Students’ Assets and Strategies via the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Program

A Case of Cambodia’s Master Degree Students

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Abstract
This study analyzes the structure of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program by utilizing mixed methods, and is being analyzed within the contextualized framework of the Cambodia's Higher Education system as well as its relationship with the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program.

Mixed approach has been employed for this study, combining both quantitative data to construct the social space, which acts as a backbone for interpretation, and qualitative data from interviewing the scholarship program coordinator and scholarship holders in order to investigate the recruitment process and the students' perception respectively, presenting the macro-micro relationship that makes up the entirety of the scholarship program.

Collectively inspected, the findings reveal a new contextualized result that contributes not only to the development of the Cambodia’s Higher Education, but also to its position and its students within the space of the scholarship program of Erasmus Mundus. Through the close inspection using interview method, the underlying complexity of the recruitment process of the scholarship program is illustrated, indicating a multi-layer hierarchy and multiple decision-making processes. There are also implications of oppositions between the properties of the students, signaling the diversified student body in the scholarship program.

Prominent theme of the opposition in the space appears to be related to the colonial past of the Cambodia’s system as well as the differences between local and international experiences that the students possess. Students interviewed in the study, furthermore, reveal how they prepared themselves to apply for the scholarship program and to be successful candidate, which depicts their assets and strategies that can be derived from the constructed space. Unanimously the students show strong confidence and great insight of information which can be understood as the compatibilities between the recruiter of the scholarship program and the students’ assets.

Finally, overall findings give a new perspective of the profile of the scholarship program within the Erasmus Mundus mobility scheme. It shows that while students are required to possess certain objectively set requirements, there are also exception cases that students who possessed lower amount of capitals can also be successful, provided that the conditions like the credentials of their degree from Cambodia, as well as minimum requirements to pass the university admission have been met, and their “motivation letter” is exceptionally well-written which shows the subjective side of the recruitment process.

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Preface

It was around my birthday in April 2013, a regular sunny day in a local café named “Brown” in Phnom Penh, when I was sitting with my friends discussing about the opportunities to study abroad, because everyone around me seemed to have done just that. Later on, the discussion turned into a search for scholarship programs, specifically ones for academic exchange study for Cambodian students. I still remember it so vividly sitting, discussing and searching for the scholarship programs with my best friend Sakada and my ex-colleague bong Monypich, to find the best and most suitable program for me to apply, with the biggest criterion of being a fully funded program\(^1\). This marked one of the turning points in my life that has brought me to Uppsala University. I largely contributed my whole experience to that critical period of time, which has helped pave me academic path to doing this master’s program in Sociology of Education. This was made possible thanks to the European Commission funded scholarship program, Erasmus Mundus scholarship program.

Fast forward to when I have gone through a quarter of the master’s program, the interest of scrutinizing the scholarship program, of which I am a grantee, really started to take shape. The discussion of the core theoretical aspect of the master’s program aims to critically inspect the balances and tries to transcend the polarity between objectivist approaches and the subjective experiences in sociological framework. I have been particularly extremely fascinated in understanding those scholars from Cambodia who had obtained the scholarship title and their paths. One of the aspects was their career development, which can be understood by the sociological term, “social trajectory”\(^2\).

Moreover, considering that Cambodia is still in the development process, nurturing human resources is the foremost approach to enhance the pace of the development and advancement. To quote from the ministry of education in Cambodia: “[c]onsiderable progress has been made in Higher Education between 2009 and 2013 with student enrollments increasing to 207,000 and students receiving scholarships to 4,200.”\(^3\) This statistics, nevertheless, does not provide any more information other than there is a remarkable development within the sector. The questions arise from a sociological perspective on the regards of how students can make use of the resources, strategic or not, to explore within the local as well as global arena. How the system allows them to do so also deserves an inspection of its own as well.

However, the quality of the local educational system has not been up to par to provide and well-equip its students with the specializations they need in each respective sectors, such as economics, education, politics and science and engineering. It is more conspicuous when looking into the major global ranking platforms that none of the Cambodia’s higher education institutions is on any of the lists. Therefore, in the global arena for competing global knowledge economy, Cambodian students who study domestically often lack the credentials to be internationally recognized, especially when they want to branch themselves out to pursue Master’s degree for their academic and professional career.

This positional disadvantage, although seemingly difficult to tackle and resolve, is alleviated with the help of scholarship providers from all over the world, ranging from the

\(^1\) Fully funded scholarship covers all of the financial cost, ranging from tuition fees, return flight tickets, a comprehensive health insurance, monthly stipends as well as other fees that may occur during the process such as visa or residence permit cost.

\(^2\) Bourdieu, P., *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984. p. 87. He uses the term in *Distinction* to explain the taste and lifestyle of specific social classes in his empirical studies. He explains the connection between statistically defined trajectories to the all different types of capital compositions of those groups.

already established industrialized countries, such as the US, the UK, the EU, Singapore and Japan to the neighboring countries, such as Thailand and Vietnam etcetera. The list goes on to an even large sphere depending on it being the discipline specific scholarship programs, which are open for everyone, or it being countries partnered based programs, which are available only for countries in the partner consortium. The motive behind that is that through the prestige of the scholarship program, one can conceptualize and contextualize the credentials value of the local Cambodia’s institution as a basis, and then argue that that foreign degree on the master’s level from abroad will help the students in obtaining better jobs thus the ability to climb the social ladders. Therefore, in sociology of education, the question arises within the realm of educational sector, which leads to the investigation, on the one hand, of how the students are matched with the scholarship program, and on the other hand, what are the student’s strategies, if any, that the students employ to orient themselves towards their goals.

To be able to make the understanding of the main topic better, the next chapter is dedicated to contextualize two of the major components of this study, one being the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program, and the other being Cambodia’s higher education system.
Chapter One: The Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Program and Cambodia’s Higher Education System

Before, diving into discussing the whole structure of this study, it is pivotal that two of the major parts are contextualized and explained to make sense. It is also crucial at this stage to make disclaim that this will be an exploratory study, attempting to showcase the structures of the complex organizations that have never been done before, at least in the context of Cambodia.

First of all, a comprehensive detail of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program or mobility schemes ought to be illustrated together with its partnered country which is Cambodia. It also allows the readers to understand the recruitment processes purely from the arguably objective criteria set by the European Commission who is the funding agent of program. Secondly, since the higher education system in Cambodia is focused, the contextualized, historical and social development of such have to be weighted equally and given as much attention in understanding its power relations among the local as well as the international higher education institutions.

Erasmus Mundus Mobility Schemes

In order to give this study a context, descriptions of the Erasmus Mundus mobility scheme must be explained. Since the nature of the program itself is rather complicated, a comprehensive description is needed in conjunction with the explanation of the country involved, in which case Cambodia is highlighted.

In this section, the description of the scholarship program also plays an important role in contextualizing this study, meaning that some of the interpretations and discussions will be scrutinized from the objective description of the aims of the scholarship program. It is relevant to analyze the structure of the scholarship program together with student’s trajectory. This is done so in order to investigate a full picture of the position taking of individual students within the space of Erasmus Mundus scholarship program.

In order to provide clarity for later discussion, analysis and interpretation, the presentation of the information of the program was quote entirely word for word in the appendix. Contextual understanding for the Cambodia’s system will be presented here.

Structure of the Program

The Erasmus Mundus Program funded by the European Commission consists of three different schemes or actions, out of which the first two actions offer scholarship program for mainly for students to pursue higher education, and the third is to promote European higher education.

Relevant to this study, the first two actions are presented to describe its overall objectives and aims. This discussion of how these schemes apply to Cambodian students are emphasized as well.

Next, the two actions will be presented and discussed in accordance with the context that applies to Cambodian students.4

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4 For more details, refer to appendix 1.
Action 1

Action 1 will foster cooperation between higher education institutions and academic staff in Europe and Third Countries with a view to creating poles of excellence and providing highly trained human resources.

Joint programmes of outstanding academic quality are designed and implemented by a consortium of European universities from at least 3 different countries. Consortia may also include universities from other parts of the world. Scholarships/fellowships are open to higher education students and academics from all over the world. Programmes include obligatory study and research periods, in at least two universities, and award recognised double, multiple or joint degrees.\(^5\)

As depicted, the action 1 of the scholarship program primarily nurtures the foundation of collaboration in academia, co-creates a prestigious platform for students everywhere around the globe to benefit from the program. This means that Cambodian students are in for the competition with all individuals from every background.

Action 1 for Cambodian Students

In this action, the selection process is based on merit as well as the eligibility of the study program, meaning that there is no quota according to home university or home country, but limited to the amount of scholarships available each year. Those students who are qualified for basic requirement for the study program they applied to will also qualify to apply for scholarship in order to cover for tuition fees, comprehensive insurance coverage, traveling costs, as well as the monthly stipend and other related expenses for the period of the studies.

Later in this paper there will be discussion about the Cambodian higher education institutions that have the accreditations as well as reputation to be recognized internationally, or in such case, in Europe. Since the qualifications of the degree from different home countries vary largely due to different system as well as the so-called quality education provided at home university, the investigation is also employed by using the study population pool to justify the quality of their home university.

Action 2

Action 2 consists of partnerships with Third Country Higher Education Institutions and scholarships for mobility.

Partnerships in the framework of Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 are the basis for enhancing academic cooperation and exchanges of students and academics, contributing to the socio-economic development of non-EU countries targeted by EU external cooperation policy… Special attention is given to disadvantaged groups and populations in vulnerable situations.\(^6\)

It is interesting to notice that in action 2, it provides “support for the establishment of cooperation partnerships between European Higher Education Institutions and Higher Education Institutions”\(^7\) by involving certain Third Countries with the aim to incorporate structured arrangements of the individual to be able to exchange between European and Third Country partners.

In this regard, the pertinent two mobility schemes focused in this study are Erasmus Mundus scholarship program action 1 and action 2. Action 1 being a joint masters/doctoral programs; action 2 being partnership based program.

Within the two mobility schemes in master degree level, Cambodian students have been the beneficiaries in both joint master programs as well as the partnership based program, in which the partnership of their home university gives their students the priority in accessing the opportunities. In other words, those who are benefited from the action 2 program have been the students studying in the partnered universities, which presents a certain quotas reserved for them. However, there are different target groups set by the Erasmus Mundus program in order to help balance the social profile as well as the economics background of the students.

**Action 2 for Cambodian Students**

In this action, the qualification of the home university is magnified and well-reputed by the aboard of consortium where around a dozen of higher education institutions come together to create the network for certain specific projects that provide primarily their students the opportunity to study abroad and expand the network more globally.

In order to explain this action, illustration of one particular project within the program is used as an example here. It is chosen because I am one of the beneficiary of the program therefore having more access in retrieving relevant information, and able to explain the project clearer in a sense.

The website reads:

Lotus Unlimited is an Erasmus Mundus Action Two Partnership (EMA2) of European and South-East Asian Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and Associations aiming at fostering mutual enrichment and better understanding between the EU and South-East Asia (China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand), through the exchange of persons, knowledge and skills at higher education level and to co-operate in the following program activities:

- Mobility of undergraduate and graduate students
- Mobility of PhD students
- Post-doc mobility
- Academic and administrative staff mobility

In sum, the program overview aims to provide an explanation and clarifications, and to highlight some of the relevance towards one of its partnered countries which is Cambodia. I also argue that such contextualization and the description of the development of the Cambodia’s higher education system is very crucial. Not only does it help build the foundation and concrete indication of how the system looks like, but it also offers the readers a more comprehensive understanding about the education system, for which not so many have yet to cover, besides the policy and foreign aids studies from the international donor and aid provider such OECD and World Bank. This historical narrative will provide a different angle that explains how the system become what it is today, which is closely relevant this study.

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The Development of Cambodia’s Higher Education System

In the realm of development in today’s modern society, like any other developing countries, Cambodia’s developmental goal has also been put forward into national agenda to nurture more human resources to be able to compete in today’s market society within the regional context as well as in the globe, adapting and adopting education as a vital role in building and strengthening the developing countries. Therefore there have been significantly improving discussions and national policies and agendas on the discourse of educational practices as an investment in developing human capital and promoting national growth, first and foremost economics sector in the Cambodian case.

However, in the historical aspect, there was no higher form of learning as defined in a classic sense by Clark that the higher education in the national systems garner the intellects together to share, disseminate and develop for the intellectual heritage of the world. Therefore, in this section, I will explore the historical development aspect of the Cambodia’s higher education system as well as the result of the modernization and globalization of the system that lead to the discussions of accreditation alongside with labor markets and human capital development.

Pre-Colonial Era, Colonial Era and Khmer Rouge Regime

In a brief walk though of the historical aspect, the Cambodia’s highest form of learning before the 20th century was essentially done in we called “Wat”, which refers to a Buddha temple and only boys were allowed. However, it should be noted that other forms of education, such as carvings and other artisanal skills also took place in various apprentices manner, similar to the guild concept in the western settings. Therefore, the history of Cambodia’s education can be traced back to the Angkorian Era in the 12th century. After the collapse of the Empire in 15th century, these institutions were consequently abolished or ceased to open due to the war and invasion from the neighboring countries namely Thailand and Vietnam. From this point onward, temples and pagodas were the place, predominantly, for men to obtain basic education such as literature, simple arithmetic, as well as basic skills base on education such as carpentry, of which the monks are the teacher.

Later on, the French established the higher education institution named National Institute of Juridical, Political and Economic Sciences (NIJPES), despite facing various problems caused by the unqualified teachers and poor teaching methodology and financial incapability. After the French protectorate period, the former King Norodom Sihaknouk expanded and strengthened the educational system, in which he integrated the French curriculum with Khmer curriculum. In this period the number higher education institutions rapidly increased as a result of the King’s effort in investing in education sector. However, this legacy did not last very long because of the next two regimes namely the Khmer Republic and the Khmer Rouge. This civil war had erased all remnants of the university, which leveled out the entirety of the Cambodia’s educational system. Fortunately, with the help from the Vietnamese troops, the Cambodian’s “dark age” ended; however the war persisted. This, nevertheless, was the critical period for the new government to restore all the nation’s educational system.

Later on, with the intervention from the United Nation in 1992, the real restoration and restructuring of the higher educational institution started. There were both private and public sectors, permitted by the government, that provide higher education to the students,

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along with scholarship opportunities to study abroad. Regardless, the system was still very much problematic due to the political instability and the civil war.

