 2015; Harman et al., 2010; London, 2022; Mai et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2020c; Nguyen & Vu, 2015; Pham & Goyette, 2019; Van & Hien, 2018) argue that this legal autonomy has not substantially translated into meaningful autonomy in practice. The system exhibits what some describe as symbolic autonomy, where institutions are rhetorically positioned as independent entities, but remain practically constrained by political controls, limited resources, and compliance-based accountability frameworks. This discrepancy between formal autonomy and real-world dependence has generated substantial tensions in the governance of Vietnamese universities. On the one hand, institutions are encouraged to compete globally, increase research productivity, and adhere to international standards. On the other hand, they operate within a system that inhibits flexible decision-making, entrepreneurial risk-taking, and academic freedom. Many university leaders have limited discretion in setting academic priorities or in restructuring departments to pursue research excellence. Even when granted nominal authority, their decisions must often be approved by party representatives or follow complex bureaucratic procedures (Hayden & Thiep, 2010; London, 2011).

The consequences of this governance structure are far-reaching. For lecturers, the experience of working within such an environment often entails compliance with top-down directives, frequent reporting duties, and limited participation in organisational decision-making. Academic identities and responsibilities are constructed not only by scholarly expectations but also by administrative demands and political expectations. In this context, the possibility of cultivating a dynamic academic identity that embraces both R&T is significantly constrained. Moreover, the bureaucratic and politicised nature of institutional governance can diminish

professional motivation and inhibit innovation. Lecturers may perceive themselves as functionaries rather than intellectual agents, with their professional legitimacy tied to hierarchical authority rather than academic accomplishment. This situation has implications for how reforms are interpreted and enacted at the grassroots level. Without adequate autonomy or trust in academic judgement, even well-intentioned policies may fail to translate into meaningful change in practice (see Hai & Anh, 2021; Hayden & Thiep, 2010; London, 2011; Mai et al., 2020; Pham & Goyette, 2019; Tran et al., 2019).

In short, the centralised governance structure of VHE reflects deep-rooted political rationalities and institutional arrangements. These issues pose significant challenges for the development of RI universities and for integrating academic R&T. They also emphasise the importance of understanding reform as a complex process of negotiation within constrained institutional settings, rather than a linear implementation of policy design. The theme of constrained transformation under a discourse of reform is further developed in the subsequent section on the post-*Đổi Mới* era transition.

2.2.3. Post-Đổi Mới transition: opening up within control

The *Đổi Mới* (renovation) reform, launched in 1986, marked a turning point in Vietnam's political economy, transforming the country from a centrally planned system to a socialist-oriented market economy. This fundamental and comprehensive reform has widespread implications for HE, for example, opening new possibilities for growth, diversification, and internationalisation. Amidst broader liberalisation efforts, the HE sector began to evolve from a rigid, state-run model toward a more flexible system with mixed governance arrangements, despite continued political control. Acknowledging and understanding this transitional phase is essential to further grasping the hybrid mechanisms that characterise VHE today (Gillen et al., 2021; Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020; Huong & Fry, 2004; St. George, 2010).

The post-*Đổi Mới* era witnessed an expansion in the scale and diversity of the VHE system. As the government adopted market-oriented policies, the HE sector was encouraged to mobilise non-state resources and broaden access through the establishment of semi-public, people-founded, and later private universities. These developments reflected a strategic transformation from centralised provision to a more diversified landscape of providers (Nguyen & Vu, 2015;

Phan & Doan, 2020; The World Bank, 2008b). Alongside the establishment of new institutions, existing public universities were allowed to engage in joint training programmes with foreign partners, initiate fee-paying schemes, and generate income from research, consultancy, and service provision. This era also witnessed increased emphasis on training high-quality human resources to meet the demands of international integration and industrialisation (Nguyen, 2016; St. George, 2010). At the same time, the system was also undergoing varied transformations driven by a strong Western-oriented spirit, the forces of internationalisation and globalisation of HE, neoliberal ideals, global ranking aspirations, nation-building and modernisation (Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021). What makes the VHE context distinct is that its reforms have been undertaken under the leadership of the CPV, which remains committed to its socialist ideology and promotes a market-oriented socialist economy. The blend of these two seemingly contradictory and paradoxical ideologies – socialist and market-oriented – in VHE has made it unique in the global landscape of HE (London, 2022; Phan & Doan, 2020).

Consequently, the transformation does not imply a full withdrawal of state control. The CPV continues to assert authority over strategic directions, and the MOET retains the mandate to regulate curricula, staffing, and institutional mandates. Universities operate within a framework of conditional opening, granted greater operational flexibility, but still bound by political imperatives and administrative procedures (London, 2010, 2022; Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020). This tension between liberalisation and control would shape the trajectory of subsequent reforms. For instance, the early 2000s brought renewed reform efforts aimed at enhancing institutional autonomy and promoting research productivity. Most notably, the HERA (2005-2020) set ambitious goals to transform Vietnamese universities into more autonomous and research-oriented institutions (Ly, 2013). These ambitions were then echoed in legal frameworks such as the 2012 Law on HE and its 2018 revision, which introduced provisions for greater autonomy in academic, financial, and organisational matters. Universities were encouraged to (re)define their missions, establish governing boards, and participate in international rankings. However, while these policies marked a discursive shift, their practical effects remained questionable. The autonomy granted was often considered symbolic or unevenly implemented, as discussed above. In the broader governance context characterised by political oversight and bureaucratic procedures, these issues continued to constrain institutional innovation (Mai et al., 2020; London, 2022). A more detailed analysis of these contradictions will be developed in section 2.2.4 below.

Overall, the reform process has generally remained tightly controlled. While autonomy is encouraged in policy discourse, it is often conditional, sometimes reversible, and subject to informal or implicit political constraints. The introduction of university councils and pilot models of institutional autonomy has not substantially shifted power away from ministerial authorities or party-appointed leaders (Hai & Anh, 2021; Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020; Nguyen, 2020c). The continued salience of political loyalty in leadership selection, combined with fragmented and inconsistent legal interpretations, has led to uncertainties and inconsistencies in the implementation of reform policies (Mai et al., 2020). In this context, universities may have limited space to (re)define strategic priorities, (re)structure academic expectations, or (re)allocate resources. Instead of fostering competition and innovation, the reform agenda sometimes reinforces compliance, as institutions focus on fulfilling state-mandated performance indicators without developing internal governance capacities. The lack of clear accountability mechanisms for university councils or boards further undermines their legitimacy and decision-making authority (Hayden & Thiep, 2007; Pham & Goyette, 2019).

At the grassroots level, lecturers have often experienced the reform process as a source of pressure rather than empowerment. As a result, the push for research often leads to superficial compliance strategies, such as publishing in low-quality journals or engaging in co-authorships with minimal substantive contributions (Gillen et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021). Furthermore, the top-down nature of reform design leaves little room for lecturers to influence institutional strategies or voice concerns. These gaps between policy expectations and workplace realities may generate frustration and tensions related to professional identity. Lecturers might perceive reform as externally imposed, misaligned with their habitus, and unsupportive of their academic development (Jones et al., 2021; Pham & Hayden, 2019). In this sense, the post-*Đổi Mới* transition, despite its achievements, has not yet resolved the foundational tensions in the system.

Despite persistent constraints and challenges, the reform era also brought about tangible improvements that deserve recognition. Recently, Vietnamese universities were exhibited in quality worlds university rankings more regularly, including the QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) ranking (one in the top 400-550), Times HE (one in the top 1000+ and two in the top 801-1000), and the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) (one in the top 901-1000) (Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021). Some universities also have significant improvements in their infrastructure, academic programmes, and international collaborations. These achievements

signalled a growing awareness of global benchmarks and a desire to align with international standards of quality (Nguyen & Vu, 2015). Moreover, research capacity, though uneven, has witnessed gradual improvements. Several institutions and scholars have increased their output in peer-reviewed publications, partly incentivised by state funding schemes and institutional policies. These progressions reflect an emergent, even though limited, move toward embracing the research dimension as a core university function. Importantly, these gains illustrate the sector's adaptive potential and the capacity of some institutions to respond strategically to reform imperatives. They also reveal the presence of reform-minded actors within the system, including university leaders and academic actors who have sought to balance compliance with autonomy and innovation (Gillen et al., 2021; Ly, 2013; Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021; Pham & Hayden, 2019).

In summary, the post-*Đổi Mới* trajectory reveals a HE system navigating the contradictions of liberalisation under persistent political constraints. These dynamics set the stage for examining more recent reform efforts and the potential contested meanings of institutional autonomy, as well as its impacts on university governance reform and changes in academic identities and expectations, which will be further explored in the subsequent sections.

2.2.4. Institutional fragmentation and structural ambiguities

As discussed above, the VHE system today is not only the product of its ideological and political legacies but also bears the institutional imprints of decades of partial reforms and inconsistent coordination. While reform initiatives have continuously introduced new goals and expectations, particularly regarding institutional autonomy and research advancement, the structural organisation of the system remains considerably fragmented and ambiguous. These structural issues are deeply rooted in the history of state control, uneven decentralisation, and the coexistence of multiple governance ideologies. As a consequence, they constitute an important element of the foundational conditions influencing how reforms are interpreted and implemented (Dang & Glewwe, 2018; Harman et al., 2009; Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020). Based on the contextual background established in the discussions above, this section draws on existing literature to examine how institutional fragmentation and structural ambiguities have complicated efforts to implement coherent reforms and continue to shape the everyday realities of academic work.

There is evidence that the VHE landscape is marked by significant institutional fragmentation. This fragmentation is reflected in the proliferation of institutional types, namely public, semi-public, people-founded, private, and foreign-affiliated universities, each operating under different regulatory conditions and varying degrees of political oversight. While such diversification may indicate increased flexibility and responsiveness, in practice, it has created a complex blend of institutional mandates and overlapping responsibilities (Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020; Phan & Doan, 2020; The World Bank, 2008b). For instance, universities under different ministries or local authorities often follow divergent priorities, with minimal coordination or strategic coherence at the national level. The MOET retains formal responsibility for system-wide regulation, but struggles to enforce consistent standards or align reform objectives across this fragmented network (London, 2022; Nguyen & Tran, 2019b).

Furthermore, the structural ambiguity inherent in institutional functions and governance processes exacerbates this fragmentation. Despite recent reform efforts, the boundaries between teaching, research, and administrative functions remain blurred. Many universities continue to operate under legacy frameworks where research is conducted primarily by external institutes, while universities focus on teaching and ideological training. Attempts to reintegrate research into the core mission of universities, as outlined in the HERA, have often lacked clear operational guidance, resulting in ad hoc or symbolic implementation. As a result, university lecturers are frequently tasked with research responsibilities without corresponding adjustments in workload, training, or institutional support (Kamibeppu, 2009; Ly, 2013; Mai et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2016).

Moreover, the ambiguity extends to the mechanisms of institutional governance. The 2012 Law on HE and its subsequent revisions introduced concepts such as university councils, designed to enhance autonomy and strategic leadership. However, these bodies often lack genuine authority or clear responsibilities. In many cases, they operate alongside existing party structures and administrative hierarchies, creating multiple centres of decision-making without clear accountability. As a result, university leaders may find themselves navigating competing demands from party officials, ministerial authorities, and university councils, each with different expectations and criteria of legitimacy (Do & Lap, 2016; Mai et al., 2020; Pham & Goyette, 2019).

Such ambiguity has been described in the literature as a key obstacle to policy implementation in VHE, where policies are often implemented symbolically rather than substantively (Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020; London, 2010). As another demonstration, while universities are encouraged to pursue international partnerships or develop research strategies, approval procedures often remain unclear, time-consuming, and subject to informal negotiations. As a result, such issues lead to discretionary decision-making, patronage networks, and a lack of transparency, ultimately eroding trust within institutions and between different levels of governance (Hayden & Thiep, 2010). The cumulative effect of this fragmentation and ambiguity is a system in which reforms are frequently diluted, delayed, or distorted during implementation. Lecturers, caught in the middle of these contradictions, often experience reform not as a coherent strategy but as a series of uncoordinated and sometimes contradictory demands. Without clear institutional visions or support structures, their efforts to engage in research or innovate in teaching are frequently undermined. Moreover, the absence of robust internal institutional communication channels and participatory decision-making further exacerbates the sense of disconnection between policy and practice (Ly, 2013; Pham & Goyette, 2019; Tran, 2014; Tran et al., 2017a).

To summarise, these fragmentations and structural conditions pose significant challenges to reform. They would rather reveal deeper tensions between the mechanisms of state control, institutional autonomy, and the academic profession. Shedding light on these tensions is crucial for understanding the complex interactions between individuals and their organisation, as well as why reform efforts, despite their ambition, often fall short in practice.

The discussions in *section 2.2* above have demonstrated that VHE has been shaped by an accumulation and influence of historical legacies, ideological directives, and fragmented governance arrangements. Clarifying these foundational conditions helps explain why reforms, however ambitious, often encounter resistance, inertia, or uneven implementation in practice. Understanding these deep-rooted influences is therefore crucial for any examination of change at either the institutional or individual level. The next section builds on this contextual background by further turning to the influences of the cultural dimension of reform. It further examines how cultural values rooted in Vietnam's Confucian heritage and collectivist traditions continue to influence institutional norms and expectations, academic identities, and responses to reform initiatives, particularly in the integration of R&T.

2.3. Cultural legacies and their influence on HE reform

As presented earlier, reform efforts in VHE have taken place not only within historical-political and structural constraints but also within a cultural context shaped by deeply embedded values and social norms. These values, rooted in Confucian heritage, collectivist orientation, and hierarchical social structures, actively mediate how policy changes are understood, negotiated, and enacted by stakeholders. This section examines three key cultural dimensions that have significantly influenced the implementation of reform in VHE: (1) the long-entrenched influence of Confucian values on perceptions of education and academic identities, (2) the collectivist orientation and its impact on institutional culture and conformity, and (3) the hierarchical structure and its implications for voice, agency, and innovation. These cultural elements intersect with the political and structural factors discussed earlier, creating a dynamic and distinct environment in which institutional and academic change is negotiated.

Vietnamese society has long been influenced by Confucian tradition for a thousand years, which emphasises the moral purpose of education, the centrality of the teacher, and the cultivation of social harmony through hierarchical relationships. In this worldview, education is not primarily a process of independent inquiry or knowledge generation but a more moral-political endeavour aimed at producing virtuous individuals who contribute to collective order (Kim, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2006; Phuong-Mai et al., 2005; Tran et al., 2019). These legacies continue to inform how both learners and teachers/educators perceive their identities and responsibilities today.

Teachers are traditionally viewed as moral exemplars and knowledge transmitters rather than critical thinkers or researchers (Kim, 2009). Such perceptions have contributed to the historical dominance of teaching in academic identities and the slow institutional embrace of research as a core responsibility. Moreover, Confucian respect for authority and emphasis on obedience may constrain open debate, intellectual risk-taking, and questioning of institutional norms, even though these qualities are often essential for RI environments. As reforms push for greater research involvement and global integration, they encounter a value system that may not fully support the dispositions required for such transformation. These cultural legacies, thus, may create tensions between traditional expectations and the characteristics of modern academia (Nguyen et al., 2006).

In addition, Vietnamese cultural norms are also strongly influenced by collectivist values, which prioritise group harmony, interdependence, and collective goals over individual interests. While such values can foster a supportive work environment, they may also discourage critical feedback, suppress opposing perspectives, and promote a culture of compliance. For lecturers navigating reform, collectivist norms may limit their willingness to challenge institutional directives or experiment with alternative pedagogical and research practices. As a result, reforms may be interpreted passively, implemented symbolically, or adapted in ways that preserve group harmony rather than stimulate transformative change (see Huong & Fry, 2004; Nguyen, 2008; Nguyen et al., 2009; Phuong-Mai et al., 2005).

Furthermore, the operation of Vietnamese universities is underpinned by a hierarchical social structure, which clearly defines relationships between students and teachers, junior and senior staff, and academic and administrative leadership. In such environments, decision-making authority tends to be concentrated at the higher levels, and junior faculty members may hesitate to express disagreement or propose initiatives that challenge established norms. This order mechanism is further reinforced by the legacies of socialist governance and the Party-state's continued oversight of the HE system (Hayden & Thiep, 2010; Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021; Phuong-Mai et al., 2005; Tran et al., 2019).

Overall, within this structure heavily influenced by those cultural elements, lecturers' agency is often bound, not necessarily by formal restrictions alone, but by cultural norms that value deference, seniority, harmony and institutional loyalty. Reform policies that assume a high degree of individual initiative or decentralised decision-making may therefore clash with ingrained expectations and practices. These cultural elements and influences, while not exclusive to Vietnam (i.e., similar patterns may be observed in other education systems) (e.g., see Dennehy, 2015; Kim, 2009; Mu et al., 2018; Stensaker et al., 2012), are embedded in specific historical and institutional trajectories that distinguish the Vietnamese case within the broader global reform landscape.

2.4. University governance reform and the direction towards RI universities

Over the past few decades, VHE has witnessed significant transformations in its governance structure. As discussed earlier, these changes, often framed under the umbrella of autonomy,

are part of a broader reform trajectory influenced by both global trends and national aspirations (Pham & Goyette, 2019). While the topic of autonomy has received considerable attention in academic debates, it is equally important to examine how governance reforms have aimed to reposition Vietnamese universities along the R&T continuum. This section reviews the existing literature on governance changes with a specific focus on the state's push towards developing RI universities and the associated challenges of the institutional transformation.

Due to the influence of the ideologies discussed in the earlier sections, especially the university model of France, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe, the VHE system has been considered to have long operated under what Schimank & Winnes (2000) categorise as a *pre-Humboldtian* model (to be discussed in detail in Chapter Three). Within this model, the university's primary function is teaching, with research not being the focus. A prevailing assumption in Vietnam has been that university lecturers are primarily teachers rather than researchers, with limited engagement in scholarly inquiry (Ly, 2013). Historically, most scientific research was conducted by a separate network of research institutes external to universities (Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021). These structural and function-based separations gradually came to be seen as a key limitation by policymakers and leaders. In response, a series of reform initiatives were introduced with the ambition of transforming Vietnamese universities into more RI institutions and redefining the role of academic staff to include both R&T as core responsibilities.

In line with international policy trends, Vietnam has adopted reform agendas inspired by global models of university governance. These include efforts to reduce central party-state control, promote institutional autonomy and accountability, and enhance university responsiveness to market and societal demands. Scholars have noted that many of these reforms were influenced by policy borrowing from more developed systems, particularly those in Western Europe, North America, and parts of Asia (Le, 2020; Marginson, 2018; Nguyen & Tran, 2019b; Nguyen et al., 2021; Vu & Marginson, 2014). However, the policy borrowing of such governance models into Vietnam's state-socialist context has not been straightforward, often resulting in hybrid and context-specific adaptations (London, 2011, 2022; Tran et al., 2017b).

One of the strategic visions of governance reform has been to shift Vietnamese universities away from their traditional teaching-focused mandate towards becoming RI institutions. One of the first milestones and most influential policies is considered Decision 324-CT by the Chair

of the Committee of Ministers (the present Prime Minister) in 1992, which outlined the restructuring of the network of 'Research and Development Institutions' in VHE. This Decision aimed to consolidate universities and research institutes into a unified national system for research and development. Through it, the government sought to encourage universities to 'conduct all types of research from basic to applied, experimenting and applying research results into life and production' (Nguyen, 2020a, p. 68). The vision has been reaffirmed in subsequent government regulations concerning HE, including the Law of HE (2012 and 2018) and the Education Law (2019).

Following that, during the early 2000s, renewed reform efforts emerged to enhance institutional autonomy and promote research productivity one after another. The year 2005 marked another significant milestone in the reform process, as policymakers implemented the *Higher Education Reform Agenda* (HERA), which outlines missions, goals, and strategies for comprehensive and fundamental reform of VHE (Nghi & London, 2010). One of the most important parts of the HERA is enhancing autonomy for HEIs in terms of organisational (structures and governance), academic, staffing, and financial autonomy (Mai et al., 2020). The HERA is also considered a remarkable effort by Vietnamese policymakers to improve university lecturers' research productivity and research engagement with the overall aim to transform Vietnamese universities, most of which were considered teaching-only, into RI universities (Ly, 2013). Since its implementation, 'HERA has directly influenced how university teachers react to the reinforced research activity and how they think about their research engagement' (Le, 2017, p. 91). These ambitions were reinforced in legal frameworks such as the 2012 Law on HE and its 2018 revision, which introduced provisions for greater autonomy in academic, financial, and organisational areas (Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020; Mai et al., 2020; Nghi & London, 2010).

The promulgated policies have demonstrated the political will and vision of Vietnamese leaders and policymakers, which require universities to perform two functions simultaneously: R&T, with an emphasis on the research dimension. The strategic orientations to be RI universities are commonly expressed and enshrined in many universities' mission statements, for example, *"…becoming an advanced research university…"*, *"…becoming a leading national hub for research and technology transfer…"*, and *"…becoming a leading national applied research and technology transfer hub…"* (Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021; Nguyen & Van Gramberg, 2017). Furthermore, the aspiration of having *'world-class'* universities in global university

rankings has also been highlighted in many policy documents. As a demonstration, in 2013, the Decision No. 36/2013/QD-TTg declared that Vietnam would have at least one university ranked among the top-200 universities globally by 2020; or the Decision No. 69/2017/QD-TTg indicated that Vietnam would have at least two HEIs ranked among the 100 best universities in Asia, and at least four HEIs ranked among the top-1000 universities in the world by 2025 (Nguyen et al., 2021, p. 1). These policy aspirations are consistent with global trends that view research productivity as a key indicator of institutional prestige, competitiveness, and national development potential (Carnoy et al., 1999; Le, 2016a; Tikly, 2001; Van der Wende, 2003; Zajda, 2010). While there are numerous motivations driving university leaders to pursue these goals, such aspirations may be overly ambitious given the persistent structural and cultural barriers that continue to hinder effective implementation.

The recent literature suggests that the process of becoming RI has proven complex and contested. Several scholars (e.g., London, 2011; Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021; Nguyen & Van Gramberg, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2021; Nguyen Thi Mai & Hall, 2016) argue that the state's vision of RI universities in Vietnam has been implemented in a top-down manner, often without sufficient alignment between policy goals and institutional readiness. The research function remains underdeveloped in most universities due to longstanding structural constraints, including limited funding, inadequate research infrastructure, and insufficient staff capacity. Moreover, research expectations are frequently introduced without corresponding reforms in human resource management, workload allocation, or academic promotion systems.

The literature also highlights a growing stratification within the HE system, with a relatively small number of universities designated as RI, while the majority remain primarily teaching-focused institutions (London, 2022; Mai & Yang, 2013; Nguyen & Van Gramberg, 2017; Nguyen & Vu, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2021). Government initiatives have aimed to establish a group of *'key universities'* or *'leading universities'* (e.g., two national universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City) that receive priority support for research development and international engagement (see MOET, 2004; The Vietnamese Government, 2019, 2025). However, there has been a question whether these 'elite institutions' have sufficient autonomy, capacity, or governance structures needed to fulfil their expected roles (London, 2022; Nguyen & Van Gramberg, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2021). Tensions between managerial control, academic freedom, and symbolic autonomy persist in the sector, limiting the transformative potential of

such reforms. Furthermore, the concept of 'world-class universities', often used in policy discourse, has been critiqued in the literature as a borrowed ideal that may not fully resonate with local conditions or academic traditions. Vietnamese scholars have argued that attempts to borrow Western models of excellence risk prioritising surface-level performance metrics (e.g., rankings and publication counts) over substantive academic development (Le, 2020; Vu & Marginson, 2014). This raises critical questions about the appropriateness and generalisation of global benchmarks in shaping national reform strategies and the capacity for local adaptation.

In summary, governance reforms in VHE reflect a complex interplay of global policy borrowing and local adaptation. The state's ambition to develop RI universities has opened new directions for institutional development, yet it also confronts deep-seated structural, cultural, and capacity-related constraints. Therefore, understanding these reforms requires not only a review of policy texts and governance models but also critical attention to the historical and cultural context in which such transformations unfold, as discussed earlier. These reform trajectories, situated at the intersection of borrowed ideals and local realities, play a foundational role in understanding how shifting governance structures have redefined academic expectations. The following section further explores how these transformations have impacted the roles, responsibilities, and identities of university lecturers in Vietnam.

2.5. From teaching-focused to research-oriented: Changing academic expectations in Vietnamese universities

Building on the aforementioned discussions, this section shifts the focus to how the transformations in VHE have impacted evolving expectations of university lecturers, particularly the shift from a teaching-focused model to a dual responsibility that emphasises both R&T.

Historically, the academic identity in Vietnamese universities has been predominantly defined by teaching duties. As noted in previous sections, the influence of Confucian legacies, colonial instrumentalism, and the Soviet-style division of labour between R&T contributed to a model in which research was peripheral to university function. Lecturers were primarily seen as teachers and ideological trainers rather than as researchers or 'knowledge producers' (see Hamano, 2008; My, 2018; Nguyen & Bui, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2009; Nguyen Thi Mai & Hall,

2016; Tran, 2016). This longstanding ideology has entrenched a normative understanding of academic identity centred on pedagogical competence and moral authority, with limited institutional infrastructure or incentives for research engagement (Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020; Ly, 2013).

However, the governance reforms introduced in the 1990s, particularly those associated with the HERA, have begun to redefine this professional model by placing new emphasis on research output, international collaboration, and academic performance metrics. Vietnamese lecturers are now expected to publish in indexed journals, participate in funded research projects, and contribute to institutional research strategies (Gillen et al., 2021; Le, 2017; MOET, 2008, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2021). These expectations represent a fundamental shift in the definition of academic success, with career progression increasingly tied to research productivity rather than teaching excellence or years of service. Such changes are reinforced by performance-based funding models and institutional rankings, which have become influential benchmarks for evaluating both universities and individual academics.

This redefinition of academic identities has resulted in a growing sense of overload and identity dissonance among academic staff (Nguyen Thi Mai & Hall, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2021). The dual expectations of being both an effective teacher and a productive researcher can create significant pressure, especially for those trained in an earlier system that prioritised teaching. Moreover, as discussed earlier, structural, cultural and institutional barriers continue to impede the transformation of academic identities. Despite policy discourses promoting research engagement, many universities lack the necessary infrastructure, funding, and mentorship systems to support sustained research activity. Promotion criteria and evaluation procedures remain inconsistent, with some institutions still privileging seniority and administrative compliance over scholarly merit (Gillen et al., 2021; London, 2022; Mai et al., 2020).

It can be seen that these dynamics illustrate how governance reforms have reconfigured the academic identity and professional practice in VHE. The movement toward RI models is a profound transformation of lecturer identity, institutional culture, and workplace practices. Nevertheless, this transformation remains uneven, contested, and shaped by the enduring legacies of previous systems.

2.6. VHE as a contested 'field'

The previous sections have outlined the historical, political, structural, and cultural foundations that have shaped the VHE system. Building on this contextual background, this section briefly adopts Bourdieu's concept of *field* to conceptualise VHE as a socially structured space in which various actors compete for authority, legitimacy, and symbolic capital[6]. The notion of field helps to make sense of how institutional reform, professional roles, and policy implementation are mediated by power dynamics, capital distribution, and historically sedimented practices.

In Bourdieu's terms, a *field* is a relatively autonomous social space governed by its logic, within which agents occupy positions that reflect their access to different forms of capital (e.g., social, cultural, symbolic, and economic) (Maton, 2004). These positions are not static but are constantly negotiated through struggles over recognition, status, and influence. In the VHE context, the field is shaped by multiple, and often competing, logics: the legacies of socialist control, the emergent market-oriented agenda, the pressure to adopt global standards, and the enduring influence of cultural norms such as hierarchy and collectivism.

Within this field, universities are not homogeneous entities; instead, they occupy differentiated positions. Leading institutions designated as 'key universities' or aspiring to 'world-class' status often accumulate more symbolic capital through access to state funding, international partnerships, and policy visibility. In contrast, regional or less prominent institutions may struggle to assert their legitimacy, particularly when performance metrics are heavily skewed towards research outputs. These dynamics create a stratified institutional landscape in which competition for scarce resources and recognition reinforces existing inequalities (Bui et al., 2019). At the same time, academic actors, particularly university lecturers, are embedded within this field and must navigate its tensions. For many, the shift towards RI norms disrupts established professional identities and challenges their sense of belonging in the academic field. These issues are especially pronounced for early-career academics and those located outside major urban centres, who may find themselves on the periphery of the field with limited capacity to influence its rules (Huong & Fry, 2004; Phan & Doan, 2020).

[6] Note: A more detailed presentation and analysis of Bourdieu's ToP, particularly the concept of *field*, as the theoretical foundation for this study, will be discussed in Chapter Four – Theoretical Foundation.

Moreover, the field is not only stratified but also transforming. As new governance reforms, performance-based metrics, and international rankings gain prominence, the taken-for-granted assumptions of the academic field are being increasingly contested under the influence of performance metrics and international rankings (see further discussion in Chapter Four – Theoretical Foundation). Viewing VHE as a contested field helps to gain a more nuanced understanding of how institutional change unfolds, not just through formal policy, but also through the micro-level practices, struggles, and adaptations of those situated within the system. This perspective helps to explain why reforms often yield uneven outcomes and why resistance, compliance, and innovation coexist in complex and sometimes contradictory ways.

2.7. Summary of the chapter

The present chapter has provided a multidimensional contextual map of the VHE system, revealing how its historical legacies, political structures, cultural norms, and reform trajectories have collectively shaped the conditions under which academic identities are transformed and negotiated. It sheds light on the institutional change in Vietnam, which is mediated by a complex interplay of inherited ideologies, structural discontinuities, national aspirations, and culturally embedded expectations. By conceptualising VHE as a contested field in Bourdieu's sense, the chapter offers an analytical frame for understanding how power, capital, and identity are negotiated within a system undergoing profound yet uneven transformations. This field is an active site where competing mechanisms and demands of state control, policy discourse on autonomy, and established academic identity clash and co-evolve. Within this field, lecturers are positioned at the intersection of these forces, expected to internalise new expectations while remaining embedded in historically rooted value systems. This contested field also underscores the importance of viewing reforms through the experiences of those who implement change.

This chapter makes a foundational contribution to the thesis by contextualising the dynamic of reform implementation within the specific historical, structural, and cultural configurations of VHE. It establishes the contextual basis upon which subsequent chapters can interpret how lecturers perceive, respond to, and negotiate their evolving expectations. The subsequent chapters build upon this foundation by reviewing international literature and theoretical frameworks concerning the R&T relationship, academic identities and the dynamics of governance reform in global HE systems.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW: THE RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS, GOVERNANCE REFORM, AND ACADEMIC IDENTITIES

3.1. Overview of the chapter

This chapter aims to review the relevant international literature on the R&T nexus, the motives that influence HE governance, and the debates on academic identities, while also identifying potential gaps in the existing literature. It includes three main parts.

First, *section 3.2* explores the literature related to the concept of the R&T nexus, tracing its historical evolution, theoretical conceptualisations, and empirical complexities. It examines how the relationship between R&T has been variously theorised as integrated, separated, or contextually contingent. It also identifies unresolved tensions and underexplored dimensions in previous research, particularly the lack of attention to non-Western and culturally sensitive contexts.

Section 3.3 then reviews scholarship on governance reform in HE. This part situates recent reforms within broader global trends toward decentralisation and managerialism, and analyses how these reforms reshape the evaluative regimes, symbolic hierarchies, and field dynamics that structure academic work. The section emphasises the role of the reforms and the implications for the R&T nexus and academic identities.

Finally, *section 3.4* presents the relevant literature on academic identities, further exploring how institutional expectations, reform efforts, and cultural values interact to shape lecturers' self-perceptions and professional trajectories. It reviews studies that document the fragmentation and hybridisation of academic identities in the face of competing demands, with a particular emphasis on how these dynamics unfold in transitional and culturally specific contexts similar to Vietnam.

The current chapter, by reviewing these three bodies of literature in an integrated manner, highlights the importance of contextual, institutional, and cultural dimensions in understanding how lecturers experience and respond to reform-driven expectations of their academic identities. This discussion enables the study to position the research focus, i.e., the R&T nexus,

within a broader context and recognise theoretical, empirical, and contextual gaps that need to be addressed. Thereby, this chapter also sets the stage for the theoretical discussion in the subsequent chapter, and for the study's contribution to understanding how lecturers perceive and negotiate academic identities in the context of governance reforms in a non-Western, rapidly transforming HE context.

3.2. The R&T nexus: from a historical and conceptual perspective

As one of the most widely debated themes in HE research, the relationship between R&T, commonly referred to as the *research-teaching nexus*, has attracted sustained scholarly attention over several decades (Halliwell, 2008; Tight, 2016). This section examines how the nexus has been historically constructed, theoretically conceptualised, and empirically investigated across diverse academic systems. It begins by presenting the evolution of university functions and their implications for academic identities and responsibilities, then reviews major theoretical models and empirical findings, and finally identifies prominent tensions and underexplored dimensions in the literature.

3.2.1. Tracing the historical evolution of university functions

The relationship between R&T has long been considered one of the defining features of the modern university. These two functions have been the subject of extensive scholarly debate for decades, raising fundamental questions about the mission of HEIs and the identities and responsibilities of academic staff (Robertson, 2007; Shin et al., 2014; Tight, 2016). As Clark (1997) argued, 'no issue is more basic in modern HE than the relationship between R&T. And no issue occasions more superficial thought and retrogressive criticism both outside and inside the academy' (p. 241). Such an argument emphasises the longstanding relevance and complexity of the so-called R&T nexus. In the same vein, many scholars (e.g., Barnett, 2005; Brew, 1999, 2016; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999; Elen et al., 2007; Horta et al., 2012; Kaasila et al., 2021; Leisyte et al., 2009; Lucas et al., 2008; Shin et al., 2014) claim that the way the nexus is conceptualised has implications not only for national and institutional policy but also for academic governance and the construction of academic identities. However, despite considerable theoretical and empirical interest, the nature of the relationship remains contested. Recent reviews of the literature (e.g., Halliwell, 2008; Hattie & Marsh, 1996; Heng et al., 2022;

Tight, 2016) suggest significant variation in how academics perceive the nexus: some view it as mutually reinforcing, others as conflicting, and still others deny its existence altogether. It can be said that the relationship between R&T, as two primary functions in modern universities, has long been the subject of debate and remains highly controversial, which needs further exploration (see Braxton, 1996; Coate et al., 2001; Hattie & Marsh, 1996; Hughes & Tight, 1995; Tight, 2016).

There have been substantial efforts to explore and improve the understanding of this highly complex problem. A systematic literature review by Tight (2016), one of those approaching the nexus from a historical and structural perspective, claims that it is necessary to clarify the roots of the relationship, asking where the current tensions originate and how they relate to broader debates about the nature of the university. Tight (2016) argues that the ongoing debates on the nature of the university and the idea of HE have been underlying the discussions on the R&T nexus. In the same vein, many authors (e.g., Barnett, 2005; Brew, 1999; Elton, 1992; Shin et al., 2014) argue that evolving conceptions of the university's purpose have played a significant role in shaping the relationship between R&T. It is argued that key features of the transformations in major university functions, i.e., the university model, have contributed to changes in the relationship between R&T.

In addition, at the heart of these debates lies the 'Humboldtian idea' of the university, which emphasises the integration of R&T as the foundation of modern academic life (Amaral et al., 2008; Harland, 2016; Shin et al., 2014). Taking the point of time when Wilhelm von Humboldt introduced the *'new idea'* of the *'new university'* model, Schimank & Winnes (2000) provide a useful typology of how this relationship has developed historically, identifying three university models. The first is the *pre-Humboldtian* model, well-known exemplified by the French HE system in the 18th century and later adopted across Eastern Europe and the Soviet bloc. In this model, R&T were institutionally separated, with universities focusing primarily on teaching, while research was conducted in distinct research institutes. This type of university model might be labelled as a *teaching-only or teaching-focused university*. Academics in these contexts typically assumed a teaching-focused identity, with limited engagement in research activities (Arimoto, 2013; Schimank & Winnes, 2000).

The second is the Humboldtian model, which emerged in nineteenth-century Germany and fundamentally redefined the modern university. It was based on the integration of the *'discovery of knowledge'* (research) and its *'transmission'* (teaching), promoting the unity of these two functions within a single institutional space. Universities adopting this model aspired to be *'research-intensive'* and encouraged academics to fulfil dual roles as both researchers and teachers (Brew, 2016; Jenkins & Healey, 2015; Schimank & Winnes, 2000). Academics in the pre-Humboldtian model, traditionally teaching-focused, are expected to assume dual identities under the Humboldtian ideal (Arimoto, 2013). The Humboldtian doctrine played a fundamental role in the establishment of the University of Berlin in 1810 and has had a significant impact on HE systems worldwide (Schimank & Winnes, 2000; Teichler, 2014).

Lastly, the third model is the *post-Humboldtian* pattern, characterised by 'a differentiation of roles and/or organisations and/or resources for R&T', even though lecturers at a university are expected to fulfil professional academic roles (Schimank & Winnes, 2000, p. 398). This pattern extends beyond the Humboldtian model in terms of the differentiation between the two activities, as evident in the UK (Leisyte et al., 2009; Schimank & Winnes, 2000).

In recent years, although it cannot be assumed that any one university model is the *best practice*, global events and socio-economic shifts have further influenced how universities define and balance their core functions. For instance, the role of academic research in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the value of university-based research for the public good, especially when 'vaccines and treatments produced during the global coronavirus crisis demonstrated the importance of university R&T' (Hordósy & McLean, 2022, p. 1).

At the same time, broader transformations in state-university relations, the growth of the knowledge economy, and increased institutional autonomy and accountability have prompted a rethinking of what universities are for, with a growing movement towards research as the dominant function (Barnett, 2005; Leisyte et al., 2009). As Cummings and Shin (2014), Elen et al. (2007), and Hu et al. (2015) suggest, these global shifts have significantly influenced academic roles and identities, contributing to a reconfiguration of academic identities in many systems, including those in transition. As a result, these tendencies can be understood as part of a broader global transformation in the academic identities and functions of universities (Kaasila et al., 2021; Macfarlane, 2016).

3.2.2. Theoretical models and empirical debates on the R&T relationship

The R&T nexus has been conceptualised through multiple theoretical lenses, each offering distinct interpretations of how R&T relate to one another within the university context. Several attempts have been made to categorise this relationship, highlighting its complexity and context-dependency. Healey (2005), for instance, distinguishes between structure-based and process-based conceptions of the nexus. The former focuses on organisational arrangements and the formal integration of R&T, while the latter emphasises the dynamic, pedagogical processes through which R&T interact in practice. From another approach, Brew contributes to the discussion by exploring how epistemological beliefs shape academic engagement with the nexus, suggesting that different ways of knowing influence whether academics perceive R&T as integrated or separate endeavours (see Brew, 1999, 2003, 2010, 2016). In the meantime, Griffiths (2004) offers a widely cited typology, which Jenkins and Healey (2005) extend, delineating four distinct curriculum strategies: research-informed, research-based, research-oriented, and research-led teaching. These models differ in their emphasis on research processes, research content, and student involvement. This framework has been influential in guiding institutional policy and curriculum design, although its applicability is often moderated by disciplinary cultures and institutional settings. Rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all solution, these models collectively indicate that the R&T nexus is inherently plural, complex and must be adapted to fit specific contexts.

Furthermore, empirical research has reinforced the idea that there is no single or universal nexus. Instead, academic experiences of the R&T relationship vary widely across systems, disciplines, and individual careers. Tight's (2016) extensive literature review finds substantial variation in how the nexus is operationalised and experienced. Leisyte et al. (2009) show that in contexts of shifting governance regimes, the nexus is often shaped more by institutional constraints than by academic ideals. In the same vein, some scholars (e.g., Hattie & Marsh, 1996; Heng et al., 2022; Robertson, 2007) argue that while the integration of R&T is often rhetorically promoted, it is rarely structurally supported in practice. Disciplinary context plays a key role. For example, in the sciences, R&T may align more naturally through lab-based instruction, whereas in the humanities, integration often depends on individual initiative and pedagogical creativity (Brew, 2010; Neumann, 1992). These findings caution against romanticising the nexus as inherently beneficial or automatically achievable.

One of the influential contributions to the debate is the meta-analysis undertaken by Hattie and Marsh (1996), which synthesised 58 studies on the relationship between teaching effectiveness and research productivity. Their findings challenged the widespread assumption of a positive and consistent link between the two, revealing instead that the overall correlation was close to zero. According to their analysis, engaging in research did not make one a better teacher, nor did good teaching necessarily align with high research output. Crucially, Hattie and Marsh did not conclude that the nexus should be abandoned altogether. Rather, they proposed a more nuanced interpretation: the relationship may be positive, negative, or non-existent depending on contextual moderators. These include variables such as academic discipline, level of students taught, institutional mission, and methods used to assess R&T. The authors advocated for moving beyond aggregate correlations and called for further studies that account for these intervening factors.

Therefore, on the one hand, it cannot be denied that the scientific research achievements of universities have made significant contributions to the development of each nation in particular and the progress of humanity in general (John & Fanghanel, 2015). In addition, much empirical evidence from the recent literature demonstrates that the integration of R&T can bring mutual benefits to both domains, as well as to student learning outcomes (see Brew, 2010; Colbeck, 1998; Cummings & Shin, 2014; Gutman, 2021; Harland, 2016; Breen et al., 2003; Jenkins & Healey, 2005; Tight, 2016). Thus, promoting the research dimension and linking it to teaching appear to be promising strategies in contemporary HE.

On the other hand, this relationship remains a complex and often contested concept that resists easy generalisation. As emphasised by many scholars (e.g., Hattie & Marsh, 1996; Shin et al., 2014; Tight, 2016), there is a need to investigate the nexus in contextually grounded ways, attending to variations across institutional structures, national systems, and academic subcultures. What is clear from the literature is that while many conceptual models and policy agendas assume integration to be a normative ideal, the practical realities sometimes reflect fragmentation, negotiation, and even resistance. This sets the stage for a deeper inquiry into the unresolved tensions and underexplored dimensions of the nexus, particularly as they relate to academic identity, institutional governance, and broader socio-political forces.

3.2.3. Unresolved tensions and underexplored dimensions

Despite the growing body of scholarship on the R&T nexus, several unresolved tensions and considerable gaps remain that require further investigation. Much of the existing literature either appears to idealise the integration of R&T or problematise their separation. Nevertheless, the practice and complexities of navigating this relationship amid broader institutional and systemic pressures are also important issues that need further exploration. Some recurring limitations can be identified in both conceptual and empirical studies.

First, much of the debate frames the nexus primarily as a technical or pedagogical matter, focusing on curriculum models or classroom practice. While models such as those proposed by Griffiths (2004) and Jenkins and Healey (2005) have been influential in guiding curriculum design, they provide limited insights into how academics actually navigate competing expectations, structural pressures, or identity tensions in practice. As noted by other scholars (e.g., Brew, 2010; Halliwell, 2008; Shin et al., 2014), such models may fall short of capturing the complexities and dynamism of academic work, especially in contexts of change.

Second, empirical investigations have often focused on measuring correlations between R&T, rather than exploring their meaning within the context. Hattie and Marsh's (1996) widely cited meta-analysis, for example, challenged the assumption of a positive link but did so through a statistical lens that overlooked the socio-cultural and institutional dimensions of academic work. While later studies (e.g., Leisyte et al., 2009; Tight, 2016) have begun to recognise this limitation, the field still lacks in-depth, contextually grounded analyses of how the nexus is experienced as a site of tension, adaptation, and academic role negotiation.

Third, relatively little attention has been given to the relationship between the nexus and wider HE reforms. Although many scholars recognise that institutional policies and national frameworks shape academic identities, there is a need for further examination of how governance changes, such as managerialism, performance-based funding, or research-focused evaluation regimes, mediate the R&T relationship. This neglect is problematic, as reforms often intensify demands for research while offering limited support for teaching, thereby exacerbating tensions in academic identity and other consequences.

Finally, much of the previous research remains centred on Western, particularly Anglophone, systems. As a result, the structural, cultural, and political specificities of non-Western contexts are sometimes underexplored. In societies influenced by hierarchical traditions, Confucian values, or socialist legacies, the negotiation of R&T may be shaped as much by symbolic expectations, power relations, and internalised norms as by formal policy or workload allocation. Without appropriate and timely attention to these dimensions, existing theories risk being overly narrow and less applicable to systems undergoing rapid reform under uneven conditions of modernisation.

In summary, the relevant literature on the R&T nexus reveals a landscape of diverse interpretations, contested assumptions, persistent tensions, and underexplored dimensions. While various conceptual models and investigations have sought to clarify the relationship between R&T, empirical findings indicate that this nexus is highly variable and shaped by a range of contextual factors. However, existing studies may overlook the interplay between academic identity and institutional change, or unintentionally marginalise non-Western perspectives. These discussions highlight the need for a more situated, sociologically informed understanding of the R&T nexus, which could transcend normative prescriptions and instead attend to the everyday negotiations, institutional structures, and cultural values that shape academic identities. By exploring how Vietnamese lecturers experience and navigate the nexus as part of their identity negotiation within a changing context, this inquiry seeks to address these gaps and contribute to a more context-sensitive theorisation of R&T integration. It positions the nexus not as a spontaneous structure or policy ideal, but as a dynamic and contested space in which identities are negotiated, values are enacted, and roles are reshaped in response to changing institutional fields.

3.3. Governance reform in HE and its implications

The governance of HE has experienced significant transformation over the past few decades, driven by broader movements toward decentralisation, institutional autonomy, and market-oriented orientation (Gornitzka et al., 2005; Kogan et al., 2006; Varghese & Martin, 2013). In both Western and other contexts, these reforms have sought to enhance efficiency, responsiveness, and accountability within university systems. However, beneath their technical and managerial rationales, governance reforms also entail symbolic and structural shifts that

reshape the conditions under which academic work is valued, organised, and enacted (Amaral et al., 2008; Leisyte et al., 2009; Varghese & Martin, 2013; Wang, 2010). This section reviews key trends in governance reform on a global scale, with particular attention to how they impact academic identities, mediate the R&T nexus, and reproduce or contest existing hierarchies of value in HE.

One of the most prominent tendencies in recent HE governance is the move toward greater university autonomy and decentralisation (Hai & Anh, 2021; Tran, 2014; Varghese & Martin, 2013). In Asia, this trend has been strongly promoted through national and regional policy initiatives, although the extent and character of reform vary across countries (see Pham & Goyette, 2019; Varghese & Martin, 2013; Wang, 2010). In Vietnam, governance reform has been framed as a pathway toward modernisation, with a series of policy documents promoting increased institutional autonomy and reduced state control (Nguyen & Tran, 2019b; Pham & Goyette, 2019; Tran, 2014). However, as several scholars have noted, these reforms sometimes remain partial and uneven in practice. Pham and Goyette (2019) describe the Vietnamese case as a statist model of autonomy, in which the rhetoric of decentralisation coexists with enduring forms of top-down control. Similarly, Hai and Anh (2021) highlight the practical difficulties faced by academic staff when participating in university governance under constrained conditions, pointing to persistent tensions between formal autonomy and informal dependency.

These governance changes bring with them new evaluative regimes that prioritise accountability, performativity, and measurable outcomes. A common feature across reforming systems is the rise of managerialism, which reorients academic work around quantifiable outputs and standardised indicators (Dao, 2015; Kogan et al., 2006). This trend has significant implications for how academic identities are defined and valued. The managerial principles often prioritise research productivity and international visibility, creating evaluative hierarchies that favour certain forms of capital (e.g., publications in indexed journals) over others (e.g., quality teaching). Consequently, the reconfiguration of governance structures is closely tied to the fragmentation of academic identities and the intensification of identity tensions (Dugas et al., 2020; Kyvik, 2013).

From a structural perspective, these reforms also affect how the R&T nexus is organised and experienced. In systems that reward research more heavily than teaching, academics may be

incentivised to disengage from pedagogical commitments in order to meet performance targets. Leisyte et al. (2009) demonstrate how governance reforms in the Netherlands and England have led to differentiated roles and workloads, reinforcing a division between R&T functions. This structural decoupling challenges the ideal of integration promoted in much of the international literature (see section 3.2), and instead encourages a strategic separation of tasks in response to policy pressures. In the Vietnamese context, recent reforms have introduced similar dynamics. As Tran (2014) and Dao (2015) observe, while institutions are expected to become RI, support for such a shift remains inadequate, leading to unrealistic expectations and institutional ambiguity. For many lecturers, this creates a sense of misalignment between policy discourse and workplace realities, thereby undermining their ability to reconcile R&T responsibilities.

These tensions are not merely operational; rather, they are also symbolic. Rowlands (2017), drawing on Bourdieusian perspective, argues that governance reforms serve as mechanisms of symbolic reordering, redefining who has voice, authority, and recognition within the academic field. As policies reframe academic worth through metrics and audits, they impose new forms of symbolic capital that may clash with traditional academic values or local professional cultures. In Vietnam, where hierarchical relationships, collectivist norms, and Confucian traditions continue to shape academic identity and professional practice, the cultural implications of reform may be particularly pronounced (Tran et al., 2019). Pham and Goyette (2019) suggest that reforms based on Western managerial templates can conflict with entrenched cultural expectations, where academics internalise external standards without adequate means to meet them. As a result, the reforms risk entrenching inequalities and further marginalising those without the requisite capital to succeed under new evaluative regimes.

To summarise, the relevant literature suggests that governance reform is not solely a matter of institutional design or policy innovation. Rather, it further reshapes the normative structures of the academic field, redefining what counts as valuable, who is recognised as legitimate, and how academic roles are to be performed and evaluated. These movements directly shape how the R&T nexus is negotiated and how academic identities are reconstructed, particularly in such contexts as Vietnam. As the next chapter will argue, understanding these dynamics requires a theoretical framework that can account for both institutional and individual levels of analysis.

3.4. Academic identities: between policy expectations and professional values

The changes in university governance have significant implications for how academic identities are constructed, enacted, and experienced. Recently, scholars have focused their attention on investigating how institutional policies, governance structures, and cultural values intersect to be able to (re)shape academic identities (see Amaral et al., 2008; Dugas, 2020; Henkel, 2005; Stensaker et al., 2012; Tran et al., 2017a; Van Lankveld et al., 2016; Whitchurch, 2010). This section reviews the relevant literature on academic identities, with a particular focus on how university reform and managerial discourses have introduced competing pressures, reshaped traditional professional boundaries, and redefined what it means to be an academic. It also highlights how these tensions manifest, especially in non-Western contexts such as Vietnam, where structural reforms intersect with cultural norms, creating distinctive patterns of identity negotiation.

