

**Working in response to managerial controls under the  
influences of national culture: Vietnamese academics'  
lived experiences**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the nature of academic work in contemporary academia, which is set in an under-researched context, Vietnam. The research context is unique in its blending between long and rich cultural values and Western ideologies in management. The study examines how Vietnamese academics practice their academic roles in response to the interactions of those two domains.

Avoiding the approach of seeking for evidence of negative impacts of managerial controls on aspects of academic life as commonly used in the existing literature, this study focuses on analysing the complexities in relationships of individual academics with management and other actors including managers, colleagues, students and scholar community. This approach is advanced in understanding both social and individual meanings in academic work as well as the social and cultural values which shape their perception of academic roles.

The research enquiry of producing an insight into academics' work life and experience in contemporary academia informs a qualitative and interpretive research. The findings suggest that the application of managerial controls is less challenged whilst highly accepted in Vietnamese higher education as a context under the influence of Confucianism. The evidence of academics' compliance and collective actions underpinned by Vietnamese cultural values in this study offers to reconsider the discrepancy of the nature of these phenomena in the belief of the West and the East. The study's exploration of being an academic as multi-layered meanings expanding from within and outside of university roles proposes academics' potential strengths in coping with insecurity and ambiguity at work. It then sharpens the suggestion that contemporary management in higher education needs to be mindful of the emotional-related and meaningful nature of academic profession for the best outcomes of both individual work and organisational aims rather than relying on either soft or hard controls.

## **Author's Declaration**

Please note some parts of this thesis have been presented and/or published elsewhere:

1. Gardner, T and Bui, H, 2019. How to be appropriate? Early-career academics' identity work in the era of exclusion. EGOS Colloquium, Edinburgh, 2019.
2. Jones, D, Gardner T and Bui H (2021). Vietnamese Early Career Academics' Identity Work: Balancing Tensions between East and West. *Studies in Higher Education*. 0 (0) 1-13.

These publications contain my ideas and writing regarding literature review, methodology, findings, discussions, and conclusions which relate to this thesis.

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## Abbreviation

CMS	Critical Management Studies
HERA	Higher Education Reform Agenda
OMS	Organisation and Management Studies
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
NPM	New public management
AoP1	Academy of Politics, region 1.

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1.Introduction**

This study is about the lived experiences of Vietnamese academics in response to practices of managerial controls in academia regarding how they enact their academic roles. In producing this research, the author was motivated by answering various questions from the experience of her own and Vietnamese colleagues “What should we do? What have we done? Are we doing the same way as academics in the West have done?” In introducing an under-researched context, the author sheds the light to such questions as: how do academics in Asian cultures and developing economies (where managerialism was imported) deal with increasing pressures in their everyday work? Do they feel in the same way as academics in Western cultures and advanced economies (where managerialism was born or/and first applied) have felt? Are they happier and why? Answering those questions is as important as contributing to the literature of higher education and critical management studies.

This introductory chapter explains how the research interest was developed from the context of Vietnamese academia and theoretical background; then describes the research questions; and gives a brief outline of how this study is constructed.

## **1.2.Background of the study**

Since 1990s, higher education from West to East has been reformed under the ideology of managerialism, ‘the primacy of management above all other activities, developing quasi-market competition for public services and devising means of quality auditing and accountability’ (Deem and Brehony 2005, p. 220). Academia has been changed since managerialism was first employed to reform the sector in western countries and then has been adopted widely in academia in Asian countries (Lee 2011; Lee et al. 2017; Huang 2018; Huang et al. 2018). However, the application of managerialism in higher education institutions has been critiqued as not going in the way it was meant to do, especially regarding how it affects academic identities (Henkel 2005), which has become one of the key themes in scholars’ debates within critical management studies. The pressures relating to managerialism are specifically driven by such factors as financial cutbacks (Barry et al. 2006), reward systems influenced by elite members (Kogan and Hanney 2000; Henkel 2005; Ratle et al. 2020), ‘autocratic control’, audit, monitoring, performance indicators (Olssen 2002; Jones et al. 2020)

and erosion of the ‘balancing role played by collegiality’ (Kolsaker 2008, p. 515). Such changes and pressures associated with performing targets happen regularly through everyday governance and line management relationships are considered as forming micro-terror (Ratle et al. 2020). Such ‘violence of academia’ (Smith and Ulus 2020) have been argued as the cause of ‘deep insecurities regarding their worth, their identity and their standing’ (Gabriel 2010, p. 769).

Despite the debate of the impacts of managerialism on academic identities, Parker and Jary (1995) and Barry et al. (Barry et al. 2001) argue that the assumptions of managerialism’s impacts on working lives in academia should be reviewed only as ‘an early warning’ rather than ‘signalling its hold in day-to-day university life at the present time’ (Barry et al. 2001, p. 90). The emphasis of this study is located around *lived experience*, which avoids the intention of criticising to highlight the negatives or complementing to exaggerate the positives of managerialism. Such perception of this study is influenced by the argument of Parker and Jary (1995) that managerialism, specifically in higher education, is neither ‘simply good or bad’. However, the rationale and consequence of its can vary where it is applied or adopted to serve the management purposes; hence, it is necessary to address the negative aspects (Parker and Jary 1995) but should not be the sole enquiry.

Detecting negative aspects which have affected academics’ role practices has been one of the major themes in critical management studies (CMS). Scholars who research higher education practice have showed growing interest in studying certain issues at a time regarding the impacts of prevalent managerialist practices in universities on academics’ lived experiences at work. Among such interest, a great body of work has looked at how research culture has been impacted by audits, targets and commercialising strategies of universities (Willmott 2011); the demand for more ‘collective activism of solidarity’ (Contu 2018; Jones et al. 2020, p. 364); the relationships among academics, as referred to collegiality (Parker 2014; Kalfa et al. 2017); and the concerns on academics’ wellbeing and identity insecurity (Knights and Clarke 2018; Antoniadou and Quinlan 2021). In addition, other interests look at the tensions in universities’ management strategies to balance their targets of funding, research and teaching (Parker 2020).

However, although it seems easy to find various examples of negative impacts of managerialist controls on academics’ everyday practices of role reported in the extant literature of CMS, there are interests in seeking for evidence of positive in practices of managerial controls and academics’ responses. Ratle et al. (2020), through exploring early-career academics’ small acts

to resist micro-terror, put forwards the hope for linking individuals, building communities and network, celebrating success and taking off the focus on failure. The hope suggested by Ratle et al. (2020) does not stand alone. It joins the stance sharing by more international academics in CMS who contribute their arguments in a special issue of the journal of Management Learning in 2020, which emphasises ‘optimism over despair’ (Jones et al. 2020, p. 374).

In this study, the optimism is not located only within the aim of seeking for the collective activism among academics but also towards the lived attitudes of academics, which can indicate any evidence of transferable ‘good’ management that can become the lessons for practices in other contexts. Hence, this study is not just about a new context. A part of the motivation to conduct this study in a context like Vietnamese academia also derives from the researcher’s personal experience, by having contacts with Vietnamese academics, about some positive stories of managerialist controls. The study was supported as having a good direction and kind words of the reviewers for the journal Studies in Higher Education who reviewed an earlier version of one part of this study, now published. The substance of that article is reported in Chapter 6, which appears in a form incorporating further data and analysis. One reviewer commented:

‘I am keen to see further work from the authors, ... There are lessons here for higher education organisations around the world.’

The researcher is aware that there is further research required to make more comprehensive contribution. This becomes her argument for future research which will be discussed further at the end of this thesis. The following sub-section will introduce the context of this study and reasons why Vietnamese academia was chosen in answering the research enquiries.

### **1.3.Description of context**

In terms of contextual background, the study is constructed in the context of Vietnamese academia. Vietnam is a South-East Asian country of over 90 million people. Vietnamese higher education is characterised along with the nation’s developing economy. Indeed, the system has experienced a rapid expansion in both the number of higher education institutions and enrolled students. From 1995 to 1999, the number of universities grew from 109 to 131 whereas the number was doubled after 7 years (from 2000 to 2006). By 2016, there were 445 higher education institutions; the number decreased to 236 due to the restructuring of the sector.

Similarly, the number of enrolled undergraduate students has increased dramatically from 297 thousand in 1995 to 1.5 million in 2019 (Bộ Giáo Dục [Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training] 2019)

Despite the rapid expansion, the sector's performance has been facing numerous challenges, particularly with regards to low research capacity (Pham and Hayden 2019), ineffectiveness in governance and backward curriculum (Tran et al. 2017). For over three decades since 1986's Doi Moi – Renovation policy, the state government has introduced various policies and managerial instruments to encourage the reform of the sector. Higher education reform in Vietnam was triggered by the Open-Door policy which played as the antecedent for internationalisation and globalisation.

Internationalisation and globalisation have significant influences on the development of Vietnamese higher education (Tran et al. 2017). As internationalisation means different countries do things similarly and share ideas and knowledge (Deem 2001), it encourages the Government and the higher education managers of Vietnam to borrow and learn policies and management ideologies from the developed economies (Tran et al. 2017). Globalisation as a market-induced process (Yang 2003) spreads services and business along with key cultural, economic and social practices to a global market through transnational corporations (Deem 2001; Yang 2003). This market-driven phenomenon leads to global competition, various changes in the provision of higher education around the world (Yang 2003) and funding regimes (Deem 2001). Being influenced by foreign countries' forces is one characteristic of Vietnamese education (Tran et al. 2014; Nguyen and Tran 2018), which is associated with the systems' reforms towards 'mass' education (Parker and Jary 1995), marketisation and privatisation (Tran et al. 2017). Such changes rooted from globalisation and internalisation are not exclusive to Vietnamese higher education system. Studies have reported the phenomena's influences in other Asian countries such as Malaysia (Lee et al. 2017), Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar (Hill et al. 2019).

*Marketisation*, the promotion of higher education as positional good through trading on brands, identities and rankings (Lynch 2015; Tannock 2017), and *privatisation*, delivering higher education service through contracting out, charging fees and applications of stricter performance measurements (Lynch 2015; Pollitt 2016), are the background for the successive reforms of the system, remarkably associated with the policy of 'university autonomy'. The policy can be seen as the key attempt of the State in encouraging the market-driven operation

of Vietnamese public universities albeit rather slowly (Nguyen and Tran 2018). University autonomy was initially the policy which marked the State's gradually withdrawal of funding to public universities. Through a period of reviewing, the State set the regulations of route for universities to achieve autonomy. Accordingly, university autonomy is conditional. Universities can only achieve their full autonomy if they meet the requirements regarding operation, governance, quality, and finance. Along with university autonomy, a Higher Education Reform Agenda (HERA) was introduced in 2005 which shows the expectation of the State Government in moving Vietnamese academia closer to the international standards in terms of teaching and research quality.

Despite the efforts of the State and higher education managers to reform and improve the teaching and research quality, numerous issues have remained. Previous studies recorded a number of significant challenges such as inadequate resources and facilities, lack of quality staff and the contextual complexities (Nguyen and Tran 2018). Not surprisingly, the major cause of low performance of research in Vietnam has been reported widely as consistent with inadequate financial support (Dao 2015; Nguyen and Tran 2018; Nguyen et al. 2021). Another major reason for the remaining challenges of the system is the quality of staff. The percentage of academics who have PhDs in Vietnam is low at 28.8% (Bộ Giáo Dục [Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training] 2020a). In addition, English fluency is also one challenge of Vietnamese academics to get international publications, like other non-English speaking academics around the world (Boussebaa and Brown 2017).

Apart from the reason to conduct this study regarding the development of Vietnamese higher education, the motivation of exploring lived experiences of Vietnamese academics in the period of managerialism derives from the enquiry of the influences of the national culture. Vietnamese national culture is the combination of numerous cultural value systems mainly from Patriotism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism (Nguyen 2016). Remarkably, Confucianism has a long and significant influence on Vietnamese culture and its value system has guided and shaped Vietnamese behaviours and perception for thousands of years (Vuong et al. 2018). Patriotism represents the national solidarity resulted from the long history of wars and manifests collectivism (Nguyen 1999). Buddhism and Taoism, one is religious value system, and one is moral value system, both encourage Vietnamese' moral activities and group harmony.



Within the discipline of policy research, studies suggest that in several policy domains, Asian countries have combined elements of local culture with those of the west, creating hybrid practices. Hybrid practices occur not only in Vietnam but also in Malaysia (Lee et al. 2017) and other East Asian countries (Chan et al. 2017) regarding policy production, policy practices (Kothiyal et al. 2018) and operation model (Lee et al. 2017) which are mainly emphasised on the acceptance of ‘binary distinctions between global and local, Western and non-Western’ (Kothiyal et al. 2018, p. 147). In Vietnam, hybrid practice has happened in most governing processes, which means Vietnamese universities accept globalised norms while continuing the country’s cultural heritage. Tran et al. (2017) report the incompatibility between Communist ideology and foreign principles and beliefs embedded in imported curriculums. Nguyen and Tran (2018) argue that the reform can ‘arouse right from the core of the system’ as borrowing policy can exhaust Vietnamese universities by forcing them to be like Western institutions (p. 41). These recent studies on Vietnamese higher education reforms have highlighted a number of issues occurring in the transition period and within the interactions between traditional values and western values. However, their perspectives are embedded within the field of policy development. Their approach, hence, is mainly top-down with a focus on the practices of top managers, middle managers and administrators. Furthermore, although their arguments indicate that the struggles of Vietnamese higher education in effectively employing western ideologies of managerial controls are embedded in the significant influences of cultural values, the analysis of such cultural influences are left untouched. This present study will provide a whole chapter of empirical evidence to cover this missing space which answers the question: national culture is highly influential in organisational context, how do its value systems influence the practices of managerial controls and academics’ role enactment?

#### **1.4.The justification and research questions**

To formulate the research questions of this present study, a crucial step is identifying research gap. It can be argued that the justification of research gap and research question development should be placed after literature review. However, firstly in producing this study, literature review was conducted thoroughly, which enables the author to justify what she could bring to the existing literature from this research. Hence, although the presentation of literature review is placed later in this thesis, the author presents the understanding of research gaps and discussion of research questions in this chapter to provide the audience a more comprehensive overview of the study. This subsection’s task is to justify research spaces that this present study

can join the current debates as well as contribute to the literature by responding to the calls of previous studies and challenging the assumptions underlying existing literature (Alvesson and Sandberg 2011). Although it might appear that justifying research gap and asserting the significance of conducting this present study are overlapping tasks and can be explained within one section, the latter will be presented in the next subsection for clearer presentation.

Global higher education has witnessed the prevalence of managerialism, with its agenda based upon individualist and regular target setting, accountability practices, and performance management (Huang and Pang 2016; McCarthy and Dragouni 2020). In the West, specifically the United Kingdom, where managerialism was introduced to reform public sector, there is a growing body of studies looking at academics' experiences of changes; however, happy stories about academic career are harder to find than the stories about, but not limited to, 'surveillance' (Lorenz 2012), micro-terrors (Ratle et al. 2020) or labour pain (Knights and Clarke 2014; Robinson et al. 2017). In the East, the literature has recorded little interest of scholars in examining the experiences and responses of academics under managerialism. A few studies have reported how Asian academics respond to managerial changes such as in China (Huang et al. 2018), Malaysia (Lee et al. 2017) or Korea (Kim and Kim 2021). Besides the modest number of studies, there are limited uses of the cultural perspective which can portray cultural-based academics' responses, although the influences of cultural values have been argued as significant in higher education development in East Asia (Chan et al. 2017).

Moreover, the research gap is identified by acknowledging the lack of understanding on the practices of managerialism and academics' experiences in a non-western context. This lack in literature, to some extent, might be a barrier to expand the function of critical management studies which is to offer 'a range of alternatives to mainstream management theory with a view to radically transforming management practice' (Adler et al. 2008, p. 119). Different cultures and institution structures can help unveil the historically dependent character of the particular arrangements which triumph in any certain time and place (Adler et al. 2008). Hence, this study with its insightful analysis of contextual and cultural characteristics of Vietnamese higher education can take part in filling such gap.

Bringing together all the above discussions on theoretical background, research context and research gap identification, and to achieve **the research aim of investigating Vietnamese academics' lived experiences at work regarding the imposition of managerialism in the context of higher education**, this study has a number of objectives:

The first objective is to explore empirically the practices of managerialism in the context of Vietnamese higher education through the bottom-up approach and interpreting 41 in-depth interviews of Vietnamese academics from 12 different universities. This objective is underpinned by the suggestion of Clarke and Newman (1997) that managerialism can be detected in management technologies of organisations, cultures and narratives, and organisational forms as different universities can use different sorts of external accountability to encourage quasi-market competition and to improve effectiveness and efficiency of higher education services (Huang et al. 2018).

The second objective is to examine the Vietnamese academics' perception of their self-meanings and role practices in response to managerial changes in Vietnamese higher education. To deliver this objective, the analyses will consider both the meanings of self they construct as individual selves and through their interactions with other actors such as colleagues, managers, students and broader scholar community. This approach of analysis enriches the understanding of academics' lived experiences as the combination of 'both intra-personally, in soliloquy, and with others in social interaction' (Brown 2021) and because 'the self is...a product of social interaction' (Callero 2003, p. 121).

The third objective is to examine contextual characteristics, with the emphasis on national culture, which impact academics' processes of meaning making. As national culture and histories play significant roles in tempering the manner in which managerialism is effected (Saravanamuthu and Filling 2004), involving contextual factors can advance the finding analysis of the influences of managerialism on respondents' role practices and identity. Such factors are considered both straight from respondents' interviews and from the knowledge of most commonly accepted cultural value systems.

With the above discussions leading to the aim and objectives of this present study, two research questions are generated:

- 1. How do practices of managerialist controls influence Vietnamese academics' work life, in the context of Vietnamese higher education?**
- 2. How does Vietnamese national culture influence Vietnamese academics' working experiences in response to the practices of managerialist controls, in the context of Vietnamese higher education?**

To articulate the answers for these research questions, this study employs the literature of identity and identity work. The utilization of identity literature to examine academics' experiences in the period of prevalent managerialism in academia has increasingly and dramatically contributed to the main theme in higher education research and critical management studies. Identity can be understood as representing some classic questions that individuals come to answer: Who am I? What should I do? Who do I want to become? (Brown 2015). According to Brown's (2021) review, identity literature used in publication in the field of 'education' was in the lead with 303 papers in 2019. Following identity literature to answer the research questions, this study takes a more challenging path as it is open to alternatives. This means the author is creative in blending different strands of identity and identity work theorising. Such way of producing a study regarding identity is argued as more valuable and towards the 'future direction of travel for identities theorizing in OMS [organisation and management studies]' (Brown 2021), which is also used in the work of DeRue and Ashford (2010) who combine the role identity (identity theory) with social identity theory and symbolic interactionism to modelling the social process of leadership identity construction in organisations.

Having argued that, this present study draws on identity theory (role identity theory), social identity theory, identity regulation and identity work to inform how managerial controls influence Vietnamese academics' identity and identity work. In terms of role identity, academics are considered to hold the meanings of being an educator (teaching role), researcher (research role), field expert (consultant), and (maybe) managers (managing role) and to act in response to the social expectations towards the roles (Stets and Burke 2000). Regarding social (group-based) identity, academics are university members and hold their sense of belonging to their organisations in terms of organisational identification (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016). After achieving the understanding of academics' self-identity and social identity, the study examines how respondents' academic identities have been changed or impacted under the practices of managerial controls. Accordingly, managerial controls are reflected on the process of identity regulation through which organisations seek to discipline and shape their employees' identities (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). As managerialist controls start to make influences upon academics, they incorporate the expectations of the role, as given by universities through regulations, into their processes of identity construction. Finally, national culture's impacts will be examined as the loop covering the whole processes of identity regulation and academics' identity construction. This is supported by scholars including Alvesson and Willmott (2002)

and Knights and Clarke (2017) who encourage studying identity and identity regulation within cultural contexts. Hickson and Pugh (1995) are certain that ‘it [culture] shapes everything’ (p. 90). Covering national culture in articulating findings and discussions helps this thesis, to a great extent, respond to Brown’ (2017) call for exploring the impacts of cultures on identity work and organisational identification.

### **1.5.The significance of the study**

This study is significant as it takes the bottom-up approach, interpreting Vietnamese academics’ narratives to explore their experiences with regards to the practices of managerial controls. The approach is underpinned by the special interest of the author in understanding and privileging the population of over 70,000 academics across the system (Bộ Giáo Dục [Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training] 2019). Through reporting the lived experiences of academics, the contribution of this study is twofold regarding literature and practice. Firstly in literature, it suggests the importance of employing a combination of theoretical perspectives in enriching discussions and arguments. For this study, it utilises the literature of managerialism, identity and national culture to provide valuable arguments from analysing the complexity in respondents’ narratives of their work life. In addition, the study enriches the literature of managerialism by examining the phenomenon in a non-western context which is influenced by strong cultural systems. This study argues that it can be a problematic issue relating to the myopia and amnesia of identity studies in OMS which take identity for granted and neglect the significant role of cultural and historical context of identity formation (Alvesson et al. 2008; Knights and Clarke 2017). Developing on existing western literature, conducting a study in a very different context, Asian, developing and emerging academia – Vietnamese higher education, the author expects to produce an interesting study which can highlight the significant role of national culture in providing meaning to academics’ actions as well as shaping the practices of managerial controls. To some extent, this study can also present a comparative sense in a non-comparatively structured study which reflects the differences of what we have perceived in current studies and the contrasting pictures of academic lives in different sides of the world.

Secondly in terms of practice, the findings reveal empirically and sentimentally the outcomes of the practices of managerial controls which are not normally shown in quantitative statistics in the management reports of State or universities. By conducting the research, this is the opportunity for Vietnamese academics, in the culture of high power-distance, to unveil their

opinions and not-normally-told stories, which importantly calls for staff empowering. In addition, Vietnam shares a number of cultural values with other Asian countries such as China, Malaysia, Korea or Japan which are influenced by Confucianism. Hence, findings of this study can provide some suggestions for practices of managerialism in such similar contexts. Moreover, employing academics as research participants and proving the values of this study through delivering their valuable stories and findings mean that studies without participants like deans or hard-to-reach population are also precious and empowering.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century academia, higher education is global and borderless. Understanding stories on the other side of the world is as important as building local policies and strategies for academic development. The author in producing this study has noticed various flashlights which suggested that there can be plenty of beautiful stories about academic life and that it is not always the case that developing systems (Vietnam) import policies and strategies from advanced systems (the UK, US, Australia). Possibly, it can be the other way round.

It is unlikely to avoid that managerialism becomes global ideology which guides the governance of higher education around the world. Teaching has to serve for the students' best interests; research has to climb up the ranking ladder; academics have to follow the academic career path from doctoral student, junior professor, senior professor, to (hopefully) professor emeriti... so 'what's then' (Elangovan and Hoffman 2019). This path is rather lonely and individual. Could we hope for some sense of collectiveness to make academic career less bitter and fragile (Knights and Clarke 2014) but more positive, meaningful and valuable (Alvesson and Spicer 2016; Contu 2018)? Once, the author of this study had a quick chat with a colleague. The colleague said: 'this profession is so different, IF I DON'T DO THIS, NO ONE IS GONNA DO THIS FOR ME'. Indeed, even when it is the work of a group of academics, we are still individual in what we do and what we can achieve afterwards. Conducting a study and collecting stories from individuals who are from a collectivist culture might shed some light on the hope.

## **1.6. Structure of the thesis**

This thesis has the structure as follows:

The next chapter, chapter two, introduces the context of Vietnamese higher education with more details on its historic development and governance. The chapter also introduces the employment of academics and how it has changed over time.

Chapter three provides an in-depth review on literature of managerialism, identity and national culture. It provides the knowledge on what managerialism is, how managerialism has been developed and employed in higher education, and how the ideology has been critiqued. In this chapter, the literature of identity is provided to understand the core definitions, the theoretical underpinning, identity regulation on which managerial controls are reflected on, and identity work to understand how academics responded to changes in their daily role practices. It then reviews literature of national culture and discusses about the relation between national culture and identity. An introduction of Vietnamese national culture is also provided in this chapter.

Chapter four presents the research philosophy, research design, research methods, data collection and findings analysis. It introduces this study's adoption of interpretivist paradigm which guides the qualitative methodology, interview method of data collection and data analysis.

Chapter five reports the findings and discussion in answering the first research question of how managerial controls have influenced Vietnamese academics' work life.

Chapter six reports the findings and discussion in answering the second question of how national culture influence Vietnamese academics' work experiences in response to the practices of managerialist controls, in the context of Vietnamese higher education. This chapter highlights the tension Vietnamese academics experienced between the impacts of national culture and the practices of managerial controls, and how Vietnamese academics responded to the complexity of the context.

Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by revisiting the debates in literature and reviewing the responses to the research questions. It justifies the contributions of the research and highlights the practical and theoretical implications. It also clarifies the limitations of the study, which opens up recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Vietnamese higher education**

### **2.1.Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined Vietnam and its higher education system to explain why the study is conducted. This chapter elaborates that history and shows how the academic profession has been changed and the description of academic management and academic employment established in legal documents and universities' policies.

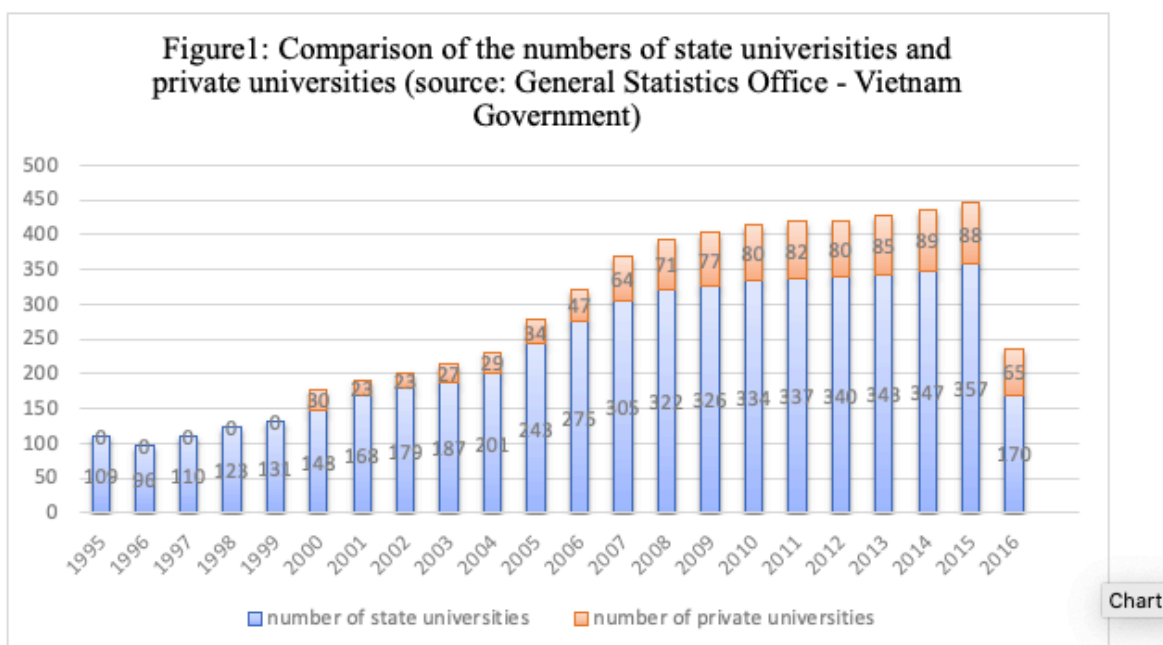
### **2.2.The development of Vietnamese higher education**

Vietnamese higher education is the product of a complex mix of education heritages influenced by Confucianism, the French, the American and Soviet. The establishment of higher education in Vietnam can be traced back to the 11<sup>th</sup> Century when Confucian academies were first established. This earliest form of higher education was to provide knowledge for the elite which mainly included Mandarins serving in Chinese authorities in Vietnam (Le and Hayden 2017; Le et al. 2019). The elitism of higher education provision continued in the system provided by the French along with their colonization in Vietnam in 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Pham and Fry 2002). The replacement of Confucian academies by the French Collèges existed until the French colonial empire ended in 1945 in Vietnam. With the influence of the Soviet, higher education system was rebuilt and started to accept students from broader community. The higher education provision until mid-1980s was highly centralized and monopolized by the state (Le and Hayden 2017).

The changes in public management including higher education were triggered in mid-1980s by the demand of economic development. Before 1986, Vietnam economy had only two sectors: state sector and cooperative sector, which means there was no 'private sector' existing in the economy; social services such as education and healthcare at all levels were provided by the state and almost free of charge. However, the slow development of the economy and the enormous rebuilding costs after war made free social services become a fiscal burden for the government. In 1986, the policy "Doi Moi" was launched by the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam and became the most significant milestone of the changes in Vietnam policy and legal system upon every aspect of economics, society and culture.



Before Doi Moi, according to the National Institution 1980, the state wholly provided and managed Vietnam’s Education system (Quoc Hoi [National Assembly] 1980), with a viewpoint that having education was the substantial right of every citizen and had to be accessible without any bias and inequality. As a result, higher education was fully subsidised by the State and there was no private university. After Doi Moi, the private sector attended the economy and took the first steps into the higher education industry, which put public higher education into a new competitive environment. However, the unequal treatment for public and non-public players in delivery this kind of service has been creating a barrier for improving service quality. The unequal treatment mentioned here involves the regulations (e.g., Investment requirements has been increasing dramatically from 15 billion VND to 250 billion VND<sup>12</sup>) or lack of regulations for non-public institutions’ operation and the community’s bias towards private institutions’ service quality. Despite the increasingly competitive environment, with the gradual growth in number of private universities, public universities have still been the main players who contribute about 80% into the industry (figure 1) (Bộ Giáo Dục [Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training] 2009; General Statistics Office [Vietnam Government] 2019). Meanwhile, public universities remain a big number of problems regarding service delivery and quality. Thus, reform of higher education management has been put into debate.



With an effort to encourage the reform, the Government issued the Decree No.10/ND-CP of

<sup>1</sup> 15 billion VND = 500,000 Pounds; 250 Billion VND = 8.3 Million Pounds

<sup>2</sup> Decision N0. 14/2005/QĐ-TTg and Decision No. 64/2013/QĐ-TTg

the Government on 16/1/2002 about financial regulations applied for fee-collecting public business institutions (Chinh Phu [Government] 2002) and No. 43/2006/ND-CP about regulations of the right of autonomy and self-responsibility for **executing duties, organisational structure, recruitment, and finance in public business institutions** (Chinh Phu [Government] 2006). The policy resulted in the so-called *University Autonomy* which is related to the transformation of Vietnamese academies from being fully governed by the State to self-governance. University autonomy has been expanded and clarified in the Law of Higher Education 2012 (Quoc Hoi [National Assembly] 2012). According to the Decree No. 43, universities have the autonomy mainly in 5 areas which are organisation and human resource, finance and assets, science and technology, international cooperation and assurance of higher education quality (Article 32). Thus, the role of universities in general and public universities in particular has been expanded and emphasised on the service quality as service provider.

Besides, the Article 68 states that the managerial role of State is mainly on macro level where the State takes controls through policy and law making, quota establishing in programs and education quality, information function on organisation and operation of the whole system, managerial mechanism operation, lecturer qualification management, resource management for development of higher education, management in research and technology application, management in international cooperation, reward management, assessment of observance of law and solving complains and reports. According to the data provided by The World Bank (2015), regarding the autonomy in university governance, 100% of universities have had the right to make decision about the number of students to educate since 2012, 100% of universities have had the right to design their own educational programs and open new programs and courses which are based on demand since 2011. Regarding universities' finance, income from tuition fee contributes 39% into the total revenue. As reported by the Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW on 4th November 2013 of the Central Executive Committee of The Communist Party, there has been an ambiguous separation between the management of the State and managerial activities in universities. Once again, this document emphasises the need of renovating the managerial activities in education and training, assuring democratism, increasing the autonomy and social responsibility of education institutions. Based on the guidance of the Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW on 4th November 2013, the Government issued the Resolution No. 77/NP-CP on 24/10/2014 about pilot renovation of the operation mechanism for public universities in the period of 2014-2017 where the autonomy and self-responsibility of public universities are granted fully if they commit to self-supply the whole of regular operation cost and investment

cost. However, as emphasised by the vice prime minister of Vietnam - Vu Duc Dam (2015), the attitude of the State is clear that autonomy does not mean that the State stops investing into the education, but this is the change in investment method. Nevertheless, until 2016 the number of public universities which implement the autonomy and self-responsibility was only 15 out of 436, a very modest number (Dan Tri 2016). In 2019, the number slowly increased by 23 but led to the big jump in tuition fee and created a huge gap between public universities in terms of the amount of fee they charged upon enrolled students (Tuyen sinh so 2019).

Along with such prime changes, the Government issued Resolution No 14/2005/NQ-CP on November 2, 2005 (herein called Resolution No14) introducing a Higher Education Reform Agenda of the period time 2006-2020 (HERA) to set up new objectives for Vietnamese higher education by 2020 (Chinh Phu [Government] 2005). HERA is considered to trigger fundamental changes in Vietnamese academia. HERA aims to reform higher education governance, justify financing, enhance teaching and research quality, improve accountability and transparency in financial management across the sector (World Bank Group 2009). Accordingly, the line management of State and local authorities upon universities needs to be eliminated, which means universities are expected to have their own governing boards and autonomy in governance (Nguyen and Shah 2019). In addition, with HERA, the Government expect to move Vietnamese academia closer to international standards regarding teaching and research quality. HERA aims to enhance research quantity and quality with an expectation of developing a group of research-oriented universities, in which key universities become research centres of the country. In response to this aim, there are various changes in how academics practice their profession, particularly in research orientation, which will be described further in the next section.

Along with HERA by the Government, Vietnamese universities have applied various motive measures to improve research activities among academics. Such measures include bonus and/or rewarding schemes. For example, the document of standards to nominate academic rewards published by University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City indicates that one of the most important requirements to achieve the highest reward in the university (Chien si thi dua co so – Outstanding staff) is that academics must be the first/principal author of articles published in domestic and international journals<sup>3</sup>. The University of Economics - University of Danang establish their awarding schemes based on the index of ISI and Scopus ranging from

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<sup>3</sup> <https://ueh.edu.vn/images/upload/editer/10.%20Cacphuluc.pdf>

£1,200/publication on Q3 to £4000/publication on A\* or ABS 4\*. At the state level, the Government apply the awarding schemes annually which base on research ranking among universities to award to universities with international publications. In these state schemes, every university with international publications (from 1 publication) is awarded with £100/publication.

Changes in Vietnamese higher education are also embedded in the internationalisation with the Western dominance which commonly occurs in Asian academic institutions (Altbach and Knight 2007). Higher education internationalisation only started its influence in Vietnam from Doi Moi as the State established the Open-Door policy (Mo Cua) in 1986. The policy set the foundation for the transactions of ideologies and philosophies regarding management and higher education from the West into Vietnam as Altbach (1989) remarks:

‘Academic hierarchies, the structure of the curriculum, the system of examination, and the very rhythm of academic life is Western in origin and Western in feeling. The idea of the university as a pure meritocratic organization is deeply ingrained – although compromised in Asia, as it is sometimes in the West.’ (p, 22)

Under the influence of internationalisation, Vietnamese higher education has been reformed to adapt with international standards. As commented by Nguyen and Tran (2018), the implementation of policies by the Ministry of Education and Training and Vietnamese Government is strongly influenced by Western ideologies. There has been a ‘burning desire to borrow Western HE model or import the top 200 world university’s programmes and curriculums’ (Nguyen and Tran 2018, p. 34).

The prevalence of Western influences in Vietnamese higher education is consolidated by various programs of international cooperation (Tran et al. 2014; Nguyen and Tran 2018) and an increasing number of abroad-trained academics. There are more than 500 cooperation projects in education which are worth over 4.4 billion US dollars and over 450 international curriculums delivered by 70 higher education institutions (Minh Thi 2020). Among these, the biggest partnerships are with Western partners from the United States, United Kingdom and Australia are respectively (Pham 2016). In addition to the international engagement regarding curriculums and standards, Vietnamese higher education, similarly to other developing economies, has a big flow of students educated abroad, within which a considerable number of Vietnamese academics have attended training courses or further education programs. To

enhance academic quality and develop the performance of Vietnam universities under internationalisation, Vietnamese Government have significantly supported private and state universities by granting scholarships for academics to achieve PhD qualification in Vietnam and abroad. For example, the 911 project of approximately 500 million USD aimed to help 23.000 academic staff achieve PhD degree by 2020, in which was expected to have 10,000 academics with international PhD degree (Giang Son 2017). This source of international-educated academics exposes to international models and standards, especially Western philosophies, and ideologies in education.

### **2.3.Changes in academic work**

It is obvious that the reform emphasises on the changing roles in academic management of both universities and the State, which shows the dramatic change toward higher education in Vietnam, from a state-wholly-subsidised to market-oriented service sector. Gradually, higher education is separated from the state's function and becomes a market-oriented service. With financial autonomy, there have been competitions among universities in attracting more students and external funds from both the state and other investors (Cong Chuong 2019). Accordingly, students become customers who pay for education 'service' whilst expecting high quality service. With such motivation, universities need to invest in their infrastructure, knowledge development, and research quality. In addition, there are various research projects released by the state and organisations which universities and academics can compete to achieve research grants. The research grants are important financial sources which contribute to the revenues of universities and academics' income.

One of the changes in academic work regards to the proportion between teaching and research activities. Before the establishment of Resolution No14, higher education in Vietnam, as stated in Education Law of 1998 and 2005, mainly focused on teaching activities and providing skilled labour force for the development of the country rather than research function. The research function of universities was only emphasised in the Resolution No14 as fundamental activities along with teaching. Accordingly, teaching and research become mandatory tasks of academics as stated in Higher Education Law 2012.

Secondly, the changes in academic research are also inevitable due to the low quality of higher education in Vietnam. Vietnam has only two universities in the top 1000 of the QS World University Ranking for 2019 (Times Higher Education 2019). As a result, Vietnamese

Government and universities emphasise on the sector's international competition (Hill et al. 2019). With regards to research performance, Vietnam has been ranked as poor in research performance among developing higher education systems in ASEAN such as Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, or Malaysia. According to the Scopus database, Vietnamese academics have only published 63.969 peer-review papers with H-index (the measure that indicates both quality and impact of research output) of 220, which is much lower than Thailand (339) and Malaysia (323), and slightly lower than Philippines (246) and Indonesia (241) (Scimago 2019). One of the reasons for the poor performance in research of Vietnamese Universities is that the low number of academic staff holding PhD degree which stands at only 23 percent (The World Bank 2020). This low quality of staff makes it more difficult to catch up with the increasing requirements of higher education around the world because one of the most important factors is academic staffing workforce (The World Bank 2020). Indeed, without a strong qualified academic staffing workforce, it is very difficult to produce world-class research (Pham and Hayden 2019). Academics need good English skills, especially writing. It is very difficult to get their research published on international journals without English proficiency (Boussebaa and Brown 2017). As a result, Universities in Vietnam are expected to have an increasing number of academics holding PhD qualification to respond to the new research and teaching requirements of university. In some leading universities, PhD qualification are essential to academic role. In practice, Vietnamese universities have expanded their service provision to both undergraduates and post-graduates whilst the laws state that only qualified academics can do particular levels. For example, According to the Law of Higher Education 2012 only academics with bachelor qualification or above can teach undergraduate level, only academics with master qualification or above can deliver lectures to or supervise master level, and only academics with doctorate qualification can supervise PhD students (Quoc Hoi [National Assembly] 2012). As a result, academics who want to develop their career need to achieve the highest qualification.