The last stage of the development has been the transition to the democracy starting 1998 when the newly announced government was formed. In this period, although there has been an extensive expansion both public and private higher educational institution, the quality and the competitive edge from the private institutions were far more alluring than the public ones, which caused the loss of lecturers in the public institutions. Until present day, this problem still persists, even though the development has been flourishing like never before, considering the hardship and challenges that the country have encountered and endured.12

Growing Phase

Since higher education system is the topic of discussion here, the weight of focus in this section is more on the growth of such rather than the strategic planning of the institutions involved. Despite the lack of financial for the development of the higher education system itself, compared the primary and secondary levels, there are many emerging private sectors which target specifically in higher education institution for university partnerships as well as research center to match the development goals. Although it is important to mention that there are very little supports and emphases within research aspect in Cambodia’s higher education system. In total, there were 121 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country, 48 of which were state HEIs and 73 were private HEIs in 20 capital/provinces. HEIs were under supervision of 16 ministries/institutions. There were 73 HEIs under Ministry of Education, Youths and Sports (MoEYS), among which 13 states and 60 private HEIs. 38 HEIs provided post-graduate courses.13

This is a very complex administrative and bureaucratic system, of which we trace back to the French colonial era and see the remnants of the system still implemented in the current system. The discussion will be based in the next section of the changing condition of the management of the system.14 Purely from this number with no discussion and analysis made, it falls between the elite and mass education brackets according to Trow’s model.15 It is considered the elite’s education because compared to the entire population and how the institutions are located. It is extremely hard for students from rural areas to attend university as the institutions are clustered in the main capital city and other few major cities, in which the quality is one of the issues that will be discussed later in this paper. Moreover, there has been indication illustrating that then Cambodia’s higher education systems have been an “elite” (or at least “small”) since 1970 until 2005. The results are striking because only Cambodia and Laos are still in the low percentage of the enrollment rate that fall under the elite classification.16 On the contrary, it seems counterintuitive that the numbers suggest ‘eliteness’ but contain no elite characteristics mentioned by Trow, because the emphasis is focused on the transmission of skills and knowledge, for which in this case of Cambodia not enough critical ability is present, “with formal instruction carried on through large lectures often taught by teaching assistants or

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15 Please refer to the appendix for the extracted table. The source and arguments are based from Williams, J.H., Kitamura, Y., and Keng S. C. (pp. 84-86)
the growing number of part-time instructors without strong or long-term connections to the institution.”17

Therefore, the reader should be critical the historical context of the Cambodia’s system as a whole was nothing a like compared to the countries reflected in the table18. Since Cambodia was still in the recovery phase from the destruction of the genocide in Khmer Rouge regime. According to Ayres, “compounding the destruction of educational infrastructure was the severe human cost of the previous decade’s social turmoil.”19 Moreover, it is not helpful and seems paradoxical when the indication is made by the percentage relatively to the population, since very few young people that finish high school continue higher education, due to financial and personal constraints, for which mass education is still not aptly named in this case. Nevertheless, it is an apparent transitioning phase towards mass education according to number provided by the MoEYS in the Policy on Higher Education Vision 2030. There has been an increase in the number of graduates from general education has led to an increased demand for higher education since the late 1990s. As a consequence of such drastic surge in demand, all the involved sectors that run the system initiated a policy that is based on the principle of public private partnership. Under this policy, the first private higher education institution (HEI) was established in 1997. Since then, the number of private universities has skyrocketed, noticeably during the millennia reaching 64 by 2014. This leads to the introduction of fee-paying courses within the public sector of HEIs, which yields the result that entirely shaped the landscape of Cambodia’s higher education system; moving from elite to mass access to higher education.

As the statistic suggested from the MoEYS:

The number of public HEIs increased from 8 in 1997 to 39 in 2014 and the number of students in higher education increased from nearly 10,000 in the early 1990s to more than 200,000 in 2013.20

With the much expansion of the public and private partnership within the higher education systems comes the greater scrutiny on the accreditation of the whole system. Such responsibility has been pointed out earlier in the extremely complicated managerial system that heavily hinders the speed of the development and efficiency of the transition process in competing with the other nations within the region of South Asia as well as the status of the higher education institutions among the academic around the world.

Changing Conditions in the Globalized World (Language(s), Economics Benefits, and Political Affiliation)

With rapidly expansion of the higher education system, it is pivotal to adopt and adapt the management model that can effectively and efficiently run the entire sector. However, as discussed above in the previous section, the extremely bureaucratic structure of the institution is highly ironic in a sense on the ground that the purpose was supposedly to disperse responsibility and decentralize the administration to let the local authorities possess the power they need at the lowest level possible. However, due to corruption and the fairly loosely regulated law, it allows the power at the top level to have more control over the local authorities, for which they can drive the system to a certain direction to better serve their political agendas.

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17 Trow, pp. 254-55.
18 Appendix 1.
This is one of the critical issues that has been in the blurred line that has discouraged the studies in academia to investigate within the sector due to such political arbitrary as well as risks that may incur. Nevertheless, it is worth to mention such factor as Clark puts it that “[a] national bureaucratic structure can not only protect and administer the particularism of personal rule but may even help cause it.” Such appearance of the system implies the top down characteristic of the managerial system based on which the six levels of authority discussed by Clark. This leads to the observation of the changing condition of the priority of certain faculties over the others. For example, that the system used to be elite based serving the people at the highest status of the social stratum has slowly transitioned into a more open mass education level. As a consequence, the effect can be observed on the weight and the importance of the discipline of knowledge. The fields of studies have definitely broadened and shifted more towards Science, rather than the Social Sciences and Humanities, although the report from the MoEYS showed a different trend that students tend to favor Social Science more than Science and Technology. Moreover, certain high prestige disciplines such as Law, Medicine and Information Technology and Engineering have been greatly influenced by the Anglophone world in which language of instruction and academic documents have been transitioned from French to English. These disciplines are in high demand for their prestige in a sense; however, as Trow depicts:

It may try to transmit skills and knowledge, but that is not what makes it ‘elite higher education’ in the sense that we have been using the term both to characterize a kind of education and a kind of institution in which it was most commonly experienced.

This reflects the direction and the ideology of the Cambodian’s government to prepare more students into the highly lucrative field to boost its economy while keeping control of the social order. The reason is that those fields’ teaching methods and instructions contain little to no critical thinking aspects for higher participation in the political and civic engagement. Law is an exception nevertheless, for which favoritism as well as high level of control can be summed up for this particular field. If, then, those subject areas are deemed elite higher education because they make large demands on students and to prepare students, both morally and technically, to achieve high ambition, it seems to contradict what the Cambodian government desires at least within the political sphere and other facets such power relation, dynamics and ultimately control, which can be inferred that status quo in wanted. Nevertheless, such policy from the government illustrates a great commitment in helping produce the labor force in the current globalized market society. Therefore, local higher education, I argue, serves the labor market purpose but not for the elites.

As a consequence, these graduates are expected to communicate in foreign languages with people from different cultures, to build up in-depth knowledge about other countries, and to serve as representatives of their organization abroad.

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21 Clark, p. 111.
24 Trow, p. 250.
26 Trow, p. 250.
The yield of such result give a glimpse into what determines the partnerships and the credibility of the Cambodian higher education institutions, which will be shortly discussed in the following section.

International Partnerships and International Credibility

Student mobility is another central part of the development of the current educational system in Cambodia. The transition of the English language within the higher education system in Cambodia has greatly impacted its institutions in a number of ways, one of which is to be able to expand its global network in addition to its relationship with former colonial master, the French’s institutions. Since there lacks recognition of ranking world wide of the institutions in Cambodia, I argue that the quality of the institutions should be looked at in conjunction to how many international partnerships the institutions have and how well and credible those partnered institutions are.

A comparison between universities in Cambodia can be done by looking at the international partners within the region of Southeast Asia, ASEAN as well as the entire world, from the eastern hemisphere like China, Japan, Korea to the western part like the US, and many others European universities. Noticeably Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), one of the few (public) universities that is recognized internationally by other well-regarded institutions, has 122 partnered institutions during 2011-2012 listed on their website,28 compared to 139 Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia (PUC),29 which is a private university. One of the biggest differences between these highly prestigious universities is that the former one appear to have more affiliation with its former colonial French institutions and the latter seems to focus on the US. These two institutions are considered ‘elite’ universities, in a sense that they both provide their students with immense opportunities to expand their knowledge as well as their network in order to benefit their future career in such globalized market society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the history and the development of the Cambodia’s higher education system has a very unique characteristic. From the highest learning form in the Buddhist temple until now the modern university and other institutions, the process of such development is highly significant to understand its purpose and its current form. Although it might not be started in parallel the concept in the western world where students and intellectuals come together to create the higher learning as in academic settings, the colonial era was the cornerstone of the birth of the new system in the Cambodian society. Parallel development of the political changes as well historical development put into context in order to understand the entire system from the top to the bottom and its unique characteristics. The effect of the globalization within the education context should also be accounted for when scrutinizing the system.

After the contextualized information about how the Cambodia’s higher education system has emerged and evolved, one can make scrutiny of its students and quality with regards to the prestige and student alumni network that is going to be presented in the data set. This symbolic accreditation is pivotal for students in pursuing further education such as Master’s degree abroad via scholarship program as the admission requirements set by both the universities abroad as well as the scholarship program will be set reasonably high although there are no indications of such. This aligns with the upcoming analysis of the first research question that will be discussed in the result finding section.

One disclaimer should be noted that because this is only a briefly historical view in giving descriptive perspective to understand the background of the transitional stages in the Cambodia’s higher education system. It lacks few in depth critical assessments as well as some in depth discussion about how some events happened and their unfolding development.

In the next sections, research objective, research question, literature review, theoretical framework and methodological approach of this study will be presented and outlined in a structured manner.
Chapter Two: Research Objective and Research Questions

One of the most interesting research within the transnational educational strategies gives an overview of students’ mobility, in which their social positions are being investigated alongside with the destination of the host countries. It is relevant and helpful to review these types of literature in order to understand the core element of student’s mobilities as well as the dynamic and relational power between institutions in the global higher education institutions. Therefore two main themes are focused here in order to shed lights on the topic.

Firstly, the topic of student mobilities via transnational educational strategies is discussed, and secondly the organizational aspects, on which the theoretical framework drawn from Bourdieu’s prominent studies of the French Higher Education system - “Homo Academicus” and “The State Nobility” will be the basis of this study. The reason being this study focuses, on the one hand the educational aspects on how students perceive and strategize their positional advantage to win the scholarship, and on the other how the Cambodia’s educational system, in which the students thrive, provides the foundation for the credentials that are consecrated within the “social space” of the scholarship program, in this case the Erasmus Mundus scholarship.

There will also be some reviews on scholarship programs and their intended agendas to incorporate with the study objective of scrutinizing the structure of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program, which in return reveals the recruitment patterns in the past decade. Furthermore, studies which focus specifically on recruitment patterns structured by cultural capital carried out by Börjesson et al., will also be helpful to understand the students’ profile and their overall background. In addition, the global space of international students by Börjesson will provide a solid foundation in terms of the dynamic of the international students and their mobility within the international higher education.

Therefore, opting both approaches of scrutinizing from the top down and bottom up at the same time, I argue it will provide a more solid picture of the whole structure underneath. This way, since this is an exploratory study, it will clarify the underlining power relations as well as power dynamic between different the higher education institutions, both local and international and the scholarship providers. On the other hand, it also sheds lights on the students who have undergone specific local institutions, and their trajectory towards obtaining the scholarship ultimately. This deserves a deeper and comprehensive investigation of its own if the data sets allow.

Why was the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Program Chosen?

There are studies that are solely focused within Europe, which more or less looks into the most established exchange program Erasmus student mobilities. However, the increasingly globalized landscape of education has brought light on the importance of East Asian

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30 The word “consecrate” appeared throughout most of Bourdieu’s work and will be discussed in more details in the Theoretical Framework section. The consecration of the credentials here can be understood as the bachelor from home university in Cambodia.

31 Bourdieu’s term which will be discussed in theoretical chapter.


students’ mobility westwards to pursue higher education. Brooks and Waters, for example, have done a comprehensive scrutiny of not only the students but also their parents’ strategies of educational mobility. This education mobilization can be as early as middle school and can require their relocation out of their home country in a very early age.34

This field of study cannot be looked apart from the development of the educational system as well as the labor market, which has been heavily affected by the globalized twenty first century. The effect of global labor market and knowledge economy are especially conspicuous in the developing countries like Cambodia. Mass education is crucial for the country’s development agenda, which is also strongly influenced and aided by the top organizations such as the World Banks, the UN, and the OECD, just to name a few.35 This development trajectory leads to the competition of students to seek for the top quality education that can offer them both the world’s standard recognition as well as the necessary knowledge and resources.

Due to the increasingly demanding skilled labor both in the developing and the developed world, students are not only competing locally but also globally. However, this is only true for those who belong to the top resource and asset occupants of each respective countries, as the opportunity is so incredibly skewed and is presented for those deemed elite.36 This is when the educational aids like scholarship program comes in to play to alleviate the huge gap between the rich and the poor. It also levels out the playing ground in terms of providing the financially less able the platform to showcase their talents and ability.

However, the question of accessibility emerges when the availability of the scholarship program is widely open to the audience equally. Who are the beneficiaries of the scholarship program? Are they from an already affluent family? Are they the exceptional students who strived among the others while still being limited by their background? These questions spark the interest of this particular research topic, opening up the possibility to explore the space of the scholarship program in the Cambodia’s higher education, which hopefully will offer a brand new perspective with a sociological lens.

There also emerges, at the same time, the intriguing aspect of the scholarship program itself. What are the motives behind? What is the structure like? Do they have, if any, a particular target group who they prioritize or regard as outstanding? By looking into this topic from two different perspectives, it can provide a better picture of the whole space that highlight the significance of the social structure within the scholarship program itself and how students as individuals maneuver through and climb the social ladder to become and position themselves in a higher social status, if it occurs to be the case. This is most intriguing for Cambodia especially the motivation and the intention for training so many scholars both locally and internationally is to develop and enhance its human capital in helping develop the country forwards to compete in the global arena in almost every facet.

One of the reasons behind the choice of looking particularly into Erasmus Mundus scholarship program is that while there exists so many others scholarship program in Cambodia, Erasmus Mundus stands out from the other. It is because the program itself consists of many different layers of partners and authority from the funder, which is interesting to unveil the structure of the ultimate decision maker (or makers if there exists a joint decision). Moreover, the name of Erasmus is arguably pervasive throughout the European context, which mainly only involves mobility within Europe. The complexity of the structure without a doubt heightens the interest in investigating as Erasmus Mundus

involves various actors that each has their own hierarchical power relative to their third-country partners, specifically in this case corresponding to the Cambodia’s context.

Furthermore, there are also several factors that motivate the choice of opting to study Erasmus Mundus scholarship program in the Cambodia’s context. First of all, there are abundance of the existing literatures about Erasmus mobility, but solely within Europe as mentioned, and in most cases, there is no clear distinguish between mobility and degree seeking. Although the mobility scheme stems from this very idea of mobility, the dynamics and power relation of the partnership between the countries and institutions involved are completely different.