It can be recognised that the transformation of the academic profession in the context of global HE reform has prompted growing interest in the shifting nature of academic identities (Stensaker et al., 2012). Scholars have increasingly pointed to a disjuncture between institutional policy expectations and the values that underpin the academic profession (see Barnett & Di Napoli, 2007; Billot & King, 2015; Macfarlane, 2016; Stensaker et al., 2012). These tensions have led to what many researchers describe as a fragmentation of academic identities, especially in contexts where reform discourses foreground productivity, accountability, and performativity. Within this changing environment, lecturers are not only expected to reconcile competing demands but also to renegotiate their sense of professional self (Billot, 2010; Macfarlane, 2016).

Academic identity has long been acknowledged as a dynamic and multifaceted construct that cannot be reduced to a singular role. Traditional distinctions between R&T academic roles have given way to increasingly hybrid and context-sensitive configurations. As Whitchurch (2009) observes, the rise of *blended professionals* who operate across academic and managerial domains illustrates the erosion of clear professional boundaries. This shift complicates conventional notions of identity and requires academics to navigate overlapping spheres of responsibility. Discipline-specific cultures and institutional settings further compound the fragmentation of academic identity. For instance, Billot and King (2015) demonstrate that

academics often adopt multiple metaphors to describe their identities, reflecting the multiplicity and ambiguity of professional life. In the interpretative synthesis, Kaasila et al. (2021) and Kaasila et al. (2023) argue that academic identities are increasingly fragmented by institutional pressures; however, some relational coherence may be found through engagement in R&T integration. In a similar vein, Van Winkel et al. (2017) explore the complex identity negotiations of research-active academics in new universities, who must navigate different worlds of practice to construct a comprehensive academic profession. These studies suggest that identity construction is not static but processual, continually shaped by institutional context, disciplinary expectations, and personal values.

Against this backdrop of identity fragmentation, scholars have increasingly examined the structural conditions that give rise to such tensions, particularly those associated with governance reform and managerialism. Indeed, a substantial strand of literature has examined how university governance reforms reshape academic work and identity. The rise of managerialist discourse, with its emphasis on quantifiable outcomes, performance targets, and standardised evaluation, has been linked to the erosion of traditional academic values (see Amaral et al., 2008; Dugas et al., 2020; Henkel, 2005; Stensaker et al., 2012; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013). Studies in various contexts highlight how shifting from teaching-only to research-related roles reshapes academic identities and creates tensions in integrating academic responsibilities. For instance, Van Winkel et al. (2017) show that academics in professional education institutions experienced multiple and evolving identities when research was introduced into their roles. While these identities reflected opportunities for professional growth and the incorporation of research into teaching, they also exposed contradictions between institutional expectations and practice, generating challenges in aligning academic work with institutional goals.

Similarly, Kyvik's (2013) empirical study in Norway indicates that the research role has become increasingly demanding, encompassing activities such as networking, collaboration, management, publication and evaluation. The context of Kyvik's study is similar to this research context, since 'although many [Norwegian academic staff as participants] would argue that the teaching of students is the main task of universities, others would maintain that research and knowledge production are the most important functions. For most individual staff members, research is obviously the area of work they appreciate the most and wish to prioritise' (Kyvik,

2013, p. 525). Although many academics still prioritise teaching, research is often valued more highly, producing pressures and potential conflicts as expectations expand. Academic staff must respond to increasing external demands (e.g., the introduction of new technologies, quality assurance, accountability, globalisation, internationalisation, marketisation, and massification) and internal demands (e.g., expectations, social values, informal norms, and written rules) by enhancing their academic role performance. The study highlights the need for further investigation into how lecturers navigate conflicting, mixed, and ambiguous academic expectations, as well as the factors underlying variations in how they prioritise and fulfil different aspects of their academic identities.

These findings in the literature resonate strongly with the Vietnamese context, where lecturers are confronted with new research policies that reconfigure their academic identities and responsibilities. In the context of VHE, these tensions are particularly pronounced. A prominent trend in this research topic is to make efforts to investigate, understand and classify 'new' emerging academic identities and roles. Tran et al. (2017a) demonstrate, for example, how English language lecturers reacted with mixed identities and emotions, from enthusiasm to resistance, when adapting to reform-driven research demands. Their accounts highlight how English language lecturers struggled to adjust to new research expectations introduced under national reform policies. Their study reveals emotional distress, uncertainty, and a profound sense of dissonance between the imposed academic roles and their professional beliefs. To summarise, these studies reveal that attempts to integrate R&T sometimes create academic ambiguity and identity tensions, underscoring the need for institutional support to mitigate conflicts and enable more sustainable forms of role negotiation.

Furthermore, Jones et al. (2021) expand on these issues by documenting the identity work of Vietnamese early-career academics, who face a complex negotiation between Western-oriented reform agendas and deeply ingrained Confucian values. These conflicts are not simply administrative challenges but involve deeper tensions around what it means to be a 'good academic' in a shifting institutional context. Moreover, in Vietnam, where collectivist orientations and hierarchical traditions continue to shape academic life, identity negotiation is further complicated by symbolic norms and relational expectations (Le, 2016b; Nguyen & Tran, 2019b; Phan & Doan, 2020; Tran et al., 2019). In such contexts, identity tensions are not simply institutional but deeply cultural, requiring a more context-sensitive analysis.

Despite these pressures, academics are not passive recipients of reform. Identity work is inherently agentic, involving active sense-making and selective adaptation. Van Lankveld et al. (2016) note in their systematic review that the development of identity in universities is shaped by both external demands and individual aspirations. They argue for a relational view of identity which acknowledges the interplay between self-perception, institutional culture, and disciplinary communities. Kaasila et al. (2021) similarly suggest that R&T integration may offer a pathway toward more coherent identities, particularly when institutional support is present. However, they also caution that this coherence is fragile and contingent on context. In the meantime, Whitchurch and Gordon (2010) draw attention to the growing diversity of academic identities and the challenges this poses for institutional management. These findings collectively indicate that identity formation in contemporary academia involves continuous negotiation, often characterised by emotional labour, resistance, and strategic alignment with institutional norms.

In summary, the existing literature on academic identity demonstrates a landscape marked by fragmentation, hybridity, and contestation. As HE systems undergo structural reforms and adopt new governance structures, academics are increasingly required to manage diverse expectations and navigate complex identity configurations. These tensions profoundly impact how academics perceive themselves and approach their professional work. The Vietnamese context exemplifies how cultural and structural dimensions intertwine to produce unique challenges and modes of identity work. This emphasises the need for a more nuanced, context-sensitive understanding of academic identities negotiation, particularly the R&T nexus, which should recognise the emotional, relational, and agentic aspects in times of systemic changes.

3.5. Summary of the chapter

Building on the empirical, conceptual and contextual gaps identified in the broader field, this chapter has synthesised insights from three interrelated strands, including R&T nexus, governance reform, and academic identities, to develop an integrated understanding of the structural, cultural, and symbolic conditions shaping academic work. It has mapped the historical development and conceptual debates surrounding the R&T nexus. It has also demonstrated that while integration between R&T is often promoted as an ideal, empirical studies reveal significant variation, disconnection, and context dependency. Importantly, it has

highlighted that the nexus is not simply a matter of curriculum or pedagogy, but is entangled with institutional structures and reform pressures.

Then, it has examined the governance reform, particularly the rise of managerialism and evaluative regimes that reshape the conditions of academic work. It has revealed how reforms not only change institutional structures but also reorder hierarchies of value, influencing who and what is recognised as legitimate in the academic field. These dynamics have direct implications for both the R&T nexus and the formation of identity. Lastly, *section 3.4* has focused on academic identities, foregrounding how policy expectations, institutional cultures, and professional values interact to produce tensions in identity. The literature reviewed shows that academic identity is increasingly fragmented and hybridised under reform conditions. These processes are further complicated in contexts like Vietnam, where lecturers must navigate between reform-oriented agendas and culturally embedded academic expectations – an area that remains underexplored in existing research. In summary, the review suggests that there is a need for further context-sensitive, sociologically informed investigations into how lecturers experience and respond to reform-driven changes in their academic identities and professional practice.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

4.1. Overview of the chapter

The discussion in this chapter serves as the theoretical foundation for the research. The primary purpose of this chapter is to establish a coherent set of theoretical tools that inform the study's approach to understanding and examining lecturers' perceptions and practices in a broader institutional context. The rationale for selecting *Bourdieu's theory of practice* (ToP) lies in its capacity to bridge the structural and individual dimensions of academic work. This feature is central to understanding how lecturers perceive and practice their R&T integration as part of their identity negotiation in the context of ongoing institutional governance reforms. Unlike approaches that either prioritise macro-level reform policy implementation or focus narrowly on individual agency, Bourdieu's ToP offers a powerful tool that enables the analysis to capture both macro-level reform conditions and micro-level responses by academic actors (Grenfell, 2014). The primary objective is not to prove that integrating R&T is the ultimate solution, but to understand how lecturers perceive and navigate their changing identities and how various factors influence their decision-making in the context of reform. Bourdieu's ToP is thus well-suited for this research purpose.

This chapter begins with a general overview of Bourdieu's ToP. This is followed by an extensive review of Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' – a collection of concepts, including habitus, field, capital, and hysteresis and their analytical relevance. In *section 4.3*, each of these concepts will then be introduced with a concise explanation of its core meaning, followed by a discussion of why it is relevant and suitable for this study. The analysis then examines each concept in greater depth, drawing on Bourdieu's original writings as well as scholarly interpretations and applications, particularly within the field of HE and in comparable socio-cultural contexts.

Importantly, the explanatory power of Bourdieu's ToP lies in the concepts themselves and the interconnections between them. Therefore, it is appropriate to examine these central organising concepts 'only in the context of the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 96). The final section thus synthesises the discussions of these concepts to further justify the adoption of Bourdieu's framework, reemphasise its relevance to the study, and demonstrate its application to the research questions and methodology.

4.2. Bourdieu's theory of practice (ToP): An overview

Bourdieu's ToP, with its core concepts of habitus, field, and capital, has become a widely used theoretical lens for examining issues in social science fields and subfields, particularly in HE research. Scholars have fruitfully applied Bourdieu's work to investigate prominent issues, such as inequality, academic culture, identity, and change (Grenfell, 2014). In particular, the dynamics of power and identity in academia have often been interpreted through Bourdieu's notions of symbolic and cultural capital, as well as the alignment (or misalignment) of individual habitus with the academic field's expectations (see Apps et al., 2019; Boschetti, 2006; Bui et al., 2019; Costa & Murphy, 2015; Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017; Grenfell & James, 1998; Kloot, 2009, 2014; Marginson, 2013; Maton, 2005; Mu et al., 2018; Naidoo, 2004; Rowlands, 2017; Yang, 2014).

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) was a French sociologist whose influence spans an impressive range of disciplines, including sociology, political science, philosophy, organisational theory, media and cultural studies, anthropology, and education. His early empirical work in Algeria and later educational studies in France laid the foundation for his critique of how educational institutions contribute to the reproduction of social hierarchies. In educational studies in particular, Bourdieu remains a touchstone for analysing how school organisation, curriculum, and pedagogy affect students' outcomes and experiences (Murphy, 2021). Like other major theorists such as Jürgen Habermas and Judith Butler, Bourdieu developed his theoretical framework through a critical dialogue with earlier thinkers. He drew inspiration from, yet critiqued and reworked, ideas from Marx, Wittgenstein, Austin, Pascal, and others. Bourdieu's methodological approach is eclectic and innovative, combining ethnographic observation, statistical analysis, and reflexive theoretical critique. He resisted the dichotomy between theory and method, advocating for a 'reflexive sociology' in which both are seen as intertwined. While he rejected positivist assumptions about value-neutral objectivity, he remained committed to rigour in the application of theory and method. As he insisted, good social science must make explicit 'the hypotheses and operations which make it possible' (Bourdieu, 1971, p. 181, cited in Murphy, 2021).

His ToP emerged as a response to the dichotomies dominating social theory in the mid-twentieth century, particularly the opposition between structuralism and agency. Bourdieu proposed a

relational approach that situates individuals within historically constituted social structures. His studies of education served a significant role in laying the foundation for his theoretical formulations, with a sustained interest in how inequality is reproduced through seemingly neutral institutions (Grenfell, 2014; Jenkins, 2002). At the heart of Bourdieu's ToP lies a dialectical understanding of the relationship between social structures and individual agency. He proposed that neither structures nor agents can be fully understood in isolation. Rather, they exist in a mutually constitutive relationship. This theoretical ideology is encapsulated in his concept of practice, which refers to the patterned actions of individuals shaped by their dispositions (habitus) and their position within a structured social space (field). Bourdieu's framework emphasises how social agents act, often unconsciously, according to the logic of the field they occupy. These logics are informed by historically accumulated power relations and the distribution of various forms of capital (e.g., cultural, economic, social, and symbolic). Bourdieu's ToP, therefore, enables a dynamic analysis of how individuals navigate institutional settings, internalise norms, and respond to changes (Boschetti, 2006; Grenfell, 2004, 2014).

Bourdieu's ToP holds great promise to offer a powerful lens for analysing how Vietnamese university lecturers perceive and respond to shifting institutional expectations. Although a detailed application of his concepts and further discussions will follow in later sections, this part highlights the theoretical potential of the framework to bridge macro-level reform dynamics with micro-level perceptions and practices. The VHE system has been undergoing significant structural transformations that reconfigure academic identities. In such a setting, Bourdieu's theoretical framework is particularly suitable for examining the tensions between inherited professional dispositions and emerging institutional expectations. By attending to both the symbolic dimensions of reform (e.g., status hierarchies, recognition) and the embodied experiences of lecturers (e.g., resistance, adaptation), Bourdieu's ToP provides conceptual tools to unpack how change is interpreted, contested, and enacted within a complex and historically and culturally embedded field. This becomes particularly relevant in analysing how lecturers negotiate their dual roles as teachers and researchers as part of their identities. This dynamic is both structured by institutional demands and shaped by long-standing professional identities.

4.3. Key concepts in Bourdieu's ToP and their relevance to this study

Central to Bourdieu's framework are the concepts of habitus, field, and capital, which will be defined, elaborated and contextualised to show their analytical value in this study. As discussed earlier, one of the essential recognitions when adopting Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' is the interconnectedness and dynamic nature of these three concepts so that 'they are to constitute a rigorous analytical tool' (Collyer, 2015, p. 324). Their interlinked capacity to connect agents and structures, the past and the present, the micro and the macro, may be diminished if solely using them independently as descriptive aspects of society as 'loose metaphors' (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008, p. 37). Such an approach would deviate from Bourdieu's initial intention (Collyer, 2015). The purpose of the present chapter is, therefore, not only to discuss Bourdieu's concepts separately but also to demonstrate and emphasise their potential to bridge macro-structural changes with micro-level practices and identities within Vietnam's evolving HE landscape.

Each of the subsequent subsections will first introduce the core meaning of the concept, explain its rationale and relevance to this study, and then analyse how Bourdieu and other scholars have applied it, particularly within the field of HE and comparable contexts. This structured approach ensures both conceptual clarity and a strong analytical alignment with the research questions and methodological considerations of this study.

4.3.1. Habitus

As previously noted, when investigating how Vietnamese university lecturers perceive and respond to changing expectations, it is insufficient to focus solely on policies or institutional structures. A critical challenge lies in understanding how individuals internalise and negotiate such changes within their professional identity and practice. This is where Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* becomes indispensable. As one of the major analytical tools in Bourdieu's ToP, habitus helps to explain how past experiences, cultural elements, and professional socialisation are sedimented into embodied dispositions that guide behaviour in ways that feel natural or self-evident to the actor (Maton, 2014; Reay, 2004b). Applied to VHE, habitus emerges as a useful theoretical concept for understanding the tensions, ambivalences, and negotiations that (re)shape lecturers' identities in the context of structural transformations intersecting with deeply rooted cultural legacies. Habitus provides the analytical bridge between individual

practices and broader field dynamics, especially when examining related concepts such as field and capital. It thus enables an exploration not only of how structural changes are received but also how they are felt, interpreted, and enacted at the micro level. Habitus, as a fundamental component of Bourdieu's ToP, therefore serves as a cornerstone of the present study's theoretical foundation.

It is well recognised in the literature that the concept of habitus is central to Bourdieu's theories and key to his originality and contributions to the social sciences. For example, Crossley (2001) described Bourdieu's theory of habitus as 'a partial ToP' (p. 95). From a similar perspective, Maton (2014) stated, 'habitus is a key part of Bourdieu's lens through which he sees the social world' (p. 61). It has probably been one of the most widely cited of Bourdieu's concepts and has been applied at macro, meso, and micro levels in studies of various practices, contexts, and disciplines (e.g., sociology, literary criticism, philosophy, cultural studies, anthropology, and education) (Grenfell, 2014; Jenkins, 2002). While the concept of habitus has gained wide recognition across the social sciences, it is also marked by relative ambiguity and contestation. As Maton (2014, p. 49) observes, habitus can appear 'both revelatory and mystifying, instantly recognisable and difficult to define, straightforward and slippery', making it one of Bourdieu's most widely used yet 'enigmatic concept'. Similarly, Rowlands and Gale (2016) describe it as 'complex, multifaceted and multilayered' (p. 4). These perspectives emphasise the importance of careful conceptual engagement.

In broad terms, habitus refers to a system of durable but transposable dispositions – deeply internalised tendencies or *'ways of being'* – that individuals acquire through prolonged social experience. This concept represents a set of internalised norms, values, and practices that guide individuals' behaviours, choices, and interpretations of the world around them (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b). Simply put, habitus focuses on the ways social agents perceive, think, feel, and act. Habitus acts as a lens through which people perceive, evaluate, and act upon their social reality (Grenfell, 2014). Crucially, these dispositions are historically and socially constituted: shaped by the objective conditions of one's upbringing and environment, notably through primary socialisation in family and early education, and thereafter through ongoing interactions within various social fields. In essence, it is how society becomes inscribed in the person, guiding behaviour in largely pre-reflexive ways (Boschetti, 2006; Maton, 2014). Bourdieu (1977) himself, in his work *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, noted that habitus is 'determined by the

past conditions which have produced the principle of their production, that is, by the actual outcome of identical or interchangeable past practices' (p. 72-73). This notion implies that not only does the habitus of social agents influence their practice, but their past practices are also an important factor in (re)shaping their habitus. Thus, the fundamental question is, as in his statement, 'all of my thinking started from this point: how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?' (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 65). In other words, Bourdieu asks how social structure and individual agency can be reconciled and (to use Durkheim's terms) how the *'outer'* social and *'inner'* self-help shape each other (Grenfell, 2014, p. 50).

From this angle, Bourdieu (1990a) describes habitus as an individual characteristic which embraces a 'structured and structuring structure' (p. 170). The term *structured* refers to how an individual's past and present circumstances (e.g., family and educational background) shape their habitus. At the same time, *structuring* highlights how one's habitus contributes to shaping their present and future practices. Moreover, it is a *structure* in the sense that it is systematically organised and ordered, rather than being unsystematic or random. This *structure* comprises a system of *dispositions* which generate perceptions, appreciations and practices (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 53). The habitus, therefore, is concurrently formed by conditions of existence and generates feelings, perceptions, beliefs, practices and so forth by its internal structure (Maton, 2014). By the same logic, Rowlands (2011) claims that habitus is both 'constituted and constituting' (p. 1275) since one's habitus not only includes 'knowledge and understanding of the world' but also contributes to the 'reality of that world' through their own experiences and practices (Mahar et al., 1990, p. 11).

As aforementioned, the habitus does not operate in isolation. Practices do not stem solely from habitus, but from its interaction with current circumstances (Bourdieu, 1990b). As Bourdieu calls 'an obscure and double relation' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 126) or 'an unconscious relationship' (Bourdieu, 1993a, p. 76) between a habitus and a related field. Formally, Bourdieu (1984, p. 101) summarises this relationship by the equation:

[(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice

While this is not a mathematical equation, it serves as a heuristic model that illustrates how practice emerges from the interplay between internal dispositions (habitus), the resources one

holds (capital), and the contextual rules and dynamics of the field. Put differently, one's practice reflects relationships between their dispositions (habitus) and their position in a related field (capital), within the field's current state of play (Boschetti, 2006; Grenfell, 2014). Importantly, neither habitus nor field is fixed. Although habitus exhibits durability and transposability, its structures are not set once and for all. Meanwhile, the social fields within which agents operate also change according to their own internal logics, which agents themselves contribute to. Understanding practice, therefore, requires attention to the dynamic nature of both the changing field and the evolving habitus that actors bring to it (Bourdieu, 1991).

Overall, it can be seen that several key features characterise the habitus. First, it is durable – difficult to shift: once constituted, the core dispositions tend to endure and lend coherence to a person's practices over time. Bourdieu notes that early formative experiences have a particularly lasting impact because 'the habitus tends to ensure its own constancy' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 60) and its defence against change (Maton, 2014). At the same time, habitus is not destiny nor an 'inflexible cage'. Bourdieu and his interpreters emphasise that habitus remains an *open system of dispositions*, constantly subjected to new experiences and thus capable of transformation. From a Bourdieusian perspective, 'being the product of history, it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133). Therefore, although resilient, habitus can evolve when exposed to significant new social contexts or contrasting field pressures. Changes in the field may generate shifts in one's dispositions, even though usually gradually and often unconsciously. This dynamic explains why individuals may resist or adapt to new environments over time, and also why they may experience internal tensions when transitioning between different social worlds (Maton, 2014; Mu et al., 2018; Yang, 2014).

In Bourdieu's metaphor, when one's habitus is well matched to one's social environment, the fit is so seamless that the person is like a *'fish in water'*. By contrast, if one's dispositions encounter a misaligned social field, they may feel like a *'fish out of water'* – a status of experiencing disorientation or strain. Because habitus tends to reproduce its underlying structure, change often requires prolonged exposure to a field with different assumptions or a crisis that renders old dispositions untenable. When social conditions change (e.g., due to policy reforms), individuals may experience a period of difficulty adjusting, as their habitus lags

behind the new demands or expectations. This is when the *hysteresis* of habitus becomes evident: the dispositions that once were perfectly adapted now appear maladaptive, creating a sense of displacement. Over time, if the individual persistently operates in the new environment, the habitus may realign, demonstrating its adaptive capacity (see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017; Grenfell, 2014; Hardy, 2014; Reay, 2004b; Yang, 2014). Discussing habitus from this angle will serve as a foundational premise for the discussions in the subsequent sections on issues related to *Bourdieu and change*, as well as the relevance to this study.

In summary, habitus is durable but not immutable: it tends to perpetuate existing patterns (i.e., providing continuity in identity and behaviour), yet it can incorporate new lessons and generate new practices when the social context calls for it. The capacity for reflection and reflexivity can also mediate habitus change. For example, conscious critical awareness might facilitate the transformation of certain dispositions; however, Bourdieu maintains that much of habitus operates beneath the level of conscious calculation. As a result, habitus not only informs our understanding of identity continuity and change, but also serves as the conceptual anchor that links individual experiences to broader field-level transformations (Bourdieu, 1977; Grenfell, 2004, 2014; Jenkins, 2002; Maton, 2014).

It is this bridging role that makes habitus foundational to the theoretical and analytical approach of this study. It enables a deeper understanding of how Vietnamese university lecturers, situated within intersecting historical and cultural legacies and reform agendas, internalise, interpret, and respond to shifting academic expectations. By focusing on the interplay between lecturers' dispositions and structural changes, habitus allows this research to uncover the dynamics of lecturers' academic identity negotiation and adaptation process. Habitus, therefore, is a relevant and essential concept for examining how academic identities are navigated and reconfigured in the context of reforms.

4.3.2. Field

As mentioned earlier, Bourdieu's concept of *field* serves as another essential theoretical basis for this study. While habitus helps to explore how dispositions are shaped and internalised, the notion of field provides the structural context within which those dispositions are enacted, challenged, or reconfigured. It enables us to examine how power, capital, and institutional

structures influence the environment in which academic actors operate. Particularly in the domain of HE, a sector increasingly influenced by global trends, national reforms, and internal differentiation, this concept provides a powerful lens for understanding how universities and academic identities are situated within a complex web of social forces (Marginson, 2013; Maton, 2005).

The concept of field enables this research to explore the structured and stratified nature of academic space, where agents occupy unequal positions based on their capital and trajectory. These positions are not neutral, but embedded in struggles over recognition, legitimacy, and authority. Moreover, as mentioned above, the properties of a given field are not fixed: it evolves, sometimes through conflict and negotiation, as new actors enter, new rules emerge, and new forms of capital gain prominence (see Bathmaker, 2015; Bourdieu, 1996; Maton, 2004; Naidoo, 2004). This is highly relevant in the Vietnamese context, where HE reforms have introduced competing logics, such as state regulation, market dynamics, and global metrics, into the traditional academic space. As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, by conceptualising VHE as a contested field, this study examines how individual lecturers navigate shifting expectations, institutional pressures, and status hierarchies. It clarifies how lecturers' habitus interacts with the institutional logic of the field, shaping their capacity to adapt, resist, or conform to it. As Bourdieu emphasises, the object of inquiry must be contextualised historically and across local, national and international scales, while the processes of its prior knowledge production should be critically examined. Without the notion of field, habitus alone cannot fully explain why certain practices are privileged or how power circulates in specific settings (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1993a). Thus, this concept is highly important and necessary for analysing the institutional dynamics of reform and their impact on academic identities in this study.

In what follows, the concept of field will be unpacked, beginning with its theoretical foundations, moving to its operational logics, and then exploring its application in studies of HE. This part will conclude by clarifying how this concept contributes to the theoretical foundation of the study, providing insights into the examination of academic identity perception and negotiation amid governance reforms in Vietnam.

As another central component of Bourdieu's ToP, field refers to a structured space in which agents and institutions engage in strategic struggles over valued forms of capital (see Bourdieu,

1984, 1993b, 1996). He argues that a comprehensive understanding of interpersonal interactions, events, and social phenomena cannot be achieved solely by examining verbal exchanges or observed occurrences. Instead, he advocates exploring the *social space* within which these events, transactions, and interactions occur (Bourdieu, 2005). From a Bourdieusian approach, it is crucial to contextualise the research object within its historical and socio-political milieu and investigate how previous knowledge about this object has been constructed. This process involves investigating the agents responsible for generating such knowledge and identifying whose interests were promoted by these knowledge-construction practices (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1993a).

In that way, Bourdieu defines fields as bounded social spaces within which social agents occupy positions that are established and distinguished by their relative standings, which are primarily determined by the amount and worth of capital or valued resources they hold. According to this perspective, a field can also be seen as a multidimensional social arena defined by power relations, wherein the status and opportunities available to agents are shaped by their relationships and interactions within that space (Bourdieu, 1985). Agents' positions within a field are thus contingent upon the form and value of capital they hold, and these positions confer varying levels of power, recognition, and influence (Maton, 2005). Bourdieu even characterises social activities within a field as an implicit but fiercely competitive '*game'*, where agents continuously strive to increase their share or even achieve dominance over particular forms of capital that are recognised as valuable and meaningful within that specific social space (see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Kloot, 2009; Naidoo, 2004).

The relevant literature suggests that the concept of field is increasingly recognised as a substantial pillar in Bourdieu's work. In his later work, Bourdieu devotes considerable attention to examining specific fields, including bureaucracy, housing, science, literature, television, culture, education, and the restructured social sites of globalised de-industrialisation (Grenfell, 2014). He argues that a field is 'a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning' (Bourdieu, 1993b, p. 162). Notably, Bourdieu dedicated significant time and intellectual effort to investigating the laws/ rules of the field of education, particularly through a specific analysis of universities and schools (see Bourdieu, 1996; Grenfell, 2014; Grenfell & James, 1998). He believes that education, as a field, has a unique capacity for self-reproduction, and the social

agents occupying dominant positions within it were profoundly embedded in its discourses and practices (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 1979; Grenfell, 2014).

For Bourdieu, fields are also of varying sizes and may exist within others, meaning there can also be 'fields within fields' (Grenfell, 2004, p. 28). For example, he viewed individual universities as situated within the wider university field, or more broadly, within the field of HE (see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Grenfell & James, 1998; Maton, 2005; Shelley, 2010). Indeed, Bourdieu's concept of field has been widely adopted to analyse HE as a social space governed by its internal logic, forms of capital, and power relations. In his empirical works such as *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1988) and *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Bourdieu, 1996), Bourdieu examined universities not simply as sites of knowledge production, but as arenas of symbolic struggle. Within the academic field, universities, disciplines, and individuals occupy positions determined by the distribution of academic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. These positions shape not only the relative power of institutions and actors but also their capacity to define what counts as legitimate knowledge, valued practices, and desirable academic roles (see Collyer, 2015; Grenfell, 2014; Maton, 2014; Naidoo, 2004).

As discussed earlier, central to Bourdieu's ToP is the dynamic interplay among habitus, field, and capital. Within this theoretical framework, the value of capital is inherently connected to the social and cultural attributes of agents' habitus, i.e., their deeply internalised dispositions and attitudes, that are enacted within particular fields (Bourdieu, 1984; Mahar et al., 1990). Thus, capital often operates symbolically, deriving its value not from intrinsic properties but rather from the recognition and significance it receives within a given social context (Bourdieu, 1985; Collyer, 2015; Grenfell, 2004). The academic field is characterised by a logic of distinction, in which agents compete to accumulate capital and gain recognition (Bourdieu, 1984, 1988). This logic produces a stratified system where elite research universities monopolise high-status capital, such as international publications, research grants, and prestigious networks, while lower-tier institutions sometimes rely on teaching-oriented capital that holds less symbolic value (Naidoo, 20024; Nguyen & Tran, 2019b). Academic capital, therefore, becomes a key marker of distinction within the field: those who possess it can influence hiring, promotion, funding allocation, and the definition of excellence itself (Grenfell & James, 1998). These dynamics create field-internal hierarchies that are often naturalised

through symbolic power: dominant actors tend to legitimise the rules that favour their position (Naidoo, 2004; Nguyen & Tran, 2019b).

In addition, the academic field is not isolated from external pressures. Despite possessing a degree of autonomy, HEIs and actors are embedded in a broader field of power comprising state regulation, market imperatives, and global competition (Bourdieu, 1996; Marginson, 2013). Reform efforts in governance, funding, or quality assurance reshape the internal logic of the academic field. For instance, the introduction of performative metrics, such as university rankings, research evaluation systems, or international publication targets, constitutes an incursion of market and bureaucratic logics into the academic field. These reforms often privilege certain forms of capital (e.g., international research outputs) and sometimes marginalise others (e.g., local pedagogical expertise), thereby reconfiguring the structure of positions and influencing how academics position themselves and their work (Kloot, 2009; Rowlands, 2017).

Furthermore, the concept of field also enables the analysis of how academic identities and practices are shaped by structural transformations. As individuals internalise the logic of the field through their habitus, they come to see certain roles, priorities, or values as *natural* or *self-evident*. However, when the field changes, such as shifts in policy or institutional direction, this alignment can be disrupted, generating tensions and uncertainties. This is particularly evident in contexts of reform, where previously dominant forms of capital may lose value, and academics must adjust their dispositions and strategies accordingly. For example, managerial mechanisms may elevate organisational capital (e.g., strategic planning skills or administrative authority) over traditional academic capital, leading to conflicts in academic roles and shifts in identity (Marginson, 2013; Rowlands, 2013, 2017).

Bourdieu's notion of field further enables the understanding of such processes not as individual resistance or dysfunction, but as structural effects of evolving field dynamics. The concept of field thus helps explain why academics and institutions respond in varied ways to similar policies. Each response reflects a position within the field and a strategic effort to conserve or enhance one's capital under changing conditions (Maton, 2005). The relevant literature on HE reform across diverse settings, from Europe to Asia and Latin America, has employed the concept of field to explain institutional differentiation, policy responses, and academic

adaptation (see Bathmaker, 2015; Collyer, 2015; Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017; Marginson, 2013; Maton, 2005; Mu et al., 2018; Naidoo, 2004). These studies demonstrate that reform is not experienced uniformly across all individuals or institutions. Actors respond according to their position in the field, the amount and degree of capital they possess, and the habitus they have developed. In this way, Bourdieu's notion of field foregrounds the relational, situated, and contested nature of reform implementation and identity negotiation in HE.

From the discussions above, it can be said that Bourdieu's concept of field provides a valuable lens for investigating the complexities and dynamics inherent in VHE reform. Historically shaped by a blend of Confucian tradition, socialist administrative logics, and post-*Đổi Mới* liberalisation, the Vietnamese academic field currently experiences significant structural transformations. While state control remains influential through centralised governance mechanisms, resource allocation, and political oversight, universities are increasingly encouraged to compete for resources, enhance research capacity, and engage with global standards. These overlapping and sometimes contradictory demands result in a field characterised by fragmentation, uneven distribution of capital, and contested definitions of academic legitimacy (Nguyen & Tran, 2019b). The application of the field concept, therefore, equips this study with an analytical framework for exploring how Vietnamese lecturers perceive, interpret, and negotiate their academic expectations and identities within these shifting institutional dynamics. Rather than viewing changes as simply imposed from above, the relational perspective of the field enables this research to capture how macro-level governance reforms interact with micro-level practices. This explains the ways actors compete for various forms of capital, redefine their strategic priorities, and respond differently to the changing rules of the academic game. Together with habitus and capital, the concept of field underpins this study's analysis of VHE as a dynamic and contested social space in which academic identities are continuously challenged and reshaped.

4.3.3. Capital

As another fundamental pillar in Bourdieu's ToP, the concept of *capital* is essential for understanding how individuals are positioned within social structures and how they navigate power relations. In combination with *habitus* and *field*, *capital* allows this study to examine how certain practices, values, and identities are legitimised or marginalised within VHE. Capital

refers not only to economic resources but also to other socially recognised assets, such as knowledge, status, prestige, and networks, that confer symbolic power and shape individuals' trajectories within a particular field. In the academic field, these various forms of capital are unevenly distributed, reflecting and reinforcing existing hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1986; Collyer, 2015). In the context of VHE, the concept of capital is valuable for exploring how inequality is reproduced or contested amid reform. Different forms of capital, i.e., economic, cultural, social, and symbolic, mediate how lecturers position themselves, how they are evaluated, and how they respond to emerging expectations. This concept also helps explain why some lecturers successfully adapt to shifting academic expectations, while others struggle to do so. Moreover, it sheds light on how strategic behaviours emerge, as lecturers seek to accumulate, convert, or protect their capital in response to emerging pressures.

Bourdieu (1986) classified capital into several forms, such as economic, cultural, social, and symbolic, each with distinct values within specific fields. Economic capital encompasses monetary resources or assets. Cultural capital can be institutionalised (e.g., academic qualifications), objectified (e.g., books, degrees), or embodied (e.g., linguistic skills). Social capital refers to access to networks and group membership. Symbolic capital, though derived from other forms, relates explicitly to prestige and recognition, thereby elevating one's status within a field (Bourdieu, 1988, 1996). In academia, cultural and symbolic capital are particularly influential, as credentials, research productivity, and institutional affiliations serve as legitimising mechanisms for defining academic excellence and authority (Collyer, 2015; Cottingham, 2016; Naidoo, 2004; Maton, 2005).

Crucially, capital is not simply possessed, but socially recognised and validated within the logic of the field. The same academic degree, research output, or professional connection may carry vastly different values depending on the field's *doxa*[7] and the institutional context. A particular form of capital may carry substantial value within one field, but this value may not be guaranteed or necessarily transferable when assessed in a different field. Even what is considered valuable capital in a given field may lose its significance or fail to be recognised

[7] *Doxa* refers to the taken-for-granted assumptions, values, and rules that are so deeply internalised by participants in a particular field that they are perceived as natural and unquestionable. In Bourdieu's framework, *doxa* shapes what is considered legitimate practice or capital within a field, thus forming the background against which habitus and field interact (see Bourdieu, 1977, 1990a).

when examined within the logic and rules of another field. From this perspective, capital can be considered as relational and symbolic, rather than absolute. Its value depends on the collective recognition and the taken-for-granted assumptions of the field's doxa, as well as the agents' investment in its stakes – what Bourdieu terms *illusio*[8] (Bourdieu, 1985; Grenfell, 2014).

These issues become particularly apparent when examining how different forms of capital operate within the academic field. In particular, Bourdieu's distinction between academic capital and intellectual capital is highly relevant to this research, as it sheds light on the interplay between managerial and collegial power structures. Viewing HE through the lens of a field reveals that academic identities are shaped by structured social forces rather than being merely individual choices (Marginson, 2013; Naidoo, 2004). While Bourdieu did not consistently differentiate the forms of capital within universities in this way (Naidoo, 2004), he, in *Homo Academicus,* classified two dominant types: academic capital and intellectual capital. These forms exhibit contrasting power dynamics within the university context (Bourdieu, 1988; Rowlands, 2013). From a Bourdieusian perspective, it can be said that academic and intellectual capital represent, respectively, the tension between managerial and collegial governance or power in the HE field (see Collyer, 2015; Kloot, 2009; Rowlands, 2017; Rowlands & Gale, 2016).

Specifically, academic capital is closely linked to managerial authority and the hierarchical structures of governance, whereas intellectual capital is rooted in scholarly reputation, research excellence, and the recognition of intellectual achievements (Rowlands, 2017). Academic capital enables 'domination of other positions and holders' (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 84) by aligning with administrative power, strategic decision-making, and institutional control. Meanwhile, intellectual capital stems from R&T accomplishments, disciplinary expertise, and scientific contributions that generate recognition and prestige both within and beyond the university community (Bourdieu, 1988; Rowlands, 2017). Both forms of capital can be translated into symbolic power – the ability to define what constitutes legitimate knowledge and academic merit (Bourdieu, 1988; Collyer, 2015). Typically, academic capital is concentrated among university administrators and leaders, while intellectual capital is primarily held by academic

[8] *Illusio* describes the belief in, and investment of energy towards, the stakes of a field – the conviction that what is at stake in the *'game'* is worth pursuing. It explains why agents participate and compete for valued forms of capital, as they accept the internal logic of the field as meaningful (see Grenfell, 2014).

staff. In the contemporary HE landscape, academic capital has become an increasingly dominant currency, particularly because it aligns with economic imperatives, political influence, and managerial logics that can shape institutional priorities (Collyer, 2015; Kloot, 2009).

There have been many previous studies (e.g., Collyer, 2015; Dugas et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2021; Kaasila et al., 2021, 2023; Macfarlane, 2016; Mathieson, 2019; Rowlands, 2011, 2017; Van Lankveld et al., 2016; Van Winkel et al., 2017) investigating changes in university governance and academic identity and professionalism, particularly in research, teaching, administration and management, as well as how Bourdieu's theoretical concepts (e.g., capital) has been employed as a theoretical foundations for these kind of research problems. One of the most prominent research trends is the study of how changes within contemporary university governance affect academic identity and the struggles or conflicts between *'new'* and *'old'* professions, as well as the tensions between collegial and managerial governance in the field of HE.

Rowlands (2017) illustrates how contemporary changes in governance in England, the US and Australia have resulted in a diminution in academic influence in decision-making processes related to R&T. By drawing on the concepts of intellectual and academic capital within the broader framework of habitus, field and capital, the author emphasises that analyses which examine university power relations as a binary between collegial and managerial governance on a spectrum have limitations. She points out the complexity of the academic workforce, including those who have assumed line management or executive positions, as well as practising academics who carry significant administrative responsibilities alongside R&T.

In Bourdieu's terms, it can be said that intellectual and academic capital represent, respectively, the tension between collegial and managerial governance or power in the HE field (see Bourdieu, 1988; Collyer, 2015; Kloot, 2009; Rowlands, 2017; Rowlands & Gale, 2016, 2019). While academic capital is associated with organisational office and executive status, intellectual capital is more closely linked to scholarly standing and disciplinary expertise (Bourdieu, 1988; Rowlands, 2017). Rowlands (2017) specifies that academic governance is the organisational subfield that produces the conditions enabling R&T, yet recent changes have *executivised* this subfield, reducing meaningful participation by practising academics in curricular, pedagogic

and research decisions. Notably, heightened demands for academic capital (committee work, compliance, and standard-setting) consume the time and cognitive bandwidth required to generate intellectual capital – the very resource upon which research quality and research-informed teaching depend. The result is a feedback loop in which rising administrative expectations attenuate scholarly production, thereby weakening the intellectual foundation of teaching (Rowlands, 2017).

In another attempt to explore this research topic and apply Bourdieusian theoretical framework, Rowlands (2011) demonstrates that structural transformations in the university field have enabled the ascendancy of managerialist governance. With academic capital tied to the executive office increasingly privileged over intellectual capital grounded in scholarly reputation, the authority of Australian academic boards, and plausibly that of boards more generally, has contracted. This analysis helps account for the diminished influence of academics compared with earlier periods. At the same time, the author also raises the question of whether corporate governance will remain dominant, or whether the widening disconnect between academic capital and the core practices of research, scholarship, and teaching (and also between intellectual and academic capital) will generate pressures for governance arrangements more closely aligned with the realities of academic work.

In the same vein, Collyer (2015), in her qualitative study of Australian universities, also highlights a struggle between emergent managerial professionals and the established academic profession, a struggle prosecuted through the mobilisation of different forms of capital within a marketised environment. Using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital, the analysis reframes conflict as a contest for workplace control and for symbolic and other resources. It shows how routine managerial practices accumulate over time to reconfigure the academic field's rules, constraints and power relations, with tangible effects on subsequent work practices. Through this theoretical perspective, academics' responses, ranging from compliance to resistance, become comprehensible as position-taking within the field, thereby illuminating shifting power dynamics and the significance of structural location in processes of marketisation (Collyer, 2015).

The distinction between these two forms of capital is crucial for this study's analysis, as both play an important role in shaping academic identity and institutional dynamics. Within the VHE

context, the distribution and recognition of forms of capital have undergone significant reconfiguration through recent reforms. The adoption of international quality assurance mechanisms, the growing influence of global university rankings, and performance-based funding have shifted the symbolic economy of academia. Research outputs, English-language publications, and international collaborations are increasingly privileged forms of capital, especially in RI institutions. Conversely, other forms of capital, e.g., pedagogical experience, may be devalued or rendered invisible in reform discourses. For instance, in VHE, publishing in Scopus-indexed journals may be seen as a form of high-value intellectual capital under globalised evaluation regimes, while long-standing contributions to teaching or community engagement may be less recognised, despite their social importance (see Bui et al., 2019). These shifts have significant implications for academic identities and practices. Lecturers who possess the newly valued capitals, such as foreign degrees, English proficiency, or research publications, are more likely to be promoted or tasked with leadership roles (see Bui et al., 2019; Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021; Nguyen & Tran, 2019b; Nguyen et al., 2021; Phan & Doan, 2020; Tran et al., 2014).

Understanding how these forms of capital interact or compete enables this research to uncover how Vietnamese university lecturers negotiate changes in governance and expectations, as well as how changes in academic identity and profession occur. In the changing context of HE, under the impact of globalisation, marketisation, and ranking competition, university lecturers are in competition to gain capital, and naturally, there are various forms of capital they can acquire.

In conclusion, capital emerges as an essential analytical component within this study's theoretical framework. Within Vietnam's transforming HE landscape, where structural reforms intersect with global pressures and local conditions, capital provides the analytical lens to understand how lecturers navigate new 'rules of the game', pursue recognition, and reposition themselves in a shifting hierarchy. In collaboration with habitus and field, this concept enables this study to comprehensively examine the complex dynamics of academic identity and the negotiation of R&T amid university governance reform.

4.3.4. Bourdieu and change

As mentioned earlier, Bourdieu's ToP offers a fruitful framework for examining social change, particularly by investigating the interplay and mutual constitution between habitus, field, and capital in shaping how individuals experience and respond to transformation. Within this 'logic of practice', efforts at reform are seen as strategies aimed at reshaping the habitus of individuals and restructuring the field itself (Collyer, 2015; Grenfell, 2014). Central to Bourdieu's conceptualisation of social dynamics is the idea that habitus and field are in a dynamic relationship. In this relationship, changes within one inevitably prompt transformations in the other, creating a dynamic and iterative process of adaptation and contestation (Hardy, 2014). Therefore, understanding Bourdieu's concepts in the context of change is vital for investigating the transformations in academic identity under the impact of HE governance reform.

As discussed above, the core of how habitus functions as a powerful theoretical tool lies in the interplay between habitus, field and capital. Habitus and field are relational structures, and their relationship is crucial for understanding and examining practice. These two structures are homologous, representing *subjective* (habitus) and *objective* (field) manifestations underpinned by the same social logic and co-constitutive, each informing and shaping the other (Grenfell, 2014; Rowlands, 2017). Significantly, 'they are also both evolving, so relations between habitus and field are ongoing, dynamic and partial: they do not match perfectly, for each has its own internal logic and history' (Grenfell, 2014, p. 57).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, habitus embodies the internalised dispositions shaped by historical and social contexts, making it both durable and adaptable. The ongoing interaction between habitus and field reflects a complex relationship that can either harmoniously align or dramatically conflict, creating varying degrees of compatibility. As Bourdieu notes in *In Other Words*: 'Habitus, as a product of social conditionings, and thus of a history (unlike character), is endlessly transformed' (1990a, p. 7). This intrinsic flexibility highlights the responsive yet stabilising nature of habitus. The symbolic capital possessed by any agent is also subject to transformation, constantly fluctuating in response to changing field positions. This adaptive process reinforces the idea that habitus is both a product and a driver of field restructuring. This adapted and adaptable habitus, in turn, contributes to the subsequent restructuring of the field itself, creating an ongoing and iterative process of change (Hardy, 2014). This mechanism

enables the relationship between the structure of a field and the habitus of its members to manifest in differing degrees of *fit* or *mismatch*. Bourdieu visualises these two poles of contrasting statuses with two examples of '*fish in water'* and *'fish out of water'* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Yang, 2014).

During periods of social and personal stability, change occurs gradually along expected paths, resulting in a harmonious match between habitus and field, in which each agent is like a *fish in water*. In this scenario, the dynamic interplay between habitus and field helps to explain homeostatic changes, generational shifts, and the constant adaptation of habitus to new experiences (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Conversely, *'fish out of water'* implies a social situation where an agent feels awkward and uncomfortable since the structuring of the agent's habitus does not match that of the social field. In such scenarios, habitus is confronted with sudden and sometimes disruptive transformations of the field that demand longer periods of adjustment. When stable and new structures have not yet consolidated, the field presents novel but often temporary opportunities. Habitus adapts to these emergent possibilities, though in ways that are difficult to predict, leaving the eventual implications for an individual's positioning within the field unresolved.

In such indeterminate changes, Bourdieu uses the term *hysteresis* to highlight the mismatch and interruption between habitus and field, as well as its consequences over time. The two defining features of hysteresis are its association with *change* and its characteristic *time lag* (Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017; Hardy, 2014). As a conceptual tool, hysteresis connects the objective aspects of systemic transformation (field change) with the subjective responses of individuals (altered habitus). It thereby sheds light on both the challenges individuals face in adapting to new conditions and the delayed, often uncertain nature of such adjustments (Grenfell, 2014). This delayed adjustment is closely linked to the inherent stability of habitus. Although social structures continuously evolve, habitus tends to generate stable and somewhat predictable patterns of thought and behaviour (Grenfell, 2004). As a product of history, habitus may cause individuals to persist with responses that are no longer appropriate, even in the face of evident shifts in the field (Bourdieu, 1990b). In that way, 'habitus facilitates understandings about why individuals, including those in HE, may resist change despite manifest shifts in the field or fields around them' (Rowlands, 2011, p. 1275).

The employment of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, i.e., habitus, field, capital, and hysteresis, has enriched scholarly analyses of HE reform globally. International studies (e.g., Collyer, 2015; Rowlands, 2011, 2017; Rowlands & Gale, 2016) illustrate how lecturers navigate shifting institutional demands and reveal persistent tensions between academic identities and roles (e.g., research, teaching, and administrative duties) and competing governance logics (managerial versus collegial). Bourdieu's theoretical lens helps explain why, in certain contexts, university lecturers resist or only superficially embrace changes in governance, academic identity, and professional roles (see Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017; Rowlands, 2011). These challenges are particularly significant for lecturers in teaching-focused universities, where professional trajectories have historically emphasised pedagogical work over research (Le, 2016b; Ly, 2013). As Harland (2016) notes, 'when R&T are brought together in the same institution and enacted within the same person, what Humboldt might have foreseen is that they would inevitably be experienced in different ways, simply because academics are merging what had previously been two clearly distinct tasks' (p. 470). In other words, the entrenched habitus of long-serving teachers can hinder their ability to adapt to the dual demands of R&T in RI environments. Here, the concept of hysteresis becomes particularly valuable in explaining the dissonance and discomfort lecturers may experience, akin to feeling like *fish out of water*.

This sense of alignment or misalignment can also be understood through Bourdieu's metaphors of the '*feel for the game' and 'out of sync'.* While *fish in water* corresponds to having a '*feel for the game'*, *fish out of water* aligns with being *'out of sync'*. As discussed earlier, both habitus and field operate according to implicit rules that influence and shape one another. In his language, Bourdieu frequently uses the notions of *'game'* and *'field'* interchangeably as metaphors to describe social practice, emphasising that agents behave as though they are playing a game with its own set of stakes, rules, and rewards (see Grenfell, 2014). For example, lecturers frequently engage in teaching as if participating in a *'teaching game'* within the broader field of HE (Rowlands & Gale, 2016, 2019; Rowlands & Wright, 2019).

Bourdieu and Passeron's works, *Reproduction* (1977) and *The Inheritors* (1979), further illustrate this logic of inclusion and exclusion within educational fields. They demonstrated how individuals' upbringing and socialisation shape their perceptions, aspirations, and behaviours, ultimately affecting their educational trajectories. Rather than being formally excluded by the educational system, individuals from working-class backgrounds often self-

exclude, perceiving universities as alien or unattainable. By contrast, middle-class students view university education as a *natural* progression, feeling *at home* because the unwritten rules of the academic field are more closely aligned with their social background and habits (habitus).