Finally, the policies to enhance academics' education consequently have caused potential competition among academics and universities. With regards to the competition among academics, there is a division between academics who do not hold PhD degrees abroad and those who come back with their PhD degrees from advanced higher education systems such as the UK, America, or Australia. Academics who have experiences of study and research in those countries generally have more advantages than majority of academics who study and research in Vietnam only in terms of English proficiency, research methodology, networks, access to

database and publication information (e.g., how to submit an article manuscript to a journal). Academics who do not study and research abroad, particularly in English-speaking countries have been concerned the most about increasing pressures of developing their English skills to not only satisfy the quality requirements by universities in the era of internationalisation (Le 2016).

#### **2.4. Academic management and academic employment**

Higher education reform has not only brought changes to academics' daily work but dramatically transformed its management in more Western, individual and quantitative ways. One of the most relevant aspects of academic management in universities is quality assurance which results in a multitude of managerial instruments to ensure that academics' work can improve universities' capacity and competitive advantages. To manage academic quality, the General Council of Education Testing and Quality Accreditation operated within the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam was established in 2003 to conduct assessments of higher education institutions' quality. There is a department of education testing and quality accreditation in each university. In most universities, this department is mainly responsible for developing academic quality to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Training and international integration in quality assurance.

In response to the aim of quality assurance, Vietnamese universities have employed various instruments to manage academics' work, which is sometimes critiqued as 'managing factory workers' (Canh 2018). To manage the quantity of their teaching and research, academics working in Vietnamese universities have been managed through the system of standard hours for teaching and research. According to the Circular 20/2020/TT-BGDĐT on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020, per academic year, academics must complete 44 weeks equivalent to 1.760 normal work hours, in which academics at the lowest level have to conduct 600 hours of teaching and spend a minimum of one third of their working time on research (586 hours). Teaching activities include delivering lectures, mentoring, and supervising master and PhD students. Academics' research outputs are measured through peer-reviewed system by universities or international journals. However, the state's regulation can be applied differently depending on the management board of each university. According to the guidance from the Government, if academics have to spend too much time on teaching, they are allowed to transfer their teaching time into research time depending on the operation of each university but it is advised that all academics have to be active in their research activities, which means Vietnamese universities

have their autonomous right to decide the appropriate requirements for their own operation and targets (Bao Chinh Phu [State Government News] 2019). Although this flexibility allows universities to allocate their work force appropriately, it is argued that universities would neglect their research function and distract academics from the research activities, which might result in the reduction in the number of research-oriented academics.

In addition, to manage the quality of academics' work, universities have widely employed numerous measures including students' evaluation towards academics' performance, inspectorship, and performance grading. Relatively, collecting students' evaluation upon academics' work has been expanding dramatically in Vietnam since 2010 and mainly focuses on assessing academics' teaching activities and qualities. The measure marks the massive transformation of pedagogy from teacher-centred to student-centred practice (Bộ Giáo Dục [Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training] 2006). However, its practice in Vietnamese context has been applied with precariousness because of the strong impacts of the country's culture. The former vice-minister of the Ministry of Education and Training advised in his speech that the measure of students' evaluation upon academics should follow the moral standards of respecting for teachers (Anh Huy 2013). Another prevalent tool to manage academics in Vietnamese universities is inspectorship which is designed to ensure academics' daily work and diligence. This managerial tool is critiqued as treating academics like factory workers and in fact, has been resisted by academics (Nguoi Lao Dong 2015). Performance grading or ranking is a common tool in most of universities to control academics' work performance. The newest guidance for academic ranking is the Decree 90/2020/ND-CP which categorises the results of academic work into 3 grades: completion, good completion and distinction completion (Chinh Phu [Government] 2020). The process of ranking academics is the mix of self-assessment and collective assessment. Accordingly, individual academics complete their own self-assessment of their work. Then, their departments organise a meeting where academics present their self-assessment. After that, their colleagues and managers provide feedback to their self-assessment and their performance. The written record of the meeting is then sent to higher management board, from there the decision is made. Hence, academic performance grading depends highly on the evaluation of other individuals in the departments and higher management board although there are bullet points of quantitative measurements; for example, academics graded as distinction completion have to achieve 50% more than the requirement.



Finally regarding to Vietnamese academics' salary, most of the time they are paid under two schemes which are from the State and from universities. Accordingly, the State scheme is applied first fundamental wage and the universities' scheme is applied on top of the first. Regarding the State scheme, there are 3 grades of salary which are Grade 1 for senior lecturers (maximum £400/month<sup>4</sup>), Grade 2 for principal lecturers (maximum £330/month) and Grade 3 for lecturers or associate lecturers (from £110-250/month) (Bộ Giáo Dục [Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training] 2020b). Depending on how well universities organise courses and the number of their students, academics can be paid more as extra wage.

## **2.5.Conclusion**

Vietnamese higher education distinguishes itself with various fundamental and historic movements and changes, all contained in the complex mix of colonial heritages and internationalised values. It has developed from an elitist and colonial system to a centralised and monopolised and then an open and market-driven sector. As the service is now for everyone and, in fact, needs to involve as many students and funding providers as possible, provision of higher education has started its 'mass production' (Pearson and Brew 2010). Accordingly, the sector has moved dramatically with multiple forms of management emphasising on individual performance, and the work of Vietnamese academics is, to a great extent, has been influenced. Changes in Vietnamese higher education are obvious, however, research on the context mainly focuses on criticising the practices of new managerial controls and assessing their effects on the sector's quality performance. The literature lacks studies on lived experiences of academics which appears as neglecting academics' opinions on what are going on in their career. Instead of taking the reform as its research subject, this present study focuses on academics as the subjects to such changes and practices of managerial controls. The next chapter provides literature review which underpins the conceptual framework to guide the articulation of findings and discussion.

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<sup>4</sup> Currency exchange rate: £1 = 32.002 VND (according to <https://portal.vietcombank.com.vn/Pages/Home.aspx>; access on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021)

## **Chapter 3: Literature review**

### **3.1.Introduction**

To study how Vietnamese academics' work life has been affected by the practice of managerial controls, it is helpful to look first at how the practice is seen in the Western societies from which it originated. The present study asks in the context of Vietnam: how have managerial controls impacted academics' identity and their processes of identity construction? In addition, through data analysis, national culture emerged significantly in interviewees' narratives which cannot be abandoned. To answer those questions, this literature review provides an understanding of managerialism, specifically regarded to higher education sector; identity approach, with fundamental concepts including identity, identity work, identity regulation and organisational identification; and national culture.

### **3.2.Overview of managerialism in higher education**

#### **3.2.1. The advent of managerialism**

As reported widely in the literature, managerialism has dramatically changed public sectors (Lane 1997), particularly higher education providers, and been assessed as not easy to be resisted (Clarke and Knights 2015) with the predication of accountability, flexibility, quality and transparency (Lorenz 2012). The term and its application in practice have still been criticised. This section provides a systematic understanding on managerialism, with a review of existing literature on its development.

Before reviewing the conceptualisation and emergence of managerialism in higher education, it is important to trace back to when it began. As early as 1980s, OECD countries started to move their management towards new public management (NPM) (Hood 1995) which is variously related to managerialism by scholars (Thomas and Davies 2005; Santiago and Carvalho 2008). Later in the next section, these rival concepts (Deem and Brehony 2005) will be distinguished; however, as 'they share a good slice of conceptual DNA' (Pollitt 2016, p. 430), this section still first relies on the general ideology of efficiency in management (Hood 2000; Pollitt 2016) to trace the emergence of managerialism in literature.

The notion of efficiency takes the search of managerialism's origins back to 1970s' European efficiency-driven managerial reforms, which originated in the UK and New Zealand (Lynn

2007) relating to a range of three settlements legitimating and sustaining the Britain's 1945 post-war welfare state. These included: the political-economic settlement, the social settlement, and the organisational settlement (Clarke and Newman 1997). The political-economic settlement can be defined regarding the compromise among the market-driven principles (inequality) and state-guaranteed citizenship (equality) which was significantly referred to public spending on welfare and social services (Clarke and Newman 1997). The social settlement of the welfare state emphasised on welfare benefits and services regarding gender, age and dependency, and race (Clarke and Newman 1997). Finally, the organisational settlement focused on two modes of coordination which were bureaucratic administration and professionalism. Firstly, bureaucratic administration aimed on efficient administration and fair treatment to all public cases to provide predictable outputs and socially, politically and personally neutral. By contrast to the bureaucracy's concern of predictability and stability, professionalism, although playing as the combination with bureaucratic administration for organisational settlement, emphasised on distinctive knowledge and skills to be employed for solving 'the indeterminacy of the social world' (Clarke and Newman 1997, p. 6).

Although the three settlements combining together created the foundation for constructing and expanding the welfare state in the post-war period, they overlapped and shaped the subsequent conditions of the crisis of the post-war welfare state (Clarke and Newman 1997). The weakness of the UK's economy started posing financial pressures on public spending. Accordingly, public spending in 1970s in the UK was no longer seen as a social or collective investment but wasteful cost (Clarke and Newman 1997). More criticism was concerned with the crisis of the welfare state about the monopoly mode of public service provision and inefficient bureaucratic administration to the public (Deem et al. 2007).

A series of reform introduced by Margaret Thatcher after the election in 1979 emphasised on the 'business like' approach which decentralised staff controls and transformed national-level government into autonomous agencies (Hood 2000). Such approach of reform is distinctive from those in Canada and Singapore (Hood 2000). Other countries took reform actions regarding the 1980s' managerialism following the same targets of reforming public sector based on privatisation and the improvement of public service productivity (Pollitt 2016). Therefore, to be clear, the above reference of the emergence of managerialism in the UK is not meant to imply that managerialism in the UK is like managerialism in other parts of the world but to provide the background explanations for the globally occurrence of managerialism.

Indeed, reforming public sector with regards to efficiency, customer responsiveness, quality and effective leadership is encouraged by global competitiveness (Hood 2000), which includes the case of globalised higher education provision.

Regarding the prevalence of managerialism in global market, although managerialism is not only practiced in the UK but its advent was recorded in the literature (Hood 1995; Clarke and Newman 1997; Pollitt 2016) as one of the first with the US 'steer – don't row' (Lynn 2007) which have been well-known as 'Anglo-Saxon' ideas and practices and inspired the reform actions employed for different reasons in dissimilar contexts (Hood 2000) around the world. Such 'global paradigm' (Hood 2000, p. 3) became prevalent because of its host countries' reputation for effectiveness and honesty. In addition, New Public Management (NPM) as known as rooting from managerialism and conceptualised by Hood (1991) started to grow globally due to the support of the United Nations' development programme – the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and international forums (Ferlie et al. 2005). Specifically, the international pressures to the employment of managerialism in other parts of the world (Asia, Africa including developing countries) were embedded in the requirements of stable and efficient financial policies and public management to join the world market economy (Mathiasen 2005). Moreover, the need for public management reforms also derived from national fiscal problems in various nations including Southeast Asian and Latin American countries so the issues would not recur (Mathiasen 2005). As a result, globalisation in public management reforms gradually transformed public sectors in many nations, which included higher education sectors (Deem 2001).

Returning to the earlier introduction of the emergence of managerialism, the notion of efficiency in management was emphasised, which helped the literature review at this stage step away from the tornado of debates or efforts on separating two concepts: New Public Management and managerialism because these concepts both are meant to relate to public sector reform. Hence, the above writing focuses on understanding of the origins of managerialist practices firstly in Western countries, specifically Anglo-Saxon States, which associates with public management reform and have pertinently spread around the world. Before moving to the review of the literature about how higher education management has been transformed with the employment of managerialism, the immediately following section will discuss about the definition of managerialism.

### **3.2.2. The conceptualisation of managerialism**

Managerialism has never been easy to be defined and scholars have developed their own understandings on the concept (Teelken 2012). Managerialism has emerged and been mixed up with other terminology, and linked in different ways with New Public Management (NPM) and neoliberalism (Shepherd 2017). Scholars have argued that the impact of managerialism has been described as no less than ‘ideological enslavement and asphyxiation’ (Klikauer 2015, p. 1114), through its concomitant public sector changes and resembling a business world view (Ward 2011).

Among various attempts to conceptualise managerialism, there are two highly cited schools of conceptualisation by Christopher Pollitt, and Rosemary Deem and colleagues (Shepherd 2017). Relatively, the one provided by Pollitt (1993, 2016) emphasises on management reform in order to achieve efficiency (Teelken 2012; Pollitt 2016). Pollitt (2016) distinguishes the approaches which public sector and private sector have used to optimise their performance. By contrast, Deem’s (1998) conceptualisation argues that managerialism in public sector is adopted from private sector practices to achieve excellence, effectiveness and efficiency. Among these two schools of conceptualisation, the work of Rosemary Deem and her colleagues specifically focuses on higher education sector, which is relevant to the current study. However, her research are geographically limited within universities in Europe (mainly Britain) and North America (Deem 2001) whilst Pollitt’s conceptualisation relates to more general aspects of public sector reforms which can be adapted to different contexts as it embeds on structures and processes (Shepherd 2017). Let alone their arguments of what sector managerialism derives from, both of them have developed pertinent conceptualisations of managerialism which benefits our understanding of such global modern-day phenomenon (Shepherd 2017). Christopher Pollitt is one of the first scholars (some studies claim that Pollitt is the founding father of the term ‘managerialism’ (Deane 2017) so did Pollitt (2016)) whilst Rosemary Deem and her colleagues are those of the leading scholars who have developed the knowledge of managerialism specifically for/in higher education sector.

According to Pollitt (2016), public sector employs managerialism ‘to deliver more with less’ whilst private sector utilises managerialism to boost their competitiveness globally. As early as in the 1980s, Pollitt (2016) observed ‘something new’ emerging in management, especially in the UK and America which he termed concisely:

‘- as both a general ideology, and an associated set of more specific doctrines and practices.’ (p.430)

Pollitt (2016) and a number of scholars conceive managerialism as an ideology (Kolsaker 2008; Shepherd 2017). Linguistically, part of the word ‘ism’ involves ideological meaning that refers ‘to a faith or belief in the truth of a set of ideas which are independent of specific situations’ (Trow and Clark 1994, p. 13). It does not only contain managerial techniques but also the understanding as well as belief of imposing such managerial techniques (Deem et al. 2007). Managerialism, in Pollitt’s conceptualisation, is underpinned by the notion of efficiency which embeds that the failure of management is inefficiency and optimal utilisation of resources to doing tasks is success (Pollitt 2016).

In Deem’s (2001) conceptualisation of managerialism, two aspects are emphasised including *ideologies* and *actual use*. Relatively, managerialist ideologies regard the employment of private sector’s ideological application of values, techniques and practices in organisational management of public service provision (Deem 2001). As managerialism is conceived as ideological phenomenon, to most theoreticians who prefer it to ‘new public management’, it is regarded as an ideological approach to the management of providing public services associated to manager power and state regulation over their employees and such services (Deem and Brehony 2005). Secondly, actual use relates to the utilisation of the above-mentioned techniques and practices in organisations of public sector (Clarke et al. 2000a; Deem and Brehony 2005). The utilisation of managerialist practices includes the removal of bureaucratic rule-following procedures, bringing attention on the primary of management rather than other activities, controlling employee performance, the achievement of financial targets, designing measures for publicly auditing quality of delivering public services, and developing the quasi-markets for public services (Deem and Brehony 2005).

In brief, managerialism can be conceptualised as a modern phenomenon (Shepherd 2017), occur both globally and nationally (Deem 2001), which contains the understanding and belief of imposing managerial values, techniques and practices adopted from private sector to perform and deliver public services supported by the guiding notion of efficiency, specifically regarding financial and human resources (Hood 1991; Pollitt 2016). Before moving to reviewing the literature of managerialist controls and practices in higher education, it is important to return to the concern at the beginning of this chapter regarding the differences

between new public management (NPM) and managerialism to avoid misleading in understanding these two rival concepts (Deem and Brehony 2005).

Firstly, the concept of managerialism is wider than that of NPM. Managerialism is the ideology which underpins NPM (Shepherd 2017). NPM is associated to a set of doctrines which is more specific and applicable to public sector (Pollitt 2016). As such, NPM is expressed as a new paradigm to reform the provision of public services (Clarke et al. 2000b) by reducing bureaucracy in publicly funded organisations and promoting quasi-markets for public services (Hughes 1994). By contrast, managerialism retains its ideologies on privatisation and improvement of public service provision ‘which were to remain in the slimmer, but still substantial public sector’ (Pollitt 2016, p. 431).

Secondly, with regards to the relation of the two concepts, scholars including Pollitt (1993, 2016) or Deem and her colleague (2005) argue that NPM is underpinned and covered by managerialism whilst Klikauer (2015) debates that NPM has its root from neoliberalism. Specifically, Deem and Brehony (2005) regard managerialism to critiques on both socio-economic conditions and policies whilst Klikauer (2015) argues that managerialism’s development is mainly based on ‘corporations and management and the function of both inside ‘managerial capitalism’ (p.1107). He asserts that managerialism regards political and democratic issues simply as ‘a hindrance on the way to efficiency and competitive advantage’ (Klikauer 2015, p. 1107). Despite the lack of consensus regarding the relation of the two rival concepts, scholars generally agree that NPM focuses on economics whilst managerialism embeds on management with the emphasis on the role of managers as the key to public sector transformation (Clarke and Newman 1997; Klikauer 2015; Pollitt 2016).

Briefly, managerialism, as a general ideology, serves the attempts to impose managerial values, techniques and practices. By contrast, NPM is mainly used by theorists to regard the implementation of a specific form which associates to regulatory governance by state agencies in public services, which is more technical and administrative rather than being used as an ideological phenomenon (Clarke and Newman 1997; Deem and Brehony 2005; Klikauer 2015). In this study, managerialism is used to explore the managerialist ideology associating with values, techniques and practices in transforming higher education in Vietnam which is spread from western countries’ academia rather than specific technical activities. The following section will focus on reviewing the literature of how managerialism has emerged in higher education and how managerialism has transformed academics’ work life in western academia,

and to some limited extent, around the world. This literature review is useful to figure out a number of contrast findings and discussions in the context of Vietnamese academia in comparison with what have been explored in existing studies.

### **3.2.3. Managerialism in higher education: the development and the critiques**

#### ***3.2.3.1. The development of managerialism in higher education***

A number of scholars in the field have argued that it is the globalisation and internalisation which brought managerialism to academia firstly in western countries then prevalently around the world including Asian higher education (Dudley 1998; Deem 2001; Yang 2003; Altbach and Knight 2007). Globalisation is the spread of services and businesses along with key cultural, economic and social practices to a global market, normally by international companies as well as internet (Deem 2001). Internationalisation is the way different countries do things similarly (in similar ways), and share ideas and knowledge (Deem 2001). Due to the significant impacts of globalisation and internationalisation on higher education around the world (Yang 2003), it is important to review the advent of managerialism in higher education prior to studying the emergence and practices of managerialist ideologies in Vietnamese academia because of two reasons. Firstly, this approach to conduct the present study can be seen as relating to the local-global axis (Deem 2001), which can enforce the understanding of the link between the local and the global (Deem 2001). Secondly, it provides the researcher more chances to learn about the nature and the development of managerialism in higher education which can be used as the rich reference to understand the specific context where the study embeds, especially a developing country like Vietnam which joined international public management later than others.

In a number of Western countries, the motive of delivering more with less may have been one of the foremost for employing managerialist ideologies to the reforms of public service provision and other public activities including higher education (Deem and Brehony 2005; Pollitt 2016). Delivering more with less or efficiency became the priority and key in managerialist ideologies, which leads to the application of performance-based payment and privatisation, corporatisation, and marketisation (Saravanamuthu and Filling 2004). As mentioned above, managerialism emerged originally from the crisis of the welfare state and the weakness of the post-war economies (Clarke and Newman 1997). Accordingly, the notion of efficiency guiding managerialist ideologies is also compatible with the efforts of reducing public investment on public services, including higher education (Lynch 2015).



In 1990s, universities were affected by a global movement with which governments in the UK and the US expected higher education institutions to be able to self-finance through various external funding entities (Ball 2012). As a result, universities gradually have become more like a market commodity (Slaughter and Leslie 1997) and customer-oriented (Ball 2012). As the managerialist ideologies replace the old management in Western universities, the use of language with a more business notion including ‘customers’, ‘products’ and ‘line managers’ in academia have been more common and parallel with the academic terms such as, relatively ‘students’, ‘courses’, and ‘deans’ (Parker and Jary 1995). Once universities have to self-finance, they have to rely mainly on the revenue deriving from course fees and external funding sources. The former leads to the emergence of mass higher education system with hugely increasing numbers of students (Deem 2001). The latter is consistent with quality audits of teaching and research mainly because of scarce funding and resources (Knights and Clarke 2014) and the desire for remaining the high quality of academic standards (Deem 2001).

Despite sharing the similar motives for the employment of managerialism, the applications of managerialism in different situations can take various forms and concepts. Managerialism applied in British higher education has two distinct forms with a soft and a hard concept (Trow and Clark 1994; Trowler 2001). The soft concept appreciates managerial effectiveness with the focus on improving the ‘efficiency’ of the existing institutions, which means high quality at low cost. The hard conception relies on the management systems, with the establishment of rigid criteria and mechanism that reshape and reform higher education to ensure the steady improvement in higher education quality (Trow and Clark 1994). Accordingly, the ‘soft’ managerialists tend to remain higher education as an autonomous activity that can be governed by its own norms and traditions; hence, managerial functions can be defined by academic community itself. By contrast, ‘hard’ managerialists withdraw their trust in the academic community’s ability of self-assessing and self-improving. As a result, managerial mechanisms are introduced similarly to ordinary commercial firms that can assess and manage the scholar community in order to ensure its quality and improvement (Trow 1994; Trow and Clark 1994).

Among the two forms, ‘hard’ managerialist ideologies are dominant in reforming British higher education (Trow and Clark 1994) and many European countries (Teelken 2012). The application of the hard concept of managerialism in these countries results from the Bologna declaration signed by 29 countries. The declaration has successfully encouraged member countries to produce their audit systems aligning with the declaration’s European Credit

Transfer System (Teelken 2012). There are some specific examples of such systems in a number of European countries' advancing higher education. The UK higher education established the Quality Assurance Agency, who manage the quality of teaching and Research Excellence Framework which is used to assess the quality of research in British higher education institutions. The Dutch higher education employs hard controls associating with accreditation such as the emphasis on productive output of publications and graduated students; and rigid judgement on the outcome (pass or fail) (Teelken 2012). In brief, the application of soft or hard conception depends on managerialists (Trow 1994) taking into account their specific circumstances and conditions.

Additionally, managerialism has its origin in the private sector; thus, it embraces an entrepreneurship aspect (O'Reilly and Reed 2010) with the emphasis on principles of accountability and quality (Davies and Thomas 2002; Kolsaker 2008; O'Reilly and Reed 2010; Ekman et al. 2018). Accountability and quality can be understood as the consequences from the trust withdrawal by government. Somehow, accountability can be described in the term 'accounting' that represents the transparency through 'a dual process of accounting' and giving an account of activity (Parker and Jary 1995, p. 325). In terms of quality, managerialism carries its mission in designing quality assurance mechanisms (Barry et al. 2001) to ensure the quality of academics' work (Deem and Brehony 2005) to be compatible with government directed measures (Davies and Thomas 2002) and funding (Trow 1994).

Briefly, managerialism in academia can be explored by its reforming purposes that derive from two pressures. The first refers to the demand of improving academia (Trow 1994) because of 'their complacency and conservatism, their administrative inefficiency, their indifference to establishing links with industry and commerce or to broadening access to larger sectors of the population' (p. 14). The second engages with the explanations of the enrolment numbers and the market adaptability for financial viability (Tilling and Tilt 2004). As a result, managerialism emerged with the notion of efficiency as the 'guiding star' (Pollitt 2016). 'Efficient management' in managerialism aspires to 'deliver more with less', to guide 'professional skills so as to focus on the highest priority goals' and to praise 'measurable outputs and outcomes' (Pollitt 2016, p. 431). Barry et al. (2001) choose to relate the above rationales of managerialism application to the establishment of new quality assurance mechanisms and marketization in academia to illustrate the so-called 'McUniversity' in the 'New Higher Education'. 'McUniversity' is the term that comes from the work of Martin

Parker and David Jary (1995), 'The McUniversity: Organisation, Management and Academic Subjectivity' and has its origin in the discussion of 'McDonaldisation' by Ritzer (1993), which refers to mass higher education in which academics are expected to be instrumental in their behaviours and attitudes. Indeed, the name itself can deliver its content of Fordist standardisation and rationalisation of production methods that desires 'commodification' of academic labour with lower 'direct costs' (Parker and Jary 1995, p. 326). After understanding when it started, why it started and how it has been referred to, it is now time to learn how managerialism has changed academic work and life through reviewing the opinions of scholars in the field.

### ***3.2.3.2. The critiques of managerialist controls in higher education***

Although managerialism was expected to develop efficient management and quality in higher education, the managerialist controls in higher education have been criticised by scholars mainly in MOS. MOS scholars' critiques of managerialist controls in academia have emphasised its impacts on academics and higher education in terms of affected academic community, academic values and identity, and academic autonomy (e.g. Deem et al. 2007, Feather 2016, Knights and Clarke 2018). One of the earliest critiques on managerialist controls in universities was from Parker and Jary (1995) who, nearly 30 years ago, asserted that managerialism could cause instrumental rationality in higher education which could produce instrumental academics then instrumental students. Their argument is that rationalisation should be resisted as it can cause the impossibility of debates due to the mass production of graduates or publications. In addition, they also suggest resistance to the public-policy interventions is the responsibilities and characteristics of the higher education students and staff to avoid the instrumentality in their behaviours and attitude.

The early problematic of managerialist controls was spotted by Parker and Jary regarding the tension between managerialism and the nature of academic profession. At the time when they were writing their paper, a university was, as their description, like 'a legally constituted web of corporate surveillance mechanisms' which contrasted the 'popular stereotype of the academic' as 'a member of the leisured class – tenured, eccentric, individualist and able to pursue their arcane teaching and research interests without external constraint' (Parker and Jary 1995, p. 327). Such early comment on the application of managerialist controls in academia has been supported by later studies which focus on changes in academics' work life and academic identity due to the increasing pressures deriving from the practices of managerial

controls. Recent studies have paid more attention on criticising negative impacts of managerialism whilst positive or bright picture of academia has been hardly found.

Despite the expectation that managerialism was brought up to replace inefficiently traditional forms of public administration (Hood 1991), its ideology is believed to focus on how to manage organisations with the interest of management aligning with the role of individual managers (Lawler and Hearn 1995) and the emphasis on strengthening of the line management function (Teelken 2012). Managers become the dominant group within organisations (Shepherd 2017). Empowering managers' roles and management function in managerialist ideologies have turned academics to 'powerless' staff (Anderson 2008) in coping with organisational norms and professional values such as elitism and excellence (Alvesson and Spicer 2016). The effects of managers' power have been recorded as the cause of autonomy loss and academics' negative emotion because managers can intervene academics' professional decision in terms of, for example, marking or creativity (Antoniadou and Quinlan 2021). In many cases, it is also the opinions and views of managers which associate with uncertainties and stresses in academics' everyday work as academics appreciate their managers' attention (Martin et al. 2020). The attention and opinion of managers are important to academics in organisations because managers 'are seen to represent the organisation and its expectations' (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016). As the confirmation of positive identity 'proper academic' depends on managers' message (Martin et al. 2020, p. 533) – can be considered as unpredictable other, the construction of the self is explicitly threatened and even more vulnerable when the subject failed to achieve such confirmation (Knights and Clarke 2017). Hence, the influence of managers is the indirect impact of managerialism on academics' subjectivity. The findings of this present study expect to clarify this argument.

Regarding the changes in academic work life deriving from the application of managerialism in higher education institutions, academics' relationships with colleagues, students and academic communities have been impacted as universities become 'value adding and commercially oriented' (Faulconbridge and Muzio 2008, p. 8; Kalfa et al. 2017). The study in Cypriot academia shows that the sector has been heavily commercialised with the practice of austerity measures (Antoniadou and Quinlan 2021). Various strategies regarding university commercialisation are reported including franchise of educational programmes, income from international students, commercialising research, consultancy and renting out university facilities (Jain et al. 2009; Lee et al. 2017). Due to the scarce resources, competition between

academics is encouraged, new academia is raised up (Kallio et al. 2016); hence, pedagogy is likely to be pernicious and universities have been transformed into ‘workplaces’ from ‘meritocratic institutions’ (Acker 1994, p. 125) or communities of scholars (Deem et al. 2007). Relevantly, competition is associated with measured environment explicitly including career progression and ‘excellence’ culture as well as ranking of research, universities and academics (Lynch 2015; Elangovan and Hoffman 2019), which pushes professional morality and collegiality under challenges (Fitzmaurice 2013; Kalfa et al. 2017) and academics become subjects of neoliberal higher education management and constant insecurity (Robinson et al. 2017; Knights and Clarke 2018). Comparatively, this present study will explore if its findings can show any difference with the existing debates on the affected morality and collegiality.

Managerial techniques such as evaluating research output, public/social impact assessments and teaching quality have become normalised and naturalized in academics’ working lives (Clarke et al. 2012). The performance assessing system along with the ‘Diamond list’ of journals that emerges as parts of managerialism practices have been criticised as a serious threat to ‘academics freedom and the diversity within the profession’ (Harvey and Lee 1997, p. 1431; Teelken 2012). Performative practices which are extended from managerial prerequisites and represent a culture, a technology and a regulatory mode, prioritise maximum performance through optimising output and tying input to efficiency (Jones et al. 2020). A few recent studies have conceptualised the impact of intense performative practices’ impacts as ‘terror’ of symbolic violence which causes various negative feelings in academics of anger, shame, burn-out, loss of self-confidence (Jones et al. 2020; Ratle et al. 2020) which not only happen in the UK or other developed economies but also in developing economies such as South Africa, Sri Lanka, Pakistan (Ratle et al. 2020). Additionally, academic insecurity is also considered to be rendered by proliferating managerial instruments such as audit, accountability and performativity (Davies and Thomas 2002; Knights and Clarke 2014). Academics who are insecure in their work seem to appear as ‘imposters’ (one is not capable or adequate as others think and relates to self-doubt); ‘aspirants’ (one desires a position which is ‘higher, better, or nobler than the one they currently occupy’); and existentialists (those who look for a calling, not a job) (Terkel 1972; Knights and Clarke 2014).

This emerging academic insecurity reminds us that academics seem no longer satisfied with their jobs (Bryson 2004), undermining the intentions of managerialism (bringing efficiency and effectiveness to universities’ work) (Trow and Clark 1994; Davies and Thomas 2002;

Bryson 2004). Managerialism seems to have been practiced against its own intentions (Teelken 2012). Empirical studies show that examples of frustration and stress (Willmott 1995; Teelken 2012), dissatisfaction and demoralisation (Davies and Thomas 2002) appear to be ubiquitous. With regards to the new demands regarding managerialism, scholars are required to be ‘rational efficient academics’ (Walsh 1994, p. 6) and the means of production (Clegg and Dunkerley 1980) rather than staying with their own self-identity and career preference.

Briefly, academic career seems to appear in the literature with various dark experiences of academics (Jaremka et al. 2020; Jones et al. 2020; Ratle et al. 2020). Academic autonomy and freedom are considered as being damaged by the increasing controls that endeavour to ensure individuals’ behaviours matching the best interests of the organisations (Miller 1994; Du Gay et al. 1996; Halford and Leonard 1999). In other words, there is always a potential conflict between managerial paradigm and the popular stereotype of academic community. Correspondingly, the application of managerialism to reform universities implies the withdrawal of trust on academics that negatively is drawn on the assumption that people are lazy from the inside and will just try to undertake minimum amounts of work (Thrupp and Willmott 2003). Furthermore, performance control is also argued to be more likely to develop academic success (Gabriel 2010), thus replace collegiality (Deem 1998; Dollery et al. 2006), which gradually transforms academia into a competitive institutional context (Churchman and King 2009; Ford et al. 2010) and academics into vulnerable and powerless subjects (Anderson 2008; Jaremka et al. 2020). This present study, in comparison, will be precarious in using the debates in the literature to explore novel findings which might both align and/or contrast to existing discourses. To deepen its analysis, the cultural approach will be employed. To answer the research question on how managerialist controls impact on Vietnamese academics’ identity and identity work, the following section will move to reviewing the literature of identity, and particularly academic identity.

### **3.3.Identity and identity work**

Following the previous section’s literature review of the impacts of managerialism on academic profession, this present study joins the main theme of debates in the existing literature which takes the identity approach as it desires to explore lived experiences of academic staff which is normally hidden in the transition (Churchman and King 2009), especially in a high power-distance culture like Vietnam. Hence, this section will review identity theoretical frameworks and previous studies which discuss about the construction of identity, academic identity, and

academic identity work as well as the use of ‘identity regulation’ in analysing the impacts of managerialism on academics’ identities and their identity work.

### **3.3.1. Core definitions**

Before reviewing the literature of identity, it is important to understand the core concepts associated with the research approach. According to Ybema et al. (2009), considering language seriously and carefully helps researchers be able to solve the complexities of identity construction and formation. Having said that this study employs the identity approach to research the experiences of Vietnamese academics in the transition between traditional higher education management to managerialist higher education management, the core concepts need to be learned first and foremost are identity and identity work.

‘Identity’ is a contested concept (Brown 2021) and is difficult to be described and explained due to its lack of discreteness of conventional objects and sustainability (Brown 2015). In different disciplines, scholars have their ways to conceptualise ‘identity’. Sociologists consider ‘identity’ as ‘a kind of interface’ between one and society (Snow and Anderson 1987; Brown 2015), which forms the most general term of identity (Ybema et al. 2009). In a more specific term, social psychologists bind up ‘identity’ with individuation and social validation (Brown 2015). Despite various ways to conceptualise identity, scholars have gained the consensus on the concept of identity that ‘identity refers to the meanings that individuals attach reflexively to themselves, and developed and sustained through process of social interaction as they seek to address the question ‘who am I?’’ (Brown 2015, p. 23). As it is associated with processes, through social interactions, identity can be related to ones’ answers to two other fundamental questions “‘who do I want to become?’ and ‘how should I act?’ (Brown 2021).

The understanding of identity has become hard to be captured as identity has been partially related to the metaphor of ‘liquid modernity’ (Coupland and Brown 2012). The metaphor represents the flexibility, fluidity and unpredictability of a business and organisational world full of rapidly mutating (Clegg and Baumeler 2010; Coupland and Brown 2012). As identity is bound up with individuation and social validation while individuals live with ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman 2000), identity becomes more precarious (Knights and Clarke 2017, 2018), fluid (Clarke et al. 2009) and fragmented (Brown et al. 2005). Knights and Clarke (2017) emphasise on the ‘too often’ but serious aspect associated to identity which is security. To cope with insecurity at work, individuals engage to identity pursuits (Knights and Clarke 2017),

which associate to self-esteem, belonging, uniqueness, authenticity, celebrity and fulfilment, success and achievement (Brown 2021).

Before moving to learn about the concept of identity work, it is important to understand three close concepts ‘self’, ‘identity’, and ‘meanings’. Although there is common and consistent use of the two concepts ‘self’ and ‘identity’ or sometimes ‘self-identity’ – more personal and non-accessible than identity (e.g. Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, Cuganesan 2017) in identity research, these concepts are not identical but partly overlapping (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). Both social psychologists and sociologists have the consensus that *self* contains an organised set of *identities* and is fuelled by *identities* (Burke 1980; Brown 2015). According to Knights and Clarke (2017), identity is the ‘unending and recursive perceptions of others’ perceptions of the self’ (p. 341). Hence, self ‘is more existentially significant’ (Alvesson and Robertson 2016, p. 10) and identity is ad hoc, positional (Brown 2015) and more context-specific (Brown 2019). *Meanings* are what individuals attach to themselves reflexively and associated to an identity (Brown 2015). Meanings emerge through social interactions as others interact with a person regarding his/her role identities (Hogg et al. 1995). In turn, self is provided with meaning by identities (Hogg et al. 1995).

As identity literature has significantly grown, ‘identity work’ has emerged as a perspective in OMS which is ‘a distinctive arrogation of often long-established frames and concepts’ (Brown 2021). The concept has been used in identity literature along with various cognates (Brown 2019) including identity construction – the most primary cognate (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016) and identity practicing (Pratt 2012). Identity work broadly relates to all personal and social characteristics of self to engage in creating, maintaining, repairing, revising and strengthening a desired notion of self-concept relating to who individuals are and how they remain distinctive from others (Brown and Coupland 2015). To sum up the fragmented conceptualisation to *identity work*, Brown (2021) asserts that identity work perspective involves all of conceptions which emphasise on how individuals ‘fabricate their identities’. This present study considers identity work as a vital research subject because the process of identity formation is always ‘in process’ (Coupland and Brown 2012), particularly in the ‘liquid modernity’ (Clegg & Baumeler, 2010) where individuals search for identity as ‘one symptom of individualism’ (Ybema et al. 2009, p. 299), and engage in identity work (Brown and Coupland 2015). This subsection has provided initial understanding of the core concepts associated with the identity



approach to answer the research enquiry. It is now better time to move to more details of the theoretical underpinning of identity and identity work.

### **3.3.2. The theoretical underpinning**

First of all, as the research focus is on academics and their work life, it is important to draw attention on the concept 'work identity' (Dutton et al. 2010; Caza, Moss, et al. 2018). As a working adult, individuals spend most of their time at work until they retired, which means work-related issues seem to play significant roles in individuals' identity construction, even in non-work-related issues. For example, a professor in a university can certify a document (according to the UK's law on certifying a document<sup>5</sup>). Work identity is also conceptualised with the emphasis of one's role in his/her organisation tying to specific activities of work (Dutton et al. 2010). There are several definitions provided by scholars in the field. Among those, Walsh and Gordon (2008) assumes work identity as containing more aspects than just organisational basis:

'An individual's work identity refers to a work-based self-concept, constituted of a combination of organizational, occupational, and other identities that shapes the roles a person adopts and the corresponding ways he or she behaves when performing his or her work.' (p. 47)

In Walsh and Gordon's definition, individuals' work identity is not sourced from only their organisations but also other institutions, and moreover, there is no separation of these sources in forming the meanings of their work-based self. Hence, their work-related behaviours are consistent and appropriate with their roles in those institutions. For example, an academic is a staff of a university, a co-author in a scholar group, a well-cited scholar in her field and an inspiring academic to younger colleagues. Sharing similar opinions on the scope of constructing work identity, Dutton et al (2010) define work identity as the meanings of self when individuals participate in the activities of their work or membership in occupational groups, occupations and organisations. They also emphasised that work-related identity is the identity individuals construe in their work field (Dutton et al. 2010).