Second point goes back to support the reason of the complexity of the structure of Erasmus Mundus, and to complicate the matter further, contextualization is being the main purpose. Since this study only focuses degree seeking mobility of students from Cambodia, it contributes to the pool of literature that specifically target the symbolic recognition of a master’s degree from European countries within a developing country context such as Cambodia. As a result, the study only focuses on a degree from one European country (or a joint-degrees from two partners)\(^{37}\) in relation to Cambodia, in order to understand the symbolic value in the Cambodia’s knowledge economy, and also students’ perception of their experience on how they choose to apply.

However, before the study can be carried out successfully as well as provide a well-rounded answer to the abovementioned questions, the readers should focus on the development of the higher education system in Cambodia presented in previous chapter, and use it as a lens and reader’s guide. The historical development gives a prominent background knowledge of how scholars have been produced locally, which puts forward an underlying social structure as a given context, before those students can be studied within the international scholarship program. As argued by Sewell, the “eventful temporality” explains the path dependency of the development of an event.\(^{38}\) It builds a solid ground for the study population, of which their study program as well as home universities conditioned and contributed to their success of obtaining the scholarship.

Furthermore, the parameter of the study is limited to only the degree seeking scholarship students, in this case Master’s degree. The choice is decided based on the symbolic meaning of the foreign degree from one of the European countries in the context of Cambodia’s labor market. Since there has not been so many study done particularly on the topic of this positional advantages of holding a foreign degree with the scholarship prestige attached to it, the study deserves even more attention to this specific population of scholars, in order to investigate the power relation of the higher education institutions as well as the institutions involved from the global perspective.

Research Questions:

Against this backdrop, two interrelated research questions and one minor question emerge. However, smaller questions will be accommodating in answering the two bigger questions. The first question examines structural and objective aspect of the scholarship program. The second question reveals the assets/capitals and profile of the beneficiaries, in this case the Cambodian students. Lastly, the third minor question deals with students’ orientation prior to applying as well as the trajectories of their prospective career or academic development.

The three research questions are:

\(^{37}\) Erasmus Mundus Action 1 provides a joint-degree program from which students will obtained two degrees from the institutions of their choice, the first being one of the European partners. This will be elaborate more in chapter five, where context of Erasmus Mundus program as a whole will be discussed in detailed.

• What is the underlying structure of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program within the Cambodia’s context? What are the recruitment patterns of the scholarship program?
• What types of assets/capitals do the scholarship holders possess? What are their positions in the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program?
• How did the students prepare themselves to apply for the scholarship?
Chapter Three: Literature Reviews

In this chapter, different literatures deemed connected to the study objective will be presented and reviewed. While others are more directly relevant to the topic, few studies are helpful to structure and contextualize the study.

There is an abundance of literatures related to how the scholarship programs were funded. One case in Sweden can be seen in a study pertinent to specifically public diplomacy and soft power referred to as “cultural propaganda” and “enlightenment”.  39

To talk about the scholarship programs in Cambodia is to talk about the contextualization and internationalization of higher education in Cambodia as well. Furthermore, within the field of internationalization of higher education, scholarly mobility was enabled by various actors, one of which is the scholarship program funded by various agents. It is asserted to show the link in scientific progress.  40 In the Cambodia’s context, it translates to the progress of the increasing quality and accessibility for higher education system. Therefore, the discussion of the political and policy aspects of the scholarship program should not be neglected although it is not the core essence of this study.

A handful of studies examine the contribution to certain programs like the OECD and the World Bank. For example, Chile’s international scholarship program was developed in order to enhance and augment the human capital development in the country. 41 Other available research emphasizes on the experiences of scholarship recipients during and after program participation such as the Erasmus Mundus scholarship report themselves. 42 Moreover, it is also claimed that “[f]unding for overseas education during the colonial period was mostly provided by the colonial powers.” 43

Åkerlund argues that it is logical that the attempt to investigate the existence and function of the scholarship programs yield an explanation of “an important prerequisite for establishing and maintaining international contacts in academia.” 44 Therefore, the result of this study should be able to make sense of some of the elements that are naturally embedded in the scholarship program. On top of that, it will aid the interpretation and analysis of the research finding, which is based not only on the function and political aspects of the scholarship program but also students’ profile and the educational system in which they operate and thrive.

Nevertheless, while all these literatures are interesting and seem to be relevant to the topic of scholarship program, it is more helpful from micro perspective to examine literatures that scrutinize students’ strategies as well as the space of higher education. They should also adopt sociological functions in analyzing the social space of higher education in the global sphere, thus building the foundation for investigating the research topics and research questions more effectively.

On the micro level, this study focuses on the sociological aspects of student mobility. On the macro level, it scrutinizes the program structure, and very few to do with the

funding and policy area. Therefore, three main themes will be highlighted throughout this study, which correspond to the three research questions set out to answer.

The first theme is about scrutinizing the structure of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program, for which it helps to shed lights on the Global Space of International Students, done by Börjesson, to map out the space in which origin and destination countries are positioned. To add more is that the international student mobility concept by Brooks and Waters also plays crucial part in understanding the dynamic of the whole higher education system and its structure a ground as a departure point, which gives a contextual basis for understanding the Cambodia’s higher education, in this case more indirectly. Other glance of the case in the Swedish higher education can also be taken advantage of since it presents such a strong indication of the differences in various study programs among institutions in Sweden.

The second is to investigate the assets or capitals possessed by the students. The most suitable literature to review here, in fact, cuts across the three themes. Bourdieu’s work from The Inheritor, to Homo Academicus and to The State Nobility will be discussed throughout and will be contextualized in the next chapter of theoretical framework for the study.

Lastly, the questions of students’ perception and experience will be covered by the abovementioned literatures as well.

**International Student Mobility**

There are many studies that have shed light on international student mobility particularly on degree seeking group defined by the UNESCO. In this case the study done Brooks and Waters depict clearly on the westward movement, especially for the students from the eastern hemisphere, in pursuing higher education for various reasons, but with similar pattern.

Key concept of “employability” is especially relevant to the Cambodia’s context since the whole purpose of pursuing a master’s degree abroad is somewhat the focal point of studying abroad. On top of that, the title of being awarded scholarship embellishes the status of the scholars and students locally to appeal more to the employers, at least from a symbolic point of view, for which the master’s degree abroad is being given tremendous values. Although there seems to lack such study specifically done in Cambodia, Brooks and Waters have gathered from few East Asians context, which I argue is somehow similar and follows the trend of westward movement for higher education.

However, the financial factor in studying abroad has been removed due to the generous scholarship benefits provided by the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program. The strategies depicted in Brooks and Waters have been shifted from the family strategies to solely the students’ perception and their ability to assess the current opportunities, as well as how they go about to apply for the scholarship program, which grant them the access to enter the space. Despite the differences, some of the criteria to enter the universities abroad remain fundamentally similar because of the competitive nature of the admission process on the Master’s program level.

Additionally, Rebecca Ye and Erik Nylander’s study on Singaporean students to Oxbridge revealed interesting results about state funding scholarship programs have enabled transnational education for Singaporean students, whose educational track in their home country was elite schools. The elite students were illustrated to have immense

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45 Brooks and Waters. *Student Mobilities, Migration and the Internationalization of Higher Education.*
46 Ibid, pp. 45-68.
48 Ibid, pp. 45-68.
advantage in getting the admission from highly prestigious universities such as Oxbridge and Ivy League colleges, due to greater informational capital that provide students an upper hand in accessing the resources they needed.\(^{49}\) This is crucial aspects to understanding the capital that the students possess that offer them competitive advantage in competing for the scholarship.

The Global Space of International Students

Constructed using the data from UNESCO, this global space of international students was strategized to focus on the countries of destination since the flow of international students comes from very large different countries of origin. The study has utilized Correspondence Analysis, which is highly useful and relevant to the proposed study, and has mapped out the global space of international students resulting in three main themes of pattern, which is presented as three polar structure: market, colonial and proximity logics.\(^{50}\)

The results show that the emerging three polar structure, revealed through the Correspondence Analysis, dictates certain pattern that can be constituted mainly by language pattern. Such argumentation was backed up by the history of the former and colonial masters to the region. The explanation of the recruitment patterns was mainly described as a substitution for the tuition fee required to understand in contrast with the market logic.\(^{51}\)

As cited in the same article, Åkerlund has shown in one article that such aids play an important role to strengthen the states’ interests by highlighting “Public Diplomacy” among the international relations before and after both world war.\(^{52}\) He also added the aspect of “kulturpolitik”\(^{53}\) which further adds to the explanation of the post-colonial relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, because after all the imperial project is to imposed their superiority which can be done through culture and politics.

Since Cambodia has been colonized by the French for almost one century, it is certainly relevant to use this logic. However, in this rapidly globalized world, the trend of globalizing the education system has moved towards the predominantly accepted lingual franca, in this case English as mentioned by Crystal,\(^{54}\) to be able to catch up with development model influenced by different actors such as the UN, World Banks and other aid providers.\(^{55}\)

One a different note, since the study is contextualized within only the frame of the Erasmus Mundus, which is funded and collaborated within the EU towards most of the developing countries, the proximity logics might not apply here. The same can be said to the tuition fees aspect from the market logics, due to the resources are provided as a scholarship award.

Nevertheless, it will be interesting to see how much of an influence from the colonial master, in this case France, has on Cambodia. Together with the market logic, in the knowledge economy and positional advantages sense, how the landscape of the educational system in Cambodia has changed towards the Anglo-Saxon world.


\(^{50}\) Börjesson. The Global Space of International Students in 2010, pp. 1265-1269.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.


\(^{55}\) Refer to chapter one’s “The development of Cambodia’s higher education” section for detail discussion.
The Case of Swedish Higher Education

Certain programs within the Swedish higher education showed particular pattern which has been shown by Börjesson et al. The space of higher education in Sweden has been mapped out showing clusters of different historically prominent and highly prestigious disciplines such as Law, Medicine, Engineering, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences, etc. The space was constructed using Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital to investigate the pattern of the elite student’s profile according to their study program.56 Such results help build the ground for this study to look into different subjects that the Cambodian students have chosen to reveal specific pattern of the scholarship program, and thereby discover the underlying structure of the program per se. This will be done similarly by mapping out different capitals that the students possess, using Bourdieu’s perspective, to construct the space of Erasmus Mundus scholarship program for Cambodian students in higher education.

Such study helps hone the focus on the recruitment pattern, from which the scholarship program structure will be revealed as a result. Therefore, it can be viewed as a reference but not entirely comparable, since the nature of the Swedish context is completely different from the Cambodian one as presented in chapter one.

Bourdieu’s Sociology of Education

Homo Academicus and the State Nobility

Turning to a different approach, in Bourdieu’s study of the higher education in France, it shows relevant and useful concepts as a basis for investigating the structure of the higher education in Cambodia as well as the structure of the scholarship program of Erasmus Mundus. Both entities play equally important roles regarding the recruitment process. It contextualizes the academic settings in Cambodia and its position within the global arena within higher education, or at least European parts of the world.

Bourdieu’s sociology of education also facilitates in examining and investigating the micro perspective that shows individuals’ choices in the next section, and is apt for the discussion. That also means that the concept of capital is pivotal in binding the whole study together.

Quoting Bourdieu on the power dynamic within the academia, he postulates that:

> Academic power thus consists in the capacity to influence on the one hand expectations – themselves based partly on a disposition to play the game and on investment in the game, and partly on the objective indeterminacy of the game – and on the other hand objective probabilities – notably by limiting the world of possible competitors.57

It further strengthens the argument that signals the power of the scholarship program as a whole, and the decision making process which involves multiple hierarchy as well as democratically established. It aligns with the idea of setting various requirement criteria that are introduced arguably both objectively and subjectively.58


58 This will be discussed more detailed in findings in chapter six.
Thus we cannot entirely understand the phenomena of the concentration of academic power without also taking into consideration the contribution made by the claimants, by way of the strategies which lead them towards the most powerful protectors.\(^{59}\)

This shows a pertinent concept employed by this study to find out the underlying structure of the scholarship program which denotes its power and influences on the Cambodia higher education landscape as well as the students’ strategies in propelling themselves to take up the space of the scholarship program.

Another interesting aspect of the study is that it will provide a closer look on how the students have adapted and adopted over time the strategies, in which Bourdieu refers to as \textit{habitus}\(^{60}\) which is, often more unconscious and conscious, decision made by the students themselves.

Similarly, Bourdieu, in the academic structure of the field of the grandes écoles in \textit{The State Nobility}, captured its essence by utilizing Correspondence Analysis to construct the space of grandes écoles showing the students’ social origin, their positions, dispositions and stances.\(^{61}\) This ground work of his will set a solid background for this study as both the institution level of the higher education and the capital and habitus of the students were assessed and analyzed. It is also helpful to use the concept of the grandes écoles to mirror the eliteness of the local Cambodia’s institutions that has nurtured top tier students who obtain the scholarship(s).

The Inheritors

One of Bourdieu’s earliest empirical work was \textit{The Inheritors}, in which many of concepts were not coined as official theoretical term yet. However, such empirical work is so relevant for this research study in particular since it deals with the students’ assets as well as their inherited capitals from their own background.\(^{62}\) It also was renowned within the English speaking domain of sociology.\(^{63}\)

Similar to the rigorous recruitment process of the Higher Education in France, the scholarship program entails the same requirements of excellence for the students. To go even further back to understand the context, one can look at what type of university they have been educated in Cambodia before they applied and eventually got awarded with the scholarship. Since this study only focus on master’s degree student, it is fitting to look at some sort of symbolically consecrated objective criteria such as bachelor’s degree, GPA, and other subjective criteria such as relevant experience be it professional or unpaid extracurricular activities volunteering work.

To be able to involve in these academically demanding requirements, one is seen to possess certain cognitive conscience, conscious or not, of making such choices. This will be elaborated more in the theoretical framework in the next section. Naturally the study focus both the scholarship program from a macro perspective, at the same time, students’ capital can be made used of in order to illustrate their individual choices from a micro perspective. This mirrors what Bourdieu did before the concepts of capital and field were extensively coined and established. Who were the elected and who were seen more of “apprentice intellectual”?\(^{64}\) in the examination from Bourdieu provides a solid background for

\(^{59}\) Bourdieu, \textit{Homo academicus}, p. 91.

\(^{60}\) Bourdieu, P. \textit{Homo academicus}, pp. 91, 99.


\(^{64}\) Bourdieu and Passeron. \textit{The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relation to Culture}, p. 54.
understanding the inequality within the educational system that can aid interpretation for this particular study.