This theoretical perspective provides a powerful analytical tool for this study, enabling an exploration of which lecturers naturally adapt to changing academic identities, and which feel alienated or marginalised in the restructured field. It prompts critical questions: What characterises these different groups of lecturers? What underlying factors shape their responses to change? And what are the professional consequences of these differing trajectories? In the VHE context, this theoretical lens is especially relevant for explaining the tensions faced by lecturers whose careers were shaped within teaching-oriented institutions but who are now expected to perform as research-active academics. In Bourdieu's terms, this is a classic instance of habitus-field misalignment, where established dispositions and practices no longer fit the new rules of the game (Grenfell, 2014; Maton, 2005).

In such circumstances, as Bourdieu would describe, lecturers are like *playing* multiple *games* simultaneously, with each game governed by different rules in various fields, each with its own specific forms of capital. Since positions in the fields are determined by values and the amount of respective capital agents hold, they are expected to behave towards the strategies that help them gain more *dominant capital* in the relevant fields (Rowlands & Gale, 2019; Rowlands & Wright, 2019). As an example discussed earlier about managerial and intellectual power, one way of thinking about agents (lecturers) within the contemporary academic governance subfield who are required, or obliged, to simultaneously enact *academic* (or managerial) and *intellectual* power is through Bourdieu's notion of the *divided habitus*, '… a habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and with its ambivalence, and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication…' (Bourdieu et al., 1999, p. 511). This idea suggests a profound inner conflict and sense of ambiguity, exemplified by the predicament of an academic who must meet publication output targets within a given workload to secure research allocation for the subsequent years, while simultaneously being deeply opposed to such evaluative mechanisms. Thus, in certain contexts, habitus may become fragmented and reconfigured through tensions, contradictions, and instability, producing dispositions that point in conflicting directions (Kloot, 2014; Rowlands, 2017).

Applying these theoretical perspectives to changing contexts, it can be understood that, in many circumstances, university lecturers often face the dilemma of choosing between R&T or other roles (e.g., management or administration). In other cases, they find themselves caught between these choices, requiring additional time or resources to adapt to these changes. In Bourdieu's terms, this occurs when agents (lecturers) no longer *feel for the game* or are like *fish out of water*, resulting in undesirable consequences akin to the implicit nature of the *hysteresis effect*. The essential features of this theoretical concept, i.e., the misalignment between lecturers' dispositions and practices (habitus) and the new field structures, accompanied by the time dimension, illustrate how habitus becomes *out of sync* with the field (Grenfell, 2014). In such contexts, R&T represent two distinct fields with different and specific sets of rules. Lecturers accustomed to the teaching game must now learn and adapt to the rules of the research game, which often operate according to different values and expectations.

4.4. A synthesis: Bourdieu and this study

As has been repeatedly emphasised in this thesis, the analytical and explanatory power of Bourdieu's ToP, as applied in this study, lies not only in each individual concept but also in the interplay between them. Accordingly, following the detailed discussions and analyses in the preceding sections, this *section 4.4* serves as a synthesis and conclusion. Its purpose is to underscore the rationale for adopting this theoretical framework and to highlight how it is applied in this thesis within an overarching and 'big picture' perspective.

4.4.1. Rationale for adopting Bourdieu's ToP

As discussed above, this study focuses on investigating how HE reforms in Vietnam impact academic identity, with a specific attention to their R&T integration. The changes discussed earlier are reflected in practice, encompassing the university's functions, the roles of university lecturers, and the expectations of what it means to be a university lecturer. Specifically, in the Vietnamese university context, there has been a shift from teaching-only models to RI ones. As a result, university lecturers, who were predominantly involved in teaching, are now expected to take on other responsibilities as researchers, even with an emphasis on prioritising scientific research over teaching (Ly, 2013). Therefore, this study not only investigates the R&T nexus independently but puts this research problem in a broader context for a more comprehensive

and nuanced analysis from micro to macro, from ‘inner’ to ‘outer’, from the past to the present, and from agents to structures (as Bourdieu’s language, see Grenfell, 2014). In line with the study’s overarching conceptualisation of reform implementation as a process of negotiation, a theoretical framework is required that captures both the structural conditions shaping academic identities and how individuals interpret and respond to these conditions. Central to this exploration is the need for a theoretical lens capable of comprehensively bridging structural transformations with individual agency, capturing both institutional constraints and lecturers’ subjective experiences.

Given these demands, it becomes essential to select a framework that systematically links macro-level structural forces to micro-level practices and identities. Bourdieu’s ToP emerges as uniquely suited to this task due to its analytical power that explicitly addresses the interplay of macro-level structures, micro-level practices, and the dynamic distribution of capital within specific fields. Unlike approaches that focus solely on structures or individuals, Bourdieu’s conceptual framework captures the interaction between reforms and personal dispositions. This makes his framework especially useful in Vietnam, where academic identities are (re)shaped by both governance reforms and cultural traditions. It helps explain not only the constraints lecturers face but also how they negotiate their academic identities.

Other theoretical lenses, such as role theory or social identity theory, were initially considered. However, these frameworks, although insightful, present certain limitations when applied to the specific analytical needs of this research. Role theory tends to overly focus on role expectations and conflicts at the individual level, often neglecting broader structural and symbolic dimensions of institutional change. Social identity theory, while valuable for understanding individual self-conceptions, may be insufficient to account for how identities are shaped by structural power relations and the distribution of capital.

In contrast, Bourdieu’s ToP provides a more integrative and comprehensive analytic toolkit. It explicitly foregrounds the interdependent relationship between structures (fields), resources (capital), and dispositions (habitus), facilitating an in-depth examination of both structural constraints and individual agency within VHE. Through the application of concepts (e.g., hysteresis), Bourdieu’s framework enables the study to delve deeply into the structural and cultural context of reform, while also accounting for the individual-level negotiation and

adaptation processes of lecturers. To sum up, it helps to bridge macro-structures and micro-practices by showing how policies, cultural traditions, and past experiences are embodied in habitus and enacted within specific fields. It captures both continuity and change, as well as constraint and agency, providing a much richer explanation than lenses that focus solely on roles, policies, or individual identities in isolation.

Despite the analytical power of Bourdieu's ToP, it is crucial to acknowledge its limitations. One potential critique is that the concept of hysteresis, while insightful, may not fully account for individual agency and the proactive capacity for reflexivity and deliberate adaptation (see Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017; Hardy, 2014). Particularly, while the habitus-field dynamic provides rich analytical insights, it may inadequately capture the complexity of broader socio-political forces that shape HE systems, especially those embedded within culturally sensitive and post-socialist transitional economies like Vietnam.

Moreover, originating predominantly from Western sociocultural contexts, its applicability and relevance to non-Western contexts, particularly those influenced by Confucianism and socialist/post-socialist ideologies, such as Vietnam, might raise concerns regarding its cultural specificity and universality. Beyond these theoretical limitations, cultural factors such as Confucian heritage also play a crucial role in shaping academic identities. In Confucian-influenced contexts, the role of teachers is traditionally centred on teaching rather than research (Jones et al., 2021). Numerous studies (e.g., Chen, 2015; Dennehy, 2015; Mu et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2006; Phuong-Mai et al., 2005) highlight how teachers are often positioned as *'gurus'* or *'ultimate sources of knowledge'*. This cultural emphasis frames teachers as knowledge transferers (teachers) rather than knowledge producers (researchers). Consequently, shifts in lecturer identities toward research-oriented roles have led to profound changes in academic expectations within these educational systems. However, there remains a lack of research that integrates both Western and non-Western perspectives to explore the evolving identities of lecturers, particularly in relation to the R&T nexus. Addressing this gap, this study places culture, especially Confucian values, at its core, combining insights from Bourdieu's framework with an appreciation of local traditions.

To sum up, this study engages with Bourdieu's ToP as a living framework that is reflexively applied, tested, and adapted within the specific VHE context. This research explicitly aims to

examine Bourdieu's concepts by empirically grounding them within the unique socio-cultural and institutional realities of VHE. Through careful adaptation and critical reflection, this study seeks to extend and deepen the theoretical understanding and practical application of Bourdieu's concepts, making contributions to international scholarship on HE reform.

4.4.2. Applying Bourdieu's ToP to this study

The previous sections have systematically introduced and discussed key concepts within Bourdieu's theoretical framework, demonstrating their analytical potential in the context of HE reform, as well as in contexts such as Vietnam. Building upon these foundations, this section synthesises and applies Bourdieu's concepts to the specific research questions guiding the current study, further articulating how the theoretical framework informs the research process.

For the research question one – '*What have been the impacts of HE reform in R&T on Vietnamese academic identity?',* Bourdieu's ToP provides critical analytical insights. The concept of habitus allows for an exploration of how lecturers' professional identities and dispositions, shaped by historical, cultural, and institutional factors, influence their understanding of the R&T nexus. Field provides a lens to examine how the structural logic of RI universities, with its competing expectations and hierarchical arrangements, shapes lecturers' perceptions and strategies. Furthermore, capital illuminates how lecturers' positions and symbolic recognition within the academic field affect their ability to integrate R&T. Finally, the concept of hysteresis helps capture moments of misalignment between lecturers' established dispositions and the evolving institutional environment, revealing how they negotiate and adapt their dual roles under reform pressures.

For the research question two – *'Which constraints and enablers have affected Vietnamese lecturers' integration of R&T in practice, and in what ways?',* the concept of field enables a structured examination of how policies, evaluation mechanisms, and institutional hierarchies create both opportunities and constraints for lecturers' professional practices. The distribution and value of different forms of capital, such as research publications, international collaborations, or teaching experience, clarify why some lecturers are better positioned to thrive in an RI environment, while others face marginalisation. Habitus sheds light on the internalised beliefs and routines that shape lecturers' responses to these structural dynamics, while

hysteresis explains how misalignments between past dispositions and new institutional demands generate tensions, delays, or resistance in adapting to research-oriented roles. They help to explain why lecturers' responses to the same reform may differ, depending on their background and professional trajectory. The concepts are also helpful to examine identity tensions and adaptation struggles during periods of rapid reform, particularly in Vietnam's shifting HE landscape.

Additionally, these conceptual tools inform the research design. The employment of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis is strategically intended to capture both the explicit institutional structures and the implicit cultural and professional dimensions shaping lecturers' perceptions and experiences. Specifically, the study aims to identify patterns indicative of habitus-field misalignment (hysteresis) and to examine how different forms of capital and lecturers' habitus influence their responses to governance reforms. Thus, Bourdieu's theoretical framework informs the study not only analytically but also methodologically, ensuring robust empirical exploration aligned with the research objectives.

Building on these insights, this study adopts Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of habitus, field, capital, and hysteresis to critically examine how HE reforms in Vietnam impact academic identity, with a particular focus on the interplay between R&T. This theoretical perspective enables a nuanced analysis of lecturers' responses to shifting institutional logics and expectations. It also helps distinguish between lecturers who adapt effectively and those who struggle, uncovering the motivations, strategic behaviours, and affective investments that underpin these responses. These theoretical concepts enable an analysis of how differences in capital and field position produce uneven responses and outcomes, as well as how lecturers negotiate reforms not only as policy receivers but also as active agents, working within constraints and possibilities. Bourdieu's theoretical framework holds great promise for illuminating not only overt compliance or resistance to change, but also the subtle, often unconscious mechanisms that underlie them. This structured yet flexible analytical approach addresses both structural conditions and subjective experiences, facilitating a nuanced and multidimensional exploration of the R&T nexus and the institutional conditions that (re)shape lecturers' identities.

4.4.3. Positioning the research and theoretical contributions

This research is positioned at the intersection of the scholarship on the R&T nexus, academic identities, and HE governance reform. While existing literature has extensively explored these themes, the Vietnamese context, characterised by Confucian cultural legacies, socialist governance structures, and rapid integration into globalised HE, remains relatively under-researched. By utilising and adapting Bourdieu's ToP, this study offers an empirical, contextual and theoretical contribution, specifically illuminating how macro-level reforms are internalised and negotiated at the micro-level by lecturers within this distinctive socio-cultural setting.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the current literature by empirically and critically applying Bourdieu's core concepts within a non-Western, socialist context. By systematically examining Bourdieu's concepts within VHE, the study provides fresh empirical insights that may enrich and expand the theoretical scope of Bourdieu's framework. This application not only verifies the cross-cultural relevance of Bourdieu's concepts but also identifies specific adaptations necessary to reflect the distinct structural, cultural, and symbolic realities of Vietnamese academia. By integrating Western theoretical lenses with non-Western cultural contexts, this research contributes insights to the relevant literature.

By critically engaging with both global theoretical perspectives and local empirical realities, the research contributes to international debates on HE reform, offering a culturally sensitive and theoretically robust framework that can inform future studies in similar contexts. This study reaffirms the importance of contextual specificity in theorising and researching academic identities, underscoring the value of Bourdieu's conceptual tools in fostering nuanced and critical analyses of educational change. This study thus not only applies Bourdieu's ToP to a new setting but also critically re-engages with its assumptions and boundaries, thereby contributing to a more plural and contextually attuned theorisation of academic work.

4.5. Summary of the chapter

This chapter has established a comprehensive and contextually grounded theoretical foundation for the study. Centred on Bourdieu's ToP, the chapter has introduced and discussed key conceptual tools, including habitus, field, capital, and hysteresis, which illuminate the

relationship between institutional structures and embodied dispositions in changing contexts. This also deepens the analytical capacity of the framework to account for identity tension and struggles in the adaptation process. The chapter has then synthesised these theoretical resources to reemphasise the rationale for adopting Bourdieu's framework, articulating how it not only aligns with the study's conceptualisation of reform as a negotiated process but also enables a nuanced reading of both structural conditions and lived experiences. The application section has demonstrated how each concept informs the study's research questions, methodological design, and analytical strategy, while the positioning section clarified the study's theoretical contribution to the international literature.

The chapter not only establishes the study's theoretical foundation but also affirms its epistemological position, which holds that academic identities and practices are neither passively determined by policy nor purely agentic. Rather, they are continuously negotiated within a dynamic and stratified field. This perspective is also crucial for guiding both the design and interpretation of the study.

In summary, the present chapter serves as a conceptual bridge between the literature-based groundwork and the empirical core of the thesis. It underpins the thematic logic of the research design and sharpens the analytical focus of the inquiry. The next chapter builds on these foundations by outlining the methodological approach of the study.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

5.1. Overview of the chapter

This chapter outlines the methodological foundations and research procedures employed in this study, which is guided by the following two research questions:

1) *What have been the impacts of HE reform in R&T on Vietnamese academic identity?*

2) *Which constraints and enablers have affected Vietnamese lecturers' integration of R&T in practice, and in what ways?*

The current chapter begins by presenting the philosophical underpinnings of the study, followed by an explanation of the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach. It then describes the process of participant selection and the use of semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection. Procedures for data management and thematic analysis are outlined, alongside a reflexive account of the researcher's positionality. The chapter also discusses the strategies utilised to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, acknowledges its methodological limitations, and explains the ethical measures taken to safeguard participants. These discussions outline the research methodology and explain how insights were generated to inform the subsequent chapters on findings and discussion.

5.2. Research paradigm

This study is situated within an interpretivist paradigm.

Neuman (2014, p. 96) defines a paradigm as 'a general organising framework for theory and research that includes basic assumptions, key issues, models of quality research, and methods for seeking answers'. Researchers need to make their research paradigm explicit before commencing a study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In the social sciences, two major paradigms, i.e., positivism and interpretivism, represent primarily different philosophical approaches to understanding the world and have a significant impact on how researchers perceive the nature of reality and conduct their inquiries. These paradigms differ fundamentally in their ontological and epistemological assumptions. While positivism views reality as singular and governed by

objective laws, interpretivism posits that reality is socially constructed, multiple, and shaped by the subjective interpretations of individuals (Bryman, 2016; Cohen et al., 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

From a positivist perspective, the social world is regarded as analogous to the natural world, governed and operated by universal principles which are independent of human influence. Accordingly, human behaviours are seen as quantitatively measurable and predictable, making it possible for researchers to identify cause-and-effect relationships and generalisable patterns through experimental and quantitative methods. Positivist researchers share the belief in a singular truth, that 'the world exists and is knowable as it really is' (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 7). Based on these assumptions, positivist studies are designed to test hypotheses and examine general laws that explain and predict human behaviours and social phenomena (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In contrast, interpretivist researchers argue that human beings, unlike physical objects, possess agency, reflexivity, and the capacity to assign meaning to their social world (Carter & Little, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). People do not merely conform to external rules and structures but continuously interpret, negotiate, and potentially transform them. Thus, interpretivism emphasises the importance of context, subjectivity, and meaning-making in examining social phenomena (Cohen et al., 2017; Sönmez, 2013). It acknowledges the existence of multiple realities, shaped by individual experiences, social norms, cultural values, and institutional settings. These realities are not fixed but are fluid, possibly contested, and open to reinterpretation over time (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Rather than seeking to establish objective, generalisable truths, interpretivist research focuses on how people understand their world, perceive their roles and circumstances, and act accordingly (O'Donoghue, 2006; Willis, 2007). While social orders, laws, and cultural norms may influence individuals' perspectives, they do not wholly determine them. People can revise, reinterpret, or challenge these structures based on their subjective understandings. Studies adopting an interpretivist paradigm, therefore, aim to discover diverse perspectives through participants' experiences, interpretations, and personal backgrounds. This approach thus often relies on qualitative methods such as observations and interviews, which are particularly suited to generating in-depth, context-sensitive understandings rather than statistical generalisations (Cohen et al., 1994; Willis, 2007).

In light of these considerations, this study adopts an interpretivist research paradigm, as it provides a more appropriate foundation for addressing the research questions. This philosophical orientation provides a strong foundation for the study, which aims to understand how Vietnamese university lecturers perceive and negotiate their academic identities within the context of ongoing governance reforms. As discussed earlier, rather than treating lecturers as passive recipients of institutional policies, this study adopts the view that lecturers are meaning-makers, actively engaging with and responding to shifting expectations around R&T. Their understandings and practices are situated in particular institutional, historical, and cultural contexts, and therefore cannot be fully understood in abstraction from these settings. Lecturers may share certain similarities, yet they also differ considerably in their educational backgrounds, worldviews, and value systems, as well as their experiences, reflections, perspectives, and concerns. Consequently, each lecturer possesses their own *reality*. These realities are unique to each individual and carry their own value. Moreover, as these realities are grounded in personal and experiential subjectivity, they are relatively fluid and context-dependent, shaped by both space and time (Neuman, 2014; Yin, 2016). Such assumptions about lecturers' realities are more aligned with the interpretivist paradigm. Accordingly, the interpretivist paradigm supports the research's central concern with identity transformation and negotiation.

Additionally, Cohen et al. (2017, p. 20) argue that 'people interpret situations through their own eyes' and that 'such interpretation takes place in socio-cultural, socio-temporal and socio-spatial contexts'. These perspectives also align with Bourdieu's theoretical position as discussed in Chapter Four – Theoretical Foundation. Bourdieu likewise emphasises that, to understand and explain practice, one must examine both the individual's perspective and the broader historical and social conditions (Bourdieu, 1990b). This research, which is theoretically guided by Bourdieu's ToP, thus aligns more closely with interpretivist principles than with positivist ones. It also justifies the use of a qualitative methodological approach and interviews as a data collection method, which is well-suited to exploring complex, context-bound experiences through participants' narratives and reflections. By foregrounding the meanings lecturers attach to their professional experiences, the selected paradigm allows this research to generate rich and nuanced insights into the realities of academic work under reform. The alignments in the decisions made are believed to enhance the rigour and trustworthiness of the study (Carter & Little, 2007).

5.3. Research design

In line with the interpretivist paradigm and the theoretical foundation and research aims outlined earlier, this study employed a qualitative research design.

Since ontological and epistemological assumptions inform methodological choices, the philosophical differences between positivism and interpretivism also lead to distinct approaches to research design and data collection. Positivist studies typically follow a top-down logic: researchers begin with theories and hypotheses, gather data, and then confirm or reject the initial assumptions. This process is grounded in determinism, reductionism, and theory testing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Conversely, interpretivist studies ordinarily adopt a more inductive orientation, using participants' perspectives and narratives to construct broader themes, patterns, and conceptual insights. The knowledge generated in this approach emerges from meanings that individuals construct through their personal experiences and social interaction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lichtman, 2013; Willis, 2007).

Interpretivism and qualitative methodology are closely aligned in their ontological and epistemological assumptions, particularly in the emphasis on understanding meaning, experience, and context from the perspectives of those involved (Lichtman, 2013; Ritchie et al., 2013). In contrast to the top-down, hypothesis-driven logic of positivist research, qualitative inquiry typically follows a bottom-up approach. A qualitative design allows researchers to explore the complexities of participants' experiences in depth, without imposing predefined variables or seeking universal generalisations. It begins with participants' subjective experiences and builds towards broader patterns and themes through an inductive process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Willis, 2007). In other words, this inquiry allows for the interpretation of multiple realities of the world through 'the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher' (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 81).

The choice of a qualitative design is grounded in the study's aim to explore how Vietnamese university lecturers negotiate their academic identities in the context of university governance reforms. These are complex, socially situated phenomena that cannot be meaningfully captured through standardised measures or pre-determined variables. Instead, the present study aims to gain insights into the realities of academic work, including how individuals perceive and

navigate institutional expectations, cultural norms, and constraints. Therefore, qualitative research design is well-suited to this purpose. It allows for in-depth engagement with participants' perspectives and narratives, enabling the researcher to explore what lecturers think or do, as well as how and why they make sense of their identities in particular ways. As argued by Sönmez (2013) and Ritchie et al. (2013), qualitative approaches are especially valuable in the social sciences, where the goal is to understand human meaning-making in cultural and organisational settings. In the field of education, qualitative methods have been widely utilised to study the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of teachers and students (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lichtman, 2013). They are considered more appropriate than quantitative approaches when the research focus lies in understanding subjective interpretations rather than testing generalisable hypotheses (Meert et al., 2009; Silverman, 2000).

In light of these considerations, a qualitative research design offers a suitable framework for this study. It has the potential to explore lecturers' perspectives as meaning-making processes situated within broader socio-political, cultural, and institutional landscapes. This design supports the study's aim to generate a nuanced, contextually grounded understanding of how academic identities are interpreted and negotiated under the impact of HE reform. The subsequent sections detail the methodological components of the research design.

5.4. Participant selection and sampling

In line with the study's qualitative research design and interpretivist orientation, participants were selected using purposive sampling (also referred to as purposeful sampling), a strategy widely utilised in qualitative research for identifying individuals who can offer rich, contextually grounded insights into the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2014). Specifically, the study used maximum variation sampling to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives across gender, disciplinary background, academic rank, professional experience, and geographical location. This strategy was chosen to reflect the heterogeneous nature of the academic workforce in Vietnam and to capture a broad range of experiences and interpretations of the R&T nexus. The central idea is that the present study can, to some extent, capture the diversity of Vietnamese lecturers' viewpoints, consistent with the study's aim.

Qualitative data collection was conducted with fifteen participants. The participants are lecturers in RI universities in Ho Chi Minh City (Southeastern region) and Hanoi (Northeastern region) in Vietnam, all of whom are over eighteen years old and competent to provide informed consent. The rationale for selecting universities for this study is that they must meet all criteria to be recognised as RI universities, according to Decree No.99/2019/ND-CP (The Vietnamese Government, 2019). In addition, they were among the earliest adopters of the university autonomy mechanism associated with the reforms. The selected universities articulated an explicit research-oriented vision and strategy and were represented among the small number of Vietnamese universities appearing in major global ranking tables (Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021; Nguyen & Van Gramberg, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2021). The target universities varied in their geographic, socio-economic and cultural contexts, enabling the study to understand the phenomenon from different perspectives. Thus, choosing universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City is reasonable, as these are the two largest cities and academic hubs in Vietnam, with key national universities located in the northern and southern regions, respectively (see The Vietnamese Government, 2025).

Participants were initially contacted via email with a personalised invitation and were requested to participate voluntarily. Important information, including the Consent Form, Privacy Notes, and Participant Information Sheets, was also attached to the invitation emails to ensure that they have sufficient information about the study's purpose, what their participation will involve, and how their privacy will be protected. Then, the researcher contacted them via phone to briefly explain the topics and discuss the time and location. During the process, the researcher recognised that it is vital to be flexible in terms of time and location, and to approach interviewees according to their preferences, availability, and personal characteristics (e.g., age, personality). Other practical factors (e.g., location, cost) were also carefully considered when finalising participant recruitment. In addition to purposive selection, snowball sampling was used to supplement the participant pool. Initial participants were invited to recommend colleagues who might meet the selection criteria and offer valuable perspectives (Patton, 2014).

The fifteen participants came from a diverse range of disciplinary fields. Their years of academic experience ranged from two to forty years, and their qualifications included Master's degrees, PhDs, and associate professorships. A summary of the participant characteristics is presented in *Table 5.1* on the following page.

Table 5.1. Overview of participants' characteristics

Characteristics	Details
Gender	10 Females 5 Males
Area	7 in Ho Chi Minh 8 in Hanoi
Academic Discipline	Education; Law; Industrial Engineering and Management; Logistics; Computer Science; Electrical Engineering; Biological Sciences; Tourism; Vietnamese Culture; Business Management; and other fields
Experience Level	Ranging from 2 to over 40 years
Degree/ Status	5 with a Master's degree (including 2 PhD students and 1 PhD candidate) 10 Doctorate
Professorship	2 participants hold the title of Associate Professor

5.5. Data collection method

This study employed one-on-one, semi-structured, in-depth interviews as its data collection method. As Cohen et al. (2017) define, an interview is 'a conversation between two people which is designed to obtain research data to meet objectives of research' (p. 508). Interviews, a core method within qualitative research, offer access to the depth and richness of participants' experiences. This data collection method is designed to uncover the nuances of social life. It is particularly effective when researchers seek to understand phenomena that are embedded in context and shaped by personal histories, institutional environments, and wider cultural systems (Bartlett & Burton, 2016; O'Donoghue, 2006). Unlike everyday conversations, interviews are purposeful and typically guided by a set of thematic questions. They are widely acknowledged as one of the core qualitative research tools, offering the potential for generating detailed, contextually rich information about participants' thoughts, experiences, intentions, and social environments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lichtman, 2013; Ritchie et al., 2013).

Given the interpretivist orientation and the need to capture individual meaning-making processes, semi-structured interviews were considered the suitable approach for this research. Semi-structured interviews were selected for the research because they allowed the researcher to follow a flexible protocol while also adapting to the individual flow of conversation with each participant (Bryman, 2016). The interview guide combined open- and closed-ended questions to ensure both thematic consistency and the ability to probe emerging ideas. This approach enabled the researcher to cover predetermined themes while also allowing space for participants to introduce issues they considered important (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). The purpose of the use of interviews in this research was to investigate what lecturers thought and did, as well as to explore how and why they constructed meaning around their academic identities in the context of institutional and policy change. Overall, semi-structured interviews were suited to the study's interpretivist orientation and qualitative design, enabling the researcher to collect nuanced, context-sensitive data that illuminated how academic identities and practices are shaped and negotiated amid ongoing reforms.

Prior to formal data collection, two pilot interviews were conducted with lecturers outside the main sample. These pilots served to test the clarity, relevance, and sequencing of the interview questions. It provides an opportunity for the researcher to refine their interviewing skills, such as note-taking, listening attentively, and appropriate probing (Bryman, 2016). Based on feedback and reflections from these sessions, the interview schedule was finalised to ensure coherence with the research questions, improve clarity, and ensure a more natural conversational flow. The interview schedule is provided in Appendix A.

The duration of the conducted interview sessions ranged from 35 to 120 minutes. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, ethical considerations, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time and the protection of their confidentiality. All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese – the native language of both participants and the researcher, to facilitate comfort and a more nuanced and in-depth expression (Clark et al., 2017). With participants' informed consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for thematic analysis.

Originally, the plan was to conduct all the interviews in face-to-face settings. Nevertheless, for the convenience of the interviewee, two interviews were conducted online via Zoom. Both types

of interviews had their disadvantages and advantages. Face-to-face interviews facilitated rapport and allowed the researcher to better understand the nonverbal expressions of participants, including their body language and facial expressions. It helped identify whether any questions caused discomfort to the participants or which questions kept them engaged. Online interviews took place after working hours, when lecturers were at home. As a result, the recording files are of better quality. However, it posed challenges to the researcher's focus and led to increased fatigue due to prolonged screen time. The internet connection was sometimes unstable, which sometimes disrupted the conversations. Despite their minor limitations, both formats proved effective in supporting open and reflective dialogue, aligning with the study's interpretivist orientation.

One of the primary principles guiding the data collection process was to create a suitable environment that would facilitate concentration and continuity throughout the interviews. As Ho Chi Minh City is the researcher's place of residence and work in Vietnam, and Hanoi is a location to which the researcher had frequently travelled, identifying appropriate venues for the interviews did not pose significant challenges. In most cases, participants preferred to be interviewed at their workplace. In a few cases where interviews were held in coffee shops, the preparation was equally thorough. The researcher first asked participants which venue would be most convenient and appropriate. Once the location was identified, the researcher gathered information on the address, opening and closing times, the space and atmosphere of the venue, and other relevant conditions to ensure that the interview would proceed as planned. Prior to the scheduled day, the researcher visited the venue at the exact time slot when the interview would take place, in order to assess the environment and confirm whether any potential disruptions might occur. The researcher also inspected the venue's layout to select a seating arrangement that met the pre-established criteria and confirmed the booking with the staff.

In addition to venue preparation, pre-interview arrangements also played a crucial role, as relevant documents had been sent to participants by email beforehand. In most cases, they only needed to sign the required forms on the day of the event. However, in a few cases where participants had not had sufficient time to review the documents in advance, the researcher reviewed them with the participants, reminding them to raise any concerns or queries directly if needed. This process was conducted in a straightforward yet rigorous manner, avoiding unnecessary formality so as to maintain focus on the interview itself. Immediately before

commencing each interview, the researcher reaffirmed that the conversation would be audio-recorded. Once both sides were ready, recording was initiated on two separate devices. The use of dual devices was intended to minimise technical risks, and both were tested in advance to ensure proper functioning.

With these preparations in place, all fifteen interviews were conducted successfully and achieved their intended objectives, thereby providing a substantial foundation for the subsequent data analysis process.

5.6. Data management

Each audio-recorded interview was transcribed into written documents using Microsoft Word. The recordings were saved as MP4 files, and the transcripts were systematically organised and stored in corresponding text documents. In addition to these, Microsoft Excel spreadsheets were created to assist with data tracking, including an overview of the dataset, such as dates, formats, and sources. Another separate spreadsheet was developed to record key demographic and professional information for each participant, including their code, pseudonym, institutional affiliation, department, age, level of academic experience, academic qualifications and titles.

Given the nature of the research, the collected data includes sensitive information about participants' thoughts, stories, experiences, and perceptions regarding their work and institutional environments. To protect participants' confidentiality, all personal identifiers were removed through an irreversible anonymisation process. Each participant was assigned a code, and no linking key was retained to match the code with the original identifiers. This ensures that individual participants and their institutions cannot be traced in the reporting or archiving of the data.

All electronic data were organised into structured folders grouped by type, location, and date of collection or modification. These files, including research data and any personal data, are stored in password-protected folders on the researcher's personal computer. The computer itself is secured by an additional password, and access is restricted to the researcher only. All files are also backed up on the researcher's University of Glasgow OneDrive account, which is protected by multi-factor authentication to ensure data integrity and availability.

Printed materials, including consent forms and paper notes, are securely stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's residence. The personal data will be permanently deleted at the end of the project using secure removal software. According to the University of Glasgow's data management policies, research data such as interview transcripts will be retained for a period of ten years after the project's completion, to allow for verification of findings and ensure research integrity.

5.7. Data analysis

The data analysis process in this study followed a systematic, two-stage approach grounded in qualitative methodology and supported by the use of MAXQDA (Max (Weber) Qualitative Data Analysis), a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. All interview recordings were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents. The transcribing process helps to familiarise oneself with the collected data, which is an important part of the analysis (Miles et al., 2019). This process prioritised the meaning of participants' responses rather than the linguistic detail emphasised in discourse or conversation analysis (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Accordingly, fillers (e.g., "ah", "uhm") and repeated words were eliminated to enhance readability. These text files were then imported into MAXQDA for coding, organisation, analysis and visualisation. The software was utilised for its user-friendly interface and compatibility with Vietnamese texts, allowing for the efficient processing of the original-language transcripts. As all participants and the researcher share Vietnamese as their first language, it was used during phases of data collection, transcription and initial data analysis. This decision aimed to facilitate a comfortable environment for participants to share, preserve the authenticity of participants' expressions, and minimise the risk of misinterpretation or meaning loss due to translation (Clark et al., 2017; Nurjannah et al., 2014). The transcripts were thus not fully translated into English. However, the codes were developed in English to align with the conceptual language of the theoretical framework and existing literature, as well as to facilitate the thesis writing process later.

The collected data in this study were analysed following a qualitative procedure that involves an ongoing and iterative process of transcription, coding, themes/patterns identification and development, thematic network construction, interpretation, and report writing. As outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative analysis generally entails three main stages: preparing

and organising the collected data, condensing them into patterns/themes through cycles of coding, and representing the results in written form, though additional steps may be included depending on the specific approach taken. Additionally, the process of data analysis should occur concurrently with data collection and continue through to the completion of the final report (Miles et al., 2019). In this research, preliminary analysis was conducted during the data collection phase. The interval between two interviews played a crucial role in the research's progress. This was the period when the researcher engaged in review and reflection on the just-completed interview, thereby enabling better preparation for the subsequent one. After each interview, the researcher revisited the key parts of the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, drawing on both the audio recording and personal notes. Given that the questions in the interview schedule were designed in a semi-structured format, there was often considerable flexibility and many possibilities for the researcher to direct and maintain the conversation's focus. Thus, the process of reflection was vital in providing lessons learned and enhancing the quality of preparation after each interview.

Once the data collection and transcription process were completed, the researcher read through all the transcripts to gain an overall view and an initial sense of the material gathered. At this stage, preliminary impressions and key initial notes began to emerge and were recorded. Later, some of the ideas and notes generated during this preliminary and familiarisation phase were developed into core codes, which were documented in the MAXQDA file. Following the initial reading, the transcripts were subsequently reviewed multiple times in a detailed and thorough manner. Through this process, the notes gradually became more focused and systematically organised. The decisions made throughout these processes were supported by recommendations from scholars (e.g., Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles et al., 2019), which suggest using analytic memos to record reflections, questions, and emerging ideas that may inform subsequent coding decisions. These memos support the iterative nature of qualitative analysis, facilitating the development of conceptual links and prompting further exploration where needed.

Regarding data coding, this study employed two cycles of coding: open coding and axial coding (Miles et al., 2019). In the first cycle, open coding was conducted to assign meaningful labels to segments of data. 'Open coding can be performed on a line-by-line, phrase-by-phrase, sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph, unit-of-text-by-unit-of-text basis or a semantic unit' (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 671). As Miles et al. (2019) suggest, four basic coding methods

were primarily utilised in this stage, including descriptive, In Vivo, process and concept coding. They were carried out with the technical support of the MAXQDA software as follows:

- *Descriptive coding*: to summarise the topical content of a passage by giving labels.
- *In Vivo coding*: using participants' own words and phrases to preserve authenticity and uniqueness
- *Process coding*: to identify conceptual or observable actions within the data
- *Concept coding*: to assign higher-order meanings, often capturing abstract ideas, institutional discourses, or policy logics

Table 5.2 below presents some coding examples derived from the participant interviews.

Table 5.2. Examples of coding from participant interviews

Interview excerpt	**Codes**
Engaging in research improves a lecturer's knowledge in their field, keeping them updated with new information. This is particularly beneficial in rapidly evolving fields, such as Computer Science, where staying current is crucial for effective teaching. Students may become disinterested if the knowledge shared is outdated or irrelevant to their needs. Therefore, the literature review process in research substantially aids in the teaching and learning process.	Research enhancing teaching *(descriptive coding)*
It is a two-way relationship, like the '*chicken and egg'* situation. When you generate knowledge, you must also disseminate it, and in turn, the process of disseminating knowledge contributes to generating new knowledge – this iterative cycle continues indefinitely. It just depends on where the emphasis lies and what the preferences are. Some people enjoy teaching more, so let them focus on teaching, while those who prefer research should be encouraged to pursue it. That is the model of Humboldt University, a RI university that has existed since 1810 to the present day…	"chicken and egg" situation *(In Vivo coding)*
In my university, lecturers are encouraged to pursue research, and those who yield noteworthy research outcomes may see a reduction in their teaching workload. Some of my colleagues even have the option to take a teaching hiatus for an entire semester, allowing them to focus solely on their research endeavours.	Prioritising research over teaching *(process coding)*
Completing research projects brings financial gains and enhances one's scholarly reputation. In contrast, no matter how outstanding, teaching excellence lacks tangible benefits and recognition, making research endeavours far more rewarding.	The devaluation of teaching *(concept coding)*

The MAXQDA software provided substantial technical support throughout these processes. Specifically, its interface allowed the researcher to work with all codes either transcript by transcript or through the overall code system, depending on the purpose. The code system operated hierarchically, enabling the organisation of codes into categories and themes/subthemes (in a tree-like structure, where one theme could be nested under another, and further subthemes could be created). Each category or theme typically encompassed numerous codes, and the software allowed easy access to all related information, including the theme/category name, preview, and analytical memos and notes. One of the most useful features in the coding process is that the software allows multiple codes to be assigned to the same segment of text. In practice, the researcher has effectively utilised this function in many cases. To facilitate recognition, in addition to giving different names to the codes, the researcher also used different colours. Additionally, this programme also provided search functions within each category/theme as well as across the entire project file. This was particularly valuable when handling such a large dataset, with nearly one thousand codes ultimately generated during the coding process.

Table 5.3, presented on the following page, illustrates a piece of the first-cycle coding process. That includes an interview excerpt from a participant's response concerning the challenges they encountered in meeting academic expectations, along with the corresponding coding memos.

In the second cycle of coding, the initial codes were reviewed and grouped into broader categories. These categories were then organised into themes/ subthemes that addressed the study's research questions. These processes were informed by both inductive reasoning – emerging from the data, and abductive interpretation – drawing on theoretical insights from Bourdieu's conceptual framework. Examples of the process of the second coding cycle, by which initial codes were grouped into categories and broader themes in relation to the research questions (RQs) and theoretical framework, will also be presented in *Table 5.4,* immediately following *Table 5.3*.

All codes were defined and continuously refined throughout the analytic process, as patterns emerged and interpretations deepened. These approaches enabled the researcher to remain grounded in participants' language while also moving toward more abstract, theoretically informed interpretation.

Table 5.3. Examples of first-cycle coding with memo

Interview excerpt	Codes
Firstly, the current legal framework does allow [flexibility in managing lecturer academic workload…]. However, at some universities, the number of students is so large that it is more suitable to assign heavier teaching loads to younger and early-career staff members. Secondly, there is a cultural norm that younger and early-career lecturers should not be perceived as teaching less. Right? If you are young, you are expected to volunteer and take on more [in a teaching role]. In fact, most universities still keep the benchmark of 270 hours [per year]. Young and early-career lecturers are often required to teach a lot. Although the standard is 270 hours, these lecturers often exceed this limit, reaching 300-400 hours per year, particularly in large universities with substantial student populations. In my view, it would be better to set only a minimum framework and make the range wide enough so that lecturers have the flexibility to choose. They could, for example, be allowed to focus more on research in certain semesters. The average might be the equivalent of teaching four or five courses per semester, but this could be adjusted by substituting research outputs. For instance, if you teach three courses, you could compensate by producing one to two research articles. However, you cannot go below one course. You must teach at least one. Moreover, administrative tasks are not something we can choose to avoid. We are currently overwhelmed by having to shoulder too many tasks and job demands, particularly administrative and 'other duties'. Even events such as flower arranging competitions necessitate my attendance for applause, and cultural performances require my participation in dancing. Additionally, we are also required to serve as invigilators during student examinations. If not that, they push you into management roles that you do not enjoy, dealing with nameless issues. I was offered positions such as vice-dean, head of department, centre director, and even deputy director of an institute, but I turned them down. These are administrative and management tasks, and I see them as meaningless. I would rather be left alone to focus on academic work that truly engages with my expertise. Please, let us do our academic roles! In fact, despite their reluctance, lecturers often have to take on roles they dislike, maintaining harmony within the group and building an image of being cooperative and non-confrontational. They choose to sacrifice. Therefore, lecturers, especially young and early-career lecturers, rarely refuse or question the non-academic roles ['other duties'] assigned to them. As a consequence, many people chose to transfer to other universities that offer greater autonomy and flexibility.	*Flexibility in workload management* *Heavy teaching loads* *Young team – cultural norm* *Standard teaching hours – Heavy teaching loads* *Demand for autonomy & flexibility – Flexibility in workload management* *Admin roles – other duties burden* *Other duties burden – nameless* *Management roles* *Demand for autonomy & flexibility* *Reluctance – Group harmony* *Young team* *Seeking autonomy through mobility*
<u>Coding memo:</u> Legal framework allows workload flexibility, but teaching demands & cultural norms challenge Young team face heavier teaching loads (norms of volunteering and proving commitment) Teaching standard: 270 hours, often exceeded (up to 300-400 in large universities) Admin and management roles are perceived as meaningless, yet difficult to refuse Group harmony – cultural norms: reluctance to challenge Lack of autonomy & overload, burdens => lecturers seek greater flexibility through mobility => Focus on more cultural influences and their implications; how about 'other duties' burdens? => Don't overfocus solely on emerging research; teaching pressures are also increasing	

Table 5.4. Examples of second cycle of coding and their relevance

Codes	**Categories**	**Themes/ Subthemes**	**Their relevance to RQs and theory**
Keep teaching content updated	Research enhancing teaching	Integration-oriented perspective: lecturers' belief in R&T mutual benefits	Provide insights into the question of what lecturers think about the R&T relationship
Enrich classroom materials			
Enhance lecturers' academic credibility			
Sources of research ideas and motivation	Teaching enhancing research		
Opportunities to identify gaps			
Foster collaborative networks			
Lose interest in teaching	Consequences on academic identity and professional practice	Impacts of the shifting resources and priorities	Provide evidence to demonstrate how the implementation of reform policies has affected academic identity and practice, particularly the imbalance between R&T
Teaching in disguise			
The devaluation of teaching			
Unethical behaviours			
Emotional stress			
Play-it-safe strategy			
Teaching first	Confucian legacies	The tensions between R&T *Subthemes:* - Entrenched primacy of teaching - Lecturers' responses to the changes - Other constraints	Provide insights into the constraints and enablers affecting lecturers' adaptation to change; how the tensions between R&T emerge, and their implications for academic identity and practice. They are also connected to Bourdieu's concepts, particularly the misalignment between field and habitus
Group harmony			
Reluctance			
Young team	Divided generation		
Old team			
Slow adjustment	Adaptation to changes		
Stuck between two worlds			
Fall further behind			
Heavy teaching loads	Role overload and burdens		
Research pressures			
Admin overload			
Other duties burdens			

In fact, the MAXQDA software proved highly useful at this stage of the research process due to its feature that enables the design of a code system in a tree-like structure, as described above. Consequently, the process of arranging and organising codes could be carried out in parallel with the coding process itself. Once these steps reached a stage of stability, with few major changes to the code system and with the basic themes firmly established, subsequent coding of transcripts primarily served to supplement the existing system of codes. These factors suggested that the data collection and analysis had the potential to reach a point of saturation. Specifically, no new first-cycle codes were emerging, and final transcripts yielded no additional properties or relationships within existing categories, indicating both code and meaning saturation. In practice, whenever the researcher needed to review or adjust the 'tree' system (e.g., even during data presentation or discussion), the software facilitated this process straightforwardly and conveniently.

Although each interview represented a distinct perspective, the data analysis focuses not only on individual stories but also on identifying shared patterns, divergent views, and the structural and cultural dynamics underpinning lecturers' perceptions and experiences, as presented above. Attention was paid to both convergence and variation across participants. The thematic outcomes withdrawn through these processes formed the analytical and empirical foundation for the discussions and conclusions in the subsequent chapters.

The presentation of the analysed data in the thesis is also a crucial step. Conveying a large volume of data, even when rigorously analysed and condensed, into coherent arguments that address the research questions remains a significant challenge (Miles et al., 2019). In addition to consulting established methodological guidance, the researcher also drew on examples of how research results were presented in other dissertations within the University's database. The findings of this study are reported in Chapter Six – Findings. The chapter begins with *Table 6.1*, which summarises key demographic and professional profiles of the participants, including their disciplines, academic statuses, levels of experience, and other relevant background information, with all names replaced by pseudonyms. Then, when presenting direct quotations from interview excerpts, selected contextual details already reported in *Table 6.1* will, where relevant, be briefly reiterated to support the discussion.

5.8. Researcher reflexivity

In qualitative research, researcher reflexivity (also known as researcher positioning) has typically been viewed as essential for maintaining rigour and trustworthiness (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Olmos-Vega et al. (2022), researcher reflexivity refers to the practice whereby researchers 'self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes' (p. 242). Researcher positioning in qualitative research is a crucial element, as it acknowledges that researchers are not neutral observers but are situated within the research process, from the formulation of research ideas to data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation. Rather than striving to eliminate subjectivity completely, the aim is to critically reflect on how the researcher's background, assumptions, beliefs, values, and experiences influence the choices made throughout the study (Neuman, 2014). This section provides a reflection on my personal and professional background and its impact on the study's focus, approach, methodological design, data collection processes, and the interpretation and representation of findings.

At the time I initiated this research, I was working as a guest lecturer at a public university in Vietnam, with prior experience in HE. My teaching responsibilities and engagement with institutional change provided me with insider knowledge of the system, yet I was not directly involved in leadership or policy-making. This position offered me both proximity and distance. On one hand, I was relatively familiar with the structures and challenges facing lecturers. On the other hand, I also had to remain mindful of not assuming that others' experiences were the same as mine. I had not previously worked with any of the participants involved in the study, which helped mitigate potential biases associated with prior or hierarchical relationships.

Being an insider in the academic field in Vietnam meant that I shared many contextual and cultural reference points with the participants, which helped build rapport and understanding of subtle expressions and detecting indirect cues during interviews (e.g., locally meaningful idioms, face-saving moves). At the same time, I was also aware that my interpretations were influenced by my habitus – the socially and historically shaped dispositions that I brought into the research. For instance, having worked in an academic environment shaped by both traditional values and reform-oriented pressures, I was attuned to the implicit tensions in

lecturers' narratives around performance, identity, and institutional pressures. I tried to maintain a critical awareness of these positionalities throughout the research.

In addition to my positionality within the academic field, my personal and intellectual development also played an important role in designing and implementing the research process. In this study, I repeatedly emphasise that the core focus (i.e., academic identity and the R&T relationship) must be situated within the broader context of change (i.e., governance reform). This theme of *change* is perhaps the issue that I care about most deeply at this stage of my life, and one that will likely continue to preoccupy me for many years to come. I have also experienced profound transformations over the past decade, since entering university, most notably during my postgraduate studies. Before that, I had been, in many ways, a very different person.

During my twelve years of schooling before university, the subjects I both excelled in and most enjoyed were the natural sciences (such as Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry). The pursuit of solutions where every question or problem, no matter how difficult, ultimately had a predetermined correct answer gave me both excitement and rewards. The Vietnamese school system of that time left me with many fond memories and shaped a large part of who I am today. Nevertheless, it also fostered in me a misconception: that every problem has one, and only one, correct solution. Entering university, my experiences in a different academic environment revealed that many questions do not always have predetermined answers and that multiple realities can co-exist. Later, during my Master's studies at the University of Glasgow, prior to commencing this doctoral research, I was introduced to the concepts of ontology and epistemology, an encounter that felt transformative. I still vividly remember the moment when my life partner and I were first introduced to these concepts. In that moment, we felt as if we had discovered the world's greatest secret.

By the time I formulated the present study, I had already shifted from someone firmly grounded in *positivism* to someone more aligned with *interpretivism*. I have come to believe in and respect the plurality of truths embedded in individual perspectives. I have learned to listen more calmly and cautiously, and to express my own views with greater care and consideration. This marked profound changes from the past, when I tended to make emphatic assertions about what I believed to be right, as I was deeply convinced of the existence of a single truth within myself.

I have gained a deeper appreciation for the complexity and multidimensionality of the social world. Rather than feeling confused or intimidated by this uncertainty, I have become curious in a calmer manner, recognising that persistence and commitment to truth are indispensable in the pursuit of such complex and multi-layer realities. I understand that this endeavour requires effort, attentive listening, attention to detail, and dialogical engagement to illuminate matters more clearly. For these reasons and based on my personal experiences, I strongly believe in the power of dialogue and conversation. In Vietnam, there is a saying that *"stories are gifts" ("Lấy câu chuyện làm quà" in Vietnamese)*. I am a passionate believer in this. Thus, selecting interviews as the method of data collection when designing this qualitative study, to explore participants' truths, perspectives, and experiences, in my view, was appropriate, alongside the other rationales discussed earlier.

Additionally, prior to commencing data collection for this study, I underwent a profound shift in my perception of human interaction and ways of communication, largely due to my engagement with the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) approach. Although for me, NVC is not simply a mode of communication, it is far more than that, offering me a choice of worldview and lifestyle. This approach thus significantly influenced how I listen, empathise, and understand others, not only in everyday life but also in this research context. NVC encouraged me to approach participants with openness, presence, and genuine curiosity, rather than judgment or subjective assumptions. I used neutral, non-judgemental prompts and allowed paced silences when necessary. It also enabled me to better attend to the emotions and underlying needs expressed (sometimes indirectly) during interviews and helped me develop a more compassionate lens when interpreting participants' stories. Although NVC was not utilised as a formal analytical framework, its influence shaped my approach to interviewing. It informed my interpretive sensitivity, particularly in moments where participants expressed discomfort, ambivalence, or inner conflict, as well as the representation of my findings in this thesis.

A potential bias that I was conscious of throughout the research process stemmed from my commitment to using Bourdieu's ToP as the conceptual lens. While this theoretical foundation provided a powerful framework for understanding structure-agency dynamics, I was mindful of the risk of overly fitting data into pre-existing concepts. To address this, I began the data analysis inductively, using open coding to let meanings emerge from participants' words, before

gradually bringing Bourdieu's concepts into dialogue with the data in an abductive manner. I remained open to adjusting my interpretations and consciously resisted the temptation to overgeneralise or impose theoretical expectations on the data without sufficient empirical evidence.

