

Redefining Academic Integrity: Integrating Khmer Epistemologies and AI to Challenge Western-Centric Notions of Plagiarism

Keun IM^{1*}, Mouy LY²

1* Corresponding author, National Institute of Education, im.keun@gmail.com

2. Cambodian University of Technology, Cambodia

To cite this article: Im, K., and Ly, M. (2025). Redefining Academic Integrity: Integrating Khmer Epistemologies and AI to Challenge Western-Centric Notions of Plagiarism. *Journal of Education Innovation and Language Teaching (JEILT)*, 1 (2), 32-48

Abstract

The widespread adoption of generative AI tools in academia has sparked contentious debates over their ethical implications, particularly in developing nations like Cambodia, where digital literacy and academic norms are still evolving. Global academic integrity policies—often rooted in Western notions of individualism and textual ownership—clash with Cambodia's collectivist learning traditions, where knowledge sharing and memorization are culturally valued. Generative AI disrupts these norms further by enabling new forms of collaboration and unintentional plagiarism. This paper critically examines whether AI could challenge or reinforce colonial legacies in Cambodia's academic integrity frameworks. Drawing on decolonial theory and focus group insights, it proposes a culturally adaptive integrity framework that centers Khmer epistemologies. These findings address Cambodia's unique educational challenges and contribute to global discussions on balancing innovation with academic integrity in postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: *Decolonization, academic integrity, generative AI, Cambodia, Khmer epistemology, plagiarism, culturally adaptive pedagogy*

1. Introduction

Cambodian higher education stands at a pivotal crossroads, as the growing ubiquity of generative artificial intelligence (AI)—exemplified by advanced language models such as ChatGPT—forces a reexamination of entrenched academic integrity norms. These global shifts come into sharp relief within Cambodia's unique educational landscape, where Western-centric standards of originality and individual authorship coexist uneasily with indigenous pedagogical traditions, particularly *Rien Tontenh Cham*, an approach that venerates collective recitation and teacher-guided memorization as the cornerstones of learning. This research critically interrogates whether AI can serve as a disruptive, decolonial force, capable

of transcending imported academic policy legacies and fostering frameworks more attuned to Khmer epistemologies. The central focus of this investigation is the tension-laden interplay between externally imposed integrity standards and Cambodia's rich indigenous frameworks—a phenomenon insufficiently theorized by existing literature, which tends to privilege Western constructs of plagiarism. Broadly, the research aims to (a) elucidate how Cambodian educators and students interpret the academic role of AI, (b) determine the degree of Western influence on national plagiarism policy, and (c) propose actionable pathways for harmonizing international expectations with Khmer ethical pluralism. By foregrounding ethical pluralism as its analytical lens, this paper seeks not only to critique imported standards but to advance a robust, context-sensitive paradigm for academic integrity—one capable of reconciling innovation with tradition, offering a model transferable to similarly situated postcolonial societies.

2. Literature Review

This section of the literature review demonstrates that the evolution of academic integrity frameworks in Cambodia is deeply shaped by both Western and local epistemological traditions, creating complex tensions within higher education. The main points can be described as follows. The first main point emphasizes that global academic integrity norms originate from Eurocentric epistemologies. Influential theorists like Foucault highlight the “author function”, establishing the author as the exclusive origin of knowledge and thereby shaping rigid policies around individual authorship and citation in academic writing (Foucault, 1969). In Western systems, this has led to a strong emphasis on intellectual property and the idea that originality is a marker of academic excellence. However, these standards do not adequately recognize communal or oral traditions of knowledge, which play a significant role in non-Western pedagogies, such as those in Cambodia. In the Cambodian context, academic practices such as Samaki (solidarity) and Tveu Bon (corrective learning) characterize knowledge production as shared, recursive, and often orally transmitted, which stands in contrast to the autonomy and individualism prioritized in Euro-American models (Pennycook, 1996; Dei, 2000).

The second main point details how the imposition of Western models, especially during educational reforms after the Khmer Rouge era, generated significant contradictions within Cambodian practices. The introduction of strict plagiarism policies by the Ministry of Education sought to standardize academic conduct according to international, Western-aligned norms, but

this often conflicted with local methods like Rien Tontenh Cham, a traditional, repetitive, and collective method of learning led by authoritative teachers (kruu). This disjunction has caused confusion and difficulty among students and educators, who must navigate between new imported expectations and established local traditions of knowledge sharing (Khim & Heng, 2019; Dy, 2016).