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<sup>5</sup> The information can be found on the website: <https://www.gov.uk/certifying-a-document>

Considering academic identity as work-related identity, the literature review continues to the theoretical bases to understand the concept of identity. It is well worth starting from two main theoretical streams which have been dominant in identity literature: Social Identity Theory and Identity Theory. Despite the dominance of these two theories, the review of them is relevant to this present research because of two reasons. The first reason lays on the social characteristic of academic self-meanings, which is argued that academics are influenced by peer reputation (Parker and Jary 1995) and the environment within which they define themselves, commonly referred as ‘social networks’ or ‘communities of practice’ (Feather 2016). The second reason is also another characteristic of identity and academic profession which is the individual nature. Regarding the former, Feather (2009) suggests that the interpretation of identity should not ignore the individual/personal aspect even in the case of social activities. He adds that an individual wishes to be a part of a collective or a group and in return, the individual can use his/her membership of the group to improve his/her status in other groups or organisations. This explains that individual characteristic still remains. The latter, in addition, emphasises that academics are considered as subjects of the individualist system (Laudel and Gläser 2008) and their work is commonly regarded as individual projects (Alvesson and Spicer 2016), even when it is a group work. Having considered these reasons, both social identity theory and identity theory are learned for better analyses and argument in the later chapters of findings and discussions. Relatively, social identity theorists pay their attention on self-identification within salient social groups whilst identity theory approaches identity by explaining the relationship between self and society along with social behaviour.

### ***3.3.2.1.Social Identity Theory***

**Social identity theory** comes from the early work of Henri Tajfel in Britain on social factors in perception and the processes of social judgement in terms of racism, prejudice and discrimination (1959; 1969). Social identity theory emphasises on its own perception of *self-categorisation* of individuals regarding salient group memberships (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Stets and Burke 2000). With the development of social identity theory, there are two important processes that produce different consequences, namely self-categorisation and social comparison (Hogg and Abrams 1988, see also Stets and Burke 2000). The former leads to ‘an *accentuation*<sup>6</sup> of the perceived similarities between the self and other in-group member’ (Stets

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<sup>6</sup> *Accentuation means the involvement of all attitudes, beliefs and values, affective reactions, behavioural norms, styles of speech and other which are included in intergroup categorisation (Stets and Burke 2000).*

and Burke 2000, p. 225) while the latter produces the consequence of ‘the selective application of the accentuation effect’ (Stets and Burke 2000, p. 225). Accordingly, one’s social identity emerges from the process of self-categorisation where one is aware of similar characteristics with others which lead him/her to assign him/herself to one group and categorise others to other groups (Stets and Burke 2003). As individuals adopt the meanings of their in-group membership, social identification occurs where they develop the sense of belongingness to their groups (Ashforth and Mael 1989, p. 34). The social comparison process involves that individuals exist in preceded society and they develop their identity from their social categories, which contrast to other groups (Hogg and Abrams 1988).

To a number of scholars of social identity theory, identity construction is explored mainly with the involvement of individuals or groups, in which individuals are the main key (Billett 2004; Pratt et al. 2006; Alvesson et al. 2008; Ybema et al. 2009). According to communitarian theory, developed from social identity theory, the individual is the bearer of community tradition (MacIntyre 1981). Scholars of communitarian theory focus on the community base of identity construction rather than conflicts and power because they assume that power relations are always a part of identity making process (Henkel 2005). Moreover, in social identity theory, although individuals develop their belongingness with their social groups, such identification is not guaranteed as forever as self is not stable but a ‘reflexively organised project’ (Giddens 1991). This point of view shares the same opinion by postmodernists who celebrate fragmentation, fluidity and the transitory (Henkel 2005). Accordingly, individuals in postmodernism have less options to fix their identity, instead, they are ‘pulled in different directions by contradictory identities’ (Henkel 2005, p. 158).

Social identity theory has been appreciated by identity scholars as ‘one of psychology’s pre-eminent theoretical perspectives’ (Brown 2000, p. 745). It is useful for understanding individuals’ repertoires of individually separate and distinct category memberships (Brown 2021). Moreover, social identity theory can enable the explanation of what it is meant to be a member of a specific social category as one incorporates belief systems of the category in defining who he/she is and into in shaping his/her actions (Harris et al. 2019; Brown 2021). Furthermore, social identity theory is employed in OMS to research managerial techniques which define social categories which members belong to and differ from (Cuganesan 2017). However, the rich literature still lacks the understanding about the complexities and

contradictions within the identification and categorisation processes which might affect academics' response to managerial requirements.

In this present study, social identity theory can help explore academics' identity work as university members. First, social identity theory and its related premise *organisational identification* will be employed to investigate how the sense of belongingness with their universities influences academics' attitude and behaviours in response to universities' practice of managerialist controls. Second, social identity theory helps understand sub-group categorisation to inform how academics deal with conflicts within their universities where there are practices of managerialism. As the organisational life is rather complicated (Ashforth et al. 2014), shared meaning – the primary of social identity is difficult to attain (Weick 1995, p. 188). Consequently, there are numerous cases in which subgroups exist within one organisation, one department and/or one work unit, which can potentially lead to subgroup conflicts (Hogg 2006). The first and the second purposes of employing social identity theory are not separate. They both serve to narrate the rich meanings and complexities in organisational life. Academics identify and categorise to different social groups regarding academic disciplines (Henkel 2005), field of expertise/profession (being a nurse, accountant) (Jain et al. 2009; Findlow 2011) or academic levels (elite or early career academics) (Jaremka et al. 2020). Such categorisation processes might affect academics' organisational identification and consequently their social behaviours, which will be investigated in this study. The argument is supported by a wealth of research which is inspired by social identity theory to explain processes of organisational identification in multiple-identity organisation (Foreman and Whetten 2002), the tendencies of different organisational identities (Lupina-Wegener et al. 2020), or 'simultaneously positive or negative orientations' toward hybrid identities, role conflicts and contradictory goals (Ashforth et al. 2014).

Although SIT can provide a strong theoretical stand for the current study's argument and finding discussions, there are theoretical aspects of the theory which encourage this study to consider how it could be employed efficiently and appropriately to answer the research questions. Social identity theory is commonly used to explain the organisational behaviours and member-organisation relationships of members through their organisational identification processes where they justify the compatibility between their self-categorisations and their categorisations of their organisations (Foreman and Whetten 2002). Individual members tend to follow the stereotypical members and cooperate stereotypical characteristics into their self-

meanings. However, it is argued that organisational life is rather complicated and hard to achieve a solid similarity among members. SIT's explanations are insufficient to unveil the complex process of members' social comparison and then identification. Foreman and Whetten (2002) propose that members of hybrid-identity organisations can find themselves following competing goals and concerns related to noticeably different identity elements.

Moreover, SIT discusses how individuals develop their self-meanings as group members by reflecting on stereotypical members/characters (Hogg 2006). However, stereotypical members/characters are sometimes hard to be defined by new members or in case of multi-identity organisations. Empirical studies have reported stereotypes such as age and/or gender which can influence members' relationships with their organisations (Sammarra et al. 2021). However, there is a shortage of effective explanations and conceptual values from SIT to examine the influence of the interactions and conflicts among organisational members on their identification (Hogg 2006). As of the critiques on the scope of SIT application, this current study offers a different approach which emphasises on dealing with in-group conflicts and negotiations that Vietnamese academics have faced at work and during daily duties.

Furthermore, the debates on the variable influences of social identity theory on studies of collectivist-relational and individualist-autonomous contexts still remain controversial (to some extent, under-researched) (Brown 2000b; Yuki 2003; Hogg 2006). As stated above, the heart of SIT is to explain individuals' behaviours based on out-group social comparisons that group members engage into collective actions which can differentiate their ingroup from other groups. In addition, according to SIT's explanation, individuals' behaviours to achieve and maintain positive self-esteem are embedded on social identity and identification processes (favourable intergroup comparisons) (Brown 2000b; Greco et al. 2021). Hence, SIT does not provide explanatory tools to interpret the relation among ingroup members to form collective actions to maintain and enhance group identities. As SIT abandons the bond among ingroup members, the theory lacks capability to explain for individuals' behaviours with the absence of organisational identification (e.g., individuals still remain in their ingroup although they do not identify with the group identity). Study of Gundlach et al. (2006) also highlights such theoretical concern located within SIT perspective to explain team-based identification with which individuals arrange their individual interests and targets versus the shared/group ones. Ashforth and Schinoff (2016) has called for further attention on examining SIT in collectivist contexts where individuals seek for social validation from their ingroups.

Finally, SIT is sufficient to explain how organisational identification encourages individual group members to act to maintain the ingroup identity and to distinguish themselves from

outgroup individuals. However, previous studies have emphasised on SIT's weakness in explaining individual levels of identification and collective behaviours and that focusing only on organisational level of identification 'has created the erroneous impression that organization is typically the most important target' (Ashforth 2016, p. 365). The discussion for expanding the employment of SIT by integrating with other theoretical perspective has been encouraged but remained under-researched. In response to the call from the literature, this current study makes its novel contribution into the field of explaining and exploring how individuals work within organisations at different levels through the integration of SIT and identity theory in a collectivist cultural context.

### ***3.3.2.2. Identity Theory***

Identity theory, with the core ideas developed by Sheldon Stryker in 1980s, is underpinned by symbolic interactionism from Mead (Mead 1934; Stryker 1980). Accordingly, individuals are bounded within social structure with pre-existing organised social relationships which comprises social interactions and patterned behaviours (Stets and Burke 2014). Scholars of identity theory started with the complementary relationship between self and society (Stryker 1968; McCall and Simmons 1978) that society impacts on self, through which it affects social behaviour (Hogg et al. 1995). Identity theorists argue that self has multiple components which they call them as identities or role identities (e.g., a mother can also be a wife, a daughter and a teacher); then they deduce that the impact of role identity on social behaviour can be clarified through the concepts of identity salience and commitment (Stryker 1968, 1980; Serpe 1987; Hogg et al. 1995). Role identities refer to self-identification that individuals identify themselves to particular roles and engage to role standards (Burke 1980). For example, a wife is also an academic when she goes to workplace – her university to teach and research.

Stryker (1980) argues that the relationship between self and society is shown in the way that society provides roles to be basis for identity and self, in turn self is an 'active creator of social behaviour' (p. 385). The interaction between individuals and society incorporates the meanings and expectations closely relating to the role of self and its performance. Those meanings and expectations develop the standards for behaviours (Burke and Tully 1977; Burke and Reitzes 1981; Thoits 1986; Burke 1991) and individuals engage to activities or behaviours which express their identities (Stets and Burke 2014). From the argument that individuals cannot exist out of the pre-existing organised social structure, identity theory emphasises the pressure imposed upon individuals to engage to behaviours which comply with expectations of the role

in order to remain a stable social structure (Stets and Burke 2014). Moreover, identity theory has underpinned one of the main streams of identity studies which focuses on exploring multitudes of individuals' processes of negotiation among social actors and their institutions as well as among self and others (Ybema et al. 2009). Such emphases of identity theory are employed in this present study to analyse how Vietnamese academics perceive the meanings of their work identity – the meanings of being an academic (related as academic identity) and behave in response to managerial requirements upon them and social expectations for their work roles.

In addition, the adoption of identity theory in the current study aligns with how identity theorists explain and predict individuals' behaviours. Developing from the heart of Identity Theory are two different but closely related approaches (Stryker and Burke 2000). The first approach, developed by Stryker and his associates, is *social structure* approach which is keen on explaining the effects between social structure – self – social behaviours (Stryker 1980). The second approach, developed by Burkes and colleagues, focuses on the *internal dynamics of self-processes* which emphasise the common system of meanings which relates identity and behaviours together (Burke 1980).

From Stryker's theorisation, a person has many role identities which are organised in a salience hierarchy and there is a salient identity playing out more frequently across different situations. The level of a salient identity depends on the actor's commitment to that identity (Stets 2006). For example, if an academic has a commitment to teaching-oriented identity, the academic will be more likely to enact identity performance as a teaching-oriented academic including developing teaching skills. Accordingly, commitment to an identity is influenced by two aspects. The first aspect is related to the number of people an individual has relationships with through an identity. The second aspect is associated with the strength and depth of those relationships (Stets 2006). For example, if an academic works among colleagues who are research-oriented, the academic will enact the identity performance as research-oriented more frequently. The social structure approach emphasises on the consistence of individuals' behaviours to meet social expectations of particular role identities. In other words, social structure shapes the self and the self then shapes social behaviours.

If the stance of Stryker and colleagues within identity theory focuses on identity hierarchy and how identities associated to social structures, Burke and his associates are keen on the effect of the sum of situation and internal self-meanings on individuals' behaviours, which explains

the internal dynamics of self-processes (Burke 1980). When identities and behaviours share meanings, identities can predict behaviours (Burke and Reitzes 1981). For example, academics' orientation towards teaching and research can be a useful predictor of the activeness of research/teaching. Later research of Burke (1991) provides the explanations for how the meanings of self are related to the meanings of behaviours in a model which contains four aspects: the identity standard, the perception of self-relevant meanings, the mechanism comparing the perceived situational meanings and self-meanings in identity standard, and the person's behaviour. The model provides that behaviours are enacted to bring situationally perceived meanings in line with self-meanings in identity standard, which is achieved by either changing the situation or perceived self-relevant meanings. Such process is referred as self-verification. For example, an academic moves from a teaching-oriented university to a research-teaching balanced university as she perceives that being an academic is to work on both research and teaching. This approach to identity theory brings agency to the individual rather than considering individuals as dependent on social structure in Stryker's approach (Stryker and Burke 2000).

These two approaches seem to be developed separately from one another. However, they are considered as intertwining by Stryker and Burke, the developers of the two approaches (Stryker and Burke 2000). The key point is that both approaches meet at the particular set of behaviours that express identities, in interaction with others. Consequently, individuals in the internal dynamic approach cannot neglect situations as they are likely to define the situations which are potentially for them to find themselves. In addition, such situations involve the interactions with others which provide identity confirmation. For example, an academic with research orientation is more likely to find a workplace where her research-oriented identity is more likely to be confirmed by colleagues and managers. The intertwining of the two approaches is also presented through that identity is internal while role (defined in social structure including such as groups, work units) is external. Identity consists of internalised meanings associated with a role and behaviours expressing identity are enacted to fulfil the expectations related to the role.

In this study, the adoption of both approaches to identity theory is applied. First, while a role is defined in social structure, the meanings of identity related to a role are perceived differently by different actors and such meanings for identity affect how they enact behaviours. For example, academics work for the same university are not necessarily to enact role performance



similarly because they perceive different meanings of academic identity (teaching-oriented or research-oriented). Secondly, the combination of the two approaches is effective in examining how academics with multiple identities associated to diverse roles enact identity performance (fulfil social expectations for each role identity) as well as achieve self-verification (matching the situational meanings and the meanings of identity standard). Finally, individuals cannot distance from social structure where the salient identities are premised because social validation is significant to individuals' identity construction (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016). However, social structure and social validation are argued as unstable, especially in liquid modernity (Knights and Clarke 2017). Hence, it is fruitful to investigate how internal dynamics of identity processes interact with identity enactment in (un)favourable social structures (Stets 2006).

The significance, success and popularity of social identity theory and identity theory/role identity have been proven by the adoption of the two theories in examining identity-related phenomena in organisations (Brown 2021). Although SIT and IT seem to explain different identity matters, they have some connections which are argued as effective to capture multitude of social behaviours through the use of both theories in the current study. This approach is inspired by Stets's (2006) assertion about 'group, role, person identities as simultaneously operating in situations' (p.90). The first connection is related to two key concepts: identification from SIT (individuals' belongingness to organisations) and identity work from IT (situated and/or continuous activities to create, signify, claim, adapt and reject identities from available resources). Identification is closely related to identity work and an emergent process of identity work (Ashforth et al. 2008; Brown 2017). Individuals construct identities which align with the organisational identity that they desire for; or as individuals develop their self-identities, they identify with organisations which have identities aligning with their self-meanings. With the integrative approach to adopt both theories, the current study can unveil academics' complicated identification processes. E.g., one might perceive that being an academic means undertaking both teaching and research. She also identified to her university as she perceived that being an academic meant being affiliated to a university. She found B university which kept the balance between research and teaching activities. She, hence, developed the belongingness between her and the university. In a contrast context, her university was a teaching-focused university. She recognised conflicts between her role identity as an academic and her identification with the university.

Moreover, adopting both SIT and IT can provide a multi-focal lens to consider an academic as both an individual and a member of an organisation, which can capture in-group conflicts in academic life. A was an academic of B university; A identified herself to highly scholarly groups who concentrated on research. B university was a teaching-research balance university; however, its staff were mainly teaching oriented. A identified with B university but found mismatch in working with her colleagues. She eventually distanced herself from the university. Furthermore, the influence of SIT is argued as, to some extent, overwhelming in studies on individuals' behaviours in organisations (Ashforth 2016; Miscenko and Day 2016). An integrative approach which can represent individuals as both their personal selves and organisational members is needed to make the domain less static (Miscenko and Day 2016). Social identity theory assists the understanding of Vietnamese academics' social identities - the belonging to their institutions and their associating identity work. Such social identities, also referred as group-based identities (Stets and Burke 2014), concentrate on the bond and group norms among group members through members' consensus on normative actions and perceptions rather than the interactions among group members (Hogg et al. 1995; Stets and Burke 2014). With social identities, academics define themselves with in-group meanings and as a part of a particular group or a collective (Caza, Vough, et al. 2018). Hence, social identities are characterised as collective and institutionalised (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016). By contrast, identity theory enables the interpretation of Vietnamese academics' role identities. The focus regarding role identities, hence, is on academics' role behaviours and the fulfilment of the social expectations towards their academic roles (Stets and Burke 2014). With role identities, academics do not define themselves according to the meanings given by their particular groups or categories, but depending upon social perception of their roles and role-expectations (Caza, Vough, et al. 2018). In sum, considering academic identity and academics' identity work under the lens of both social identity theory and identity theory enables the understanding of sources of meanings consisted in academic identities and their identity work. The following subsection provides the conceptualisation of academic identity. This approach follows critically the suggestion of Brown (2021) that 'creative combinations, simultaneity, and concomitant thinking are often valuable and more prized' in identities research as identities are always nuanced, dynamic and contextual. As such, a possible example from this current study is that when the identification processes are interrupted, academics follow self-identification processes to make sense of their professional behaviours, which opens the thinking that individuals' identity work is, to some extent, inextricable and in constant processes.

### 3.3.3. Academic identity

It is not easy to find a solid definition of academic identity documented in literature. The concept is considered as difficult to define due to the complex sense of ‘self’ as well as the environment where an academic finds himself or herself at a given time (Feather 2016). Such environment is associated with historic, media and societal discourses portraying an academic (Martin et al. 2020). It is reported that the ambiguity of academics’ self-identities occurs both from the perception of academics themselves and that of the others. From the research of Findlow (2011) on nurse education, there appeared a tension in identity construction of nursing teachers who wanted ‘academic status and respect’ but also wished to remain the meanings and sentiments associating with professional identity of nursing (p. 131). Learmonth and Humphreys (2012) argue that academic identity can be mixed of ‘a feeling of dislocation, of being in the wrong place, of playing a role’ and ‘sense of selves as business school faculty members’ (pp. 1-2). In recent decades, universities have run through a triple helix model (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1997), experienced new managerial mechanism (Henkel 2005; Shepherd 2017) and multi-dimensional markets (Findlow 2011), which has dramatically changed the nature of academic work (Parker and Jary 1995; Craig and Willmott 1997) and contributed to fragile academic identity (Knights and Clarke 2014). As a result, the question ‘What it is to be an academic’ (Barnett 2000, p. 256) is not easy to be answered, particularly in 21<sup>st</sup> century academia.

As explained above, the employment of both social identity theory and identity theory is useful in explaining different sources of meanings in academic identity. Within academic identity, the collective and personal meanings are intertwined and cannot stand without the other. Through the lens of social identity theory, academics are ‘social beings in organisational contexts’ (Alvesson et al. 2008, pp. 5–6). As academic identity is work identity, institutions, where academics work, play a prime role in forming academic identity. The identity projects of academics, especially those of young and early-career academics, are influenced significantly by the institution (Fitzmaurice 2013). Younger academics or newcomers tend to accept and construct similar academic identities to senior colleagues (Archer 2008a). Building the sense of belonging does not limit within only the university, but also disciplinary community (Henkel 2005; Elangovan and Hoffman 2019). Rhetorically, discipline can be seen as where ‘a sense of academic identity flourishes’ (Kogan 2000, p. 209) and builds up communities for academics to ‘construct their identities, their values, the knowledge base of their work, their modes of

working and their self-esteem' (Henkel 2000, p. 22). From all of those arguments underpinned by social identity theory, the meanings of academic identity are consistent with the specific social categories they belong to (Harris et al. 2019), which are not limited within universities.

Through the lens of identity theory, academic identity is described according to roles and role-expectations. According to Martin et al. (2020), role-expectations of academics may be associated to various roles that academics are assigned to, as teachers, researchers and/or managers, practicing roles to meet traditional and institutional aims, and social expectations whilst working to be suitable with employers and professional bodies. Feather (2016) asserts that staff work in a higher education in further education environment should define themselves as academics. A number of scholars define academic identity in consistence with their daily activities which are emphasised on the inseparable relation between research and teaching (Healey 2005; Hemmings 2012; Yavash 2017).

Although teaching and research are normally regarded as the basis of academics' daily and primary activities consistent with their role identities, it is suggested to take into account related practice and settings in which academics have role responsibilities. According to the research of Clegg (2008), except for two academics, one prioritised teaching role and one emphasised the priority of research, 11 other academics included the meanings of being an academic, a practitioner, an intellectual or a prac-ademic into their self-identity as academic. Aligning with Clegg's research, the participants in the study conducted by Clarke et al (2012) identified their self-hood as an academic in association with their presentations and by claiming their identities. The two studies remind about self-identification which underpins the formation of identity. Through self-identification, academics 'define themselves through a generally understood term, often identifying themselves as their occupation' (Martin et al. 2020, p. 527). However, as academics define their self-identity associating with their occupation and profession, their academic identity becomes fluid, fragile and complex because of dramatical organisational changes, especially in recent 3 decades (Parker 2020).

In summary, this present study conceptualises academic identity in tandem with the arguments of scholars in the field that academic identity is negotiated and constructed in social relationships or interaction (Dugas et al. 2020; Martin et al. 2020) as well as by incorporating belief systems of social categories which they belong to (Harris et al. 2019). In the lens of both social identity theory and identity theory, academic identity is learned about according to the bond between academics and their universities and their perception of individual role. This

theoretical employment enables the researcher to design interview questions and articulate data analysis to gain the rich discussion. As this present study aims to understand the impacts of managerialist controls on academic work life through the identity approach, and influenced by social identity theory and identity theory, the next section provides understanding of how their identities are regulated by managerial controls and the relation between academics and their organisations relatively through contemporary theorising in identity literature: *identity regulation*, *identity work* and *organisational identification*.

#### **3.3.4. Identity regulation approach to managerial controls**

Follow the work of Boussebaa and Brown (2017) that employs identity regulation as an approach to research the impact of the prevalent Englishization – consistent with ‘managerially-defined goals’ in disciplining academics’ identities (p. 7), this present study uses the approach to explore how managerial controls influence Vietnamese academics’ identity and identity work. Studies on identity regulation are located within scholars’ quest for understanding how organisations seek to discipline and shape their employees’ identities (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Bardon et al. 2017; Boussebaa and Brown 2017). It is argued that one of the modern management’s targets is managing employees effectively from the insides – meanings of self, rather than directly upon their behaviours (Deetz 1995). In other words, the modern management aims to manage employees’ identity, which is a medium of organisational control (Alvesson and Willmott 2002).

In their well-known study on identity regulation, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) approach the concept with the argument that managerial intervention can influence employees’ self-construction; such influence can be more or less intentional, effectively or not. There are a number of emphases on identity regulation in organisations. First of all, identity regulation is constructed consistently with the process of identification, which means organisations - through induction, training and promotion procedures - become a considerable source of individual’s identification. *Identification in organisations* or *organisational identification* is related to the extent to which individuals insert managerial discourses into their narratives of self-identity (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) and discern the notion of unity between themselves and the organisation (Brown 2017), from ‘I – They/the company’ to ‘We’. Organisational identification will be returned to in the next section to build the argument on the association between organisational identification and identity work.

Secondly, associating with identity regulation, identity-construction processes are encompassed by basic concerns and qualities of identity about ‘Who am I’ or ‘who do I want to be’ (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Brown 2017). These processes are constituted on the basis of *self-awareness* that individuals are aware of their self-identity and values (Hassard et al. 2000; Alvesson 2010). In addition, regulating and creating ‘*distinctiveness*’ of meanings within self are relatively the subjects of organisation’s identity regulation and one’s identity work. Respectively, the former produces regulations to differentiate, define and maybe appraise the unique characteristics of individuals (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). The latter can be seen as one of the identity motives (Ashforth 2001) of identity-construction in which individuals demand for being different while remaining some characteristics shared with others (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Ashforth and Schinoff 2016). Having said that individuals demand for both sameness and distinctiveness (Cuganesan 2017), identity regulation and identity construction embed on ‘*direction*’ which directs individuals to be appropriate, desirable and valued with/to others and themselves (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). Moreover, it is argued that identity regulation and processes of identity-construction are not independent from values. Such values are associated with self-esteem, self-related values, beliefs and norms (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016).

Thirdly, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) strongly assert their disagreement on any suggestion that management or identity regulation has an ‘omnipotent’ definition of worker identity. Instead, it should be kept in mind that identity regulation is often contested and involved in individuals’ processes of identity construction (Alvesson and Willmott 2002), which refers to its continual relation with active identity work of employees. This suggests that identity regulation reflects ‘discipline power’ (Foucault 1979), however, discipline can be both externally imposed and internally self-constituted within self-discipline processes (Boussebaa and Brown 2017).

As Alvesson and Willmott (2002) put it, ‘mechanism and practices of control – rewards, leadership, division of labour, hierarchies, management accounting, etc – do not work ‘*outside*’ the individual’s quest(s) for self-definition(s), coherence(s) and meaning(s)’ (p. 622). Thus, managerial interventions interact with organisational members’ identity work and such identity work becomes ‘a significant medium and outcome of organisational control’ (p. 622). In the context of higher education, scholars studying academics’ working life have related managerial controls as identity regulation to understand how academics are subjected to such prevalent but

often contested modality of normative organisational control (Boussebaa and Brown 2017; Bristow et al. 2017). Academic profession and higher education workplace are argued as distinctive from other occupations in bureaucratic organisations, in which being an academic is central to who they take themselves to be (Watson 2008) with their own criteria (Clarke et al. 2012). On the contrary, managerial controls drive their identity construction to pre-set working aspirations and targets: what do I need to do to become an academic? Although there have been numerous studies on academics' working lives in changing environment of academia exploring how academics come to define who they are under managerialism, the discussions remain fragmented. Scholars mostly focus on criticising the effects of managerial interventions on academics' identity and their work behaviours in terms of the management ideologies from private sector affecting members of 'Ivory tower' (Barry et al. 2001; Deem et al. 2007; Lam 2010) and academics' forms of resistance and compliance or surrendering their autonomy to managerial controls (Alvesson and Spicer 2016). It is called for exploring how such interventions, as identity management, positively interact with academics; how their new identities are produced in tandem with managerial goals; and how academics perceive the unity between themselves and a collective – universities, groups and scholar communities, which can, to some extent, explore evidence of non-instrumental individualism (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Knights and Clarke 2017) and explain multitude of conformist identity work (Boussebaa and Brown 2017) such as game playing (Kalfa et al. 2017).

This present study seeks for exploring and explaining the processes of academics' identity construction in a new period of Vietnamese academia with the emergence of managerial controls through the approach of identity regulation. In the next section, the review of literature provides further understanding of the impacts of managerial controls and academics' responses to such identity regulation through the terms of identity work or identity construction and organisational identification.

### **3.3.5. Identity work and organisational identification**

In using the identity approach to study about the influences of managerial controls in academics' work life, the literature review in this subsection provides further understanding of identity work perspective and the use of this perspective in studying academics' behaviours in response to managerial controls in the daily role practices.

### 3.3.5.1. Identity work

The key concept adopted here is *identity work* which has been an emergent key explanatory concept to study identity in and around organisations (Ybema et al. 2009; Brown 2017). The phrase ‘identity work’ is widely accepted in OMS (Reedy et al. 2016; Brown 2017), including studies on academics (Learmonth and Humphreys 2012; Boussebaa and Brown 2017), it has various cognates such as identity construction (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Pratt 2012), identity project (Giddens 1991) and identity management (Watson 2008). Although identity work started to be theorised in mid-1980s, it became nascent from 2000s (Brown 2019). Among others’ conceptualisation of identity work, according to the intense review of Caza et al. (2018), there are three most referred definitions developed by Snow and Anderson (1987), Alvesson and Willmott (2002), Watson (2008). These three definitions are shown in table 1.

The literature review here avoids challenging those widely accepted definitions of identity work but to employ them as the guidance to understanding Vietnamese academics’ responses to managerial controls. Additionally, the term *identity construction* is used in this study as equivalent to *identity work*. This is because the use of identity construction as a parallel term or synonym of identity work is the most notable in comparison with other cognates in the extant identity literature (Brown 2021). More specifically, in identity OMS, identity construction, understood as a process (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016), relates to scholars’ interest in understanding how individuals reproduce or transform their sense of self (Alvesson et al. 2008).

<b>Table 1: Definitions of identity work</b> (created by the author)		
(Snow and Anderson 1987, p. 1348)	(Alvesson and Willmott 2002, p. 626)	(Watson 2008, p. 129)
‘The range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept.’	‘Active identity work: people are continuously engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious	‘Identity work involves the mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and,



	sense of coherence and distinctiveness.’	within limits, to influence the various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives.’
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Among the three definitions, the definitions of Snow and Anderson (1987) and Alvesson and Willmott (2002) emphasise on forms of behaviours that are involved in identity work. In a more social perspective, Watson’s (2008) definition takes into account the ‘external’ aspects (p. 129), which indicates the connection between the self and its environment. More explanation is presented as follows.

There are different strands relating *identity work* to individual-organisation relations in social science literature and OMS. Some studies influenced by poststructuralist accounts for identity examine identity work as a continuous process since identity is unstable whereas other scholars argue that identity work occurs only in periods when people have to deal with issues of identity disruptions in fragmented contexts (Alvesson et al. 2008; Brown 2017). From a different perspective, identity work is posited as to serve the benefits of the internal self or to bridge between self-identity and wider discourses. The former represents the emphasis of Alvesson and Willmott (2002) and Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) on how individuals engage in identity work to ‘strive to shape their personal identities’ (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003, p. 1165). With regards to the latter, identity work mediates social identities and personal identities, by which social identity, as cultural phenomenon and external to selves, is loaded into self-identities (Watson 2008). The latter, as Brown (2017) emphasised, partially explains the effects of processes of socialisation, symbolic management and ‘role models’ (Bandura 1977; Brown 2017) in shaping individuals’ understanding and emotions.

Despite those controversies, Brown (2015, 2017) contributes significantly into the fragmented and, to some extent, confusing literature with an extensive review of identity, identity work and organisational identification. He produces a competent analysis of five distinct and overlapping approaches to identity work which are discursive, dramaturgical, symbolic, socio-cognitive and psychodynamic. Discursive approach to identity work emphasises that identities are theorised as being formed in connection to significant others, or the ‘self’ is different from the ‘other’, through dialogical processes. Scholars studying identities and identity work from

this approach mostly focus on how identity is expressed and constituted in self-narratives (Churchman and King 2009; Thornborrow and Brown 2009; Clarke and Knights 2015). For example, Sacks (1985) asserts that ‘each of us constructs and lives a “narrative” and this narrative is us, our identities’ (p. 121) and ‘the self is perpetually rewritten story’ (Bruner 1987, p. 15). Dramaturgical approach suggests that individuals constitute their identities regarding the choice of dramaturgical actions and interactions in social settings such as specific manners, gestures, walking or working. Specific identities such as accountants (Grey 1998), rugby players (Brown and Coupland 2015) or academics (Barry et al. 2006; Alvesson and Spicer 2016) might involve the enactment of highly specific repertoires of behaviour. In symbolic approach, individuals make use of object symbols and tangible entities to claim, articulate and constitute desired identities. Such object symbols can include, for example, dress code, cosmetic or body art. Another approach is socio-cognitive which can be related to functionalist orientation (Corlett et al. 2017). This approach suggests that ‘identity work as conducted through the operation of an assortment of cognitive...and sense-making’ (Brown 2017, p. 309). Correspondingly, individuals conduct identity work to seek for affiliation and maintain self-esteem. Finally, psychodynamic approach refers to identity work as being conducted in the form of unconscious ego defences. This approach to theorise identity work is associated to the work of Sigmund Freud (1936). Identity work in this approach functions to reduce anxieties, deal with conflicts and maintain self-esteem and existing identity (Brown 2000a; Gabriel 2000).

Although individuals’ identity work can be researched in one of those approaches, Brown (2017) and Corlett et al. (2017) suggest that there is still a chance to combine, integrate these approaches to obtain better findings. In addition, as mentioned above, these approaches are overlapping (Corlett et al. 2017; Brown 2019), an exclusive use of any certain approach might lead to myopia which restricts the full understanding of academics’ complex narratives in the dynamic work environment. As a result, this present study employs these approaches appropriately and selectively to articulate its data to obtain rich understandings of academics’ processes of identity work.

In the context of academic work lives, empirical studies have recorded evidence that academics are exposed to ‘deep insecurities regarding their worth, their identity and their standing’ (Gabriel 2010, p. 769) regarding the increasing demands of research, publication, teaching as well as judgements from managers and students (Knights and Clarke 2014). Academic identity

is continually contested (Harley 2002) in the insecure and peripheral place – universities (Harding et al. 2010; Knights and Clarke 2018). In such condition of everyday stress, anxiety and insecurity (Knights and Clarke 2018), academics are more likely to engage into identity work which are more conscious and concentrated (Alvesson et al. 2008). Academics' identity work is recorded in empirical studies range from conditionally and unconditionally surrendering their autonomy (Alvesson and Spicer 2016), conforming to performance culture (Clarke and Knights 2015), and to creatively playing the game (Kalfa et al. 2017), this list is not exhaustive. Such forms of identity work are to constitute 'free space' and to secure stable and coherent identity (Clarke and Knights 2015, p. 1875).

Individuals, in 'liquid modernity' with contemporary trends of fluidity and ambiguities, struggle to secure a sense of self (Bauman 2000; Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Coupland and Brown 2012). Indeed, there is consensus among OMS scholars that contemporary identity is less secure (Coupland and Brown 2012). In the changing condition of work with increasing pressures to perform and elitism, academics have been striving in indefinite state and less tenure (Clarke and Knights 2015; Alvesson and Spicer 2016). Hence, academic identity is argued to be more insecure than other occupations (Grey 2010). According to Giddens (1991), the contemporary world provides individuals with multiplicities of contradictory discursive discourses and resources; thus, engagement into identity work is considerably unavoidable (Watson 2008, p. 129). In such insecure conditions, individuals' activities at work, including those of academics, entail 'active *identity work*' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 626, emphasis in original) to form, maintain, repair, revise and discard personal and social roles (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003; Watson 2008).

### ***3.3.5.2. Organisational identification***

Emerging from existing studies of identity relating to identity regulation and processes of individuals' identity construction is the individual-organisation relations which are referred to the conceptualisation of organisational identification. This present study has its focus on how academics locate and define themselves within their universities – organisational contexts. In addition to understanding the influences of universities' managerial controls on academics, the research aim is accomplished by studying on how individuals, as academics, engage into identity work that reflects their relationships with their organisations. This subsection provides an overview on how organisational identification is studied in the literature of identity, and

then articulate it with identity regulation and identity work to build a theoretical framework to achieve the research aim.

The development of organisational identification can be traced back to very early ideologies. Organisational identification was known as *the construct* when discussions about it emerged in organisational science (Ashforth et al. 2008). It has its relation with ‘coalescence’ between the individuals and the organisation, discussed by Chester Barnard (1938), through which a sense of individual conviction and the willing devotion to the organisation are generated (Ashforth et al. 2008). Although Herbert Simon can be considered as the first management scholar who gave the construct some theoretical clues (Simon 1947), identification, in a narrow theorising, is known and associated with the rising dominance of social identity theory in organisation and management studies (Ashforth et al. 2008). Along with the development of social identity theory, identification started to gain its traction in organisation studies. The publication of Ashforth and Mael (1989) gave a starting point with *social identification* and *group identification* and indicated that organisational identification as a form of social identification. It is argued that identities in social landscape are not constituted merely in relations with organisation but also with network and occupation as the relationships between self and organisation become tenuous in modern working life (Ashforth et al. 2008). Taking this argument into account, the theoretical underpinning will be employed to guide the analysis of academics’ identification with both collectives (university, department) and social factors (colleagues, students, co-authors).

There is no universal definition of organisational identification among scholars. Ashforth and Schinoff (2016) simplify the understanding of identification as the outcome of identity construction at the individual level that an individual incorporates ‘a given identity’ as a part of the definition of self. In other words, organisational identification represents an alignment between individual and collective identities (Brown 2017), the extent to which individuals accepts collective goals, values, beliefs, knowledge and skills as their own (Ashforth et al. 2008). Organisational identification reflects the embodied notions of identity as ‘the perception of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate’ (Ashforth and Mael 1989, p. 21; Brown 2017, p. 299), which means that the conception of self consists the same attributes as the perceived organisational identity has (Dutton et al. 1994).

Although organisational identification is commonly regarded as a positive connection between self and organisation – an attractive, distinctive, and consistent organisational identity, even

self-sacrifice in the interests of organisation (Ashforth et al. 2008), there are various relationships between individuals and organisation/collective which can be represented through the term organisational identification. According to Brown's (2017) review of identity literature, the connection between individuals and their organisations, in many cases, can vary in different levels of positiveness/negativeness including dis-identification (negative connection between self and organisation), schizo-identification (identification and dis-identification at the same time with different aspects of an organisation), and neutral identification (no strong sense of either negative or positive connections with an organisation).

In general, reviewing the literature of organisational identification is useful in presenting and explaining Vietnamese academics' identity construction in response to the influences of managerial controls. As shown in the arguments throughout this thesis, the author's preference to study academics' experiences is considering them both as individuals (serve their personal identities) and as social actors (serve their social identities). Organisational identification is involved as the outcome of processes of identity regulation because it provides the understanding of how individuals incorporate meanings given by their organisations into their identity work processes. In addition, as this study is based on qualitative data, like other research using the same method, there is no absolute end of literature review. Indeed, the analysis of findings is strengthened by revisiting between data and concepts. The part of organisational identification in this thesis's literature review was conducted after the findings showed that Vietnamese academics' identity work and responses to managerial controls were significantly associated with their sense of belonging with their collective and networks. Following up the literature review, to understand how academics' identity work and universities' managerial controls are shaped by national culture, the next section will review the existing literature on national culture and introduce the most salient characteristics of Vietnamese culture.