Although I encountered considerable difficulties at the outset of engaging with Bourdieu's approach, I feel that I 'met' Bourdieu at precisely the right time. The major themes that had profoundly influenced my values and beliefs, such as change, multiple realities, and persistence, resonated strongly with the more abstract notions embedded in Bourdieu's ToP. It seems that not only in this study but also in my broader observations, reflections, and attempts to make sense of truths around me, I have usually tended to situate them within a context of movement and transformation. However, I am aware that this research does not investigate binary or instantaneous, regular or predictable changes, such as a light bulb switching on or off, or the daily alternation between day and night. Rather, its focus lies in lecturers' perceptions, beliefs, values, and behaviours in the face of change, what Bourdieu conceptualises as habitus.

As Bourdieu (1990b) has emphasised, while habitus is not immutable and may shift, it does not transform overnight. Habitus, together with the social space in which it operates (field), constitutes relational structures that evolve over time. In Vietnam, we also say: *"Sow thoughts, harvest behaviours. Sow behaviours, harvest habits. Sow habits, harvest personalities. Sow personalities, harvest destinies". ("Gieo suy nghĩ gặt hành động. Gieo hành động gặt thói quen. Gieo thói quen gặt tính cách. Gieo tính cách gặt số phận" in Vietnamese).* This life lesson, distilled from everyday experience from Vietnamese ancestors, has enabled me to connect with Bourdieu's ideas more intuitively, even though I initially found them highly challenging. To sum up, there are numerous factors and reasons underpinning the decision to adopt Bourdieu's ToP as the theoretical foundation of this research, and I remain convinced that it was the most appropriate choice I could have made at the time.

In conclusion, my position as a Vietnamese academic, the evolution of my worldview through reflective practices, my personal and intellectual development, and my theoretical orientation all contributed to shaping my approach to the research process. I have acknowledged these influences, and I sought to make them visible, critically examine them, and allow them to enrich the interpretive depth of the study. At the same time, in order to establish and maintain the

balance and objectivity required of a qualitative study, it is necessary to discuss the strategies employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, which will be presented in the following section.

5.9. Trustworthiness of the study

There are many ways to evaluate research; in other words, whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods, research can be assessed through different features. These may include, for instance, 'the importance of the topics and issues to the field of enquiry' or the 'contribution to existing research and theoretical debates', among others (Silverman, 2024, p. 81). The preceding discussions have already clarified these issues and also explained the rationale for the choices of philosophical assumptions and methodological approach. This section addresses the trustworthiness of this study, aiming to demonstrate that the research findings are credible, unbiased, and consistent.

Trustworthiness is considered one of the central concerns in evaluating the quality of qualitative research (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). This is particularly the case in light of the criticisms often raised by positivists. While concepts such as reliability and validity may be applicable in quantitative studies, their direct transfer into qualitative research has limited applicability due to the fundamental differences between natural and social sciences (Shenton, 2004). Consequently, various efforts have been made (e.g., Silverman, 2001, 2024) to illustrate how qualitative researchers can adopt strategies that address these concerns. Within these efforts, many naturalistic scholars have purposefully opted for alternative terminology in place of reliability and validity, as a way of distancing themselves from the positivist paradigm.

As Shenton (2004) points out, 'Guba's constructs, in particular, have won considerable favour' among the frameworks developed to ensure trustworthy qualitative inquiry (p. 63). The four criteria proposed by Guba (1981), including *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*, were adopted and integrated into the research process of this study to enhance its trustworthiness. Respectively, these constructs correspond to four criteria used by positivist researchers, including internal validity, external validity/ generalisability, reliability, and objectivity.

5.9.1. Credibility

In interpretivist studies, credibility refers to the trustworthiness and plausibility of the interpretations, whether they are well-grounded in the data and make sense to participants and knowledgeable readers within the given context (Bryman, 2016). It addresses the question of how confidence can be established in the truth of a study's findings. Ensuring credibility is therefore regarded as one of the most central to establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative research, as it directly relates to the plausibility and accuracy of the interpretations drawn from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance confidence that the phenomena under investigation have been accurately documented, researchers can incorporate many measures, such as prolonged engagement, peer debriefing and examination, triangulation, member checks, random sampling, iterative questioning, negative case analysis, the researcher's 'reflective commentary', the adoption of research methods well established, tactics to help ensure honesty in informants, thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny, and examination of previous research findings (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). In this study, several strategies were employed to ensure its credibility.

First, one strategy commonly recommended to enhance credibility in qualitative research is *prolonged engagement*, which refers to the researcher's sustained involvement with the research context to gain a deeper understanding of the setting and establish trust with participants (Shenton, 2004). In this study, such engagement was evident through the researcher's early and ongoing familiarity with the cultural and institutional contexts of VHE. As a learner, lecturer and researcher working within the system for years, I already possessed an insider's familiarity with its context, academic norms, expectations, and challenges (see sections 1.4 and 5.8). This positionality, combined with my prior professional networks, enabled me to approach participants in ways that were culturally appropriate and conducive to building trust. In practical terms, I had visited the participating universities on multiple occasions before conducting the interviews and was therefore aware of their academic environments and institutional practices. Such early familiarity helped ensure that the questions posed and the subsequent dialogues were meaningful and contextually grounded, while also fostering rapport with participants. At the same time, I remained attentive to the risk of over-identification with the field and maintained a reflexive stance to preserve critical distance in both data collection and interpretation.

Second, *peer debriefing and examination* are also useful to ensure research credibility. This strategy can involve structured critical dialogue with the researcher's supervisors or a steering group to widen the investigator's perspective, surface assumptions, explore alternative courses of action, and detect potential flaws in logic or design. This process can also extend to colleagues and disciplinary peers who can challenge taken-for-granted positions and test the robustness of emerging claims (Shenton, 2004). During this research project, I engaged in discussions and feedback meetings with my supervisory team and had numerous conversations with colleagues knowledgeable in qualitative methods and related fields. These dialogues provided an important means of checking researcher bias, validating emerging insights, and ensuring analytic coherence. Moreover, informal yet critical conversations with other practitioners in HE, including my partner and father-in-law, both university lecturers, provided valuable opportunities for reflection and challenge. Additionally, the Annual Progress Review (APR) meetings, attended by my supervisory team and the convenors, provided important opportunities for review and reflection. They enabled me to receive probing questions, constructive feedback, and expert advice from senior academics at critical milestones in the doctoral research project. These discussions also prompted refinement of the analytic narrative and strengthened the justification for claims by challenging assumptions and requesting clearer evidential support. Overall, these exchanges served as a sounding board for critically developing and examining ideas and interpretations.

Another strategy used in this research project to enhance credibility was *triangulation*. It can be achieved through the purposive use of multiple methods to generate comprehensive data collection strategies, thereby developing a more complete understanding of the phenomenon (Guba, 1981). Triangulation can also be pursued by engaging a diverse set of research participants. Comparing accounts across those individuals enables cross-checking of viewpoints and experiences, and in turn, supports the construction of a more comprehensive picture of the perceptions, needs, attitudes, and behaviours under study. Such corroboration may, for instance, involve examining whether the 'realities' reported by one participant are echoed by others in a comparable situation (Shenton, 2004). Another form of this measure is site triangulation. It can be realised by involving participants from multiple organisations or different geographical sites, helping to minimise the influence of institution-specific factors. Convergent patterns/ themes emerging across sites possibly enhance the perceived credibility of the findings. This idea is conceptualised by Dervin (1983, cited in Shenton, 2004) as a

'circling reality' process. Accordingly, she emphasises 'the necessity of obtaining a variety of perspectives in order to get a better, more stable view of 'reality' based on a wide spectrum of observations from a wide base of points in time-space'. To sum up, on the assumption in social science that social reality is constructed from the perspectives and realities of different individuals, enhancing the credibility of a naturalistic inquiry requires maximising diversity in the methods, sources and sites through which research data are collected (Silverman, 2001, 2024).

Although the present study relied solely on semi-structured interviews as the primary data source, efforts were made to maximise variation and richness by purposefully selecting participants from diverse institutional types, academic disciplines, and statuses, as well as professional ranks and experience profiles (including some with management roles and international backgrounds). This diversity enabled cross-informant checking of both convergent and divergent accounts, supporting a comprehensive understanding of lecturers' practices and identities. Second, site triangulation was achieved by recruiting participants from more than one university and location (in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City), thereby reducing the influence of local factors specific to any single institution or location. These strategies allowed for the inclusion of multiple perspectives, thereby enhancing the breadth and contextual depth of the dataset and contributing to the overall credibility of the findings.

Another provision adopted to ensure the credibility of this research was *member checks*. This involves verifying the accuracy of the data either during or at the end of the collection phase. Ensuring the contextual meanings of qualitative data collected by interviews is a further, critical concern. This is especially important in longer interviews, which address complex issues that require sustained thought and reflection. In such contexts, it is essential to confirm that what participants have just said matches what they intended to convey, thereby ensuring the accuracy of the data collected (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004).

In this research project, particular care was taken to support this aim. As detailed in earlier sections, the interviews were preceded by thorough preparation (e.g., initial contact via email/phone, sending documents in advance, familiarisation with the interviewee's context and the interview venue, site visits and arrangements to secure an appropriate space). These

prepared steps were designed to minimise participants' logistical concerns, allowing them to maintain optimal focus during the interview.

Moreover, during the interview exchanges, questions were not asked in a rigid, pre-scripted sequence. Instead, I maintained full attention and active listening, especially when participants offered dense, layered narratives, and, where necessary, posed follow-up prompts to confirm or clarify specific points. Frequently used checks include *"Are you saying that […]?"* and "*When you refer to [X], do you mean […]?".* This approach aligns with Shenton's (2004) concept of iterative questioning, a credibility-enhancing tactic that employs targeted probes and deliberate returns to earlier topics. Iterative questioning involves rephrasing or spacing out prompts over time to extract further details and verify the internal consistency of shared accounts. Where discrepancies arise, they are explored and clarified, or, if necessary, noted transparently in the notebook. In applying this technique, I intended to facilitate clarification rather than to steer responses, allowing participants to refine or correct their statements as their thinking unfolded. The key guiding principle was to stay within the bounds of verification: I avoided inserting my own opinions, refrained from speculation or assumption, and did not ask leading questions – pitfalls that can easily arise when confirmation drifts into unnecessary interpretation. Although these practices were not written down in the Interview schedule, I recorded them as reminders in my notebook. In practice, such prompts, however, were most needed in the first one or two interviews. Thereafter, the process became more natural, almost reflexive, while still maintaining the necessary structure and rigour.

Alongside the accuracy of the collected data, the study also adopted measures to foster honest participant responses, thereby enhancing its credibility. This centres on creating conditions of voluntariness and psychological safety so that only those genuinely willing to contribute took part and felt free to speak candidly. Key elements include making refusal as an explicit option, reiterating that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, emphasising the researcher's independent status (so disclosures would not affect how participants were viewed by their managers or superiors), and affirming an unconditional right to withdraw at any point without giving reasons. Such strategies help minimise fear of judgement or losing credibility, thereby encouraging frank accounts that more authentically reflect participants' thoughts, feelings and experiences (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004).

In this research project, these strategies were operationalised as follows. Prior to the interviews, the study's purpose, voluntary nature, confidentiality agreements, and withdrawal rights were clearly stated in documents sent (see Appendices) and communicated via email/phone, and reiterated during the consent process. At the start of each interview, participants were reminded that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, that pseudonyms would be used in all reporting, and that they could decline to answer any question or stop the interview without consequence. Where relevant, the researcher also noted and mitigated potential power dynamics (e.g., ensuring privacy and the absence of supervisors). In practice, these principles and procedures were not consistently applied in the same manner or to the same extent across all fifteen interviewees. The variation did not stem from the researcher's side but from the participants. As university lecturers and also researchers, they were, to varying degrees, already familiar with such protocols. Naturally, their prior knowledge differed according to their backgrounds, research orientations, and professional experience. For example, in some cases, when I began to summarise the procedures and key principles, participants indicated that this was unnecessary, noting their familiarity and their prior review of the materials I had sent. In other instances, the participant preferred to hear the full procedural briefing before commencing the interview. At times, this 'preliminaries' segment also served to create momentum and to set a tone that facilitated a frank, sincere and honest conversation.

Another strategy to evaluate the project is the researcher's 'reflective commentary'. This is a systematic, contemporaneous record of initial impressions, methodological decisions, and emerging patterns maintained throughout the project. Such commentary serves to monitor the developing interpretations, what Guba and Lincoln (1989) term 'progressive subjectivity', and to make visible how claims evolved from the data rather than from retrospective rationalisation. During the research, I frequently noted salient contextual factors, points of emphasis or hesitation, and any tensions or contradictions worth probing later, following each interview. I also recorded the perceived effectiveness of specific techniques (e.g., phrasing of probes, order of topics), flagged potential negative cases, and listed action items to refine subsequent interviews. Additionally, analytic memos were systematically stored in the MAXQDA files for relevant transcript segments. During the writing phase, the sections of the commentary that tracked emerging patterns/ themes also informed the Findings and Discussion chapters, and the notes on technique effectiveness underpinned the methodological reflections and limitations.

Furthermore, Shenton (2004) also notes that research credibility is enhanced by examining previous research findings. Accordingly, research findings should be related to the existing body of knowledge, and the researcher should examine the extent to which the themes developed converged with, or diverged from, findings reported in previous studies conducted in comparable institutional settings or addressing similar issues. In this thesis, the Discussion chapter explicitly positions the present themes in relation to studies conducted in comparable contexts, noting both convergences and divergences and offering contextual explanations (e.g., institutional type, disciplinary location, stage of governance reform). In addition, the literature review itself functioned as an early credibility check. It mapped areas of agreement and debate in the field. Iterative returns to the literature during the research project helped corroborate or problematise provisional claims and clarified the study's contribution.

5.9.2. Transferability

In qualitative inquiry, transferability concerns the extent to which insights from one study can be meaningfully applied to other settings. Because qualitative findings are highly contextual and often generated from non-representative samples, this criterion cannot be applied in the same way in positivist research (Bryman, 2016). As Guba (1981) argues, qualitative findings are context-bound and lack general applicability. Accordingly, they must be accompanied by thick descriptions of the context in which they were produced, enabling readers to assess the relevance of the findings to other contexts. Following suggestions from some scholars (e.g., Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004), thick descriptions were used in this research to refer to richly contextualised accounts that are sufficient to support readers' judgments about their fit in other contexts, distinct from other uses of the term (e.g., ethnographic).

In this study, thick descriptions were offered at multiple levels to support such reader judgements. While Chapter Two provides a contextual account of the VHE system and the governance reform landscape, Chapter Five details the sampling strategy, participant selection, profiles, and data collection procedures. Furthermore, the presentation of findings and discussion in subsequent chapters includes rich contextual detail and direct quotations, allowing readers to appreciate the specific institutional and cultural dynamics in which participants were situated. The use of purposive and maximum variation sampling also enhances the potential for

transferability by including lecturers with diverse academic backgrounds and professional experiences. While this research does not aim for universal generalisation, the diversity within the sample enhances the potential relevance and applicability of the findings across a broader range of educational contexts.

5.9.3. Dependability

Dependability concerns the stability and consistency of research findings over time and across contexts. In qualitative inquiry, some degree of instability or variability is to be expected because phenomena and interpretations are context-bound (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). As Guba (1981) argues, the dynamic and constructed nature of reality means that absolute replication is neither feasible nor desirable. Instead of assuming the stability of findings across time and context, dependability in qualitative research acknowledges the dynamic and constructed nature of social realities.

In this study, dependability was supported through a clear audit trail and methodological transparency. The researcher systematically documented decisions made throughout the research, including revisions to the interview protocols, coding frameworks, analytic memos, and theoretical reflections. All interview protocols, consent forms, transcripts, and memos were stored and managed using secure digital folders and systematic file organisation and clear labelling of versions. The use of MAXQDA also facilitated the organisation of data and analytic decisions in a traceable and transparent manner.

In relation to the audit trail, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that an auditor be engaged from the beginning of the research project, enabling ongoing auditing throughout the study's life. In this doctoral research project, peer examination and supervision (see *peer debriefing and examination* in Credibility) served as an ongoing check on dependability. Supervisors acted in an auditor role during the project, for example, through supervisory meetings and Annual Progress Reviews (APRs), or by reviewing versions of written drafts. They provided me with much helpful feedback to ensure the consistency of the study. Moreover, dependability was also promoted through the use of triangulation for consistency checks across sources and sites (see Credibility). These measures were especially valuable given the scale and complexity of qualitative datasets.

5.9.4. Confirmability

Confirmability concerns whether the study's interpretations are grounded in the data rather than being a product of the researcher's predispositions, biases, perspectives, or interests (Guba, 1981). In qualitative inquiry, this concept is comparable to objectivity: because complete neutrality is unattainable, steps are taken to make the interpretive process transparent, evidence-based, and open to scrutiny. Central among these are triangulation (to reduce investigator bias), explicit acknowledgement of the researcher's position, and the maintenance of an auditable chain of evidence (Miles et al., 2019; Patton, 2014).

In this study, confirmability was ensured through multiple strategies, some of which have been discussed already in this thesis: (i) section 1.4. Personal, professional and academic motivations for the study; (ii) section 5.2. Research paradigm; and (iii) section 5.8. Researcher reflexivity. Additionally, the preceding discussions on member checking, reflective commentary, and especially on triangulation and audit trail also promote the confirmability of the study. Moreover, direct quotations were extensively used in the Findings chapters to substantiate interpretations and ground them in participants' voices. During the research process, I continually reminded myself to respect and embrace the evidence as presented, rather than steering it with my own ideas. This sustained commitment to self-examination and transparency strengthens the confirmability of the study's results.

5.10. Limitations

As with any qualitative study, this inquiry has several methodological limitations which should be acknowledged.

Firstly, the research was based on a relatively small sample of lecturers from a limited number of universities in Vietnam. While this purposive, snowball and maximum variation sampling strategy enabled the researcher to capture a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, the findings cannot be generalised to all HEIs in Vietnam or beyond. As stated earlier, the study's primary aim was not statistical generalisability but to offer in-depth, context-sensitive insights that could inform broader discussions on governance reform and academic identity, particularly the R&T relationship.

Secondly, although efforts were made to minimise bias, the researcher's role as an academic may have influenced participants' responses. Some participants might have shared views that they assumed aligned with the researcher's position or avoided disclosing more sensitive opinions. Several strategies were adopted as discussed above to mitigate this potential risk.

Thirdly, the data collection period was relatively constrained by institutional timelines and practical considerations. The study relied solely on semi-structured interviews without triangulation from other data collection methods, such as observations or institutional documents. While rich data were obtained through interviews, the absence of multiple methods might limit the ability to cross-verify interpretations from different angles.

Fourthly, two further limitations related to the researcher's positionality and learning journey should be acknowledged. First, at the beginning of the PhD process, the formulation of the research topic, focus, aims, and questions was complicated by a change in supervision. One of the original supervisors, who had initially encouraged a direction focusing on evidence-based education and professional development, left the project after the first year. This initial direction foregrounded a pedagogical lens on the R&T nexus, rather than examining how governance reforms shape academic identity using that nexus. This considerable change required the researcher to reassess the conceptual underpinnings of the study and gradually reorient towards a more identity-focused approach in the context of reform. While this shift ultimately enhanced the coherence and theoretical alignment of the research, it involved extensive reworking of the literature review and conceptual framework, resulting in delays and a more iterative developmental process.

Additionally, the researcher had limited prior experience in conducting qualitative research, particularly in handling bilingual data. Although several strategies were adopted, as discussed above, and great care was taken in translating participants' quotes from Vietnamese to English, it is possible that some of the nuanced meanings, especially those embedded in cultural context or subtle linguistic expressions, may not have been fully conveyed. Vietnamese cultural norms often involve indirectness, implicit meanings, and context-dependent cues, which can be challenging to convey in other languages such as English. While every effort was made to ensure a faithful translation, the researcher acknowledges that some cultural depth may have been lost in the process, which constitutes a limitation of the study.

5.11. Ethical considerations

Ethical principles were carefully observed throughout the research process, with particular attention paid to obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and protecting the rights of participants. The study was approved by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow prior to data collection (see Appendix B). All procedures adhered to the University's ethical guidelines for research involving human participants.

Given the qualitative nature of this inquiry and its focus on lecturers' personal perceptions and experiences within their institutional contexts, some of the information disclosed during interviews may have been sensitive. Participants occasionally discussed challenges, concerns, and tensions in their professional lives, including reflections on institutional practices and workplace dynamics. The potential for reputational or relational harm made it essential to ensure strong protections for privacy and anonymity.

As mentioned earlier, all prospective participants received a Participant Information Sheet, a Privacy Notice, and a Consent Form (see Appendices C, D, and E) explaining the study's purpose, the significance of the research, procedures, data storage, analysis, and use, potential risks, and their rights. Participants were notified that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any time without penalty or need to provide a reason. Only after signing the consent form did interviews proceed. Participants were assured that their identities would be anonymised and that no identifiable information, such as real names, specific departments, or university affiliations, would be included in the thesis or any resulting publications. Pseudonyms were used throughout, and sensitive details were either generalised or omitted where necessary to ensure non-traceability.

Data were collected through in-person interviews, except for two interviews conducted via Zoom at the participants' request, as they found this mode more convenient. These online interviews were conducted with the same ethical care and rigour as the face-to-face sessions, with attention to privacy, data security, and participant comfort. To further facilitate participants' well-being, the researcher created a respectful, empathetic, and non-judgmental interview environment where participants were encouraged to express themselves freely.

Moreover, cultural sensitivity was considered throughout the research process. By adopting a reflexive stance (as discussed previously), the researcher sought to minimise unnecessary influence, remain empathetically attuned to participants' needs, and uphold the dignity of all involved. The researcher was also attentive to signs of hesitation or emotional discomfort and allowed participants to skip any questions or terminate the interview if they wished to do so. The collected data protection and management were implemented in accordance with the University of Glasgow's research data management policy (as discussed earlier).

Moreover, this project also engaged a set of ethics-in-practice issues inherent to interviewing academics about sensitive organisational matters (e.g., autonomy, employment terms) and the risk of deductive disclosure in small communities. Operational responses are specified above, including sampling and access, interviewing protocols and venue choices, translation and representation, data security, storage, and retention, as well as researcher positionality/power dynamics. These measures were adopted to anticipate and manage ethical risks throughout the study's design and conduct.

Furthermore, this research was conducted during the period following the COVID-19 pandemic. By the time face-to-face interviews began, the researcher had recovered from COVID-19 and tested negative for the virus. Other precautionary measures were also taken to minimise health risks to the participants and the researcher. The researcher wore face masks, maintained appropriate physical distancing during interviews, sanitised hands frequently, and used private transportation to travel to interview locations. These steps were in line with Vietnamese government guidelines at the time and aimed to protect both participants and the researcher. In fact, no concerns or adverse effects related to participants' well-being were reported during or after the interview process. This suggests that the risk mitigation measures adopted were effective in ensuring a safe and ethically sound research environment during that challenging period.

5.12. Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented the methodological foundation of the research. Rooted in an interpretivist paradigm and qualitative approach, this investigation has utilised a qualitative

research design to enable an in-depth, context-sensitive exploration of lecturers' perceptions and experiences across diverse institutional settings.

The chapter has detailed the sampling strategy, the use of semi-structured interviews as the data collection method, and the processes of data management and analysis using MAXQDA software. It has also discussed the researcher's positionality and reflexivity, emphasising how personal orientations influenced the research process. Trustworthiness was addressed through strategies aligned with Guba's criteria, while ethical considerations were implemented to ensure participants' privacy and well-being throughout the study. Some methodological limitations were also acknowledged, including those related to the scope of the sample, the interpretive translation, and the development of the early-stage research design.

In summary, this chapter provides a transparent and rigorous basis for understanding the findings. It serves as a critical bridge between the literature review, theoretical discussions in earlier chapters and the empirical analyses and discussions that follow.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

6.1. Overview of the chapter

Drawing on the collected data and the theoretical and methodological foundations discussed earlier, this chapter aims to present the empirical findings of the study. It is organised into three main parts.

The chapter begins with an exploration of whether university lecturers perceive R&T as mutually beneficial *(section 6.2)*. Although most participants emphasised the potential complementarity between R&T, they also noted that such integration is often aspirational rather than fully realised due to certain constraints. While the presented results may not appear surprising to readers in other contexts, their empirical confirmation carries substantial weight in the VHE context, where multiple factors, especially historical and cultural ones as analysed earlier, have significantly impacted lecturer identity and practice.

Section 6.3 then examines the tensions that arise as lecturers are increasingly expected to engage in research while maintaining traditional teaching responsibilities. The findings reveal multiple dimensions of difficulties, including the entrenched primacy of teaching in Vietnamese academia, ambiguities surrounding evolving research role expectations, and widespread limitations in research capacities and institutional support. These challenges are reflected in the diverse ways lecturers respond to change, ranging from explicit resistance to more subtle forms of reluctance shaped by hierarchical and cultural norms. These dynamics have significantly influenced how they perceive themselves and their professional development.

Next, *section 6.4* delves into the consequences of these ongoing tensions by examining the shifting allocation of time, effort, attention, and recognition between R&T. It highlights how the institutional growing prioritisation of research significance impacts the teaching dimension and overall lecturer identity, integrity, and well-being.

As mentioned earlier, to provide context for the findings representation, the demographic and professional profiles of the fifteen interviewed lecturers are summarised in *Table 6.1*, presented on the following page. For confidentiality, all participants' names have been replaced with

pseudonyms. The participants represent a diverse mix of disciplines (e.g., Education, Law, Engineering, Business Management, etc.), academic statuses (ranging from Master's degree holders to Associate Professors), and levels of experience (from early-career academics with less than five years of teaching to senior lecturers with over four decades in the field). Several participants also hold management roles or have international academic backgrounds, which adds richness and depth to the data. When presenting direct quotations from interview excerpts, selected contextual details already reported in the table will, if necessary, be briefly reiterated to support the discussions.

Table 6.1. Summary of participants' demographic and professional profiles

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Academic Discipline	Academic Status	Experience Level	Other Information, Managerial Position, Country of Study
Phuong	Female	Education	Doctorate	Over 20 years	Holds a management position at the university; Japan
Hien	Female	Law	PhD Candidate	Over 10 years	Holds a management position at the university
Thi	Female	Industrial Engineering and Management; Logistics	PhD Student	Less than 5 years	Vietnam
Hoang	Male	Computer Science	Master	Around 5 years	Vietnam
Nam	Male	Electrical Engineering	Doctorate	Around 15 years	Head of department at the university; France
Nhi	Female	Biological Sciences	Doctorate, Associate Professor	Around 20 years	Director of a centre at the university; Japan
Bao	Male	with expertise in computing and data-related disciplines	PhD Student	Around 5 years	Vietnam
Vy	Female	Education	Doctorate	Over 10 years	Nearly 10 years of teaching experience at high schools; Vietnam
Thoa	Female	Tourism	Doctorate	Around 15 years	Vietnam
Hung	Male	Education	Doctorate	Around 15 years	Senior assistant to the university board of directors; France and Taiwan
Huong	Female	Business Management; Tourism	Doctorate	Around 10 years	Holds a management position at the university; Germany and Vietnam
Quang	Male	with expertise spanning applied social sciences	Doctorate, Associate Professor	Over 40 years	Began academic career under the educational model, which was heavily influenced by the Soviet system
Quynh	Female	Business Management	Master	Less than 5 years	Vietnam
Lien	Female	History	Doctorate	Nearly 20 years	Vietnam
Hoa	Female	Education	Doctorate	Around 15 years	Vietnam

6.2. Two orientations in lecturers' perspectives on the complementarity between R&T

As one of the major concerns of this investigation, this section presents the findings to explore how the lecturers conceptualise the relationship between R&T as part of their evolving identity, specifically whether they perceive them as mutually beneficial aspects of academic work. The empirical evidence reveals two broad but distinct orientations among participants regarding the relationship between R&T. While a small minority of lecturers remains sceptical, not necessarily rejecting the idea but questioning its practicality, the majority expresses confidence in the mutual benefits of integrating R&T.

The first orientation can be termed as a *sceptical* (or *segmented)* perspective. While not denying potential benefits of integrating R&T, lecturers who hold this orientation express substantial doubts, scepticism and uncertainties regarding its practical feasibility. On the contrary, the other orientation reflects a strong belief among most participants in intrinsic values and practicalities of the R&T integration, which can be described as an *integration-oriented perspective*. Lecturers who share this orientation consistently express the viewpoint that meaningful academic practice fundamentally requires a close relationship between these two primary roles, each enriching and reinforcing the other. This group consider research not as a separate responsibility, but rather as a core activity that actively enhances the teaching dimension, and vice versa.

This section begins by presenting the sceptical perspective. It then discusses the dominant perspective among lecturers who perceive the two roles as mutually reinforcing. Finally, it further examines how lecturers perceive these two aspects as complementing each other in two directions: research supporting teaching and teaching enhancing research.

6.2.1. Sceptical perspective

Among the interviewees, two cases expressed scepticism regarding the mutual benefits of R&T. While they did not entirely deny the possibility of such a relationship, they questioned how effectively it could be realised in practice. They both acknowledged that various influencing factors determine the extent to which R&T complement each other, which may differ for individual lecturers. In her case, Ms Hien (with over 10 years of experience in academia)

believed that the specific characteristics of her discipline (Law) resulted in a more distinct separation between the two R&T dimensions compared to other fields. She explained:

> Perhaps in fields such as Public Policy or Biotechnology, R&T may complement each other more significantly. However, in my field, these two roles do not seem to be closely connected […] Perhaps research sometimes supports teaching to a certain extent, but the other way around, not really.

Similarly, Dr Quang, an Associate Professor with over 40 years of academic experience, shared a comparable perspective. He stated that the extent to which R&T reinforce one another is not as pronounced in his fields as it might be in others. Having begun his academic career under the educational model which was heavily influenced by the Soviet system, he also emphasised the role of teaching experience, asserting:

> Lecturers like myself can still teach effectively without conducting research. I have been doing this job for decades. I gather information from textbooks and personal experience to ensure I can teach effectively without any issues.

Mr Quang noted that, with his extensive teaching experience, undertaking research is simply a requirement imposed by the university rather than something that necessarily relates to the teaching profession he has long excelled in for decades. He further suggested younger generations of lecturers today might have new approaches to integrating R&T in ways that complement both roles. However, based on his more than 40 years of experience in academia, he perceived little reciprocal benefit between the two.

6.2.2. Integration-oriented perspective: A dominant belief in the mutual reinforcement of R&T

While Ms Hien and Mr Quang expressed scepticism about the mutual benefits of R&T due to disciplinary distinctions and extensive teaching experience, the predominant perspective among the interviewees suggests otherwise. The majority of participants appeared to perceive a positive relationship between these two academic roles, viewing them as mutually reinforcing rather than entirely separate endeavours. Their perspectives indicate a belief in the ways R&T can complement each other, contingent upon specific conditions, institutional contexts, and individual approaches. These perceptual patterns reflect underlying differences shaped by their disciplinary backgrounds, generational positioning, institutional cultures, and personal experiences.

For instance, Dr Huong (around 10 years of academic experience) emphasised the inseparability of these two roles, stating: *"R&T cannot be separated. They are complementary".* She further explained that her time studying and working in German academic environments has strongly shaped her viewpoints on the relationship. She said that, in such environments, it would be unnecessary to question whether these two roles complement each other. Instead, the real question should be how they do so.

The belief in the complementarity of R&T was consistently expressed across other participants from various disciplines and backgrounds. Others echoed similar views: Mr Hoang (5 years of academic experience) described the connection as *"a positive relationship that is very closely linked".* In comparison, Dr Lien (around 20 years of academic experience) referred to it as *"mutually beneficial".* Dr Nhi (Associate Professor, around 20 years of academic experience) elaborated on this point, stressing the importance of maintaining a balance:

> There is a positive relationship between R&T. The two roles should complement each other, as focusing too much on one at the expense of the other is not ideal. Lecturers need to understand that maintaining a balance between these two roles is crucial.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that these lecturers not only acknowledged but also conceptualised and envisioned how research could enhance teaching and vice versa, even if these synergies were not always fully realised in their practice. Dr Phuong (over 20 years of academic experience), for instance, believed in this positive relationship, while recognising that the benefits might not always be visible in her daily work. She noted: *"These two roles should complement each other and be closely connected to achieve mutual success".*

This view was also reinforced by Ms Nhi, who emphasised that both functions should progress together to promote research while enhancing teaching. In the same vein, Dr Hung (Education, 15 years of academic experience), who has expertise and experience in HE and is also a policymaker actively involved in designing and implementing HE policies, expressed an even stronger stance. He firmly believed in the inseparable relationship between R&T. He conceptualised this relationship as akin to the *"chicken and egg"* analogy, emphasising that:

> It is a two-way relationship, like the *'chicken and egg'* situation. When you generate knowledge, you must also disseminate it, and in turn, the process of disseminating knowledge contributes to generating new knowledge – this

> iterative cycle continues indefinitely. It just depends on where the emphasis lies and what the preferences are. Some people enjoy teaching more, so let them focus on teaching, while those who prefer research should be encouraged to pursue it. That is the model of Humboldt University, a RI university that has existed since 1810 to the present day [...] Therefore, the mission of university management is to design a 'game' with mechanisms that align with academic dispositions and changes, adapting to different contexts. In short, without teaching, research is useless, and without research, teaching is also worthless!

Overall, the data indicate that most participants perceive R&T as interdependent rather than separate activities. When asked to elaborate on this potential relationship, they indicated several ways in which engaging in research can enrich teaching, ultimately fostering a more dynamic and research-informed educational environment. The following discussions examine in detail how research is viewed as enhancing teaching, and how teaching, in turn, supports the advancement of research.

6.2.3. Research enhancing teaching

The participants' perspectives on how research benefits teaching can be grouped into several key subthemes. First, many lecturers emphasised that active engagement in research allows them to stay updated with the ongoing developments in their academic fields. By keeping their knowledge current, lecturers can ensure that their teaching remains relevant and reflects the latest advancements in their field. During the interviews, the respondents frequently referred to the importance of keeping knowledge *"up-to-date"* or *"updated",* and incorporating *"new information"*. Reflecting this concern, Ms Nhi cautioned: *"Lecturers who do not engage in research risk having their knowledge become outdated quickly".*

Echoing this concern, Dr Vy (Education, over 10 years of academic experience) highlighted a broader dimension of personal and professional growth, stressing that: *"If one only does teaching without engaging in research, the content of the lectures will remain static and will not reflect personal and professional growth"*.

Adding another perspective, Dr Hoa (Education, with around 15 years of academic experience) pointed out the practical value of research for teaching preparation, particularly in the updated features of teaching materials derived from research. She explained:

> A significant benefit of research is providing materials for lecture preparation. The process of conducting literature reviews or using one's research findings as teaching material becomes a valuable updated source of information.

Mr Bao (Computer Science) further reinforced that in disciplines like his, where knowledge evolves rapidly, the need to stay updated becomes even more critical for effective teaching. He maintained:

> Engaging in research improves a lecturer's knowledge in their field, keeping them updated with new information. This is particularly beneficial in rapidly evolving fields, such as Computer Science, where staying current is crucial for effective teaching. Students may become disinterested if the knowledge shared is outdated or irrelevant to their needs. Therefore, the literature review process in research substantially aids in the teaching and learning process.

Beyond keeping their knowledge up to date, participants also viewed research as a means of developing key intellectual and teaching-related skills. They suggested that conducting their own research, as well as engaging with research literature, can sharpen critical thinking, logical reasoning, and problem-solving abilities, which are crucial not only for producing research but also for designing and delivering effective teaching. For example, Mr Hoang (Computer Science) claimed: *"Research helps lecturers develop logical thinking, enhancing their teaching expertise"*. From his perspective, the skills developed through research directly translate into more effective teaching strategies, particularly in disciplines that require problem-solving and critical analysis.

Furthermore, several informants suggested that research experience provides valuable insights for teaching research-related subjects more effectively. As research methodologies become an integral part of HE curricula, students increasingly require guidance in understanding and applying these methods. Lecturers who are actively involved in research are therefore seen as better positioned to provide this guidance. For instance, Ms Phuong explained: *"Students now need to learn about research methods, and lecturers who engage in research can teach this subject more effectively. One cannot teach well something they are not actively involved in"*. She shared that, in her field, students are often required to take research methodology courses and conduct research projects or graduation theses. Lecturers must continually refine their research expertise and knowledge to provide effective guidance and support to their students.

In addition, multiple lecturers provided concrete examples of how research directly enhances their teaching practices. Dr Thoa (Tourism) shared how integrating research into her teaching helps her feel less pressured and creates a richer learning experience for students. She said:

> Am I integrating R&T? Absolutely. These two activities cannot be separated [...] when I can earn the mutual benefits of both by integrating them, I feel somewhat relieved of the pressure […] The research process brings many benefits to my teaching, greatly enhancing it. For example, when I go on field trips to gather data for my research, I also collect materials from real-life experiences to use in my classroom lectures. Moreover, the findings of my research serve as valuable educational resources. And because these are real-life materials, they are relevant to ongoing life situations rather than outdated [...] My students become more engaged and focused, and I see a significant improvement in my teaching effectiveness.

Her narrative illustrates how research activities, particularly those involving fieldwork, enable lecturers to bring fresh, real-world examples into the classroom, making lessons more engaging and relevant for students. The integration of her own research findings not only enriches teaching content but also provides a sense of authenticity that students respond positively to. Echoing this experiential dimension, Ms Huong reflected on how research fosters ongoing learning, which in turn inspires her teaching approach:

> Lecturers engaging in research mean they are continuing their learning. That embodies the spirit of lifelong learning. That is how we use that spirit in research to inspire our students when we teach.

She elaborated that the act of doing research keeps lecturers intellectually curious and adaptive, and this mindset of *"lifelong learning"* sets a powerful example for students. In her view, research not only provides new content for teaching but also cultivates an academic attitude that resonates with learners.

Beyond improving teaching content and fostering engagement, some respondents also argued the role of research in enhancing a lecturer's professional reputation and credibility. Dr Quang, for example, described the connection:

> Publishing research in reputable research publications enhances a lecturer's reputation and credibility among students and the academic community. Contributing to the body of knowledge and then imparting this new knowledge to students is a source of pride for lecturers, earning them greater respect from their students.

His perspective highlights how research achievements not only enhance academic standing but also confer greater authority in the classroom. Mr Quang implied that when students see their lecturers contributing to knowledge production, they are more likely to respect and value their teaching. This reflects certain cultural values, particularly those aligned with Confucian traditions of respect for scholarly accomplishment. These cultural aspects will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent parts.

6.2.4. Teaching enhancing research

While the previous discussions illustrated how research can enrich teaching, the participants also emphasised the reverse dynamic – that teaching, in turn, plays a crucial role in informing and advancing research. Their responses suggest that the interaction between these two academic roles is not one-directional but mutually reinforcing. Specifically, the lecturers described various ways in which their teaching experiences inspire research ideas or provide valuable insights for academic inquiry.

First, teaching can, in certain circumstances, provide a platform for lecturers to draw on and disseminate new knowledge. When there is alignment between their research interests and teaching responsibilities, classroom discussions may help refine ideas, clarify complex concepts, and ensure that research findings are communicated more effectively. As Mr Quang observed: *"Teaching creates an environment for lecturers to disseminate new knowledge and insights"*. However, he also admitted that when lecturers' research interests do not align closely with the subjects they are assigned to teach, the opportunities for this form of knowledge exchange are less direct.

Second, teaching can sometimes facilitate the formation of collaborative research partnerships, particularly when lecturers work with postgraduate students or advanced undergraduates. Through these interactions, some lecturers reported that they were able to identify potential research collaborators and expand their academic networks, which support their scholarly activities. This benefit was illustrated by Mr Hung reflecting on his own experience:

> Engaging in teaching develops relationships with students, which can lead to collaborative research partnerships. In fact, I have established research groups that include many students, providing an essential human resource for research projects.

Mr Hung proudly shared that his research groups have brought together many talented and motivated students, and through studying and conducting research together, almost all of them have achieved excellent academic results as well as remarkable research accomplishments. Many of these students have subsequently earned prestigious study-abroad opportunities and scholarships, paving the way for promising futures. For Mr Hung, this is one of the greatest personal rewards of being a lecturer. He recounted these achievements with a tone of genuine pride and excitement.

Third, teaching can serve as an incentive for research motivation and help lecturers identify research gaps. Several participants observed that the dynamic nature of classroom interactions often prompts them to explore new areas of inquiry. For example, questions or critical reflections from students can challenge existing assumptions, revealing areas that require further investigation or refinement. Ms Quynh (Business Management, early-career academic with less than 5 years of academic experience) argued that her teaching experience has not only provided fresh material and ideas for her research but has also shaped her worldview and methodological approaches. She explained:

> I believe that the relationship between R&T is positive. For example, during my teaching, if students ask me about certain topics I am unfamiliar with, it inspires me to delve deeper into research and gain a better understanding. This motivation drives me to explore further. Moreover, there are occasions when students criticise certain aspects, which makes me feel like I have been shown the 'gaps' that I need to investigate further for research.

Her reflection illustrates how teaching in her field actively contributes to generating research ideas, refining conceptual frameworks, and strengthening her analytical lens as an early-career researcher. Similarly, Mr Hoang (another early-career academic with around 5 years of academic experience) shared that teaching can 'spark' new research directions, particularly when students' questions push him beyond his current expertise:

> Teaching sometimes stimulates research motivation. For instance, sometimes students ask questions about certain topics I have not explored in depth, which motivates me to investigate them further and conduct research on the subject.

He added that these moments of challenge encourage him to remain open-minded and innovative, ensuring his research work stays responsive to emerging ideas and technological

developments. These narratives from early-career lecturers highlight how teaching can stimulate curiosity and open up new avenues for research.

This perspective was also shared by more experienced academics, such as Dr Nam (Electrical Engineering, around 15 years of academic experience), who observed that: *"Students often open up new perspectives or identify research gaps I may not have noticed otherwise".* He reflected that, despite his extensive experience, classroom interactions remain a valuable source of fresh ideas and alternative viewpoints. Engaging with students' questions and interpretations helps broaden his research lens and prevents him from becoming overly entrenched in familiar patterns of thinking.

Furthermore, teaching encourages lecturers to engage in critical reflection on their research findings. Classroom interactions often create an environment where ideas are continuously questioned and refined. Students' critiques and alternative perspectives can challenge lecturers to reassess their assumptions and ensure their research remains rigorous and objective. Ms Phuong, for example, illustrated this reciprocal process:

> Students are also an effective channel for critique. Sometimes, I am convinced of a particular viewpoint based on my research, but when I teach, the questions and arguments students raise prompt me to reconsider and double-check my knowledge. Thus, debates with students enhance my research work.

She elaborated that these debates not only help validate her arguments but also reveal *"blind spots"* that she may have overlooked during the research process. These discussions serve as a triangulation measure that helps to strengthen the trustworthiness of her research findings. Mr Hung echoed this sentiment, noting: *"Teaching is like an opportunity to reflect on what I have researched, helping to reduce the subjectivity inherent in scientific research".* He further explained that the process of discussing and defending research findings in the classroom encourages him to adopt a more balanced and objective stance, thereby preventing his research from being overly influenced by personal biases.

Overall, the participants' narratives illustrate a strong belief in the reciprocal and mutually reinforcing relationship between R&T. On the one hand, engaging in research was perceived as a way to keep teaching content current, develop critical and analytical skills, enrich classroom materials with real-life insights, inspire students through the spirit of lifelong learning, and

enhance lecturers' academic credibility. On the other hand, teaching was seen as a source of research ideas and motivation, providing opportunities to identify gaps, refine arguments through student debates, and even foster collaborative networks that support scholarly work. These insights demonstrate the dynamic interplay between the two roles, suggesting that when effectively integrated, R&T can inform and strengthen each other in ways that extend beyond their particular functions.

In summary, the findings presented in this section 6.2 show that while a small number of participants expressed scepticism about the complementarity between R&T – primarily due to disciplinary differences and extensive teaching experience, the majority strongly believed in the mutual benefits of integrating these two academic roles. Research can enhance teaching, and teaching can, in turn, benefit the research process.

6.3. The tensions between R&T

Even though participants acknowledged the potential benefits of integrating R&T, they reported substantial challenges in adapting to these evolving role expectations. While these challenges represent practical difficulties, they often give rise to deeper tensions when they conflict with lecturers' established professional identities and longstanding perceptions of teaching as their primary responsibility. Drawing from the collected data, this section presents a detailed examination of these tensions, highlighting the dynamic between lecturer beliefs, academic identity, external constraints, and their responses to the changes.

The section is organised into three main parts. First, it examines the entrenched dominance of teaching in lecturers' professional identity and how this affects their engagement with research. Second, it explores the multifaceted difficulties participants face in adapting to research-oriented changes, including scepticism, ambiguity in role expectations, and limitations in research capacity and institutional support. Finally, it analyses how lecturers respond to these tensions, highlighting a spectrum of attitudes and behaviours ranging from open resistance to more subtle forms of reluctance and compliance. These findings demonstrate that the shift towards research-oriented identities in Vietnamese universities is neither straightforward nor universally accepted.

6.3.1. The entrenched primacy of teaching and its implications for lecturers' identities

The data indicate that for many participants, teaching has traditionally been regarded as their primary role, deeply embedded in educational culture and institutional practices. They frequently attributed this emphasis to historical traditions, linguistic associations, and societal expectations, which they felt had shaped their professional identity and continued to influence their engagement with other responsibilities, including research.

A prominent subtheme emerging from the interviews is the belief that teaching constitutes the fundamental function of a university. Many respondents stated that teaching is the core purpose of HEIs, rooted in the historical and traditional foundations of universities. For instance, Mr Nam articulated this perspective clearly:

> The primary function remains teaching, which is the *'root'* of a university. When teaching is not done well, please do not talk about research function […] Between the two, in my opinion, the priority must always be given to teaching […] The primary responsibility of a lecturer is to excel in teaching first and foremost.

Mr Nam's reflections suggest that teaching is often perceived as the moral and institutional *"backbone"* of Vietnamese universities. His metaphor of teaching as the *"root"* implies that research may be considered secondary, or at least contingent, on the quality of teaching. This viewpoint appears to reinforce the notion that teaching remains central to many lecturers' sense of responsibility and professional worth.

Several other participants shared a similar view, indicating that teaching has long been considered a cornerstone of university operations. For instance, Ms Vy referred to this historical emphasis, commenting:

> Teaching is deeply rooted in tradition. This function has been around for ages. It is like a fundamental activity in universities, isn't it? On the other hand, I think the research function has recently gained more attention.

These reflections reinforce the long-standing perception that teaching has formed the historical and institutional foundation of Vietnamese universities, with research seen as a more recent or less central focus.

In addition to historical justifications, some interviewees also pointed to the professional designation of *'lecturer'* as evidence of the primacy of teaching. Ms Phuong, for example, reflected on the terminology used to describe university academics:

> I think teaching is still the core because everyone calls us *'lecturers' (in Vietnamese, 'lecturer' is translated as 'giảng viên', where 'viên' refers to people, 'giảng' means teaching, so 'giảng viên' implies someone who teaches)*. Regarding the function of universities, there is a book titled *"The Uses of the University",* and my viewpoint is similar to the perspective presented in that book, which is that universities should first and foremost be places to disseminate knowledge. Secondly, they should also be places to generate new ideas, innovate, and create new knowledge.

Ms Phuong's reflections encapsulate the influence of language, professional designation, and philosophical views on the university's purpose. By referring to the Vietnamese term "*giảng viên"*, she draws attention to how the very title of *"lecturer"* positions teaching as the defining element of an academic career. This linguistic framing not only shapes self-perception, emphasising the identity of lecturers as *'those who teach',* but also reinforces public expectations of teaching as the central duty of university staff. Moreover, her reference to Clark Kerr's book *The Uses of the University*, and her assertion that universities should prioritise the "*dissemination of knowledge"* before pursuing research or innovation, further highlights a traditional, teaching-centred conception of the university's function. While she acknowledges the importance of generating new ideas and advancing knowledge, these are presented as secondary to the foundational task of HE.

These perspectives suggest that the primacy of teaching is not only historically and institutionally grounded but also culturally encoded in how academic identities are named and understood. Several other participants echoed such viewpoints. For example, Ms Hoa also reflected that teaching is a defining marker of academic identity:

> Being a lecturer implies an inherent duty to teach. Without teaching, one cannot be considered a lecturer. The primary role of a lecturer is to transfer knowledge to students.

Her statement emphasises the moral and professional weight attached to teaching, presenting it as both an obligation and a core responsibility that legitimises the academic identity and role. While others, such as Ms Vy, similarly pointed to the etymology of the term *'lecturer'* as evidence of this expectation, she claimed: *"The term 'lecturer' is derived from 'lecture',*

indicating that teaching is the primary role". These linguistic associations reinforce the identity of lecturers as teachers first and foremost, shaping both self-perception and societal expectations.

In addition to historical traditions and linguistic associations, the interview data suggest that cultural influences, particularly those associated with Confucian legacies, are perceived by some lecturers as deeply shaping how they understand their identities and academic roles. Mr Quang (with over 40 years of teaching academic experience), who began his career under the educational model heavily influenced by the Soviet system, offered a reflection that is especially telling. His longstanding immersion in a tradition that places the teacher at the centre of moral and intellectual life provides valuable insights into how Confucian values continue to inform academic identities. He observed:

> For my generation, we have always held the belief that good teaching remains a top priority. No matter what is said, the teacher remains the central figure and the key role in the classroom. Every activity in the classroom, including interactions between students and the teacher, revolves around the teacher […] So, being a teacher means prioritising being a good teacher first and foremost.

Mr Quang spoke with a tone of unmistakable pride, as though reflecting on a vocation he has dedicated nearly half a century to. His reflections illustrate how Confucian-influenced values, coupled with the legacy of centralised and teacher-centric models of education, shape a perception of lecturers as authoritative figures who carry both moral and academic responsibility. His statement also indicates the enduring belief that teaching excellence is not only a professional requirement but also a marker of personal virtue and societal respect. This cultural framing is further evident in his assertion:

> The designation *'lecturer'* commands respect from students and society […] Lecturers are respected professionals in society and should exhibit appropriate behaviours and attitudes.