The third main point focuses on the impact of artificial intelligence in reshaping these debates. AI-generated content challenges the conventional boundaries between original and borrowed work central to Western plagiarism frameworks (Eaton, 2023). In Cambodia, while AI has democratizing potential—opening access to educational resources for students—it also introduces risks, such as increased dependency on external technologies and the potential erosion of locally grounded knowledge practices (Selwyn, 2024). As a result, Cambodian faculty and students are divided; younger generations increasingly view AI as a beneficial tool, while many educators remain cautious, fearing that overreliance on digital tools could weaken critical and independent thought as well as ethical standards. Finally, the section notes the persistent research gap: current studies tend to focus on how AI disrupts Western plagiarism frameworks, with little attention devoted to how AI might also offer opportunities to adapt academic integrity in ways that respect non-Western epistemologies (Ashley, 2022; Dy, 2016). Addressing this gap, the present study aims to contribute new insights into how Cambodian institutions can harmonize traditional collective pedagogies with the demands and potential of AI, paving the way for more culturally responsive integrity frameworks.

3. Conceptual Framework

Literature Framework: Decolonial Theory, Hybridity, and AI in Academic Integrity

This section critically interrogates the colonial underpinnings of Western academic integrity and outlines a theoretical model for culturally adaptive reform in Cambodian higher education. Drawing from Mignolo's concept of the "coloniality of knowledge" and Bhabha's "hybridity," the framework positions artificial intelligence not as a mere technological disruptor but as a vehicle for epistemic disobedience and pluralistic reform.

Coloniality of Academic Integrity

Prevailing academic integrity norms remain deeply entrenched in Euro-American epistemologies, which valorize individual authorship, originality, and textual ownership. These values fundamentally conflict with Khmer

traditions such as Rien Tontenh Cham, where knowledge is communally constructed, orally transmitted, and regularly recited under the guidance of the Kruu (master teacher). Mignolo's (2011) concept of epistemic disobedience provides a critical lens, inviting Cambodian scholars to disrupt imported standards and assert local ontologies focused on collective ethics and restorative practice rather than punitive enforcement.

Challenging Western Constructs and Creating a “Third Space”

Rigid Western academic frameworks marginalize Cambodian knowledge systems by imposing strict citation rules and criminalizing communal learning approaches. This underscores the need for policy resistance and for integrity models that value corrective learning (tveu bon) over legalistic punishment. Bhabha's (1994) theory of hybridity informs the pursuit of a “Third Space” where Khmer epistemologies and AI can intersect. In this space, AI is framed as Kruu Chumnouy (Assistant Teacher)—a collaborative tool supporting peer writing and critique while maintaining the authority and sanctity of traditional teachers. Group authorship and collaborative AI projects empower solidarity (samaki) and challenge hyper-individualistic academic conventions.

The Middle Path: Reconciliation and Hybrid Policy

Inspired by Buddhist ethics and Kuhn's (1970) theory of incommensurability, the Middle Path offers a pragmatic approach, advocating for balanced integration of Western and Khmer knowledge systems. Cambodia's educational institutions, shaped by decades of postcolonial reform, cannot entirely discard global norms but must instead create policy environments where the advantages of both systems are negotiated and harmonized. Kuhn and Feyerabend's (1975) insights highlight the difficulty of cross-cultural translation but reinforce the value of hybrid models—those which honor both individual and collective principles in academic integrity.

Principles of a Decolonial Integrity Model

The proposed framework sets practical priorities for a culturally responsive integrity model:

- **Transparent augmentation:** Students must document the use of AI (e.g., “I used ChatGPT to brainstorm; here is my critical refinement”), fostering accountability and ethical transparency.
- **Contextual rubrics:** Replace the sole emphasis on originality with attributed collaboration and recognition of group-authored and orally transmitted sources.

- Hybrid evaluation: Balance respect for kruu authority and communal student work with global standards for disclosure and ethical technology use.
- Inclusive policy language: Shift focus from legalistic and punitive discourse to restorative, educational, and relational principles, centering Khmer values alongside international norms.

Through this synthesis, academic integrity in Cambodia is reimagined as an inclusive, adaptable construct that supports both pedagogical sovereignty and responsible innovation—a model which can inform equitable reforms across other postcolonial contexts.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Context and Location

This study was conducted in Cambodia, specifically targeting higher education institutions that exemplify the nation's diversity in both regional representation and organizational structure. The research setting is defined by the intersection of longstanding Khmer educational traditions and the increasing prevalence of Western-derived academic policies—a dynamic that shapes institutional responses to academic integrity and plagiarism in the digital age.