Therefore, the early adaptation of the multivariate statistical method used by Bourdieu to attempt to investigate and examine the students’ social origin as well as their ability in the educational system will be aiding the interpretation in the findings since this study also looks into students’ profiles.
Chapter Four: Theoretical Framework: Bourdieu’s concepts of “capital”, “habitus” and “social space”

In sociology of education, specifically one that stems from Bourdieu’s sociology, the study of space and field can be analyzed through using multiple correspondence analysis. With that said, certain theoretical approach comes with its own advantages and disadvantages, and it is the researcher’s job to explore and construct the best and most suitable methods to obtain the data set needed as well as to frame the scope of the study.

This study, as derived from the French traditions, will be carried out using the predominantly central theory of Pierre Bourdieu, which comes with the methodology opted for the study. This is also because Cambodia’s higher education context has, almost entirely in the historical development, been influenced by the French system starting the colonial period for significantly long period of time as discussed in the previous chapter. On top of that, due to current internationalization and globalization of higher education in Cambodia, it is only fitting to base this study on Bourdieu's theoretical framework to reveal students’ profile as well as the structure of the local system within the global arena.

As mentioned in the previous literature review section, the concept of “capital” in particular in the central part of this study which aims to map out the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program. One of the advantages to do this is that it also reveals certain patterns and characteristics of the scholarship holders thereby providing a more detailed look of the assets of the students.

Three Forms of Capital

Bourdieu's prominent theory evolves around the theoretically and empirically investigated notion of capital. This concept of capital and accumulation of capital is best for answering the second research question that is “who are the scholarship beneficiaries?” to put it simply. It also signifies what types of capitals that are those beneficiaries possess, and are consecrated within the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program.

In Bourdieu’s term, capital exists in three different forms economic, cultural and social depending on the field in which it functions. 65

Economic and Symbolic Capital

In this specific study, one can interchangeably refer economic capital to as symbolic capital. These two capital as explained by Bourdieu, the former “is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights,” 66 this translates to the students’ economic resources being invested in obtaining a bachelor’s degree in order to be eligible to apply for a master’s program. In this context, it also explains that not only a degree is important, but which of the institutions that produce that degree is also equally pivotal in understanding.

It is useful concept in constructing the survey using the capital concept in determining the students’ assets and resources. 67 Despite a clearly divided concepts of capitals, in the

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https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm

66 Ibid.

Cambodia’s context at least, economic and cultural capital go hand in hand and are seen arguably inseparable, because they are mutually exclusive in the realm of educational field, since resources such as finance are required to enter the field, and knowledge to thrive within the field. One complements the other, and vice versa.

Cultural Capital

The term cultural capital, according to Broady, is not entirely consistently defined even by Bourdieu himself. It is such a broad term that under the umbrella comprise of many other types of aspects ranging from a degree from a highly well-regarded university, the ability to read classical music and classic literature, and the ability to articulate in a cultivated manner.68

This, however, is only partly visible and relevant in the Cambodia’s context in this study because of the different historical development of the country as well as its educational system. It also depicts challenges for Cambodia’s context that cultural capital must be recognized69 in accordance to the dominating educational system in the western hemisphere because the students are applying to a master’s program in one of the European universities. Nevertheless, through such framework, it assists the process of selecting different criteria of capitals to construct the survey for the study that is closest to what Bourdieu would refer to as cultural capital. For example, in this case it would be the types of news and amounts of books the students have read, as well as the proficiency of foreign languages that the students can speak etc.70

On top of that, cultural capital, according to Bourdieu, exists in three different forms which are embodied state that refers to the embodiment of mind and body to form a long last dispositions, objectified state that includes wide range of cultural goods, and lastly institutionalized state that can for example be apprehended as academic qualifications.71

However, that because capital in convertible as mentioned, the academic qualifications, or in this case bachelor’s degree and language certificates, are shown to be both economic and cultural capital. That is, without certain level of economic resource, students are immediately excluded from the cultural field, and at the same time, without cultural capital from academic field.

Social and Informational Capital

Access to the information of the scholarship program is one of the most crucial factors for the students to step their first leap into the space. Without the information, it would not be possible in the first place. Therefore, the concept of social capital, in this case also applies to informational capital, is foremost for understanding the students background as well as their position within the space. Social capital is defined by Bourdieu as:

> The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.72

The resource in this context of study are mainly involve the access to the information, not only just information but the most accurate information, in order to apply for the

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68 Translated from Broady 1998a, original text as “Examina från respekterade läroanstalter, förtrogent med klassisk musik eller litteratur, förmåga att uttrycka sig kultiverat i tal och skrift…” p. 6.
69 Ibid., “symboliskt kapital är det som erkännas.” p. 6. This applies symbolically for both economic as well as cultural capital.
70 More on than in chapter six in findings section.
71 Bourdieu. Three Forms of Capital, p. 17.
72 Ibid, p. 21.
scholarship program. With the help of this theoretical understanding, the usage of the Internet, the amount of books\textsuperscript{73} that the students have read, all contribute to the amounts of social or informational capital one might possess.

Habitus

Bourdieu’s notion of habitus incorporates both the subjective experiences of individuals and the objective structure in which individuals operate. The reciprocal influences of the students’ experiences illustrate and offer a helpful understanding of how they take advantage of the educational system on the one hand, and on the other hand reproduce the embodiment of their social view. To Bourdieu’s actual text, since it only is fitting to capture the essence of the meaning of this theoretically concept, he stated:

\begin{quote}
The habitus is the product of the work of inculcation and appropriation necessary in order for those products of collective history, the objective structures (e.g. of language, economy, etc.) to succeed in reproducing themselves more or less completely, in the form of durable dispositions, in the organisms (which one can, if one wishes, call individuals) lastingly subjected to the same conditionings, and hence placed in the same material conditions of existence.\textsuperscript{74}
\end{quote}

This tool is relevant for analyzing the students’ disposition and perception in preparing themselves for the scholarship program and in return showing the underlying structure which might reveal certain types of acknowledgement as well as the desired students’ profile. As Broady explained, that habitus is formed fundamentally through practices of various activities within the family at home as well as at school. It can be seen as embodied form of capital.\textsuperscript{75} Therefore all capitals that the students possess to enter the scholarship program are seen more or less influenced by their habitus, which can be empirically investigated.

To refer it back to the Cambodia’s context, one can draw from the upbringing of the students to understand their different habitus(es) which can present a very complex structure of understanding since the historical development of Cambodia’s education system is unique, plus the dark history that impacted the development of Cambodia as a whole. Therefore, the students, depending on where and when they grew up, might possess very particular habitus that may or may not be understood elsewhere. For example, if inspecting their family background, some of the students’ families suffered heavily from the genocide, from which it is hard to scrutinize their believes and world views from their immediate family; however, it is possible that the social environment in schools as well as casual surrounding can shape their habitus formation more effectively. Nevertheless, this speculation can only be exemplified to some extend and cannot be overgeneralized. The discussion will be made in more detailed in the findings section.

The Social Space

The concept of capitals and habitus go hand in hand, of which individuals possess, accumulate, use and convert within certain specific, for example, literary field, academic

\textsuperscript{73} This books reading activities create a strong sense of communities within the young Cambodian students, especially books that are written in English language. It can be seen as overlapping between cultural capital and social capital. One creating and opening a conditions to access the other.


Roughly translated from the original text: “Med habitus avses system av dispositioner som tillåter människor att handla, tänka och orientera sig i den sociala världen. En människas habitus grundläggas genom de vantar hon införvarar i familjen och skolan och fungerar sedan som ett seglivat och ofta omedvetet handlingsmönster. Habitut kan betraktas som förkroppsligat kapital.”
field, etc. However, to be able to qualify as a field, there are certain criteria, nine to be specific, all of which result in the autonomy of the field itself. Since the context of the Cambodia’s higher education and the scholarship program do not exhibit conspicuously the criteria to be analyzed as field, the concept of social space is instead the choice of the theoretical framework for this study. Moreover, due to the scope and the scale of the study is limited, the power relation within the field could not possible be explored either. Therefore, in short, constructing the space of the scholarship program is merely a step into understanding the possibilities for future in depth if the data allow.

Although it is interesting to highlight that it could be further investigated as a field after the social space has been constructed, because several specific capitals are present and qualify as field specific capitals that only the scholarship program consecrates most. Moreover, as noted by Börjesson, “[a] social space does share a number of properties with social fields, yet another key concept in Bourdieu’s sociology, but is less strictly defined.”

On the construction of the space, Bourdieu stated:

In so far as the properties chosen to construct this space are active properties, the space can also be described as a field of forces: in other words, as a set of objective power relations imposed on all those who enter this field, relations which are not reducible to the intentions of individual agents or even to direct interactions between agents.

With that, this particular concept will also aid the construction of the questionnaire of this study in which the data (in forms of different of properties) will be used for constructing the finding results. Therefore, it can arguably be deemed as a relative large advantage by opting to narrow down the focus on the theories which comes with specific methodology that can be made used of. Furthermore, Bourdieu explained in the social space that:

Agents and groups of agents are thus defined by their relative positions in this space. Each of them is confined to a position or a precise class of neighbouring positions (i.e. to a given region of this space), and one cannot in fact occupy – even if one can do so in thought – two opposite regions of the space.

Nevertheless, once again, due to limitation of the scope of the study, the relation/polarization between the agents in the social space might not be apparent or prominent, but it instead gives an overall view on the topic area, which can be useful for possible future research for in depth investigation of the Cambodia’s higher education as well as the “field” of scholarship programs in Cambodia.

Summary

In sum, these theoretical concepts perfectly accommodate what this study is trying to achieve, that is, to investigate the structure of the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Program through the students’ capitals. However, this is only made possible with the background knowledge of the Cambodia’s context of higher education, so that it can be presented in a meaningful way. Without the historical development of the Cambodian society, this will not be well understood and at the same might be wrongly interpreted. From the habitus to the different types of capitals accumulated by the students, the tools will structurally map

76 Ibid., p. 6.
77 Börjesson The Global Space of International Students in 2010, p. 1258.
79 Bourdieu, P. Language and Symbolic Power, pp. 229-230.
out the positions occupied by the students in the social space, thus making it comprehensible through their opposite of disposition projected from the space.

Next the methodological adaptation will be explained and discussed on how it is employed and deployed.
Chapter Five: Methodology

This study is mainly inspired by the study of the space of higher education in Sweden and many of Bourdieu’s work that has utilized Geometric Data Analysis (GDA) to construct the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship, of which the Cambodian students are the occupants who carry certain specific properties.

Geometric Data Analysis, specifically Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), is opted for this study because, as following the philosophy of inductive approach: “[t]he model should follow the data, not the reverse!”80 This is very important because in order to investigate the structure of the scholarship program in relation to the Cambodia’s context, I argue that one must look at from both macro perspective, which can be analyzed and interpreted textually from the program website and interview, together with micro perspective, of which the scholarship students are the focal point and thereby creating the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program specifically for Cambodian master’s students. On top of that, by utilizing Multiple Correspondence Analysis to construct the space of the scholarship program, it provides an emblematic visual model of the structure of the program itself.

Although the question of representativeness of the studied population will be raised, this study is, as mentioned before, primarily an exploratory study which can be useful for future pertinent studies regardless of the small studied population. Despite the challenge, this can be dealt with by adding a more qualitative results from some of the students, who volunteered to participate, to give their perspectives on why and how they decided to apply for the program, through which the cognitive subjective experience can be analyzed through their opinions and responses to the interview questions to paint a more holistic picture.

Therefore, this study is designed to be analyzed from both quantitative as well as qualitative to match with the research objectives of scrutinizing the structure with mixed-approach, and understanding of student’s perspective with the latter. In addition to that, one more interview was done with one of the experienced coordinator of the Erasmus Mundus program, whose identity will be anonymous and fictional name will be used.

Furthermore, ethical consideration will be discussed more thoroughly in last section. Through the interview, the process of the recruitment will be more detailed with certain specific examples of how the work is actually done. This further clarifies the subjectivity of the recruitment process that can be understood as the subjective experience that the recruiters have on the students.

The following will mainly explaining the data set of the Multiple Correspondence Analysis, including data collection, data coding, data sampling and finally ethical consideration. This will give a basic description that can be utilized later in the result section.

Data Set

Although the study is done by using mixed approach, the primary method is employed by using Multiple Correspondence Analysis as a basis for interpretation. The other part of the method, qualitative method, is arguably straight forward and requires little attention, since it is based purely on interpretation. However, it aids to the interpretation and the analysis for a more enriched and complemented results. These interview questions will be presented

alongside with the findings section in order to provide a clear and straightforward look into it, and will be conceptually discussed and analyzed in a synthesized manner in conjunction with the theoretical concepts such as capital, habitus and social space, and the context discussed above.

In the following, the construction of the survey will be presented and explained throughout. The survey was based on the construction of the space of higher education in the Sweden, of which students capitals were formularized in the questionnaire which consists of three main analytical purposes, economic/inherited capital, cultural capital\textsuperscript{81}, and informational (social) capital\textsuperscript{82}.

There are also be secondary data from the official website of the European Commission who is the funding agent from this particular program as a basis to interpret as well as to match the objectives of the scholarship program.

**Sampling**

The sampling of the study population was done by randomly selecting the students who I personally know obtained the scholarship previously. Thereafter, I asked them to spread the word among their peers who are in the same program, or who they might know that are in the same category. Since I am one of the beneficiaries of the scholarship program, I also have access to several database of the Cambodian scholarship holders, and contact them directly by sending them a link to the online survey which was done anonymously. The purpose is to collect as many beneficiaries as possible, therefore this snowball sampling is believably the only method that can be employed for such study since the scholarship program protects personal data of the scholarship holders for privacy reasons.

Due to this privacy reason however, it can be seen as one of the disadvantages for the study topic, because there is no clear indication of the total number of the beneficiaries from Cambodia. Consequently, the representativeness of the study will be vague. However, the result that such small exploratory study will provide is extremely useful for future research in similar context for Cambodia’s higher education system.

**Ethical Considerations**

Due to the nature of the data requested from the students, it is in the best interest to protect the participants’ identity. There are also some concerns before and after the distributions of the survey questions, which was distributed online, that some of the questions might be too intrusive for the students. For personal purpose and considerations, few of the categories (in MCA term) have already been ruled out before of the sensitivity embedded in the Cambodian’s culture asking about the total income of the family. Moreover, there are also some uncomfortable confession from some participants themselves that some of the questions, particularly their parents’ educational background, might be a little bit sensitive.

Finally, the concerns of being able to be identified through the sets of property that the students have filled have been raised as well. This might be the challenge and disadvantage, in a cultural sense, which specifically can be attributed to context of Cambodia. Nevertheless, the participants were reassured that all the information obtained

\textsuperscript{81} Cultural capital refers primarily to their educational level and symbolic degree that is recognized and allows them to apply for master’s program abroad. This was discussed extensively in chapter four.