Again, his voice carried pride and a sense of honour in upholding the dignity and moral expectations associated with being a lecturer. Such values reinforce the primacy of teaching in both professional identity and societal expectations. This makes the shift towards RI models possibly complicated for senior academics whose identities have long been shaped by these traditions.

These cultural and societal expectations also intersect with how lecturers have been trained and socialised into their academic roles. Ms Phuong, for instance, reflected on how teaching was emphasised during the formative stages of her career:

> In our generation, we were first trained to be teachers. That was our main job. Research was not something we were extensively trained in, nor was it something we were expected to prioritise.

Ms Phuong's perspective is particularly insightful given her extensive background. Before embarking on her university career, she underwent years of structured and formal preparation to become a university lecturer, with a strong focus on pedagogy and classroom delivery. Her reference to *"our generation"* implies how, for academics like her, the professional pathway was designed primarily to produce competent teachers, with research regarded as an additional activity. She further explained that her own research skills and capacities were mainly developed through years of on-the-job experience rather than through initial training. This account highlights how a teaching-first orientation, shaped by both generational training practices and institutional expectations, continues to influence how senior lecturers perceive research as an additional responsibility rather than a core component of their academic identities.

This teaching-first orientation, as reflected in the narratives of lecturers like Ms Phuong, has significant implications for how they respond to the rising emphasis on research. While some participants acknowledge the growing significance of research in VHE, many expressed unease about shifting expectations in a system where teaching has long been the dominant role. This shift often creates tensions between institutional demands for research and lecturers' enduring sense of purpose as educators. As Mr Quang captured this transition succinctly: *"Whereas research was previously only encouraged, it has now become a mandatory task"*. His observation further highlights the perceived rupture between past and present priorities. That is, teaching was once the unquestioned foundation of a lecturer's work; research is now imposed as an essential performance metric, often clashing with established professional identities.

These changing expectations, as remarked by participants like Mr Quang, have not been experienced uniformly across generations or career stages. Mr Hung (Education, 15 years of academic experience and a policymaker involved in HE reform) offered a particularly revealing

reflection on how lecturers from different generations had responded to the increasing emphasis on the research dimension:

> In the face of the wave of changes, we can see there are varied responses. Firstly, the '*old team'* are conservative, choosing firmly not to change, remaining static, yet still clinging to power and refusing to yield the *'playing field'* to the younger generation. Of course, among them, some accept the *'new game'*. They have changed along with the younger ones, but they are few and far between, only a minority […]. These changes are more suitable for the younger generation, more beneficial and offer more opportunities to them, as well as to those lecturers who have had the opportunity to be trained abroad.

When asked to clarify, he explained that the *"old team"* refers to senior lecturers aged roughly 45–50 and above, while the *"young team"* includes those younger than 45. Mr Hung's reflection implies a generational divide in how research-oriented expectations are perceived and enacted. He further argued that many senior lecturers, whose professional identities were formed under a teaching-dominant system, either resist or struggle to adapt to new expectations. The *"old team"*, in his words, are not only hesitant to change but also seen as holding onto positions of influence, which can steer or even hinder the shift towards an emerging research-oriented culture. Conversely, *"young team"*, or those who have had exposure to international academic environments, are perceived as more agile and better equipped to embrace these changes. This is partly due to their training, which often integrates research competencies from the outset, and partly because they see research as a pathway to career advancement and global engagement.

Mr Hung's narratives further indicate a tension that is not simply about age or capability, but has more implications about identity and cultural inertia. For those who have long viewed teaching as their primary and most valued role, the increasing emphasis on research feels misaligned with their established professional identities and accumulated expertise. These generational contrasts, combined with tensions between traditional teaching identities and emerging research demands, foreshadow the diverse responses from academic staff that will be explored further in the subsequent sections.

In summary, the findings suggest that teaching has long been considered the primary responsibility of university lecturers, a perspective shaped by historical traditions, linguistic associations, and enduring cultural and societal expectations. For many participants, this belief is deeply embedded in their professional identity and continues to influence how they approach

academic work. While some acknowledge the increasing emphasis on research within VHE, several, particularly those from the *"old team"*, seem hesitant to adapt to these institutional changes. These challenges, further elaborated in the following sections, often give rise to tensions when traditional teaching identities intersect with emerging research-oriented demands.

6.3.2. Difficulties in adapting to the emerging emphasis on research in (re)shaping academic identities

The entrenched primacy of teaching has impacted lecturers' professional identity and reinforced their tendency to prioritise teaching over other academic responsibilities. However, as universities in Vietnam increasingly emphasise the research dimension, lecturers are expected to integrate research more substantially into their academic profession. The interview data reveal other dimensions of difficulties that have challenged and hindered this integration and adaptation, which will be presented in this section.

First, many participants expressed scepticism about transitioning to RI models, questioning their relevance and feasibility in their contexts. This scepticism was often compounded by ambiguity and concerns regarding research-related role expectations, which made it difficult for lecturers to define their academic responsibilities clearly. Second, a considerable number of respondents acknowledged their limited research capacity, largely due to a lack of institutional support, which restricted their ability to meet the growing demands of academia. These difficulties reinforced and deepened the broader tensions between the longstanding teaching-first identity and the emerging research expectations.

a. Scepticism towards transitioning to RI university models

As Vietnamese universities increasingly prioritise research, lecturers are required to engage more actively in research activities, sometimes without sufficient preparation or clear guidance. A recurring theme in the interviews was a sense of scepticism about the rationale and direction of this shift. Several participants questioned whether the HE governance reforms promoting RI models genuinely aimed to enhance academic quality and scholarly development, or whether they were primarily driven by institutional ambitions, such as improving university rankings and attracting financial resources. This scepticism, in turn, contributed to hesitation in fully

embracing research-related expectations, as many lecturers expressed uncertainty about the long-term vision and practical implications of these reforms.

The interview data revealed persistent concerns among participants regarding the necessity and underlying motives of shifting towards an RI model. While some acknowledged the growing importance of research for institutional visibility, many expressed doubts about whether this strategic direction was genuinely aligned with academic development or primarily driven by *"pragmatic"* considerations. For instance, Mr Hoang expressed this concern, pointing to what he perceived as performance-driven motives:

> In my opinion, it may be somewhat pragmatic, aiming to improve rankings on university league tables to attract more students and increase enrollment, consequently augmenting the university's financial resources.

His opinion represents a widespread perception among early-career lecturers (a similar viewpoint was also shared by Ms Quynh, Mr Bao, and Ms Thi) that research is being promoted less for its intrinsic academic value and more as a tool for institutional branding and financial gain. For lecturers like Mr Hoang, this raises questions about whether such priorities genuinely benefit teaching and learning, or simply serve the competitive ambitions of universities.

Similarly, Mr Hung, a scholar specialised in Education with 15 years of experience and extensive involvement in HE policymaking, interpreted these strategic shifts as largely reputation-driven, with a strong emphasis on financial and institutional gains. He argued:

> Because they want to reposition the university's 'name' and enhance its reputation […] aiming at boosting profits from scientific research collaborations [...] Therefore, in the end, it seems that the primary goal is still to bring benefits and promote the research function, while potentially undervaluing the teaching one.

Mr Hung's opinion raised a deeper concern among more experienced academics: that the emphasis on research may come at the expense of teaching, which has traditionally been regarded as the cornerstone of VHE. His dual perspective, as both an academic and a policymaker, lends weight to this critique. It implies that institutional reforms risk prioritising measurable outputs, such as research funding and rankings, over the original mission of modern universities.

These reflections illustrate a broader scepticism that the push towards an RI model is, at least in part, motivated by competitive positioning and financial imperatives, rather than by a balanced vision of academic quality.

In addition to concerns about institutional motivations, some lecturers also doubted the sustainability of these policies. They remained cautious about fully committing to the new research-oriented agenda, fearing that the emphasis on research might be temporary. Ms Phuong expressed this uncertainty:

> To be honest, I am still waiting to see whether this is truly a long-term strategy. If it is just a temporary trend aimed at improving rankings or securing more funding, then I do not want to invest too heavily in it. I am unsure whether focusing on research will genuinely benefit my career development or if, in the end, we will revert to prioritising teaching as before.

Her narrative implies a sense of strategic hesitation among lecturers who have spent much of their careers in teaching-focused environments. Rather than embracing the research agenda enthusiastically, Ms Phuong's stance reflects a careful weighing of risks and benefits. She questions whether this institutional shift represents a genuine long-term vision or merely a passing trend driven by external pressures, such as rankings and funding. This uncertainty, in turn, undermines lecturers' willingness to invest time and energy in developing research skills or pursuing research projects that may not be valued in the long run.

Another source of scepticism among the informants was the ambiguity surrounding what it truly meant for a university to be *'research-intensive'*. For some lecturers, the term remained abstract and difficult to grasp, leading to confusion about how it should be interpreted and realised in practice. Some viewed the concept as vague and open to multiple interpretations, while others worried that it might foster an undue emphasis on research at the expense of teaching.

For example, Mr Hoang, a young lecturer who had only recently been introduced to the notion of a *'RI university'*, acknowledged his uncertainty:

> Currently, the term *'RI university'* also tends to confuse and leave me feeling somewhat uncertain […] Consequently, I often interpret it more based on my experience, although I am unsure if my understanding aligns with the original meaning.

He elaborated how the absence of a clear and shared understanding of this concept can leave lecturers, particularly early-career academics like him, feeling disoriented. Without concrete guidelines or a common institutional definition, the term 'research-intensive' risks being perceived as a *"catch-all label",* which can deepen concerns about whether research priorities are overtaking the teaching mission of universities.

This sense of ambiguity extended beyond the term 'RI university' to the broader classification of HEIs in Vietnam. Mr Bao, also an early-career lecturer, pointed out:

> I seriously think the term *'university'* in Vietnam is quite ambiguous at the moment, as there are many similar-sounding concepts, such as universities, higher education institutions, universities within universities, national universities, and regional universities... *(in Vietnamese, they are "đại học", "trường đại học", "trường đại học thuộc đại học", "đại học quốc gia", "đại học vùng", etc);* and now, even the emerging concept of '*RI universities'*. It is very vague! I am unclear about how these terms differ from one another.

His comments reveal how the multiplicity of institutional terms and classifications, sometimes with overlapping or unclear distinctions, compounds the uncertainty about what it truly means for a university to be RI. For early-career lecturers like Mr Bao and Mr Hoang, this complexity possibly creates confusion about the strategic directions and priorities of their institutions.

This uncertainty was not limited to early-career lecturers. Several participants with substantial academic experience also indicated scepticism about what constitutes a RI university. Many tended to interpret the term *"straightforwardly",* mainly associating it with an increasing focus on research productivity and the reallocation of resources to research. For instance, Ms Thi observed:

> This emerging approach can be interpreted as the assumption that universities have historically excelled in teaching, hence the need to allocate greater resources towards advancing research excellence.

She further clarified that the push towards RI models as a '*form of corrective action'* – an attempt to *"balance the scales"* by compensating for a historical overemphasis on teaching. Similarly, Ms Vy noted: *"Universities committed to an RI direction tend to emphasise research activities more, such as setting working hours standards or allocating financial resources"*. Her comment reflects a *"pragmatic"* understanding of 'research-intensive' as primarily operational: research becomes prioritised through policies, workload standards, and funding allocations,

rather than through a clear redefinition of the university's mission. These perspectives reveal that scepticism is both conceptual and practical, as lecturers question not only the motives but also the operational meaning of RI directions.

For some respondents, the emphasis on research raised concerns about whether this shift might inadvertently devalue teaching, as noted in Mr Hung's opinion presented earlier. Ms Nhi, with over 20 years of academic experience and an international academic background, found the term 'RI university' particularly problematic, as she believed it risked creating an imbalanced perception of university functions. She criticised:

> Let me be frank: I find the term *RI university* somewhat awkward. I apologise for the bluntness. My perspective differs from that of the majority [of my colleagues]. I believe that any university, by its nature, must fulfil both R&T functions. It is rare to find a university that is solely focused on teaching without also conducting research in the current time, right?

This opinion indicates Ms Nhi's conviction that R&T are fundamentally interconnected and cannot be separated without undermining the modern university's holistic mission. By emphasising that *"any university, by its nature, must fulfil both R&T functions",* she implicitly criticises what she perceives as the division or prioritisation of one function over the other. Her remark also reflects the voice of an experienced academic who has witnessed multiple policy shifts over the course of more than two decades. She further cautioned that the perceived overemphasis on research might be a reactive response to global pressures (e.g., rankings, funding, international recognition) rather than a sustainable evolution of the academic identity. This insight reveals her concern that the intrinsic values of teaching, which have historically defined Vietnamese academia, risk being overshadowed by externally imposed metrics of research performance. She elaborated on her concerns regarding the potential misinterpretation of the term:

> Of course, I can understand that an *RI university* implies a strong emphasis on research, but it does not mean that the importance of teaching is diminished. Rather, it should be understood that advancing research aims to contribute to the whole society while concurrently enhancing the university's teaching function. Therefore, the term *RI university* here can easily lead to misunderstanding, suggesting a bias towards research over teaching. That is why I find it "awkward" […] To sum up, both functions in an RI university should complement and enhance each other rather than solely prioritising research at the expense of teaching.

In her elaboration, Ms Nhi carefully distinguishes between the legitimate need to strengthen research and the danger of allowing it to dominate the academic profession. Her statement that research should *"concurrently enhance the university's teaching function"* reinforces her belief that research is not an end in itself, but a means to enrich teaching, knowledge creation, and societal impact. By labelling the term 'RI university' as *"awkward",* she draws attention to the language of reform itself, implying that the terminology used by policymakers might inadvertently signal a hierarchy of functions – where research is elevated and teaching is marginalised. This criticism suggests that language is not neutral. Instead, it may shape perceptions and priorities, potentially influencing how lecturers define their professional identities and areas of emphasis.

Ms Nhi's narratives, therefore, indicate a critical perspective on the consequences of policy language and institutional emphasis. Her insistence on the *"natural"* complementarity of R&T aligns with a broader argument that the success of an RI model should not come at the cost of diminishing teaching quality. Her opinions also resonate with concerns voiced by several other participants. Her stance, as a senior academic with over 20 years of academic experience, carries particular weight because it bridges both worlds: she is deeply engaged in research, yet equally committed to facilitating teaching as a central pillar of her academic identity. While she acknowledged the importance of strengthening research, she reemphasised that R&T should be mutually reinforcing rather than positioned in competition. Her perspectives reflect a broader sentiment among lecturers who were wary of changes that might shift the institutional balance too heavily in favour of research at the expense of teaching quality.

Overall, the scepticism expressed by the interviewees implies a potential lack of alignment between policy discourse and academic realities. While they acknowledged the importance of research for institutional development, they remained cautious about the motivations, sustainability, and clarity of this shift. These concerns are closely related to another theme of challenges raised in the interviews: the ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding evolving research role expectations, which are explored in the following section.

b. Ambiguities, inconsistencies and concerns regarding the evolving research role expectations

The interview data indicate that another source of tensions for lecturers stems from ambiguities, particularly the lack of clearly articulated research expectations from their institutions. While the shift towards a more RI university model was frequently emphasised at the policy level, many participants found the concept of an *'RI university model'* itself to be vaguely defined, leaving its practical implications for their academic identities uncertain.

Specifically, several respondents argued that the lack of a coherent institutional framework left lecturers unsure about what was specifically expected of them as researchers. Mr Hung expressed this confusion:

> I know research is important, but no one has clearly explained what makes a 'good researcher' in our institution. Are we supposed to prioritise quantity, quality, and impact? It is all very confusing.

Mr Hung's concerns represent a shared opinion among participants: without clear criteria or institutional guidance, lecturers are left to navigate their research responsibilities in a state of uncertainty. This lack of clarity not only intensifies tensions but also undermines lecturers' confidence in aligning their efforts with institutional priorities.

The informants further outlined inconsistencies in institutional policies, leadership messages, and practical support. While their universities frequently underscored the importance of research productivity, the mechanisms and measures to help lecturers achieve these targets were often seen as inadequate. Some noted that although they were encouraged to conduct more research, their workloads remained heavily teaching-focused, with limited flexibility to accommodate research commitments. For example, Ms Hoa remarked:

> We are constantly told that research is now mandatory, but there seems to be no real support. Teaching remains the top priority, and nothing changes to accommodate research. They want us to publish more, but when we ask for research funding or workload adjustments, there is little concrete support. We are expected to perform well under increased pressure, yet we lack the necessary resources.

Her reflection captures the contradiction between institutional demands and the realities of lecturers' workloads. Ms Hoa highlighted a key tension: while research is rhetorically prioritised, teaching continues to dominate institutional structures, leaving little flexibility for research. Her experience suggests that calls for research excellence risk being perceived as symbolic or performative when they are not accompanied by tangible support. This dissonance can dampen lecturers' motivation and create a sense of unfairness, as they are expected to meet increasing demands without appropriate resources to do so.

Similarly, Ms Nhi, who also serves as the director of a research centre at her university, raised similar concerns. Working in the field of Biotechnology, which is currently in high demand and requires intensive scientific research, she acknowledges the importance of building a *"research-driven culture"*. From her dual perspective as both an academic and a manager, and with an international academic background, she recognises the institutional push towards research excellence, but also the challenges of creating the enabling conditions for such a culture. She remarked with a tone of both concern and frustration:

> The university has declared a strong ambition to promote a 'research-driven culture', yet funding for research activities is extremely limited […] It feels like we are being asked to do things without the necessary means to achieve them.

Her reflection conveys the tensions of a senior lecturer who not only participates in research but also carries the responsibility of fostering an institutional culture that values scientific inquiry. While she supports the goal of enhancing research, her words caution the challenges of realising and sustaining this ambition in the absence of adequate support. Her tone during the interview revealed a mixture of professional commitment and visible frustration. These insights suggest that even well-positioned academics struggle to bridge the gap between institutional aspirations and practical realities.

The stories from lecturers like Ms Hoa and Ms Nhi highlight a perception that institutional policies and discourses often set ambitious goals but seemingly fail to provide the enabling conditions for success. This perceived disconnect fosters scepticism towards institutional reforms and intensifies tensions between teaching responsibilities and research demands, further complicating lecturers' efforts to adapt to evolving expectations.

Some participants further pointed out the absence of a practical, coherent and consistent framework for defining research expectations, particularly regarding the evaluation of research output. They reported difficulties in understanding how their research contributions would be assessed or what precisely constituted research excellence within their institutional settings. For example, Ms Hoa complained that at her university, the evaluation process was not only *"rigid"* but also often disconnected from the realities of balancing R&T. She commented: *"The research evaluation criteria are rigid and not always applicable to our specific R&T context".*

She further pointed out a wider challenge that evaluation mechanisms that prioritise formal metrics often fail to account for the complex interplay between teaching responsibilities and research productivity. For lecturers like Ms Hoa, this rigidity creates a sense of misalignment between what is measured and what is realistically achievable, particularly in environments where teaching still dominates the workload. She also emphasised that, without flexible and context-sensitive criteria, the ambition to pursue research excellence risks being perceived as unfair or unrealistic, further discouraging lecturers from fully engaging with research activities.

These concerns revealed ongoing uncertainties about how lecturers' research contributions were valued within their institutional settings. As a result, some informants admitted that they tended to interpret the research excellence in overly simplified terms, assuming that it was primarily about publishing more papers or securing funding. However, such interpretations risked overlooking the broader systemic changes underway, leading to further confusion about their evolving academic identities and roles. For instance, Ms Huong wondered:

> The emphasis is now always on producing outputs, such as papers, funding, and impact factors. However, what does that mean for us as academics? How do we develop as researchers? These things seem left vague.

Her questions reflect a deeper concern that research expectations are sometimes framed narrowly in terms of quantifiable outputs, while less attention is paid to building lecturers' long-term research capacity or academic development. This narrow framing contributes to a sense that research is a performance requirement rather than a process of scholarly growth. Ms Huong further pointed out that institutional policies varied significantly across universities, resulting in discrepancies in how R&T workloads were structured. This variation across institutions contributed to further confusion about how to balance research responsibilities with teaching demands. She noted that while some universities offered workload adjustments for research-

active lecturers, others maintained rigid publication targets without carefully considering workload distribution:

> Some universities now have a mechanism in place to facilitate the conversion of standard R&T hours into a more flexible format. Even lecturers holding managerial or administrative positions are also given reduced R&T hours. For instance, the standard teaching hour is typically 600 hours; however, due to my managerial role, it has been reduced to 450 hours. Nevertheless, some universities do not allow the conversion of standard teaching hours to meet research quotas. They still require lecturers to achieve the research publication target of one international publication or two domestic publications, for example.

Her observation illustrates how the lack of a consistent and transparent framework contributes to a chaotic 'playing field', where expectations and support differ widely depending on each institution. For lecturers like Ms Huong, these complexities further intensify the tensions in (re)shaping academic identities, as they are left to navigate contrasting requirements and limited guidance on how to (re)allocate their resources.

These narratives indicate a structural issue that the absence of a unified or/and context-sensitive framework for defining and supporting research roles leaves lecturers facing increased uncertainty in adapting to the evolving academic landscape. This added another layer of ambiguity for lecturers, making it difficult for them to navigate their evolving academic responsibilities.

In summary, the findings reveal that ambiguities surrounding research expectations remain significant barriers for lecturers in adapting to new academic demands, thereby reinforcing the tensions between their R&T roles. These ambiguities manifest in multiple aspects, including unclear definitions of what constitutes research excellence, inconsistencies between policy discourse and practical support, and in evaluation criteria. Such conditions were further complicated by variations across universities, which created additional confusion and a sense of inequity among lecturers.

For many participants, these factors reinforced the long-standing primacy of teaching within their professional identities. When faced with vague or conflicting expectations, some lecturers chose to maintain focus on teaching, which they viewed as the more clearly defined and

manageable part of their work. As Ms Lien admitted: *"In the end, it is easier to focus on teaching because at least we know exactly what is expected of us".*

Therefore, the ambiguity issues not only affect lecturers' willingness and ability to engage in evolving research demands but also sustain the dominance of teaching in their academic identities and practices. Without clearer guidance, better support structures, and fairer evaluation systems, lecturers may continue to struggle in adapting to the growing emphasis on the research dimension, thus perpetuating the tensions between the two.

c. Constraints in developing research competencies and institutional capacity

The transition towards a more research-oriented academic environment has not only introduced new expectations for lecturers but also required them to prepare and enhance their corresponding research-related competencies. However, the findings reveal that many participants face considerable challenges in meeting these evolving demands, arising from both individual capacity constraints and institutional barriers. In other words, the push for research productivity encounters practical obstacles that limit lecturers' capability to adapt effectively.

One of the key challenges is that not all lecturers possess the skills or experience required to meet the increasingly rigorous research requirements. As a demonstration, for non-native English speakers, language proficiency emerged as a significant barrier to engaging in international research and publication. Ms Vy candidly shared:

> Actually, publishing research articles in domestic journals is not a problem for me. However, international publications often require proficiency in foreign languages, especially English, which can be a barrier. For instance, conducting a literature review and reading dozens of English documents is tiring; simply reading them leaves me feeling exhausted. Generally, when it is not your mother tongue, it always requires more effort.

Ms Vy's experiences demonstrate how language challenges not only add time and cognitive strain to research tasks but also reduce lecturers' confidence in aiming for international journals, which are often regarded as the benchmark of research excellence. This further represents a significant issue faced by many participants, who felt that linguistic limitations hindered their ability to access global scholarly conversations and, by extension, their opportunities for academic recognition.

Additionally, many lecturers face challenges due to limited formal training in research-related skills, particularly research methodology. While the degree of importance placed on formal methods may vary across disciplines (e.g., between fields such as engineering and educational studies), participants highlighted this as a critical factor affecting their ability to adapt to evolving research expectations. For example, Ms Phuong (Education) observed:

> Not every lecturer is well-prepared and capable of conducting research. They may have the motivation, but when they lack the necessary research skills, they struggle significantly. In contrast, those who are skilled can work very efficiently [...] Sometimes, they understand the benefits of doing research but can also feel helpless.

This reflection captures a recurring theme among many participants, particularly among lecturers who were trained in previous systems that traditionally emphasised teaching. While motivation and awareness of research benefits may exist, the absence of structured training leaves many feeling inadequately prepared for research tasks. Ms Phuong's expression of *"helpless"* conveys a sense of disempowerment. It further implies that even experienced academics may feel excluded from the *"research game"* when lacking the increasingly demanded research capacities. Her narratives imply a broader issue among the interviewees that research has historically been underemphasised in academic training, meaning that many lecturers must develop these competencies later in their careers, often through trial and error rather than formal preparation.

As another demonstration, Mr Quang emphasised that the limited prior training and experience in research pose significant challenges, especially for senior lecturers whose formative academic years placed far less emphasis on research competencies. He expressed concerns that many lecturers had not received systematic training in research capacity, making it difficult for them to adapt to the emerging research requirements. He observed:

> Our generation, first and foremost, did not prioritise learning English, which has limited our opportunities. Second, our lack of thorough and systematic training in research methodology made it very challenging to write an international publication. The younger generation of lecturers who study abroad will differ from our generation, which studied domestically, in terms of language proficiency and research methodology.

Mr Quang's account underscores the generational gap in research preparedness. For his generation, foreign language skills, particularly English – the lingua franca of academic

publishing, were neither prioritised nor systematically taught. This linguistic limitation, combined with the lack of formal research capacity training, means that senior lecturers like Mr Quang are at a structural disadvantage compared to younger colleagues who have benefited from international study or exposure to global research standards. He further shared that the current research environment may inadvertently marginalise older lecturers, whose intellectual capital is rooted in teaching expertise rather than research proficiency. Mr Quang elaborated on the strain of adapting to these increased research expectations:

> This research role is really challenging today. We have to try to adapt and maintain balance [with other roles], although it is incredibly exhausting! Many lecturers are very apprehensive because it is so draining and stressful! There are very stringent standards to meet. It is both exhausting and time-consuming, and it can even negatively impact our fundamental teaching role.

His statement reveals a deep sense of frustration and fatigue that goes beyond skill gaps. For lecturers like Mr Quang, the process of balancing new research demands with their core teaching duties feels overwhelming and, at times, counterproductive. The repeated emphasis on exhaustion reflects a growing perception that research requirements are being imposed without adequate consideration for the realities of the workload. His viewpoint also reinforces the notion that as research expectations intensify, there is a real risk that teaching quality, which has traditionally been considered the cornerstone of academic identity, may suffer.

Moreover, throughout his interview, Mr Quang frequently used the pronoun "*we"* rather than *"I",* often referring to phrases such as *"people like us"* and *"our generation".* When asked about this, he explained that through personal observation and discussions with his colleagues, he noticed that they share similar experiences and viewpoints. In particular, lecturers like Mr Quang, who have similar backgrounds in terms of age and years of experience, were educated and socialised into HE systems heavily influenced by the socialist bloc, particularly the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. He emphasised these academic backgrounds, believing that they play an important role in why his generation finds it more difficult to adapt to the ongoing changes in Vietnamese universities.

For instance, he explained that the research standards in Eastern Europe differ significantly from the internationally accepted standards that are currently in place. To meet current scientific research requirements, he felt compelled to adopt international standards as a benchmark, which

is both *"challenging and time-consuming"*. He described how this process forces him to learn new standards and adjust his long-standing academic habits, resulting in a greater time commitment to research – sometimes at the expense of teaching, and thereby creating an imbalance between his R&T responsibilities.

Mr Quang's narratives reveal how historical academic traditions and systemic legacies continue to shape the present challenges faced by senior lecturers. His emphasis on *"our generation"* suggests that these challenges might not be individual shortcomings but rather collective experiences rooted in how their professional identities were formed. The transition from Soviet-style academic models to a globalised research-oriented framework requires not only skill acquisition but also a shift in mindset. This shift, however, is far from straightforward for those whose careers have been built on different academic priorities and evaluation criteria.

Mr Hung shared similar observations, highlighting generational differences in research competencies shaped by academic background and prior exposure to distinct research systems. He claimed that many lecturers trained under the Soviet-influenced HE system struggle to adapt to current international research standards. In contrast, younger lecturers with international education and exposure tend to be more proficient in language and research methodology than their domestically trained counterparts. He further elaborated:

> Young lecturers who have studied abroad and received training in developed countries such as the US or Western Europe are already familiar with conducting research according to international standards […] When they return to lectures at universities in Vietnam, they may encounter fewer difficulties in adapting to the institutions' increasing research demands. In the current changing landscape, this has become one of their notable advantages over their colleagues.

Mr Hung's comments reinforce the perception that international exposure provides the *"young team"* (by his words) with distinct advantages in adapting to research-oriented reforms. Being trained in Western environments may equip lecturers with the research competencies, language proficiency, methodological skills, and academic networks that are highly valued in today's global research environment. By contrast, lecturers who were trained domestically under the Soviet-influenced model may find themselves at a structural disadvantage, as their professional capital is more aligned with teaching than research. This observation also hints at a growing divide between generations of lecturers, where differences in training and academic orientation translate into unequal opportunities for career progression in a system that increasingly rewards

research output. The *"international standards"* that Mr Hung refers to have become a kind of benchmark for academic credibility, but they also represent a moving target that not all lecturers are equally prepared to meet.

Beyond the limitations of individual competencies, institutional challenges further hinder lecturers' ability to meet the growing demands of research. However, the nature and severity of these challenges may vary across different disciplines. While some fields, such as social sciences and humanities, may require fewer physical resources, areas like Computer Science, Engineering, or the Biotechnology Sciences often depend heavily on access to advanced equipment, laboratories, and specialised facilities. Several participants, particularly from STEM fields, raised concerns about the limited availability of research infrastructure and facilities. For example, Mr Hoang (Computer Science) remarked: *"Infrastructure and facilities are significant barriers in my field. Sometimes, we lack the necessary equipment for our research projects".*

Mr Hoang's comment mentions the discipline-specific challenges that lecturers in technical and experimental fields face when research requires substantial material resources. He further complained that the absence of necessary equipment not only delays project implementation but also limits the ability to compete for high-impact publications or grants, where sophisticated tools and facilities are often prerequisites for success.

Similarly, access to research materials remains a pressing concern, as many universities in Vietnam face difficulties in providing comprehensive academic databases and reliable support services. Although some institutions have made efforts to upgrade their library systems, the usability and accessibility of these resources remain inconsistent. Ms Thoa (Tourism, around 15 years of academic experience) shared her experience:

> Currently, the quality of the library system at my university is among the top in Vietnam, offering a wide range of resources. However, we often encounter difficulties accessing accounts. Moreover, when we face issues, there is no one to assist us. Since working here, I have never been able to use the library resources!

Her narrative highlights that even when physical infrastructure or online subscriptions are available, inadequate user support and cumbersome access procedures can render these

resources ineffective. For lecturers like Ms Thoa, the frustration lies not in the absence of materials but in the lack of technical or administrative assistance to utilise them. Ms Nhi (Biological Sciences) echoed this sentiment, pointing to the broader challenge of gaining access to high-quality international research databases:

> In Vietnam, we lecturers face the issue of accessing online materials for academic work, especially publications and documents from major and reputable international databases. This support is still minimal.

She further cautioned that without access to cutting-edge scholarship and reliable international publications, lecturers risk being excluded from global academic conversations. They may find it more challenging to produce research that meets international standards. In a similar vein, Mr Bao (Computer Science) emphasised how limited access to up-to-date research materials and academic networks further constrains research competencies. He pointed out that the adequacy of library resources varies significantly across disciplines:

> The library at my university does allow access to databases from many reputable publishers. Whether this is sufficient or not depends on the field. Some areas might be considered adequately served, but others are not. Therefore, we often have to spend our own money to purchase the necessary materials. Specifically, in my field, we frequently need to search for research resources in external sources outside the university.

Mr Bao's sharing further draws attention to the financial burden placed on lecturers, who often resort to personal expenses to acquire necessary research materials. His narrative also reinforces the idea that disparities in resource availability between disciplines create unequal opportunities for research productivity. The insights from these participants reveal that research expectations are rising faster than the institutions' capacity to provide the necessary infrastructural support.

Funding for research is another critical limitation highlighted by the interviewees. The shift towards an RI model has not only increased the pressure on lecturers to secure grants and publish in high-impact journals, but has also exposed the gap between institutional expectations and financial realities. However, financial support for the research dimension sometimes remains inadequate, as Ms Nhi (Biological Sciences) pointed out: *"A lack of funding for research projects is a significant limitation in Vietnam, as poorer countries often have limited financial resources"*.

Her narrative reveals that even when lecturers are motivated and capable, insufficient financial resources may restrict their ability to initiate or sustain high-quality research. For disciplines that require costly equipment, lab work, or field research, such as hers, the lack of stable funding becomes a significant obstacle. Other participants also suggested that this funding gap creates inequality between universities, as better-resourced institutions can more easily attract talent and build a reputation for research excellence.

In addition to financial constraints, bureaucratic procedures associated with research projects were also identified as a major barrier. Several lecturers expressed that completing a research project requires substantial time and effort, sometimes leaving them feeling exhausted. In particular, the administrative paperwork associated with these projects was perceived as one of the most burdensome aspects of the process. For example, Mr Bao described the *"psychological costs"* of this process (in addition to the expenses that individuals like him had to incur to *"purchase the necessary materials"* as mentioned above):

> At times, simply initiating a research project requires overcoming 'psychological and emotional costs' – the overwhelming burden of administrative procedures has become a source of deep frustration […]. Institutional policies should be implemented to support lecturers […] without such measures, fulfilling research responsibilities will remain highly challenging.

Mr Bao's stories highlight another paradox of institutional demands for increased research output while simultaneously maintaining rigid administrative controls. This *"double bind"* – high expectations with minimal support – results in wasted time on paperwork, reducing the energy and focus available for actual research work. For early-career academics like Mr Bao, this burden can be particularly discouraging, as they are still developing research competencies and require streamlined processes and mentoring rather than bureaucratic obstacles. The narratives from these lecturers clarify that resource accessibility is not just about infrastructure but also about the 'hidden costs', such as time, personal expenses, and emotional frustration.

Overall, the findings presented in this subsection reveal that both individual and institutional constraints create significant challenges for lecturers in adapting to the increasing emphasis on the research dimension within VHE. On the individual level, limitations (e.g., insufficient research training, language barriers, and the absence of early career exposure to international research practices) hinder lecturers' confidence and capability to meet new academic

expectations. Generational differences further exacerbate these difficulties, as senior lecturers trained under teaching-dominant models often find it particularly challenging to develop the methodological and linguistic competencies required for international publishing. At the institutional level, constraints (e.g., inadequate research infrastructure, limited access to global academic databases, insufficient funding, burdensome administrative procedures, and further 'hidden costs') compound these individual struggles. These structural and institutional issues not only reduce the focus, time, and energy available for research but also reinforce a sense of frustration and disengagement, particularly when institutional discourse on research excellence is not matched by practical support.

As a consequence, these challenges might further reinforce the enduring dominance of teaching in lecturers' academic identities. For many, teaching remains the more clearly defined and familiar role, while research is viewed as a demanding responsibility that is difficult to fulfil without adequate institutional support. In addition to the ambiguities surrounding research expectations, the structural and capacity-related barriers discussed in this subsection further complicate the transition towards an RI model.

In summary, this section 6.3.2 has discussed the multifaceted difficulties lecturers face in adapting to the emerging emphasis on research as part of their (re)shaping academic identities. These issues contribute to the tensions between lecturers' entrenched teaching-first identities and the growing demands for research productivity. While some participants recognised the value of strengthening research to enhance institutional reputation and academic quality, many expressed scepticism regarding the motives, sustainability, and clarity of this shift. The ambiguities surrounding research role expectations left lecturers feeling uncertain about how to define and fulfil their academic responsibilities. These challenges were further compounded by individual capacity constraints and institutional shortcomings. These findings serve as the foundation for discussions in section 6.3.3, which explores how lecturers respond to these issues, ranging from active resistance to more subtle forms of negotiation and reluctant compliance.

6.3.3. Lecturers' responses to the changes: Between resistance and reluctance

As discussed earlier, the growing emphasis on the research dimension within VHE has significantly disrupted traditional expectations and practices among university lecturers. This shift has created tensions that challenge the longstanding teaching-focused identities of many academics. While some participants actively attempt to adapt to these evolving demands, others express open resistance or quiet reluctance.

The interview data reveal a spectrum of responses that range from overt resistance, where lecturers explicitly question or reject the prioritisation of research, to more subtle forms of compliance, where lecturers reluctantly meet requirements due to external pressures such as evaluations or promotion criteria. These responses are shaped not only by individual factors (e.g., career stage and research competency) but also by institutional contexts and cultural norms that influence lecturers' willingness to voice disagreement or navigate challenges. By examining the nuances of resistance and reluctance, the findings reveal how lecturers respond and negotiate to emerging research demands while attempting to maintain the integrity of their teaching-oriented identities.

The following subsections examine these dynamics in greater depth, distinguishing between active resistance to changes in lecturers' roles and a more understated reluctance to challenge unclear or burdensome institutional expectations.

a. Resistance to changes in academic expectations

The ongoing transformations in VHE have increasingly prioritised research performance, compelling lecturers to reassess and adjust their academic identities and practices. However, the interview data reveal that this shift is not universally embraced. A notable group of participants expressed open resistance to the evolving expectations. Such resistance appears to stem from a combination of factors: the enduring perception of teaching as the core academic responsibility, the complexity and intensity of research demands, and the lack of adequate institutional conditions to support the transition. This resistance should not be necessarily understood merely as opposition to the emphasis on the research dimension, but rather as a reflection of the tensions created when deeply ingrained teaching-first identities clash with newly imposed research demands.

A recurrent theme emerging from the responses is the *exhaustion* and *stress* associated with the push towards an RI model. As discussed above, senior lecturers who have built their careers on a teaching-focused identity often view these changes as disruptive rather than enabling. As quoted earlier on *page 152*, Mr Quang expressed strong concerns about the overwhelming demands of research and its adverse impact on teaching. His reflections illustrate how increasing research expectations can be perceived as an imposition that disrupts lecturers' established professional routines. During the interview, he repeatedly emphasised the *"exhausting"* and *"draining"* nature of research work. This reflects a broader sentiment of frustration among senior academics, who feel that research demands are being added to their existing, already heavy teaching workloads.

Indeed, his description of research as *"exhausting"* and as something that negatively affects his teaching resonates with the narratives of other senior participants, such as Ms Phuong, who similarly expressed that research tasks often feel like *"additional burdens"* rather than integrated parts of their academic identities. Ms Phuong admitted that despite recognising the value of research, she often feels *"overwhelmed"* when having to meet research targets while maintaining high-quality teaching. Such narratives underline how the perceived conflicts between R&T might be most acute among lecturers who have long identified teaching as their primary contribution to HE. These senses of role conflicts lie at the heart of their resistance, as they question whether the pursuit of research metrics should come at the expense of effective teaching.

However, the data also reveal that this resistance is seemingly not uniform. The *"young team"* member, such as Mr Bao, Ms Thi, Mr Hoang, and Ms Quynh (who have no more than 5 years of academic experience), generally demonstrated greater adaptability. These early-career lecturers, often trained in more recent or international contexts, tended to view research not as a competing demand but as an opportunity to enhance both their professional reputation and teaching quality. By contrast, lecturers with over a decade of experience, particularly those trained under older, teaching-centric systems, showed greater hesitation or slower adjustment.

From these accounts, it is possible to identify varying degrees and forms of resistance to the emerging research expectations. Some lecturers exhibited *slow adjustment*, citing practical constraints such as insufficient research competencies, language barriers, or heavy teaching

workloads. Others demonstrated *disengagement*, often rooted in scepticism about the institutional motivations behind the research push (as seen in the views of Ms Nhi and Mr Hung discussed earlier). Another group displayed *overt resistance*, openly criticising reforms that they perceived as undermining the centrality of teaching. These patterns provide insights into how lecturers negotiate their academic identities and practices in response to institutional reforms. Their varied responses reemphasise the complex interplay between entrenched teaching-oriented identities and the emerging emphasis on research.

The first pattern of resistance identified in the data involves lecturers who encountered considerable challenges in adapting to evolving research expectations but did not explicitly reject these changes. Their resistance manifested as slow or hesitant adjustment, often driven by practical constraints such as time constraints, heavy workloads, or limited research experience. While these lecturers acknowledged the value of research, they struggled to integrate it effectively into their practice due to competing demands and a lack of institutional support.

As Ms Phuong observed, this adaptation process has been sluggish and has not resulted in significant changes in R&T practices: *"Overall, the adaptation [of lecturers] takes place slowly, and there is not much difference [compared to the past]".* She argued that while policy shifts have been introduced, the daily realities of academic work remain largely focused on the teaching dimension. As another example, Ms Lien described this conflict as feeling caught between two academic worlds:

> I agree that research is important, but I feel like I am stuck between *'two worlds'*: the old system, where teaching was the top priority and this new one, where research is now the main focus. It is overwhelming trying to manage both.

Her words illustrate the psychological strain of transitioning from a teaching-centred professional identity to one that requires balancing both R&T. The status of *"stuck between two worlds"* implies what could be seen as a liminal position for lecturers navigating between traditional and emerging expectations: they neither fully belong to the old system, where teaching was the uncontested priority, nor feel equipped to thrive in the new one that emphasises research performance. This sense of 'in-betweenness' generates not only emotional strain, as seen in her use of *"overwhelming"*, but also a practical dilemma about where to focus limited time and energy. Her reflection reinforces the argument that the shift towards an RI model is

not simply about acquiring new knowledge or skills, but also about reconfiguring one's professional identity to meet conflicting expectations. For Ms Lien and others like her, this dual pressure could contribute to a sense of inadequacy, as balancing both academic roles is perceived by some as highly challenging, which can deepen the sense of frustration and hesitation.

As presented earlier, a recurring concern among these lecturers was the lack of institutional support to facilitate the transition. Building on the struggles described by Ms Lien, this challenge was also articulated by Ms Huong, who explained the difficulties of adapting when universities fail to create enabling conditions:

> For lecturers to keep up with the RI focus and help bridge the gap between the old and new expectations, substantial time and support from the university are required. If left to lecturers alone within a short timeframe, it will be challenging. They may even fall further behind.

Ms Huong's reflection is another evidence of the structural imbalance between institutional expectations and practical support mechanisms. This reinforces the tensions between individual capacity and institutional reform, where the burden of change is disproportionately placed on lecturers, rather than being accompanied by structural measures such as reduced teaching loads, clearer evaluation criteria, or accessible research funding. She cautioned that, without sufficient time allocations, mentoring opportunities, or workload adjustments, lecturers risk being left behind, especially those whose professional identities have been rooted in a teaching-centric model. The emphasis on *"fall further behind"* possibility implies that the lecturers most vulnerable to this risk are those already struggling to meet the emerging research standards, typically senior lecturers who have spent most of their careers in a teaching-dominated environment, or early-career lecturers without strong research training and networks. In her opinion, the lack of timely support mechanisms could widen the existing performance gaps between lecturers who are already research-active and those who are not.

The notion of *"falling behind"* was also mentioned by other participants. For example, Mr Hung clarified that *"falling behind",* in some context, does not simply mean missing publication targets. It could also imply being excluded from competitive funding opportunities, international collaborations, or promotion pathways that increasingly hinge on research achievements.

These narratives further suggest a sense of urgency and vulnerability. The shift to an RI model is about a race against time, where those unable to adapt quickly may be perceived as underperforming. In this 'race', inadequate preparation and a lack of a good starting point pose the risk of *"falling further behind"*. This might create a feedback loop where lecturers who cannot keep pace are at risk of marginalisation within their institutions in the trajectory of changes, as their capital remains tied primarily to teaching rather than research.

In contrast to the first pattern, a second group of lecturers displayed a more pronounced sense of disengagement. Unlike those who struggled mainly due to time constraints or limited research competencies, these lecturers further expressed doubts about the rationales and direction of the current reform movements. Their resistance principally stemmed from scepticism, uncertainties, and the beliefs that the institutional push towards research was misaligned with the traditional missions of universities as they understood them.

For example, Mr Quang admitted that those trained under the old system, including himself, would likely find it much harder to change and adapt to the new approach. He further questioned the shift from national to international research publications expectations:

> Whereas research was only encouraged in the past, now it has become a mandatory task […] While previously, publishing articles in national journals was sufficient and more 'manageable' for us, now there is a push, sometimes even a requirement, to publish internationally, which, although 'not yet familiar' and fraught with difficulties, we still have to strive to accomplish.

This reflection indicates the escalating demands and unfamiliarity with global research standards, which Mr Quang perceives as externally imposed rather than intrinsically valuable. In the interview session, his tone suggests compliance out of necessity rather than genuine commitment. It reflects a form of passive resistance where research is undertaken primarily to meet institutional expectations rather than as a source of intrinsic motivation and a goal for professional growth.

Ms Hien expressed similar sentiments, illustrating how the lack of clarity and personal connection to the research dimension leads to disengagement:

> I find everything still very vague. For now, I will focus on doing my teaching well, as I have always done. Research is secondary. It is merely done to meet the required targets. Since it has become mandatory, I am unable to avoid doing it.

Her sharing implies that teaching is still a safe and well-defined domain, in contrast to research, which she frames as a compliance task. This illustrates not just uncertainties but also a detachment from the underlying value of research, which she does not perceive as central to her academic identity. Her response also exemplifies how research expectations, when perceived as vague or imposed, can foster a sense of disengagement and even resistance to institutional change.

These accounts reveal that the second group of lecturers experience a deeper cognitive and emotional withdrawal from the reform trajectories. Unlike the first one, which struggles primarily with practical adjustments, this group questions the legitimacy and purpose of the shift toward research-focused approaches. They see it as misaligned with their professional values and the historical mission of universities.

Lastly, the third group consisted of lecturers who tended to express more overt resistance to the emerging research-oriented agenda. Unlike the first two groups, which were either cautiously adapting or passively disengaging, these lecturers actively contested the shift in institutional priorities, questioning its feasibility and fairness. Their resistance was shaped by a perception that the push for research excellence was abrupt, unrealistic, and poorly aligned with their professional contexts and capacities. Their resistance stemmed not only from personal challenges but also from broader structural and cultural dynamics that they believed were overlooked by current reforms.

One of the key dimensions of this resistance relates to institutional cultures and generational norms, as highlighted by Mr Hung (in addition to what he said about the *"old team"* quoted on *page 139*):

> That is the older group [of lecturers]. They are conservative, vehement, and look for every way to resist and refuse to change […] The *'old team'* includes veteran officials who hold significant academic ranks and high positions within the institution. Many of them, especially those with long tenures, often seek ways to resist the changes. Their resistance is not just about personal matters but about the long-established institutional and cultural norms. It is also about the culture! In a sense, it is a force that hinders the process of innovation and adaptation to change.

Mr Hung's observation suggests that this form of resistance is not purely individual but also collective and cultural, embedded in the traditions and hierarchies of Vietnamese academia. By emphasising that the *"old team"* holds positions of influence and has shaped institutional norms over decades, he suggested that resistance is linked to power structures and established values that favour teaching as the cornerstone of academic identity. His comment further highlights the power dynamics at play that can slow down or even block reform efforts because of deeply rooted beliefs about what constitutes a legitimate academic identity and work. This once more demonstrates that the current reforms are challenging habits and further questioning long-standing institutional logics.

Another source of frustration lies in the perceived abruptness of reform initiatives, as Ms Hoa highlighted:

> For years, the focus has always been on teaching. Now, suddenly, the expectation to publish internationally is unrealistic for many of us, especially when our primary responsibility was never research. The shift is too abrupt and does not take into account our actual capacity or the time required for this change.

Ms Hoa's observations reveal how *"sudden"* policy shifts can create a sense of disorientation and unfairness, particularly among certain lecturers. What she described as *"abrupt"* signals a lack of gradual preparation, which exacerbates feelings of being overwhelmed or unfairly judged by new performance criteria. This "*sudden"* emphasis on international publications is framed as *"unrealistic"* and unaccompanied by the structural or temporal resources needed to support such transitions. Her reference to the lack of time needed for the changes suggests that institutional expectations have seemingly outpaced the professional development structures required to support lecturers' transitions into RI roles. These sentiments resonate strongly with participants who perceive research expectations as externally imposed rather than organically integrated into academic identity and practice.

Similarly, Ms Hien observed many of her colleagues had disengaged due to the overwhelming nature of the research role:

> Many of my colleagues genuinely wanted to conduct research, but they were unsure of where to begin. There was no proper training, little support, and an overwhelming amount of paperwork related to research projects. Eventually, some just gave up altogether.

Ms Hien's account reinforces the gap between aspiration and capacity. Her reference to colleagues *"wanted to conduct research, but they were unsure of where to begin"* implies that resistance can arise when motivation to do research is undermined by a lack of resources, training, and supportive infrastructure. The reference to colleagues *"giving up altogether"* suggests a forced withdrawal rather than a voluntary choice, driven by structural conditions that make research appear inaccessible or unnecessarily burdensome.

As another case, Ms Thoa expressed her resistance in particularly emotive terms, describing how institutional pressures left her feeling both overburdened and unsupported:

> I am really struggling here! I have to fight! The teaching role alone has consumed all of my working time. And now, I am expected to handle the added pressure of research? And then there is the burden of 'the third roles' or 'other duties', which I have been carrying all along, including serving as an advisor, participating in community service projects, involvement in communication activities, and handling administrative tasks, among others. I am just overwhelmed! I have a suggestion, or rather a request for the university: this is not the change we want; we need a different kind of change. We need support! *(Ms Thoa, around 15 years of academic experience, expressed with a tone of deep frustration)*

Ms Thoa's statements are striking not only for their emotional intensity but also for the multi-dimensional picture of academic overload that they convey. Her reference to having to *"fight"* reflects a sense of being trapped in a system that demands constant efforts just to keep pace with basic expectations. She emphasised that teaching responsibilities remain so demanding and time-intensive that there is virtually no room left to engage meaningfully in research. This implies a key tension: the research dimension has been layered on top of an already heavy teaching workload, rather than being integrated into a more balanced academic framework.

Additionally, her mention of *"the third role"* or *"other duties",* encompassing advising, community service, communication activities, and administrative tasks, clarifies the *'hidden workload'* that lecturers shoulder, which may often be undervalued or invisible in institutional metrics of performance. She further highlights this systemic issue that universities expect lecturers to perform a wide range of responsibilities beyond R&T, yet these additional tasks are rarely accompanied by workload adjustments or recognition. In this context, the expectation to publish internationally appears not only unrealistic but also unfair, as it disregards the cumulative burden of these multiple roles.