### **3.4.National culture approach**

The thesis aims to explore Vietnamese academics' work experiences under the influences of managerial controls in higher education in Vietnam. In addition to utilising the identity approach to achieve the research aim, national culture is taken into account to persuasively answer the research questions. It is argued that human behaviour is influenced either directly or indirectly by culture (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961). Additionally, Alvesson, Ashcraft, and Thomas (2008) assert that the guidance to understand self-identity involves larger cultural

and historical formations including identity vocabularies, pressure and solutions, and norms. This subsection reviews the relation between national culture and identity and the use of Hofstede's 6D model of national culture in knowing about Vietnamese national culture. It then discusses about cultural values and beliefs on Vietnamese academic profession. Before moving to each of these points, it is important to explain why the author uses both Hofstede's 6D model and traditional culture to articulate her argument. Firstly, Hofstede's work was conducted within IBM – an international corporate, which is argued as limited to generalise all cultural aspects of a country. Secondly, as the 6D model is based on survey – quantitative research, it emphasises more on naming rather than explaining the characteristics, value systems and beliefs of countries' national cultures. For example, 6D model does not answer the questions such as why do Vietnamese academics appreciate collective targets? It is inadequate to argue that because the culture is collectivist. Instead, a better explanation should derive from the influence of the history of Vietnam through wars which prioritises unity. Secondly, this qualitative study targets for in-depth understanding of academics' behaviours and experiences to make its contribution to Vietnamese higher education management within a mixed context of educational heritages from American, French and Soviet influences. Thirdly and also associated with the first and second reasons, the 6D model does not take into account most influential social values which have guided social and virtuous behaviours which, in this present study, are regarded to Confucianism. Furthermore, although Vietnamese traditional culture is not limited within Confucianism as it should be explained in association with historical and regional characteristics, the author acknowledges that this present study is not a study of national culture. Hence, the review of literature focuses on the information which supports the analysis and discussion of emerged findings.

### **3.4.1. National culture and identity**

Culture on its own is defined by UNESCO<sup>7</sup> as a complex whole of '*knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society*'. An individual as a member of society is influenced by knowledge, morals, customs and habits deriving from the culture of the society. The correlation between culture

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/cultural-diversity/>

and identity is emphasised widely in both sociologists and organisation scholars. As noted by Alvesson et al., (2008), cultural factors and identity formation are intertwined:

*‘...there is nothing natural or self-evident about concern with who we are; preoccupation with identity is a cultural, historical formation. Far from coincidental, the surge of identity scholarship is part of this formation, which makes the surge appear logical and necessary.’ (p. 11)*

From the assertion of Alvesson et al (2008), it is believed that processes of individuals’ identity construction have a strong cultural and contextual background (Brown 2015). From the perspective of social identity theory and theoretical basis of identification, individuals perceive oneness and belongingness to some human aggregate (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Ashforth et al. 2008). Individuals identify them with their groups, or broadly speaking their nation, they tend to incorporate national values and beliefs into their self-definition. Individuals’ identities in their larger cultural and historical background in terms of membership of their communities are constituted on the basis of cultural raw material including language, symbols, values, sets of meanings, norms of behaviours; such cultural raw material can be collected also from early life experiences and contribute to answering the questions ‘Who am I?’ or ‘Who are we?’ (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Knights and Clarke 2017). Individuals assemble their self-narratives from cultural resources, memories or desires to transform their sense of self (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003; Alvesson et al. 2008). From this point of view, culture is seen as a whole of antecedents of processes of identity formation. It influences the processes which individuals choose to insert meanings into their self-identity.

In combination with role identity perspective, individuals construct their selves in interactions, as personal identity is a dependent variable with regards to others’ appraisals and expectations. Self-identity is constructed by both self-distinctiveness and role repertoire to integrate and blend into community (Côté 1996). Individuals are concerned about identifying with particular culture, race, nation, set of ideas (Knights and Clarke 2017). When individuals identify with their society, including organisations and groups, they follow the society’s expectations to gain the approval of the society (Côté 1996) and so become microcosms of the society and organisation (Ashforth and Mael 1989). In return, every culture has their own guidance of their members’ behaviours and life priorities. Ashforth et al. (2008) put that it is the outcome of identification when individuals are encouraged to enact the values, beliefs and norms of the

collective and role. Such arguments suggest that culture is not only an antecedent of identity construction but also the target of processes of identity construction.

Furthermore, there is little of literature exploring how individuals' identity and identity work are affected by organisational and national cultural settings (Brown 2015). Knights and Clarke (2017) point out that in the vast literature of identity and identity work, scholars tend to relate to identity with a lack of attention on the embodied, historical and contextual notion of identity. With that taken-for-granted way to study identity and identity work, existing literature that is mainly constructed within Western culture appears to fail to challenge the notion of instrumental individualism. It is suggested that identity work might occur differently in diverse culture (Brown 2015). Having said that the literature appears to be Western-dominant, it is advantageous to conduct the present study with regards to a very different context: a typically Asian cultural country, due to its potential to present distinctive morphologies of identity work or identity construction.

### **3.4.2. Definition of national culture**

National culture is rooted from the work of anthropologists. Geertz (1973, p. 5), an anthropologist, argues the concept 'culture' as 'essentially a semiotic one' and that the analysis produced by it is essentially 'interpretive, in search of meaning'. National culture studied by anthropologists relates to the differences between cultures – 'cultural analogy' (Smircich 1983, p. 348). The term culture has been defined variously by researchers. Back to over six decades ago, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) had found out over 160 definitions of culture. More recently, Geertz (1973) conceptualised culture as 'an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life' (p. 89). Clark (1990) offers the definition of culture as 'as a distinctive, enduring pattern of behaviour and/or personality characteristics' (p. 66). Hofstede (1984) approaches culture from the perspective of in-group and out-group which emphasises that culture can be defined as 'a collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another' (p. 21). Hofstede's approach to distinguish different cultures focuses on value systems which are defined as 'broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others' (Hofstede 1980a, p. 19). Building on these works, a broad definition of culture is initiated by UNESCO which refers culture as '*complex whole which includes*



*knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society’.*

Among various conceptualisations, the term ‘national culture’ has been used widely according to Hofstede’s work to imply different cultures of different nations. Besides, it is also used to emphasise the characteristic of a society which is distinguished from other forms of culture such as organisational culture (Doney et al. 1998). Doney et al. (1998) argue that norms and values covered in culture are all accepted and followed by all groups, ethnics or all segments of a population of a country. Aligning with such arguments and regarding the scope of the research, this present thesis does not cover the differences of regional cultures but accepts that a nation’s dominant cultural stereotypes have their influences on groups of people who share similar background, education and occupation (academics); and on how they enact identity work.

### **3.4.3. Hofstede’s 6D model**

This study employs Hofstede’s 6D model in combination with the knowledge of traditional culture to guide the data analysis and discussions because this is the leading model which has been applied widely in culture-related studies. Hofstede (1980a) conducts his first quantitative study using questionnaire information to develop his cultural value framework which allows him to classify national cultures into groups. The study processed data from 116,000 morale questionnaires completed by 88,000 employees of IBM company’s subsidiaries in 72 countries of different regions in the late 1960s and early 1970s. From this extremely large-scale study, Hofstede suggested four dimensions of cultural differences among countries in which he grouped cultures with respect to high or low quality on each of these dimensions. The four dimensions are: Power distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism-Collectivism and Masculinity-Femininity.

*Power distance* is the dimension reflecting ‘the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organisations is distributed unequally’ (Hofstede 1980a, p. 45) (Hofstede 1980b, p. 45). This is the extent to which subordinates such as employees are not expected to disagree with super-ordinates and super-ordinates are not expected to involve their subordinates into the decision-making process (Hofstede 1980a, 2001).

The second dimension of national culture is labelled as *individualism-collectivism* which represents ‘the relationship between individuals and the collectivity which prevails in a given

society' (Hofstede 1980a, p. 213). In organisations, the level of individualism or collectivism reflects the relationship between an individual and his or her organisation (Hofstede 1980a). In collectivist society, people distinguish ingroup and outgroup relations; the ingroup becomes the major source of self-identity and they expect their in-groups to 'protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty' (Hofstede et al. 2010, p. 92).

The dimension *uncertainty avoidance* can be defined as 'the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situation' (Hofstede et al. 2010, p. 191). Future is a key uncertainty of human beings and people have created various ways to cope with uncertain future (Hofstede 1980a). However, it is a fine line between accepting uncertainty or defending against them. Different societies have had different ways to adapt to uncertainty (Hofstede 1980a). In organisations, to measure the uncertainty avoidance index, three questions to calculate the level of anxiety are designed with regards to job stress, rule orientation and employment stability. The index shows that when uncertainty avoidance index is higher, people in that society feel more stressed while trying to cope with their anxiety through security searching (Hofstede 2001).

The dimension *masculinity-femininity* is defined with regards to 'whether the biological differences between the sexes should or should not have implications for their roles in social activities' (Hofstede 1980a, p. 261). In organisations, the division of labour associates with the division of sex roles (Hofstede 1980a). In feminine society, both men and women are assumed to be tender, modest and concerned with the quality of life; however, in masculine society, gender roles are significantly distinct, which means men are meant to be tough and focused on material success and women are expected to be tender, modest and concerned with the quality of life (Hofstede et al. 2010).

In the later studies, Hofstede renamed a value dimension as *long-term versus short-term orientation* (LTO) which was first identified as *Confucius* by a survey so-called Chinese Value Survey conducted among students from 23 countries initiated by Michael Bond (Hofstede et al. 2010; Hofstede 2011). The fifth dimension is defined with the differentiation between long-term orientation and short-term orientation: '*long-term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards – in particular, perseverance and thrift*' and '*short-term orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present – in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of "face", and fulfilling social obligations*' (Hofstede et al. 2010, p. 239, emphasis in original).

The sixth cultural dimension is added in the publication of Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov in 2010 labelled by Minkov as *Indulgence versus Restraint*. This dimension relates closely to the literature of ‘happiness research’ (Hofstede 2011). The dimension is defined that ‘*indulgence stands for a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun*’ and ‘*restraint, reflects a conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms*’ (Hofstede et al. 2010, p. 281, emphasis in original). There are three predictors of happiness within a nation including: happiness, life control and importance of leisure. The first two correlates refers to the cognition of life control (individuals have a feeling of liberty to live without social restrictions) and the third predictor relates importance of leisure as a value of persons (Hofstede et al. 2010). For example, people from indulgent societies can act as they please, they can enjoy life, have fun whereas people from restrained societies are restrained by numerous social norms and prohibitions.

**Critiques:** Hofstede’s 6-dimension model of cultural differences has its significant influences on subsequent understanding of culture with regards to cross-cultural organisational behaviour and psychology fields (Taras et al. 2010). Nevertheless, there are a number of significant critiques on Hofstede’s work. One of them is that such frameworks (4D and 6D) do not reflect the relations of the opposite poles of each dimension (McSweeney 2002; Fang 2011). For example, Nguyen (2017) argues that people can be both feminine and masculine which means, in some cases, a culture can have a high score on both feminine and masculine poles. Additionally, regarding the findings of primary data, Schmitz and Weber (2014) prove that some dimensions such as uncertainty avoidance is not valid in specific contexts like France and Germany. They suggest the theoretical explanation for this associating with cultural change over time and that Hofstede’s work was conducted in 1970s-1980s and not replicated in specific modern contexts although Hofstede asserts that culture, in general, and national cultures, in particular, remain their stability across many generations even at least until 2100 (Hofstede 2009).

Moreover, McSweeney (2002) alerts us that Hofstede’s dimensions are not situation specific as the sample chosen from IBM subsidiaries is critiqued to be not representative of nations. However, later surveys conducted in schools and universities suggested that the applicability of Hofstede’s dimensions can be remained in different situations and places (Jackson 2001). Another important point from McSweeney’s (2002) argument is that there are non-cultural

influences other than national culture on human action such as institutions and/or physical constraints. Taking this criticism into account, this present study relates to national culture to explain the cultural context which contributes to learning different morphologies of identity construction (Brown 2015), rather than seeing it as the systematic cause of academics' identity work.

In addition, Hofstede recognises some usual criticisms on his models and provides his own argument against such criticism (Hofstede 1998) which are summarised in the table 2.

<b>Table 2: Criticisms of Hofstede's 6D model</b>	
Criticisms	Hofstede's answers
Surveys are not a suitable way to measure cultural differences.	They should not be the only way
Nations are not the proper units for studying cultures.	They are usually the only kind of units available for comparison.
A study of the subsidiaries of one company cannot provide information about entire national cultures.	What was measured were differences among national cultures. Any set of functionally equivalent samples can supply information about such differences.
The IBM data are old and therefore obsolete.	The dimensions found are assumed to have centuries-old roots; they have been validated against all kinds of external measurements; recent replications show no loss of validity.
Four or five dimensions are not enough.	Additional dimensions should be statistically independent of the dimensions defined earlier; they should be valid on the basis of correlations with external measures; candidates are welcome to apply.

Despite such critiques, Hofstede's model has been employed widely in OMS with regards to organisational cultures (Doney et al. 1998; Barry 2009), and particularly in higher education such as learning (Bui et al. 2013). In the field of identity research, Cleveland et al. (2016), inspired by Hofstede's 4 dimensions including individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, femininity- masculinity and power distance to present the correlation between identity, culture and consumer behaviour. Ashforth and Schinoff (2016) draw on Hofstede's 3 dimensions including individualism-collectivism, power distance and short-term orientation - long-term orientation to suggest future studies how processes of identity construction occur differently cross culturally. Empirically with regards to Vietnamese context, Hofstede's cultural dimensions have underpinned studies about Vietnamese academics' work life in the changing world. The study of Nguyen Thi Mai and Hall (2017) inspired by Hofstede's cultural

framework suggests that although Vietnamese academics are willing to accept changes, the employment of ‘Western’ constructivist pedagogies need to be contextualised and respect for Vietnamese cultural beliefs deeply influencing teaching and learning in Vietnam. Phan (2017) draws on Hofstede’s model to develop the argument that quality management in higher education should be understood with regards to culture which also provides leaders different ways to achieve effective quality practices in the context of higher education reform occurring in Vietnam. This present study is inspired by the previous research regarding their strategies of employing Hofstede’s model as the cultural framework which guide the understanding of academics’ behaviours.

In addition, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions have inspired and informed various studies in the field of education from the approaches of quantitative positivism and qualitative interpretivism. The application of Hofstede’s model in positivist studies can be adopting his survey items and exclusive concepts to examine the relationships between different cultural dimensions and academic performance, academic and social integration (Baumann and Hammin 2011; Rienties and Tempelaar 2013). Interpretivist studies tend to employ Hofstede’s cultural dimensions for coding categories (Verma et al. 2016; Rojo et al. 2020) or contextualise findings (Verma et al. 2016). Nevertheless, such studies from both approaches to Hofstede’s model employ the model as an underpinning framework for answering research questions. This present study is not exclusive about examining the impacts of national culture on academic identity or academic behaviours, but to explain academics’ identity work through the cultural lens to enrich the understanding of the research subjects in their context.

Furthermore, there are significant critiques that only 40% of the items used in Hofstede’s survey can be claimed as valid (Venaik and Brewer 2016). As a result, the adoption of Hofstede’s cultural dimension from a positivist approach can raise criticism in the validity in this current study where its aims are not to examine Vietnamese cultural values but to explain Vietnamese academics’ behaviours from the background understanding of available concepts (what it means to be individualism/collectivism). For example, the participants were not asked questions based on the items consisted in Hofstede’s survey but they were asked questions about their daily practice of roles, relationships with colleagues, students and managers, and their perception of such practice or relationships. The findings were developed from identity literature and reflecting on each dimension of Hofstede’s model for in-depth understanding and explanation. However, not all of the dimensions emerged in the findings (mainly collectivism

and power distance). At the same time, other cultural values were involved such as Confucianism along with Hofstede's cultural dimensions (seniority in Confucianism can also be explained as an aspect of power distance).

Moreover, the exclusion of relating cultural values to Taoism or Buddhism while exclusively focusing on Confucianism is another claim that highlights the caution of adopting Hofstede's cultural dimensions in culture-related research (Fang 2003). The current interpretivist study works closely with individual participants to understand their points of view rather than relying exclusively on Hofstede's concepts and positivist approach, which highlights the author's appreciation of such critiques and effectively assists the involvement of Vietnamese traditional culture and cultural value sets within Taoism and Buddhism for a more comprehensive conclusion.

In the application of the model to explain the influences of national culture on the processes of identity construction of Vietnamese academics, the author employs Hofstede's 6D model bearing in mind the characteristics of Vietnamese academia, other virtuous values such as Confucianism and the nature of academic occupation. For example, academic profession can be individualist in the collectivist society, or Vietnamese universities are not intercultural organisations, but they are mixed with academics adopting foreign cultures? Do such characteristics lead to tensions in academics' processes of identity construction?

Among Hofstede's 6 dimensions of national cultures, there will be some dimensions typically representing Vietnamese culture. In the next sub-section, Vietnamese cultural aspects will be introduced regarding academic occupation and Vietnamese higher education. Then, they will be reflected into Hofstede's dimensions to illustrate more obviously the distinctiveness of Vietnamese culture.

#### **3.4.4. Vietnamese traditional culture and Hofstede's 6 dimensions of national culture**

Vietnam is a South-East Asian country with a mix of ethnicities and languages. Vietnam had nearly 1000 years being dominated by the Chinese. The domination occurred not only to the country's politics and sovereign but also its culture. Hence, the country's animistic beliefs and traditional values and Chinese culture such as Confucianism and Taoism (He et al. 2011). In addition, Vietnamese culture also contains value systems which derive from its historical and contextual characteristics.

**Patriotism** is seen as the most significant part of Vietnamese national culture (He et al. 2011; Nguyen 2016). It has occurred and been reaffirmed through the country's history. During the wars, patriotism was performed by the solidarity and unity to fight colonial forces. After the wars, patriotism is expressed through the integration of Vietnamese people for the country's development (Nguyen 1999). Patriotism can be seen as both the national pride and precious cultural value of Vietnamese and manifests *collectivism*.

**Buddhism.** Buddhism was brought to Vietnam in the first century A.D. by Indian sailors and traders (Le 2014) and became the ancient tradition of the country. Most of Vietnamese people have a Buddhist seed within themselves (Thich Nhat Hanh 2008). There are numerous principles regarding Buddhism and many of them are engaged to people's daily life which are conceptualised into the concept 'Engaged Buddhism' (Thich Nhat Hanh 2008). For example, people follow Buddhist principles while they communicate with people, drive, shop or management. In Vietnam, Buddhism blends into the national culture with a number of dominant beliefs such as Karma, Tu Bi – Hi Xa and Tu An. Karma relates to the rules of causes and effects which mean what happen in people's present time (or this life) can be answered as resulting from what they did in the past (or the previous life). Tu Bi (compassion) - Hi Xa (Tolerance) guide people's behaviours in line with love, helpfulness and forgiveness. Tu An represents people's gratefulness to their parents (the highest level of gratitude), nation, teachers and other human beings who give support and help to them. These principles are consistent to virtuous values in Vietnamese culture and influence behaviours of people in general, and particularly those who strongly believe in Buddhism.

**Confucianism.** Confucianism was brought to Vietnam by the Chinese during their domination in Vietnam from 111B.C. to A.D. 938 and gradually transformed the society from matriarchy into patriarchy. The patriarchal system emphasised on the social and family relationships and sets of virtues for women (Taylor and Choy 2005) and became the dominant principles which influence social morality and rules for the roles of and relationship between women and men, and other social relationships. In comparison with Buddhism, Confucianism has a longer and more significant role in Vietnamese culture through the political assimilation of the Chinese (Vuong et al. 2018) which is not only limited within religious beliefs.

Confucianism prioritises rules of manners and humaneness (benevolence, righteousness, propriety and faithfulness) over materialism (Vuong et al. 2018). Such rules also reflect a strong social bond with emphasis on shared values with others (Kang et al. 2017) in Vietnamese



culture. Vietnamese culture prioritises virtue, which is also emphasised in the President Ho Chi Minh's well-known quote: 'Talent without virtue is useless, untalented virtuous people find everything difficult'. Virtuous manners and behaviours are essential in individuals' self-definition. People focus on remaining their reputation as one of their most precious assets and are threatened by 'losing face' (Nguyen 2015) because reputation is consistent with prestige and social status. One of the ways to remain reputation is being righteous, modest, generous and selfless (Nguyen 2016). As social bonds are considered as important, Vietnamese culture appreciates a harmonious society where people live harmoniously and appropriately in relations with others.

Furthermore, Confucianism still has its influence in contemporary Vietnamese culture. A traditional woman of virtue should be responsible for the well-being of family such as looking after family, children and house. Although there are changes in the role of women in modern Vietnamese society, such virtue is still widely appreciated. In addition, parents are responsible for children's well-being and they have significant influences on their children. Such responsibility and influences are remained for long time even after the children are mature and start their independent life. Being shaped by Confucianism, Vietnamese are family-oriented and family is the heart of social life (Nguyen and Ta 2018). Hence, family also has its great impacts on individuals and their daily decision-making processes and behaviours. As family plays an important role to Vietnamese life, it is interesting to see if this family-oriented values interact with the practices of managerial controls in Vietnamese academics' processes of identity construction.

Another Vietnamese cultural value associated with Confucianism is *seniority*. Reflecting on Hofstede's 6D model, seniority, as a virtue in Confucianism, is the manifestation of power distance which represents the hierarchy in Confucianist societies regarding age and social position (Horak and Yang 2019). The impacts of seniority have been recorded as significant on work promotion and career progression in South Korea, a Confucianist culture (Horak and Yang 2019), and other Asian countries including China, Japan and Taiwan (McHale 2002). As social members follow the hierarchy regarding seniority, the rule by men can be more effective than the rule by law (Kang et al. 2017), which suggests that early career academics or new staff are more likely to follow their seniors in their processes of identity construction, juniors should show their great respects to seniors such as grandchildren to grandparents, children to parents, younger siblings to older siblings or students to their teachers. Hence, it is interesting to explore

the tensions in Vietnamese academics' practices of role regarding this major cultural influence and the impacts of managerialism. For example, are there any identity struggles in early-career academics' identity work? Can it be assumed that senior academics can avoid identity insecurity? How do lecturers see the changes in their identity in relationship with their students? Can the student-teacher relationship remain in the way that students must follow and respect for lecturers?

**Taoism.** Taoism existed in Vietnam from the second century and started its influences in the North of Vietnam, mostly from 918 to 1400 (Vuong et al. 2018). Taoism was accepted by Vietnamese due to the country's agricultural culture which used to rely on nature. The existence of Taoism in Vietnam is in both philosophy and religion. Philosophically, Taoism has its impacts on remaining the harmonious relationships between individuals, and human and nature. One of the most influential ideologies of Taoism in Vietnamese culture is 'inexertion' or 'inaction' as 'the art of stopping when it is time to stop' (Budriūnaitė 2014, p. 6). When blending into Vietnamese context, Taoism took part in guiding people to avoid conflicts but being willing to allow the existence of different opinions or behaviours without criticizing or punishing (Nguyen 2016). Correspondingly, the principle of remaining social harmony in Taoism aligns with that of Confucianism as discussed above.

**Other cultural values.** Nguyen's (1963) study presents more characteristics of Vietnamese cultural values including moral respect and frugal ability, love of peace, patriotism, humanism, optimism and community-collectives. The collectivist feature in Vietnamese culture is emphasised in people's dedication to their families, especially their children, appreciation of unity, tolerance, harmony and cooperation (Nguyen 2016). In other studies and records, Vietnamese traditional culture consists fondness for learning, sacrifice, diligence, compassion, tolerance, respect for morality, solidarity, and gratitude (Dang Cong San Viet Nam [Vietnamese Communist Party] 1998; Dao 2000).

In general, Vietnamese traditional culture is the product of a complex mix of ethics and social-historic influences, among which Confucianism, as an ethical system, is the most influential, especially in education sector (Truong et al. 2017). Although the author acknowledges that there are more socio-economic and historic factors contributing into Vietnamese culture, this present study covers a number of main ethical systems, which assists the data analysis and discussion to keep the coherence and the conciseness of the study's presentation. Among Buddhism, Taoism and other traditional ethics, this study relates its discussion more to

Confucianism as the ethic is considered as the biggest influence and most relevant to managerial controls. In addition, Confucianism and managerialism share the characteristic of power relation. However, Confucianism emphasises on self-discipline or self-control relying on virtue and moral education (Truong et al. 2017) whilst managerialism through identity regulation encourages self-discipline relying on external intervention in forms of rigid rules (visible promotion and punishment) (Alvesson and Willmott 2002).

Furthermore, it is noticeable that those discussed ethical systems blend together and their values overlap. Hence, the author decided to cover them to provide more details to and support Hofstede’s cultural model in understanding the cultural base of Vietnamese academics’ self-meanings and identity work. Regarding Hofstede’s 6D model, Vietnamese culture is collectivist and feminine, classed as weak in uncertainty avoidance and a fairly restrained and long-term oriented country, has high index in power distance dimension (table 3). Recent empirical studies show that the two dimensions of power distance and individualism-collectivism are significant in Vietnam (Bui and Baruch 2012; Nguyen 2015; Truong et al. 2017). Table 3 presents how Vietnamese cultural values and ethics match Hofstede’s 6D model. As presented, the left column contains keywords describing Vietnam’s cultural values. These keywords are sorted to reflect each cultural dimension according to Hofstede’s 6D model, which can enhance the understanding of Vietnamese cultural values that would influence and shape behaviours of both managers and staff.

<b>Characteristics of Vietnamese culture</b>	<b>Hofstede’s 6D model</b>	
	Dimensions	Vietnamese indexes
Seniority, sense of respect.	Power distance	70 (high)
Collectivism, Loyalty, family bond, patriotism, strong social relations, sacrifice, appreciation of unity.	Individualism-Collectivism	20 (collectivism)
Patriarchy.	Masculinity-Femininity	40 (feminine)
Optimism.	Uncertainty avoidance	30 (weak)
Tolerance, fondness of learning.	Long-term vs short-term orientation	57 (long-term oriented)

Diligence, strict moral disciplines.	Indulgence vs Restraint	35 (Restrained)
Other characteristics: appreciation of reputation (threats of ‘losing face’), propriety, love of peace, and immaterialism	N/A	N/A

### 3.4.5. Vietnamese academic profession from the cultural perspective

In Vietnamese culture, knowledgeable and moral individuals are highly respected. Scholars including academics have been seen as a prestige class in Vietnamese society who possess a source of unlimited knowledge for the society. There are various Vietnamese proverbs which express the respect and admiration of the society to scholars and educators:

*‘Without teachers, you can barely achieve success’ (Không thầy đố mày làm nên).*

*‘Build a bridge if you want to cross the river, love the teachers if you want your children to be knowledgeable’ (Muốn sang thì bắc cầu kiều, muốn con hay chữ phải yêu lấy thầy).*

The image of teachers in Vietnamese society is emphasised on humanity, honesty, knowledgeability, artistry and trustworthiness (Nguyen 2015; Nguyen Thi Mai and Hall 2017). Although the learner-centred approach has been adopted along with the reform of Vietnamese education system, learners are still observed as dependent and obedient to their teachers as they believe that teachers know more than students (Pham 2010). Such belief significantly contributes to the increased distance between students and teachers as they are unwilling and hesitate to bring up discussion or disagreement with their teachers and gradually become tolerant towards the knowledge provided by teachers (Nguyen 2011).

Such beliefs and traditional thinking towards academic professionals partly become pressures upon academics’ identity construction with regards to their efforts to careering, improving knowledge and morality. Moral and knowledge mistakes become unacceptable regarding academics’ self-discipline and self-esteem, as known as ‘losing face’ (Nguyen 2015). Nguyen

and Hall's (2017) study, however, shows that Vietnamese academics are willing to accept change and adopt new approaches. Their findings also suggested that there was still a strong influence of traditional culture on academics' teaching work when they blended new ideas and approaches into their daily teaching.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

This study joins in the emergent debates and discussion about academics' experiences with regards to changes in higher education management in many countries (Knights and Clarke 2018; Bristow et al. 2019; Dugas et al. 2020; Jones et al. 2020, 2021; Ratle et al. 2020; Antoniadou and Quinlan 2021) and adopts identity approach to achieve its research aim. Most specifically, the study aims to explore and understand Vietnamese academics' role practices and experiences at work under the influences of managerial controls in Vietnamese higher education. By employing identity approach, managerialist controls are considered through the theorising of identity regulation and academics' practices of roles are examined on the base of identity theory and social identity theory.

Due to the significance of Vietnamese cultural values which are supposed to shape practices of managerial controls and academics' behaviours, national culture is involved to provide in-depth findings and discussions which reflect Vietnamese academics' lived experiences in working to respond to the emergent managerialism in academia. The author, hence, seeks to find answers for the enquiries such as what shape Vietnamese academics' attitudes and behaviours which can differ from previous studies' findings in Western context? Is there any tension existing in Vietnamese academics' processes of identity construction due to the application of a Western managerial ideology? This approach aligns with the assertions and suggestions of various scholars. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) and Knights and Clarke (2017) encourage studying identity and identity regulation within cultural contexts. Hickson and Pugh (1995) are certain that 'it shapes everything' (p. 90). Covering culture in articulating findings and discussions helps this thesis, to a great extent, respond to Brown' (2017) call for exploring the impacts of cultures on identity work and organisational identification. More specifically in Vietnamese context, Nguyen and Tran (2018) strongly argue that social and cultural traditions can be abandoned despite their vitality in the processes of planning and translating Western policies in Vietnamese higher education. They also emphasise that the culture of teaching and learning is affected heavily by national culture. In the next chapter, the presentation of

methodology is provided regarding this study's adoption of research philosophy, research paradigm, choices of research methods, and research procedures.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This study explores the impacts of managerial controls on academics' work life, and to a large extent under the influence of Vietnamese national culture. The importance of methodology lies in its capacity of facilitating researchers in describing, explaining and predicting phenomena. In this chapter, the author is going to introduce an overview of research philosophy, research approach, research strategy and research method, by which the explanations are provided for employing a relevant theoretical perspective, methodology and methods to deliver the aim of this study.

### **4.2. Research Philosophy**

The research methodology is reviewed following one of the major research philosophies of social sciences including positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism which will underpin all further decisions such as methodology perspective (choice), research strategy, data collection methods and data analysis procedures (Saunders et al. 2016).

Ontology is the primary aspect in the knowledge exploration as it refers to the nature of reality (Bryan and Bell 2015; Saunders et al. 2016) or 'the nature of existence' that answers the question 'what constitutes reality' (Gray 2004, p. 16). The ontological perspective of the author is that of interpretivist as the aim of this study is to explore Vietnamese academics' experiences in their daily work life regarding their affected academic identity and identity work.

Interpretivism as one of two main research paradigms, which, along with positivism, has become the most influential. Adopting interpretivist perspective is where researcher make 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world' (Crotty 1998, p. 67). Whilst positivism is more likely the main paradigm for quantitative methods, interpretivism is associated mostly with qualitative methods. According to interpretivists, subjects (ourselves/human) and objects (the world) have no one-to-one direct relationship (Gray 2004). Ontologically, interpretivists concern more about individuals (Cohen et al. 2007) in how they make sense of their world (O'Donoghue 2007) and the meanings they bring to situations and behaviour (Punch 2013). According to interpretivism, human behaviours are meaningful and future oriented in order to share their experiences through everyday

interactions (Cohen et al. 2007; Bryan 2012), from which interpretivist researchers need to explain social actions and social world from the individuals' point of view (Bryan 2012). As a result, the research should expect surprises of findings (Bryan 2012) and precede theories rather than following them (Cohen et al. 2007). In other words, researchers of interpretivism are supposed to 'create new, richer understanding and interpretations of social worlds and contexts' (Saunders et al. 2016, p. 140). For example, interpretivist business and management studies will look at different groups of people because the ontology here is that organisations and management are rich and complex with various experiences, processes and practices (Saunders et al. 2016).

Being inspired by Brown's (2021) point of view to invest in learning about 'ambiguities' rather than 'construct clarity', 'equivocalities' rather than 'theoretical precision' or 'generalizability' (quoted words in original manuscript), the author of this present study invests in understanding Vietnamese academics' self-interpretation (Bosanquet et al. 2017) of their everyday role practices which is rather complex and uncertain. Furthermore, interpretive perspective has been used in leading publications in the field which investigate experiences of academics in the prevalent period of managerialism around the world. Feather (2016) employs interpretivism to study how academics make sense of the world they work in. McAlpine et al. (2014) utilises interpretive approach to examine early-career academics' learning through experience. More recently, Knights and Clarke (2018) adopt interpretive research design to study academics' insecurity and anxiety at work. Antoniadou and Quinlan (2021) engage to interpretive approach to analyse values, emotions and responses in Cypriot academics' stories towards higher education reforms in the country. The peer-reviewed publication, which has formed part of this thesis, shows the rich understanding resulted from applying interpretive approach to understand Vietnamese academics' identity tension regarding the influences of managerial controls and national culture (Jones et al. 2021). Following interpretivist paradigm, the study employs qualitative method and design as discussed in the next section.

### **4.3. Research design and methods**

#### **4.3.1. Qualitative research**

Following the interpretivism paradigm, this study employs a qualitative research approach. Its research design and the use of methods are inspired by Gray' (2004) assertion that 'Generalisation is less important than understanding the real working behind 'reality'' (p. 31).



Regarding the focus of this study on the impacts of managerial practices on Vietnamese academics' daily role practices through their stories, it is stated by generating a thick description and deep exploration of the phenomena more than generalising its findings. Thick description developed by Geertz (1973) is a method to reveal and explore the meaning behind actors' language and actions through understanding thoroughly the context where such language and actions inhabit (Thompson 2001; Bechky 2006). The method appears to be significantly beneficial in the current interpretive study as it draws the author's attention and motivation to delving deeper into participants' words of describing their responses to managerialism. From there, the author could reveal the meanings of participants' actions and interpret significant events, which can inform the novelty of the research. Hence, the research strategies and methodologies, for answering the research questions, need to be suitable for this research purpose. With reference to the adaptability of interpretivism stance in answering the research questions, the research focuses on 'complexity, richness, multiple interpretations and meaning making' (Saunders et al. 2016, p. 141) rather than testing theories, which is supposed to employ the inductive approach.

According to Gray (2004), qualitative research provides the capacity of going 'beyond giving a mere snapshot of events' (p. 320). Hence, the researcher can incorporate academics' emotions, prejudices and incidents of social interactions between them and management in their 'natural setting' (Creswell 2013) to produce in-depth analysis and discussion. As indicated by Miles and Huberman (1994), data of qualitative research are open to multiple interpretations that enables the researcher to understand the ways people act and account for these actions. This methodology proves its value right in this present study by taking the author to another enquiry. Accordingly, after analysing the respondents' interviews, the author realised their positive attitude in response to the practices of managerial controls in their universities, which interestingly contrasts to the big theme in the Western literature of CMS on stressful academic life (Alvesson and Spicer 2016; Knights and Clarke 2018; Jaremka et al. 2020). It is the suggestion from the initial findings that there could be something else which influence the relationship between managerial controls and academics. The author started to notice about cultural aspects in the respondents' words and stories. She then went back to literature and found that culture and contexts were suggested by scholars to explain different forms of identity work (Brown 2015) which, although, still have been under-researched. As she extended her enquiry, the author could not only find the issues and problems but also explain them and develop theoretical and practical implications to contribute to the literature.

Furthermore, it is also considered as appropriate to employ qualitative methodology for analysing the meanings of academics' responses and their identity processes basing on the meaning of words (Saunders et al. 2019) rather than quantification in collection and data analysis.

#### **4.3.2. Semi-structured interview**

To conduct the qualitative research and answer the research questions, the author employed one-to-one interview as the data collection method; the interviews are semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews enable participants to be open to talk, share ideas and emotions, which can portray their multifaceted experiences of managerial practices as well as how they responded to managerialism. In addition, being an academic who used to be affected by the new managerial practices can be useful in helping the researcher to analyse participants' stories from their points of view.

Semi-structured interviews as a data collecting method to acquire knowledge allows the researcher to carry out interviews following the guide whilst being able to follow topical trajectories during the conversation that may be lost from the guide when the researcher feels appropriate (Cohen and Crabtree 2006). Regarding the studies in the relation between managerialism and academia, the method is employed widely and efficiently by scholars (e.g. Clegg 2008, Jain et al. 2009, Clarke et al. 2012, Knights and Clarke 2018, Martin et al. 2020) to explore 'the inter-subjectivity of organisational life in a thoughtful and empathetic fashion' (Alvesson et al. 2008, p. 7). Indeed, the method allows the researcher to provide more information of the study and to build up the trust between the researcher and participants, which helps 'in attaining a rich and (often) emotional data set' (Clarke et al. 2012, p. 8).

#### **4.3.3. Sampling**

Given that the purpose of an interpretivist qualitative study is to explore the in-depth reality than generalisation and inductive approach is mainly used to reason the events occurring in a context (Saunders et al. 2016), it is not required for this kind of research to have a large sample. Indeed, the researcher prioritises the comprehensive understanding of different stories, for each person she will gain more in-depth and gradually uncover the hidden rationales behind academics' responses. As suggested by Warren (2002), the minimum number of interviews for a qualitative interview study to be published is from 20-30. Besides, one of the strategies to

justify sample sizes in qualitative research is ‘saturation’ which is commonly used by various qualitative researchers. Saturation is related to as a standard of sample size in qualitative research which occurs when no new information is received to count to the investigated theory (Malterud et al. 2016).

On the one hand, this is a useful tool to guide researchers to the effectiveness and efficiency of final results which answer the research questions without time waste on repetitive information. On the other hand, saturation is argued that using this tool as a ‘generic quality maker’ is not always appropriate as qualitative researchers are not always transparent about the achievement of saturation and to aim for exploration rather than generalisation, a full description of every aspect of the phenomenon is not necessary (Malterud et al. 2016, p. 1758). In this study, while saturation is employed as a lighthouse to the appropriate sample size, the researcher still keeps in mind that being able to answer the research questions and data quality is more important than the number of respondents (Malterud et al. 2016).

Various recent studies in the field use sample of 20 to 50. For example, Kalfa et al (2017) employ 20 participants to explore Australian academics’ response to managerial controls; Kothiyal et al. (2018) analyse 32 in-depth interviews to explore how Indian educators enact their identities in the period of rising research requirements; Harris et al. (2019) also interview 32 academics to analyse the experience of academics in contemporary neoliberal academia; Ratle et al. (2020) use 38 interviews to explore early-career academics’ experience of ‘targets and terror’ in academic profession; and Antoniadou and Quinlan (2021) examine the experience of academics in Cyprus through 23 interviews. An initial study based on the thesis published at *Studies at High Education* had 33 interviews to discuss about the participants’ identity work in response to the tensions between the practices of managerial controls and the influence of national culture. This thesis currently has 41 interviews which is appropriate with the above argument and can consolidate the findings and discussions.