\textsuperscript{82} Informational capital will be regarded and used instead of social capital in a sense that all the social circles and peers that the students involve with constitute to the information of different opportunity for applying for the scholarship program.
will only be used for research purposes and no data will be used against any particular individuals. Plus, it was completely anonymous in the first place to fill in the survey. Besides, as the author of this study myself, I reached out to contact few specific individuals to get the snowball sampling effect started.
Chapter Six: Findings, Analyses and Discussions

The results are going to be divided into three sections corresponding to the three research questions set out to answer. These three questions might seem disconnected at a glance; however, it exists as an integral step to understand the whole structure of the scholarship program and cannot and should not be analyzed separately.

While the first question deals with the structure and the recruitment process itself, question two takes on the structural basis and explains the subjective experience of the students, in this case, Cambodian students who are the agents of such social space. The third question adds another dimension to study by revealing the scholarship holders’ perspectives towards the scholarship program as well as against other scholarship programs.

An Insight towards the Recruitment Process and the Structure of the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Program

The first questions is to examine the structure of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program as a whole, by utilizing secondary data from the official website, as well as an interview to try to analyze the micro-level and the subjective side of the recruitment process. The idea is to discover the underlying subjective experiences against the official criteria of the program presented in previous chapter. This section will be the basis of interpreting the second research questions which will be presented in form of Multiple Correspondence Analysis.

The choice was decided based on the nature of the scholarship program, of which a more comprehensive context was discussed and presented in the previous section. Due to the complexity of the program itself, as well as the limited data that was able to be retrieved, a generalization of the whole program has to be made based on one specific project of the data. I argue that while different types of project consist of their own objectives, the main aim at the end of the project remains similar, that is to provide the platform for the outstanding students who will be well-represented among others scholars.

Moreover, since this part primarily examine the recruitment process, it is easily understood from one case, and make an inductive generalization, as the projects belong to the same umbrella of the Erasmus Mundus mobility scheme.

As shown in the previous section, the structure of the Erasmus Mundus program is fairly complex; however, the scope of the study is only limited to the relation of the program towards the Cambodia’s collaboration part. Therefore, the discussion made will solely be applicable to the Cambodia’s context and not necessarily suitable for different countries. With that said, the interview part will, in contrast, be the general procedure of the recruiter. The reason for that is because the criteria will not differ based on countries but the overall consensus objective criterion-based guideline, expect for some quota restriction as well as some special case, such as two students receive the same scores during the evaluation. This will be discussed in more detail side by side with the analysis from the interview.

Therefore, the first step here is to present the general guideline from the Erasmus Mundus general guideline, and make qualitative analysis of such. Next is to relate to a more

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83 Erasmus Mundus scholarship program consists of many projects in which different collaborative universities are participating. Different projects also comprise of different focus on different areas of study as well. This particular discussed is Project LOTUS+ under the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 scheme.
specific example, which will be explained with the answer from the interviewee, thereby solidify the recruitment process, which will help in tracing the pattern in the next section.

By analyzing the text of the criteria from the official website, in conjunction with the interview information from the recruiter, both objective and subjective aspect of the recruitment process will be address and therefore shed lights on the pattern of the scholarship program.

First research question is:

What is the underlying structure of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program within the Cambodia's context? What are the scholarship program's recruitment patterns?

The official website of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program clearly focuses heavily on the administrative side of the project instead of students. This can be seen throughout the documentation available publicly on the website itself. The recruitment criteria, although seem to be missing, are shown in the parts of the procedure of the selection of the project funding. The criteria of the selection of the students itself are shifted and decentralized among the partnered consortia of each project.

This way of management system makes sense since Erasmus Mundus program itself is the central unit for the funding and the coordinator to distribute the committee among the projects. However, it can be seen throughout the available document that there is an importance is requiring universities as actors to be able to in the consortia itself, which means that students from those universities already has an advantage, directly or indirectly, through the recognition and approval to be participating in the program in the first place.84

One of the highlight in the documents is that there is also focus on “[tackling] cross-cutting issues like gender-balance, equal opportunities and the participation of disadvantaged groups (disabled students, economically disadvantaged students). Clear inclusive provisions to enable real participation of disadvantaged groups into this programme are a requirement;”85

To understand more thoroughly about the recruitment process, a mixed-approach using interview is employed here. This also highlights a subjective aspect of the recruitment when it comes to choosing between students who have similar profile, as it will be shown in the discussion below. The interviewee comes from one of the project under the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 program. The rest of the interviewee’s profile will be remained anonymous and the interviewee will also be referred to as in fictional name Elina in italic.

The sub-questions set will be presented and discussed separate in the ordered manner in accordance to the application assessment steps. There will be discussion, analysis, and conclusion made at the end of the section to bind everything together as well. The interview consists of five questions as the following:

“Gatekeeping” Mechanism for Requirement Assessment

This is the backbone of the program’s core element when it comes to criteria for the students as an eligibility to be admitted and awarded the scholarship.

When asked “What are the assessment criteria for the scholarship program?” Elina mentioned that “[s]ince it’s only master degrees we are talking about; we have kind of multiple steps process.” The first a somewhat important step is to evaluate the entirety of the application, the completeness of the application so to speak which includes all the relevant document required by the scholarship program. It was the entry point and the determined step into

85 Information can be found in the document on page 54-55.
being the evaluation process. The filtering process as presented in the interview, “in 75 per cent they are not [complete]”, hence only 25 per cent of the total applications in each around usually are qualified.

From this first step, there is already a filtering process seen as a gatekeeper\(^{86}\) therefore this social space has its objective consecrated criteria to enter such arena, as highlighted by Åkelund:

Scholarship offers normally come with a well-defined rule on eligibility attached, and they are often concentrated on certain academic areas or for applicants from certain countries.\(^{87}\)

The applications were, after the first screening, furthered to the admission office to be evaluated for the academic criteria to be admitted into the university program, said Elina. Each department of the study program also has their own specific requirements before the students were fully accepted academically.

Up to this point, it might seem that the criteria are not different from any other types of students, such as fee paying students or free movers. However, the steps get more complicated and more competitive as described by Elina. She said, until the end of the filtering process from the academic gateway, only around 20 out of approximately 200 applications each round managed to pass the bar. Such minuscule success rate reflects the competitive nature comparable to those top elite institutions.\(^{88}\)

However, the numbers will be furthered narrowed down due to the scholarship capped quota for each individual country in this case. The interviewee, as expected, gave a thorough answer that match with the standard criteria found in the Erasmus Mundus.

Key Component for the Selection Assessment

There are different key components when assessing the applications. In this section, Elina was asked the question: “Please rate the most important criterion to the least. (Motivation letter, study program, gender balanced etc…)”

The answer was quite clear from the beginning. Motivation letter is among other criteria the most important part of the selection process, as Elina stresses that it “singles the good and the bad out”, by which it is meant that the deciding factor between good and a bad application. There are also cross-cutting factors as mentioned also, of which the priority can be based on gender, socioeconomics background, as well as underappreciated subject, especially for a heavily gender biased subject like engineering and other similar programs. However, it only matters “if everything else is the same”, for which it shows that the objective criteria are still being evaluated first and foremost, and then the subjective decision will be made when there are issues as such emerge.

To understand this better, however, one could not fully comprehend such complexity of the recruitment process without taking into consideration of the students’ profile. The reason being that students themselves come from different socioeconomics background which were exposed and immersed in different context of what can be seen as consecrated assets or capitals within the arena of the scholarship competition. For example, Elina gave an example of if a girl who came from Syria wanted to apply for a Peace and Conflict Studies, the motivation letter is the integral part to take into consideration, aligning with her study profile as well as motivations. This builds the basis of the second research questions which will be scrutinized in the next section.


\(^{87}\) Åkelund, 2016, p. 14

\(^{88}\) Trow model of elite education, and other ranking website that shows competitive admission rates
To complicate things even further, the factor of motivation letter can be regarded as both objective and subjective at the same time, which is aligned with Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, since the objective structure of how the students were being educated, is arguably similar, while the subjective experiences that the students possess are completely determined by the influences of their environments, in which they were socialized.

Being postulated as the most important criterion for the recruitment process of the scholarship program, the motivation letter not only plays the pivotal roles of showing the students’ background, but also is the embodiment of the students’ capitals.

**Evaluating Committee (The Gatekeepers)**

“Who else are the evaluating committee besides the scholarship project coordinator?” This particular question was posed to find out various decision makers involved in the scholarship program. On the other side of the evaluating process stands a committee which involves many more actors in deciding the final result, mostly in the most democratic way possible. The abovementioned about the cross-cutting issues such as gender balance and socioeconomics background of the students will ultimately be determined by the committee when every suggestion from the involving institutions have been delivered.

… One poor girl from Indian and one rich guy from Indian [who] both want to do Computer Science, I would go for the girl. Or if you have a poor guy and a rich girl, I would probably go for the guy. But the final balances are … like measured by the coordinator, because then you also have home universities and host universities and different balances according to the project.

Therefore, the decision making process is shown to be highly structured as well as hierarchical. Each has different role ranging from the evaluator, the home and host universities, as well as the project coordinator of the scholarship.

From here one can confidently state that the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program is very straightforward, in terms of the criteria used in the selection process. At the same while objective criteria exist, subjective decision has to be made accordingly when dilemma emerges as discussed above, since there are limited spots, which also speaks volume about the successful scholarship holders’ profile.

Furthermore, the host universities, according to *Elina*, play a very important role in admitting the students into the programs. As discussed above in question one, these academic criteria are arguably objective based criteria. “[The host universities] either accept or reject.” And after the decision has been made, the rest of the consortium cannot overrule the result, because the students have already been “disqualified”.

This multilayer of evaluation and selection process aligns with the embedded purpose or objective of the scholarship program, which is stated to recruitment outstanding students from the countries participating in the consortium.

**Interview Process Missing and Students’ Language Abilities**

Next question is “What do you think about the missing “interview” procedure for the students?” For this question, although it touches on the subject of getting to know the students from a face to face interview, or at least video conference, to see their ability and level of communications in the corresponding languages, *Elina* highlights the practicality and feasibility of hosting interview for more than 200 applicants. She admittedly agrees saying that “it would be great if we could do it, but that is like, no way, that is possible.”
From the sociological point of view, this seem to be quite important to see how well the students can express themselves in comprehensible as well as articulate manner. For this can be attributed highly from the students’ habitus, and their use of language as shown in many of Bourdieu’s empirical studies mentioned in the previous sections. As Elina continues mentioning that the students could definitely be benefiting from the interview process, however, the language part was already part of the required documents which display the students’ ability to be able to command the four macro skills in a university level standard. This missing interview step is seen to set apart the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program to other similar profile scholarship program available in Cambodia.

In addition, the main language discussed is solely English for it is the means of university study programs. However, Elina adds that students might benefit from secondary foreign languages such as Spanish or French, which certain universities from Spain and France respectively offer in those particular native languages as the means in the study programs. Other than that, even though the students might have an impressive linguistics profile, it will not affect the evaluation of the application in anyway as long as it does not have direct link to the study program they choose.

Characteristics of the Selected Students

“If you were to sum up to three words to describe some of the successful candidates (in your experience), what would it be?” Here the question highlights some specific characteristics that the students might have, described from the coordinator’s perspective.

Motivation letter again continues to be the main highlight of the successful candidates. Elina states that the successful candidates have one thing in common, which was that they are “specific”. The theme of specificity runs through the three words Elina provides, which were “be honest, be prepared, [and] be humble.”

Interestingly this question has definitely shed some lights on the subjectivity side of the evaluation criteria, although it might seem objective at times. Elina gave an example that the motivation letter the students wrote should show that they have done a lot of homework, in order to show that they have figured their path to motivate for the study program. Moreover, they should be honest, as she claims that often times, if students lie in the letter it would show and will be noticed.

Discussion and Analysis

As presented above, the recruitment process of the scholarship program is very structured, starting from the filtering of the incomplete applications to the special case of decision making when dilemma emerges between similarly merited students.

Although the interview is only done with of the many projects within the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program, it can be seen that most of the projects under the same scholarship program all consists of the same based requirements that have been set to filter out the incomplete applications. Those are: documents of languages certificate that show the minimum requirement, documents of their grades/transcripts and bachelor degree, motivation letter, valid travel documents, and finally reference letter from relevant individuals.

These criteria can be found on most of the project website, and all were done and processed online. This is worthy to mention because, it just singles out those who do not have access to using computer, the Internet, and other technological base devices. It also shows the limitation to those who do not possess a good enough knowledge of computer

89 See Bourdieu, 1977, p. 85
and technology to even get the information and apply online. This is the one thing that was left out and taken for granted when the interview questions were formulated. However, this is will be investigated deeper in the second research questions which corresponds to students’ profile and their capitals.

The Erasmus Mundus scholarship program structure is somewhat straightforward and seemingly objective when it comes to selection criteria, which is also true for a lot of parts. However, from the interview, one can derive that all those of objective assets, in fact, have been influenced heavily by the students’ subjective experiences.

One very conspicuous example is the strong emphasis on the motivation letter, which reveals a tremendous amount of information from the students. The way they presented themselves can sometimes be arbitrarily assessed as well from the eyes of the evaluator. Therefore, each institution can have different interpretation on motivation, although there are objective parts as guidelines within the motivation letter such as the four main questions of who, why, how, and what, that students should motivate base upon.

Therefore, the result, although is not definitive, sheds the light of how the recruitment process of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program operates. While it makes sense to assume that the scholarship no doubt is run by obliging guidelines and criteria that are objectively set, it also is very important to understand that the objective criteria have a lot of subjective biasness in nature as well. Just as shown in *Homo Academicus* and *The State Nobility* that such power relations between the involving institutions stems from the very top, adding to the already subjective criteria set by the same institutions.

This aptly opens the discussion for the next section which involves the students themselves, which is to investigate all sort of their capitals and can be analyzed and interpreted as the students’ subjective experience towards the application process and how they manage to pass all the steps in the recruitment processes.

After obtaining a better understanding of the program structure as well as the recruitment criteria, it is interesting to see how the actual space of the scholarship program looks like and who are the scholars with what types of properties that they possess to be able to win the scholarship. It also provides insights into different social positions between scholars, whether or not the space is made up of homogenous group of scholars or there are polarization among them.

Therefore in the next questions, the space of Erasmus Mundus scholarship program is constructed and will be discussed and analyzed next.