Moreover, her request for *"a different kind of change"* suggests that Ms Thoa may not inherently oppose the reform. Instead, she recognises that the reform should not simply add more tasks but should provide the resources, time, and training necessary for lecturers to succeed. Her statement, *"We need support!",* is another direct critique of the gaps between institutional ambitions and the reality on the ground. It implies that, without addressing the structural constraints that create role overload, the push for research will continue to generate frustration and disengagement rather than genuine innovation or improvement. Therefore, the resistance, in this context, is not necessarily about rejecting research-oriented directions but also about calling for a more supportive and realistic reform approach that respects the multiple roles lecturers already perform.

Overall, the findings indicate that resistance to changes in academic expectations is not a uniform or simplistic phenomenon but rather a spectrum of responses shaped by personal histories, institutional conditions, and cultural legacies. Some participants demonstrate a slow and hesitant adjustment, constrained by practical barriers (e.g., heavy teaching loads, limited research experience, and insufficient institutional support). Others express a more conceptual disengagement, questioning the underlying rationale and feasibility of the research-focused reform, which they perceive as misaligned with the traditional mission of Vietnamese universities. Another group exhibits overt resistance, openly challenging reforms they view as abrupt, unrealistic, or lacking the necessary structural support. These varied responses illuminate how entrenched teaching-oriented identities, generational divides, and institutional gaps intersect to influence lecturers' willingness, or hesitation, to embrace research-oriented roles.

b. Reluctance to challenge academic expectations

While the previous section examined explicit forms of resistance, the findings also reveal a subtler pattern of response characterised by quiet compliance and an implicit reluctance to challenge shifting academic expectations, particularly concerning non-academic responsibilities. Rather than openly resisting changes, many lecturers, particularly early-career academics, appear to internalise these pressures, silently accepting additional responsibilities even when these tasks undermine their R&T priorities.

This reluctance is not necessarily a sign of agreement with institutional expectations. However, it is often rooted in cultural values of deference and harmony, as well as a perceived lack of voice or agency within hierarchical structures. By examining how lecturers navigate increasing administrative and non-academic duties without overt opposition, this subsection sheds light on how such tacit acceptance can further exacerbate the tensions between their R&T.

Participants frequently expressed feelings of being overwhelmed by vaguely defined responsibilities, often described as *"nameless", "unstructured"*, or *"falling from the sky"*. Common expressions included *"un-predetermined roles", "undefined administrative work", "vague contract terms",* and *"lack of transparency in evaluating tasks".* These descriptions indicate a significant lack of clarity in how additional responsibilities, commonly grouped under the category of *"other duties"* (as Ms Thoa mentioned above), are assigned and managed. The findings suggest that their lack of structure and predictability exacerbates the tensions. When time, focus, and energy are diverted to such ambiguous tasks, lecturers struggle to concentrate on their core academic roles, i.e., R&T. This leads to frustration and passive compliance rather than active engagement, particularly in response to emerging research demands.

Several interviewees highlighted that unclear or incomplete job descriptions contributed directly to this confusion and stress. Ms Quynh, for example, shared her frustration with the lack of clarity in her initial role expectations:

> The regulations and job requirements outlined in the contract when I took up this position were too brief and condensed. As a result, I did not have a comprehensive visualisation of all the tasks I would need to undertake, especially those listed under the *'other duties'* section, which, based on my experience so far, primarily involved administrative tasks. Consequently, I felt quite stressed during the initial phase of assuming this lecturer position.

Ms Quynh's experiences illustrate how poorly defined job descriptions and administrative obligations can negatively influence the time allocation and cognitive resources required for R&T. Her mention of the *"other duties"* section, largely administrative, points to an additional layer of workload that does not directly contribute to academic achievements. For early-career lecturers like her, this lack of clarity intensifies the difficulties of engaging meaningfully with research tasks, as the boundaries of core academic responsibilities are blurred by undefined administrative demands.

Similarly, Ms Huong noted that even supplementary documents like the *"Internal Spending Rules"* provided insufficient guidance, particularly regarding administrative duties:

> The contract only mentions very general provisions and terms. In practice, there is a document called the *'Internal Spending Rules'*, which provides more detailed guidance. As I remember, it categorises roles into three main areas: teaching, research, and 'other duties' [...] However, the regulations and guidelines about *'other duties'* are neither clear nor specific.

Ms Huong's reflection explained how institutional documents, while formally categorising lecturers' roles, fail to establish clear boundaries between teaching, research, and the catch-all category of *"other duties"*. She argued that this lack of precision creates ambiguities around workload allocation and accountability, leaving lecturers uncertain about how to prioritise their resources. Importantly, this vagueness directly impacts the R&T nexus. When *"other duties"* unexpectedly consume unpredictable amounts of time, lecturers are sometimes passively forced to push research activities to the margins of their schedules, thereby reducing opportunities to integrate research insights into their teaching.

The *"unpredictable"* and *"unstructured"* nature of these tasks significantly contributed to lecturers' feelings of being overwhelmed, stressed, and anxious, negatively impacting their job satisfaction and performance. Ms Hien, for example, highlighted how these responsibilities dominated her daily schedule:

> Honestly, administrative tasks and *'other duties'* consume most of my time! They are mostly unnamed, unstructured and unpredictable, so whenever they call, I have to go and get them done [...] That is why administrative work and *'other duties'* make me feel overwhelmed.

Ms Hien's statement illustrates the *'time squeeze'* caused by administrative overload. By describing these tasks as *"unnamed"* and *"unstructured"*, she highlights their ad-hoc nature, which hinders her ability to plan and balance teaching with research activities. She further complained that this constant unpredictability not only created stress but also undermined any systematic approach to research, which typically required uninterrupted blocks of time for reading, data analysis, and writing. Once again, the sense of being *"overwhelmed"* reflects a common sentiment among participants that administrative obligations are crowding out core academic work. She also emphasised that when administrative tasks dominate daily routines, the opportunity for reflective, research-informed teaching diminishes. This not only reduces the

lecturer's ability to contribute new insights to their classes but also weakens the potential for research to feed into and enrich teaching practice.

Ms Hoa echoed these concerns, emphasising the difficulties in maintaining a balance amidst a growing administrative workload:

> We already have too much on our plates, and now we are asked to take on even more *'other duties'*. How can we possibly cover everything when our time is limited? What our lecturers need here is a sense of balance.

Her remark emphasises the structural imbalance that arises when institutional expectations expand without corresponding adjustments to workload or resource allocation. By calling for a *"sense of balance"*, Ms Hoa cautions the risk of diminishing both R&T quality, as neither can thrive when time, focus and energy are fragmented by miscellaneous tasks. Her reflection directly reinforces the central argument that these additional responsibilities intensify the tensions between R&T, making meaningful integration increasingly difficult.

Mr Hung shared a similar perspective:

> We [lecturers] are currently overwhelmed by having to shoulder too many tasks and job demands, particularly administrative and *'other duties'*. Even events such as flower arranging competitions necessitate my attendance for applause, and cultural performances require my participation in dancing [...] Please, let us do our academic [R&T] roles!

This statement, tinged with irony and frustration, exposes the misalignment between institutional expectations and academic priorities. Mr Hung's examples of events, such as *"flower arranging competitions"* (in traditional activities to celebrate important holidays, such as Vietnamese Teachers' Day), highlight how cultural or ceremonial activities, though possibly valued by institutions and individuals, can encroach on time meant for academic work. His appeal, *"Please, let us do our academic roles!"*, serves as a pointed critique of how administrative and ceremonial tasks distract from the core academic responsibilities. This example illustrates how non-academic tasks, although culturally or institutionally valued, can dilute the professional focus on R&T. It suggests a possible systemic undervaluation of academic work, where symbolic duties are sometimes prioritised at the expense of scholarly development.

These burdens might be most acutely felt by early-career lecturers, who often lack the authority or confidence to question unclear assignments. Ms Quynh reflected on these challenges: *"During these first two years of experience, I have found that these 'other duties' have often consumed more of my time than my primary R&T roles".* Her experience highlights the particular vulnerability of early-career lecturers, who, being at the bottom of institutional hierarchies, often accept additional tasks without complaint. This quiet compliance further exacerbates the imbalance between R&T, as their limited time and experience leave little room for engaging in research activities, let alone integrating them into their teaching. This situation is particularly concerning for early-career lecturers, who are at a critical stage of developing their research profiles but are often consumed by administrative work that offers little contribution to their academic growth or research output.

The narratives discussed above clarify how unclear administrative expectations create stress and erode the time, focus and energy lecturers could otherwise allocate to R&T. The prominent subtheme is that these *other duties*, although often peripheral to core academic roles, sometimes become an unspoken priority due to institutional norms and the absence of clear boundaries. These dynamics lead lecturers, particularly those in early-career stages, to internalise a sense of obligation rather than openly questioning the fairness or relevance of these tasks.

The collected data reveal that one of the key reasons for this reluctance may lie in broader cultural norms. Influenced by Confucian values that often prioritise *collective harmony* and respect for hierarchy, many lecturers, especially younger ones, hesitated to question institutional decisions or confront authority figures. This cultural influence often discouraged lecturers from seeking clarification or refusing non-academic roles, as they feared disrupting harmony or offending superiors and colleagues. Many participants reported a tendency to accept unclear or burdensome roles without question or confrontation, as challenging institutional expectations could disrupt collective harmony. In this sense, cultural legacies, while possibly fostering collegiality, may inadvertently perpetuate a culture where lecturers are reluctant to assert their academic needs. As Mr Hung explained:

> In fact, despite their reluctance, lecturers often have to take on roles they dislike, maintaining harmony within the group and building an image of being cooperative and non-confrontational. They choose to sacrifice. Therefore, lecturers, especially young and early-career lecturers, rarely refuse or question the non-academic roles [*'other duties'*] assigned to them.

Mr Hung's explanation clarifies how cultural expectations of harmony *("hòa khí", in Vietnamese)* and respect for hierarchy *("tôn ti", in Vietnamese)* shape lecturers' behaviour, leading them to silently comply even when the additional tasks detract from their core academic duties. For those, particularly early-career lecturers, this compliance is often intertwined with the fear of being labelled as uncooperative or disrespectful, which could threaten professional relationships and future career opportunities. These dynamics directly affect their R&T, as time-consuming administrative work erodes the capacity to invest in research activities that could otherwise enrich teaching.

These cultural expectations were further reinforced by institutional norms that disproportionately assigned administrative tasks to early-career lecturers. As Ms Quynh succinctly put it: *"The 'young team' is often assigned more administrative roles and is tasked with teaching more".* Ms Quynh's observation again reinforces the underlying inequity in workload distribution. Younger lecturers are usually burdened with tasks that provide little academic value. This disproportionate allocation of *"other duties"* not only limits the time they can dedicate to developing research but also hinders their ability to create meaningful connections between their R&T practices.

Consequently, the combination of systemic ambiguities, hierarchical structures, and cultural deference leaves many lecturers caught in a cycle of silent compliance. Rather than resisting, they internalise these additional duties, often at the expense of their well-being and academic focus. The consequence is further intensifying the tensions, as administrative overload and cultural expectations prevent lecturers, particularly those at the start of their careers, from engaging fully with research activities that could enhance their teaching quality and vice versa.

Faced with these realities, several participants expressed a strong desire for structural reforms to reduce the administrative burdens placed on lecturers. They argued that reallocating non-academic tasks to dedicated administrative staff would enable lecturers to focus on their core academic roles. As Ms Thoa proposed:

> What do we need? We need to be reduced or, even better, removed from non-academic roles, administrative work, committees, unions, etc. For administrative and management tasks, it is better to have a specialised person responsible than to have lecturers handle them. Additionally, a department should be established to support lecturers with research project paperwork. In general, we lecturers need to focus most on our academic roles in our specialised field.

Ms Thoa's perspective reemphasises how administrative overload can negatively influence lecturers' ability to integrate R&T effectively. Her suggestion for specialised administrative staff implies a broader recognition that structural barriers, not just individual capabilities, are hindering the integration of R&T. By calling for support departments to handle paperwork for research projects, she proposes a practical solution to a recurring problem discussed by other participants: that excessive procedural requirements not only consume time but also diminish the motivation to engage meaningfully with research. Her argument suggests that without such institutional adjustments, the R&T nexus risks being overshadowed by the *"other duties"*, leaving lecturers unable to excel in their primary academic responsibilities.

Overall, this quiet reluctance is not solely a matter of passive compliance but a reflection of how institutional ambiguity and cultural norms of deference shape lecturers' responses to role expectations. The empirical evidence demonstrates that these unspoken pressures, particularly the expectation to assume undefined administrative duties, intensify role strain and erode the time and energy required for R&T. As a result, the R&T nexus is indirectly undermined, since lecturers, particularly early-career academics, struggle to dedicate attention to research activities that could enhance their teaching. The participants' narratives above also emphasise the need for clearer institutional frameworks, equitable workload distribution, and supportive structures that allow lecturers to prioritise their academic roles and engage more effectively in integrating R&T.

The findings presented in this subsection 6.3.3 indicate that lecturers' responses to shifting academic roles are diverse and shaped by multiple factors. While some appear to resist the changes overtly, others express subtler forms of reluctance, particularly regarding administrative and non-academic duties that compete with their R&T responsibilities. These responses are influenced by institutional conditions, generational backgrounds, and cultural norms that may discourage open confrontation or questioning. These insights underscore the complexity of navigating the R&T nexus in a changing environment, where structural and cultural factors can make the process of role adjustment uneven and, for certain groups of lecturers, particularly challenging.

In summary, the discussions in section 6.3 above examine the tensions that arise as Vietnamese lecturers navigate shifting expectations in an RI academic environment. The entrenched

primacy of teaching, reinforced by historical, cultural, and institutional norms, continues to shape their professional identities and influences their capacity to adapt to new research-oriented roles. The ambiguities in institutional guidelines, limited research competencies, and substantial administrative burdens appear to compound these challenges further. Lecturers' varied responses, ranging from explicit resistance to quiet reluctance, reflect not only individual differences in adapting to change but also broader cultural and organisational dynamics. Overall, these findings provide insights into the micro-macro interactions between individual experiences, cultural expectations, and organisational structures that shape how lecturers engage with R&T integration as part of their identity transformation and negotiation in a changing HE landscape.

6.4. Impacts of the shifting resources and priorities on academic identity negotiation and professional practice

The interview data reveal that the increasing institutional emphasis on research, coupled with the entrenched primacy of teaching, has created a structural imbalance among academic role expectations. This imbalance manifests in how lecturers allocate time and effort, as well as how institutions reallocate their resources and priorities, often leading to trade-offs that compromise either teaching quality or research engagement. This section examines how these imbalances impact lecturers' academic identity negotiation, professional practice, and overall academic experience.

The first subsection illuminates the shifting allocation of resources, showing how institutional policies, incentive systems, and systemic constraints have led lecturers to prioritise research over teaching. The second part presents a thematic analysis of the impacts of this shifting, including its effects on teaching quality, academic integrity, and lecturers' professional satisfaction and well-being. By focusing on these practical consequences, the findings highlight how the lack of alignment among academic roles poses long-term challenges for the sustainable development of academic careers in VHE.

6.4.1. Shifting resources and priorities: research over teaching

While teaching continues to form the cornerstone of lecturers' professional identities, the increasing institutional emphasis on research has altered how both institutional resources (e.g., funding, evaluation systems, and workload policies) and individual resources (e.g., time, energy, and attention) are allocated. The findings reveal that university governance mechanisms, including performance-based incentives, publishing targets, and ranking-driven agendas, have restructured academic priorities, compelling lecturers to invest more effort into research. This reallocation is not always embraced enthusiastically. For some lecturers, particularly those who remain committed to teaching excellence, this shift feels less like an 'organic evolution' and more like an externally imposed reprioritisation that reduces the time available for teaching preparation and student engagement.

Rather than simply reflecting the emergence of research as a priority (as discussed in the previous sections), this section examines how specific resource allocation practices are tipping the balance toward research, often at the expense of the teaching dimension. In many universities, lecturers are now expected to produce tangible research outputs, meet specific publishing targets, and actively contribute to institutional rankings. Mr Nam, for example, voiced the growing sense of pressure among his peers: *"I have heard many colleagues discuss a prevailing issue, and I personally agree with it: the immense pressure of conducting research"*.

Mr Nam's comment reflects the prevailing sentiment among many participants that research demands have escalated to the point of overshadowing other responsibilities. Several respondents noted that preparing lectures, mentoring students, and engaging in pedagogical development now compete directly with the time and mental energy required for research tasks such as writing grant proposals or preparing journal submissions. In practice, this often leads lecturers to make trade-offs, where teaching preparation is condensed or less innovative due to the pressing need to prioritise research outputs. Mr Nam also further emphasised how institutional performance frameworks, such as metrics linked to publications, impact factors, and research income, have become dominant indicators of professional success. For lecturers who continue to view teaching as their primary academic contribution, this shift can feel misaligned with their sense of professional purpose, creating both practical and emotional

tensions. The consequence is that the balance of time, attention, and institutional recognition has shifted sharply in favour of research.

As several participants observed, universities are adopting concrete mechanisms to incentivise research productivity, which in turn reshapes how lecturers reallocate their time and energy. Ms Vy shared an example of how research accomplishments are directly rewarded through workload reductions or sabbatical opportunities:

> In my university, lecturers are encouraged to pursue research, and those who yield noteworthy research outcomes may see a reduction in their teaching workload. Some of my colleagues even have the option to take a teaching hiatus for an entire semester, allowing them to focus solely on their research endeavours.

Her sharing illustrates how institutional policies explicitly reconfigure the balance between R&T. Time, arguably the most valuable individual resource, is strategically reallocated to favour research output. While such arrangements can support research productivity, they also risk devaluing teaching, especially when recognition for high-quality teaching does not come with equivalent benefits.

Such arrangements reinforce a system in which research is rewarded with tangible benefits while teaching contributions receive less recognition. Mr Bao highlighted how these performance metrics, though perhaps justified from a policy standpoint, place overwhelming burdens on lecturers:

> At times, I find it challenging to balance my academic roles [R&T] with *'other duties'*. Particularly in the research role, the university has established new requirements and criteria for lecturers, including research output, academic publications, book publishing, and the completion of research projects. Honestly, I understand that these policies may be appropriate, and I am doing my best to meet them. However, I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the pressure.

Mr Bao's remark connects back to the findings in section 6.3.2 on the difficulties in adapting to emerging research expectations. The pressure he describes is not simply about doing more research but about reconciling competing demands: teaching, administrative responsibilities, and stringent research targets. His comment also reemphasises that while research is rewarded, the lack of comparable recognition for teaching generates a subtle but persistent sense of inequity.

Indeed, the prioritisation of research is further reinforced by systems of rewards. Participants described how publishing in high-ranking international journals not only improves professional status but also yields substantial financial bonuses. As Mr Hung observed:

> I have heard that some universities offer substantial bonuses to incentivise their employees to participate actively in research. If you publish research papers in prestigious Q1 or Q2 journals, you could receive significant rewards, ranging from tens to hundreds of millions of VND – a number many times higher than the monthly salary.

The prestige and financial incentives associated with research stand in stark contrast to the limited recognition for teaching. Mr Nam emphasised this disparity:

> Completing research projects brings financial gains and enhances one's scholarly reputation. In contrast, no matter how outstanding, teaching excellence lacks tangible benefits and recognition, making research endeavours far more rewarding.

These reflections highlight how institutional reward systems not only divert resources toward research but also risk eroding the morale of lecturers who continue to prioritise teaching as central to their professional identity. This dynamic reinforces the imbalance, where research is increasingly seen as the primary pathway to career advancement and institutional prestige, while teaching excellence is viewed as secondary.

However, this prioritisation of research does not exist in isolation. Participants repeatedly emphasised that systemic constraints, such as heavy teaching loads, administrative responsibilities, and the ambiguous category of *"other duties"*, leave them with limited capacity to engage meaningfully in either teaching or research. These constraints often compel lecturers to make strategic compromises, sidelining teaching not by deliberate choice but out of necessity, as they attempt to meet rising research targets. Ms Thoa, for instance, complained about the overwhelming teaching volume in revenue-generating programmes:

> Especially in 'hot' or 'high-quality' fields like mine, more classes and teaching generate substantial revenue for the university but also coerce lecturers into becoming mere 'teaching machines'.

Her reflection implies how market-driven programmes can unintentionally reduce teaching to a 'mechanical delivery' function. The focus on maximising class hours to boost revenue creates

a paradox: while teaching output is high, the quality and reflective aspects of teaching may suffer, particularly when research responsibilities are added as a top priority.

This issue is especially pronounced for early-career academics, who shoulder additional pressures due to their junior status. As Mr Hung explained:

> Young and early-career lecturers are often required to teach a lot. Although the standard regulation for teaching hours is 270 hours, these lecturers often exceed this limit, reaching 300-400 hours per year, particularly in large universities with substantial student populations.

Mr Hung's observation reemphasises a structural inequity in workload allocation. Early-career lecturers, who are still developing their research capacity and academic identity, are often disproportionately tasked with teaching, making it harder for them to allocate time for research. This imbalance might create a self-reinforcing cycle: with less time for research, they are less able to meet institutional metrics, which in turn reduces opportunities for recognition or advancement.

In such environments, where time and energy are finite resources, many lecturers find themselves in the position of having to prioritise one role over the other. Given the institutional emphasis on research through policies, metrics, and rewards, teaching is increasingly pushed to the margins, gradually becoming a secondary activity rather than the core of academic identity that many participants still value.

In summary, such narratives suggest that the status of shifting balance between R&T roles stems not solely from individual preferences or academic orientation, but from the institutional policies and systemic constraints. The findings indicate that while many lecturers continue to value teaching as a core element of their academic identity, the dominance of research as the benchmark for career progression and institutional prestige has reshaped the distribution of time, effort, and recognition. This imbalance does not simply push teaching into a secondary role. It also redefines what lecturers perceive as meaningful or valued academic work, often leading to feelings of compromise or diminished professional fulfilment. Building on these reflections, the next part examines the consequences of these issues on lecturers' academic identity, professional practices, academic integrity, and overall professional experience. It offers further insights into the practical implications of prioritising research over teaching.

6.4.2. Consequences of the shifting on academic identity and professional practice

The findings indicate that the shifting resources and priorities, as discussed earlier, have generated a range of consequences affecting not only lecturers' academic identities, practices, and well-being, but also the broader objectives of VHE. As institutional policies increasingly emphasise the importance of research, lecturers face tensions that impact their motivation, ethical considerations, and ability to perform academic roles effectively.

a. Diminished teaching quality and disengagement

A recurring concern among participants was the decline in teaching quality resulting from an institutional overemphasis on the research dimension. Several lecturers reported that the pressure to meet research expectations drained their energy and enthusiasm for teaching, resulting in decreased classroom engagement. As Ms Vy expressed:

> Since the university's policies now heavily promote research activities, lecturers may gradually lose interest in teaching. This could lead to an imbalance where students might ultimately suffer the most. Over time, the quality of teaching might decline in exchange for improved research productivity.

Ms Vy's comment implies that students may become indirect victims of institutional priorities. By diverting energy from classroom preparation and student engagement, the push for research excellence might create a phenomenon in which lecturers teach primarily to 'get by' rather than to inspire or innovate. Similarly, Mr Hoang highlighted how the demands of research detracted from his ability to teach effectively:

> The pressure to publish is so immense that there are times when I am too stressed about research even to want to teach. My focus is almost entirely on my current research, rendering me dispassionate and disinterested in the classroom.

b. Teaching avoidance and compromised academic integrity

In response to overwhelming research pressures, some lecturers reported resorting to strategies that reduce their involvement in teaching. One such practice, often described as *"teaching in disguise"*, involves formally retaining teaching responsibilities while informally delegating them to others. Ms Thoa openly admitted to this, noting the unease it caused her:

> This situation puts me under pressure. While I believe I am justified [given the heavy teaching load and the university's high research publication expectations], it is still stressful. I have to face year-end evaluations where I must justify my workload. Moreover, when students register for a course in the system, they register under my name. However, in reality, I only teach a few classes, and others handle the rest. This discrepancy makes me feel uneasy, like I am doing something wrong. I am not comfortable with these circumstances.

Such practices not only may compromise educational quality but also raise ethical concerns about the authenticity of teaching engagement. Her discomfort reveals a moral tension: while she recognises the need to meet institutional standards, the informal delegation of teaching can undermine both teaching quality and personal integrity. This implies how research pressures can distort lecturers' engagement with both roles, leading them to prioritise 'checking boxes' over meaningful contributions.

c. The devaluation of teaching

Another key theme emerging from the data is the growing perception that teaching is being undervalued within academic institutions. Participants observed that research achievements tend to be more highly rewarded, both financially and in terms of academic recognition, as Mr Nam remarked, quoted on *page 176*. Mr Hung further illustrated the globalised perception of this hierarchy:

> If you look globally, what is someone's career usually represented by? It is research, publications, and research outcomes. Teaching is just an additional, necessary job.

Mr Hung's perspective reflects a widely observed trend in global HE, where research outputs increasingly dominate professional evaluations, often relegating teaching to a secondary or less prestigious status. This perceived devaluation of teaching can diminish lecturers' intrinsic motivation and lead to a shift in professional values over time.

d. Ethical concerns and compromised research integrity

The imbalance in resource allocation not only affects the teaching dimension but can also give rise to ethical issues in research practice. Several participants shared concerns about unethical behaviours resulting from excessive pressure to produce research outputs. Mr Hung explained:

> The pressures of standard R&T hours lead to situations where lecturers find every way possible to meet requirements, and sometimes, it deviates from what is ethical.

Some participants cited instances of practices such as *"ghost authorship", "buying and selling"* research papers, and delegating writing to third parties. As Ms Thi observed:

> I think people are chasing achievements. This implies that lecturers engage in research merely to fulfil requirements, manage workload, and achieve predetermined targets. This will lead to various undesirable practices across numerous universities, such as fraudulent authorship and misrepresentation, *'ghost authors'*, *'buying research papers'*, and hiring others to write papers.

Mr Nam echoed these concerns:

> Many individuals complete their research but then *'sell'* it to other institutions or universities needing publications to claim under their name […] for extra income.

These stories indicate that when research is framed as a high-stakes performance metric rather than an intellectual pursuit, lecturers may prioritise *"outputs"* over quality or authenticity, leading to questionable practices that erode academic integrity. These findings reveal that some current institutional environments not only incentivise surface-level research performance but also create conditions in which academic integrity may be compromised.

e. Emotional stress and professional compromise

Finally, the cumulative effect of these pressures, such as performance expectations, administrative burdens, and ambiguous role demands, has contributed to emotional stress and a diminished sense of professional fulfilment among lecturers. For example, Mr Hung said about the emotional toll of managing multiple roles:

> I need to balance these two roles because it is about finding a work-life balance. Immersing myself in writing research papers and data processing on a daily basis can be incredibly stressful. The need to socialise is occasionally important – to interact with colleagues, students, and others.

Others also reported feelings of resignation and a tendency to *"play it safe"* in order to meet basic institutional expectations, even when this contradicted their professional aspirations. As Ms Thoa reflected:

> Ultimately, I must choose the safest path for myself. That is, to fulfil the required teaching hours and strive to produce a research paper for submission to a conference, merely to fulfil the basic standards of task completion. That is it. I know this *'playing it safe'* approach may not be what I want. However, given the circumstances, what else can I do now?

Ms Thoa's statement reemphasises the cumulative toll of overlapping demands, where meeting institutional expectations becomes an exercise in survival rather than professional growth. What she described, *"I must choose the safest path for myself",* represents a defensive coping strategy. That is, rather than striving for pedagogical innovation or ambitious research, she focuses on the bare minimum needed to meet institutional criteria. Furthermore, her tone of resignation, *"What else can I do now?"* conveys a sense of powerlessness, especially in navigating competing priorities with limited resources and support. It further implies that strain in roles is not only exhausting but also identity-shaping: lecturers may begin to (re)define success not through academic passion but through avoiding failure in an unforgiving evaluation system. For early-career lecturers or those in fields with heavy teaching loads, this mindset may lead to disengagement, diminishing both their professional satisfaction and their potential to contribute to high-quality R&T.

In summary, the findings from this section 6.4 show that the shifting resources and priorities in Vietnamese universities are not only a question of workload distribution but also a deeper challenge to professional identity, ethics, and well-being. The pressure to prioritise research, amplified by performance metrics, financial incentives, and institutional rankings, has led to trade-offs that compromise teaching quality, distort the meaning of research, and further intensify emotional stress. While some lecturers adapt by strategically allocating their time, others adopt coping mechanisms that risk diminishing both roles in the long term, such as performing research for compliance rather than intellectual engagement or minimising teaching effort due to time constraints. Crucially, these dynamics reveal that R&T are being treated as competing priorities rather than mutually enriching activities. These findings reinforce the need for more supportive, balanced, and ethically sustainable systems that recognise and value the full spectrum of the academic profession, not just research performance.

6.5. Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented the key findings from the qualitative data analysis, highlighting the complexities, tensions, and challenges surrounding the evolving R&T nexus and academic identity negotiation in VHE. The findings reveal that while most lecturers believe in the potential benefits of R&T, they face significant tensions and difficulties in adapting to the growing emphasis on the research dimension within their academic roles and identities.

The entrenched primacy of teaching, deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and linguistic traditions, continues to shape lecturers' professional identities and practices. As universities transition towards an RI model, lecturers encounter several challenges (e.g., scepticism about the rationale for change, ambiguities in research role expectations, and constraints in research competencies and institutional support). These difficulties have resulted in diverse responses among lecturers, ranging from explicit resistance and disengagement to quieter forms of compliance and reluctance. Some explicitly resist changes in academic roles, while others, especially younger or early-career lecturers, are hesitant to question institutional expectations due to cultural norms surrounding hierarchy and harmony.

The findings also indicate that institutional policies have created a growing imbalance in resource allocation between R&T, with research increasingly prioritised in terms of time, resources, and recognition. This imbalance has led to a range of consequences, including declining teaching engagement, avoidance of teaching responsibilities, the devaluation of teaching excellence, the emergence of unethical research practices, and increased emotional stress and professional dissatisfaction among lecturers.

These findings clarify the complex interplay of policy, institutional structures, personal agency, and cultural values in shaping how lecturers perceive and respond to evolving academic expectations. They provide insights into the realities of lecturers navigating institutional change. To conclude, the findings presented in this chapter address the research questions by illuminating how HE reforms in Vietnam impact lecturer academic identity, with a focus on their R&T integration and what factors influence that integration. These findings provide the empirical foundation for discussions in the next chapters, where the implications of these dynamics are examined in relation to broader theoretical, policy, and practical considerations.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

7.1. Overview of the chapter

This chapter critically interprets the empirical insights presented in the Findings Chapter in relation to the theoretical framework and relevant literature. It aims to offer deeper explanations of their significance through the lens of Bourdieu's ToP, particularly the concepts of habitus, field, capital, and hysteresis. It addresses the central question of what the findings mean by explaining the social, cultural, and structural mechanisms that underpin lecturers' experiences and practices. It further engages in discussing relevant literature to situate the findings within broader scholarly debates on the R&T relationship, academic identities, and HE governance reforms. The discussion is organised into three main parts.

Section 7.2 examines the tensions experienced by lecturers whose beliefs in integration are challenged by historical, structural, and cultural constraints. It employs the concept of hysteresis to illuminate struggles with identity and emotional misalignments. It discusses the identity-level dissonance that arises when deeply internalised dispositions come into conflict with shifting institutional logics. Rather than framing this misalignment as a question of motivation or competence, the section draws on Bourdieu's idea of habitus-field misalignment (i.e., hysteresis) to offer a deeper, sociologically grounded explanation.

Next, *section 7.3* analyses the consequences of overemphasising the research dimension on academic identity and professional practice, focusing on shifts in symbolic capital, the devaluation of teaching, and the deepening of inequalities within the academic field. Section 7.4 then discusses the research findings on the R&T nexus in VHE within a broader international context, through the analytical lens of Bourdieu's ToP. The findings of this study align with arguments that the R&T integration is a promising endeavour, but one that must be enacted within an appropriate contextual frame. The discussion further illustrates that the Vietnamese case provides a distinctive and valuable context for enriching related debates. The final part offers a summary of the chapter and transitions to the concluding chapter of the thesis.

7.2. When beliefs meet constraints: Identity tensions and the hysteresis effect

The persistence of the integration-oriented perspective despite the constraints and practical difficulties in actualising integration indicates an alignment between the lecturers' habitus and the evolving logic of the academic field in Vietnam in certain cases. As universities increasingly prioritise the research dimension reflected through several adjustments, the symbolic capital associated with research activities has risen significantly. Lecturers whose habitus has already aligned with research find themselves resonating with the shifting priorities of the field, gaining symbolic advantage and institutional recognition. For these lecturers, this alignment has often been reinforced by previous educational experiences, international training, or disciplinary contexts where research engagement has been normalised and actively promoted as a valuable asset (as evidenced by Ms Nhi and Mr Hung's narratives). Their internalised dispositions thus have made them inclined to perceive integration as not only a policy-driven imperative, but also a natural and indispensable component of their academic work. Their affirmation of R&T integration thus represents a strategic alignment of their professional identities with the emergent academic field logic.

These findings align with, but extend beyond, Griffiths's (2004), Jenkins and Healey's (2005), and Healey's (2005) conceptualisation of the R&T nexus. While their categorisation integrates primarily through pedagogical typologies, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of why integration ideals persist despite structural, institutional, and cultural barriers, through an analysis of habitus-field alignment. The study's contribution, therefore, lies in unpacking the deeper social and institutional conditions underpinning lecturers' sustained belief in integration. It also suggests that these beliefs are not simply pedagogical ideals but strategic adaptations shaped by the distribution of symbolic capital and institutional strategic priorities.

Yet, when beliefs meet constraints, their practices frequently fall short of the beliefs and aspirations. The gaps between espoused ideals, beliefs and actual practices are not simply a result of logistical constraints, although these practical barriers undoubtedly play a certain role. Rather, it represents a deeper conflict embedded within their professional identities. Lecturers ideologically aligned with integration encounter significant institutional obstacles, which limit their ability to translate their beliefs into sustainable practices. It reveals a mismatch between their internalised dispositions and the changing realities of the academic field.

A critical interpretation of this issue through Bourdieu's concept of habitus reveals deeper underlying tensions than what appears at first glance as institutional or logistical challenges. For lecturers whose habitus has historically been formed in teaching-oriented environments, the shifts toward RI models represent changes in academic expectations and fundamental reconfigurations of their professional identities. As the academic field in Vietnam increasingly adopts international research benchmarks and outcomes-driven evaluation systems, the previously dominant habitus, which prioritises teaching excellence, now finds itself fundamentally at odds with the new logic of research prioritisation.

This phenomenon can also be illuminated by Bourdieu's concept of hysteresis, which refers to the lag between the evolving structural conditions of the academic field and the deeply internalised dispositions formed under earlier contexts (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). For lecturers attempting to adapt to the new research-oriented expectations, hysteresis manifests as a sense of dissonance or misalignment between their professional ideals (e.g., integrating R&T) and their actual capacities to achieve these ideals within the current institutional structures. In the context of VHE, the emergence of RI reforms has restructured the academic field. However, lecturers whose habitus was shaped in historically teaching-dominated environments may struggle to realign their dispositions with these new institutional demands. The teaching-centred habitus is historically and culturally grounded. Shaped by Confucian and socialist traditions, it has long valorised moral authority, ideological education, and pedagogical service, while placing less emphasis on the research dimension. Consequently, the emerging demands for research introduced by contemporary reforms constitute a new *'game'* with unfamiliar rules that many lecturers have not been trained to play. Their aspiration to integration is sincere, yet their capacity to operationalise this belief is constrained by dispositions that remain anchored in a previous era. This misalignment generates identity-based tensions: lecturers are caught between what they value, what they believe and what they can feasibly achieve.

More specifically, many lecturers, particularly those trained under previous systems, voiced confusion, scepticism, and resistance when faced with new research demands. Some expressed a desire to *"play it safe"*, fulfilling only the minimum research requirements to meet institutional expectations without fully internalising the value or logic of the research-driven model. These tensions were already evident in the findings, particularly in the form of confusion, uncertainty, and reluctant compliance (see section 6.3). Hysteresis in this context

manifests not only as resistance but also as disorientation and emotional fatigue in response to conflicting institutional expectations. This kind of professional dissonance once again does not simply represent a lack of willingness or competence, but rather underscores the enduring influence of historically embedded practices and dispositions on their contemporary experiences. The *"sudden"* and largely *"top-down"* imposition of research-related metrics thus clashes with their ingrained sense of academic worth and professional duty. The hysteresis effect thus generates more than logistical barriers. It further produces deep psychological and existential strain. Lecturers caught in this disconnectedness often question their own legitimacy, feel marginalised by newer norms or *"game rules",* and struggle to make sense of conflicting institutional messages. This further contributes to a sense of disengagement, fatigue, frustration or loss of professional confidence.

The notion of hysteresis thus sheds light on why even those lecturers who most ideologically believe and are committed to integration find themselves struggling to enact this belief consistently. This field-habitus mismatch can lead to various responses: strategic adaptation, reluctant compliance, quiet resistance, or even withdrawal from certain academic aspirations. The ongoing tensions between professional identity and institutional expectations, as well as lecturers' responses, underscore the complexity of hysteresis as lecturers navigate their identities in a shifting academic landscape.

It is critical to emphasise here that the hysteresis effect experienced by the lecturers might not simply be a matter of individual resistance or personal deficiency, but reflects broader and deeper systemic issues associated with the rapid and uneven trajectory of HE reform in Vietnam. These identity struggles represent a collective response to a shifting academic field that simultaneously demands international research standards while maintaining historical commitments to teaching-focused roles. Institutional ambiguities, inadequate professional development opportunities, and unclear performance metrics compound this issue. It contributes to lecturers' feeling unsupported in bridging the gap between their professional aspirations and institutional realities.

This deeper exploration, viewed through the lens of hysteresis, also makes contributions to the existing international literature on the R&T nexus. While scholars such as Griffiths (2004), Jenkins and Healey (2005), Robertson and Bond (2001), and Brew (2006) have offered valuable

typologies and frameworks illustrating the potential benefits of integrating R&T, these models often overlook the complex structural and cultural conditions necessary for successful implementation. By interpreting the findings through the lens of the concept of hysteresis, this study extends existing theories, illuminating why even integration-oriented lecturers, those most inclined toward adopting and valuing such practices, struggle to enact these beliefs in practice. This analysis, therefore, calls for a critical reassessment of the international conceptual models, which implicitly assume a degree of institutional autonomy and support for lecturers to enact integration. The findings from the Vietnamese case challenge these assumptions by showing that integration is not simply a pedagogical or personal decision, but one shaped by broader structural, cultural, and political-economic constraints. It reemphasises the need for greater contextual sensitivity in theorising the R&T relationship, especially in the context of how HE reforms impact academic identity.

The insights gained from this investigation also resonate with and extend prior scholarship that has engaged with the concept of hysteresis to explain institutional and identity-based tensions in HE. In this regard, a study by Dirk and Gelderblom (2017) provides a compelling example of how hysteresis manifests not only as a temporal lag between habitus and field but also as a multi-layered psychosocial and epistemological struggle within academia. Their study, situated in post-apartheid South Africa, illustrates how historical institutional positioning (e.g., conservative Afrikaans universities) led to the entrenchment of a particular form of academic habitus that later became misaligned with the ideological and structural shifts in the broader HE field. The authors demonstrate that resistance to curriculum reform was not simply behavioural or strategic, but deeply embodied and emotional, stemming from subconscious attachments to inherited cultural and intellectual capital.

This is also the case for university lecturers in this research. Similar to the conservative professors in Dirk and Gelderblom's study, many Vietnamese lecturers, particularly those trained in historically teaching-oriented institutions, face challenges in adjusting to RI reforms not simply because they lack capacity, but because their sense of what it means to be a *'good academic'* has been formed within an older logic of teaching excellence. As in the South African case, this transformation involves more than new tasks or skills; it demands a reorientation of the professional self. At the same time, the Vietnamese case adds a specific cultural-historical depth, shaped by Confucian ideals of moral teaching, socialist pedagogical traditions, and more

recent neoliberal reforms. These overlapping and complicated influences create a uniquely layered field transformation, intensifying the temporal lag and making adjustment particularly complex.

The concept of hysteresis thus gains analytical power when it is not only confined to describing adaptation difficulties but also employed, following Dirk and Gelderblom (2017), to examine the emotional, epistemic, and identity-based issues that sustain resistance or ambivalence in the face of reforms. Their argument that retraining is ineffective without examining the resistant knowledge embodied in the habitus finds direct resonance in the research participants' accounts, where institutional workshops and policy discourses promoting R&T integration often failed to translate into practical change. As shown in the findings in this study, it is not uncommon for lecturers to feel *"caught in between"* two logics – not because they reject reform, but because their dispositions and daily structures remain *'out of sync'*.

The empirical evidence from this study enriches Bourdieu's concept of hysteresis by illuminating its emotional and identity-based dimensions within non-Western HE contexts. While traditionally conceived as a temporal lag between changing field conditions and entrenched habitus, hysteresis is shown here to profoundly affect lecturers' professional identities and emotional well-being. This research thus expands the concept of hysteresis beyond its original temporal framing, positioning it as a deeply psychosocial and existential concept.

7.3. Prioritising research: Capital accumulation and implications for academic identity and professional practice

The policy orientation, which emphasises the research dimension as the dominant institutional priority in VHE, has reconfigured the 'symbolic economy' of the academic profession. This section discusses how such prioritisation reshapes academic identities, redistributes capital, and produces significant implications for both individual and institutional. By drawing on Bourdieu's ToP, the analysis further indicates how symbolic capital is increasingly tied to research performance, compelling lecturers to adjust their strategies, identities, and forms of engagement. This transformation also brings about ethical, emotional, and professional consequences, and potentially deepens existing inequalities within the academic field.

7.3.1. Shifting capital: Research as the new dominant 'currency'

The prioritisation of resource allocation towards research, as presented earlier, represents a significant shift in the nature of symbolic capital, the forms of recognition and legitimacy that confer prestige and influence within the academic field. Drawing on Bourdieu's theoretical framework, symbolic capital refers to the prestige, honour, or recognition conferred by a field's dominant actors (Bourdieu, 1986). In contemporary VHE, research productivity, as measured by international publications, citations, and research grants, has increasingly become the principal form of symbolic capital, overshadowing traditional metrics associated with teaching quality and pedagogical effectiveness. Policies designed to boost institutional rankings and global competitiveness explicitly prioritise research outputs over teaching excellence. Universities are increasingly recognising and rewarding achievements in research performance, thereby reshaping lecturers' priorities and professional practices. Such strategic responses reflect lecturers' attempts to accumulate symbolic capital within the shifting academic field. According to Bourdieu (1988), actors in any field continuously strategise to maintain or enhance their positions by aligning their practices with the prevailing forms of capital valued by that field. Lecturers, therefore, consciously recalibrate their professional activities, prioritising research productivity to secure institutional legitimacy and career progression.

The findings in this study align with other previous research on how HE reforms impact on academic identity in particular in how they adjust their strategies to adapt to the changes (e.g., see Bui et al., 2019; Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021; Nguyen & Tran, 2019b; Nguyen et al., 2021; Phan & Doan, 2020; Tran et al., 2014). Within the VHE context, the distribution and recognition of forms of capital have undergone significant reconfiguration through recent reforms. The adoption of international quality assurance mechanisms, the growing influence of global university rankings, and performance-based funding have shifted the symbolic economy of academia. Research outputs, English-language publications, and international collaborations are increasingly privileged forms of capital, especially in RI institutions. Conversely, other forms of capital, e.g., pedagogical experience, may be devalued in reform discourses. These shifts have significant implications for academic identities and practices. Lecturers who possess the newly valued capital, such as foreign degrees, English proficiency, or research publications, are more likely to be promoted and assigned to leadership roles. Others, especially those trained under earlier systems or located in teaching-focused universities, may experience symbolic

dislocation: their existing capitals are no longer sufficient or relevant, and they must either convert their capital, acquire new forms, or risk marginalisation.

More specifically, this study's findings are consistent with accounts that investigate policy-driven shifts which emphasise research as the principal basis of institutional prestige and academic advancement. As pointed out by Phan and Doan (2020), in Vietnam, the integration of global ranking logics into sector governance has entrenched performativity and output auditing, re-specifying what 'counts' as excellence (e.g., publication metrics, citation counts) and recalibrating academics' incentives accordingly. These dynamics are documented in the Vietnamese context, where rankings are described as a *'finite game'* that disciplines universities through indicators and auditing cultures, thereby redirecting academic effort towards measurable research outputs. In other words, rankings/managerialism have reshaped academic work and dislocated the R&T balance. In line with this literature, the present study also shows that promotion, recognition and workload allocation have become tightly coupled to internationally indexed publications, which lecturers must learn to prioritise.

Similar findings also come from institutional studies of research culture. This study's findings are similar to Nguyen and Marjoribanks' (2021) analysis, which argues that Vietnam's traditionally teaching-focused HEIs now face the leadership/management task of building a mobile, globally driven university research culture with performance indicators dominated by research outputs. Consistent with their insights, this research found that when universities brand themselves as 'research-intensive' or transition towards a research status, academics realign their practices to match the branded mission, with research performance becoming the salient pathway to recognition.

These results also reflect Bui et al. (2019)'s comparative work, which shows that under ranking/managerialist pressures, academics *'play the game'* of performance and orient towards research outputs that their institutions measure and reward. As Bui et al. (2019) employ a Bourdieusian lens to show how recognition and advantage in VHE are structured by the distribution and convertibility of different capitals and by symbolic power. This finding is similar to those in this study, which collected data indicating that, under current reforms, internationally indexed publications and English-medium research serve as the dominant symbolic 'currency' through which lecturers now secure recognition and mobility.

Additionally, this study's patterning of incentives toward English-language, indexed journals is consistent with discipline-specific unevenness identified elsewhere. Nguyen et al. (2021) show that discipline-based research cultures are emerging, but unevenly. They report that discipline-based research cultures are markedly stronger in the natural sciences and technologies (referred to as 'hard' disciplines). In contrast, cultures in the social sciences and humanities (referred to as 'soft' disciplines) are more fragile and subject to tighter constraints. They call for better-adjusted, peer-review-oriented funding (e.g., via the government's National Foundation for Science and Technology Development – NAFOSTED) and for redressing the *'hard-soft'* knowledge imbalance. This is also the case in this study. That is, the capitals most readily valuable for recognition are those that map onto international, STEM-weighted criteria-indexed outputs, citations, and externally funded projects. These patterns suggest that the 'symbolic economy' driven by reforms is implicitly STEM-weighted, possibly leaving the humanities and social sciences with fewer convertible capitals and rendering R&T integration more precarious in those fields (see Pham & Hayden, 2019).

Moreover, the interpretation that research has become the dominant 'currency' of symbolic capital accords with Bourdieusian analyses of how only legitimised forms of capital convert into recognition in a field. In VHE, the concept of *'new managerialism'* and ranking metrics legitimise particular research forms and trajectories, thereby narrowing what is seen and valued institutionally (Phan & Doan, 2020). The empirical insights gained from this research are consistent with prior Vietnamese scholarship (e.g., Nguyen & Marjoribanks, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021), which traces the recent development of the research-university project and the sector's ongoing efforts to institutionalise research capacity and culture as a credible route to prestige.

Consistent with the relevant literature, this research found that the incentive shift is uneven and can marginalise teaching-related expertise. Moreover, as others have noted, resource and cultural constraints (e.g., infrastructure bottlenecks, hierarchies) can mitigate the intended effects of research-first incentives, especially outside the *'hard'* sciences (Nguyen et al., 2021). These insights are also evident in this study, where some participants strategically pursue the *"playing it safe"* approach to satisfy metrics rather than making deeper pedagogical or disciplinary contributions – an adaptation also observed in Vietnamese and international analyses of ranking-led governance (Phan & Doan, 2020). These correspondences position the

Vietnamese case within international debates about the R&T nexus, academic identity and performativity in HE.

The findings in this study further align with the international literature on the R&T nexus, academic identity, and the global shift towards research prioritisation. For instance, Marginson (2013, 2018) highlights that global competition and the internationalisation of HE have fundamentally redefined academic value systems, placing research productivity at the forefront of institutional and individual prestige. Likewise, De Weert et al. (2013) emphasise that the traditional balance between R&T is increasingly disrupted, leading to widespread strategic realignments within academic communities worldwide. Yet, the Vietnamese case offers a distinctively nuanced perspective. It illustrates not only the structural and symbolic realignment of institutional priorities but also the cultural tensions and disruptions to habitus encountered by lecturers who must navigate this new landscape. The strategic prioritisation of research observed among Vietnamese lecturers thus goes beyond compliance with institutional requirements. It represents an active negotiation of symbolic capital, attempts to secure legitimacy, career advancement, and professional stability within a rapidly transforming HE field. This strategic shift has considerable implications for understanding the broader dynamics of academic work and identity, particularly in contexts marked by institutional transformations and global pressures. While the shift in capital incentivises strategic adaptations, it also generates unintended effects on other dimensions of academic life. The next section examines the ethical, emotional, and professional implications of this symbolic restructuring, particularly in relation to the responsibility of teaching.

7.3.2. Undermining the teaching dimension: Professional, ethical, and emotional consequences

While the growing symbolic value of research incentivises strategic prioritisation among Vietnamese lecturers, this shift carries significant consequences for their academic identity and professional practice. The findings have revealed a pattern in which research-centric logics, institutional evaluation schemes, and limited structural support collectively shape lecturers' engagement in ways that compromise the quality of teaching and erode their ethical and professional identity. This section analyses these consequences through the lens of Bourdieu's

concepts of field and capital, showing how institutional reward structures generate distortions in academic identity and practice.

One of the most salient consequences is a marked decline in teaching quality, often accompanied by emotional disengagement. This is not entirely an individual matter of overwork or inefficiency but stems from a systemic devaluation of teaching as a form of capital, as discussed earlier. In this context, even lecturers who value teaching may reduce their investment in it, perceiving that pedagogical dedication offers little 'return on investment'. Rather than an intentional neglect, this disengagement often emerges as a coping mechanism in response to intensified research expectations. As a result, teaching becomes routinised, less reflective, and less attuned to student needs – not out of disregard, but out of strategic necessity.