Regarding data collection strategy, a purposive sampling approach is utilised to ensure ‘the processes being studied are most likely to occur’ (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p. 202) and achieve rich and thick understanding of the research enquiry. The use of purposive sampling is important in forming the participant selection and choosing appropriate methodology approaches (Kothiyal et al. 2018). Thus, this present study’s purposive sample includes participants who have experienced influences of managerial controls in their universities for a reasonable period of time. In fact, the author selected Vietnamese academics who had at least

one year actively working full time for Vietnamese universities. With regards to purposive sampling approach, snowball sampling, the most popular sampling technique (Noy 2008), was adopted. This strategy has a number of advantages. According to Noy (2008), the technique can enable to reveal the connectedness of individuals in networks, thus, the researcher will start with a small group and expand the informant population through contact information provided by the initial respondents. Additionally, the sampling, ‘a particularly informative procedure’ (Noy 2008), is potential in building trust with new interviewees. Trust is crucial in this present study’s participant recruitment which contributes to its completion because the author’s aim is to capture respondents’ real experiences of managerial controls imposed upon them and respondents need to be free to tell without worrying about their employment or personal benefits. Moreover, through interviewing the initial group, the researcher will develop her understanding about who can be potential and suitable to be interviewed after. Gradually, she will gain in-depth knowledge relating to interviewees’ interpretations of their own working life, identities and responses. Hence, participant recruitment is undertaken with regard to the accessing capacity as the researcher is introduced to participants through work and private relationships. The mix of academic participants across universities will be able to enhance the diversity of the sample, then improve the validity and reliability of the findings. The participants of this study are academics who were from 12 universities in the North, South and Middle of central Vietnam. Although the sample of this study is supposed to include academics of Vietnamese universities without discrimination, the interviews started with academics of three biggest universities of Vietnam, one of which was one of the highest-ranked universities in Vietnam, which also had a good relationship with Bournemouth University. More information of them is shown in the Appendix 3. Due to the ethical consideration, participants’ affiliation is not attached into this report as requested by the participants.

#### **4.3.4. Data collection**

This subsection presents the procedures of data collection after the author setting the clear targets of participant recruitment as discussed above. The first interviewees were related to the author as they were Vietnamese PhD candidates studying in the UK. From those initial interviews, the later respondents were introduced. The author also posted the recruitment on her Facebook personal account and some of the participants were referenced to her through personal relationships. The researcher contacted potential interviewees by email or Facebook messengers in which the participant information and consent form were attached. After hearing

back from them and having their consent to attend the interviews, the author arranged interviews at the time and by the means which were at their convenience. All interviews were undertaken one – to - one with participants with the highest privacy and audio recorded with their permission. To ensure all participants to have no risk of their employment, the author avoided recruiting participants from top-down relationships (asking managers to introduce their staff).

The interviews started with some warm-up chat to reassure the participants that their information and privacy were kept confidential. Interestingly, some participants showed their enthusiasm and interest in attending the research as not many studies like this had been done at the time of the interviews. The respondents' expression gave a very positive feeling to the researcher that the study would be not only a study to contribute to the literature but also to create opportunities for Vietnamese academics to talk about their career, feelings and professional difficulties. As mentioned above in this thesis, studies in Vietnamese higher education have mainly focused on developing effective management and curriculums (Nguyen et al. 2017; Tran et al. 2017) whilst academics' micro-voice has not received much of the attention.

During interviewing, the researcher took notes of key words or key answers so she could encourage participants to give more in-depth information of interesting points which could potentially contribute to the findings and discussion. The interviews' length is from 30-120 minutes with most of them lasting for over 60 minutes. The next sub-section provides further details of what questions the interviewees were asked and why those questions were made.

To achieve the research aim, the author follows the approach of studying academics' work life in the literature which use identity literature to articulate their findings and discussions (Teelken 2012; Clarke and Knights 2015; Alvesson and Spicer 2016; Knights and Clarke 2018; Bristow et al. 2019). Hence, the interview questions were designed to encourage respondents to tell their stories about how they made sense of their self-identities as academics and enacted their identity work in response to the practices of managerial controls.

As the study uses semi-structured interviews, the interview questions should be structured as open-ended and presented as the guide to both the interviewer and respondents (Flick 2014). In addition, the guide should be flexible and create room for the respondent's perspectives and topics apart from questions (Flick 2014). To encourage interviewees to share their stories with

in-depth information, the interviewer avoided to use the questions which would lead to yes or no answers. The interview protocol has three parts: 1. Introduction of the study, the researcher and the information the researcher is seeking for. 2. Questions about the respondent's career duration and work events associating with the practices of managerial controls. 3. Respondents' enquiries. Specifically, the second part as the main part of the protocol contains questions which encourage interviewees to share their experience of teaching, research and publishing and how such experience had elicited changes and justification within themselves in their organisational contexts. In addition, as the study aims to explore rather than testing theories, the question protocol was not fixed from the beginning to the end of the data collection process. In fact, it was developed after each interview until no new major enquiry emerged, which is also the significant signpost of data saturation (Malterud et al. 2016). Nevertheless, semi-structured interviews can be conducted with a significantly loose connection between the guide and the actually asked questions so the interviewees can be encouraged to talk in more details and fully around the subject (Bristow et al. 2017). To manage better the collected data, gain rich information and get familiar with the data during and after each interview, the author constantly took notes of her impressions towards the responses. The next sub-section will present how the collected data was analysed.

#### **4.3.5. Data analysis**

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of Vietnamese academics regarding the influences of managerial controls on their daily work. Hence, the focus of the research enquiry is to capture lived experiences of Vietnamese academics and interpret those experiences as their 'episodes of professional transition' through narrative practices and techniques (Hoyer and Steyaert 2015, p. 1844).

Narrative is one approach laid within interpretivism (McAlpine 2016). The approach has been used increasingly in social and organisational research (Rhodes and Brown 2005), education (McAlpine 2016), and specifically in studies of academics' identity construction (Ylijoki and Ursin 2013) and identity work in academia (Robinson et al. 2017). As argued by Rhodes and Brown (2005), narrative can bring the best value to studies of identity as it considers 'the many possible identities that organisational members can adopt and the ways in which particular identities strive for dominance' (p. 176).

Using narrative approach means the author brings within the focus of the research the participants' subjective experiences (Rhodes and Brown 2005) with regards to the influences of managerial controls and national culture; how participants perceived these experiences; and the complicating actions as well as evaluative aspects were showed (McAlpine 2016). Hence, the author treats interviews as narrative accounts (Hopwood and Paulson 2012) of life experiences (McAlpine et al. 2014) which contain certain events, feelings, images, stories and metaphors (Hopwood and Paulson 2012). During the analysis, the author paid attention on interviewees' use of direct speech, 'switched personal pronoun' and repetition (Corlett et al. 2019, p. 563).

Narrative approach can be used in different ways depending on researchers' research enquiries. Caddell and Wilder (2018) analyses narrative interviews on the artefacts including key events, physical items and photos combining with the associated explanation and narratives to explore various themes which shaped and impacted doctoral students' experience of creativity, perceived excellence and university work. McAlpine et al. (2014), in their longitudinal qualitative study, employ thematic analysis within narrative research as an analysis approach to examine the learning experiences of early-career academics. Brown et al. (2019) treat interviews with UK business school deans as identity narratives and consider the identity stories told by the deans reflecting the identities they constructed in their normal work settings with colleagues. Bristow et al. (2017) combine narrative approach and critical incident technique to capture the stories of the dialectics of resistance-compliance of early-career CMS academics. Although these leading scholars have their unique ways to articulate data analysis within narrative research, they share the use of thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis can be used to narrative enquiries (Saunders et al. 2019). Although there is a growth in using the term 'thematic narrative analysis' or 'narrative thematic analysis' in recent research of academic identity or in higher education (Fitzmaurice 2013; McCune 2021), it is not clear if these terms are identical. To avoid such ambiguity of methodology which requires separate research, this present study adopts the use of narrative approach and thematic approach to analyse the data set. According to Carr and Kelen (2021), two methodologies which are not the core of each other can be used to achieve research outcomes within one study. The authors employed observation to support the discourse analytic approach to provide 'a key insight into the context in which work happened' (p. 9). In the present study, the thematic method and narrative approach to analyse the raw data are used to support each other for rich

and in-depth understanding of participants' behaviours and perception of their work life. Narrative approach makes the story kept intact and allows the analysis to track the growth of participants' academic identities, organisational identification and consequential response to managerialism. Thematic method is used here to support a structural presentation of multiple stories which are told by multiple participants. Accordingly, rather than presenting one by one story to provide the findings of 41 stories, thematic method helps the researcher group similar ideas/opinions/phenomena into themes. By doing this, the present study adopts thematic method to report effectively the findings (McAlpine 2016) rather than coding interviews according to pre-defined categories/themes as in traditional thematic methodologies. Using thematic analysis in analysing narratives means that the focus is put on structure, content and form of the selected accounts (Corlett et al. 2019); or in other words, on the *what narrative is told* rather than *how it is constructed* (Riessman 2005). In contrast to traditional thematic analysis, which analyses and organises findings from 'component themes across cases' (Riessman 2008, p. 53), the 'ultimate goal' of using thematic analysis bound within narratives is that idiosyncratic account of experience is preserved (McAlpine 2016, p. 36) and narrative analyst must pay attention on 'the chronological sequence and contextual background of the [identified] themes' (Saunders et al. 2019, p. 675).

By using this data analysis method, the researcher first looked at individual cases, followed their professional stories and focused 'on the content of narratives to elicit the common themes that emerged from the interviews' (Fitzmaurice 2013, p. 616), which means after the analysis of individual stories, the author found patterns across individuals (McAlpine 2016). Following individual cases to construct analysis, the researcher is interested in the interviewees' life experiences at work in the past, present (what they are trying to do) and their hopes in the future (who and what they want to become) (McAlpine 2016). The following part presents in more details how the data was analysed.

Following the inductive and exploratory approach, the researcher started the processes of data analysis after the first three interviews were done rather than waiting until the completion of data collection. Accordingly, the first three interviews were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVIVO software and coded. This initial process of coding and analysis was helpful for the researcher to recognise relevant literature for further analysis and discussions. For example, the initial research interest surrounded the impacts of managerial controls on academics' identity and identity work, however, the influences of national culture started to emerge



dramatically in the participants' stories. The author then went back to the literature of national culture and covered this piece of literature to develop the understanding of broader context where the phenomenon resided. In addition, by analysing the first few interviews, the researcher learned more about developing the techniques of making questions and encouraging interviewees to share their stories at length.

After the author was satisfied with the number of interviews and found the data set ready for analysis, all of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVIVO. To avoid the loss of meaning occurring within the translation process (Boussebaa and Brown 2017), the author coded in Vietnamese and only the quotes used for presentation in the thesis were translated into English. The author read one-by-one interview and open-coded every sentence told by the participants. Correspondingly, each excerpt of each interview was coded with a few words covering the meaning of the excerpts which were also the category headings. This action is also regarded as labelling in other studies (Kolsaker 2008; Soliman et al. 2019). By doing this, the author gained short/extract versions of the participants' stories which assisted the interpretive purposes by keeping the stories intact (Fitzmaurice 2013) while supporting the overall understanding of the data set. After this round, the first order list (Aguinis and Solarino 2019) of the empirical data's code with descriptions, events and perceptions (Locke 2001) were produced. The codes in the first order list were read through again to allow more chances to discard, collapse and integrate them (Brown and Coupland 2015) in the next round.

At the completion of the initial coding in NVIVO, coding was moved to the second round which is the refining round. At this stage of coding, the author identified overlapping codes and removed insignificant category headings. All of these actions were to refine the big number of the codes from the first round of data analysis, which helped the data report become coherent and consistent with the research questions. For overlapping codes, the author merged the excerpts into categories. For example, in the first round, there were headings of 'passion and professional achievement' and 'passion for academic work'. The excerpts of these category headings were merged into 'passion for academic work'. In terms of removing insignificant categories, the author identified categories which were not related to the focus of this present study. The codes of these category headings were not totally deleted but moved into a bigger category of 'unrelated themes/codes'. This precarious action can be useful for future analysis and publications.

The next round of coding was conducted associating with concepts covered in literature review which were managerial-related identity and managerial-related identity work. These categories were the broadest and most general groups of codes. Correspondingly, the codes categorised into managerial-related identity represented the respondents' narratives of their self-meanings (e.g. 'I introduce myself as a university academic', 'my responsibility is'). The identity narratives of Vietnamese academics in this study were analysed according to the subjective definitions of academic identity as covered in literature review and evidence from the respondents' responses. The codes categorised into managerial-related identity work corresponded to the interviewees' narratives of their processes of defining, amending, affirming and developing personal identity (e.g. 'I have to follow it', 'I have to meet those requirements'). In each of these two broader categories, there were sub-categories which specifically contained the excerpts representing the experiences of the respondents with other actors (managers, colleagues, students, and scholar community).

Also, at this round of coding, significantly emerging from the interviewees' stories was the themes showing the influences of national culture, which led the author's additional focus on this aspect. Accordingly, the focus on cultural influences on the relation between managerialism and academics' identity and identity work emerged during an iterative process of data analysis (Corlett et al. 2019) and rereading the transcripts. Following interpretive approach, these themes were grouped and interpreted regarding both overt and covert meanings, which required more interpretation to make sense of the meanings (Patton 2015) in respondents' stories in cases that culture was not mentioned clearly in their words. The example for this emergence of cultural influences follows. Overtly, P34 mentioned the strong influence of culture in her processes of identity work: 'I see that Vietnamese culture values social relationships'. By contrast, the cultural feature of power distance (Hofstede 1980a) was interpreted by the researcher in P39's story: 'I cannot say, who would I say to? It cannot be changed, changes must be made from the higher (management)'. Although the themes produced from data analysis are grouped in separate categories, they are rather inter-related (Corlett et al. 2019) for the need to construct coherent narratives in reporting the research results.

In addition to the main themes identified from interviewees' narratives, there was an emergent theme which contributed to the empirical understanding of the context. This additional theme was named as the general stories of Vietnamese academia.

In reporting the findings of the study, the author produced two chapters of empirical findings to answer two research questions:

- (1) How have managerialist controls impacted Vietnamese academics' role practice at work?**
- (2) How does national culture influence Vietnamese academics' work in the period of managerialism?**

The first empirical chapter, to answer the first research question, focuses on reporting participants' narratives of their experiences regarding the impacts of managerialist controls on their daily practice of role at work (Figure 2). In this chapter, the reported themes are (1) the narratives of Vietnamese academia; (2) the impacts of managerialist controls on academics' identity; (3) the direct impacts of managerialist controls on academics' identity work through policies and regulations; (4) the indirect impacts of managerialist controls on academics' identity work through the interactions of respondents with their managers, colleagues, students and scholar community.

The second empirical chapter, to answer the second research question, reports respondents' narratives of the perceived influences of national culture in their processes of identity work as well as their stories of how they enacted identity work in response to the dual influences of national culture and managerialist controls. This chapter includes two broad themes: (1) national culture in relation with managerialist identity regulation (Figure 3); (2) broadening self-meanings as strategic identity work in response to changes in work life (Figure 4).

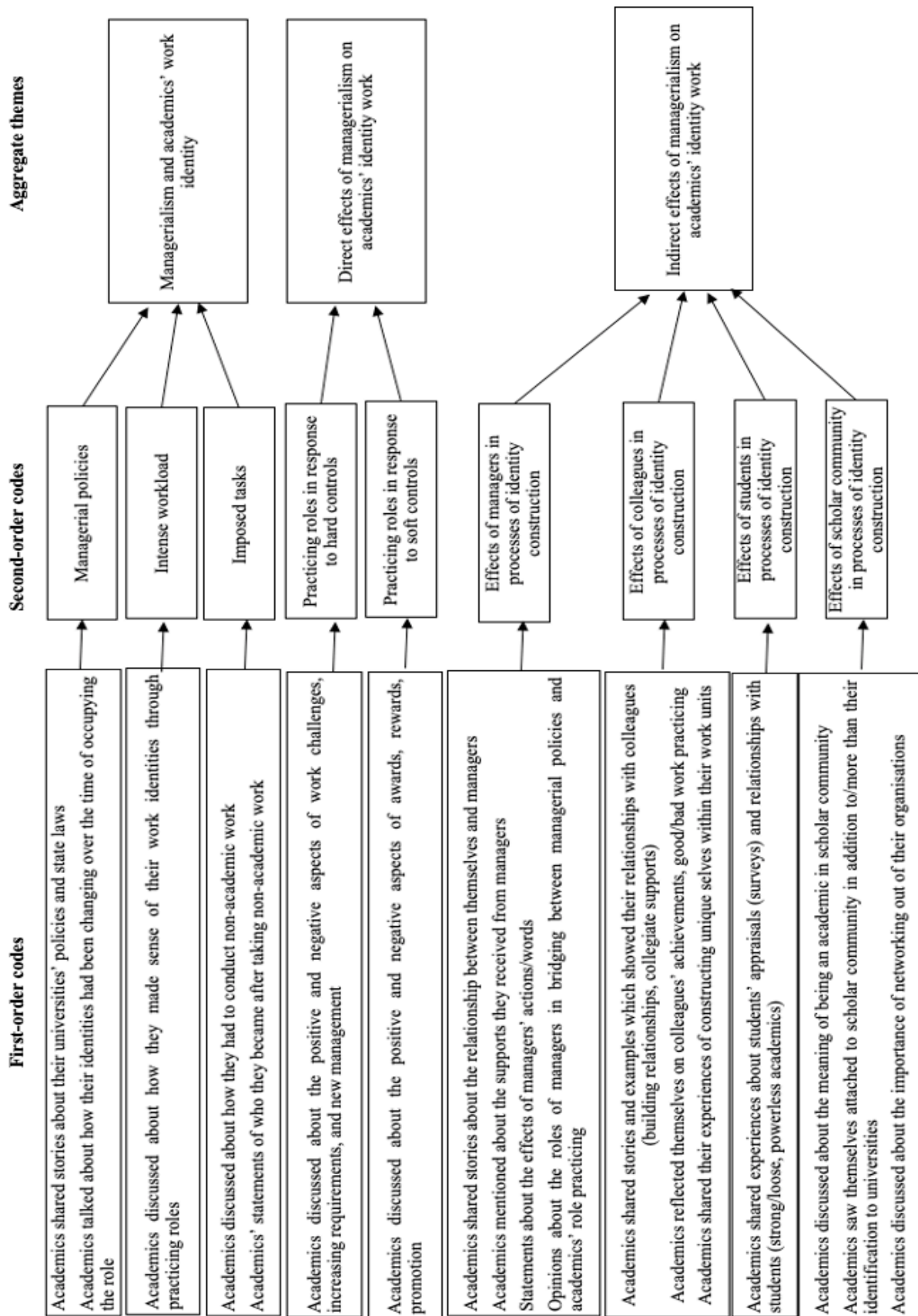


Figure 2: Coding Tree – Managerial controls and academic identity and identity work

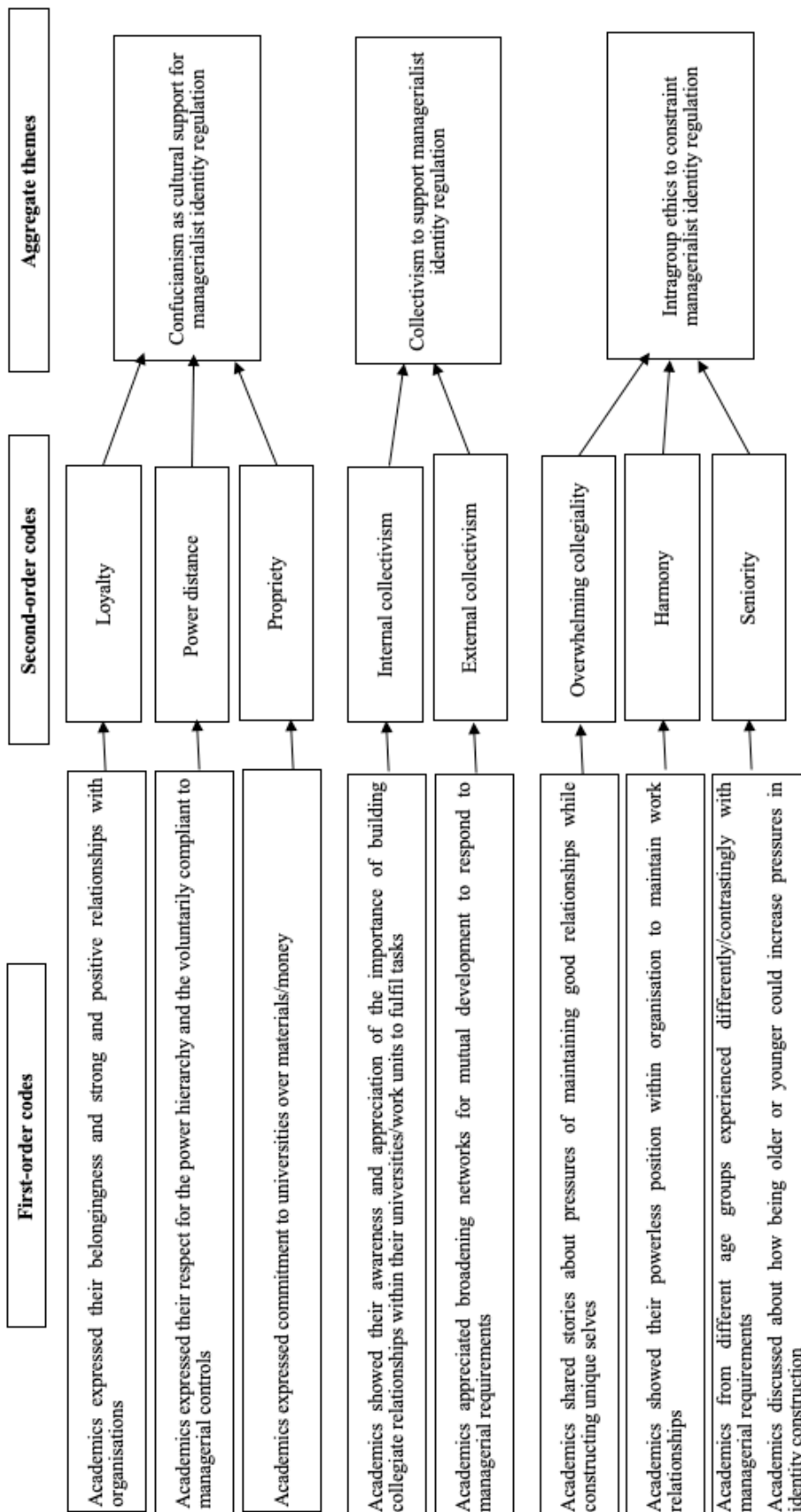


Figure 3: Coding Tree – The effects of Vietnamese national culture

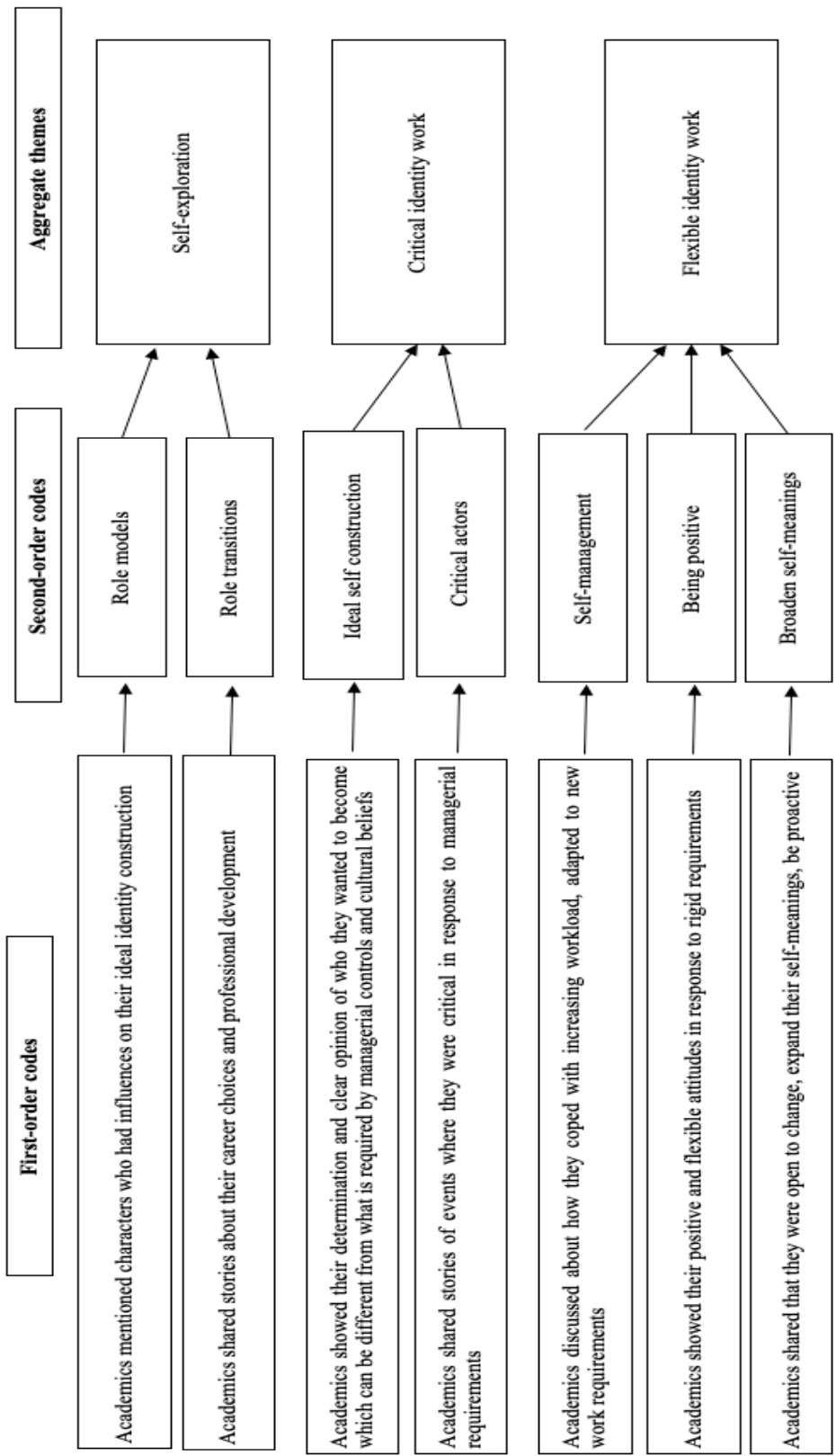


Figure 4: Coding Tree – Vietnamese academics’ identity work in response to the effects of national culture and managerial controls

#### **4.4. Research quality**

In this study, the term ‘quality’ has been referred equally to ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The author adopts framework of Lincoln and Guba (1985) to assess the quality of the current interpretive research and to claim the author’s effort in overcoming bias in semi-structured interviews that can result from interviewer (attempt to impose her own beliefs through the interview questions or bias interpretation of responses), interviewee (provide partial picture of what needs to be explored), and participation (the nature of the interviewed individuals or organisations) (Saunders et al. 2016). According to Grant and Lincoln (2021), the theorising of qualitative research quality frameworks is not to bring one above the others or to claim there is the only one. The adoption of the framework developed by Lincoln and Guba in this current study is based on the long acceptance among qualitative scholars in various fields (Netta 2018; Grant and Lincoln 2021) and the author’s own justification of the framework’s suitability regarding time efficiency.

Quality of an interpretive research can be achieved through the four widely-adopted criteria developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Relatively, credibility regards the accuracy and richness of the research’s findings. Credibility is also consistent with how believable the findings are. Confirmability refers to findings interpretation which should be reasonable and fair. To achieve credibility and confirmability, the author adopted member checking and peer discussion as the efficient strategies ensuring the adequate reflection of the interviewees’ narratives and the faithfulness of the data (Madill and Sullivan 2018). Although the study was done mostly by the author herself, some stages of the data analysis involved a number of scholars. Before the completion of this thesis, the author had one conference report and one peer-reviewed publication, both of these papers were related consistently with the thesis and the data used in these papers were extracted from this present thesis’s data analysis. After all of the stages of data analysis and themes were developed, the author discussed all of the themes with her supervisors and co-authors (of the published paper and the conference paper). Correspondingly, the author presented her themes and corresponding interpretation of the data analysis to those scholars, the quotes used and the narratives she was going to construct to answer the research questions. Those scholars, then, checked if the interpretation was consistent with the meanings delivered in the stories (Jones et al. 2021).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can be applied in different contexts (Given and Saumure 2008; Korstjens and Moser 2018). Transferability can be achieved through data collection, which, in this study, is referred to purposive and snowball sampling; the audience have the informative accounts of the participants and the context where this research locates its enquiry so those reading this research can take it as a reference in researching or having suggestions for their own contexts. Dependability is regarded to the traceable and logical procedures. Correspondingly, the processes of coding and producing themes as well as research approach and methods were presented clearly throughout this chapter.

Nevertheless, although the study is conducted with the high level of trustworthiness, an interpretive research in social science 'is the practice of a craft' (Mills 1970) containing 'imagination, flair, creativity and an aesthetic sense' (Watson 1994, p. 78). The researcher, accordingly, is a creative representer who makes representations carrying her world and who and what is presented (Brown and Coupland 2015; Boussebaa and Brown 2017). As the researcher is the one who conducted all of the processes to produce this present study, she engaged herself with the body of literature which underpinned the interpretation of the findings, interacted with participants, and used to work in the researched context<sup>8</sup>. Her interpretations of the collected stories, hence, are likely to be discrepant from the understanding of her supervisors, peer scholars or those who read the study. Although this dissonance is minimised by the clear presentation of studying procedures, it cannot be totally eliminated.

#### **4.5. Ethical considerations**

Ethical principles are considered seriously and strictly in producing this study. Before the author started her project, she had to consider to herself how she could achieve her findings ethically and all the circumstances which might influence the ethical principles. First and foremost, the author was aware that her study focused on the bottom-up voice of Vietnamese universities' staff who were considered as vulnerable and powerless. Hence, the researcher had to prepare the best procedures to make sure all personal information unable to be revealed. Her plan started from learning about how to interview participants without leaking their important information during the interviews. Then, the researcher had to do a good research about ethical

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<sup>8</sup> The researcher worked as an academic in Vietnamese academy of Politics before she started her PhD in Bournemouth University, UK.



requirements published in the Research Ethics Code of Practice by Bournemouth University. She had to complete the ethics e-module and passed the associated test in 2016.

Before officially starting the data collection, the author prepared for the ethical assessment to apply to the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Panel and the assessment was approved on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2018. The application included participant information sheet and participant agreement form. These documents are attached in the Appendices 1 and 2 of this thesis.

The ethical considerations are regarded to the procedures of methodology, research design, conduct, dissemination, archiving, future use and sharing of data produced. Although the producing of this study is vitally dependent on the participation of Vietnamese academics and the author is really grateful for their consent to attend the research, their voluntary participation is also important. After receiving their responses of agreeing to join the research, the author sent each participant an email in which the participant information sheet and participant agreement form were attached. The consent to take part into the research was then achieved in two ways: the participants signed the form and sent back to the researcher; or the researcher achieved the participants' consents at the beginning of interviews. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the researcher tried to provide the best convenience for the participants as they were in different countries; therefore, printing, signing, taking photo/scanning, attaching and sending the form back to the researcher appeared as such an exhausting process. Secondly, some participants were reluctant to sign physically on the forms, which also occurred in a previous study about academics in Vietnamese context (Le 2016). The explanation for this is that participants were concerned about information leaking and anonymous issue (Le 2016).

The anonymity and confidentiality were taken care strictly following the current Data Protection in the UK. After the interviews finished, the respondents were offered to review their transcripts. All of the participants did not have any concerns about their answers. In fact, there were participants who were not willing for the author to reach them again, which is understandable and respected by the author. The interviews were then listened again by the author to make sure that no personal information was involved, or the participants were detectable. To ensure the full anonymity, participants' affiliations are not attached into this report as requested by the participants (Cohen et al. 2011). In addition, although the study's data collection employs snowball sampling, which means participants can be introduced by the previous participants, a strategy was applied to assure no risk occurred. Accordingly, the

previous participant who introduced one or more of their colleagues/relatives/friends to take part into the study were not informed if the introduced people were chosen to be interviewed and when the interviews were taken place. The latter participant was not informed if the previous participant took part into the study. At the end of the study, there was no participant wishing to withdraw from the study.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

In summary, this is a qualitative study which follows the interpretivism paradigm and the author is an interpretivist. The author employed 41 Vietnamese academics from 12 Vietnamese universities locating in the North, the Middle and the South of the country. Purposive and snowball sampling were used as the strategies for data collection. In answering the research question with rich information, thematic analysis of respondents' narratives were employed. The findings are presented into two empirical chapters associating with the discussions for each chapter. Following is the presentation of the study's findings and discussions.

## **Chapter 5: Findings and discussion (Part 1)**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The aim of this study is to explore the impacts of managerialism upon Vietnamese academics' work life with the focus on how they identify their self-meanings and construct their academic identities in response to the practices of managerial controls. This chapter is constructed to answer the research question:

**How do practices of managerialist controls influence Vietnamese academics' work life, in the context of Vietnamese higher education?**

The first part of this chapter presents the overview of Vietnamese higher education landscape emerged from the interviewees' stories. It is an interesting and, to some extent, important part which provides the understanding of the sector in real stories, not in policies. Following the overview section, the second part will present data relating to the impacts of managerial controls on academic identity and their identity work. Managerial controls involve both direct and indirect influences. The former relates to managerial policies' impacts on how the interviewed academics constructed their identities and engaged into processes of identity work as individuals. The latter is referred to how managerial controls influence academics' identity work through managers' roles, collegial relationships, students, and scholar community, which reflects academics as the social selves.

### **5.2. The first impression of Vietnamese academia**

In chapter 2, the picture of Vietnamese academia in the period of managerialist controls was delineated through the analysis of current legal documents and recent research on the changes in Vietnamese academia. In this chapter, stories of the interviewed academics are added to enrich our knowledge of the system from academics' perspective. Emerging from the stories of this study's respondents, the practices of managerialism in Vietnamese universities appear to have distinctive traits regarding the *flexibility in management style* and *the low level of work pressures* which contrast with the rigidity and prevalent work pressures recorded in the previous studies regarding managerialist academia (Teelken 2012; Knights and Clarke 2018; Bristow et al. 2019). In addition, there are more stories about the difficulties Vietnamese universities and academics have to deal with in their daily operation.

### 5.2.1. Flexibility in management style

Regulations stated in law and other legal documents present a picture of hard rules being introduced, but participants emphasised that their universities in Vietnam were *flexible in practicing the regulations of academic work* which allows academics to allocate their time and resources between these functions so that academics could meet the job requirements while being able to go along with universities' plans.

Some participants highlighted that the flexibility of management related to managers' sympathy for academic staff's individual situations:

*'In my university, academics can propose their priority between teaching and research to managers. Some academics can suggest having more teaching tasks to increase their income'* (P6)

As mentioned in second chapter, academics' incomes came from two sources (for those who work in state universities). The first source is paid by government and classed as basic salary. The second source comes from overtime teaching hours (tăng giờ) and is consistent with universities' finance autonomy (revenue). In some cases, academics are keener on extra teaching hours, which means research requirements are sometimes not fulfilled. Depending on individual needs, universities' managers allowed academics to convert some extra hours of teaching into research time so that the research requirement is met (P17):

*'In fact, my university is very flexible. It is possible that research hours can be less than teaching hours, which means it can be exchanged, those who teach more can do less research; those who focus on research can teach less. So, it would not be a problem.'* (P17)

In addition, some participants highlighted the flexibility in management regarding individual capacity:

*'I can tell them honestly that I have limit capacity in doing the assigned tasks and my managers always understand and encourage me to try. If I still could not do it, they will assign it to someone else'* (P20).

In some cases, universities understand that research and publication are not easy. Thus, they established various ways for academics to contribute with their research. The practice of managerial controls in such cases are more encouraging than forcing:

*'My university does not force me, instead they encourage me, in many ways, to contribute into research. It is not all about writing papers and getting them published. I can help my students with their research projects or attending conferences.'* (P13).

### **5.2.2. The low level of pressures**

By contrast to the commonly reported pressures in academic work in previous studies regarding publication or audit culture (Caddell and Wilder 2018; Dugas et al. 2020), the low level of pressures in Vietnamese academics' daily work was told by the present study's participants. The less intense pressures in Vietnamese academia can be seen as consistent to the development of the sector and practices of managerialism. As mentioned in chapter 2 about Vietnamese academia, managerialism in Vietnam academia can only be traced back in early 2000s while it has been practiced in academia in the UK and America since 1990s (Deem and Brehony 2005). Before managerialism, Vietnamese academia was subsidised by the state and research was not their key function; the quality in both teaching and research was considered as low and change-resistant. The curriculum used to be remained through generations and knowledge was limited within official textbooks. P10 shared:

*'When research was not counted as key function, lecturers even delivered their lectures with some textbooks from my father's generation. There was no renovation.'*

As the expansion of the whole system, research has become significant in Vietnamese higher education, students require high quality of lectures, universities have committed to various quality programmes and international standards. Vietnamese academics have become familiar with several indexes such as ISI, Scopus or accreditation:

*'There is a trend of getting published on Scopus'* (P10)

However, in reference to the flexibility in management, the interviewed academics experienced the steady changes in work requirements which, to them, were acceptable and adaptable or, as in their words, *'not yet as tough as in developed countries'* (P17).

Additionally, low pressures in work requirements can also derive from the developing system. In recent studies on academics' work life, academics' prevalent pressures are showed as deriving mostly from publication requirements (Cederström and Hoedemaekers 2012; Knights and Clarke 2014; Bristow et al. 2019). However, Vietnamese universities are aware that they cannot push their staff too hard as many academics are not able to meet international standards or universities have a lack of staff who need to focus on teaching as their priority:

*'At the moment, our system still has many staff who cannot meet international standards. Maybe in 20 years'* (P17)

*'We even do not have enough staff for teaching activities, how can we have resource for research? There might be some differences in 10 years.'* (P19).

Interviewed academics described the changes in their universities as steady and slow which they have not felt much of pressures:

*'I can see changes, but they are gradual. They are not significant changes'* (P25)

The slow moves in academia, to some extent, provide opportunities for not leaving anyone behind, which is considered as *humane*:

*'The changes in this university are step-by-step and slowly because we have different generations of academics. Thus, these steady changes help academics adapt better'* (P3)

### **5.2.3. The tensions of managerial controls in Vietnamese academia - the frustrated research-oriented aims.**

It seems that practices of managerial controls in Vietnamese academia have been undertaken mindfully by managers regarding flexible management style and low pressures of work requirements. Despite that, in this section the findings are presented with respondents' stories about various difficulties they have experienced in delivering their tasks. The first difficulty relates to the obstacles to achieving managerial targets. The second difficulty relates to balancing labour between teaching, research and other tasks.