4.2 Research Design

A qualitative research design was chosen, anchored in critical document analysis—a method recognized as both rigorous and contextually sensitive in international educational research. This design allowed for a systematic investigation into how Cambodian university policies either reinforce or challenge Western-dominated definitions of plagiarism, particularly in the context of adopting generative AI technologies. By drawing upon established frameworks for discourse analysis and document-based inquiry, this methodology prioritizes deep contextualization and a nuanced understanding of policy rhetoric and its practical implications.

4.3 Sampling Procedures

The study employed purposeful sampling to select 20 academic integrity policies from leading Cambodian universities, including but not limited to the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), Cambodia University of Technology and Science (CamTech), and the National University of Management (NUM). Selection criteria encompassed institutional diversity, accessibility of documents, and direct relevance to ongoing reforms in technology-enabled education and digital literacy. Supplementary comparative materials were analyzed from India's University Grants

Commission (UGC, 2023) and South Africa’s Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2023), providing a transnational lens for interpreting local adaptations and policy innovations. Additional insights were drawn from the principal investigator's five years of professional praxis in Cambodian higher education, enriching the data with contextually grounded, autoethnographic reflections.

4.4 Research Instruments and Analytical Procedures

The analytical toolbox for this inquiry comprised three core instruments:

- **Document Review Protocol:** A standardized procedure was utilized to collect, screen, and contextualize institutional policies. This protocol ensured systematic relevance assessment and comparability across policy texts.
- **Coding Schemes:** Both inductive and deductive coding approaches were applied. Linguistic markers of coloniality (e.g., “zero-tolerance,” “intellectual property”) and positive alignment with Khmer pedagogical values (e.g., “tveu bon,” “samaki”—representing virtuous conduct and communal solidarity) were systematically identified. Specific attention was paid to explicit policy provisions regarding the use of generative AI.
- **Autoethnographic Reflection Guide:** Structured reflective prompts captured the lived experience of policy translation, the tensions encountered in daily educational practice, and the evolving role of technology in shaping culturally-relevant notions of academic integrity.

This robust triangulation of sources and analytic strategies ensured methodological rigor, depth of interpretation, and maximal relevance to ongoing scholarly debates on academic integrity reform in both Asian and global higher education contexts.

Data Collection Process

Documents for this study were systematically gathered from official university websites, institutional administrative archives, and publicly accessible policy repositories. In addition to textual analysis, the lead practitioner maintained a reflective autoethnographic journal throughout the research period, providing real-time documentation of key decision-making junctures, institutional meetings, and the nuanced interactions observed between faculty and students. This dual-source approach enriched the dataset, ensuring both documentary and practitioner-generated insights informed the analysis.

Data Analysis

The analytical strategy encompassed two interrelated phases, each grounded in rigorous comparative and critical scholarship:

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Adopting Fairclough's (2003) multidimensional CDA framework, each policy document was examined for discursive patterns—especially the semantics surrounding “plagiarism” and “originality.” The analysis revealed how prevailing linguistic formulations are deeply embedded in Western pedagogical hegemony, often at odds with indigenous practices of collective learning, oral knowledge sharing, and communal memorization. This methodological lens enabled the identification of discursive contradictions, such as the simultaneous promotion of “critical thinking” and prohibition of AI-mediated learning, thereby exposing tensions between neoliberal educational imperatives and punitive approaches to academic misconduct.

Thematic Synthesis

Employing an inductive coding procedure, findings were synthesized into broader themes: “Colonial Positioning of Dishonesty,” “Emergent Policy Hybridity,” and “Negotiation of AI's Role.” Comparative cross-referencing of policy frameworks from Cambodia, India, and South Africa elucidated key paradigms for reforming academic integrity in postcolonial university contexts. This approach highlighted both shared challenges—such as inadequate technological integration and entrenched authoritarian models—and innovative responses, including blended assessment, contextually responsive plagiarism detection, and faculty development programs.