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90 These points are very common among scholarship applications for the students to motivation or propose themselves to the evaluator. There are none concrete guidelines for such, although some projects might have evaluation guideline for giving students the score based on what they have written. However, the four main questions mentioned are deemed crucial in giving a complete picture for the assessment.
The Space of the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Program within the Cambodia’s Context

Second research question aims to map out the social space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program within the Cambodia’s context. The question is as below:

What types of assets/capitals do the scholarship holders possess? What are their positions in the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program?

Therefore, in order to do that a set of questionnaires was used to collect the data from the individuals who are scholarship holders and willing to participate. The data was processed and made ready to construct a three-dimensional space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program, positions and properties occupied by the scholars. As presented, Le Roux and Rouanet put forward that Geometric Data Analysis is a way to cope with multivariate that presents the data as cloud of points. To quote:

The formalization of these structures is an integral part of the approach; properly speaking, GDA is the formal–geometric approach of multivariate data analysis. At the same time, clouds of points are not mere graphical displays, like temperature charts (where coordinate scales may be changed arbitrarily); they have a well-defined distance scale, like geographic maps.

It perfectly captures the prime purpose of this study to make use of GDA as it provides the visualization of the social space to makes sense of the recruitment process in the first research questions, as well as to reveal the theoretical understanding of the properties possess by these students. Here, specific MCA is performed here and three axes were opted for interpretation and four supplementary categories will be utilized to give a more enriched interpretation as well as a structure of its own within the social space. However, before presenting the result, the whole process of data coding will be discussed in the following prior to illustrating the space in order that the readers make sense of the properties sets.

Constructing the Space

30 individuals participated in the survey, and there are 12 active questions and 33 active categories after performing specific MCA setting the low frequency (usually <5%) categories to illustrative or passive so that they do not contribute too strong to the axes which can puzzle in the interpretation.

However, since few of the active categories are dichotomous yes/no questions, those low frequencies cannot be excluded. The data collected from the questionnaire initially consists more than the 12 active questions but later coded into the abovementioned number of categories for interpreting.
Table 1. 12 active variables and 33 active categories with absolute (n) and relative (in %) frequencies (the symbols are the ones used in figures).

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NB: Italics indicate passive category. 7 passive categories in total will be excluded from interpretation.

Table 1 shows the coded results from the data ready to be processed in SPAD94. They are students’ capitals, in other words, what the students possess before applying for the scholarship. It ranges from their Bachelor’s degree, study programs in bachelor, which is symbolic, to their everyday activities like usage of internet, reading books and the usage of English language, which is more cultural.95 There are also assets such as experiences in participating in extracurricular activities and having lived abroad, which is seen as a social capital.

94 SPAD program is used to perform Specific MCA.
95 Note the bachelor’s degree, from which students obtained, was coded into public vs. private, due to the limitation of the small scope of the study population which leads to the limit of the categories that can be included. Public degree includes institutions such as Royal University of Phnom Penh, Institute de Technologies du Cambodge, which are among some of the most prestigious universities. Private degree also includes some of the most reputable institutions such as Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia. These are important to note since the interpretation will be focused on the home universities which are most recognized in the global arena of Higher Education.
Figure 1. The space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program within Cambodian context with all active categories (Plane 1-2)

The properties consist of different forms of capitals possessed by the students. First theme refers to the educational assets, including BachelorDegree Public vs Private, BachelorProgram, and GPA.96 Second and last theme comprise of cultural capital and social capital, some of which can be seen as overlapping. They are Languages, English Proficiency, English Use Daily, HaveLivedAbroad Yes/No, Extracurricular Yes/No, ReadingNewsHours, NewsTypes: Mixed vs. Int'l, Books, and InternetUse.

On the ground that this is a small scope study consisting of few study population, there is limitation towards the amounts of categories which can be included. The final decision 33 active categories to accommodate the 30 individuals to create a more even weight. That is to make an even overall dimension of the space, considering the dimension of this study already has 21 dimensions compared to 30 individuals.97

96 These are the properties that represent the students’ educational capital, the assets from their bachelor’s degree before applying for the Master’s program.

97 Le Roux and Rouanet. Multiple Correspondence Analysis, p. 46
Table 2. Eigenvalues and modified rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Eigenvalues</th>
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A Three-Dimensional Space

The mean of eigenvalue equals to $\frac{1.75}{21} = 0.083$, to which there are 8 eigenvalues that exceed the average value. First 3 axes with modified rates are 49.4%, 21.1% and 14.8% together make up 85% of the importance of the cloud. For interpretation, the 3 axes chosen, all categories with contributions higher than the average contribution ($\frac{100}{33}=3.03\%$) are selection together with some added categories which are deemed important to see the opposing poles.

However, the third axis is seen to overlap with axis 2 showing similar pattern in opposition poles resulting in the exclusion of the interpretation.\(^{98}\) It is also worth to mention that since the primary purpose of the constructing the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program is to reveal of the different types of capitals possessed by students, but not putting too much focus on looking into the deviation between poles.

Axis 1: Traditional and French Influenced vs. Modernized and Anglicized Characteristics

As shown in figure 2, the first axis presents the opposition between two characteristics. On the right hand side, they are what I consider as a more traditional traits of the Cambodia’s educational characteristics. There are clear indications of former colonial influences of French speaking part. The Medical Science degree was primarily French plus the language spoken are essentially English and French, opposing to the left hand side of only speaking English, which can be seen from the degrees in Social Sciences and Education, which all of which the study material and medium of instruction is in English.

Another clear indication is that of the activities with regards to usage of the Internet as well the news reading, of which they are considered to be more cultural and social, depict a clear opposition between the languages. The more traditional pole demonstrates the ability to make use of both English and French but with a lack of the proficiency in English compared to the left pole, which shows a higher level of commitment to English.

Differences between reading activities are also conspicuous throughout the space, projecting the more books but less Internet usage on the right hand side, and vice versa on the left. Another interesting observation that cannot be seen from the space itself is that the degree held by the students whether it be public or private are very clustered in certain universities that are reputable as being recognized abroad in the international arena of the higher education system. Those are Royal University of Phnom Penh, and Institute de Technology du Cambodge, in the public sphere\(^{99}\), and Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia in the private sphere to give an exemplification. Contextualized in the previous chapter,

\(^{98}\) Please refer to the appendix for the picture of the space for axes 1 and 3.

these institutions are pivotal in understanding the students’ profile, which arguably predetermined their chances of being selected in the first place.\textsuperscript{100} As seen in Ye and Nylander, this study confirms the results found in the context of Singaporean students that few elite institutions in the local context foster and offer students tremendous opportunities when it comes to access to scholarship program.\textsuperscript{101}

However, it is also because of the partnership that these institutions have, already establishing a strong network with the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program as well. Therefore, it can be better understood that access and admission into these universities already increase the chance and provide students with many more advantageous resources that others would otherwise have.

**Axis 2: Lower/Local vs. Higher/International Capitals**

Among the three chosen axes, axis 2 illustrates the clearest oppositions between the amounts of capitals within the space of Erasmus Mundus scholarship program. This aids to the interpretation of the diversified nature of the recruitment profile of the scholarship program, despite the highly selective processes and strict criteria.

On the top, it shows the lack of experiences such as living abroad, participating in extracurricular activities and using less books and the Internet in general. It is interesting to note that with only exception of no living abroad experience, the weight of the properties are relatively smaller compared to the opposite side. This explains that despite being shown as diverse groups of properties, it is still highly desirable to possess higher amounts of capitals to increase the chance of winning the scholarship.

On the bottom part, all of the properties represent high capitals with a touch of international experience to it. From a cultural and social capital point of departure, the students who possess higher amounts of capitals in this case can be understood as having a more exposure to the outside world resulting in the ability to obtain more information as well as understand better the process of the scholarship program, for example. The links between the usages of the Internet are crucial in this context, since most of the communication channels as well as the information will be founded on the Internet, therefore giving the students who are frequent users of the Internet an advantage.

However, I argue that the local experience possessed by students can be used as their advantage since in depth knowledge of local context can lead to a stronger and more focused goal, which can be incorporated into their motivation letter, and assessed highly by the selection committee.

**Summary**

The two axes reveal interesting patterns showing arguably distinctly opposing poles. Different languages used as well the capitals that are deemed local and international are the main results, in spite of the overall diverse group of students. The overall picture of the space of the scholarship program is presented very clearly, showing somewhat clear oppositions in four poles. Since this small samples of data is far from being ideal to make accurate generalization, it is not entire impossible to understand that there are certain characteristics within the groups of the students. This will act as a basis to interpret the structure of in the supplementary categories.

\textsuperscript{100} These institutions as explained in the previous chapter already established various partnership with other universities which make them one of the more reputable in terms of quality of the students.

Supplementary Categories: *Gender, Age, and Social origin*102

After inspecting the students’ “objective” assets, three supplementary categories are chosen to scrutinize various factors that could influence their life trajectories until the point of their success for obtaining the scholarship.

First, gender was put into examination, which shows no deviation in the first axis. However, slight deviation in the axis 2 shows that men are positioning towards the lower/local capitals pole, and women are implied to have more international experience according the space. Explanation can be drawn from the fact that in developing country such as Cambodia, women are being prioritized and given more opportunities especially in education in attempt to close the gender gap as well as the empower the matriarchy society per se. This is shown all throughout the development agenda from various actors. It is very interesting to see such deviation, although small, can be representative enough to reflect the bigger picture in the whole educational system in Cambodia.103

Figure 2. Supplementary categories (Plane 1-2) gender, age, and birth place

![Supplementary categories (Plane 1-2) gender, age, and birth place](image)

NB: The size of markers is proportional to the weights.

Second supplementary category is age. Once again, there is no great deviation. Big population was in the ages 23 to 29, which position in very near to the center of the axis. Group of the students aging between 30 and 34 years is the more isolated cluster,

102 Social origin is divided between students’ birth place and their parents’ education.


Although, women empowerment can be seen throughout the Cambodia’s educational context, the effort was put in the elementary level to ensure a stable retention rate from the very early stage of the educational trajectories. Various cultural and societal factors are also the influential element towards the development which will not be discussed here.
positioning in a more modernized but possess lower capitals compare to the group of age between 35 and 40, which is leaning towards a higher capitals poles. There is no significance explanation for the deviation of the age group since the population is relatively small.

Social origin, which is determined by their birthplace is the third supplementary category. Another small deviation between those who were born in the province leaning towards to the more traditional and lower capital pole, and those in the capital city, Phnom Penh, leaning just slightly to the more modernized and higher capital pole.

All in all, the supplementary categories did not show any significance in deviation between, gender, age, and birth place. However, it is worth noting that the weight of the students who are from provinces is somewhat larger than those from Phnom Penh, implying that the students would move from the provinces to the city in order to attend the universities, which can be understood as their habitus within Higher Education system, since more opportunities and access to opportunities most likely are given or presented in the larger academic settings in the capital city of Cambodia, in which many highly reputable institutions are located.

Figure 3. Supplementary categories (Plane 1-2) parents’ education

Next is parents’ education of the students. The most noticeable deviation is shown on the left side of the pole of space depicting the more modernized and anglicized characteristics of the students who have father who possess a master’s degree, and a mother bachelor degree. On the contrary, those whose father possesses a bachelor degree is leaning towards a more conservative French influenced pole on the right hand side. All higher degree possessed by the parents are positioning in the higher capital and international experience in the bottom pole. Interestingly enough, mother’s lower educational background of 1-6 years in school deviate the most leaning towards the more international experience of the children and slight more traditional.
The educational background of the parents’ did reveal some patterns showing higher capitals students do, to certain extent, inherit from their parents’ high educational capital as well. This is a very special case to be conceived, although it seems to present itself as a matter-of-factly. The level of education of the students’ parents are not to be understood in a conventional way, since most of the parents all went through the period of genocide and war, and the fact that they were able to obtain high school level or even tertiary education means that the family possess considerably large amounts of capitals thus inherit to the students with high amounts of capital as well as shaping their habitus in the field of higher education as well. Nevertheless, the amounts shown in this study is very small to be generalized, and should not be overly emphasized.

Structuring Factors of the Space: Master’s Programs and EU Countries

While the social original and other factors are interesting to understanding the profile of the students, the structuring factor of the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program can be benefit from outlining the structure by projecting the Master’s program that the students attended as well as the EU countries that they chose to go.

For the Master’s programs, it was coded similar to the active categories of the Bachelor programs. The result gives a straight forward representation of similar patterns between the Bachelor degree programs and Master’s programs, with the program in Education and Social Sciences flipping the position from the Bachelor to Master’s program. The reason can be understood from the nature of the study programs that require specific academic background with Education and Social Sciences being more flexible and can be applied interchangeably in terms of area of studies.

Figure 4. Structuring factors (Plane 1-2) master’s programs and EU countries

NB: The size of markers is proportional to the weights.

New fascinating discovery of this research should the position of the EU countries in accordance to the students’ choice as destination country. The pole of the French
influenced more conservative characteristics, no doubt, shows France as the destination country with Germany and Italy positioning on the right side of the pole as well. On the opposite, Finland Belgium, Portugal and Sweden are leaning towards to more anglicized pole, leaving Czech Republic in the middle. If one tries to make sense of this pattern, there probably exists no true conceptualization of why the countries were positioned as they are, rather than the fact that foreign degree and scholarship education is undoubtedly given prestige and highly valued.

However, one might be able to understand the students’ profile in accordance to the countries by their ability to speak French as well as their background of their study in Bachelor program. Since the university admissions are strictly imposed, especially on the Cambodia’s Bachelor's degree, and how it is recognized, there is virtually no flexible changes in terms of the trajectories of choosing master’s degree.

On the axis 2, the amounts of capitals possessed students shed light on how the countries are positioned as well. Sweden, Denmark and Italy, with singular weight, deviate from the rest positioning at the far bottom, referring higher capital and more international experience. On the very top of the space stand Germany, Czech Republic, and Finland on the pole that represent lower capital and more local experience. One implication that can be made is that the language that is required in the French universities, especially in Medical Science program, is obviously French, and that it has an underlying implication of the colonial influence of the study program as well as the more traditional characteristics.

All in all, the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program illustrates the matter of fact of the nature of the study programs that are offered by different universities among the EU countries. The visual representation does not determine any interpretations that one country is better than the other, or one country has higher requirements hence demands higher capitals from the students any more than the other. This simply shows the fact that certain student profiles are matched with certain countries as a result of the selection of the scholarship program, which involves multiple processes as discussed above in the first research question.

Summary
From the construction of the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program, one can see clearly that despite such small study population was involved, the properties were so diverse yet give a glimpse on the minute differences which are interesting and new to the existing knowledge of the current context of the Cambodia’s higher education system as well as the students profile which is matched with different supplementary elements discussed above including gender, age, social origin as well as the structure of the master’s programs and EU countries chosen by the participants.