### *Obstacles to achieving managerial targets*

First of all, the participants emphasised one of the obstacles to universities' targets of developing their research activities due to *a lack of supports for research* such as encouragement and financial supports, which can demotivate academics to undertake research. In most cases, universities in Vietnam still tend to prioritise teaching although they claim that they are research-oriented university:

*'Oh no, my university focus more on teaching than research. Maybe 70% for teaching and 30% for research although they say they focus on research but really they do not'* (P34)

Sometimes the obstacles derive from universities' strategies to allocate their resources:

*'They (university) only focus on those which have potential resources, they do not treat every research equally. For example, if someone has good relationships with other potential professors or PhDs, university will support them to go further otherwise, people have to develop by themselves without much of support'* (P34)

Being in a similar situation, P15 highlighted the obstacles for her departmental members to achieve the research requirements as the university prioritised other departments but she also emphasised on the proactiveness of the academics in her department in outsourcing which can support their research:

*'My department is not supported in research by the university as much as linguistics departments. In my department, we need to rely on the networks established by returned academics from abroad...For example, it is not easy for academics in my department to get (financial) support from the university if we want to attend international conferences. It means we lack support policies for research in departments which are not linguistics departments'* (P15)

In addition, there might be *disruptions* in academics' processes of identity work. Academics who want to work more on research might get involved in various administration process which sometimes can be a hassle:

*'In Vietnam, there is a lack of supports. Thus, academics feel tired when they undertake research, they feel wasting their time on research for filling in a lot of paperwork, process of funding allocation or assessment. They feel tired of such irritating processes, thus, they do not want to continue'. (P22)*

Others spoke of their concerns about financial issues as the main reason for their hesitance of doing research, especially for universities' sake:

*'Honestly if I want to do research, I have to use my own money because if I only used University's fund, it would just result in rubbish research. So, I have to consider if it is worth to spend my money (on research) because it is the money that I want to provide my family. Should I use the money for my family or for proving myself in career? However, if I do research for companies, they pay me money. It is also research and it brings money to me' (P37)*

It is important to look at what P37 told us. He highlighted what it was meant to be research. In another piece of talk, he mentioned that what he needed to do as an academic was research and teaching. However, here he made it clear that doing research was not always about publication. Even, hidden behind his words 'for proving myself in career', he meant research in university was just proving his work identity which to him was not as important as providing for his family. Thus, the role of management to support academics while they make decisions in their everyday work is very important. For example, if universities can prove to academics that 'it is worth' to do research for universities, they might choose differently.

#### *Balancing labour between teaching, research and other tasks*

Regarding the second sort of difficulties, interviewed academics reported how hard it was to allocate their time for research and teaching as well as other tasks. Previous studies recorded that academics in Australia had to carve out time to fulfil requirements and accomplish their assigned tasks (Anderson 2006). In Vietnam, although the context is not the same, universities still have experienced similar issue. On one hand, Vietnamese universities have been financially autonomous, which means they have to compete against each other to attract more students and external funds. As a result, teaching as the main tool to expand revenue cannot be neglected. On the other hand, to meet international standards and catch up with other neighbour countries (Malaysia, China, or Thailand), research is necessary and also mandatory by law. In



fact, according to participants, universities prioritise teaching while putting pressures on academics to get publication. Such tension from managerialism has caused tiredness:

*'They require academics to get publication. They have regulations about teaching and research but in fact they assign too much teaching. Most of the time, after long hours of teaching, my mind is empty, really tired, I cannot think about research'* (P39)

And consequently, academics felt like their identities were changed:

*'I teach so much. My colleagues, they even have thousands of teaching hours a year. They become teaching workers rather than academics'* (P39)

Academics were under pressures of balancing between different tasks to hold their academic identity:

*'My pressure is all about balancing between my time for teaching and my time for research'* (P7)

However, they sometimes might be left with frustration:

*'The sad news is in Vietnam, I cannot balance...I have to do my management tasks and teach...I have too much to do. Therefore, I cannot balance to save time for research.'* (P22)

For those who found research as their neglected tasks, their big hope was slowing down, reducing workload and having chance (or time) to fulfil their identity by doing more research:

*'In the future, I will need to consider and negotiate if university can reduce my teaching workload so I can put more attention on research'* (P16)

Briefly, the emphasis here is that the claim as 'research-oriented aim' of Vietnamese universities cannot make them become 'research-oriented universities' due to the conflicts in management. To construct their desired organisational identity, it needs the combination of universities clear aims, practices of those aims, how academics define themselves within their universities (e.g., Do they define themselves as research oriented or teaching oriented academics) and real organisational behaviours (conducted by their members). For the two latter, they become necessary as organisational identity is argued to be constructed through the

determination of organisation's members about what it is and what it desires to become (Whetten and Mackey 2002). Thus, when academics still perceive themselves as 'teaching-oriented academics' (either by themselves or through their imposed tasks), universities will struggle to achieve their desired organisational identity.

### **5.3.The impacts of managerialist controls on academics' work identity**

One of the enquiries of this study is exploring how academics see themselves under the influence of managerial instruments. In literature, the conceptualisation of academic identity has not gained a consensus and appeared as fragmented. Following the work of Martin et al. (2020) in line with major literature on identity construction (Alvesson and Willmott 2002), the findings on how managerialism impacts academics' sense of self will be analysed in accordance to a combination between institutional discourses and everyday practices. In this section of findings, the author will present how academics' identities are influenced by managerial controls with regards to managerial policies as identity regulation and academics' daily assigned tasks.

#### **5.3.1. Managerial policies as the source of academics' work identity**

All of the interviewed academics defined their academic identities in accordance with regulations on their professional tasks. Mainly from their narratives, academics emphasised that they constructed their self-meanings as an academic towards their assigned tasks regarding teaching and researching:

*'It (academic profession) is different from other professions, I am assigned to do teaching and researching...it is the regulation about academic profession' (P3)*

As consistently incorporating the managerial definition into her academic identity (to be an academic, it is standard to be active in both teaching and research), one academic claimed that she was not yet an academic, she defined herself as teaching fellow because she had not fulfilled her research tasks. Teaching fellow is not an option in Vietnamese academic profession as every academic has to do both of the tasks. The participant referred to the term 'teaching fellow' as used in the UK's academia to describe her situation:

*'I have not done much research. I mostly do teaching activities. As we know in the UK, it is called teaching fellow. So, I have not got to the academic status' (P18)*

Some academics showed their concern about not fulfilling managerial requirements, which can actually impact significantly on their self-esteem:

*‘My University is really strict...I think I am pushed to work appropriately with the standards because I am worried about my ‘face’, I am scared that my name would be shown publicly’ (P35)*

‘face’, in a great extent, is a common sense of self-esteem in Vietnamese society. The study of Nguyen (2015) suggests that the motivation of ‘saving face’ can influence academics’ behaviours and thinking regarding their daily professional practices. In this study, ‘saving face’ can be a motive of identity work as the interviewed academic implied that she had to fulfil the requirements strictly to avoid losing her ‘face’. Academics also implied in their narratives that the meanings given through the regulation by their university and government were widely accepted in academic society, which means they found it more reasonable to incorporate those meanings into their self-identities:

*‘I think it (managerial requirement on research) is reasonable. It can be hard, we can find it really hard to get but we still have to do it...I think it is still standards, international standards, we cannot exclude ourselves out of that international trend. It (Vietnamese standards) must get to that point, we cannot delay forever’ (P19)*

### **5.3.2. The teaching worker**

In this stance, academics revealed how their sense of selves was affected through the reality of their daily professional work. The findings here show that there is some difference between what academics see themselves and define their professional tasks according to managerial policies (who they are meant to be and who they want to be), and what they see themselves regarding their daily professional practices (who they actually become). Here are some examples of how academics defined themselves in everyday practice and how they explicated their feelings towards some certain extent. Some interviewed academics defined themselves overtly as ‘teaching worker’:

*‘I teach so much. Some of my colleagues even undertake thousands of teaching quota. They become teaching worker, not academics...’ (P39)*

Another interviewed academic clearly perceived the discrepancy between her expected identity and her reality:

*'I really want to balance between teaching and research. I can't be an academic if I only do teaching, it is 'worker', academics must do research. However, due to this organisational arrangement, it is 7-3 (out of 10) proportion, 7 parts for teaching and 3 parts for research.'* (P7)

It is obvious that interviewed academics were not happy with the discrepancy in the processes of their identity construction. Moreover, it is not only the unbalanced academic tasks which can cause identity discrepancy, in the following instance, academics also highlighted different effects on their academic identity from other non-academic tasks assigned by managerial system.

### **5.3.3. Non-academic tasks and academic identity**

Since universities have expanded their services with a limited workforce and cost cutting, in everyday work, Vietnamese academics - especially young academics – have to undertake many more extras including non-academic tasks. Having told that academics even did not have enough time to practice their core tasks (teaching and research), so how do such extras impact their sense of selves? This study is not the first and the only one which has recorded that academics have to perform administration and other extra tasks as this has been reported in the studies of Anderson (2006), Kalfa et al. (2017), or Smith and Smith and Ulus (2020). However, this study holds exclusive evidence that academics do not merely have negative attitude but also have positive attitudes towards the matter. Accordingly, there were two schools of thoughts among the interviewed academics regarding the impacts of non-academic tasks on their academic identities. One is those who have no issue with doing non-academic tasks and one is those who are strongly against non-academic tasks. They also explained their interesting points.

The first group generally related non-academic tasks to their professional tasks. To them, all work within academia can support each other, which means their academic work can also benefit from those tasks. One academic said about her willingness to do such tasks:

*'Frankly, those (non-academic) tasks didn't really affect my main job, people mainly do it voluntarily...Because I have professional knowledge about those activities (her research field is marketing and the University asked her to run marketing campaigns to attract new students), so I supported my department. It did not really affect my professional work as those campaigns were mainly run during summer holidays...those (campaign activities) also benefit my professional knowledge about marketing' (P16)*

Another participant shared the similar thought:

*'Although it (doing non-academic work) really affects my research time, it still has its own benefit. The benefit is that when I do accreditation, I will understand, for example, before I developed curriculum, but I did not do it systematically, I mean I only have professional knowledge about electronics then I develop curriculum of electronics...Thus, when I do this, it is like I get to learn education management and how to educate and manage (the curriculum) efficiently. It involves more details about teaching methods. Generally, it is hard work, but it is very beneficial...'* (P21)

It is possible to highlight an implication that if academics can engage the imposed non-academic work to their processes of identity construction, they would not mind the negative impacts. In addition, academics also showed their flexibility to construct, develop and maintain their identity. To the interviewed academics, they can convert different activities into parts of their processes of identity construction. For example, they converted the achieved knowledge from doing non-academic tasks into experiences which can support their professional activities. It is interesting to discuss about this finding that identity work can involve various activities which might not be consistent to the core meanings of self (teaching and research), depending on how academics translate the meanings of such activities.

By contrast, the second group showed their strong disagreement to non-academic work as their processes of identity work were disrupted dramatically. One academic talked about herself and her colleagues:

*'As I said, it means if we do something more than our main work, we will forget what our main duties are. And in fact, in my department, there are many people like that, they have been distracted from their primary work, teaching and researching. There are some people who have never researched, never written a paper, never done*

*anything like that, because they always teach and do other stuff. They think they have got contributions, done some work so they do not have to do that work (research and publication). They have forgotten their main duty' (P34)*

She also added that being distracted from her main work made her feel unethical if she became an unknowledgeable academic:

*'This (academic) quality, in my opinion, is not only academics' quality, but also academic morals. I mean when I go on my lectures, first of all I have to be good then I can teach my students good things. It is irresponsible if I have to abandon my main work for other stuff because my lectures are not completed' (P34)*

Another academic emphasised on the negative impacts of non-academic tasks on her feeling for work:

*'Those sorts of (non-academic) work usually make me feel so emotionally exhausted' (P9)*

Briefly, this section has presented how managerialist practices in Vietnamese universities have influenced academics' self-identities. It is similar in the participants' narratives that managerialist controls can develop or disrupt academics' sense of self, which also means that academics' self-definition, to some extent, can be significantly influenced by managerial policies and practices.

#### **5.4. Managerialist controls' direct impacts on academics' identity work**

This section of data presentation is going to report the direct influences of managerialism on academics' identity work through narrating the participants' experiences of some typical managerial tools and their opinions about such tools' impacts on their identity work. From the stories of the interviewed academics, they were clear about what tools were efficient and effective, and what were not. Managerial tools as discussed in this study have been reported in previous empirical studies on managerialism and academics' identity work. Clarke and Knights (2015) conceptualise such tools as technologies of power through which discipline can be done 'as an economy of power without force' (p.1872) and specific behaviours are rewarded or penalised through norms, observation and the examination (Clarke and Knights 2015). Findings of this present study report not only multitudes of hard controls such as the application

of observation in combination with examination, but also various forms of soft controls including common forms of promotion such as academics awards and managerial instruments to nurture self-discipline. The findings report two nuances of academics' experiences and opinions on managerialist controls in their universities: hard controls and soft controls.

#### 5.4.1. Hard controls

Following Trow's (1994) hard conception of managerialism which emphasises on 'the continuing force' (p13) to steadily improve the provision of higher education, hard controls are described in this study as the tools which need to be followed and are applied to normalise academics' behaviours or identity work. Where there are hard controls, penalisation is expected as the outcome of resistant behaviours. However, is hard control always perceived as negative and pessimistic?

*Hard controls - The more appreciated 'in theory'*

In Vietnamese academia, penalisation is used popularly with regards to staff ranking and salary:

*'About 6-7 years now, X University has issued requirement framework on research standards. If (academics) cannot meet those standards...If (academics) do not have publications, it is considered as task missing, (they) will not be nominated for 'lao dong tien tien'<sup>9</sup>' (P3)*

The managerial instruments mentioned by P3 were also told by other interviewed academics. It is interesting here that they seemed to appreciate hard controls due to the promising efficiency those kinds of hard controls being applied:

*'In the nature of such activities, I think they are necessary managerial tools, the target is improving quality, it is very good. I think it is also some pressure upon academics, so they need to endeavour and enhance their quality' (P19)*

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<sup>9</sup> One of the traditional rewarding systems in Vietnamese public sector is named 'Thi đua – Khen thưởng' (Emulation – Rewarding) which contains three grades: satisfactory employees (hoàn thành nhiệm vụ), progressive employees (lao động tiên tiến) and outstanding employees (chiến sĩ thi đua).

Interestingly, none of the interviewed academics disagreed with the application of research and teaching requirements. They even expected for higher requirements:

*'I'm a person who enjoys working over<sup>10</sup> pressures. I would like more research hours so that academics can have more pressure (to work)' (P6)*

*Hard controls – the less appreciated 'in practice'*

By contrast to the participants' compliments on the application of hard controls 'in theory', the picture of hard controls in practice was critique as ineffective and inefficient. Such ineffective and inefficient hard controls were mentioned as the inappropriate force of publication and observation through administrative management. P24 critiqued two sides of research policy:

*'An academic needs to complete 500 (research) hours, for example, otherwise salary will be reduced or something else. This is very good, it makes people motivated to research. It also has some bad effects that people rush in the trend of doing research without any concern if such research is high quality or not.'* (P24).

Although managerialist controls have been gradually applied in Vietnamese higher education as mentioned above, there are some factors that the so called 'universal policies' (author's words, which means the policies are applied to every academic in all situations) have still left some academics behind. A professor honestly shared her concern:

*'The trend now is about publishing on international journals...However, with that regulation, there is a practical issue that senior academics without the proficiency in foreign languages would be limited in their opportunity to satisfy those requirements, even though their professional capacity is very high'* (P41)

This point mentioned by the interviewed professor recalls the issue indicated in the study of Boussebaa and Brown (2017) on Englishization of non-Anglophone academics which is bound up with processes of normalisation. Moreover, Englishization is just one of the examples which relate to the 'one-size-fits-all' logic of managerialist controls, their requirements and quality assurance. Sharing the same critique towards the approach to manage academics' work and

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<sup>10</sup> Word by word translating: 'over'; English common translation: 'under pressure'



their work quality, one participant emphasised that the university used the same requirements for every academic regardless of their individual situations:

*‘In general, our Mathematics Department, we never run out of teaching time units, but it is very hard to get published research...However, academics of Departments of Linguistics have more chances to get their work published’ (P15)*

With regards to the practice of research requirements in his university, one interviewed academic highlighted the negative consequence of such approach:

*‘I find it (research policy) unreasonable because for example, within one academic year you need 1 point of research activity but some academics they do not research at all, they paraphrase some research and send it to some unknown journals. They still have 1 point. In addition, as attending conference is also counted as research activity for collecting points, departments organise conferences for their academics to attend. Such a waste of money.’ (P10)*

Correspondingly, one participant pointed out how the issue in managerial controls impacts negatively on her identity:

*‘It (managerial issue) regards me as the same as those who do research irresponsibly to satisfy the research requirements’ (P24)*

This point of findings is in line with the current study of Caddell and Wilder (2018) which reports academics’ experiences of the ‘game’ and players are expected to tick the same boxes however they do it. Correspondingly, Vietnamese universities, following the so-called ‘international standards’ design the requirements for all of their academics: everyone has to conduct research to publish and complete their teaching rota, which is similar to a participant’s emphasis in Caddell and Wilder’s (2018) study: ‘everybody has to be a brick, the same size and the same colour and the same shape and the same direction’ (p.19). Moreover, the consequence, to some extent, was told as obviously negative because the real capacity of universities (staff and resources) is not compatible with their requirements upon academics. Hard controls in this instance are less appreciated as they are not effective and efficient, according to the participants’ implications.

In addition to normalisation and penalisation, managerial controls are also critiqued in terms of its observation (Clarke and Knights 2015) by the interviewed academics as it does not really result in effectiveness and efficiency as supposed by managerial advocates (Pollitt 2016). Observation in some Vietnamese universities is practised through tight administrative management, working in office rather than working from home. They emphasised on working space and administrative management:

*'I need appropriate working space; it means I have self-management in work. Because you research, you need a comfortable feeling of work, it shouldn't be so restrictive'* (P2)

Sharing the same opinion, another participant preferred a less administrative management. To her, there is no need to force academics to work under observation at office:

*'I like research freedom. Research can be done at home. It doesn't need to be done at office. It (working from home) is happier. It is going to a state that work can be done anywhere, the important thing is proper outcomes'* (P9)

It is not only about ineffective outcomes, the consequence can relate to mental pressure, which even causes escapism:

*'I was under pressure of administrative management for about 1 year, 2 years; then I had particular annoyance, I wanted to change the working environment...it is like I wanted to escape from that environment'* (P6).

Briefly, from the narratives of the participants, Vietnamese academics seem to support the ideology of hard controls in managerialism, which they implied as the source of motivation for their identity work. However, the process of normalisation and tight administrative management were critiqued by the interviewed academics in a several points. First of all, the process of normalisation might cause the negative effects in how academics engage into the processes of identity work. Those who might not be able to meet the requirements of publication will find a way to tick all the boxes. The others who want to fulfil the requirements feel insecure as they are concerned that they lack some bullet points (proficiency in English) or they find it hard to highlight their work and identity among others. Secondly, the administrative controls over academics' identity work can lead to negative effects regarding

mental well-being. Although this piece of findings is not commonly spoken out by the participants in this study, it is necessary to highlight that tight administrative controls over how and where academics do their daily work can cause disruption to their processes of identity work mentally.

#### **5.4.2. Soft controls**

Soft controls, following Trow's (1994) soft concept of managerialism which emphasises on the improvement of the existing system by enhancing the 'efficiency', are described in this study as the tools including promotion or academic rewards which are applied with regards to 'managerial effectiveness' (Trow and Clark 1994, p. 13). The following sections will present academics' stories and opinions about some forms of managerial soft controls.

##### *Soft controls - the more appreciated*

In this instance, academics explained their support to the application of soft controls and the kinds of soft controls they appreciated. In literature, the ideology behind managerialism is the loss of trust and hard controls are applied to manage staff to improve efficiency (Pollitt 2016). In contrast to the idea behind the application of hard controls, the participants emphasised that trust should be remained, and soft controls should be used to enhance efficiency. Soft controls which are appreciated by interviewed academics are applied through academic rewards and awards, promotion, and managerial support.

Vietnamese universities, as told by the interviewed academics, have applied rewarding and awarding measures to motivate academics to research while there is no same application to teaching activities. Commonly, Vietnamese universities give bonus award and reward badges to academics who get their research published on journals indexed by Scopus or ISI, which are much complimented and appreciated by the respondents:

*'I see that now some universities in Vietnam have improved this (award scheme), which is that one internationally published article will get monetary award. And there is encouraging money to do research, which is quite high. These (measures) have motivated people' (P2)*

As mentioned in Chapter 2, rewarding and awarding schemes towards research in Vietnamese academia are generally generous and exceeding the average incomes. Supported by the

respondents of this study, such schemes appear to show their positive outcomes. Interestingly, the interviewed academics actually revealed why this kind of soft controls were appreciated. It is because some academics demand identity confirmation and organisational recognition of their identity work; and awards and rewards are tangible proof for their identity work:

*'Getting award is getting more money...even though it is just little bit, it is still better than others (academics)...As I said the important thing is 'face''(P14)*

This academics mentioned about 'face' similarly like other respondents to emphasise on the importance of social validation (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016). As 'face' is enduring sense of self (Nguyen 2015), such sense becomes both the motivation and target for identity work.

Other academics also emphasised the role of academic awards and rewards in their processes of identity construction regarding the confirmation of their competency. When asked about their targets of identity work towards managerial awards, P23 was clear that she wanted to focus on her present identity work and was willing to wait when she deserved it. Until then her identity would be potentially validated:

*'I think, as an academic, I will need to keep trying. I try doing it and when it comes to me, it means I have reached a particular level in my career'. (P23)*

Along with academic awards and rewards, and promotion, managerial supports were also mentioned by the interviewed academics that the supports they received from universities played a multifaceted role in motivating academics to work more effectively and efficiently. An academic emphasised that managerial supports could enhance her bond with her university and work harder to 'pay back':

*'When you receive those (managerial) supports, you will definitely pay back or return from your side. For example, I receive the supports, I will engage to my organisation, engage to my work. So, of course when I am paid a good salary, I get a good bonus, I have to work, have to make good products, which means my work outcomes must be good' (P2)*

From a different approach, another academic highlighted that a good policy should go with effective supports to trigger academics to follow the university's requirements:

*'The only thing is maybe, what is not appropriate is the supports from University, they haven't got enough supports, I think the policy (requiring academics to engage to research activities) is no problem' (p19)*

Her colleague added in a separate interview about the lack of supports from her university which causes poor performance in research:

*'But University's regulation about research is not much supportive... if University doesn't have a support regime, they will have to accept that research conducted by academics can only get to that (low) level' (P16)*

*Soft controls – the less appreciated*

In contrary to the appreciation of soft controls, there are critiques about such tools in some respects. The inefficiency and ineffectiveness of academic rewards in Vietnamese academia were highlighted through the participants' stories of improper reward schemes or the mild impacts of such schemes on academics' identity work. One of the participants expressed his opinion about the practice of his university's reward scheme, which also represents other academics' experience:

*'In general, the academic badges and rewards are not so important as how much our work and effort are recognised. It is not that I really need an academic badge. Academic rewards in Vietnamese universities are not appropriate, which means I find it has no impact on academics' striving to perform. Academics generally do not care about it. Only academics who care for their promotion really care about rewarding and competition. Then they try to get A, B or C ranking; and try to critique others. Thus, I don't find it bringing any contribution to the development of the University. However, I myself still do it, but whatever I do, it must be recognised so people will keep going' (P21)*

Another academic found it seriously inappropriate in the way academics apply for nomination of what they achieved:

*'I have been so concerned about the practice of rewarding. If you wanted to be rewarded, you have to write a paperwork to suggest being recognised. So many people have gone against this...for example, the French football team, as winning World Cup,*

*the French President watched the game and he felt admiring the endeavour of the team and he nominated the reward to the team...Similarly, I am in my department, I have performed very well. My line manager needs to recognise it, he has to nominate me to rewards. No way I would nominate myself.’ (P25).*

According to this participant, the reward scheme should play the role of looking for outstanding performance, it is the job of management. From his point of view, awards and rewards should be the certain outcomes of organisational recognition without any further actions of academic staff.

Briefly, this section of data presentation has highlighted the respondents’ mixed schools of thoughts about the direct influences of managerial controls upon their processes of identity work. The data analysis in this part of findings follows the ideologies of managerialism regarding hard controls and soft controls (Trow and Clark 1994). Holding on the author’s neutral stance, the respondents’ narratives are analysed on the basis that can present all possible expressions to enrich the research findings. Correspondingly, the interviewees’ opinions towards managerialism are not highly concurrent as some respondents embraced the new way of managing academics’ work to catch up with global higher education while some others opposed to the practice of managerialism due to its negative effects. The findings of such schism aligns with the results of previous studies (Winter 2009; Ylijoki and Ursin 2013; Dugas et al. 2020) which suggest that there has not been an absolute way of gaining perfect managerialism as both hard controls and soft controls contain positive and negative impacts. However, the findings can provide for the designing and practicing processes of managerial controls with possible scenarios of academics’ responses to establish sustainable development for the system.

### **5.5. Managerial controls and the indirect impacts on academics’ identity work**

In the previous sections, the respondents’ narratives were analysed to examine the direct impacts of managerial controls on their self-identity and processes of identity construction. However, in organisation life, it is not only the relation between management and academics, managerial controls are executed through managers and identity is constructed through the reflection of relationships between individuals and sociality (Ybema et al. 2009). In this part of data analysis, the focal report is on academics’ social self. Accordingly, the impacts of

managerial controls are described with regards to the relationships between academics and their managers, peers, students, and scholar community.

### 5.5.1. Managers and academics

Managerial controls are enacted by managers and managers are those who assess academics' performance; hence, managers can play a key role in academics' career. Despite the widely discussed topics about the impacts of managerial ideology and practices on academics in literature, a vital aspect of academics' working life which is the relationship between academics and their managers has been under-researched. In addition to talking about the impacts of managerial policies on their general working life, the interviewed academics specifically described how their processes of identity construction were affected by the relationships with their managers. One interviewed academic strongly agreed:

*'Of course, everyone wants their managers to consider them as good and recognise their competence' (P22)*

Another academic emphasised that her process of identity construction within her university was associated with managers' validation of her work competence:

*'If the managers do not appreciate talents, they don't know how to utilise my competence, I will leave' (P1)*

Appearing in the interviewed academics' narratives is the important role of managers in validating the outcome of their identity work. In other words, P1 demanded for the confirmation of desired identity but if the desired identity is not validated within managers' decision-making processes, it might lead to her decision to leave the university.

As presented above, managerial support regimes are reported as effective in motivating academics' identity work. Within such regimes, supports provided by managers can be a factor which contribute to academics' motivation to work:

*'...and the supports from my managers. For example, my head of department or program leader should support their competent staff. When they see me as an academic who are good at researching and potential to publish, they should reduce my teaching tasks. If they treat me the same as others..., it is unfair.'* (P2)

One academic added that managers can affect significantly on academics' identity work processes including identity development:

*'It is the Chancellor who follows the strategy of promoting research activities in the University. So, he supports young academics to have further education abroad and conduct research abroad' (P24)*

In addition, managers' influences on academics' identity work are also related to the respect which the participants have for their managers. Such respect can be regarded to a cultural aspect which will be showed later as power distance. One of academics in this instance emphasised that she followed what her manager asked her to do, which suggests that managerial controls could be executed more easily through managers:

*'I undertook some tasks given by my manager because I respected for him. I respect for him. I am not scared of him' (P14)*

Another interviewed academic supported this point:

*'In Vietnam, mostly...I can say 80% in state organisations, about 80% you have to follow managers' targets. In private organisations, some of them follow staff's competence, optimal results. However, I always work for state universities, I can see my dependence is really big, most of the time I follow the targets they (managers) set, not my targets' (P38)*

Some participants considered the relationships with their managers as important in their career:

*'I think in Vietnam (to get promotion), you need some relationships, I mean you should have good relationship with your managers, and you need to get prepared in terms of qualifications' (P18)*

In some cases, the influences of managers on academics' identity work can be negative. The participants reported their feeling of frustration as their processes of identity work were under pressures by managers' activities and decisions:

*'Since I started working for this University, I have worked with two managers. The pressures from these two managers are very different. This feeling depends mainly on*



*them, not me. They both are my managers (one is her old boss and one is her current boss) but one brings me very friendly and confident feeling to work with, the other makes me feel a little bit fed up because of the awkward management style, it is not really smooth. That's why I am overloaded with a lot of work, and I feel stressed by it rather than from my own feeling. It means it is possibly the personality as I am not the one who is scared in front of power or anything, but it also depends on the other. For example, if that one wants to appear as powerful, I will step back. If that one wants to be happy (friendly), I will be happy to them.'* (P34)

### **5.5.2. Collegiality**

The relationships between academics and their colleagues represent the indirect impacts of managerialism on academics' identity work. The influences from colleagues are presented in the forms of motivation and competition in the participants' everyday working life. Avoiding the common theme in literature on the damage of collegiality caused by managerialism (Davis et al. 2016; Kalfa et al. 2017), this section of findings focuses on presenting how managerial requirements are enacted indirectly through collegiality to influence academics' processes of identity construction.

In terms of motivation, the interviewed academics referred to their colleagues' working capacity and status to author their *desired* and *prospective* identities. In their narratives, colleagues' working performance became a motive source for academics to engage to publications and further self-development. One academic stated the strong influence from her colleagues on her motivation to work harder and achieve higher performance:

*'I am still young, slowly publishing a couple of papers makes me feel ashamed. I feel ashamed for myself, not the University stigmatised me as bad because I actually completed my task...I want to catch up with my senior colleagues. I see them as my desired target.'* (P29)

Colleagues can also group together to build a high-performance community which motivates its members:

*'The standard of my university is very high now. They (academics) follow their groups, each department has their own groups. They want to do it as one or two excellent individuals will motivate others' (P10)*

As this academic told, the influences of colleagues appear as 'snowball effect' which means one's performance can influence dramatically others' motivation to work, and gradually *new norms for identity construction are consequently created*. Snowball effect, as conceptualised in this study, is not identical to the common term 'peer-pressure'. Snowball effect embeds on social identity and the tightness of the attachment of the self-meanings to particular social groups or communities. To be imagined, if one snowflake attaches to a snowball, it is impossible to separate. If it is detached from the snowball, it becomes nothing while the snowball remains its structure and keeps rolling on more snowflakes. Such snowball effect gradually develops individuals' definition of self or aspirational identity which is not directly driven by the regulations. Aspirational identity can be understood as preferred future identity which individuals earnestly desire to construct to become higher and better than the one they hold (Thornborrow and Brown 2009). Academics are surrounded by academic environment (Ennals et al. 2016) and they are aware of who they should become and what they should do to avoid identity insecurity.

In contemporary academia, there is an increasing pressure to perform among academics (Clarke et al. 2012). Being more knowledgeable and holding the highest qualifications are two key tick-boxes embedding in academic career. One academic showed her extreme concern looking at her colleagues moving forwards:

*'Yes, I think so (about the need to undertake further education). I am being behind, everyone is moving forwards, I am not moving, I stay here. Does it mean I have not stepped forwards? Does it mean I am being behind? All of my colleagues have got PhD, I do not. A lot of pressures' (P11)*

Another interviewed academic shared the same feeling and motivation to take further education abroad:

*'In that working environment (her university), domestic qualifications are less appreciated...there are 80% of academics having Master and PhD degrees, many graduated abroad...other academics, they return (with their international*

*qualifications) and they have got a lot of experience and skills to teach and research. If I acquire my qualification here (in Vietnam), my experience, knowledge and research methodologies are limited. That's why I go abroad.'* (P14)

In some cases, colleagues can be seen from a different perspective through which academics can make sense of who they are and what they are doing differently or if they need to choose a different career path:

*'One professor I really admire, his whole life is dedicated to research. He is NDT. But if you want to be like that, you must have passion, a huge passion for research. But I don't have that passion, I have passion for something else.'* (P37)

Or one interviewed academic saw her colleagues as the illustration for her career prospect, which influences her choice of identity work:

*'I can see two groups, one group are those who are very ambitious, one group are those who are not. I mean ambitious PhD students desire for publication; I see they have gone through so many difficulties. The other group who are not ambitious, only set their target as finishing their study and going home (country). They do not have so much pressure. Their life is relaxing, they enjoy their lives. Why do I need to dedicate and work hard through days and nights?' (P13)*

Apart from the growing motivation, the sense of competition starts to grow in which academics realise that they have to act to secure their position: *'to remain and develop in this environment'* (P20). In this instance, participants recognised the potential competition among academics which implies the indirect impacts of managerialism on academics' identity work. Managerialism nurtures competitions through which academics are motivated to work harder and constantly engage to activities to remain their uniqueness. One academic claimed the strong impact of competition on her daily practice of role:

*'Students and other academics are those who validate me. That is competition because students may like this lecturer or that lecturer, not me. I would feel very sad about it. They (students) would choose this lecturer, not that lecturer because they do not understand what that lecturer says...'* (P11)

Another participant emphasised her career prospect under pressures of competition in which she had to be strategic to minimise insecurity:

*'In my department, 8 out of 10 academics come back from France. That's why they are limited in English. Studying in English speaking countries provides me a foundation for my career prospect which makes my uniqueness...my study abroad helps me compete to my colleagues...'* (P13)

Earlier in the interview with this participant, she mentioned that her university did not require academics to study abroad. Studying abroad was all her choice which she believed could potentially become her competitive advantage for her career development. Having said that a very common managerial requirement is publication and English proficiency is essential, not only in Vietnam but also in other non-English speaking countries (Boussebaa and Brown 2017), getting prepared with English is a strategy to effectively meet professional requirements. In other words, through competition among academics, managerial targets of publication can be optimised as academics can become proactive to practice their roles without the enactment of mandatory regulations.

### **5.5.3. Students and academics**

It is argued by scholars that the changes brought to academia by managerialism affect not only academics' ways to work but also the relationship between academics and students (March 2003; Caddell and Wilder 2018). In managerialist universities, students become 'customers' rather than 'learners' (Parker and Jary 1995; Davies and Thomas 2002). Such language change does not simply emphasis the way students are called; it recreates the positions of parties and relationships between academics and students. As introduced in chapter 3, Vietnamese culture appreciates teachers, educators, and scholars. However, in this instance, it is interesting to learn about how much it has changed with the relationships between students and academics and how it affects academics' working life.

In their stories, the participants expressed their pleasure for being academics who can provide quality lectures, knowledge and joy to students but experiencing the pressures regarding the relationships with students undermined by managerialist controls. There are two strands of the way academics saw their students and the relationships with students.

In the first strand, interviewed academics saw students as partners, which is less affected by students' reports and evaluation towards academics' performance. Academics in this strand focused more on the co-operation with students. P38 had always been working in educational industry. Her personal mission was to contribute the best during her education career. She saw students as an important part in her profession:

*'I just want to make students feel they have received more than they have given. Or now they work with me, I want them to achieve more than they did before.'* (P38)

To her, the impression she could make to students is very important and not consistently related to managerial controls:

*'Many students have graduated, they still keep contact and good relationships with me. All of them are so close to me just like family.'* (P38)

The experience with students can be a source of (de)motivation to academics even when managerial controls such as students' assessment/evaluation are not so obvious. The interviewed academics expected to have effective lectures with their students. P14 emphasised on the meanings of and a big love for her academic profession which were significantly impacted by the students' appreciation:

*'The more important factor is about students...the most vital thing holding me in this profession is that, maybe, the feeling of sharing my knowledge and my knowledge sharing is appreciated (by students). And students show that (their appreciation) by being active and happy in the classroom, achieving good results, or sometimes with some emails sent to me, I am thankful. All those moments are so valuable which can keep me here (in academic profession) although the salary is not high and there are still bitter moments'* (P14)

To many academics, achieving positive feedback from students is one of the fundamental outcomes of their identity work:

*'The influence is fundamental, which means one of the failures of an academic is that his students don't remember anything about him'* (P23)

In the 41 interviews with the participants, some academics showed their experiences under the impacts of managerialist, which contributes to the second strand. In this strand, a group of interviewed academics saw students as a source of pressure in their daily work.

In P20's case, the returned result of students' feedback were the tangible evidence and the 'nutrition' which fed her motivation of trying harder aligning with such assessment mechanism:

*'Every term we are assessed and honestly because of that I am very happy as most of the times, the department announce 'oh, Mien (this is not the respondent's real name) has the highest scores' ... I am not sure how it is in my colleagues' eyes, but in students' eyes, I am someone. Maybe my professional knowledge is not as good as theirs (other colleagues), but I have my way or approaches which are appropriate with their (students') demand. Those assessments are also validated by my university. Of course, it is only something that contributes to the full annual assessment, but that result makes me happy, and I know I have to try harder' (P20)*

One academic who decided to take a break to study abroad and one of the reasons for her decision was about students:

*'The students in my university are quite low in entry quality, they are reliant and require a lot of specific guidance. That's why I feel I haven't been helpful to them. They also make inaccurate feedback about me.' (P9)*

Sometimes, academics appear as powerless in front of their students. Emerging from their inside was the temporary demotivation as in the stories of P16 and P14:

*'It really demotivates me. When you stand in front of your students, they show no interests at all to what you are talking about or ask them to do. They just sit there, no questions; even when you turn to them and ask a question, they still stay quiet. When it is like that sometimes, I feel really disappointed, so fed up. Some classes I walk in with lots of excitement. Some classes make me feel just looking forward to the lesson to be over because I feel my efforts are not appreciated.' (P14)*

*'If there are any effects, one of them must be from students because some courses I know they are good students. They are hardworking. I feel loving my teaching role.*

*However, students in some courses are so lazy and not keen on studying, I of course feel fed up.’ (P16)*

In addition, there exists the mechanism that students can make choices of lecturers, they can become the source of the potential competition among academics:

*‘Not that we have no competition. I have to provide lectures, the way they respond, if they like them or not, if my teaching was good or not. Students in my university are free to choose their lecturers. If they have any concerns, they can raise the issues on the University’s website. The competition here is not about students picking me and not other lecturers. It is about self-development because students and other colleagues assess me in my area’ (P11)*

#### **5.5.4. Scholar community and academics**

In this strand of narratives, interviewed academics presented their experiences in scholar community. Managerial controls have appeared in academics’ stories with the indirect impacts on academics’ work relationships with managers, colleagues and students. Scholar community is also highlighted by the interviewees as an important factor affecting academics’ daily work. The following subsections will present how academics’ experiences with scholar community were affected under the practice of managerial controls regarding academic performance of publications.

##### *Scholar community as identity source*

Vietnamese academics appreciated network and the importance of the membership in scholar communities within which they can author and confirm their distinct identities. In this strand, interviewed academics highlighted the privilege of having relations with scholars whose identities are confirmed by particular institutions (universities in developed countries) or high-ranking journals.