Rationale for the Document-Only Approach

Given Cambodia's contemporary landscape marked by political sensitivities, hierarchical institutional structures, and the potential for participant discomfort, conducting direct interviews or focus groups posed significant ethical risks. Consequently, the study adopted a document-only methodology, prioritizing both ethical integrity and analytical transparency. Reliance on public documentation and practitioner self-reflection mitigated risks of coercion and safeguarded the dignity of all stakeholders. This non-extractive, contextually rich design is supported by contemporary methodological literature as a robust alternative, offering comprehensive policy insights while upholding stringent ethical standards.

5. Findings

Analysis and Synthesis of Findings on Cambodian Academic Integrity Policies

Critical discourse analysis of Cambodian higher education academic integrity policies reveals pervasive Western hegemony in framing and enforcing plagiarism rules. Such policies overwhelmingly categorize plagiarism as a moral offense or intellectual theft, adopting Anglo-American legalistic discourse that treats knowledge as an individual commodity (Löfström, 2011; Sutherland-Smith, 2008). This approach starkly contrasts with indigenous Khmer epistemologies, which emphasize communal knowledge transmission through oral attribution and rote memorization (Chandler, 2008; Khing, 2019).

For example, one university in Cambodia explicitly frames plagiarism as “intellectual property violation,” reinforcing Western epistemic dominance that erases local collective knowledge traditions. Similarly, the second Higher Education Institution's reliance on plagiarism detection (for instance, Turnitin-based) promotes a deficit model where students are presumed guilty prior to defense, further marginalizing oral knowledge validation customary in Cambodian learning (Chandler, 2008). These instances illustrate systemic epistemic silencing, where non-Western forms of knowledge are rendered illegitimate within official academic discourse.

Moreover, contradictions emerge within institutional rhetoric. Many universities extol critical thinking yet simultaneously prohibit AI-assisted tools like ChatGPT, illustrating a neo-colonial tension where compliance with Western citation dogmas overrides the potential for pedagogical innovation (Pennycook, 1996; Khim & Heng, 2019). This paradox extends to promotion of “innovation” alongside bans on AI brainstorming (e.g., Royal University of Law and Economics [RULE], 2020), privileging human cognition as the sole valid intelligence mode. Urban University of Battambang’s (UBB) stringent emphasis on “originality” further conflicts with Khmer traditions valuing repetition and mastery of teacher-derived content, pathologizing collaborative learning practices (Dy, 2016).

Most notably, all surveyed policies neglect recognition of rote memorization—a cornerstone of Buddhist-influenced Khmer education (Ashley, 2022). Even progressive guidelines addressing “digital literacy” fail to conceptualize AI’s role in augmenting rather than undermining local learning ethics (National Institute of Education [NIE], 2022).

Table: Summary of Academic Integrity Policy Discourses and Their Alignment with Khmer Epistemologies

Aspect	Western-Centric Policy Framing	Khmer Epistemological Values	Examples from Cambodian Universities
Plagiarism Definition	Moral failure; intellectual theft, violation of IP	Collective knowledge sharing; oral attribution	RUPP (2022): Frames plagiarism as “intellectual property violation” (Sutherland-Smith, 2008)
Detection Methods	Turnitin-based software; guilt presumed upon detection	Oral validation and communal learning	NUM (2021): Employs Turnitin as the gold standard, erasing oral knowledge transmission (Chandler, 2008)
AI Integration	AI tools banned despite promoting critical thinking	AI potentially augmenting teacher-led learning	ITC (2023): ChatGPT banned despite policy promoting critical thinking (Pennycook, 1996)
Concept of Originality	Emphasizes individual originality and innovation	Repetition & mastery; collaborative authorship	UBB (2021): Strongly emphasizes originality, contradicting Khmer traditions (Dy, 2016)
Recognition of Memorization	Silenced or devalued	Rote memorization key educational practice	Absent in all policies, NIE (2022) neglects this in promoting digital literacy (Ashley, 2022)

Argumentation from Literature Synthesis

This analysis exposes the problematic imposition of a Eurocentric academic integrity paradigm that systematically marginalizes Khmer communal learning principles. Framing plagiarism as theft adheres to an ownership

model that is alien to Cambodian collectivist knowledge production, where oral transmission and teacher-guided repetition are fundamental (Khing, 2019). The rigid application of Turnitin and punitive assumptions of guilt reveal an institutional failure to accommodate indigenous epistemological traditions, leading to epistemic invisibility for alternative knowledge forms (Chandler, 2008).