A related concern is the phenomenon of teaching avoidance and its implications for academic integrity. The strategic reallocation of effort away from teaching can take many forms. In some cases, this extends to practices that compromise pedagogical ethics, such as delegating core teaching responsibilities to junior staff without sufficient oversight and supervision. These practices may reflect not individual moral failure but rather the structural misalignment between institutional values and reward mechanisms. The academic field, now tilted towards research as the dominant currency of recognition, incentivises practices that inadvertently undermine the integrity and richness of teaching.

This reorientation also contributes to a broader symbolic devaluation of teaching as a professional activity. Lecturers increasingly perceive teaching as a secondary responsibility, a task to be managed rather than a core dimension of their scholarly identity. The institutional signals are clear: career progression, peer esteem, and rewards are overwhelmingly tied to the research dimension. Within this *"game",* teaching gradually becomes a liability – a drain on time and energy that could be better spent accumulating research capital. This shift in symbolic valuation gradually alters how lecturers perceive their worth and contribution. The erosion of symbolic capital associated with teaching, in turn, deepens identity and emotional dissonance.

Furthermore, the pressure to publish under time constraints, lack of support, and 'other duties' burdens can push some lecturers to engage in superficial, fragmented, or even questionable research practices. While not the norm, such cases reflect the dark underside of symbolic

competition. That is when institutional survival is linked to research productivity, the quality and ethical grounding of academic work can become secondary concerns. This is not unique to Vietnam but is intensified in contexts where reforms are implemented rapidly.

These concerns echo findings from other Southeast Asian contexts. Heng et al. (2022), in their study of Cambodian academics, highlight how the rise of research-driven reforms in developing HE systems can lead to reductive understandings of research and strategic responses that compromise its intellectual and ethical quality. Faced with pressure to publish in international journals, lecturers sometimes prioritise form over substance, emphasising quantity, stylistic conformity, and instrumental alignment with journal criteria, rather than epistemic rigour or relevance to local contexts. Such tendencies caution that when institutional value is overly tied to measurable research outcomes, research becomes a 'means of survival' and recognition rather than a vehicle for critical scholarly inquiry. While Heng and his colleagues focus on the Cambodian context, their insights resonate strongly with the Vietnamese case, where lecturers report similar struggles, balancing externally imposed performance targets with their intrinsic sense of academic purpose.

Finally, these systemic pressures take a profound emotional toll on lecturers. The identity dissonance between their values and their enacted practices generates fatigue, self-doubt, and a sense of professional compromise. For many, especially those trained in systems that only focused on teaching, the current reform environment feels 'alienating'. Lecturers may comply outwardly with research expectations, but internally, they experience erosion of purpose, coherence, and a sense of belonging. This emotional disengagement is particularly damaging because it undermines not only individual well-being but also the long-term vitality of academic communities. These consequences further caution against the risks of an unbalanced reform trajectory that prioritises research over teaching, affecting the overall well-being of lecturers. Through the analysis, it becomes clear that these are not isolated effects but systemic consequences rooted in how capital is distributed and symbolically valued within the academic field.

As Barnett and Di Napoli (2007) argue, the instrumentalisation of HE risks diminishing its formative and emancipatory functions. Similarly, Macfarlane (2016) cautions that an overemphasis on research can lead to a narrow conception of academic professionalism,

marginalising the pedagogical mission. This study extends these critiques by demonstrating how these dynamics unfold in a non-Western context, where historical commitments to teaching intersect with new reform imperatives, resulting in particularly acute tensions. Thereby, this analysis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how HE reform policies (re)shape academic identity, practice, and ethical and emotional dimensions of academic life.

7.3.3. Unequal opportunities and structural inequalities within research-oriented reforms

Another significant yet less examined dimension of prioritising research within VHE reforms is how structural inequalities have been exacerbated by shifting symbolic valuations. The findings of this study indicate that adaptation to institutional change is not equally accessible to all lecturers, reflecting deeper issues of inequality embedded within the academic field. Through Bourdieu's theoretical lens, these inequalities can be understood as resulting from differential access to and accumulation of various forms of capital. This shift in symbolic valuation, while encouraging strategic adaptation for some, simultaneously redefines what counts as legitimate academic worth. As such, it reshapes power dynamics within the field, advantaging those with convertible and recognisable capital while marginalising others. This subsection examines how inequalities are deepened through uneven access to capital, revealing who can adapt and who is left behind.

One of the most crucial aspects is the uneven convertibility of capital. According to Bourdieu, capital, whether economic, social, cultural, or symbolic, can be transformed from one form to another under certain conditions (Rowlands, 2017). For instance, social capital, such as access to international research networks or collaborative opportunities, can be converted into symbolic capital in the form of institutional recognition, awards, and professional advancement. However, as highlighted by participants like Ms Huong, this convertibility depends significantly on lecturers' initial positions within the academic field, their available institutional resources, and the alignment of their habitus with evolving field expectations. Lecturers with substantial social and cultural capital, often derived from international qualifications, English-language proficiency, and exposure to RI academic cultures, possess greater facility in adapting strategically to reform demands.

The narratives of lecturers such as Ms Nhi illustrate clearly how younger, internationally trained academics feel *'at home'* in the shifting academic landscape (as Bourdieu's language, see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). Her experiences of embedding research projects into teaching and actively engaging in research-informed pedagogical practices highlight not only individual agency but also the structural advantages conferred by her international educational background and exposure to RI environments. This scenario underscores Bourdieu's metaphor of *'fish in water'*, where alignment of habitus with the field's logic ensures a smoother adaptation to institutional reforms. In contrast, lecturers lacking similar international exposure and institutional support often find themselves in positions of structural disadvantage, akin to '*fish out of water'*, experiencing disorientation, self-doubt, or superficial compliance rather than meaningful integration into the new research-centric culture (see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

This disadvantage is particularly significant for senior lecturers, whose accumulated capital, primarily derived from longstanding contributions to teaching excellence, becomes increasingly misaligned with a field that is newly prioritising research outputs. While senior lecturers may hold substantial field-specific capital (e.g., academic capital), recognised prestige, or leadership and management roles within the traditional VHE context, this capital can lose its legitimacy under new institutional logics (i.e., new 'game rules') that favour research performance and international visibility. Professors previously esteemed for teaching contributions find themselves marginalised because their historically accrued symbolic capital no longer aligns with contemporary institutional valuations.

Moreover, these inequalities are exacerbated by institutional policies and evaluation frameworks that disproportionately reward international research visibility. Lecturers with limited access to international networks, lower proficiency in English, or fewer institutional resources face significant barriers to capital accumulation. As illustrated by the findings from the previous chapter, lecturers excluded from these resources sometimes internalise their structural disadvantages as personal shortcomings. This misrecognition deepens the inequalities, as systemic issues are misattributed to individual inadequacy, obscuring the structural forces at play.

These insights have critical implications for understanding lecturer resistance or disengagement. What may appear superficially as individual reluctance or resistance often masks deeper structural inequalities. Lecturers who appear less adaptable to RI expectations are not necessarily ideologically opposed to change, but rather constrained by their limited capital configurations and institutional positions. Conversely, those who adapt successfully may appear highly capable or committed, yet their adaptability may reflect structural privileges rather than purely individual merit or effort. This raises the question of equity of opportunities within organisations.

These patterns are not static inequalities but dynamic ones, subject to amplification over time. As presented, some participants cautioned that institutional reforms that accelerate research expectations may risk leaving already disadvantaged lecturers *"further behind"*. Their reflection illustrates how the inequality is not simply a matter of temporarily existing resource gaps but a systematic issue of inequity in opportunities. That is, those with dominant capital accumulation continue to accumulate advantage, while those without may *"fall further behind"*. This dynamic deepens symbolic hierarchies, not only between R&T but among lecturers themselves. In this way, research-oriented reforms may unintentionally reproduce or even exacerbate existing inequalities and inequities within the academic field.

Through this analytical perspective, the Vietnamese case provides insights into the broader global phenomenon of HE reforms in relation to inequality creation and intensification. This study underscores a vital need for policy interventions informed by structural considerations, thereby ensuring equitable opportunities and sustainable professional trajectories for all academic staff. The discussions in this section underscore that adaptation to reform is also a matter of capital access and field alignment. Bourdieu's theoretical framework enables a more critical and nuanced interpretation of the R&T nexus: it is not simply a question of whether integration is desirable or achievable, but of who can integrate, under what conditions, and with what implications for equity and recognition.

In summary, the analyses in this section 7.3 have shown that the growing emphasis on the research dimension in VHE constitutes a significant restructuring of symbolic hierarchies, professional identities, and the distribution of power within the academic field. Through Bourdieu's conceptual lens, it becomes evident that lecturers' responses to these changes are

deeply embedded in their access to capital and the alignment of their habitus with evolving institutional logics. The shifts not only may undermine the professional and ethical values of teaching but also amplify structural inequalities. In this sense, the reform process unintentionally produces 'winners' and 'losers', sometimes not solely based on competencies or achievements, but through the new 'game rules' of capital accumulation. As Vietnam continues its pursuit of international academic competitiveness, this analysis calls for a more reflexive and equitable reform agenda, one that not only rewards research productivity but also protects professional integrity and inclusive academic development.

7.4. Research and teaching (R&T): a promising but context-sensitive relationship under a Bourdieusian lens

Despite the ambivalences and complexities surrounding its theoretical aspects and actual implementation, the integration of R&T remains a prominent and promising ideal in current HE. Numerous policy documents, institutional strategies, and scholarly frameworks, such as Healey's (2005) influential typology, Robertson and Bond's (2005) framework or Elton's (1992) study, have sought to encourage synergies between the two domains. Other research, such as Griffiths (2004) and Jenkins and Healey (2005), proposed a widely cited framework of R&T linkages that positions integration as a key element of effective academic practice. These conceptual models often assume a level of institutional capacity and autonomy that enables academics to align their R&T in productive ways. However, other strands of literature have taken a more cautious stance, questioning the feasibility of such integration under certain conditions. As Hattie and Marsh (1996) notably argue, the widely held belief in a strong R&T nexus is not consistently supported by empirical evidence. Their meta-analysis found negligible statistical correlation between research productivity and teaching quality, suggesting that the relationship, while normatively attractive, may be more rhetorical than real.

This study contributes to current debates by offering an evidence-based, contextually informed, sociologically grounded explanation of why the perceived ideal of R&T integration frequently fails to translate into actual academic practice. Rather than assuming integration as either an inherent good or an individual choice, the analysis, drawing on Bourdieu's ToP, foregrounds how dispositions (habitus), structural positions (field), and access to valued resources (capital) interact in shaping academic identities and professional practice. It reveals how lecturers'

perceptions and practices of R&T integration are shaped not only by individual beliefs but by the alignment (or misalignment) between their embodied dispositions (habitus) and the shifting logics of the academic field. These findings are consistent with previous research (e.g., Brew, 1999, 2010; Tight, 2016), which similarly highlights how systemic pressures, resource limitations, and other challenges may impede genuine integration, especially in contexts undergoing policy reform.

The findings in this study have shown that Vietnamese lecturers generally subscribed to the idea that R&T can be mutually reinforcing. However, their experiences also diverge sharply, revealing the two distinct orientations: the *sceptical* versus the *integration-oriented* perspectives. These perceptual patterns reflect underlying differences shaped by their disciplinary backgrounds, generational positioning, institutional cultures, and personal experiences. They also reflected deeper tensions between institutional expectations and individual positions within the field, highlighting the complex and contested nature of the R&T nexus in the HE context. These orientations further characterise fundamentally different beliefs about the nature and purpose of academic work, as well as illuminate the alignment (or misalignment) of lecturers' professional habitus and the changing academic field.

These insights align closely with broader theoretical debates and international conceptualisations of the R&T nexus. They support existing international arguments regarding the potential benefits of R&T integration (e.g., see Braxton, 1996; Breen et al., 2003; Brew, 2006; Elton, 1992; Griffiths, 2004; Healey, 2005; Jenkins & Healey, 2005; Robertson & Bond, 2001). At the same time, they extend these arguments by highlighting the conditions under which such integration-oriented beliefs can be either sustained or challenged within specific national and institutional contexts. It therefore underscores the need for greater contextual sensitivity in theorising the nexus, not simply as a matter of individual competencies and attitude or institutional design, but as a field-level dynamic marked by structural inertia, historical path dependencies, and divergent professional cultures.

In this regard, the findings in this study may expand the conceptualisation of habitus by emphasising its culturally and historically situated nature. While Bourdieu's notion of habitus highlights its durability and adaptability, this study demonstrates that habitus, particularly within the Vietnamese academic context, is significantly shaped by distinctive historical and

cultural legacies. The findings have shown lecturers' habitus formed by a blend of Confucian ideals, emphasising moral authority and pedagogical duty, and socialist-era principles centred on collective service and ideological conformity. When confronted with the reforms prioritising research, these historically rooted dispositions become significant sources of professional dissonance, generating varied reactions ranging from resistance and disengagement to gradual, contingent adaptation. Empirical accounts from this study reveal some cases where lecturers, after experiencing initial dissonance, gradually adapted to changing institutional expectations. For example, lecturers (e.g. Mr Hung, Ms Huong, Ms Hien) who initially struggled with research demands began to engage more confidently once they received mentorship, joined peer-led research groups, or participated in targeted training programmes. These forms of scaffolding helped reframe their perception of research and the R&T integration from a burdensome imposition to a meaningful professional pursuit.

Such transformations illustrate a process of relearning the 'game rules' of the field. Lecturers began to reinterpret institutional expectations as invitations to engage with new modes of academic identity. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this shift signals a reawakening of faith in the academic game and a recalibration of identity investment. This reorientation may stem from both internal motivation and external reinforcement, suggesting that habitus can be restructured under conditions of sustained exposure and support. However, this potential for change remains contingent. Only those with access to suitable measures, such as mentoring or collaborative networks, were able to undergo such transformations. For many others, the absence of these conditions meant that their experience of hysteresis persisted. Thus, while habitus is not entirely fixed, it may not be easy to transform, depending on specific contextual conditions.

These findings contribute to emerging discussions about Bourdieu and change (e.g., see Costa & Murphy, 2015; Hardy & Lingard, 2008; Kloot, 2009; Mu et al., 2018), which challenge deterministic readings of habitus. They show that even deeply internalised dispositions can evolve when individuals are exposed to new meanings, communities of practice, and reconfigured field dynamics. In the Vietnamese context, this underlines the importance of creating institutional environments that foster reflective learning, peer mentorship, and the cultivation of academic curiosity, conditions that not only support individual growth but also (re)shape the culture of the field itself. Thus, habitus is neither fixed nor uniformly malleable.

Its evolution is contextually embedded, underscoring the significance of institutional strategies in enabling or hindering professional adaptation.

The Vietnamese case presents a particularly rich empirical setting for exploring how Bourdieu's framework operates beyond the Western academic field. As the findings have shown, lecturers' dispositions (habitus) are deeply shaped by a hybrid contextual formation. These layered influences have generated a complex academic habitus, one that values harmony, deference, and pedagogical responsibility, but is now increasingly expected to accommodate new roles centred on research productivity and global rankings. Bourdieu's metaphor of the academic field as a site of struggle between competing logics is particularly useful in analysing these issues. Still, it must be expanded to include symbolic structures unique to Vietnam's post-socialist and Confucian legacies.

7.5. Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented a comprehensive discussion of the empirical findings, interpreting them through theoretical frameworks and engaging with relevant international literature. Through the conceptual lens of Bourdieu's ToP, the chapter has demonstrated that lecturers' orientations towards the R&T nexus are shaped not only by individual beliefs but also by the alignment (or misalignment) between their habitus and the evolving academic field. It has analysed how the hysteresis effect manifests as identity tensions and emotional strains when historically embedded dispositions confront new reform-driven logics. The concept of hysteresis offers a valuable theoretical tool for diagnosing and understanding these deeper, systemic challenges. This study thus not only exemplifies hysteresis in practice but also invites a rethinking of global reform narratives that sometimes underplay the significance of embodied professional traditions and specific contextual influences.

The chapter has also explored how the growing symbolic value of research, underpinned by global policy discourses, restructures academic and intellectual capital in the field of HE, marginalises teaching, and exacerbates structural inequalities. These processes were shown to have both institutional and individual consequences, shaping how lecturers negotiate academic identity, professional purpose and commitment. Finally, the chapter has highlighted that R&T integration is widely recognised as promising, yet its realisation depends critically on contextual

conditions. It has also shown that the Vietnamese case provides a distinctive context through which to enrich global debates on academic identity, HE reform, and the complexities of enacting R&T integration. The chapter has contributed a contextually grounded and theoretically engaged understanding of academic life in transitional HE systems. The discussions in this chapter lay the groundwork for the final chapter, which will synthesise the main conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.1. Overview of the chapter

This concluding chapter aims to weave together the study's central arguments and clarify its scholarly and practical significance. It begins by revisiting the research questions and synthesising the key findings that have emerged from the inquiry. Following this, the chapter discusses the study's contribution to the relevant literature and the broader implications for theory, the field of study, and practice. Drawing on these discussions, the chapter offers recommendations aimed at policymakers and university leaders to better support a sustainable integration of R&T. Next, it discusses limitations of the study and points to areas for further investigation. These include considerations of the study's scope and methodology, as well as opportunities for further inquiry that could build on the insights generated. This chapter concludes with a reflective account of the research journey, highlighting its central contributions and scholarly significance.

8.2. Revisiting the research questions and synthesising key findings

The present study is formulated to explore how HE reforms in Vietnam impact lecturer identity, with a specific attention to their R&T integration, centred on two research questions:

1) *What have been the impacts of HE reform in R&T on Vietnamese academic identity?*

2) *Which constraints and enablers have affected Vietnamese lecturers' integration of R&T in practice, and in what ways?*

First of all, this investigation has found that lecturers generally perceive a mutual relationship between R&T. A dominant narrative among the participants is that the two academic roles are mutually reinforcing, aligning with the ideal of an integrated academic identity. Many respondents articulate the belief that engaging in research enriches their teaching content and pedagogy, while teaching provides inspiration and practical insights that can inform their research. They claim that active research involvement keeps their knowledge up to date, which translates into more current and intellectually stimulating lectures. Conversely, classroom

interactions and questions from students often spark new research ideas, suggesting a two-way flow of benefits. This widespread belief in complementarity suggests that, at the level of espoused values, Vietnamese lecturers view the nexus as a positive ideal, a means to improve both R&T dimensions. Only a minority of interviewees expresses scepticism about this supposed synergy. While these lecturers do not completely reject the possibility of such a relationship, they are cautious and doubtful about the practical benefits of linking R&T. Their concerns are that an excessive focus on research might detract from teaching quality or vice versa. They also acknowledge that various influencing factors (e.g., disciplinary distinctions) determine the extent to which R&T complement each other, which may differ for individual lecturers. Such scepticism, however, stands out as an exception against the prevailing optimism about the integration. Overall, the idea of the R&T nexus is largely endorsed by lecturers in Vietnam's RI universities. They perceive R&T as potentially complementary roles that, in principle, should enrich one another. This shared belief sets an aspirational tone, suggesting that lecturers conceptually align with the global discourse on the value of the nexus, particularly in their emphasis on the research dimension in their identity negotiation.

The findings regarding lecturers' perceptions and practices of the R&T integration, as well as their academic identities, are particularly meaningful in the context of VHE, a system with a complex history that is currently undergoing fundamental and comprehensive reforms. These insights may not appear surprising to readers in other contexts. Nevertheless, their empirical confirmation carries significant weight in the Vietnamese context, where multiple factors, particularly historical, political and cultural ones, have significantly shaped academic identity and professional practice. The starting point is a HE system deeply influenced by Confucian traditions, which historically emphasised the 'transmission of knowledge' rather than the 'creation of new knowledge'. In addition, Vietnamese universities have developed within a long-standing trajectory in which teaching was the primary mission. At the same time, research was largely conducted in a separate network of research institutes external to universities. Therefore, in the face of the transformations brought about by these reforms, it is crucial to investigate how lecturers perceive the relationship between R&T and, more fundamentally, how they negotiate their identities in the context of HE reform. Accordingly, the research findings need to be interpreted within their appropriate contextual frame.

The study has also revealed a landscape in which structural conditions and institutional changes significantly influence how, and to what extent, lecturers can integrate their academic dual roles. The empirical evidence in this study suggests that lecturers have encountered substantial constraints in negotiating their R&T as part of their academic identity. Chief among these constraints is the entrenched primacy of teaching in the VHE context. Historically, Vietnamese universities, rooted in Confucian educational traditions and decades of socialist educational policy, have valued teaching as the lecturer's foremost duty. This historical emphasis has cultivated what can be described as a teaching-oriented habitus. It is a set of deeply internalised dispositions, strong beliefs and work habits oriented towards teaching excellence. When reform policies and institutional priorities have elevated research to a more prominent position, some lecturers have experienced significant tensions. The findings have revealed that even those who wholeheartedly agree that R&T should go hand in hand have found it challenging to actualise this in practice. The shifts in institutional expectations, essentially asking lecturers to devote significantly more resources to producing research outputs, clash with long-standing professional identities centred on teaching. The consequence is that lecturers feel pulled in two directions by competing demands and expectations that are difficult to satisfy simultaneously and immediately, given the limited resources available. These issues often manifest as expressions of guilt, frustration, dissatisfaction, anxiety or anger. Lecturers express feelings of being overwhelmed between meeting publication targets and providing quality teaching, echoing a sense of identity tension where fulfilling one aspect of their roles risks undermining the other.

The concept of hysteresis from Bourdieu's ToP is instructive in illuminating these issues. In the context of this study, one can see a hysteresis effect at play: lecturers' habitual orientations (shaped in an era when teaching dominated) are 'out of sync' with the new pressures of a reforming academic field that prioritises research. This misalignment, essentially the time lag of habitus adjusting to a transformed field, has generated conflicts and challenges. Lecturers who have spent much of their careers perfecting their teaching profession now confront expectations and new 'game rules' for which they feel inadequately prepared. The findings indicate that this scenario leads to feelings of inadequacy, ambiguity, uncertainty and a sense of unwillingness, or even resistance. On one hand, lecturers intellectually recognise the institution's push for a 'research-active' academic profile. On the other hand, they often feel

like '*fish out of water',* unsure of how to meet these expectations without compromising their long-held standards of teaching excellence.

The dissonance does not always result in outright opposition or refusal; instead, it can lead to nuanced responses. Most lecturers continue to express support for promoting engagement in the research dimension, yet they often feel ill-equipped or unsupported in doing so in practice. Their responses to this dilemma vary. Several facilitating factors have been identified; for instance, some universities introduce incentive schemes (e.g., reduced teaching loads, financial rewards) for faculty members who publish in high-ranking journals. These measures sometimes indeed act as facilitators by carving out time for research or rewarding research productivity. Some lecturers take advantage of such opportunities, indicating that when structural support is provided, it can help them engage more deeply in research. Younger lecturers or those with recent training abroad also emerge as a facilitating factor in themselves, as they often possess stronger research skills, language advantages and networks. They are thus more comfortable integrating research into their professional routine. Such lecturers sometimes become local change agents.

However, these facilitating factors are sometimes double-edged or insufficient. The workload reductions and financial rewards for research outcomes, while helpful to certain individual recipients, also unintentionally reinforce a symbolic hierarchy that privileges research over teaching. The findings have shown that only those who already have a footing in the research domain can readily win these opportunities, leaving their teaching-oriented peers feeling further marginalised. Moreover, the evidence in this study indicates that institutional structures and policies have contributed to a growing imbalance in resource allocation between R&T responsibilities, with research being disproportionately prioritised in terms of time allocation, recognition, and incentive mechanisms. These strategies imply that teaching excellence often does not attract comparable recognition or reward, a reality that many find demoralising and unfair. This emerging disparity itself has become a constraint on genuine integration, as it implies a message that teaching has been a second-order priority, to be maintained only to a minimally acceptable standard, while one's potential career prospects largely depend on research performance. This perception and practice have led to several negative consequences related to academic identity, as well as professional, ethical, and emotional issues. Consequently, the facilitator elements for research engagement sometimes ironically hinder the

ideal of integration by encouraging a 'zero-sum' mindset. Lecturers feel pressured to shift their attentions and resources toward research at the expense of teaching, rather than feel motivated to integrate the two. These insights underscore the need for more balanced and supportive systems driven by HE reforms that value both R&T as integral components of academic identity and professional practice.

The findings have demonstrated that the institutional conditions further constitute another set of constraints identified in the findings. HE reforms in Vietnam, aligned with global trends, introduce new 'game rules'. The participants report that these changes translated into emerging specific institutional expectations (e.g., annual targets for the number of publications, requirements to secure research grants, or directives to incorporate international research standards). Nevertheless, lecturers often highlight the gaps between policy discourse and actual support. While universities now expect more research, there have been modest improvements in research infrastructure and mentorship. Libraries, research facilities, funding for conference travel, and research collaboration opportunities remain uneven across and within institutions. Many lecturers feel that they are being asked to *'do more with less'.* In this sense, inadequate systematic institutional support operates as a practical constraint on the integration. Even willing lecturers are not able to engage meaningfully in research if they lack fundamental and tangible resources.

Moreover, one of the most significant findings to emerge from this inquiry is that cultural norms play a subtler constraining role in certain dimensions. The legacies of Confucian and collectivist values in Vietnamese education have resulted in a status where openly dissenting or candidly voicing difficulty is rare. Lecturers tend to quietly comply with institutional demands out of respect for authority and a desire to maintain harmony, rather than openly negotiating their workloads or pushing back against unrealistic expectations. This cultural disposition toward acquiescence can mask the depth of the struggles they face. They seldom openly challenge the heavy research demands, but quietly cope by reallocating their resources or, in some cases, compromising quality or engaging in unethical practices. These issues have become more severe for young and early-career lecturers, who often find themselves at the bottom of institutional hierarchies. Thus, a kind of passive acceptance has prevailed, which in itself is a constraint on change.

In synthesising, the study identifies a multidimensional interplay of constraints and enabling factors that affect R&T integration as part of university lecturers' academic identity in their professional practice. Such constraints (e.g, heavy teaching loads, administrative burdens, insufficient research infrastructure, and historically rooted professional dispositions) significantly impede lecturers' ability to integrate the two core academic responsibilities effectively. Facilitator elements (e.g., policy incentives, workload adjustments, and the infusion of a younger generation of research-trained academics) provide some support, but they are not universally accessible and can introduce new tensions (particularly the research-over-teaching situations). The 'net effect' observed is that actual integration of R&T remains uneven and often elusive. There have been some 'success stories'; however, these remain piecemeal. Systematically, lecturers' practices tend to incline one way or the other, reflecting the underlying imbalance in how the institution structures their priorities and resources. The individual orientations are not merely personal choices, but they also correlate with structural positions and organisational priorities. This also highlights that context matters: the same reform that enables one lecturer to develop as a well-rounded academic may leave another feeling inadequate or even "fall further behind". Therefore, it is observed that the impacts of VHE reform on lecturer identity manifest in a range of forms, levels, and responses.

In conclusion, this study has examined discrepancies between the ideal of R&T integration and the realities of lecturers' profession in the context of VHE reform. Lecturers share general beliefs in the potential value of integrating R&T, but multiple constraints hinder their ability to do so. This gap between embraced ideals and enacted practices is a defining feature of the Vietnamese lecturers' experience in RI universities during the reform era. Importantly, it should not be considered a simple binary of success or failure. Instead, lecturers have put efforts into navigating a continuum of strategies, ranging from genuine integration to pragmatic separation of their roles, in response to the pressures they encounter, given the resources available to them. These varied responses imply that the R&T integration cannot be successfully strengthened without addressing the structural and cultural conditions that influence how lecturers perceive, negotiate, and prioritise their academic responsibilities. Without such attention, the push towards an RI model risks deepening the tensions and disengagements rather than fostering meaningful integration. Moreover, the Vietnamese case also provides insights into the broader global phenomenon of HE reforms, revealing how reform policies can produce and reinforce deep-seated inequalities in academia. These findings challenge simplistic narratives of

individual adaptation or resistance. This study underscores the vital need for policy interventions informed by structural considerations, thereby ensuring equitable opportunities and sustainable professional trajectories for all academic staff.

These insights provide the foundation for the discussions in the subsequent sections. This study's understanding of lecturers' perceptions and experiences enables critical engagement with implications for theory, the field of knowledge, and policy discourses, as well as providing further recommendations. It further re-emphasises questions about how academic identities are shaped and reconfigured, and how global models of the R&T nexus translate into local practice under HE reform efforts.

8.3. Contributions to literature

This section presents the study's contributions to ongoing scholarly debates in the existing international literature, regarding: (1) the R&T nexus, (2) academic identities, and (3) HE governance reform. In general, this Vietnamese case study enriches the global conversations around academic identity and HE reform by illustrating the certain conditions under which tensions between habitus and field manifest with particular intensity. It reveals that promoting meaningful R&T integration requires more than simply supporting it as an ideal. It demands careful attention to lecturers' historically formed dispositions, institutional support structures, and coherent and consistent reform policy designed to bridge the gap between policy aspiration and practice. Without recognising and addressing the hysteresis effect and its associated identity tensions, the reforms risk perpetuating cycles of frustration, demotivation, and superficial compliance, rather than genuinely transforming academic practices. By utilising Bourdieu's ToP, this study offers a comprehensive and theoretically enriched understanding of why perceived ideals about R&T integration frequently fail to translate into actual academic practice.

First, this study contributes to the current debates on the R&T nexus by offering insights from the Vietnamese case on how university lecturers perceive and experience the integration, and by foregrounding the structural and cultural conditions that mediate lecturers' capacity to enact integration. It highlights how systemic inequalities, ambiguous policies, and deeply ingrained cultural expectations influence integration in a post-socialist, non-Western context. The findings challenge the implicit assumptions in many R&T models that integration is primarily

a matter of pedagogical design or personal motivation. Instead, this study reveals how lecturers' perceived capacity for integration is profoundly shaped by many factors. By situating the R&T nexus within Vietnam's transitional HE system, this study extends the scope of the literature both geographically and conceptually. It contributes to a growing body of scholarship that frames R&T integration not as a universal good or inevitable outcome, but as an aspiration that is structurally and culturally mediated (e.g., see Douglas, 2013; Heng et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2014; Trigwell & Prosser, 2009). The present study provides empirical evidence to highlight how integration is unevenly realised in practice and variably interpreted depending on several factors.

Moreover, this study highlights the importance of acknowledging the disparities between institutional discourse and the realities of academics. While national and institutional policies often promote integration rhetorically, the actual conditions of practice, as mentioned earlier, produce a gap between belief and enactment. This rhetorical-practical disjuncture echoes critiques in the international literature of policy performativity in HE (e.g., see Carnoy et al., 1999; Gornitzka et al., 2005; Stensaker et al., 2012; Zajda, 2010) but gains additional complexity in the Vietnamese case, where traditional norms of harmony and deference constrain open dissent. This study reinforces the need to contextualise the R&T nexus in a field of symbolic struggle where access, legitimacy, and meaning are unevenly distributed.

Second, this study provides insights into the current debates in the literature on academic identities by demonstrating the relational and structurally embedded nature of identity negotiation in contexts of educational reform. Existing scholarship has extensively documented how academics negotiate the competing demands of teaching, research, and service (e.g., see Henkel, 2005; Kaasila et al., 2021; Le, 2016b; Macfarlane, 2016; Van Winkel et al., 2017), as well as how managerial reforms have intensified tensions surrounding identity coherence and role expectations. The current study further situates academic identity as a product of historical habitus, symbolic hierarchies, and field-level logics, thereby offering more insights into how identity dissonance emerges and is experienced in transitional systems. The Vietnamese case illustrates how deeply internalised teaching-centred identities, shaped by Confucian values and socialist pedagogical ideals, come into conflict with a rapidly changing institutional logic that prioritises the research dimension. The findings in this study provide insights into the field by demonstrating that academic identity encompasses not only what lecturers say about

themselves, but also what they can accomplish, given their position in the field and their access to resources and recognition.

By integrating Bourdieu's concepts, the analysis reveals how lecturers' responses, ranging from scepticism and quiet withdrawal to strategic adaptation, reflect not only individual dispositions but also the underlying symbolic economy of the academic field. These insights contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how governance reforms transform academic subjectivity. Additionally, the study highlights generational and experiential differences in identity positioning. While senior lecturers trained under previous systems often experience habitus-field dissonance, younger lecturers with international exposure appear more able to align their identities with RI roles.

By re-situating identity struggles within a relational and stratified field, this study supports and extends calls in the literature for a more structurally grounded approach to academic identity (e.g., see Amaral et al., 2008; Barnett & Di Napoli, 2007; Billot, 2010; Crossley, 2011; Dugas et al., 2020; Whitchurch, 2010). It also highlights the emotional and ethical 'costs' of HE reforms, underscoring a dimension of academic life that is sometimes underexplored in policy narratives. Ultimately, the study contributes to a more comprehensive theorisation of identity that connects individual narratives with systemic dynamics and that treats academic identity as both embodied and institutionally negotiated.

Third, the present study contributes to the literature on HE governance reform by offering a context-sensitive analysis of how global policy discourses are interpreted, mediated, and experienced within the Vietnamese academic field. Much of the existing literature on governance reform tends to focus on policy convergence, the diffusion of performance-based funding, quality assurance, and international rankings, and the extent to which universities comply with or resist these reforms (e.g., see Hai & Anh, 2021; Leisyte et al., 2009; Varghese & Martin, 2013; Wang, 2010). However, this study argues that understanding reform implementation requires attention not only to formal policy instruments but also to the symbolic and structural conditions under which these reforms are enacted at the institutional and individual levels.

The findings from this study reveal that lecturers in Vietnam experience governance reforms as a series of layered and sometimes contradictory signals. These include an emphasis on research at the expense of teaching, demands for publication without adequate support, and calls for international standards without addressing local constraints. Rather than framing this as a failure of implementation, the study conceptualises these contradictions as expressions of a changing field, where different logics compete for dominance. This aligns with Ball (1990)'s notion of policy enactment as a contested, interpretive process shaped by context, culture, and capacity.

By employing Bourdieu's theoretical lens, the study deepens these perspectives by showing how governance reforms affect not only organisational structures but also symbolic hierarchies, lecturers' identities and dispositions. The reform agenda implicitly redefines what constitutes legitimate academic work, prioritising research outputs and international visibility over local engagement. This redefinition may delegitimise existing professional values without explicitly negating them, resulting in compliance that is often superficial, reluctant, or emotionally fraught. In this way, the study contributes to scholarship on the 'hidden costs' of reform, particularly in systems where academic traditions and policy paradigms remain misaligned. Furthermore, it challenges linear narratives of reform success or resistance by highlighting adaptive strategies used by lecturers to negotiate reform pressures. Such strategies reveal the limits of assuming straightforward trajectories of reform uptake and point instead to a politics of situated negotiation, where actors reinterpret policy through their own positions, histories, and habitus.

Finally, the Vietnamese context enriches global debates on governance reform by illustrating how state-led modernisation agendas intersect with post-socialist legacies and Confucian moral orders. These intersections produce unique patterns of symbolic recognition, institutional authority, and role performance that cannot be fully captured by Western-centric models of university governance. As such, the study contributes to the growing calls for more plural, contextually grounded accounts of HE reform, ones that acknowledge the diversity of institutional pathways and the deeply cultural nature of policy translation.

In summary, this study contributes to the current debates in the literature on the R&T nexus, academic identity, and governance reform by foregrounding the interplay between structure,

agency, and cultural context. It enriches current understandings by demonstrating that R&T integration and academic identity are shaped not only by institutional policies or personal beliefs, but also by embodied histories, symbolic hierarchies, and uneven access to capital. These insights may provide a grounded basis for future comparative work, particularly in post-socialist or Confucian-influenced systems, where the entanglement of tradition, reform, and globalisation creates complex and often contradictory demands on academic identity and practice.

8.4. Implications

8.4.1. Implications for theory and scholarship

One of the important implications of this research lies in its contribution to academic debates, particularly its engagement with Bourdieu's ToP, and to the broader scholarly understanding of academic identities in HE reform contexts. By applying Bourdieu's conceptual framework, including the concepts of habitus, field, capital, and hysteresis, the present study demonstrates the robustness and adaptability of these concepts beyond the Western settings in which they were originally developed. Bourdieu's framework is considerably effective in explaining how macro-level reforms interact with micro-level practices in investigating the research problems.

The concept of field proves invaluable in conceptualising VHE as a contested space that is currently being restructured by global and local forces. Within this field, the study observes changes in the relative value of different forms of capital. The shift in the field's capital structure aligns with global tendencies in HE, but the study's granular look at Vietnam provides empirical evidence of how this revaluation plays out in a distinct political-cultural context. It shows that as universities adopt ranking metrics and world-class aspirations, symbolic and material rewards accumulate for those who excel in research, thereby reproducing a hierarchy that recalls Bourdieu's notions of distinction and power within the field. The implications for theory here are twofold. First, Bourdieu's idea of field-specific capital is reinforced; the Vietnamese case exemplifies how altering the rules of the game (through reforms) redistributes capital and thus reshapes professional identities and trajectories. Second, the data extend this concept by illustrating how cultural context can mediate these shifts.

Additionally, the study's use of the concept of habitus sheds light on the inertia and adaptability of professional identities. It highlights that lecturers' habitus, particularly for the older generation trained and long employed under a different set of institutional logics, carries the imprint of Vietnam's academic past. These dispositions (e.g., valuing teaching, compliance with authority) condition how reforms are internalised or resisted. Moreover, the hysteresis effect observed, where lecturers' ingrained habits lag behind the field's evolution, offers a concrete demonstration of Bourdieu's theory in action. The implication for theory is that hysteresis is a phenomenon in HE reform contexts: rapid structural transformations can generate a temporal discord with actors' habitus, leading to identity dissonance and inconsistent practices. Notably, the emotional and identity dimensions that emerged suggest that Bourdieu's framework, while powerful, can be enriched by dialoguing with other theoretical perspectives that account for affect. The lecturers' emotional responses (e.g., pride in teaching, anxiety about research expectations, and quiet frustration) suggest that the conversion of one habitus to another under structural pressure is not merely a cognitive recalibration, but also an affective journey.

This study invites theoretical integration, suggesting that a Bourdieusian analysis of academic change could be complemented by, for example, the sociology of emotions, to fully understand the consequences of field shifts from a humanistic approach. Nonetheless, the primary theoretical implication remains that Bourdieu's ToP is considerably applicable and illuminating in the VHE context. The study verifies the cross-cultural relevance of Bourdieu's concepts and expands their scope by foregrounding elements such as Confucian heritage and socialist legacies as integral to the field's structure. It thereby contributes a non-Western case study that challenges any implicit assumption that concepts like habitus or capital operate uniformly across contexts. Instead, it shows that they manifest in locally specific ways; for example, academic capital in Vietnam includes not only research credentials but also, at times, Party membership or administrative status, reflecting the unique interweaving of political and academic fields in this context. These nuances underscore the importance for scholars to apply theory with cultural and contextual reflexivity, as well as to adapt and expand conceptual frameworks as needed to capture local realities.

This study demonstrates the analytical value of Bourdieu's theoretical framework in non-Western contexts, provided it is adapted flexibly and contextually. It also supports the growing body of literature that calls for reinterpreting global theoretical models through culturally

situated case studies. By situating these theoretical insights within the Vietnamese case, this study not only validates the adaptability of Bourdieu's framework but also contributes to its ongoing development. It echoes calls from scholars such as Tran et al. (2014) and Tran et al. (2017b) for a more contextualised approach to educational research, one that recognises how global theories must be adapted to account for the diversity of educational systems and their socio-political embeddedness. This contribution is significant in light of the global diffusion of HE policy discourses (e.g., performance-based funding, internationalisation, and academic ranking systems). While such discourses may travel easily, their effects are mediated by national contexts, producing field transformations that do not fully align with institutional capacity or academic traditions. The Vietnamese case, with its postcolonial, post-socialist, and Confucian legacies, exemplifies how educational reforms interact with deeply rooted dispositions and symbolic structures, leading to uneven outcomes and new forms of inequality. Rather than treating Bourdieu as a static or universal template, this analysis suggests a need for *'Bourdieu with context'* – an approach that retains the relational rigour of the theory while remaining open to its political, social, and cultural adaptability.

In addition to theoretical implications, the study also speaks to the international literature on the R&T nexus and academic identity in the context of HE reform. Previous research globally has debated whether R&T are in harmony or tension, often with mixed results. It adds a novel perspective by illustrating that these debates should be situated in a broader context of the relationship between HE reform and academic identity. The implication is that the R&T nexus should be theorised not merely as a technical or pedagogical issue, but as a field phenomenon influenced by historical path dependencies, resource distributions, and priorities. In the case of this study, the nexus represents an aspiration that is not being sufficiently and systematically supported by the existing structures. This point likely resonates with reports from other emerging systems where rapid reforms outpace the capacity for implementation. Thus, the study reinforces calls in the literature for contextualising the nexus: it is not a universally achievable synergy, but one contingent upon alignment between several factors, such as beliefs, capacities, and structural conditions.

Similarly, the findings demonstrate how academic identities are (re)shaped under the impact of HE reform. The implication here is that theories of academic identity should integrate structural considerations (e.g., changes in institutional governance or national policy) alongside the

personal narrative accounts. Identity is neither static nor freely malleable. It can be established and reshaped by one's position in the academic field, and that position often depends on the value of dominant capital in that field that they possess. These variations caution against implementing one-size-fits-all staff development or policy expectations. Instead, they suggest that policies should be sensitive to heterogeneous identity trajectories within the academic workforce. It adds evidence to the argument that identity dissonance in universities represents a mismatch between what the institution now values and what many academics have been trained and incentivised to value for most of their careers. Thus, the study's implication is to advocate for a more critical sociology of academic identities in times of HE reform, an approach that Bourdieu's concepts facilitate by linking personal dispositions with institutional structures under the impacts of change. This means that future research should continue to bridge micro-level experiences with macro-level analysis, possibly drawing on interdisciplinary insights (from cultural studies, political economy, etc.) to enrich the Bourdieusian perspective. It also means that comparative work can benefit from this study's approach, examining whether similar hysteresis effects or capital realignments are observable in other comparable systems.

8.4.2. Implications for policy and practice in VHE

The present study provides insights for HE policy and practice in Vietnam (and by extension, in other similar contexts). At the broadest level, it presents a caution on the unintended consequences of reform policies on the academic profession. VHE reforms have been strategically designed to elevate research capacity and enhance global competitiveness. However, the evidence in this research suggests that without careful implementation, these reforms risk undermining the very goals they seek to achieve by overburdening lecturers, creating identity tensions, and deepening inequalities.

One key implication is the need for a more holistic and balanced approach to negotiating academic identity. Policymakers and university leaders should recognise that R&T are both essential to the missions of a university. A sustainable academic system must facilitate and support both. Currently, the incentive structure seems to incline so steeply towards research output that it has disincentivised investment in teaching. If teaching quality diminishes, it may, in time, affect student learning outcomes and the cultivation of future researchers, paradoxically and potentially harming the research mission as well. Therefore, an implication for practice is

that evaluation and reward systems need to be balanced. Authorities and universities could, for example, revise promotion and appraisal criteria. By doing so, the system would send a clearer message that both academic roles are valued. It also helps to eliminate the symbolic hierarchy that currently leaves teaching-preferred academics feeling like second-class citizens.

Another practical implication is the importance of capacity building and support mechanisms to enable lecturers to meet increasing research expectations. The findings in this research indicate that many lecturers are willing and wish to engage more in research, but feel ill-equipped or unsupported. These insights imply how the absence of adequate support systems can exacerbate existing inequalities, creating a widening gap between those with the requisite capital to thrive under new research demands and those who, despite significant efforts, *"fall further behind"*. This also highlights a gap that policy can address: providing targeted professional development and resources to support these efforts. However, as discussed above, any measure should be implemented in an equitable manner. If only a small number repeatedly benefits from these efforts, the divide has come to widen significantly. Instead, policies should ensure that all academics have equal opportunities for advancement and career growth. This would treat research engagement as a developmental right, rather than just a reward or a command. It may further help those who are struggling to get a foothold in the research 'game', rather than only those who are already excelling or advantaged.

Moreover, a notable implication from this investigation is the need to address administrative overload and role diffusion. Participants complain of spending excessive time on administrative duties and miscellaneous tasks *("other duties")* that detract from both R&T. This indicates that universities should re-examine how academic staff workloads are structured, especially those related to "other duties". In essence, role clarity and focus should be improved. Lecturers should primarily engage in academic roles (i.e., R&T) – the roles that require their academic expertise – and be less burdened by other duties that could be performed by non-academic staff. The implication here aligns with global practices that world-class universities often have robust administrative infrastructures that enable academics to focus on their core responsibilities, allowing them to excel in their areas of expertise (see Billot, 2010). While the current resource constraints in Vietnam may limit the immediate employment of new staff, even modest steps, such as better scheduling of duties, reducing duplicative reports, and employing digital solutions for routine tasks, can make a significant difference. University leadership should

actively solicit feedback from lecturers on which administrative tasks are most exhausting or redundant, and then take action to eliminate or simplify them. This approach might not only aid in the integration of roles by making space for them, but also boost morale. Lecturers who feel their time is respected and used effectively are likely to be more motivated and productive.

This study also offers insights for the design and implementation of reform. It has been evidenced that a one-size-fits-all, top-down policy imposition is problematic in a system as diverse and evolving as VHE. Lecturers in various disciplines, institutions, or regions have faced distinct challenges. A uniform mandate, such as 'increasing research output', will play out unevenly. Hence, a recommended approach is for policy to incorporate flexibility and contextualisation. The MOET and university administrators might set strategic visions and broad goals, but allow departments or faculties to devise customised action plans that suit their circumstances. This may involve setting realistic local targets, identifying specific needs, and implementing changes in a gradual and paced manner, in accordance with available resources. Moreover, there is a need for improvement in communication and shared understanding of reform goals. The findings have revealed confusion and varied interpretations among lecturers regarding the true meaning of a 'RI university' (e.g., some feared it signalled a devaluation of teaching). Clearer messaging is needed from leadership, emphasising that the aim is to enhance, not undermine, teaching. Leaders should engage academics in dialogue about reform rationales, addressing misconceptions (e.g., clarifying that 'research-intensive' should not necessarily mean 'teaching-neglectful') and listening to ground-level concerns. By involving lecturers in shaping how reforms are enacted (i.e., participatory governance), institutions can foster greater buy-in and reduce the passive compliance that currently prevails. This participatory approach can be formalised through regular forums, surveys, or representation of university lecturers in decision-making bodies focused on academic development.

Furthermore, the study's context-sensitive analysis suggests that VHE reforms should consider cultural factors and effective change management. The Confucian legacy of respect for authority can cause lecturers to seldom voice dissatisfaction, but it does not mean they are unaffected by reforms. In fact, the dissatisfactions often surface indirectly, in disengagement or quiet resistance. University managers should therefore be proactive in measuring faculty well-being and professional fulfilment. Developing a culture that encourages reflective feedback can help. The implication is that leadership practices should evolve in collaboration with policy

changes. A compassionate, academically informed leadership can act as a bridge between impersonal reform mandates and individual lecturers' capacities. This human-centred approach could mitigate the sense of pressure and other emotional consequences.

Last but not least, this study provides evidence to support Vietnam's push to develop RI universities, suggesting that differentiation and balance in lecturers' roles should be carefully considered. Some participants, including senior academics and those involved in policy design, suggested that not every academic needs to be equally active in R&T at all times, echoing models from international practice. This perspective implies that it should allow lecturers to explore differentiated career pathways or role specialisations within the university as part of shaping their identities. For example, some lecturers could be designated or allowed to gravitate into more teaching-focused roles, while others could be assigned to research-focused roles, all while maintaining a collaborative environment where both are valued and can contribute to the university's overall mission.

This is akin to the idea of a Humboldtian model updated for the modern age: while the ideal is a unity of R&T, the reality may involve some extent of specialisation of that ideal. That is, where teaching specialists and researchers work in parallel to deliver both excellent education and robust knowledge production (see Schimank & Winnes, 2000; Shin et al., 2014). Suppose an experienced lecturer has a passion and talent for teaching but struggles with research. In that case, it may benefit the institution more to allow them to concentrate on teaching (perhaps by taking on higher teaching loads or pedagogical leadership roles) while giving them credit and job security for that focus, rather than pressuring them into minimal research just for compliance. Because, as discussed earlier, research engagement should be treated as a developmental right, rather than a command. Conversely, a highly research-productive scholar might take on lighter teaching responsibilities to maximise their research contribution, as long as the department ensures teaching quality through suitable alternatives.

The data has shown that some Vietnamese universities may have already realised this idea by offering reduced teaching for certain groups of researchers. The implication of this study is to formalise and destigmatise such differentiation. It must be stressed, however, that even if roles differentiate, the institutional culture should not consider one as superior to the other. An appropriate balance may require strong institutional messaging that emphasises the importance

and respect for both pathways. Implementing dual tracks or role differentiation could be piloted carefully, with clear criteria and opportunities for movement between tracks, to avoid unfairly 'locking in' individuals early in their careers. This approach might address the scenario observed in the study: those who *'prefer research'* and those who *'prefer teaching'* can each thrive, rather than forcing everyone into an 'identical mould' that fits some poorly.

In conclusion, the implications for policy and practice in VHE revolve around creating an enabling environment for the R&T nexus to flourish, rather than assuming it will happen spontaneously or mechanically. VHE reforms stand to gain from adjustments that put support structures in place, recalibrate evaluation systems, and remain attuned to the lived reality of lecturers. The overarching conception is one of balance: striking and maintaining a balance between the emphasis of research and the safeguarding of teaching quality, balancing high expectations with capacity-building, balancing uniform standards with flexible implementation, and balancing support and opportunities among different lecturers with varying characteristics and backgrounds. Through such balanced measures, the VHE system can move closer to realising the positive and sustainable link between R&T that many lecturers themselves enthusiastically endorse.