P2 emphasised the significance of raising her academic identity by working with academic elites:

*‘If you have relations with well-known scholars, when you can have a co-authorship with them, others will have a lot of admiration for you. They admire you because you*

*can co-author with them. Of course, there can be some ways to have their names next to yours, but your work must have some values that make them decide to be your co-author’ (P2)*

Similarly, P24 implied that her identity was confirmed as a true academic, which highlighted the difference between her work and the work of those who just did publication for money or promotion:

*‘I hang out with academics who work as post-doc researchers or as academic staff of universities in developed countries. People see my network so they can understand my identity, who I am. Therefore, I think they have already got a different opinion about me who is different from other academics who follow the trend. Well, I feel sorry for saying that about them but the life here is like that. They have to work to have money so salary will not be reduced, their income will be secured. But I don’t care about that much. If I don’t have a paper, I can pay the fine.’ (P24).*

#### *Networking in scholar community as a booster of academic career*

Accordingly, the interviewed academics considered having work relationships with well-known or highly trusted academics as very important in their identity construction. In the following subsection, interviewees talked about how networking can help them both to meet managerial requirements and to conduct their identity work (especially publications).

P18 emphasised the difficulty of doing research and publishing research ideas without co-authoring with other scholars:

*‘I think to undertake a research project, it is very difficult for us to do it by ourselves. We need somebody to critique and challenge our research ideas. Debating is a good thing to create good research ideas and designs.’ (P18)*

She continued to highlight her career stage as ‘nursery level’ in research and networking became even more important:

*‘To me, until I am able to do so because I am just like at the nursery stage in research. That’s why I think if I stand by myself, it will not go anywhere.’ (P18)*



P21 talked about the importance of networking which he implied as one strategy to strive through competitions in research:

*‘When we try to publish a research idea, if we do it too slowly, others might finish before us and get it published, which means we have to change into different ones. It sounds like something is very competitive but I think it is just so normal. It should not be competitive here. In some cases, in the past, I worked with some people, they were competitive. I asked myself: what are we competing each other for? Even in China, so many people have the same blood groups with us, also there are many other research groups, why don’t we sit down and work together.’ (P21)*

Networking - it is not just a temporary strategy; it is a long-term strategy for career development. Interviewees saw networking as helpful for not only meeting short-term managerial targets but also effectively climbing their career ladder. P25 said positively and firmly:

*‘I surely always seek for teammates. Such collaborations, the better networks we have, well nowadays, individuals do not have the concept of singular individuals but networks. How far we can go is determined by our networks. It is said that stepping by yourself, you can go fast but if you want to go far, you need companions. Collaboration to me is very important. I always prioritise to seek for companions that I can build a collaborative environment.’ (P25)*

## **5.6. Summary of findings**

In this section, a multitude of stories have been told by the participants which provide more understanding of the characteristics of Vietnamese academia under managerialism, and insights into the direct and indirect impacts of managerialist controls on academics’ identities and their processes of identity construction. It emerged that the pressures of managerial controls were not yet intense and the management approaches in Vietnamese universities were relatively flexible. In addition, managerial policies in forms of hard and soft controls have some incompatibilities between the policies and the practice of managerial controls, which impacts on academics’ processes of identity work. Furthermore, the study analyses the participants’ narratives regarding the indirect influences of managerial controls on their identity work to deeply understand the nature of the managerial influences. The actors including managers,

colleagues, students and scholar community have their influences on how academics define who they are and what they should do. Understanding such indirect influences enhances the understanding of the rationales of academics' identity work and how organisational/professional relationships are influenced by managerialist controls and shape academics' identities. In the next section, these issues will be discussed further with references to the existing literature of individuals' identity work/construction and identity regulation.

## **5.7. Discussion and conclusion**

### **5.7.1. Identity work struggles regarding contextual difficulties**

This present study records a number of contextual difficulties which can cause disruptions to Vietnamese academics' identity work including the developmental level of higher education and other contextual materials such as infrastructure, facilities, supportive activities or finance. Ibarra (1999) suggests that contextual characteristics along with other elements such as roles, transitions, and socialisation practices can contribute to personal and role change in different degrees. Although Ibarra's suggestion is poignant, the correlation between specific material factors and identity construction is still under-researched. From the findings of this study, the author argues for the novelty of this study that Vietnamese higher education's contextual materials including the developmental level of the higher education sector, the tension between teaching and research functions, facilities (access to research resource) and financial support by universities can disrupt the processes of identity regulation and identity work. Such disruptions were also reported as the cause for the tiredness and frustration of Vietnamese academics in practising their work identity, which consequently might negatively impact on their self and organisational identification. This finding aligns with the result in the study of Dugas et al. (2020) which reports that the lack of support and difficulty managing relate to academics' depression.

### **5.7.2. How to fix contextual problems to promote academics' identity work**

Despite the contextual difficulties as discussed above, the findings of this study report that universities can fix their own problems through a number of measures including management flexibility, managerial supports and effective talent management. Among these three, management flexibility was applied whilst the other two were only mentioned as the participants' expectations towards their universities.

As reported above, Vietnamese academia have been experiencing significant difficulties in infrastructure and allocation of resources to meet their missions in both delivering educational services to more students and enhancing their research function. There is a tension in Vietnamese academics' processes of identity work. From the participants' stories, academics generally saw research duties to be more difficult to achieve than teaching duties. However, they felt their academic identities only fulfilled if their research duties were completed. Correspondingly, academics tended to carve any opportunities to fulfil their research duties, which was supported by their universities and managers who needed to tackle managerial tensions in practice to both achieve management goals and motivate academic staff to work.

Management flexibility mentioned by the interviewees can both retain academics' identity work regarding teaching and research, and optimise organisational targets, especially financial goals. Previous studies recorded academics' flexibility 'in their everyday use of logics to achieve their goals' (Dowling-Hetherington 2013; Giorgi and Palmisano 2017, p. 814). However, it is under-investigated about the role of management in creating such flexibility for academics to effectively achieve their career goals, fulfil organisations' aims and maintain their sense of self. The findings of this study show that academics' flexibility over their tasks was supported by management flexibility in identity regulating. Vietnamese universities, as reported by the participants, had established the regulatory frameworks where academics could be flexible to perform their tasks. The reason behind such regulatory flexibility results from universities' awareness of the difficulties to practice research requirements due to the quality of labour force (low level in English use, methodology knowledge, journal writing skills) and low budget which restrain international publications. Hence, to motivate academics to keep up with universities' missions and commit to the expected identities (teaching and research academics), universities had to nurture such expected sense of self. Correspondingly, they gave academics chances to collect any 'research seeds' through their daily work. For example, in terms of research duties, academics did not need to stick to specific activities to meet universities' research requirements. Instead, they could choose to act within a range of research options including supervising students' research projects, attending academic conferences or conducting non-published research projects for universities.

Regarding the other two factors, interviewees of this study shared their opinions about two forms of managing measures, managerial supports and talent management which encouraged academics' identity work and motivate their sense of academic selves. Regarding managerial

supports, through the interviews, it is highlighted that academics mainly demanded for financial supports for constructing regulated identities. Vietnamese academics were willing to construct their identities as regulated by their universities and higher education policies; however, the lack of supports was mentioned as the constrain against their processes of identity work. This piece of findings aligns with the result in Le's (2016) study which reports that lack of financial support was one of the main concerns of Vietnamese academics in humanities and social sciences regarding the increasing requirements for publications. Another aspect regarding managerial supports was that the participants called for better work allocation which could reduce their extra (non-academic) tasks and support their priorities of identity construction (who prefers research can have less teaching quota or vice versa). This also supports the recent suggestions by Dugas et al. (2020) that university leaders should provide financial and support structure so the teaching and research goals can be reached.

The final factor *talent management* regards to managerial actions which can effectively support academics' sense of self. This factor becomes very important point which has been raised up through-out the development of the country's economy and public human resource management, in general, and the higher education sector specifically (The World Bank 2020). In the interviews within the current study, the participants showed their high demand for the comprehensive policies which can provide them more chances to develop their desired identities, including higher salary and appreciation from managing boards. It is clear by the academics who emphasised on the importance of the policies of talent management in universities that they were aware of their competency. In addition, they also highlighted that managers should have been the ones who recognised and appreciated their values. A deeper discussion on the role of managers is provided in the next section.

### **5.7.3. The real impacts of managerialist controls – the impacts through the others**

Contributing to the argument of Ratle et al. (2020) regarding symbolic form of identity regulation (managerial controls), this part of discussion is going to emphasise on the real impacts of managerialist controls which seem more effective on regulating academics' identities so that they author their 'preferred identities' (Brown et al. 2019) aligning with the managerial aims. Preferred identities are regarded to 'normative identity narratives' which involve the meanings of who an individual would like to be, and how he or she wishes to be considered by others (Brown et al. 2019).

In the existing literature, the analyses of the impacts of managerial controls on academics' identity and identity work normally focus on specific forms of controls (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) or mainly emphasis on the direct forms of managerial intervention including quantity and qualitative measures (the number of published papers, journal rankings, tenure of the lectureship, student feedbacks) (Lynch 2015; Alvesson and Spicer 2016; Kalfa et al. 2017; Jones et al. 2020). Correspondingly, the most recent studies focus more on exploring multitude of academics' forms of resistance to direct controls and domination while the impacts of other social actors have been under-researched although they are considered as more 'efficient' than the 'overt form of violence' (Ratle et al. 2020, p. 455).

### **5.7.3.1. The policy or managers?**

Previous studies report academics in managerialist academia as to subordinate themselves and other aspects of their lives, to work and tasks of getting their names on top-ranking journals (Anderson 2006; Knights and Clarke 2014), and having become subordinates (e.g. Winter 2009, Davis et al. 2016) who are, to some extent, powerless in the relationship between themselves and management (Anderson 2008). Academics pursuit their career towards 'quantitative ammunition' (Cederström and Hoedemaekers 2012, p. 232) where the concept of performative universities (Jones et al. 2020) with progress reports, league tables, staff rankings and evaluations (Cederström and Hoedemaekers 2012) have been prevalent. In most of the literature on academics' working life in managerialist academia, power and managerialist practices have appeared as negative managerial intervention on academics' self-construction (Parker and Jary 1995; Knights and Clarke 2014; Alvesson and Spicer 2016). From this perspective, any responses by academics seem even weaker and 'decaff' (Contu 2008) as if they react against the unlikely-to-change system, therefore, their compliance is likely seen as surrender (Alvesson and Spicer 2016). Within the power relation, the relationship between academics and managers is reported as under-researched (Knights and Clarke 2018). Taking a closer look into the intragroup relationships, the findings of this present study suggest that academics' self-construction can be disrupted or supported by managers and the relationships with managers.

In Vietnamese academia, managers, through whom management can be executed play an important role in academics' processes of identity construction. According to the argument of Ashforth and Schinoff (2016), managers seem to be one of the key sources of social validation as their views have significant impacts on academics' career and their processes of identity

confirmation to be good or bad academics; managers also have their power to reward or punish academics. In managerialist academia, academics need to work to meet the performance management agenda which relies mostly on the judgement of managers (Winter 2009). As managers' opinions are valued, the social validation coming from them is prized (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016). Correspondingly, academics are significantly eager to achieve social validation from their managers. As Collinson (2003) argues that the validation of the self can be made from 'career success and the confirmation of significant others' (p 530), managers can be seen as the living embodiment of identity regulation, which means their positive evaluation of academics' identity work is the proof of validated identity. Additionally, without the validation of managers, the managerial validation of academics' identity construction can only be robotic as the managerialist controls appreciate the results more than the processes. Such mechanism does not seem to care how hard academics dedicate to their work, which sometimes can result in psychological matters relating to win-lose performance such as repeated rejections by journals (Jaremka et al. 2020) or students' evaluations recorded by this present study. The mechanism prioritises the results of their work – if their work can get published or if students are happy with their lectures. Consequently, the assessments provided by managers become more important and 'lively' which contribute to academics' performance report at the end of academic year. Moreover, interviewed academics in this study also emphasised that the role of managers does not only lay on their rewarding/punishing power but also from their ability to establish the ground for academics to develop their identities. It can be either duty allocation or opportunity distribution, which implies *a more humane managerialism*.

Importantly, the influence of managers, as analysed and discussed in this present study, are bounded within universities where respondents worked at. It is not obvious in the interviewees' stories that the social validation by managers can be replaced with that of professionals outside their workplace because the respondents appreciated good collaborations (scholar community) as the support or consolidation of their academic identity construction. Although it cannot be confirmed in this study, the suggestion for further research is to explore if academics, in any cases, may devalue the role of line management's social validation; or to reconsider the role of managers if academics separate the identity work within and outside universities. The next section continues to discuss about how work relationships come to form Vietnamese academics' identity work under the influence of managerialism.

### 5.7.3.2. The power of the others

In contrary to the impacts of managers on academics' processes of identity construction, the impacts of colleagues, students and scholar community are not direct to academics' career, yet significantly affective. Whilst the influences of managers are more direct regarding the final achievement of regulated identity, the influences of colleagues take place mainly within the processes of identity formation including sense-making, self-definition and aspirational identity construction. Borrowing the related concept used by Ratle et al. (2020), the impacts of managerial controls in Vietnamese academia can be examined through '*horizontal*' social interactions. According to Ratle et al. (2020), the use of '*horizontal*' attached with symbolic violence is in the context of analysing the impacts of '*colleagues with no line management relationship*' to an academic (p. 462). In this present study, such horizontal relationships are expanded to students and scholar (professional) community.

According to the argument of Ashforth and Schinoff (2016), personal identities, to some extent, are institutionalised, which means an individual, especially newcomer, tends to learn about the context and constructs a self that is relevant to the reality (how surrounding others act and expect each other to act and how individuals respond to such expectations); and accordingly, a desired self emerges. Such process is consistent to sensemaking, through which identity is the target and identity motives become apparent (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016). The findings of this present study support such argument. Vietnamese academics, especially early career academics, tend to explore the sense of self by observing their colleagues' performance or processes of identity construction. For example, they showed their admiration for colleagues' high achievements and/or designed their identity construction strategy to author unique self in comparison with their colleagues (eg., P29 saw her colleagues' achievements as the target of her identity work or P14 pursued her PhD abroad to create a better profile for her career development). As a result, colleagues become a source of sensemaking for Vietnamese academics when they come to answer a range of questions developed following the work of Ashforth and Schinoff (2016):

- (1) What does it mean to be [an academic]?
- (2) What does it mean to be a member of my organisation?
- (3) How I want to see myself (to be similar to my colleagues or better than them)?
- (4) How do I come to be – and be seen as – a legitimate exemplar of this desired self?

(Ashforth and Schinoff 2016, p. 120)

In addition, identity is ‘relational and comparative’ (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 16). During the processes of sensemaking and aspirational identity construction, a situated sense of self emerges from comparing with others. Previous studies on academics’ life have recorded multiple examples of competition among academics (Kalfa et al. 2017; Caddell and Wilder 2018) which can derive from staff rankings (Knights and Clarke 2018), academic employment status (Santiago and Carvalho 2008; Kalfa et al. 2017), fund and scarce resources hunting (Ntshoe et al. 2008; Acker and Webber 2017), and academic prestige between senior and younger/early-career academics (Anderson 2006). Moreover, competition among academics has been also recorded as a source of academic identity insecurity and anxiety (Knights and Clarke 2018), contribution to mental health issues (Guidetti et al. 2020), or the reason for the erosion of traditional forms of collegiality (Burnes et al. 2013). In contrast to such arguments, the findings of this present study suggest that there is no evident relation between competition among academics and the erosion of collegiality in Vietnamese context. This point of finding will be explained further by applying the body of work to the Confucian and collectivist culture of Vietnamese academics in the next chapter.

Vietnamese respondents implied the competition in terms of self-esteem and pretige (why did students choose the other lecturers, but not me? Or Why cannot I get my work published as they do?). They seem to engage to competition as self-reflexivity when they self-interrogate rather than securing or glorifying their selves (Ybema et al. 2009). In this instance, Vietnamese academics tend to question themselves and work harder to develop themselves rather than to take competitive actions or sentiments. In their narratives, supports and competition among academics integrated and interplayed. They took competition to challenge themselves to be better academics while they still supported each other, which means *they compete in a collegial approach*. This form of academic competition seems to create healthier academic relationship as it does not split up collegiality. Instead, it works as the indirect impacts of managerialism on academics’ identity work which provides effective measures to encourage academics to be proactive in practicing their roles. Managerial controls as identity regulation in this case do not need to regulate and discipline (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) or engineer (Kunda 1992) academics’ identities. The findings from this present study support previous studies about the influences of colleagues on academics’ identity work (Ybema et al. 2009; Ennals et al. 2016) while enhancing its novelty that managerial requirements can be enacted effectively with the



internal collaboration within the university (Bristow et al. 2019; Jones et al. 2020) where there is the presence of colleagues' snowball effect and competition.

Not limited within universities, the collegial approach is utilised when Vietnamese academics interact with academics outside their organisations. Underpinning Vietnamese academics' desire for the collaboration within academic community is the desire to work friendly together. Networking as described by the respondents is not only the source of meanings for them to construct their identities but also the support for their career development. Accordingly, the former emphasises on the salient social identity. In the lens of social identity theory, individuals construct their in-group identities which distinguish themselves from the out-groups (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Stets and Burke 2000). In this case, the in-group base of academic identity is not universities which academics affiliate to but the professional groups which academics identify to regarding certain standards (being true and ethical researcher). This piece of findings provides suggestions to explain the argument in the last section regarding the significance of managers' social validation. In Vietnamese context, identifying or being accepted to a group of scholars is helpful in consolidating the process of meaning making (being respected or more likely to be appreciated) but cannot discard the impact of universities' managerial controls.

In relation to the role of networking as the support for academics' career development, emerging from Vietnamese academics' demonstration is that joining the collaboration with other academics can facilitate them in responding to the increasing requirements of managerialism and they significantly appreciate collaboration with scholar community. This finding aligns with various findings of scholars in the field in which their respondents demonstrated that collaboration is the only way to create success (Ennals et al. 2016). In the existing literature, the desire for collaboration and networking is indeed burning in research (Ennals et al. 2016; Contu 2018; Gardner and Willey 2018; Ratle et al. 2020). So, one question the author raises here representing her argument as well as the contribution to the literature of CMS: has managerialism actually become the trigger of collaboration and collective actions among academics across departments, universities and/or nations? Maybe it is time to reconsider if managerialism is just about 'individualised academic capitalism' (Lynch 2015, p. 197), or/and isolating individuals off from one another (Knights and McCabe 2000). Indeed, increasing managerial pressures is the reason for academics to realise their strategies of collective activities and collaboration to battle against isolation (Ratle et al. 2020), to boost their performance, and to sustain job satisfaction (Sutherland 2017). However, collaboration is

not painless. Clearly reported by the respondents, networking does not seem purely powerless relations and collaboration, to some extent, is not easy to get. Ranking and hierarchy are tangible in such horizontal relations. Can they be the rival mechanism of university management? Future research can look at how university management facilitates academics' collaboration and how out-of-university collaboration shapes academics' organisational identification.

The data of this thesis also argues for the concern of scholars in the field regarding the changing relationships between students and academics which associate with the model of 'student-as-customer' in managerial academia (Anderson 2008). Vietnamese academics saw their relationships with students as collaboration and partnership. By contrast to Vietnamese culture of 'tôn sư trọng đạo' (respect master, respect morals), the respondents saw themselves as the contributors or partners of students' academic journey rather than seeing students as 'acolytes' (March 2003, p. 356) or customers. As respondents considered students as the significant part of their processes of identity construction, students' social validation became important and affective to them. However, although there was the practice of student survey as a managerial tool which can be linked to academic performance evaluation, Vietnamese academics paid more attention on the non-managerial interactions with their students to seek for social validation (if they were excited within the lessons or if they remembered their lecturers). Thus, it cannot be concluded if managerialism is the exclusive reason for the changes in teacher-student relationships nor totally ignore its impacts. The findings, hence, suggest that the role of students has been shifted to be more powerful under the influences of managerialism but in affective ways in Vietnamese academia as students' responses to academics' professional activities could make them feel very happy, competitive, or even frustrated.

#### **5.7.4. Conclusion**

To sum up, this chapter of findings and discussion has three important contributions. Firstly, it provides the overview of characteristics of Vietnamese academia through interviewees' narratives which include the development of the sector, the flexible management style and the compatibilities between the managerialist policies and managerialist practices. Secondly, it elaborates the analyses of the impacts of managerial controls which cause identity struggles and how the issues can be potentially fixed, which might be the suggestions for higher education management under managerialism. Thirdly, by looking closer to the intragroup relationships of academics, the study highlights the significant indirect impacts of

managerialism through social actors such as managers, colleagues, students or scholar community. The role of managers is argued as important because managers do not only help managerialism become more humane through their decision-making processes but also directly influence academics' identity work. Especially by looking at horizontal influences of social actors including colleagues, scholar communities and students, it is argued that in the period of prevalent managerial controls in academia, there are instances when Vietnamese academics do not rigidly follow the audit culture or performative practices (Jones et al. 2020; Ratle et al. 2020). Collegiality in this study is proved as maintained by and among Vietnamese academics. The snowball effect (from colleague to colleague – when you get in touch with the snowball, you will get stuck with it and roll the same way with others) is highlighted as the motivation for academics' identity work which is argued as more effective than managerialist policies in regulating academics' identity work. Furthermore, Vietnamese academics showed their desire for developing networks with scholar community in response to the prevalent of managerial pressures and publishing culture. In addition, it is not clear that students were seen as customers in Vietnamese context and their impacts are embedded more in an affective way to the respondents. The emphasis at the end of the discussion highlights the powerful influences of non-line management relationships between academics and colleagues, students, and scholar community. Among these, it is suggested that scholar community can become a rival mechanism of managerialism which can regulate academics' identities and can disrupt academics' organisational identification with their universities.

The novel point of the current study's findings is that it does not emphasise merely on the negative impacts of the overt and symbolic forms of managerial controls as in most of recent studies on managerialist universities and academics' identity work (Kalfa et al. 2017; Bristow et al. 2019) or using the dark side of the phenomena to shed light and hope for new ways of practicing neoliberal mechanism (Ratle et al. 2020). Just like Ratle et al. (2020) keenly call for 'bringing examples of good and supportive line management in from the shadows' (p. 468), the present findings manage to show the interviewees' multisided opinions about their daily work affected by managerial controls. Accordingly, the interviewees neither totally criticised nor appreciated managerial practices in their universities. There are examples of understanding staff and supportive management here. Vietnamese academics were aware of the incompatibilities between the policies and the practices of managerialist ideology, the pros and cons of the managerialist controls, and strategically designed their identity work. The findings align with the argument of Alvesson and Willmott (2002) that individuals might distance

themselves from organisational discourses if there is any discontinuity. In this study, where such incompatibilities appeared, Vietnamese academics tended to construct their identities in their personal projects or scholar communities out of their organisations although meeting the requirements by their universities was still one of their priorities for identity work, which shows their good resilience by actively choosing their identity work which fit their work circumstances.

The message from the stories of interviewees is that the gloomy and fearful feelings about Vietnamese academic career do not seem to have yet surrounded their daily work life as emphasised in other CMS studies. This point of discussion should be referred to the increasing pressures from managerialist controls regarding the audit culture in universities around the world (Lynch 2015; Knights and Clarke 2018; Martin et al. 2020). Correspondingly, due to the developing stage of Vietnamese academia, the pressures of high-ranking publications or fundraising have not been as intense as in Western universities. Such distinctive characteristic of Vietnamese academia can be a good explanation (also mentioned by the participants) for academics' positive reactions and sympathy for the difficulties that Vietnamese higher education's management has been through. The next chapter using cultural approach to elaborate how the practices of managerial controls impact Vietnamese academics under the influence of national culture.

## Chapter 6: Findings and discussion (Part 2)

### 6.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, the study reported the impacts of managerialist controls on Vietnamese academics' identity work and self-identities regarding the changes in work relationships between academics and managers, colleagues, students, and scholar communities. On one hand, such relationships have become the mediums through which managerialist controls indirectly affect academics' processes of identity work. On the other hand, such relationships are also shaped by cultural norms.

In addition, Vietnamese academics' attitudes and behaviours have been influenced by values emerging from globalisation (for example, individualism or personal freedom) (Hallinger and Truong 2014). Following the study of Huang et al. (2018) which explores academics' identity work in Chinese context, in combination with the understanding of the context of competing national cultural pressures, this chapter is going to answer the research question:

*How do managerial controls impact Vietnamese academics' identity work under the influence of national culture?*

This chapter of findings and discussion is connected and consistent with the peer-reviewed published paper, in which the researcher contributed the significant role in writing and developing research ideas. With the analysis of a bigger dataset (41 interviews in this present thesis and 33 in the paper), this chapter reinforces and extends the paper's research results with more findings of the cultural matters in the relation between managerialist controls and academics' identity work.

### 6.2. National culture in relation with managerialist identity regulation

#### 6.2.1. Confucianism as cultural support for managerialist identity regulation

Three aspects in Confucianism support managerialist controls emerging from the participants' stories including loyalty, high power distance and propriety.

Confucianism appreciates *loyalty* and loyalty is consistent with organisational identification. The interviewees expressed a strong level of organisation identification (individual's perception of a sense of belonging to their organisations (Brown 2015)) and a highly positive

bond with their universities. For Vietnamese academics, organisational identification with their universities became the normative identity work with which all of the regulations enacted within their universities are regarded as highly acceptable. Organisational identification is referred to the state-being that an individual becomes a microcosm of his/her organisation when his/her identity and fate 'become intertwined with those of the organisation' (Ashforth et al. 2008, p. 333). One academic expressed her growing faithfulness as she received the support from her university. This respondent used the words 'gắn bó' to express the great belongingness to her university. It is hard to find an English word exactly equivalent to 'gắn bó', the best way to explain is that she wanted to stay and to go with the university. The word that was used by Dr Nordberg during supervising this thesis maybe the best match here - 'commitment'. Vietnamese normally use the words 'gắn bó' in the context of full of love and harmony. She identified herself with her university just like 'a cell of one body' from which she defined her role as 'a person, a researcher, an expert; and I contribute to maintaining a good image of my university...':

*'I think I am like a cell of one body. At the moment, I feel integrating with my organisation and my role, because I receive their supports, I become a person, a researcher, an expert and I contribute to maintaining a good image of my university to the outsiders' (P2)*

Holding a strong identification with their universities, the participants viewed their identity work as activities that should both fulfil their personal purposes and contribute to their organisations' development:

*'I think it [studying abroad] suited what I needed and wanted, and what my university wanted to do in terms of developing more overseas-educated academics to develop its brand' (P9)*

Whilst loyalty are more affective which guides individuals' feelings and behaviours from the inside, **power distance** is about imposition, but power distance does not imply voluntary compliance. Emerging from P17's interview, loyalty and power distance seem to combine nicely and provide more voluntary compliance to the university's regulations.

*'I am an academic of an organisation, so I have to follow its norms if I want to develop within this system. The norms will be like this forever, so I have to be compliant with them.'* (P17)

P17 showed her intention to stay and develop in the university that she accepted to follow the regulations imposed on her practices of role. The quote might appear as if the respondent's compliance was grudging, however the excerpt 'I am an academic of an organisation, so I have to follow its norms' shows her strong bond with her university and her respect for the regulations. Consequently, loyalty – the consistence of staying and developing in the institution – plays as the motive for her acceptance of the university's regulations.

Similarly, managerialist controls as identity regulation in Vietnamese academia is more acceptable as Vietnamese academics seem to prioritise constructing their work identities within their institutions. One academic talked about how he authored his identity and developed appropriate identity work as a member of his organisation:

*'In general, organisations have their own regulations. I am as an individual, which means a member of the organisation, I should have to, firstly, conform to myself, and secondly, to my organisation. This is very difficult. Normatively, I have to conform to the organisation. I still need to accept things which are applied in the organisation and to everyone, although they sometimes contradict my personal values if I still want to work for that organisation'* (P23).

Other participants indicated that their professional development and targets were coherent with their organisational roles. A participant did not only engage into the organisational standards, but also implied that her personal profession was identified along with such standards:

*'First of all, you are a member of your organisation, you have your targets aligning with your organisation's regulations and vision'* (P30)

Another academic, although not emphasising on her loyalty to the university, showed her willingness to follow the rule:

*'When we do a work, such as teaching, we have to be aware of the University's regulations. We have to follow what they regulate'* (P34)

Another aspect of Confucianism ethic is referred to *propriety*, the principle of prominent moral conduct which emphasises the need for people to do right things and disregard material benefits (Vuong et al. 2018). This moral principle encourages Vietnamese academics to both identify and commit to their universities as an essential part of their identity work:

*‘To me, my university is like my home. If I find it not good, I have to do something to make it better rather than leaving it. I find myself having a sense of loyalty because it is my home, not merely a workplace for earning money’ (P22)*

*‘I feel happy with it so I can commit to it. I have committed to it for over a decade mainly because of that reason. If it was about money, I would have left it ages ago’ (P12)*

The meaning of propriety in these interview excerpts can be explained through how the respondents made decisions of their career. Correspondingly, P22 chose to stay and devote to her university rather than leaving for a better place even when the university might not meet her expectation. Sharing a similar sentiment but from a different perspective, P12 prioritised the bond with her university over the monetary demand. She chose to stay for such bond rather than leaving for higher payment.

It is obvious that Confucianism with its ethics regarding loyalty, power distance and propriety supports the practices of managerial controls in Vietnamese higher education. However, the Confucianism does not guarantee the absolute commitment of academics to their universities. There are cases that participants can both highly respect for universities’ regulations and pragmatically design their career plan and identity work, which implies ‘quitting’ as a form of response to management difficulties. Such cases occur when managerial practices do not meet academics’ self-values. One academic emphasised that her commitment to her university was not guaranteed even though she had strong social relationships which she appreciated:

*‘About my commitment with it (University), it is just a fair sentiment, not a big pride (working for the University) or something like that. Of course, I have feelings for the University, my colleagues. I used to study undergraduate there, but I don’t have a strong bond with it’ (P26)*



It is more obvious in P26's story which highlights the inconsistency between organisational identification and commitment because earlier in the interview she stressed on Confucianism ethic regarding academics' responsibilities towards their organisations: '*All organisations have their own management difficulties; thus, as a staff of an organisation, we have to fulfil their requirements and standards*' (P26)

Similarly, another academic held a strong Confucianism ethics, but she did not guarantee her commitment with her university. She said:

*'Honestly, I would like to return to my university (in Vietnam) to work as my family is there (in Vietnam), my friends are there (in Vietnam). But merely regarding my work, I don't like to work in Vietnam much because the work there is influenced too much by personal relationships, personal sentiments and people there work illogically, inefficiently. So, working with them makes me fed up.'* (P34)

By contrast to her opinion on following the rules as a member of the organisation, P34 made her complaint about social interactions and relationships at work, not the policies or managerial instruments. Although she only mentioned general people, rather than specifying if such people were colleagues or managers, it is shown in her words some level of frustration and disappointment.

Briefly, in this part of findings, the respondents' narratives have shown various positive points relating to the influences of national culture emphasised in Confucianism on Vietnamese academics' responses to the practices of managerial controls in Vietnamese universities. In general, the existence of Confucian ethics associating with power distance seems to support Vietnamese academics' acceptance of the top-down ideology in managerialism. Among the three Confucianist ethics (loyalty, power distance and propriety) presented in the findings, loyalty and propriety promote academics' organisational identification which can lead to their sympathy of managerial difficulties, then consequently promote them to work with universities rather than resisting to serve their personal benefits and purposes. The next section of data analysis will provide more evidence of how national culture can support the practices of managerialism, but outside of universities' gates.

### 6.2.2. Collectivism as cultural support for managerialist identity regulation

In managerialist period, academics performative measures are widely employed with the aim of improving universities' competitiveness in global rankings. Results in the study of Hill et al (2019) indicate that Vietnamese universities have actively encouraged international collaboration in research. Following up the study of Hill et al. (2019), the findings of this study argues that Vietnamese universities can reach their managerial aims with the support of collectivist ethics. In collectivist cultures, individuals such as Vietnamese academics appreciate wider connections within significant relationships (Yuki 2003). Apart from the internal collaboration with their colleagues within the immediate universities and country, Vietnamese academics are aware of the importance of developing external relational networks for their personal career development and their universities' global excellence. Networks, regardless internally or externally, are highly appreciated by Vietnamese academics. One academic emphasised:

*'I always feel I am fighting alone. There is no one working in my field, so I feel very lonely...I want to have at least another person who can challenge me so I can have an opportunity to reflect if I need to change anything...'* (P12)

Clearly expressed by P12 is the strong emotional attachment to work in the role of an academic professional who lacks source to develop work identity. Such source is associated to networking and mentioned as vital to her identity work. This finding can be the evidence to consider the argument of Clarke and Knights (2015): 'Success, however, is highly individualist, promising 'the narcissistic pleasure of competence and accomplishment' while perfectly fulfilling the formal demands of the organization' (p. 1879). The question here is: Can success be collective? Earlier in the first empirical chapter (Chapter 5), some respondents emphasised on the importance of networking in response to the increasing pressures of managerial requirements. Under the cultural lens, this point is once again consolidated whilst highlighting the precariousness of organisations' demanding for more compliance and individualisation.

The interviewees in this study showed their awareness of the importance of building sustainable and healthy networking for their processes of constructing research identity and fulfilling managerialist requirements regarding research output. One academic emphasised:

*‘Social skills are essential to maintain good relationships with colleagues, professors or [business] organisations. In research, I can see a very important role in networking.’*  
(P6)

Another academic agreed:

*‘In my opinion, to have a sustainable career, you have to know how to work in groups...’* (P2)

Without networks, meeting managerialist requirements is considered as difficult by participants:

*‘It is difficult that we don’t have networks in Vietnam. Without networks, in Vietnam, it is very difficult to do high-quality research’* (P17)

Following Vietnamese academics’ narratives, external collectivism, to some extent, is not only a strategical support for universities to build their competitive advantage in global competitiveness, but also a motivation for academics to develop networks which become the sources of their self-identities:

*‘When people know my networks, they can understand the distinctiveness of my identity, who I am. Hence, I think they will have a different view of me in comparison with others’*  
(P20)

External collectivism emerged in respondents’ narratives about their processes of identity construction is influenced by Confucianism which highlights an individual’s role and status in society. The findings here can be explained under both of the cultural lens and social identity theory. Regarding the former, in the culture which appreciates ‘social reputational face’ (Nguyen 2015, p. 205), reputable groups are highly respected and being a member of such groups is a privilege. Meanwhile, the latter with the in-group sentiment sharpens networking’s ability to support self-identity.

Moreover, external collectivism can have its significant impacts in motivating academics to foster positive and valuable impacts on wider society, rather than limiting within identity work for individual/personal purposes:

*‘Our research only has an impact when we share it, so that everyone can use it. What is the point if you do your research just for yourself?’ (P11)*

In a more positive and active sense, external collectivism can help break through the barriers and beliefs of ingroup – outgroup differentiations and discriminations. This present study’s participants showed their desire for connecting with broader society:

*‘If you are a good academic but your work is only disseminated within your university, you cannot inspire many others’ (P18)*

Studies on individuals’ positive identity indicates that minimising ingroup – outgroup preferences and distinctions is the outcome of moral identity work when moral identity becomes salient (Dutton et al. 2010). The findings of this present study support the argument of Dutton et al. (2010) on positive identities that changing perception (ingroup – outgroup preferences) associates with a more virtuous work identity and is a source of positive identity. Dutton et al. (2010) also suggest that minimising ingroup – outgroup distinctions as a result of positive identity construction can enhance employees positive emotions (Dutton et al. 2010).

Overall, the findings of external collectivism highlights two significant points. Firstly, external collectivism remarks the important role of out-of-university practices of academics’ identity work in their career development. The second point, which advances the argument of the first point, highlights academic identity work as the blending between social and individual actions. Correspondingly, there is not a solid disregard for either collective or individual identity work. Relatively, collective identity work contributes to the development of self-identity and individual identity work. In return, individual identity work and the uniqueness of self can contribute to the identity work of a collective such as the development of a university or a community or a society. For example, a university with academics who are membership of good networks can benefit from the outcomes of their publications; a group of excellent academics can benefit from individual excellence. Furthermore, for the development of broader society, groups of academics can get together, which can reduce the sense of in-group and out-group discrimination. So far, the findings have been presented to show how national culture can support managerialist identity regulation in Vietnamese academia. The next section of findings will provide instances where national culture can become constraint for managerialist identity regulation and individual identity construction.

### 6.2.3. Intragroup ethics as cultural constraint against managerialist identity regulation

Emerging from most of participants' narratives is the matter of intragroup relationships with their colleagues, which highlights the distinctive trait of collectivist cultures (Yuki 2003). Intragroup relationships is referred to the relationships between members of an organisation or working unit, which is distinguished from intergroup relationships emphasising on the notions of ingroup – outgroup relations in social identity theory (Yuki 2003).

According to Hofstede's 6D model, the low index of Vietnam's indulgence dimension suggests that Vietnamese culture is identified as 'restraint', which means individuals' actions are highly restrained by social norms. Emerging across participants' narratives, their processes of identity work are bound up in multiple norms of Vietnamese cultural ethics regarding *collegiality, harmony and seniority*. Among such norms, collegiality and harmony reflect the close and significant relationships between academics and their colleagues, which might cause restraints to individuals' identity work. Seniority, underpinned by Confucianism ethic, is comparable with the dimension of power distance in Hofstede's 6D model and relevant with institutional collectivism, which highly stresses on hierarchal social structures (Kang et al. 2017). The findings are presented as follows.

#### *Overwhelming collegiality*

In general, Vietnamese academics appreciate collegiality and are willing to conduct collegial identity work which relates to the form of identity work with more supportiveness and collectiveness among colleagues. One academic stressed on the need of collegiality and the benefits it can bring to the positive outcomes of personal identity work:

*'Sharing is essential. Having companion, sharing responsibility make better work progresses...it is very important, it creates work motives' (P40)*

*'We have a lot of work to do but we can balance our workload because my departmental collective has a good sense of sharing...everyone supports each other a lot' (P20)*

Participants also emphasised on the significance of the relationships with their colleagues which can cause big effects on their identity work and commitment with organisations. P12 mentioned 'colleagues' immediately as the factor that can make her commit to her university or not. She added:

*'Work environment, colleagues, students and work norms which are everyday matters. If I am happy with them, I would commit. I have committed to it (the university) for 10 years mainly because of those (factors). If it was about money, I would have left it ages ago' (P12)*

P25 and P22 emphasised on the collaboration among universities/departments' members which highlight a strong sense of collegiality in Vietnamese academia:

*'I have learned so much from my colleagues, senior academics, young academics, which is an interaction. They can learn from me; I can learn from them. People around me are very important to me. I can be influenced by them' (P25)*

*'(studying abroad) is not about my own expectation, it is other colleagues' expectations. When I finish my study and return (to Vietnamese university), I can support them to develop their career. They are my colleagues in my home country. Whatever I learn that I find valuable and beneficial, I share with them all. It is like I can broaden what I have achieved (knowledge), I can also transfer to them. I think when I study abroad, it does not benefit me only, it can benefit others' (P22)*

However, from a different perspective, interviewed academics criticised the cases when they were overwhelmed with collegial responsibilities and felt resentful that their own interest had to be sacrificed. In this stance, collegial responsibilities represent collectivist mindset that individuals are encouraged to not act in their own ways, but to involve into their identity work the benefits of the others who are mates in their workgroups, departments, or universities. Accordingly, intragroup relationships emerged as a constraint for academics' identity work because academics' identity work still retains its individual nature (Alvesson and Spicer 2016). Hence, despite the positive impact of Confucianism ethics on the practice of managerialist controls, Vietnamese academics expressed their experience of the conflicts in the nature of academic work impacted by both individualist managerial controls and collectivist mindset.