The four opposition pole from the two axes are only the attempts to show interesting patterns that can help interpretation process that aids the visualization of the space. It is helpful when trying to understand and conceptualize the space with the recruitment process which requires multiple processes. It adds another layer of complexity to the already highly structured and hierarchical recruitment process. Together it shows that students’ profiles matched in certain characteristics of the study program as well as the destination countries.

After the examination of the macro level of the scholarship program, which involves the recruiter and the structure of the program, the next research question deals with micro level of the students’ subjective experiences relating to how they prepared themselves and what the strategies might be, if any, that they used.
Students’ Dispositions and Perceptions on their Preparation towards Applying for the Scholarship Program

“How did the students prepare themselves to apply for the scholarship?” This particular question looks into a subjective experience of the students who participated in the survey and agreed to be interviewed. There are three of them, who will be named A, B, C in order to ensure their complete anonymity for ethical purposes. The interview sessions were carried via Skype video conference and the interview consists of sub-questions for investigating how students’ perception. Next step is to interpret them, with no particular individual, with the general pattern of the career development or trajectories in sociological term.

In this section, like the first research question, the result and the discussion will be presented question by question for clarity, and finally detailed discussion and analyses will be made to bind everything together. The interview comprises of questions as the followings.

How do you think about the Erasmus Mundus scholarship, what were the motivations for you to apply for it in the first place?

This question highlights the importance of the candidates’ intention for applying, which could also assist in understanding the scholarship program recruitment pattern, in this case, from a more micro-level.

Primarily, the answers from two of the interviewees, A and B, are similar highlighting that they were influenced and inspired in various ways from their peers, ranging from friends to other alumni of the program itself. They also specify the popularity of the program, to which they were drawn.

One aspect that is surprising is that three of them deemed the application process as “it is not too complicated to apply… and it is simple.” quoted A.

C on the other hand emphasizes about the presumption of experience that he has towards the program. C said that the program acts as a great platform for students to share knowledge, as well as allows them to know more about the EU.

One uniquely interesting from each interviewee is that three of them mentioned three different importance of the scholarship program, comprising of funding aspect (very generous scholarship), better educational system, and cultural aspect that can be explored around the EU countries, respectively by A, B, and C.

These initial impressions of the scholarship program of the interviewees shows that they possess already to some extend knowledge about overall idea and essence of the program. This signifies their social capabilities to gather critical information in order to comprehend the whole process of the applications.

Furthermore, the motivation factors were expressed through the well-received information from the scholarship program itself, making the students more confident in their choice.

... Erasmus Mundus scholarship, compared to other scholarships, is really well-known in Cambodia because there’s like always information available on social media like Facebook, and there’s Erasmus Cambodian alumni existing in the country and the European Delegation in Cambodia always call the alumni for gathering to know each other.

B mentioned the statement when expressing about their view of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program.
Have you ever applied for any other scholarship programs that offer you similar grant for the master’s degree mobility before?

This question is specifically intended to see the students’ experience of applying for scholarship programs in general, which to some extent reveals students’ informational capital in searching for the available programs to apply for in the first place. This is very important because while scholarship programs are widely available in Cambodia, the students are not guaranteed to receive the information they are supposed to in order to apply for the program. This way, it indirectly shows students’ navigation of the information search which showcase the readiness that the scholarship program want from a well-equipped students in my opinion.

The answer from the candidates also shed lights on other programs that might be benefited for future research as well. Some of the programs that have been mentioned are: Rotary Peace Fellowship program, Fulbright, New Zealand ASEAN Scholarship, Swedish Institute Study Scholarships, Civil Society Leadership Awards – Open Society Foundations, Australia Awards Scholarships. These scholarship programs mentioned are all foundation based program which have similar structures that involves several steps in the recruitment process just like the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program.

This is also important to present some relativity of the Erasmus Mundus program from the students’ perspective and their choice to opt for Erasmus Mundus, and ultimately received the award.

A highlights her experience of applying for Rotary Peace Fellowship program and did not make the cut at the end, quoting:

… I remember I had one of my boss[es] who was a rotary [scholar], so he knows quite a lot about it and then he tries to explain to me about the system, but the thing is the courses that they offer was not really in tune with what I wanted, I think I was something about Peace [studies]… so it's kind of related with what I do but not exactly what I wanted, so I did apply… and I think they see the same that it’s not direct connection to it, that’s why I didn't get it.

From this quote, it perfect captures the amount of capitals of A possesses, leading to be awarded the Erasmus Mundus scholarship. As seen from the first question that the main crucial factors are the universities requirement and then motivation letter, of which A displays a strong understand in aligning the application of the scholarship.

Similar responds were given by B and C; however, it was not so much detailed. Nevertheless, one can draw a reasonable amount of understanding and argue that the students possess what are required for the scholarship program and more experience from outside as well.

This, on the other hand, is only projected from three successful candidates which, in no way, are representative enough, while the responds can strengthen the second research question about their position in the social space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program.

Could you describe a bit about how you prepared yourself to apply for the scholarship?

The preparation of the candidates should capture a lot of embedded cognitive structure of the students, how they operate and why they did what they did. In this particular case, A exhibits extremely high knowledge of the scholarship before and during the application process, highlighting three main important areas that are deemed most important when it comes to studying abroad for a master’s degree. First of all, the master’s program should best align with the candidate’s background that they have applied for. As demonstrated in
previous question, A is highly knowledgeable of the field of study as well as the programs that are available to apply for. Second is the country. This is very interesting part and especially unique that while other seem to be excited to explore new culture and countries, comfort was explained by A indicating the similarity between the destination country (Portugal) and home country (Cambodia). Third is financial means A quotes that “the grant [is] to be enough to spend and to live without having to worry... if I want to study well I don’t want to worry about the money.”

Moreover, the information about the scholarship program such as the eligibility, required documents and other minute details was also mentioned. B mentioned about two particular criteria that were given high value, which are the grades and community service experiences. B continued that the information was obtained through the alumni event, which leads to the effort to “study to maintain my GPA at the same time looking for the opportunities for the experience that I can learn from society especially for the community service experiences.” All these experiences and academic grades will be written for the motivation letter that B mentioned:

[It] is one of the components that the committee is seriously looking to evaluate the candidate and who is going to receive the scholarship, so [for] a really good motivation letter you need to have a really merit academic at school and at the same time an experience to explore and tell the committee that you are ready for the scholarship and for the program.

Not less persistent than the other, C even depicts about the length of the preparations which dates back to at least two years before.

Actually, I did not plan [the academic record] only when I apply at the time, but I planned it two or three years before, so I hard to study to have good academic record, it is the first thing I could do.

This sums up all the common three areas that these three successful candidates were giving specially attentions towards. First is to thoroughly go through the eligibility criteria, which leads to a very early preparation. Second and third, which are academic grades and motivation letter respectively, are actually two of the requirement criteria that were discussed very thoroughly and also highly focused on as well even long before they start the application. However, A demonstrated an extra mile to research for how the life is going to be potentially to ensure better living environment as well as living standard for studying especially.

What makes you choose Erasmus Mundus over the other?

These two questions can be answered together since it is interrelated and can be seen as causal effect of one another. That is, because the candidates can distinguish Erasmus Mundus scholarship program, they can potentially make their decision based on the differences they found to best suit their needs academically.

Surprisingly three of the interviewee all agree that the application process is very simple compared to others scholarship, which seems to be contradicting to the first research questions at a first glance, since the program structure is very complex. However, this reflects upon two different spectrum of the whole process, which on the student’s applicants end appears to be very simple.

A compared Fulbright and Australian Award scholarship program against the Erasmus Mundus citing the complicated and long process of the formers are what differentiate the scholarship programs.
… [Fulbright] made me go to take the TOEFL test, and things like that. I did take and I passed what they want. But again the complication of the application makes it hard… I had to work and I don’t have enough time for this.

Besides, the funding aspect of the Fulbright program also sets apart from Erasmus Mundus, where the former seems to put more strain and stress on the candidates due to the cut of funding, according to A.

Again, another important factor that determines the choice of the successful candidates is the funding and the grant. Generous grants were given to ensure the students ability to be able to live abroad comfortable without any concerns, which also attracts a lot of applicants in the first place.

C said that Erasmus Mundus program promotes culture exchange while others focus more on skills based exchange. However, intriguing responds from B who compares Erasmus Mundus scholarship program to other scholarship programs especially in Asia, that most often require candidates to learn their languages before starting the program.

The overall answers, in fact, were similar and given in the first question, that emphasizes the simple process and the widely available and clear information that can be found on the scholarship website. Although the answers were not mentioned by the three interviewees, the prestige of the scholarship program was implied.

Were you more confident in applying for Erasmus Mundus scholarship than the others?

A speaks about the relevant experiences with the study program that they applied for. Language is an advantage and previous outstanding achievements.

B acknowledges their experiences in volunteering and the advantage of holding extra information in application process make them stand out. First, information was retrieved through the website available for everyone. Secondly, B personally knows the alumni who received the scholarship before. This is important because the experiences shared by the alumni can be indispensable and provide insightful into what makes a successful application.

C stresses about the language advantage, strategic in assessment potential competition. The connections with the alumni and access to the detailed information on both the Internet as well as the advice from the other successful scholarship candidates (regardless of which programs) are all important when applying to maximize the chance to be awarded the scholarship.

Lastly, they are all very confident in when they are applying because they know clearly about the requirement criteria, although they should not have so much high hopes because of the limited seats available.

Overall Discussion and Analysis

The three research questions have been answered separately; however, it does not mean that there is no relevance between them. To synthesize the context, one can look at each component as piece of the puzzle. The space of Erasmus Mundus scholarship program in Cambodia’s context gives a skeletal structure and a bird eyes view, and the interviews signify as agents who operate within that social space.

It is clear that the results from the social space might not say anything significant about how the Erasmus Mundus scholarship operates; however, with the understanding of how each project recruits the students, and how students prepare themselves for the application, it reveals a more complex as well as hierarchical structure, where power between different actors are almost equal.
Using Bourdieu’s concept of capital and habitus, it reveals that what appears to be objective criteria are not always solely objective, and it presents students’ embedded capitals that they obtained through their universities settings, and social settings as well.

All criteria required to pass through the gatekeeper are completely arbitrary in a sense that students have to possess enough capitals even before being able to do the searching and applying for the program. That is to say that it is easy to thrive once they are already in the system.

What is more is that to go through all stages from being admitted by the corresponding universities (the European universities in this case) and being evaluated and finalized by the entire board of the scholarship program, require them to maneuver through numerous complex tasks, one of which was highlighted in the first research being the motivation letter. This is crucial component to be evaluated and it is considered as the arbitrary part of the objective criteria. The students have to possess entire high level of English language in order to be able to produce and high quality and desirable piece of text, that can reflect their ability and at the same show the evaluator that they are the best match for the program.

On top of that, as explained by the coordinator in the first research question, students can benefit from a secondary language that the country of destination give priority to, that is French university. With its colonial past and how the education system in Cambodia was developed and is developing in its current form, the dynamic of the relationship between Francophone country still play an important part, although the internationalized arena in higher education is dominated by the Anglophone countries.

Although the student’s profiles in the constructed social space of Erasmus Mundus scholarship program in Cambodia are not entirely homogenous, it is not entire false to assert that the opposition within the space are negligible for they have already been elected before. On the other hand, inherited capital indicated derived from parents’ educational background did show somewhat explanation of how much more information and experiences the students can obtain in terms of international experiences. The higher the educational background, the more international profile the students have.

To add another dimension to the study, interviews from the scholarship alumni reveal interesting homogenous characteristics, showing the level of confidence and readiness when they applied for the scholarship, presenting extremely high level of preparation and commitment. They also possess impeccable insights of the program objective structures, due to their social capital involves from knowing various important actors in the field to enhance their level of confidence as well as the clarity of the information. Although the interview sample will not show representativeness of the whole study, it is safe to say that the students possess the right amounts of capitals which are consecrated and matched by the scholarship program, which was shown by the recruiter.

Furthermore, from the students’ interview, it shows that all of them have accumulated enough capitals in order to effortlessly manage through such complicated process and regard it as simple and easy to understand. This is reflected through their accumulated symbolic capital, shown as their degree from the public institutions that were already rigorously in selecting students in the first place. Aligned with the Bourdieu’s chapter “Selecting the Elect” in his book The Inheritors, the ones that already possess the right and compatible capitals will have access to more resources and accumulate their existing capitals.104

From another theoretical point of view, it can be analyzed using concept of “ease”105 by Khan where students feel comfortable in their environment and surroundings, that they

104 Bourdieu and Passeron. The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relation to Culture, pp. 1-27.
understand what should be done which makes what others might find extremely difficult tasks to be very simple and easy. The students are focused, in other words, in their goals, in which it shows in the motivation letters that were part of the requirement and selection criteria. Therefore, they are matched with the recruiter’s profile of selection.

Binning together the three research questions, one can draw from the finding results that they are interrelated in quite subtle way. However, if one investigates further and delves deeper into it, one can obtain a more complex structure of the scholarship program, of which through the concept of habitus, the students make use of their knowledge to maneuver through the system.

All capitals possessed by the students also give conditions towards the understanding of how the students take advantage of their in-depth knowledge of how the program functions and processes by obtaining extra information from their peers or their surroundings. Finally, the space of the scholarship program provides and new way of looking scrutinizing both the program as well as the scholarship students, with the help of the interpretation from MCA as well as when compared to the scholarship program’s very objective and aim.

In sum this study provides a new knowledge that has never been done before in terms of the context of Cambodia. It also shed lights on the Cambodia’s higher education system as a whole with a sociological approach. However, following the previous research, despite different context, the result show interesting pattern that correlates to the idea of the colonial logics made by Börjesson as well as the language pattern.106

With the concept of student mobilities, because the financial factor has been removed from the analysis, the results reveal a more sociological understanding of how students managed to obtain and accumulate all types of capital in order to gain access into the scholarship program. The multilayer of decision making process of the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Program, also explains the academic power that confirm with the theoretical point of view from Homo Academicus that the academic power is present and has influences on the all levels of in the structure of program.

This leads to the investigation of the students’ capitals that they uncover what one can conceptualize as habitus in making it effortlessly through such complicated process and claiming it simple enough after all the intensive and extensive preparations have been made.

Chapter Seven: Concluding Remarks

The objective of the study has been set out to answer multiple related topics combining macro-micro approach to understanding on the one hand the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Program, and on the other hand the Cambodian students’ profile who are the beneficiaries of the program. Through the study, the main evolving theme in to contextualize the Cambodia’s Higher Education system, in order to give a foundation to understand the finding results, and explaining what it meant for the Cambodian students who have obtained the scholarship.