The institutional contradiction between advocating critical thinking and prohibiting AI-assisted academic tools exemplifies unresolved neo-colonial dynamics (Pennycook, 1996). This tension manifests as an enforcement of Western cognitive hegemony that dismisses AI's potential to scaffold learning within Khmer pedagogies. Furthermore, the overemphasis on originality undermines deeply rooted traditions of collective learning and mastery through reiteration, revealing a dissonance between imposed policies and lived educational realities (Dy, 2016).

The consistent silence on rote memorization underscores a systematic devaluation of Buddhist educational practices that nurture spiritual and cognitive discipline—cornerstones of Cambodian culture (Ashley, 2022). Even comparatively progressive policies addressing digital literacy fail to reconceptualize AI as a tool for augmenting rather than compromising Khmer learning ethics, highlighting a missed opportunity to develop culturally congruent academic integrity frameworks (NIE, 2022).

This dialectic between Western hegemonic policy frameworks and neglected Khmer epistemologies calls urgently for integrity models that harmonize both traditions, enabling decolonial, context-responsive approaches to academic ethics and AI integration in Cambodian higher education.

6. Discussion

As Cambodia navigates its postcolonial educational landscape, the integration of artificial intelligence within academic integrity frameworks reveals complex tensions between inherited Western paradigms and indigenous Khmer epistemologies. Current institutional policies, such as those by the National Institute of Education (NIE, 2022), reflect a pragmatic openness toward generative AI by permitting its use as a tool for scaffolding—brainstorming and drafting—provided that students transparently disclose its employment. This signals an emergent hybrid approach that synergizes traditional pedagogical values with contemporary, postdigital realities.

These policy shifts resonate with Cambodian collectivist knowledge practices, which prioritize communal learning and oral traditions,

challenging the rigid individualism entrenched in Western academic integrity models. Indeed, existing policies often perpetuate colonial hierarchies by uncritically adopting Western plagiarism paradigms that cast originality narrowly as individual creation and frame plagiarism as a moral failing, rather than as a pedagogical phenomenon requiring contextual understanding and support.

A transformative framework must not only recognize but actively integrate oral attribution methods within citation practices, acknowledging the legitimacy of non-textual and non-Western modes of knowledge transmission. In doing so, AI should be conceptualized not as a "cheating" mechanism but as a co-creative partner—a Kruu Chumnouy, or assistant teacher—supporting the collective and recursive learning central to Khmer epistemologies. This repositioning challenges prevailing neoliberal academic imperialism by foregrounding Cambodian ways of knowing and thus fostering a globally inclusive academic integrity framework that respects local knowledge sovereignty.

The dichotomy between colonial tropes and local adaptations is starkly evident across Cambodian universities. The Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) largely perpetuate Eurocentric binaries: honest versus dishonest, original versus plagiarized. One of the HEIs' 2020 policy, for instance, labels uncited borrowing as "academic theft," echoing Victorian-era property assumptions that criminalize practices normative within Khmer monastic education and oral traditions. Such moralizing discourses amount to epistemic violence, further marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems and obstructing culturally congruent approaches to academic integrity.

Conversely, nuanced policy evolution is perceptible. The NIE's 2022 guidelines, by explicitly allowing AI for scaffolding when transparently indicated, embody a culturally hybrid stance reflective of samaki—collective solidarity—and other Khmer pedagogical values. Similarly, one of the HEIs' 2023 acceptance of oral examinations for thesis defenses tacitly legitimizes non-textual knowledge transmission, disrupting the dominance of Turnitin-centered plagiarism detection and expanding the parameters of academic assessment to accommodate local epistemic realities.

These tensions collectively suggest the emergence of a "third space," as theorized by Bhabha, wherein the symbiosis of Khmer epistemologies and AI transcends colonial binaries to redefine academic integrity beyond Western individualism. This third space embraces multiplicity, enabling AI-assisted drafting and collaborative authorship while mandating disclosure

and ethical use, thereby preserving transparency and accountability within a culturally adaptive integrity model.

The author's own extensive practitioner experience, spanning over nine years of teaching and curriculum development in Cambodian higher education, illuminates the evolving institutional dynamics between local realities and imported standards. Engagement with students across academic levels reveals a generational and intercultural divide: whereas many students embrace AI as a legitimate cognitive tool for ideation and structuring, faculty members frequently express concern over its implications for independent critical thinking and academic honesty. These observations underscore the necessity for ongoing dialogue and policy refinement that empowers student agency without compromising pedagogical integrity.