8.5. Recommendations

Drawing on the aforementioned discussions, the study proposes several recommendations to help align VHE reforms with the well-being and effective performance of its lecturers, particularly in the R&T integration. These recommendations are targeted at multiple levels of stakeholders, including national policy (MOET), university administration, and departmental leadership:

- **Re-examine academic evaluation and rewards**: recognise teaching excellence alongside research achievements. It is recommended that promotion criteria, funding allocations, and reward systems be revised to explicitly include teaching-related accomplishments. For instance, MOET and universities could develop a framework for assessing teaching innovation and impact (through peer review of teaching, student learning outcomes, or contributions to curriculum development) that carries significant weight in career advancement decisions. National teaching awards or competitive grants

for pedagogical research and innovation could be introduced to elevate the status of teaching. By coupling research incentives with parallel rewards for teaching, policymakers could restore a sense of equity and signal to academics that quality in both domains is expected and valued.

- **Strengthen professional development and mentorship**: build lecturers' capacity to meet research expectations without sacrificing teaching. Universities should establish appropriate professional development programs that are accessible to all academic staff. This could include workshops on research-related skills (e.g., academic writing, methodology, statistics), seminars on integrating research into teaching, and continued English language support for international publication. Moreover, formal mentorship schemes are recommended, for example, supporting collaboration among less research-experienced lecturers with accomplished researcher mentors, possibly even leveraging retired professors or international partnerships for mentorship roles. Such schemes would provide guidance, feedback, and moral support. Institutions may also consider establishing interdisciplinary research groups or communities of practice, where lecturers can collaborate and learn from one another. Importantly, these initiatives may require dedicated resources and time. Therefore, institutions should allocate a specific number of hours or days per year to each staff member for professional development, treating it as part of the workload rather than an optional add-on.

- **Optimise workload and reduce administrative burden**: give lecturers the resources and focus needed for primary academic work. A critical recommendation is that universities should conduct systematic workload audits to identify tasks that consume lecturers' time without directly contributing to the quality of teaching and/or research. One suggestion is for institutions to streamline administrative processes and invest in professional administrative support staff. For example, dedicating staff or creating offices specifically to handle research administration (e.g., grant applications, project budgeting, report filing) could relieve lecturers of technical burdens, allowing them to focus on substantive academic work. Similarly, non-academic student services (e.g., career counselling or event organising) could be assigned to specialised personnel instead of lecturers whenever possible. To be more specific, responsibilities (e.g., form-filling, ceremonial duties, or minor committee work) should be minimised or rotated.

Universities should invest in administrative staff and technology to handle routine processes. Ensuring that each lecturer's formal job description has reasonable teaching hours (in line with international standards for research-active academics) and caps on administrative duties will help prevent overload. In cases where new initiatives (e.g., a curriculum reform or accreditation exercise) temporarily increase workload, administrators should acknowledge this by providing compensatory reductions elsewhere or additional support. Overall, the guiding principle should be to eliminate unnecessary tasks, allowing lecturers to devote their resources and efforts to primary academic activities.

- **Enhance communication and academic engagement**: foster an inclusive culture in navigating change. University leaders should prioritise clear and transparent communication about the purposes, significances and agendas of reforms. It is recommended that universities establish regular lecturers' forums or town-hall meetings where leaders can explain upcoming changes, and lecturers can ask questions and voice concerns. This two-way communication will help clear up misunderstandings and give them a sense of involvement. Additionally, universities could set up anonymous feedback channels or surveys to timely capture lecturers' concerns and gather frank input on problems with implementation. Demonstrating responsiveness to such feedback is key. By fostering a culture that invites lecturers' professional insights in decision-making, institutions can cultivate a more collaborative environment.

- **Explore differentiated roles and career pathways**: align roles with individual strengths while maintaining overall balance. A forward-looking recommendation is for the VHE system to pilot more flexible career pathways, where academics can have varying mixes of R&T responsibilities according to their strengths and the institution's needs, without stigma. Such flexibility could align with different stages; for example, mid-career academics might need time to establish their research, while early-career academics might devote more time to teaching excellence, etc. Implementing this requires careful development of human resources policies to ensure that neither track is a dead end and that transition is possible. It also requires a change in mindset: valuing a diversity of academic profiles as collectively enriching the university. If done well, differentiated roles could address the frustration of those who feel forced into a mould.

It enables a better alignment between an individual's passion and their responsibilities, which is likely to lead to higher performance and job satisfaction. Nonetheless, such differentiation must not inadvertently create rigid divisions or professional isolation. The goal is to create a complementary team of academics, where those who focus on research contribute some teaching to stay connected to students, and those who focus on teaching remain intellectually alive in their field to inform their teaching. University managers must coordinate these roles so that students get a rich education (research-informed teaching from some, dedicated mentorship from others) and research agendas benefit from pedagogical perspectives. This recommendation ties back to the idea of designing a 'game' (i.e., academic career structure) in a way that allows different 'players' (with varying skills) to find a valued and suitable position.

- **Promote flexible and context-sensitive implementation of reforms**: one size does not fit all – adapt strategies to local needs. MOET should encourage universities to develop their own contextually adapted strategies to achieve national goals. This could be facilitated through guidelines that allow for phased implementation and pilot projects. Universities could empower faculties and departments to set micro-level goals. The recommendation is for a participatory planning approach, involving lecturers in creating these plans so that they feel a sense of ownership. Regular review and feedback loops should be instituted. At the same time, create platforms for sharing best practices between institutions. Flexibility also means being willing to modify policies in response to evidence.

- **Provide support for emotional and cultural adaptation**: acknowledge the 'human element' of reform. Recognising that reforms impose not just technical or pedagogical demands but also emotional strains, institutions should offer support mechanisms that address stress and identity tensions. It is recommended that universities consider professional development in areas like time management, work-life balance, and even counselling services for staff. Workshops or retreats on managing change, possibly featuring senior academics sharing their experiences of shifting career focus, could help mitigate the struggles and offer effective coping strategies. Given cultural norms of not openly complaining, having confidential, possibly third-party-facilitated focus groups can allow lecturers to discuss pressures and collectively brainstorm solutions.

Leadership should be trained to be empathetic and proactive in detecting burnout or disengagement. Symbolically, it could be powerful when top management explicitly acknowledges in public forums that change is challenging and expresses appreciation for the efforts lecturers have been making. This kind of acknowledgement can significantly boost morale and self-confidence.

Overall, these recommendations aim to create a healthier ecosystem in VHE where the reform-driven goals of increased research performance and global engagement do not come at the expense of teaching quality or lecturer well-being. Implementing them may require political will at the policy level and thoughtful leadership at the institutional level. In return, the payoff could be significant: a motivated academic staff, capable of both excellent teaching and meaningful research, and a university system that genuinely realises the ideal of the R&T nexus in practice rather than just in policy discourse. By investing in support and seeking balance, Vietnam can avoid the pitfalls of reforms seen in some other contexts, and instead design a more sustainable path towards academic excellence that is compatible with its unique political, social, cultural and historical context. These recommendations may not be exhaustive, but they may provide a strategic and doable starting point for aligning policy and practice with the lived realities of lecturers.

8.6. Limitations and suggestions for further research

While this inquiry has yielded insights into the negotiation of R&T by Vietnamese lecturers under the impacts of HE reform on their academic identity, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. These limitations also provide context for interpreting the findings and point towards directions for future research.

Scope and generalisability. First, the research was conducted with a relatively small sample of lecturers from a limited number of RI universities in Vietnam. The qualitative, interview-based approach allowed for in-depth exploration of lecturers' perceptions and experiences, but it does not claim to represent all Vietnamese academics. The participants were selected purposefully (and via snowball sampling) to capture a diverse range of perspectives (across disciplines, genders, career stages, etc.), and indeed a rich variety of views was obtained. However, the fact remains that the sample size and its focus on certain institutional types mean the findings are

not statistically generalisable to the entire HE sector. Lecturers in other types of institutions might face different dynamics not captured in this study. The context-specific nature of the study, while a strength in terms of depth, is a limitation in terms of breadth. Readers should thus be cautious in generalising the conclusions too broadly. That said, the aim was analytical generalisability to contribute to theory and highlight issues that may resonate in comparable contexts, rather than numerical generalisability. Future research could build on this by examining other institutional contexts, thereby testing which findings hold constant and which differ across these contexts.

Data collection methods. A second limitation concerns the methods and data sources employed. This investigation primarily relies on semi-structured interviews to gather data, which is based on self-reflection information from lecturers about their perceptions and experiences. While interviews are well-suited to understanding subjective experiences and were conducted carefully, they have inherent limitations. Participants may have, consciously or unconsciously, provided socially desirable responses, for instance, downplaying negative feelings out of professional pride or cultural modesty, or emphasising commitment to integration because it is seen as the 'right' stance. The researcher attempted to mitigate this by building rapport and ensuring anonymity; however, the possibility of response bias remains. Additionally, without direct observational or institutional data, the research relies on lecturers' accounts of policies and practices. There could be discrepancies between espoused and actual practices. For example, a lecturer might describe how they integrate research into teaching, but without classroom observation or student feedback, one cannot independently verify the extent or effectiveness of that integration. Moreover, the study did not include perspectives from other stakeholders such as university administrators, policymakers, or students. Their viewpoints could diverge from lecturers' narratives, for instance, administrators might feel they have provided sufficient support, or students might have their own perceptions of whether lecturers' research enhances their learning. Recognising this, future research could adopt a mixed-method, multi-perspective approach, e.g., combining interviews with observational studies, surveys to get broader input, or analysis of institutional documents and metrics.

Focus on lecturers (and omission of student outcomes). The research directly focused on lecturers' experiences, not extending to student perspectives or learning outcomes. This is a deliberate scoping choice, but it limits the conclusions we can draw about the ultimate impact

of the changing R&T balance. One of the motivations for integrating R&T is the presumption that it benefits student learning. Conversely, a fear might be that pushing lecturers too hard on research could undermine teaching quality and thereby harm students' education. This study documented lecturers' concerns about that possibility and some evidence of them having to reduce the quality of their teaching, but it did not measure student satisfaction, engagement, or performance. Future research, thus, could incorporate the learner dimension. Surveys or focus groups with students could reveal whether they perceive changes in teaching (positive or negative) as the universities become more research-focused. Do students in these RI Vietnamese universities feel they are getting a better education because their lecturers are active researchers, or do they feel short-changed if lecturers are busy or absent due to research commitments? Additionally, tracking indicators like course evaluation trends or student academic outcomes over the reform period could provide data on whether teaching effectiveness is indeed being impacted. This would not only validate (or challenge) the lecturers' perceptions gathered in this study but also provide helpful feedback to policymakers about the broader consequences of their initiatives.

Temporal limitations. The study offers a snapshot of rapidly evolving phenomena. Data were collected during a specific phase of the reform process, and the conclusions drawn reflect realities at that moment. However, HE reforms and their effects are longitudinal processes, and the tensions and adaptations observed are not static. One limitation of the research is that it was unable to track changes over a longer period. Lecturers' attitudes and strategies may shift as they accumulate more experience with the new policies, as younger cohorts (with different training) become a larger part of the faculty, or as institutions possibly adjust their policies in response to feedback or shifting government directives. Therefore, a recommendation for further research is to conduct longitudinal studies. Following a cohort of lecturers over several years or revisiting the same institutions after a significant interval would allow researchers to capture trends, such as whether lecturers eventually adjust their habitus to meet new field expectations (hysteresis resolving over time). Does the initial resistance or tension subside, or does it intensify into burnout, leading to an exit from academia? Are there identifiable stages in how the integration of roles progresses (or regresses) as reforms 'settle in'? Longitudinal data could also intersect with generational replacement, as more internationally trained or research-oriented young academics enter the field. The overall culture of an institution might then incline

towards integration, potentially easing some of the tensions identified in this study that were tied to the 'older' habitus.

Cultural and societal context. The study is deeply situated in the Vietnamese context, which is a strength but also means the findings are intertwined with unique cultural, political, and institutional factors. Some limitations emerge from this specificity. VHE reforms occur under a socialist-oriented government at its own pace and style of policy implementation, within a cultural setting that values harmony, respect for seniors, and collective interests over individual ones. These factors were considered in the analysis (e.g., when interpreting why lecturers might not voice disagreement or why teaching has been traditionally esteemed). However, not all such factors can be fully explored in a single study. There may be broader socio-political influences, such as the role of the Communist Party in university appointments or the public discourse on HE in the media, that indirectly shape lecturers' experiences but were outside this study's scope. Additionally, external shocks or trends (such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the rise of educational technology) may be interacting with the reform context in ways that have not been thoroughly explored in this context. Therefore, another suggestion for further research is comparative studies or broader system analyses. Comparing Vietnam's scenario with that of another country undergoing similar transitions may help isolate which findings are due to common post-socialist or Confucian heritage traits and which are country-specific. Alternatively, future investigations within Vietnam could compare the integration of R&T in different regions or between national and regional universities, taking into account Vietnam's internal diversity. Engaging with policy analysis methods to trace how global ideas were translated into Vietnamese policy could also contextualise why certain pressures manifest as they do on lecturers.

Positionality and reflexivity. Another limitation involves the researcher's positionality and how that might have influenced the research process and interpretation. The researcher (as discussed in the Methodology chapter) is a Vietnamese academic, which likely helped in understanding cultural nuances and building relevance with participants. However, sharing the same professional culture might also introduce biases. Every possible effort was made to maintain reflexivity, as presented in Chapter Five. However, the interpretive nature of qualitative analysis means another researcher might have categorised or emphasised issues differently. The themes of *'tension'* or *'shifting resources and priorities'* emerged through the researcher's analytical

lens. While grounded in participants' words, different theoretical lenses or researchers with diverse backgrounds might have highlighted other themes.

In acknowledging these limitations, it is not to diminish the study's contributions, but to situate them appropriately and suggest directions for further inquiry. Each limitation opens up questions: How might lecturers' experiences differ in other settings? What would an ethnographic or longitudinal approach reveal about the process of adapting to new academic roles and (re)shaping identities? How do these phenomena look through the eyes of students or administrators? As VHE continues to evolve, ongoing research that addresses these questions will be invaluable. It will ensure that conversations on R&T integration stay grounded in evidence and sensitive to complexity, while recognising both the advances achieved and the enduring challenges that require ongoing attention.

In short, suggestions for further research can be included: (1) *Broadening context and sample* – studies in other institutions, including different universities or comparative international contexts, to test the transferability of these findings; (2) *Mixed-methods approaches* – combining quantitative measures with qualitative insights, to triangulate and quantify some of the patterns identified; (3) *Multi-stakeholder research* – incorporating voices of administrators, policymakers, and students to build a more holistic picture of the R&T nexus and its relevance; (4) *Longitudinal and process-oriented studies* – to observe how identity negotiation unfold over time, and whether initial tensions resolve or take new forms; (5) *Intervention studies* – perhaps action research where certain support strategies are implemented in a faculty and researchers study the effects on lecturer experiences and performance, thereby directly linking research to potential solutions.

8.7. Reflections on the research journey and closing remarks

Looking back on my PhD journey, I am reminded not only of a research project but also of a deeply personal and transformative experience. Primarily, this thesis aimed to investigate how university lecturers in Vietnam perceive and negotiate the integration of R&T under the impacts of HE reform on their academic identity. Beyond this formal objective, the journey also became an opportunity for me to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of change, identity, and the complex interplay between individuals and structures, both within HE and personal life.

As mentioned in Chapter One – Introduction, I commenced this research motivated by the aspiration to contribute meaningfully to ongoing debates regarding the academic identity of university lecturers in Vietnam. This research idea stemmed from a concern I have carried for years that university lecturers, particularly in contexts like Vietnam, are often spoken about rather than listened to. As the VHE shifts toward greater emphasis on the research dimension, the human stories of struggle, tensions, adaptation, and resistance are easily overlooked. My motivation was to bring those voices to the foreground, not through critique but through understanding. This motivation was both intellectual and personal, as I have worked as a lecturer in Vietnam and experienced firsthand the tensions between teaching, research, and other expectations.

At a time when significant reforms were reshaping the VHE landscape, considerable attention and pressure were directed towards lecturers, who were often at the centre of public scrutiny. However, much of the prevailing discourse around lecturers at the time frequently focused predominantly on negative aspects, such as ethical violations in research, declining teaching quality, and other related shortcomings. Given the significant influence of Confucian traditions in Vietnamese society, evaluations of lecturers extended beyond professional competencies to encompass moral judgments as well. This sophisticated intersection of cultural norms and professional expectations presented both challenges and opportunities for exploring a seemingly familiar topic – academic identity, particularly concerning the integration of R&T – in a uniquely Vietnamese context. Reflecting on this journey, I realise that the insights and lessons gained have critically reshaped my worldview, professional path, and future aspirations.

One of the most significant transformations I experienced throughout this PhD journey was a fundamental change in my worldview, personal core beliefs and values. Central to this transformation were Bourdieu's theoretical ideas, which were initially challenging due to their abstract nature but gradually became instrumental in deepening my understanding and knowledge. At times, the complexity and limited prior application of Bourdieu's theoretical framework in the specific Vietnamese context led me to doubt my capacity to contribute something original and genuinely valuable. Nonetheless, engaging with Bourdieu's conceptual thinking was intellectually demanding but ultimately rewarding. Those concepts offered not only an analytical lens but also a mirror for reflection. As I analysed the mismatches between field expectations and personal dispositions among the participants, I began to recognise similar

patterns in tensions in my own academic path and personal life. Moments of disorientation, hesitation, and emotional discomfort were not simply obstacles to overcome but reflections of deeper identity transformation processes that Bourdieu also conceptualised.

There is no doubt that this theoretical foundation provided me with the vocabulary and logic to think critically and make sense of not only the participants' narratives but also my own. Among the most valuable lessons learned from this research journey was a deeper understanding of myself and the *'fields'* in which I operate. I became acutely aware of the continuous movement and evolution at both the individual and structural levels, gaining clarity on potential mismatches between agents and contexts. These insights have equipped me with the ability to interpret and make meaning of tensions and complexities, offering reassurance, clarity, choice, and optimism in an age overwhelmed by information. Understanding these dynamics has enabled me to manage future possibilities more effectively and navigate the uncertainties inherent in both academic and personal life. I am therefore grateful for my persistence under the kind supervision of my supervisory team, which enabled me to handle this challenging theoretical setting. Although the conclusions drawn from this study may not be revolutionary in their novelty, I hope that they extend and enrich existing scholarship, fostering a deeper and more nuanced understanding and supporting practical and context-sensitive approaches to HE reforms in Vietnam.

More specifically, I have applied these theoretical insights to my personal life and found resonance and meaning. From the beginning of my PhD journey to the moment I am writing these reflections, my path has been marked by numerous unexpected challenges and transformative moments, both personal and professional. These difficulties tested both my academic resilience and personal well-being. The early stages of my research were overshadowed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, during which I contracted the virus multiple times. Following this were significant upheavals in my personal life, including the loss of loved ones, heavy disruptions in personal relationships, and identity crises. These obstacles were further compounded by substantial changes in my supervisory arrangements and the research direction, leading to periods of deep disorientation and self-doubt. Additionally, I experienced considerable conflicts arising from the disparity between the ideologies and core beliefs I had internalised through my experiences studying abroad in Western cultures and cultural values and traditions ingrained during my upbringing in Vietnam. These tensions extended beyond my

academic pursuits, manifesting in real and ongoing challenges as I sought to implement changes in perceptions, beliefs, and practices within my family and community. Navigating these personal and professional complexities significantly deepened my appreciation for the multifaceted nature of enacting and managing change, even at the scale of a single individual or small community, let alone within a country's educational system.

During these intensely challenging periods, my mental and physical health suffered considerably, marking a critical point of crisis. There were moments when I questioned my ability to continue, when fatigue and doubt threatened to block the progress. However, in those moments, the very themes I was studying – identity, role, change, tension, negotiation, adaptation, and meaning-making – took on new relevance. These very challenges provided the greatest opportunities for personal growth. I started to question and critically examine my own identity, *'the game rules within my fields'*, and the roots of the difficulties and tensions I faced. By making meaning of these tensions, I was able to define a clear and manageable path forward, step by step, and minimise feeling excessively overwhelmed and burdened. This powerful realisation is one I firmly believe has been constantly shaping my present and future significantly.

Another significant challenge was my initial lack of experience with qualitative research methodologies. This challenge, which likely extended the duration of my research process, compelled me to proactively engage with *'the rules of the game'* – immersing myself in relevant literature, seeking guidance from supervisors and more experienced colleagues, and consistently honing my qualitative research skills. This rigorous and humbling learning process opened doors to new knowledge, professional relationships, enriching memories, and career opportunities that I had not previously envisioned. During the process, my engagement with NVC also profoundly shaped how I listened to participants, how I interpreted their stories, and how I approached moments of vulnerability. NVC reminded me to remain authentic, present, and compassionate. The qualities that are as important in the research as they are in my personal life. It helped me attend not just to what participants said, but to what they felt and needed underneath their words. This approach to working with data and people was not imposed methodologically. Instead, it emerged from a place of personal conviction and growth. As someone new to qualitative research at the start of this project, I have learned many valuable lessons, including conducting interviews, engaging with participants, coding data, and

constructing themes. However, more than skills, what I gained was a way of 'seeing the world': a sensitivity to context, a respect for complexity, and a commitment to representing personal experiences with care and nuance. These are lessons that will stay with me far beyond this thesis.

In closing, I wish to return to the fundamental concern of this research, which is how university lecturers perceive and negotiate shifting academic identities in a reforming HE system. Both previous studies and insights from this inquiry confirm that reforms have an undeniable impact on lecturers' experiences and identities. However, such reforms alone do not guarantee smooth or effective integration. Instead, successful and sustainable changes necessitate adaptive strategies that recognise and accommodate the complex interactions among personal dispositions, structural conditions, and wider political, social and cultural contexts. The findings of this study highlight the importance of maintaining an adaptive mindset and being prepared to embrace continuous change, particularly in a fast-paced and multifaceted global environment. Preparing proactively for change may minimise potential tensions and conflicts between the old and the new, between internal motivations and external pressures, as well as between stability and transformation.

In the end, I have learned that understanding one's disposition and identity, appropriately interpreting the field in which one operates, and continuously making meaning of this interaction can significantly enhance the ability to balance and harmonise our various roles and responsibilities sustainably. It is through such reflective and adaptive engagement that individuals and other stakeholders can more effectively navigate and negotiate the ever-evolving landscape of HE and life itself with a sense of confidence, belonging, optimism and resilience.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I would like to thank you for being willing to participate in the interview. As I have mentioned to you before, this study seeks to understand how Vietnamese lecturers think, make sense of, and perform the research-teaching nexus in their daily work. Secondly, the research also examines which factors and to what extent these factors facilitate or hinder Vietnamese lecturers' integration of their research and teaching activities.

The interview today will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes, and I will be asking you about your thoughts and experiences in your daily work.

You completed a consent form indicating that I have your permission to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording our conversation today?

If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record.

If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]

If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time.

Please note that during the interview, you can take breaks as you wish and decide to stop the interview at any point. You do not need to answer all the questions if you do not want to without giving reasons.

Indicative themes/questions:

1. **Background of the participant:** some general questions about his/her job, such as major/ discipline, year of experience, any management position, etc.
2. **Interpretation of research-intensive university and role of academic identity**

- How do you understand a research-intensive university?
- How do you understand the dual role of lecturers in performing research and teaching in a research-intensive university?
- Are there any benefits/ challenges arising from performing these two tasks in your daily work? If yes, what are they?

3. **Perception and practice of research-teaching nexus**

- How do you understand teaching as a duty of a lecturer?
- How do you understand researching as a duty of a lecturer?

- Do you think there is a relationship between research and teaching as the two main duties of a lecturer?
- Do you think your teaching and research activities have any relationship in your practice?
    - If not, why don't you integrate these two activities? What factors and to what extent do these factors prevent the relationship?
    - If yes, is it a positive or negative relationship?
        - If positive, in what ways/ forms do you integrate these two activities? How does this benefit your profession of doing research and teaching? What factors and to what extent do these factors facilitate this relationship?
        - If negative, in what ways/forms does one activity negatively influence the other activity? What factors and to what extent do these factors hinder the relationship?

Before we conclude this interview, is there anything you want to share with me?

- End -

Appendix B: Ethics Application Approval

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

21 December 2022

Dear Nguyen Thai Truong Le

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: THE RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION OF RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE REFORMS IN VIETNAM

Application No: 400220132

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 02/02/2023
- Project end date: 30/11/2024
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences: socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research: (https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf)
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The **Request for Amendments to an Approved Application** form should be used: https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/

Yours sincerely,

Dr Susan A. Batchelor
College Ethics Lead

Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet

Vietnamese version

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

THÔNG TIN DÀNH CHO NGƯỜI THAM GIA PHỎNG VẤN

Tên dự án: **MỐI LIÊN HỆ GIỮA NGHIÊN CỨU KHOA HỌC VÀ GIẢNG DẠY Ở GIÁO DỤC ĐẠI HỌC: NGHIÊN CỨU Ở CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC ĐỊNH HƯỚNG NGHIÊN CỨU TRONG BỐI CẢNH CẢI CÁCH QUẢN TRỊ ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM**

Project Title: *THE RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION OF RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE REFORMS IN VIETNAM*

Nghiên cứu sinh: Lê Nguyên Thái Trường

Người hướng dẫn: Tiến sĩ Mark Murphy và Tiến sĩ Stephen Parker

Chương trình đào tạo: Tiến sĩ Giáo dục học – Đại học Glasgow, Vương Quốc Anh

Xin trân trọng kính mời Quý Thầy Cô tham gia dự án nghiên cứu về **"Mối liên hệ giữa nghiên cứu khoa học và giảng dạy ở giáo dục đại học: nghiên cứu ở các trường đại học định hướng nghiên cứu trong bối cảnh cải cách quản trị đại học ở Việt Nam"**. Trước khi đồng ý tham gia vào nghiên cứu này, rất mong Quý Thầy Cô có thể hiểu rõ về mục đích của nghiên cứu và những yêu cầu về việc tham dự này. Xin Quý Thầy Cô hãy đọc kĩ những thông tin bên dưới và có thể thảo luận thêm với những người khác nếu cần. Nếu có bất kì điều gì chưa rõ và cần thông tin thêm, xin Quý Thầy Cô hãy đặt câu hỏi, tôi rất sẵn lòng để giải đáp một cách chi tiết. Rất mong Quý Thầy Cô dành thời gian để cân nhắc việc tham gia hỗ trợ cho dự án nghiên cứu này.

Xin trân trọng cám ơn Quý Thầy Cô.

1. Tóm tắt mục đích và ý nghĩa của nghiên cứu

Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu về mối liên hệ giữa hai chức năng chính của trường đại học Việt Nam – nghiên cứu khoa học và giảng dạy, với hai mục đích chính như sau. Trước hết, nhà nghiên cứu mong muốn tìm hiểu giảng viên đại học ở Việt Nam nhận thức và thực hành mối liên kết giữa nhiệm vụ nghiên cứu và giảng dạy trong công việc hằng ngày như thế nào. Cùng với đó, nghiên cứu này mong muốn khám phá các nhân tố ảnh hưởng và mức độ ảnh hưởng của những nhân tố này đến sự kết hợp giữa hoạt động nghiên cứu và giảng dạy của giảng viên.

Các kết quả của nghiên cứu này được kỳ vọng sẽ mang lại những đóng góp quan trọng về mặt lý thuyết cũng như thực tiễn trong việc kết nối hai chức năng quan trọng của các trường đại học là nghiên cứu và giảng dạy. Nghiên cứu này kỳ vọng sẽ khám phá và tổng hợp một cách có hệ thống các cách thức kết nối nghiên cứu-giảng dạy; từ đó hình thành một mô hình tham chiếu cho giảng viên trong việc kết nối có hiệu quả hoạt động giảng dạy và nghiên cứu. Hơn nữa, kết quả của nghiên cứu này kỳ vọng sẽ đưa ra các kiến nghị thực tế về chính sách cho các nhà quản lý và lãnh đạo nhà trường trong việc tạo môi trường làm việc phù hợp cho giảng viên. Ngoài ra, tham gia vào dự án nghiên cứu này cũng có thể sẽ là cơ hội tốt để Quý Thầy Cô suy ngẫm về thực tiễn giảng dạy và nghiên cứu của mình.

2. Việc tham gia vào dự án nghiên cứu cụ thể là như thế nào?

Quý Thầy Cô sẽ được mời tham gia vào một buổi phỏng vấn cá nhân trong khoảng thời gian từ 45 đến 60 phút. Buổi phỏng vấn sẽ diễn ra bằng Tiếng Việt và được thu âm lại nhằm mục đích phục vụ việc phân tích dữ liệu. Nếu cảm thấy không tiện, Quý Thầy Cô có thể yêu cầu không ghi âm toàn bộ hoặc bất kỳ phần nào của buổi phỏng vấn mà không cần giải thích lí do.

Buổi phỏng vấn sẽ diễn ra tại nơi làm việc hoặc bất kì một địa điểm nào thuận tiện cho Quý Thầy Cô, kể cả phỏng vấn trực tuyến (chẳng hạn như Zoom,…). Các câu hỏi phỏng vấn sẽ xoay quanh những suy nghĩ và trải nghiệm thực tế trong công việc hằng ngày của Quý Thầy Cô. Quý Thầy Cô không cần trả lời hết tất cả các câu hỏi nếu cảm thấy không tiện trả lời mà không cần giải thích lí do.

Buổi phỏng vấn sẽ chỉ được diễn ra khi Quý Thầy Cô đã được cung cấp đầy đủ các thông tin về dự án nghiên cứu và đồng ý tự nguyện tham gia. Trong quá trình phỏng vấn, Quý Thầy Cô có thể tạm ngưng hoặc dừng buổi phỏng vấn vào bất kỳ lúc nào mà không cần giải thích lí do.

3. Việc lưu trữ, phân tích và sử dụng dữ liệu nghiên cứu sẽ diễn ra như thế nào?

Tất cả các dữ liệu thu thập sẽ được lưu trữ một cách an toàn và sẽ được xóa vĩnh viễn sau khi hết thời hạn lưu trữ. Các tài liệu dưới dạng in sẽ được lưu trữ trong ngăn tủ có khóa tại nhà riêng của nhà nghiên cứu. Các tài liệu dưới dạng điện tử sẽ được lưu trữ trong các thư mục có mật mã bảo vệ trong máy tính cá nhân của nhà nghiên cứu. Tất cả các tập tin và tài liệu chứa thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy Cô sẽ được xóa, hủy một cách an toàn ngay sau khi dự án kết thúc. Các dữ liệu nghiên cứu còn lại (không chứa thông tin cá nhân) sẽ được lưu trữ trong vòng mười năm tiếp theo; và có thể được chia sẻ cho các nhà nghiên cứu khác nếu có yêu cầu.

Dữ liệu thu thập sẽ được nhà nghiên cứu sử dụng để viết luận án tiến sĩ, cũng như các công bố khoa học khác. Quý Thầy Cô có thể yêu cầu nhà nghiên cứu gởi bản tóm tắt kết quả nghiên cứu nếu cần. Những thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy Cô sẽ không được tiết lộ để đảm bảo tính riêng tư và bảo mật, tuân theo các ràng buộc pháp lý và đạo đức nghề nghiệp. Trong nội dung của luận án và các công bố khoa học khác, khi cần đề cập đến, tên của Quý Thầy Cô sẽ được thay đổi, và sẽ không có cách nào để xác định được danh tính của người cung cấp thông tin. Những biện pháp để đảm bảo tính bảo mật như trên sẽ được thực hiện hết mức có thể, nhưng vẫn có thể không hoàn toàn được đảm bảo trong một số trường hợp ngoại lệ, chẳng hạn như là trong quá trình trao đổi, nếu nhận thấy rằng có ai đó đang gặp nguy hiểm, nhà nghiên cứu buộc phải thông tin việc này đến các bên có liên quan.

4. Thông tin liên hệ

Nếu Quý Thầy Cô có bất kì câu hỏi nào cần được giải đáp về dự án nghiên cứu này, xin hãy liên hệ nhà nghiên cứu qua địa chỉ email: n.le.2@research.gla.ac.uk

Quý Thầy Cô cũng có thể liên hệ Người hướng dẫn của nghiên cứu:
Tiến sĩ Mark Murphy: Mark.murphy.2@glasgow.ac.uk
Tiến sĩ Stephen Parker: Stepehen.Parker@glasgow.ac.uk

Nếu Quý Thầy Cô có bất kì khiếu nại gì về quá trình thực hiện nghiên cứu này, xin hãy liên hệ Tiến sĩ Benjamin Franks (socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk) - Acting Lead for Ethical Review, College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom.

Dự án nghiên cứu này đã được xem xét và chấp thuận bởi Hội đồng về Đạo đức Nghiên cứu của Trường Đại học Khoa học xã hội, Đại học Glasgow, Vương Quốc Anh

English version

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Participant Information Sheet for Interview

Project Title: THE RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION OF RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE REFORMS IN VIETNAM

Researcher: Nguyen Thai Truong Le

Supervisors: Dr Mark Murphy
Dr Stephen Parker

PGR Programme Title: PhD in Education (Research)

You are being invited to take part in a study investigating the research-teaching nexus in research-intensive universities in Vietnam. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask the researcher if there is anything unclear or if you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

1. The purpose and significance of the research

This study focuses on the relationship between the two major functions of Vietnamese universities, research and teaching, with two main aims. Firstly, the researcher investigates Vietnamese university lecturers' perceptions and practices of the research-teaching nexus in Vietnamese research-intensive universities. This study seeks to understand how Vietnamese lecturers think, make sense of, and perform the research-teaching nexus in their daily work. Secondly, the research also examines which factors and to what extent these factors facilitate or hinder Vietnamese lecturers' integration of their research and teaching activities.

The outcome of this research project may help to improve understanding of the relationship between these two major functions of universities in terms of 1) the definition of the "research-teaching nexus", 2) the typology of the research-teaching nexus, and 3) the motives/barriers to this relationship. Thus, the research findings may help contribute to the existing knowledge and benefit other researchers involving this research topic. In addition, participating in the interviews might be a good chance for you to think and reflect on your practice. The typology of the research-teaching nexus may provide a helpful framework for lecturers seeking to link their research and teaching in different ways. Moreover, research findings may also benefit institutional leaders at the department and university levels to understand and create appropriate environments for their employees.

2. What is involved in participating?

You are being invited to take part in a one-on-one interview which will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. During the interview, I will ask you questions about your thoughts and experiences in your daily professional work. You do not need to answer all the interview questions if you do not want to or feel uncomfortable without giving any reason.

The interview will take place only if you have been provided with sufficient information about the research project and agree to participate in the interview by signing the consent form. This may take place at your workplace, or any location, or even online (e.g. via Zoom) if that is convenient for you. The interview will be conducted in Vietnamese and audio-recorded which is for the purpose of analysing data. You can ask not to record all or any part of the interview if you feel uncomfortable without giving any reason. During the interview, you can ask to stop or take breaks at any point if you want. Your participation is entirely voluntary, so you have a right to withdraw at any time without prejudice.

3. Data storing, analysing and using

All data will be kept safe during the research project and permanently deleted in due time. All printed documents will be stored in a locked cabinet at my home. All electronic files will be stored in password-protected folders in the researcher's personal laptop (password required to access). Personal data will be destroyed at the project's end date. Research data that do not include personal information will be retained for ten years.

All participants will be referred to by pseudonym in analysing data and any publication arising from the research. Your identity will be anonymised by an irreversible process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record of how the code relates to the participants' identifiers. Confidentiality will be respected subject to legal constraints and professional guidelines. Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible unless, during our conversation, I hear anything which makes me worried that someone might be in danger of harm; I might have to inform relevant agencies of this.

I will use the information you give me to write my PhD dissertation. In addition, findings and data from this study can be used to write journal articles and conference papers. You can ask me to send you the summary of the findings if you want. Furthermore, research data that do not include personal information may be made available to other researchers by personal request.

4. Contact information

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me via my email address: n.le.2@research.gla.ac.uk
You may also contact my supervisors:
Dr Mark Murphy: Mark.murphy.2@glasgow.ac.uk
Dr Stephen Parker: Stepehen.Parker@glasgow.ac.uk

To pursue any complaint about the conduct of the research: please contact Dr Benjamin Franks (socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk) as Acting Lead for Ethical Review, College of Social Sciences.

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom.

Appendix D: Privacy Notice

Vietnamese version

THÔNG TIN VỀ QUYỀN RIÊNG TƯ

Thông tin về quyền riêng tư dành cho người tham gia dự án nghiên cứu: **MỐI LIÊN HỆ GIỮA NGHIÊN CỨU KHOA HỌC VÀ GIẢNG DẠY Ở GIÁO DỤC ĐẠI HỌC: NGHIÊN CỨU Ở CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC ĐỊNH HƯỚNG NGHIÊN CỨU TRONG BỐI CẢNH CẢI CÁCH QUẢN TRỊ ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM**

Nghiên cứu sinh: LÊ NGUYÊN THÁI TRƯỜNG

Về thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy/ Cô

Đại học Glasgow sẽ đóng vai trò là đơn vị "kiểm soát dữ liệu" trong quá trình xử lý thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy Cô khi tham gia dự án nghiên cứu: MỐI LIÊN HỆ GIỮA NGHIÊN CỨU KHOA HỌC VÀ GIẢNG DẠY Ở GIÁO DỤC ĐẠI HỌC: NGHIÊN CỨU Ở CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC ĐỊNH HƯỚNG NGHIÊN CỨU TRONG BỐI CẢNH CẢI CÁCH QUẢN TRỊ ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM. **Phiếu thông tin về quyền riêng tư** này sẽ giải thích cách thức mà Đại học Glasgow xử lý các thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy Cô.

Vì sao chúng tôi cần thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy Cô?

Chúng tôi thực hiện thu thập thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy Cô như tên và thông tin liên lạc nhằm phục vụ cho quá trình nghiên cứu. Chúng tôi cần tên và thông tin liêc lạc để sắp xếp các buổi phỏng vấn hoặc lấy thêm các dữ liệu khác dựa trên các dữ liệu mà Thầy Cô đã cung cấp.

Chúng tôi chỉ lấy những dữ liệu cần thiết cho dự án nghiên cứu và sẽ tách phần thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy Cô khỏi các dữ liệu nghiên cứu (ví dụ như khỏi các câu trả lời của Thầy Cô trong buổi phỏng vấn) bằng cách dùng tên thay thế.

Cụ thể, xin mời Quý Thầy Cô xem thêm phiếu **Thông tin dành cho người tham gia.**

Cơ sở pháp lý cho việc xử lý thông tin

Cơ sở pháp lý là một điều cần thiết khi xử lý mọi loại thông tin cá nhân. Và vì việc xử lý các thông tin cá nhân trong nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích Nghiên cứu khoa học nên chúng tôi sẽ xử lý các thông tin cá nhân mà Thầy Cô cung cấp dựa trên các cơ sở của việc "thực hiện các nhiệm vụ phục vụ lợi ích cộng đồng". Với bất kì loại thông tin thuộc nhóm đặc biệt nào được thu thập, chúng tôi sẽ xử lý chúng trên cơ sở rằng đây là một việc làm cần thiết cho mục đích lưu trữ, mục đích nghiên cứu khoa học, lịch sử hoặc mục đích thống kê.

Bên cạnh đó, để đảm bảo việc thực hiện nghiên cứu này đáp ứng được các yêu cầu về mặt đạo đức cũng như sự tự nguyện của người tham gia, xin mời Quý Thầy Cô đọc kỹ nội dung của **Phiếu chấp thuận tham gia**.

Chúng tôi sẽ xử lý thông tin cá nhân của Thầy Cô như thế nào và sẽ chia sẻ các thông tin này cho ai?

Tất cả các thông tin cá nhân mà Quý Thầy Cô cung cấp sẽ được xử lý bởi một Nghiên cứu sinh của Đại học Glasgow, Vương Quốc Anh. Chúng tôi sẽ sử dụng một số biện pháp bảo mật để đảm bảo rằng thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy Cô được an toàn như: sử dụng tên thay thế, lưu trữ bảo mật, mã hóa các tập tin và các thiết bị. Xin mời Quý Thầy Cô xem **Phiếu chấp thuận tham gia** và **Thông tin dành cho người tham gia** để biết thêm chi tiết.

Trong tương lai, nếu Quý Thầy Cô có yêu cầu, chúng tôi sẽ gửi cho Quý Thầy Cô kết quả của nghiên cứu này và thông tin về các công bố khoa học có liên quan.

Qúy Thầy Cô có những quyền như thế nào?*

Quy định chung về việc bảo vệ dữ liệu chỉ ra một số quyền của các cá nhân bao gồm: quyền được yêu cầu truy cập các bản sao, yêu cầu chỉnh sửa và xóa các thông tin cá nhân hoặc phản đối việc xử lý các thông tin ấy. Bên cạnh đó, chủ nhân của các thông tin này có quyền hạn chế việc xử lý thông tin và việc chia sẻ thông tin. Quý Thầy Cô có quyền được yêu cầu truy cập các thông tin về Quý Thầy Cô vào bất kì lúc nào.

Bất cứ khi nào các Thầy Cô cho rằng những thông tin mà chúng tôi đang xử lý liên quan đến Quý Thầy Cô chưa chính xác, Quý Thầy Cô có thể yêu cầu được xem các thông tin này và trong một số trường hợp có thể yêu cầu hạn chế, sửa chữa hoặc xóa các thông tin ấy. Quý Thầy Cô cũng có thể có quyền hạn chế việc xử lý thông tin và chia sẻ thông tin.

Xin lưu ý rằng việc chúng tôi xử lý các thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy Cô là nhằm mục đích nghiên cứu khoa học. Do đó, việc thực hiệc các quyền nêu trên có thể có một số sự sai khác do một số trường hợp miễn trừ cho việc nghiên cứu theo Quy định chung về việc bảo vệ dữ liệu (GDPR) và Luật bảo vệ dữ liệu 2018 (Data Protection Act 2018). Để hiểu rõ hơn về các trường hợp miễn trừ này, xin vui lòng truy cập tại: https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/dpfoioffice/a-ztopics/research/#//

Nếu Quý Thầy Cô có mong muốn thực hiện một trong các quyền nào trên đây, xin hãy gửi yêu cầu đến trang web sau: https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/dpfoioffice/gdpr/gdprrequests/#d.en.591523 hoặc liên hệ qua email: dp@gla.ac.uk

Khiếu nại

Nếu Quý Thầy Cô có bất kì khiếu nại nào về cách thức chúng tôi xử lý thông tin cá nhân của Quý Thầy Cô, xin Quý Thầy Cô hãy liên hệ Văn phòng bảo vệ dữ liệu theo địa chỉ email sau để được hỗ trợ: dataprotectionofficer@glasgow.ac.uk

Nếu Quý Thầy Cô không hài lòng về phản hồi của chúng tôi hoặc cho rằng chúng tôi đang không xử lý các thông tin cá nhân của Thầy Cô đúng với pháp luật, Qúy Thầy Cô có thể gửi khiếu nại đến Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) theo địa chỉ trang web sau: https://ico.org.uk/

Dự án nghiên cứu này đã được xem xét về khía cạnh đạo đức bởi ai?

Dự án này đã được chấp thuận về mặt đạo đức bởi Hội đồng Đạo đức của Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội, Đại học Glasgow, Vương Quốc Anh.

Chúng tôi sẽ lưu trữ dữ liệu trong bao lâu?

Các **thông tin cá nhân** của Quý Thầy Cô sẽ được lưu trữ cho đến khi hoàn thành dự án và sẽ không quá thời gian được Hội đồng chấp thuận (30/11/2024). Sau thời gian này, các thông tin cá nhân sẽ được xóa một cách an toàn.

Các **dữ liệu nghiên cứu** sẽ được lưu trữ trong vòng mười năm theo quy định của Đại học Glasgow. Các thông tin chi tiết về việc lưu trữ dữ liệu nghiên cứu có trong **Phiếu chấp thuận tham gia** và **Thông tin dành cho người tham gia** kèm theo phiếu thông tin này.

- Hết -

English version

PRIVACY NOTICE

Privacy Notice for Participation in Research Project: THE RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION OF RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE REFORMS IN VIETNAM, Researcher: NGUYEN THAI TRUONG LE

Your Personal Data

The University of Glasgow will be what's known as the 'Data Controller' of your personal data processed in relation to your participation in the research project: THE RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION OF RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE REFORMS IN VIETNAM. This privacy notice will explain how The University of Glasgow will process your personal data.

Why we need it

We are collecting basic personal data such as your name and contact details in order to conduct our research. We need your name and contact details to arrange interviews or potentially follow up on the data you have provided.

We only collect data that we need for the research project and we will de-identify your personal data from the research data (your answers given during the interview and in the questionnaire) through pseudonymisation.

Please see accompanying **Participant Information Sheet**,

Legal basis for processing your data

We must have a legal basis for processing all personal data. As this processing is for Academic Research, we will be relying upon **Task in the Public Interest** in order to process the basic personal data that you provide. For any special categories data collected we will be processing this on the basis that it is **necessary for archiving purposes, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes.**

Consent to take part in the study, please see accompanying **Consent Form**.

What we do with it and who we share it with

All the personal data you submit is processed by the researcher – a PhD student of the University of Glasgow in the United Kingdom. In addition, security measures are in place to ensure that your personal data remains safe: such as pseudonymisation, secure storage, and encryption of files and devices. Please consult the **Consent form** and **Participant Information Sheet** which accompanies this notice.

We will provide you with a copy of the study findings and details of any subsequent publications or outputs on request.

What are your rights?*

GDPR provides that individuals have certain rights including: to request access to, copies of and rectification or erasure of personal data and to object to processing. In addition, data subjects may also have the right to restrict the processing of the personal data and to data portability. You can request access to the information we process about you at any time.

If at any point you believe that the information we process relating to you is incorrect, you can request to see this information and may in some instances request to have it restricted, corrected, or erased. You may also have the right to object to the processing of data and the right to data portability.

Please note that as we are processing your personal data for research purposes, the ability to exercise these rights may vary as there are potentially applicable research exemptions under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information on these exemptions, please see UofG Research with personal and special categories of data.

If you wish to exercise any of these rights, please submit your request via the webform or contact dp@gla.ac.uk

Complaints

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter.
Our Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotectionofficer@glasgow.ac.uk

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) https://ico.org.uk/

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee or relevant School Ethics Forum in the College.

How long do we keep it for?

Your **personal** data will be retained by the University only for as long as is necessary for processing and no longer than the period of ethical approval (30/11/2024). After this time, personal data will be securely deleted.

Your **research** data will be retained for a period of ten years in line with the University of Glasgow Guidelines. Specific details in relation to research data storage are provided on the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form which accompany this notice.

End of Privacy Notice _____

Appendix E: Consent Form for Participants

Vietnamese version

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences

PHIẾU CHẤP THUẬN THAM GIA PHỎNG VẤN

Tên dự án: MỐI LIÊN HỆ GIỮA NGHIÊN CỨU KHOA HỌC VÀ GIẢNG DẠY Ở GIÁO DỤC ĐẠI HỌC: NGHIÊN CỨU Ở CÁC TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC ĐỊNH HƯỚNG NGHIÊN CỨU TRONG BỐI CẢNH CẢI CÁCH QUẢN TRỊ ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM

(Title of project: THE RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION OF RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE REFORMS IN VIETNAM)

Nghiên cứu sinh: Lê Nguyên Thái Trường
Người hướng dẫn: Tiến sĩ Mark Murphy và Tiến sĩ Stephen Parker

- Tôi xác nhận rằng tôi đã đọc và hiểu rõ phiếu **Thông tin dành cho người tham gia** của nghiên cứu nói trên và đã có cơ hội để đặt ra những câu hỏi, thắc mắc nếu có.
- Tôi hiểu rằng sự tham gia của tôi là tự nguyện và tôi có thể ngừng tham gia bất kì lúc nào mà không cần giải thích lý do.
- Tôi biết rằng:
  - Tên và bất kì thông tin cá nhân nào có thể được dùng để xác định danh tính của người tham gia cũng sẽ được bảo mật.
  - Tất cả các dữ liệu sẽ luôn được xem là tuyệt mật và được lưu trữ một cách an toàn.
  - Các thông tin cá nhân sẽ bị xóa, hủy ngay khi dự án nghiên cứu kết thúc.
  - Sẽ không có bất cứ ảnh hưởng nào đến công việc của người tham gia cho việc tham gia hay ngừng tham gia vào nghiên cứu này.
  - Các dữ liệu nghiên cứu không chứa các thông tin cá nhân sẽ được lưu trữ trong vòng 10 năm một cách an toàn và có thể được dùng cho các nghiên cứu học thuật trong tương lai.
  - Các dữ liệu nghiên cứu có thể được sử dụng để thực hiện các công bố khoa học dưới dạng bản in hoặc trực tuyến trong tương lai.

- Người tham gia sẽ được nhắc đến bằng tên thay thế trong bất kì công bố khoa học nào xuất phát từ nghiên cứu này.

- Tôi đồng ý từ bỏ bản quyền với các dữ liệu được thu thập trong dự án nghiên cứu này.
- Tôi đã đọc nội dung **Thông tin về quyền riêng tư** có liên quan đến dự án nghiên cứu này.

Tôi đồng ý tham gia vào dự án nghiên cứu ☐

Tôi không đồng ý tham gia vào dự án nghiên cứu ☐

Tôi đồng ý việc thu âm buổi phỏng vấn ☐

Họ và tên người tham gia ……

Ký tên ……

Ngày …... Tháng…... Năm……

Họ và tên nghiên cứu sinh: Lê Nguyên Thái Trường

Ký tên ……

Ngày …... Tháng…... Năm……

English version

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Consent Form for Interview

Title of Project: THE RESEARCH-TEACHING NEXUS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION OF RESEARCH-INTENSIVE UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE REFORMS IN VIETNAM

Name of Researcher: Nguyen Thai Truong Le
Supervisors: Dr Mark Murphy and Dr Stephen Parker

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- I acknowledge that:
  - Participants will be referred to by pseudonym.
  - Participants will be identified by pseudonym in any publications arising from the research.
  - There will be no effect on employment arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.
  - All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
  - The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
  - Personal data will be destroyed once the project is complete.
  - Research data that do not include personal information will be retained for 10 years in secure storage for use in future academic research.
  - The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.
  - I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.
  - I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

I consent to interviews being audio-recorded ☐

Name of Participant ..... Signature .....

Date .....

Name of Researcher: Nguyen Thai Truong Le Signature .....

Date .....