First, the in-depth interview with the coordinator from one of the scholarship program reveals complex and hierarchical structure of the scholarship program. The coordinator also highlights both the objective criteria that all of the recruiting actors must follow, and the subjective decision when such circumstances arise. However, the interesting insight not only uncover the complexity of the objectively set criteria, of which although is objectively determined, involve so many element of subjective experiences, which can be understood as the embodiment of the habitus possessed by the students. The perfect example of such was the “motivation letter” was discussed revealing arbitrary selection criteria, hinting different elements conditions, which cannot be overgeneralized.

Secondly, the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program in the Cambodia’s context provides a visual presentation of the students’ capitals, which can be used to understanding in conjunction the previous discussed selection and recruitment process of the scholarship program. The results present a rather straight forwards picture of the space of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program, outlining all different types of capitals, which was carefully developed to construct the space. Surprisingly, the results give a more eclectic and not homogenous picture of the students’ profile, explaining the alignment of the objective of the scholarship program, which was “to enhance the quality of higher education and promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through mobility and academic cooperation.”

Lastly, when investigating further into how the students themselves perceive and how they prepared for the application process of the program, all three of the volunteer interviewees share similar perspectives on how they conceive the scholarship program in general, stressing the importance of long term preparation as well as the proactivity of searching for information and the right networking sources in order to gain access of the insider. They demonstrate a great confidence in applying although did not overly exude their tone which can be seen to align with what the coordinator stated as “be honest, be prepared, be humble.”

These overall amalgamation of the results, I argue that it put the Cambodia’s higher educational system to the table and need further deeper investigation. To the current existing pool of knowledge, it especially contributes to the understanding of the use of Bourdieu’s sociology of education in conjunction with the intricate GDA method. This not only expands the use of GDA, but also the field of higher education in relation with the scholarship provider, and how both mutual function as a system.

To be more specific, this result shed light on how the scholarship program operates, through both interviews as well as the help from the visualization of the space. On the other hand, the students’ dispositions and opinions back up, confirm and reinforce the claims made by the recruiter that the process consists of both objective criteria as well as

subjectivity reflected by the students’ habitus, which in return forms and accumulates students’ capital.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

Despite giving new knowledge of how the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program looks like within the Cambodia’s context, the study is far from ideal of being representative enough to be generalized. However, this new information has brought the spotlight on the students’ in Cambodia on the one hand, and how the historical development of the Cambodia’s educational system benefits the students on the other hand.

Taking into consideration of ethical reasons as well as the cultural sensitivity, it is a challenge task to obtain the comprehensive data that is deemed ideal for analyzing within sociological investigation. The study population is also one of another issues encountered, since the pool of the student body within the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program was not found in public record, due to the privacy policy of the program. When approaching the scholars via networking, acquaintances as well as connections through various social media group, it is also important that the students themselves feel comfortable enough to participate without risking their own identity being identified as raised by one of the students who I personally know. Furthermore, since online survey was the only feasible way to obtain the data, it is very difficult to ensure that the students are actively making effort to fill in and to share it to the others.

Nevertheless, even though the challenges are big, the results from the data shows interesting new knowledge, and together with the in depth interview, the overall findings contribute to the existing pool of knowledge that can be beneficial for future research who would like to investigate further and deeper into the Cambodia’s context of either the Higher Education or the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship Program. Expansion can also be made into a full fletch dissertation, since the topic of the study is rather broad, and details investigate deserve an attention from researchers who are interested in the field, especially for the developing country such as Cambodia.

Following a different path in the research field, this study can also build a bridge into more in depth investigation of “elite education” and internationalization of higher education in the Cambodia’s context that stems from the colonial power, as well as the globalized market economy, in order to see the opposition between the Francophone and the Anglophone system within the Cambodia’s higher education.

All in all, from the theoretical point of departure, the mutual influences between the institutions as well as the students are seen as greatly connected, with the former providing the latter a strong foundation to thrive, and in return the latter reproducing themselves within the institutions which makes the system stronger and being highly regarded because of the reputable past collaborations. The case of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship program within the Cambodian context is representing this very instance, which not only reveal the pattern of the recruitment pattern but also uncover the student’s ability to thrive within their own context.
References


PUC’s website.
http://www.puc.edu.kh/index.php/international/international-cooperation-and-partnership

RUPP’s website.
http://www.rupp.edu.kh/content.php?page=partners


http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002297/229713e.pdf


Appendices

Appendix 1: Erasmus Munds Mobility Schemes.

Introduction

Erasmus Mundus is a cooperation and mobility programme in the field of higher education that aims to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through cooperation with Third Countries. In addition, it contributes to the development of human resources and the international cooperation capacity of Higher education institutions in Third Countries by increasing mobility between the European Union and these countries.\textsuperscript{108}

Program’s Objectives

The Erasmus Mundus programme aims to enhance the quality of higher education and promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through mobility and academic cooperation.\textsuperscript{109}

Appendix 2: Table Extracted from Trow’s Classification.

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>MASS 15-50%</th>
<th>UNIVERSAL &gt; 50%</th>
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Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database
Appendix 3: Cloud of Categories for Axis 1-3 for Reference
Appendix 4: Supplementary Categories for Future Interpretation
## Appendix 5: Tables of Contribution for Variables and Modalities

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<td>6.988</td>
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| **BP: Program**        |                     |        |        |        |
|------------------------|                     |        |        |        |
| BP: Computer Science   | 0.8                 | 2.372  | 1.468  | 8.575  |
| BP: Education          | 2.2                 | 5.811  | 0.487  | 7.148  |
| BP: Medical Science    | 0.6                 | 8.249  | 9.304  | 1.017  |
| BP: Natural Sciences   | 2.5                 | 1.696  | 0.030  | 6.779  |
| BP: Social Sciences    | 2.2                 | 1.822  | 0.010  | 4.882  |
| TOTAL                  | 8.3                 | 19.950 | 11.300 | 28.401 |

| **GPA**                |                     |        |        |        |
|------------------------|                     |        |        |        |
| GPA: 2.0-2.99          | 0.6                 | 2.888  | 1.118  | 7.704  |
| GPA: 3.0-3.49          | 3.1                 | 3.585  | 1.033  | 2.379  |
| GPA: 3.5-4.00          | 4.2                 | 1.301  | 0.398  | 8.440  |
| TOTAL                  | 7.8                 | 7.773  | 2.549  | 18.523 |

| **Languages**          |                     |        |        |        |
|------------------------|                     |        |        |        |
| English                | 4.2                 | 6.882  | 0.034  | 0.063  |
| English + French       | 3.3                 | 10.825 | 0.653  | 0.403  |
| TOTAL                  | 7.5                 | 17.708 | 0.687  | 0.466  |

| **EnglishProf**        |                     |        |        |        |
|------------------------|                     |        |        |        |
| B2                     | 2.2                 | 4.962  | 1.441  | 5.385  |
| C1                     | 2.5                 | 2.680  | 0.608  | 18.856 |
| None                   | 3.6                 | 0.148  | 2.529  | 3.214  |
| TOTAL                  | 8.3                 | 7.790  | 4.577  | 27.454 |

| **EngUseDaily**        |                     |        |        |        |
|------------------------|                     |        |        |        |
| EngFreq: 15-30%        | 0.8                 | 0.976  | 5.940  | 0.160  |
| EngFreq: <15%          | 0.8                 | 8.937  | 7.362  | 6.488  |
| EngFreq: >30%          | 6.7                 | 0.501  | 3.316  | 1.086  |
| TOTAL                  | 8.3                 | 10.413 | 16.618 | 7.734  |

| **HaveLivedAbroad**    |                     |        |        |        |
|------------------------|                     |        |        |        |
| HaveLivedAbroad: No    | 6.9                 | 0.081  | 2.129  | 0.418  |
| HaveLivedAbroad: Yes   | 1.4                 | 0.404  | 10.644 | 2.091  |
| TOTAL                  | 8.3                 | 0.484  | 12.773 | 2.509  |
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Appendix 6: Survey guide and Online Survey Link

Link through online survey:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1R0FoPzWNGSa7RyiQl3VgdAYBZYxzGuRn7sB2sE7-RHI/edit?usp=drive_open&ths=true

Survey on scholarship students who have been awarded to study full master’s degree via Erasmus Mundus Mobility

Greeting, my dear Cambodian scholars:

This survey question is a part of my master thesis studying on the scholarship program recruitment patterns as well as the students’ strategies and trajectories to orient themselves in preparation for the program(s) within Erasmus Mundus mobility schemes. The aim of this study is to map out the students’ perception and dispositions within the field of higher education study at home country in Cambodia and the prospective host European countries. Using Bourdieu’s tradition in Sociology of Education, this study will also give the field of higher education in Cambodia a clearer picture in terms of study programs, and the landscape of internationalization of higher education in Cambodia.

The survey will be kept anonymous, and all the data are kept confidential as well as used only for research purposes. No information from the data will be shared in public. Please complete the survey as detailed as possible as the information provided by you will be immensely pivotal in the analysis, which will be Multiple Correspondence Analysis. Thank you in advance for participating in this survey as it is the very central part of my thesis study on mobility of Cambodian scholars within the EU via Erasmus Mundus programs.

Putsalun Chhim

Master student in Sociology of Education, Uppsala University, Sweden
salunchhim@gmail.com
**Survey questions:**

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<th>Themes</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Analytical purposes</th>
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<td>Previous education before obtaining the scholarship</td>
<td>Home university</td>
<td>Educational/symbolic capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-orientation towards the scholarship program</td>
<td>Scholarship information University Program</td>
<td>Educational, information, linguistic and social capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular/leisure activities involvement</td>
<td>Volunteer activities Student association Leadership experiences Leisure activities</td>
<td>Student’s habitus and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family background</td>
<td>Parents profession Parents highest educational level</td>
<td>Inherited economic and cultural capital, and social position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current/Future endeavors</td>
<td>Academia or Professional</td>
<td>The relationship between studying program and the employment situation and trajectory of students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. The following part contains questions about your previous educational background before obtaining the scholarship.

- [ ] Female  
- [ ] Male  
  - Year of Birth:  19 _ _

*If you were doing two degrees at the same time please specify both names of the institutions as well as study programs. Also please indicate both program GPA (Grade Point Average)*

1. Please specify the name of the institution(s) where you obtain your Bachelor’s degree:

2. Please specify your study program of your Bachelor’s degree(s):

3. Please specify your final accumulative GPA(s):

B. The following questions concern your self-orientation and preparation towards the scholarship program as well as your profile with the scholarship program.

4. How did you obtain the information about your scholarship program?

- [ ] Social media (Facebook, etc…)  
- [ ] Alumni of the scholarship program
- [ ] University’s event  
- [ ] Scholarship website
- [ ] Family/relatives  
- [ ] Classmates/Friends
- [ ] Other  
  (Please specify how: __________________________)
5. Which of the following Erasmus Mundus programs did you obtain?

☐ Erasmus Mundus Action 1 Joint Master's Degree Program
   Please specify the academic year you have been awarded scholarship.

☐ Erasmus Mundus Action 2
   Please specify the name of the project and academic year you have been awarded.
   (E.g. Project Lotus Unlimited academic year 2010-2012)

6. In which EU country did you study your master's program?

7. What is the name of your master's program?

8. How do you think the applicants of the scholarship program should be judged upon?

9. Besides Khmer as your mother tongue, how many language(s) do you speak? Please specify the level of proficiency if you have obtained a standardized test scores. Leave it blank if not applicable.
   (E.g.: IELTS 7.0 overall or TOEFL iBT 100 overall)
   ☐ English (level of proficiency by standardized test score: )
   ☐ French (level of proficiency by standardized test score: )
   ☐ Chinese (level of proficiency by standardized test score: )
   ☐ Other (Please specify: )

10. How much do you think English has been used as means for communication in your daily activities?
    ☐ less than 15% ☐ 15-30% ☐ more than 30% ☐ Not at all

11. Have you lived abroad outside of Cambodia for more than 6 months before you obtained the scholarship?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No
    If yes, please specify where: (city/cities and country/countries)
    If yes, what was the purpose of staying abroad? (exchange studies, work, etc...)

C. The following questions concern your hobbies, interests as well as how you spend your leisure time.

12. Have you participated in any extracurricular activities besides your regular study time?
    ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please specify the activities and briefly describe your involvement:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

13. **Besides spending time on school work, do you spend time reading the news?**

☐ Yes  ☐ No

If yes, please specify at least three of your favorite news sources below:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

If yes, which of the following content are you interested in reading the most:

☐ Entertainment  ☐ Culture  ☐ Economics  ☐ Local news  ☐ International news  ☐ Sports  ☐ Technology  ☐ Other ________________

14. **How much time do you spend reading news in a day?**

☐ less than 30 mins  ☐ 30 mins to 1 hour  ☐ more than 1 hour

15. **In the past 10 years, how many books have you read including your academic readings?**

☐ less than 10  ☐ 10-25  ☐ 26-40  ☐ 41-60  ☐ more than 60

16. **How much time do you spend on the Internet per day?**

☐ less than 1h  ☐ 1-3h  ☐ 3-5h  ☐ more than 5h

D. The following questions concern your family background and your personal background.

17. **What are your parents’ occupation in the present day? If you were raised in a single parent environment please specify as detailed as possible**

Father’s occupation ________________________________
Mother’s occupation ________________________________

18. **In what sector are your parents working?**

Father:  ☐ Private sector  ☐ Public sector  ☐ Do not know
Mother:  ☐ Private sector  ☐ Public sector  ☐ Do not know
19. What are your parents’ highest level of education?

Father: [ ] 1-6 years primary school  [ ] 6-9 years junior high school
[ ] 9-12 year high school [ ] Bachelor’s degree
[ ] Master’s degree [ ] PhD and Post-doc
[ ] Do not know [ ] N/A

Mother: [ ] 1-6 years primary school  [ ] 6-9 years junior high school
[ ] 9-12 year high school [ ] Bachelor’s degree
[ ] Master’s degree [ ] PhD and Post-doc
[ ] Do not know [ ] N/A

20. Where were you originally from? (Your birth place)

E. The following questions concern your employment your future endeavors.

21. Are you currently employed?

[ ] Yes [ ] No
If yes, please specify your job title:

Which sector are you working for? Please specify:

22. To what extent do you think the scholarship helped you obtain your current employment?
Please choose answer below.

[ ] Totally helpful [ ] Helpful [ ] Not helpful [ ] Not at all

23. To what extent are you satisfied with your current employment?
Please choose answer below.

[ ] Totally Satisfied [ ] Satisfied [ ] Dissatisfied [ ] Totally dissatisfied

24. To what extent do you your current employment is relevant to your study subject?
Please choose answer below.

[ ] Completely relevant [ ] Relevant [ ] Irrelevant [ ] Completely irrelevant

25. Please describe your future endeavor in terms of your career development.

The End!
Thank you for participation and your valuable time!