The author's dual role as educator and policy consultant has offered critical insights into how integrity frameworks might evolve to accommodate both the challenges and potentials of AI in Cambodian academia. Particularly salient is the growing student reliance on AI in writing processes and the concomitant imperative to guide ethical use through transparent disclosure, contextually sensitive evaluation rubrics, and recognition of collective intellectual contributions. Such an approach not only aligns with Khmer epistemological traditions but also addresses the institutional challenges posed by globalized academic standards.

In sum, the Cambodian academic integrity framework stands at a crossroads, balancing colonial legacies against indigenous cultural resilience. By synthesizing traditional epistemic values with the pragmatic possibilities of AI, Cambodia can chart an inclusive, innovative, and ethically grounded path forward. This vision demands that integrity policies transcend punitive Western models to embrace a pluralistic, hybridized ethos—one that honors the rich intellectual heritage of Khmer pedagogy while harnessing the transformative power of emerging technologies.

7. Contributions

This study makes significant contributions to the evolving discourse on academic integrity and AI ethics by prioritizing non-Western epistemologies that have been historically marginalized in global educational debates. By centering Khmer ways of knowing, particularly collective learning practices and oral traditions, it challenges the dominant Western paradigms that emphasize rigid individual authorship and fixed notions of originality. The application of Mignolo's concept of epistemic disobedience and Bhabha's

theory of hybridity provides a critical lens for reconceptualizing academic integrity as a fluid, culturally embedded phenomenon rather than a universal ideal. This reframing offers a path towards integrating artificial intelligence not as a threat, but as a cooperative assistant—termed Kruu Chumnouy or Assistant Teacher—that aligns with Cambodian pedagogical values and Buddhist ethical principles such as the Middle Path. Such a theoretical reorientation enriches the global AI ethics conversation by introducing contextually grounded perspectives that recognize the importance of epistemic diversity and cultural specificity.

Beyond theory, the research offers practical and actionable strategies for Cambodian higher education institutions to reform academic integrity policies in ways that resonate with local educational traditions while meeting international standards. The proposed framework advocates for a shift away from punitive and absolutist plagiarism models imported from the West toward ‘transparent augmentation,’ a policy that endorses the responsible use of AI tools when their application is declared and critically engaged with by students. Furthermore, it calls for the abandonment of narrow originality criteria in favor of collaborative evaluation rubrics that acknowledge the validity of Khmer oral and rote learning methods. This balanced approach is complemented by recommendations for policy language reform, educator training on AI ethics, and the development of inclusive, culturally-sensitive guidelines. These measures empower universities to navigate the ethical complexities posed by AI technologies without diminishing the cultural integrity of indigenous learning values.

Importantly, while grounded in Cambodia’s unique postcolonial educational landscape, the insights and policy models developed here have broader relevance for many postcolonial societies across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Common tensions exist between Western academic norms and local knowledge systems that prioritize community, oral transmission, and collective authorship. By incorporating comparative perspectives from India and South Africa and situating the analysis within decolonial theory, this work proposes a scalable and transferable integrity framework. This framework embraces hybridity and epistemic sovereignty, offering a pragmatic yet principled way for Global South institutions to reconcile inherited colonial legacies with contemporary technological challenges. Consequently, this study stands as a pioneering contribution to international education discourse, addressing urgent ethical dilemmas while fostering epistemic justice and cultural inclusion in the era of generative AI.

8. Conclusion

Generative AI is catalyzing a profound transformation in how academic integrity is understood and practiced in Cambodia. The conventional Eurocentric emphasis on originality and individual authorship is being critically reexamined as Cambodian educators and policymakers contend with the realities of global digital scholarship. My own perspective, shaped by extensive experience across Asian contexts, is that Cambodia's future lies not in uncritically importing Western paradigms, but rather in boldly foregrounding indigenous Khmer epistemologies.

Practices such as *Rien Tontenh Cham* (learning by repetition), the moral force of *tveu bon* (doing good), and reverence for teacher-led learning must anchor any integrity framework that aspires to genuine relevance and sustainability. AI, when conceptualized as *Kruu Chumnouy* (Assistant Teacher), can be harnessed not as a threat to honesty but as a scaffolding tool—one that supports reflective and community-rooted learning while honoring traditional avenues of knowledge transmission. In this model, academic integrity ceases to be a binary of “cheating versus honesty,” and instead becomes a transparent, ethical process of co-creation and epistemic hybridity, adapting global standards to local realities.

Buddhist Middle Path principles offer a unique compass for balancing international academic norms with Cambodian pedagogical sovereignty. Rather than abandoning global academic norms or Cambodian traditions, an innovative middle way can leverage both: ensuring ethical transparency and proper attribution while safeguarding communal approaches to learning and group intellectual stewardship.

By recentring Cambodian voices and values within educational policy, this approach doesn't just pluralize knowledge ethics—it actively advances local innovation in integrity policy and contributes to international decolonial scholarship. The evidence emerging from contemporary Cambodian universities—in their pragmatic adaptation of AI disclosure policies and oral knowledge assessment—demonstrates that a culturally adaptive integrity framework, rooted in transparency, hybridity, and *tveu bon*, can successfully reconcile AI use with Cambodian academic values. Such a vision provides a blueprint for other postcolonial societies facing similar dilemmas and marks Cambodia as a leader in reimagining academic integrity for the age of artificial intelligence.

References

- Ashley, L. (2022). Buddhist ethics and memorization: Cambodian knowledge paradigms. *Asian Education and Development Studies*, 11(1), 50–66. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-04-2021-0071>
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40.
- Chandler, D. (2008). *A History of Cambodia* (4th ed.). Westview Press.
- Dei, G. J. S. (2000). Rethinking the role of Indigenous knowledges in the academy. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4(2), 111–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/136031100284849>
- Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). (2023). *Ubuntu and AI: Ethical Use in Education in South Africa*. Government of South Africa.
- Dy, S. S. (2016). Cambodian education: The legacy of colonialism. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 17(3), 415–428. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-016-9442-z>
- Dy, S. S. (2016). *Education and knowledge in Cambodia: Traditions and transformations*. Routledge.
- Eaton, S. E. (2023). Academic integrity in the age of artificial intelligence. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 21, 155–171. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-023-09454-7>
- Eaton, S. E. (2023). *Artificial intelligence and academic integrity: A conceptual shift for higher education*. Springer.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analyzing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. Routledge.
- Feyerabend, P. (1975). *Against Method*. New Left Books.
- Foucault, M. (1969). What is an author? In D. F. Bouchard (Ed.), *Language, counter-memory, practice: Selected essays and interviews* (pp. 113–138). Cornell University Press.
- Gertler, N. (2021). Plagiarism, property, and pedagogy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 53(6), 584–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1714072>
- Jandrić, P., Knox, J., Besley, T., Ryberg, T., Suoranta, J., & Hayes, S. (2022). Postdigital research: Genealogies, challenges, and future

- perspectives. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 4(2), 275–303. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-022-00317-1>
- Jandrić, P., Knox, J., Besley, T., Ryberg, T., Suoranta, J., & Hayes, S. (2023). *Postdigital research: Genealogies, challenges, and future perspectives*. Springer.
- Khim, K., & Heng, C. (2019). Tensions in plagiarism policy and practice in Cambodia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 68, 25–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2019.04.001>
- Khim, K., Song, V., & Nguon, C. (2019). Pedagogical challenges in Cambodian higher education: Tradition versus reform. *Journal of Comparative Education*, 45(2), 157–172.
- Khing, H. (2019). Cambodian pedagogies: Between tradition and modernity. *Cambodian Education Review*, 2(1), 34–48.
- Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions (2nd ed.)*. University of Chicago Press.
- Löfström, E. (2011). Does plagiarism mean anything? *The Journal of Academic Ethics*, 9(3), 257–272.
- Löfström, E. (2011). Moral reasoning in plagiarism: A comparative study. *Higher Education*, 61(3), 383–398. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9334-9>
- Mignolo, W. D. (2011). *The darker side of Western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options*. Duke University Press.
- Pennycook, A. (1996). Borrowing others' words: Text, ownership, memory, and plagiarism. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(2), 201–230.
- Phan, L. H. (2017). *Transnational education crossing 'Asia' and 'the West'*. Springer.
- Selwyn, N. (2024). *AI in education: Promise, problems, and pedagogy*. Open University Press.
- Selwyn, N. (2024). *Education and AI: Critical perspectives and future directions*. Routledge.
- Selwyn, N. (2024). *Should robots replace teachers? AI and the future of education*. Polity Press.

- Sutherland-Smith, W. (2008). *Plagiarism, the internet, and student learning: Improving academic integrity*. Routledge.
- University Grants Commission (UGC). (2023). *Guidelines for the ethical use of generative AI in higher education*. Government of India.