The tension among the more individualistic managerialist identity regulation and overwhelming collegiality is further identified, specifically around research performance. Interviewed academics stated that they had to put their personal identity work aside to carry out other responsibilities, including administration work, which were not actually their tasks:

*'I am an academic, but I had to do administration work. My academic work is important, but we had nobody to do administration, so I had to do it...administration was the shared task. But because nobody did it, I had to do it' (P16)*

The 'shared task' comment of P16 highlights that Vietnamese academics are involved in other responsibilities which are related closely to collegial relationships rather than being imposed by management. As a good colleague and member of the work unit, she had to do the 'shared task'. Such unavoidable responsibilities are also implied in P36's interview, in which she emphasised the need of taking those tasks to maintain collegial relationships:

*'Life is impossible with personal self only; we have to be aware of what we are doing to make the people around us pleased...'* (P36)

In Vietnamese context, the dominance of social relationships is considerably high, which results in the unindividualized identity work. 'Unindividualized identity work' originally used in this thesis means that identity work in many cases in the collectivist culture cannot be just personal project. In other words, within the processes of identity work, academics have to be precarious regarding social relationships and they cannot enact their identity work in their own way and ignore the consequences of their behaviours to the others.

In addition, emerging from the narratives of participants is *sacrifice*-related identity work, which means individual academics sometimes have to set aside their own benefits, awards or personal interests:

*'Here, there is a limited number of awards, not many. If you hold that (award) every year, others will never feel motivated as they would never get it (award)...That's why some academic years I refuse to be awarded so it can be passed to others...'* (P41)

Although the data shows that overwhelming collegiality occurs in Vietnamese context and Vietnamese academics' identity work is constrained within strong collectivist mindset, it is not clear that their academic identities are harmed. P41 added:

*'I think even I refuse it (award); nobody thinks I am not as good' (P41)*

This comment of P41 can confirm that the sense of secured identity (I am good) is not likely to be affected by motivating tool of management (award). Instead, this academic's excellence

attached with her academic identity can be confirmed and secured by social validation (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016), which reflects the self-awareness of her strengths and limitations (Tomkins and Nicholds 2017). The finding from P41's comment can challenge the contemporary 'authenticity trap' which pushes individuals into the guilt of feeling 'never managed to be good enough' (Tomkins and Nicholds 2017, p. 260), as the respondent had a positive sense of who she was and what she could do. From P41's feedback on both cultural and managerial aspects, it can be argued that in this case the impacts of managerial controls are outweighed by the influence of cultural values.

Furthermore, supported by Collinson's (2003) argument, self-identity in collectivist cultures are less likely at risk of being unsecured as identities tend to be set down and confirmed through family status. Regarding the finding of this present study, it is understandable that Vietnamese academics seem to see their work units/departments/universities as their family, which means self-identities do not totally rely on performative ethics (Clarke et al. 2012; Knights and Clarke 2018) like in individualistic cultures (Collinson 2003), but are more dependent on social validation of those who are in significant relationships such as colleagues or managers. Or in other words, in some cases, Vietnamese academics prioritise social validation of managers or colleagues above rigid assessment regimes. Correspondingly, the increasingly individualised academic capitalism in Western academia (Lynch 2015) which acts as managerialist strategies to individualise academics' performance might not cause identity insecurity (Bristow et al. 2019) and collegiality erosion (Kalfa et al. 2017) in the context of Vietnamese academia.

In another instance, collegial orientation seems to discourage Vietnamese academics from forming self-uniqueness but to encourage shared identities. One of them implied the case in a Vietnamese proverb:

*'There are no fish if the river's water is too pure. We have no friend if we are too good'*  
(P6)

The emphasis of P6 is that the collectivist mindset existing among members of the community does not welcome remarkable or extraordinary uniqueness of self, in either positive (good manner) or negative (bad manner) way. If an individual is too good, he/she might be isolated. If the individual does not follow what others do, there is also not a better ending. The same respondent highlighted the pervasiveness of collegiality:



*‘Although there is no target, I still force [myself] to do some things, to be similar to others...’ (P6)*

Such overwhelming collegiality, in some cases, can cause negative effects on academics’ emotion and result in escapism (academics distance their processes of identity work from their universities):

*‘There is some sort of working environment which makes you not only unhappy, but also want to leave it. You feel so disappointed with colleagues’ (P9)*

*‘I wanted to separate myself from that university to develop my capacity, and to understand myself better because when I was there, I was not myself.’ (P36)*

The expression of P9 and P36 reveals the attachment of individual selves on collectives in collectivist culture although such attachment is not their personal desire. The examples here show that individual academics' identity work was influenced remarkably by the environment or the communities where they located (Watson 2008). The respondents felt emotionally negative as they were not happy with their collegial relationships and/or how their ideal selves were affected by such relationships. Such affected emotion can be referred with the concepts of discrepancy in ‘ideal self’ (who I would ideally want to be) and discrepancy in ‘ought self’ (who I think I should be) (Conroy and O’Leary-Kelly 2014; Obodaru 2017) in the theory of self-discrepancy (Higgins 1987). Accordingly, the ideal-actual discrepancy (I cannot be who I want to be) can result in ‘dejection emotions’ and the discrepancy related to ought self (I cannot do what I should do/who I should be ) can result in ‘agitation emotions’ (Conroy and O’Leary-Kelly 2014, pp. 71–72) as well as guilt, shame or embarrassment (Brewer and Chen 2007). Interestingly, the comments of the respondents here are not to criticise the practices of managerial controls with increasing pressures or to relate managerialism’s impacts to social relationships such as erosion in collegiality (Kalfa et al. 2017). They related their negative emotions directly to the social relationships. The negative emotions can be explained that the respondents had incorporated the individualistic feature of managerialist controls into their self-meanings and desired to construct self-identity towards such meanings; and the negative emotions expressed in their stories were the outcomes of discrepancies in processes of identity construction as they could not be who they would want to be.

## *Harmony*

The above finding is supported with more of academics' stories regarding the sense of *harmony* in their processes of identity construction. Vietnamese have a proverb which is the underpinning ethic for social relationships through many generations: '*Dĩ hoà vi quý*' deriving from Chinese ethic on harmony (人以和为贵 *rén yǐ hé wéi guì* – it is precious for people to maintain harmony). Harmony can be considered as a cultural ethic which reflects collegial orientation, and it can also become a threat to academics' identity construction if they do not get along with their colleagues:

*'Social relationships at work can impact badly on what you do ...For example, if people don't like you, or if you do not get along with the head of the department, they won't support you'* (P25)

It is shown in the excerpt of P25's interview that collegiality is built based on harmony. Without harmony, collegiality can hardly exist. Due to the threats of not having good relationships with colleagues or managers to individuals' identity work, conflict avoidance to maintain harmony seems fairly common among Vietnamese academics. In Western literature, conflict avoidance regards to individuals' responses to perceived differences of perceptions, opinions, interests or values (Barsky and Wood 2005). Such responses can be formed as withdrawing, ignoring or suppressing the conflict situation with expectations that the conflict will no longer exist (Barsky and Wood 2005). In the context of Vietnamese academia, conflict avoidance to maintain harmony underpins academics' identity work, which means academics engage into activities to form, maintain, strengthen or revise their self-meanings (Alvesson and Willmott 2002) whilst maintaining normal (good/happy) relationships with others. One academic emphasised firmly on conflict avoidance:

*'Because I think there are so many things that I have to cope with so whatever I can avoid, I will'* (P18)

Another talked about her conflict avoidance underpinned by harmony ethic:

*'There is another aspect which has effects on me. So, if I can't change it (awkward management practices), I am afraid it would affect me, I will not act (to resist)'* (P16)

Avoiding conflicts and maintaining good relationships with managers are also emphasised by interviewees:

*‘Well, theoretically I can refuse to do but sometimes things are already laid in my hands, I have to do...of course it is my respect for boss (laugh)’ (P14)*

Conflict avoidance underpinned by harmony ethic seems consistent with identity work which complies with management:

*‘No, keep silence and follow the plan I have got. If I was not quiet, who would let me go on with my PhD?’ (P10)*

*‘I don’t think trying to change it (management) is by myself, it should involve many others. I am just a little part, I can only try my best in my work, live virtuously, earn more money for my family’ (P39)*

Such form of responses to managerialism is similarly also reported by Bristow et al. (2017) in the name ‘resisters in waiting’ who strategically complied and established their desired identities (reputation, title ‘Prof’) before gaining ‘the right to be critical’ (2017, p. 1195). Although it can be seen as strategic, it also reflects the powerless position of individual academics towards managerial controls. Teelken (2012), in the earlier study, conceptualises this phenomenon as symbolic compliant or pragmatic behaviour. Teelken’s argument reminds about the short term – long term orientation in Hofstede’s 6D model which suggests that Vietnamese underpinned by long term orientation culture are pragmatic and thrifty (in career opportunities) to gain expected result in the future.

### ***Seniority***

Vietnamese academics’ processes of identity work are also underpinned by seniority ethic which derives from Confucianism and Vietnamese traditional culture. Seniority reflects a strict hierarchy in Vietnamese society and organisations which also represents power distance dimension in Hofstede’s 6D model. The distinctiveness in Vietnamese seniority ethic is that it is not necessarily consistent with professional experience/seniority. Rather, it emphasises on age, which means younger people should respect for older people. Participants in this study talked about their experiences on how seniority affected their processes of identity work and

identity construction. Seniority can become a barrier for academics to construct their self-identities:

*‘In Vietnamese mindset, being young is equivalent to lack of experiences. Thus, I am not involved in making big decisions when we have departmental meetings. They normally ask senior academics with more experiences. Sometimes, I am young, and I have better ideas, but my ideas are not appreciated’ (P29)*

The impact of seniority on young academics’ identity construction is so significant and can outweigh strong qualifications achieved from long time studying abroad and international experiences. P6, a young academic returning from her study in the UK, is an example. When P6 was asked if she would feel her role and identity more appreciated and validated after her PhD journey, she was not confident:

*‘After I finished my Master program, I returned to my University, I was told that ‘you are nothing, just a baby academic’, So I think my position will just be a normal lecturer (after achieving PhD)’ (P6)*

A deeper look is made into her career narrative, P6 still saw herself as a young and early-career academic and PhD qualification could not make much difference. In this sense, seniority might not be apparent in words mentioning about age or experience, but it can be implied within the respondent’s narrative.

P24 added:

*‘Yes, in Vietnam, people who join (the organisation) first, without any authority, they just simply were born before me, they know more than me, they think they know more than I do. So, their words are more appreciated. I don’t disrespect them, but I would like equal conversations. We are colleagues.’ (P24)*

In the case where seniority is regarded to professional seniority, new academics’ identity work is also constrained by the power of seniors:

*‘To me, my supervisor here (in the UK) is like my colleague. It means I can talk, discuss with him...he can suggest some ideas, I have a right to defend my ideas...I feel I have equality when I work with him. In home country (Vietnam), it is like being imposed.*

*Senior academics, for example in committee, always decide what is right or wrong. Thus, my research has nothing really right' (P6)*

*'...but when I argue about knowledge, I'm sure I will be lost as they (seniors) might say I am not humble or how much knowledge I have learnt. Which means I won't have chance to develop my work.'* (P34)

The above stories told by younger academics highlight significant influences of national culture and traditional ethics on Vietnamese academics' processes of identity construction. Returning to the model developed by Ashforth and Schinoff (2016) on identity under construction, social validation is the heart of the process, which emphasises self-identities as 'social' phenomena (Watson 2008) and 'selfhood is thoroughly socially constructed' (Jenkins 1996, p. 25). In line with previous studies, the argument from the present study's findings is that Vietnamese academics' identity work can be constrained by seniority ethic when their self-identities are not validated/confirmed by their senior colleagues.

As highlighted above, seniority is one of the significant cultural factors which was experienced as a constraint to younger academics' identity work. However, it is not only the stories of young academics to strive through cultural barriers to develop their identities, but also the stories of senior academics' pressures to secure their identities. In this strand, some young Vietnamese academics' narratives indicated that following managerialist practices can create opportunities for them to get over cultural barriers whilst some senior academics highlighted their identity work complying to managerialist requirements would help secure their identities as role models.

P5, a young academics, made it clear about before and after she achieved her PhD qualification and publications:

*'Before I did not have the debating power, the uniqueness and enough competency as I am having now. Therefore, in the past I only tried to go through the period of time of accepting. Now, both sides (herself and other seniors) are seniors. Thus, it will not be like before.'* (P5)

By contrast to P6's above opinion about the influence of seniority ethic, qualifications and the period of further training and education to P5 were considered as important to *upgrade* the

identity of being a young or early-career academic. In P5's narrative, before her PhD program and further training, seniority affected her identity work in the way that she could not claim her identity as equal to other senior colleagues. She had to accept rather than being active. After her PhD program and further training, she narrated her identity as a senior academic which was equal to other seniors and such narrated identity could help her go beyond the age barrier. Furthermore, seniority in this stance did not disappear. Instead, it was claimed as an achievement of the respondent.

P24 experienced some occasions before she started her PhD that her ideas were not appreciated as much as the ones of senior academics. She then emphasised her advantages which related to managerialist practices such as English proficiency or publications:

*'Because of the typical national culture, they (managers) do not see us as colleagues but lower hierarchy staff. I go to study PhD because, I am not sure how different your university (author's University) is but in my university, young academics who can achieve PhD (abroad) can be seen differently in the eyes of people who have completed their PhD. It means PhD abroad is something very special...We start to have more powerful voice. Even now I can teach in English, not many academics in my university can do it...It (teaching in English) becomes something very special. From there, others see us as someone in a different level. All of those make me feel that I can get to say what I think.'* (P24)

P24's narrative is similar to the one of P5 although she did not claim herself as a senior. This respondent shared her story about how she enacted identity work to overcome the barrier of seniority by studying abroad. Before her further education, the seniority mindset positioned her in a lower hierarchy. After the period of self-development through achieving PhD qualification and improving English, she claimed her identity as more powerful and special, which helped her breakthrough the barrier of seniority mindset, so she could enact the meanings of who she wanted to be.

By contrast to the perspective of young academics who are in the process of identity development, senior academics have their own approach to managerialist practice to secure the sense of seniority and identities as role models:

*'Honestly, as I am a program leader, I need to have very good knowledge background and I have to be able to design the development of teaching subjects. So, I should also be someone who young academics can come to and put their trust on. In University, there is no such rules (about young academics should go to seniors for knowledge) but it is kind of an underground rule. To build the trust, to manage my staff, my professional capacity must be my priority. If my professional knowledge is not good enough, people might react negatively to my professional decisions which should be the most avoiding thing'. (P41)*

In addition, one of the activities to build professional capacity this academic mentioned is fulfilling the managerialist requirements regarding teaching and research hours as must-do ticking point for securing her senior identity.

Another senior academic appreciated her identity as a senior to protect her processes of identity work from being affected by the increasing opportunities for younger academics under managerialism:

*'I wouldn't see myself as hugely senior at this age, maybe you can say you have achieved very high education, but you still have to follow the order 'new-old', 'more-less experienced'. It is the rule. I think so. I am not so much into such rule. I just think new people are not used to the work, they have to consult older people and they should do it...Of course the situation (managerialist practices) provides younger academics more opportunities as you have better English, ICT skills... ' (P40)*

At this point of findings, it shows that the traditional culture of seniority has started tottering and slowly shared its position with managerialist controls in universities. To some extent, the competition between culture and managerialism here seems to create equality at work. This also brightens young and early academics' hopes when they start their career in such Confucian culture like Vietnam, which means they can strategically follow quantitative management without being worried that their endeavours would not make any difference. Nevertheless, although there is positive evidence of potential equality among two age/experience-related groups of academics resulted by managerialism, it is obvious that academics from both of the groups perceived their identity threat towards each other. The findings align with the suggestion of Sammarra et al. (2021) that if individuals have strong belief about age dissimilarity, they are more likely to relate age as a category to identify themselves and others

to different groups (old and young). Such response of academics can produce ingroup - outgroup discrimination within departments and/or universities and cause harms to collegiality, which highlights that management must not ignore such growing phenomenon (Sammarra et al. 2021).

### **6.3. Strategic identity work to overcome the context difficulties.**

Given that both managerialist controls and cultural values have significant impacts on how Vietnamese academics engage to constructing, maintaining, securing their work identities, an emerging research enquiry is *how do Vietnamese academics enact their identity work in the context they are located?* In the previous chapter, the findings highlighted that the participants constructed the definition of their academic identity deriving from the state's law and universities' regulations, and in this chapter, on the basis of cultural values and responsibilities associating to their roles. Continually in the present chapter, it is shown that the participants appreciated Confucianism and collectivism ethics and enacted their identity work along these ethics. Following the flow of data elaboration, this section of findings will present the respondents' narratives of their processes of identity construction to explore how Vietnamese academics craft their identities through stages of their career in response to the influences of managerialism and national culture. Three multitudes of how the participants engaged to crafting their academic identities emerge from their narratives are 'self exploration', 'critical identity work' and 'flexible identity work'. 'Self exploration' describes the process through which the respondents achieved their various self-meanings of being academics. 'Critical identity work' recounts the process in which academics protect and maintain their positive identities whilst critically challenging common sense of what it is meant to be an academics. 'Flexible identity work' represents the participants' strategic forms of identity work to strive through increasing work pressures and managerial requirements.

#### **6.3.1. Self exploration**

In many cases, academics were not always clear about their professional identity. They described the routine that they went through to realise who they wanted to be and what elements of meanings were attached to their professional identities. This shows that academics might start their academic career with a fairly narrow and/or ambiguous identity. Having no obvious notion of what academic profession was, P25 chose to be an academic as his only purpose was to pursue further education overseas:



*'I, actually at the time, wanted to become an academic not because academic profession is something extraordinary or bring a lot of benefits to me but towards the only purpose, which is to have an opportunity go to study abroad.'* (P25)

As he told his story, it is shown that experiencing the academic role and getting international education, especially PhD, gradually changed his self-definition of academic identity and made it clear about what he needed to do to construct his aspirational academic identity:

*'Initially, I didn't have any clear ideas of doing research.... I focused more on being a consultant rather than an academic. ...During my studying here [in the UK], I have realised that these identities do not overlap but contribute to each other. ...First, I am an academic; I will be very well-equipped and experienced...then I will combine with my real research experience so I will be an advisor, which means [being an] advisor will be an outcome of a process.'* (P25)

Another academic shared the same opinion but in a more dependent sense as she emphasised that she was seeking for her meanings of academic identities totally following what she was asked for by the university's regulations:

*'At the time, I did not have any idea about academic identity except for trying to publish articles to fulfil the research requirements of the university'.* (P29)

More importantly, the participants emphasised the significant roles of peers including colleagues, supervisors, and other scholars in helping them seek for the meanings of selves. One academic stated that he was influenced strongly by colleagues:

*'They were very passionate for their profession, they supported, and inspired me. I could see their collective spirit, selfless devotion'* (P25)

P29 mentioned the impacts of her supervisors in defining what it was meant to be an academic:

*'I think it must be 80% (influenced by her supervisor) ... Firstly, my supervisors guided me how to conduct a research step by step, especially ethics issues. Secondly, they guided me to international conferences. Because of those, I have learned how to undertake an internationally qualified paper'* (P29)

One academic shared her experience of building her broader sense of self with the influence of her peer. The peer's influence was vital in shaping and guiding her identity work which transformed her identity from teaching role into research role:

*'From 2003 to 2008, I thought it was simply a profession. It is teaching profession which means I taught whatever I learned. But later, I started to develop the demand to research prior to teaching. Professor (also her husband) was the one who helped me form that demand...he does not see teaching methods as priority, he prioritises research. He always told me that I cannot teach without research'* (P38)

Similarly, one academic found her aspirational identity in a role model:

*'My idol – David Teece who initiated the concept Direct Capability. He is a professor at the University of California. He has his own consulting company on estate trading, a global company. He is good at both (being an academic and entrepreneur).'* (P8)

These actors' identity work added elements into the interviewees' meanings of academic identity with increasing self-value and self-responsibilities such as practical values, dedication to and responsibility for society and businesses. An academic identified herself as not only an academic but also the one who can contribute to the development of the society by *'helping a number of businesses which are struggling to survive'* (P23).

In the period of managerialism with constant movements in Vietnamese academia including changes in policies or the way academics enact their roles, role transitions occur not only in early-career academics but also to seniors. Regarding the former, early-career academics are involved in role transitions in a more intense sense as they have to learn brand-new skills, attitudes, modes of interpersonal interactions, and behaviours (Ibarra and Barbulescu 2010). In the case of the latter, seniors are involved in role transitions due to changes in role practices (work format or rules and laws) and/or moving to a new role. In such cases, academics might have to employ new work methods and attitudes (Ibarra and Barbulescu 2010). To create an effective role transition, individuals may employ narrative identity work – *'social efforts to craft self-narratives that meet a person's identity aims'* (Ibarra and Barbulescu 2010, p. 137). Self-narratives (the stories about the self), are powerful measures to fill the gaps occurring in role transition (from old to new roles) because narratives (stories) help individuals bridge the past and the present and the future, which creates continuous sense of self (Ashforth 2001;

Ibarra and Barbulescu 2010). The stories provided by this present study's participants reveal how they navigated ambiguous situations and potential tensions in their dynamic career path.

### 6.3.2. Critical identity work

This section of findings provides multiple evidence which shows that academics are active and critical. Aligning with the argument of Anderson (2008) that academics are clever people and 'by no means passive recipients of managerial change' (p. 267), the findings suggest that Vietnamese academics can engage to identity work to challenge the meanings of academic identity provided by managerial regulations. During their professional development, some academics generated their ideal selves and regulated identity work towards such ideal selves' meanings rather than relying on the common sense of academic identity, e.g., willing to tackle challenges in their career, even though it might go out and beyond their 'safe zone':

*'It (studying abroad) was also an occasion for me to go beyond my safe zone and I can explore the more pertinent and challenging parts. More precisely, going beyond the safe zone is not quite right, it should be getting out of the daily work tornado. Anyone who are stuck in that tornado would miss other opportunities to have different points of view, do differently and be critical for self-development' (P5)*

One participant was determined for his identity work plan targeting broader audience:

*'I cannot just teach, then research, then teach then research, and be around within a university only. I have to go out to exert my influence' (P25).*

Sometimes, engaging into critical identity work is to avoid from becoming neoliberal subjects (Archer 2008b) appraised by managerialism. Thus, individuals tend to develop and achieve their own comfortable selves. One respondent refused to conduct certain identity work associating with competition or promotion:

*'I pursue dynamic capability, scholar entrepreneur. I want to develop in the direction that I can work in university by researching and teaching, that is about scholarship and in terms of entrepreneur, it is about earning money and doing my own business. Doing like that makes me feel free and more comfortable than fighting against others for promotion or positions that I am not clear about' (P8).*

Another example is when some academics saw themselves as unique thinkers and conducted identity work to pursue the uniqueness of themselves:

*‘What we have seen [about academic’s identity work] is only a title, but there is something more different, more comprehensive, more important, more realistic and more in-depth. It is identity or brand, like my own brand value. If I had that title, but didn’t have prestige, also people referred to me with negative comments or they did not show their respect or appraise me, that title would become meaningless’ (P5)*

P5’s above opinion on the expected outcomes of her identity work highlights the social desirability (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016), which supports the argument of Ashforth and Schinoff (2016) on social validation. Emerging from P5’s statement are two sources of self-identity which are organisational validation (official title: Professor) and social validation (people’s acceptance and praise to the identity being constructed). According to P5, organisational validation seems not as significant as social validation, which means fulfilling managerial checklist is just lower level or earlier stage of academic identity construction. There are higher levels or further stages where academics feel respected, appraised and, more importantly, positive.

In some cases, conducting critical identity work is not just about going beyond ‘safe zone’ but covering into ‘a comforting belief in our own wilful capacity to determine our own fate’ (Knights and Willmott 2004, p. 64). Some academics conducted identity work not only to accomplish their identity-related tasks but also to craft their happy selves like two participants shared in their stories below:

*‘I still love research, but I do not think I am a researcher. I still find it interesting, and I have to complete my task, my role. It means I have to complete my PhD in three to four years. I will still carry on with that plan. My supervisor still requires me to publish, so I will still write for publication, and I feel satisfied, which means I feel it is good for me to do so but I do not think I am a researcher’ (P13).*

*‘Frankly, I used to feel tired because I blamed the system [Vietnamese higher education management]. I wanted to change the system, but I could not change it. In the future, if I am in the same situation, I might do what fits my capacity rather than brace myself up or running towards anything...I always thought I needed to be an excellent*

*academic, I had to become this person, that person, which made me exhausted. From now on, if it is a job, I'll do what I can. It will be better for me mentally' (P26).*

One participant described changes in her self-conception which is '*divergent, abundant and strong*'. The participant's narrative suggests that identity work can expand the core self-meanings and effectively challenge managerial controls which have regulated academic identity with occupational tasks. The participant did not only construct identities imposed upon her but emphasised her inner strengths when her identity has developed, which suggests her resilience and proactiveness:

*'In fact, I realise when my own world inside me is divergent, abundant and strong then it will create an energy which impacts back on my environment instead of me being dependent on it' (P5).*

This form of identity work is not only about achieving ideal selves that academics determined as right for them but also challenging and distancing them from institutionalised notion of academic self-meanings. The findings here are valuable as they are empirical evidence of academics' critical and creative responses which can contribute to the call in literature on exploring new ways of identity-construction in academic career (Elangovan and Hoffman 2019, p. 2). Stories in this stance can both, hence, oppose to the form of conformist identity work (Boussebaa and Brown 2017) in the above section of 'self exploration', and empirically support the call of scholars who criticise the managerialist 'tornado' which, to a great extent, has turned academics into 'academic zombies with the potential connotations of illness, death, dehumanization and heartlessness' (Ratle et al. 2020, p. 253) and who are keen on seeking for academics' practices of 'being true to their own scholarly selves' (Elangovan and Hoffman 2019, p. 2) and 'having something important, relevant and meaningful' (Alvesson and Spicer 2016, p. 32).

### **6.3.3. Flexible identity work**

In this section, interviewed academics shared their stories about striving through continual changes in both work circumstances and managerial requirements, and their selves during career transitions. Identity work told in this section is contrary to various extreme forms of identity work to respond to the rigid managerial controls in academia such as anger (Ratle et al. 2020), loss of self-confidence or feelings of shame (Jones et al. 2020), or complicit

workaholic behaviours (Guidetti et al. 2020). Vietnamese academics engaged to flexible forms of identity work which they provided spaces for their desired identities to perform flexibly in uncertain conditions, which also is the evidence for Vietnamese academics' resilience and proactiveness. One senior academic confirmed her positive attitude on constructing self-identity to adapt with changes in work:

*'We need to adapt with this regime...work nowadays is not like it used to be...all of those changes will lead to people's awareness of their roles (in new work circumstances)' (P40)*

Another academic emphasised on self-management that if she wanted to practice different roles (academic and consultant), she needed a preoccupation with time balance rather than limiting her roles:

*'I think too much is not good. My time is limited. If I put too much time in consultation, I will be distanced from research, not enough time for research. It will affect my academic work...but if I can keep a good balance. I'm not sure if I can do it but I can only say that I will try my best to keep balanced so I can make it (be able to do both roles)' (P6)*

One academic agreed:

*'In fact, the allocation of work now in my university is 7-3. 7 for teaching and 3 for research. It is about time only. But I think if I try to work effectively, I focus (on work), within the portions of 3, I can still produce good (research) products' (P7)*

More stories of the interviewed academics are told which reflect the flexibility in their processes of constructing selves. In this current stance, interviewed academics focused more on their present selves and created for themselves flexible space to construct their identities. One academic shared her thought:

*'I don't have any clear targets. I will have appropriate responses to particular situations at the time...for now, my target is about finishing my PhD and returning (to Vietnam) to teach. Not sure about further.'* (P26)

When asked about who P12 wanted to become, she firmly talked about her flexible plans:

*'Being certain about becoming a sort of person, having only one purpose, such things are not for me. With that personality, I might be flexible, which is true but being undetermined is also true. To many people, it is necessary to become who they want to be, but I am not like that'* (P12)

Another academic wanted to equip herself with necessary knowledge and skills before thinking about who she wanted to be:

*'Honestly, I have not foreseen what it will be but in the near future, I need to learn a lot and experience more. I am not sure how it will be at the finish.'* (P4)

Some academics used flexible identity work strategically to cope with work stresses and managerial pressures. Being flexible is also one way to remain their true selves:

*'Some people can live like water. It is exciting. It means water flows everywhere; it is still itself. Reflecting on ourselves, we can be flexible and elastic'* (P5)

One academic stated that she can adapt to any sort of management:

*'If there are work pressures, I can work along it. If there is no pressure, I can work along it'* (P11)

Being proactive and flexible in using different sources of resources for identity work is important according to one academic:

*'It is important that you are proactive. You need to have an ability to acquire knowledge so that if it lacks resource in your university, you can always outsource from external forces'* (P2)

In sum, the participants narrated various events and experiences which impacted on their academic identities. Correspondingly, the interviewed academics defined and developed their professional identities from standard meanings of academic identity bound up with teaching and research roles to socially value-making roles and more realistic and happier selves. The participants expressed that identity work is not targeted merely for remaining or revising, but also expanding the core meanings of their identity as long as they are who they want to be, or who they feel right to be, and become independent selves from the working environment.

Moreover, by engaging to forms of flexible identity work, work pressures and career ambiguity become less challenging to academics which reflects their positive attitude to enhance self-security.

#### **6.4. Summary of findings**

In summary, this chapter of findings has elaborated the tension of Vietnamese academics' identity work between the East's cultural ethics and the West's managerialist controls as identity regulation in Vietnamese academia. The findings show that cultural norms have interdependent relationship with managerialism, which represents a cultural-ideological mode of control (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). National culture can both support and constrain managerialist identity regulation in different aspects. Correspondingly, Confucianism with its ethics of power distance, loyalty and propriety is the significant cultural support for Vietnamese universities' push for managerialist targets. External collectivism encourages academics to connect with external networks and build universities' competitive advantage to achieve global excellence (Jones et al. 2021) whilst intragroup cultural norms including overwhelming collegiality, harmony and seniority can challenge the individualist capitalism nurtured by managerialism and cause tensions in academics' identity construction. Interestingly, although seniority appears as the constraint of younger academics' identity work, the findings on how senior academics were preoccupied about their identity work suggests that managerialist controls and national culture can interact and work together to create work equality. Lastly, with the understanding of the interdependence of managerialism and national culture in regulating academics' work identities, the study analyses how the participants constructed their identities in response to the tension occurring in their work life.

#### **6.5. Discussion and conclusion**

This study expands the literature of identity work in response to the call for more studies in academia within different national cultural contexts (Brown 2015; Brown et al. 2019). The findings highlight that the complexity of cultural ethics can both support and constrain the emergent practices of managerialist controls, which reflects the tension in Vietnamese academics' identity construction processes. Whilst Confucianism ethic is likely to encourage academics to engage and comply to managerialist practices, overwhelming collegiality (internal collectivism) and other intragroup ethics seem to cause disruption to academics' identity work, negative emotion, and escapism.



In this section, the discussion is constructed in four parts, which firstly argues that the influences of national culture are significant and can act as identity regulation; secondly argues for the practice of effective collegiality; thirdly, combining with the discussion on the impacts of managerialism in the previous chapter, enhances the understanding of how managerialist controls interwind with national culture; and lastly, suggests the insight into the self-meanings development of academic identity to argue that broadening self-meanings can be a powerful strategy for academics to strive through various role transitions under prevailing managerial changes.

### **6.5.1. National culture and academics' identity work processes**

In the last chapter, managerialist controls were approached as identity regulation to understand the impacts of managerialism on Vietnamese academics' processes of identity work. The findings in that chapter show that Vietnamese academics seem to engage to activities to construct and develop their identities which align with managerialist requirements and policies. In this current chapter, cultural ethics are taken into account to interpret and enhance the above findings. By contrast to the findings of previous studies in the existing literature on academics' identity work which reported prevalent compliance of academics (Knights and Clarke 2014; Clarke and Knights 2015; Alvesson and Spicer 2016) as to some extent overly pessimistic (Kolsaker 2008; Boussebaa and Brown 2017), the present study offers a more optimistic explanation of Vietnamese academics' compliant behaviours through the cultural lens.

The findings in the context of Vietnamese academia here argue against the argument by Barry (2009) that national culture is not as strong. With the influences of Confucianism, Vietnamese academics accepted and positively incorporated managerial discourses into their narratives of self-identity. Confucianist ethics have formed a central sense of what good academics and organisational members are meant to be. Hence, it seems unacceptable or unvirtuous to resist such sense, especially, in the collectivist culture where social pressures of following the common norms are heavily influential (McAuliffe et al. 2003). On one hand, it can be argued in the case of Vietnamese context that the Western managerial ideology imported into a strong national culture may be unlikely to break through cultural barriers. On the other hand, it is also suggested that when organisational controls are supported by national culture, identity regulation is more likely to be effective with employees' consensus, especially in a collectivist culture.

To a certain extent, national culture can become a form of identity regulation. It is obvious in Vietnamese interviewees' stories that their identity work is underpinned by cultural values. Vietnamese academics seem to incorporate cultural values in their processes of constructing work identities, which fosters their sense of being members in their universities, in this case as *good academic member*.

However, some examples given by this study suggest that the overwhelming influences of cultural ethics can become the cause of negative emotions, distancing, or escapism during academics' processes of identity work as academics start to accept the sense of individualism under managerialism. The argument here is that, in a collectivist and strong national culture like Vietnam, cultural ethics associating with power/hierarchical relations can assist the practices of organisational controls whilst the intragroup ethics of work relationships can disrupt academics' identity construction process. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) argue that cultural-communitarian patterns of identity regulation may support or constrain management-driven identity regulation and managerial controls enacted within these patterns. This present study provides evidence which can extend that argument by specifically exploring the impacts of managerial controls in a collectivist – Confucianist culture like Vietnam.

Moreover, the subject of this research is the lived experiences of Vietnamese academics who are appreciated in Vietnam as moral models and traditional value maintainers. Hence, the influences of national and traditional culture become even stronger in academic profession, which can be different from other contexts or professions such as multi-national companies or salesman. Finally, it is also argued that the capitalist attribute of Western managerial ideology can struggle to grow pervasively in Vietnamese academic context. The evidence emphasises that by effectively inserting cultural values in the processes of enacting identity regulation, rather than trying to erode such values, universities can gain both academics' positive identity work and managerial targets. In this sense, academics follow managerialist controls with consensus, not coercion, which illustrates the process of identity regulation. In the next section, the discussion will emphasise the tensions of Vietnamese academics' identity work between the ideologies from the West meet those from the East regarding social identity work.

### **6.5.2. The tension of Vietnamese academics' identity work - collectivist identity work not collective identity work.**

The data presentation and argument in this empirical chapter have highlighted the tensions in Vietnamese academics' processes of identity work, which follows the argument of narrative identity theories that identity narratives are the result of the interaction between internal factors and external impacts in the tension of multiple versions of reality (Caza, Vough, et al. 2018). In this study, the tensions in Vietnamese academics' identity construction processes relate mainly to the sense of collectivism – individualism and traditional – modern professional practices which results in different forms of identity work including positive mode (building bonds with universities), negative mode (distancing, escaping) or pragmatic mode ('resisters in waiting' (Bristow et al. 2017)).

Additionally, in the existing literature on identity work, studies underpinned by social identity theory, mainly in Western contexts, focus on in-group identification and highlight the tensions of personal-organisational benefits as well as the belongingness between individuals and their organisations (Caza, Vough, et al. 2018; Brown 2019). However, the intra-group relationships (identities confirmed/disconfirmed by colleagues, managers) have been under-researched and cannot be explained fully through the concept of 'collective identity work'. Following Yuki's (2003) conceptualisation of intra-group relationships and the studies of McAuliffe et al. (2003) and Truong et al (2017) on the effects of cultural collectivism, the findings of this present study suggest a distinctive form of identity work which is referred as *collectivist identity work*. Correspondingly, Vietnamese academics' identity work is enacted in a collectivist culture and influenced by collectivist norms which prioritise remaining of good intra-group relationships over personal benefits. The question is how collectivist identity work can reflect the tension in Vietnamese academics' identity construction processes? The explanation is provided as follows.

Academics in previous studies are assumed to work in individualistic processes (Jain et al. 2009) with the obsession of elitism culture, peak performances and 'excellence' (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016). By contrast, Vietnamese academics' identity work seems to be diverted from individual projects to intra-group projects due to the dominance of collectivist culture in Vietnam. Correspondingly, Vietnamese academics are conscious of their duties both as the individuals regarding managerial requirements and the members of collectivist community. They seem to conduct identity work in tensions and are pressurised into a whirl of full

workloads that require them to ‘carve out time and space’(Anderson 2006) in order to fulfil their working obligations and intra-group responsibilities.

Identity scholars have long discussed about the tensions between personal-social identities (Watson 2008), as well as personal-professional identities (Zikic and Richardson, 2016) and managerial-personal identity (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003). However, it lacks understanding about how relationships among in-group members influence academics’ identity work processes. This present study provides empirical findings on intra-group relationships among academics and colleagues, which highlights the interdependence between identity work of *relational self* and *individual self* (Sluss and Ashforth 2007). The *relational self* is defined as the self which is achieved through integrating with significant others and is based on personalised bonds of attachment (friendship or collegial relationships), while *individual self* is the self which is achieved through differentiating from others (Sedikides and Brewer 2015). However, relational self in social identity theories within Western literature is bounded within the understanding of interpersonal connection and belongingness (Sluss and Ashforth 2007) which emphasises on individuals’ desires for identifying with others and finding social entities as sources of identity, as known as identification, but individuals’ identity work is still personal projects. Hence, relational self and individual self in Western understanding are assumed as not competing each other.

By contrast, the findings in the present data have investigated the distinctive form of collectivist identity work which refers to activities that an individual engages in constructing self-identity without separating from collective benefits and social relationships within his/her organisation. Vietnamese academics engaging in collectivist identity work tend to put collective targets and remaining harmony within social relationships above their self-identity construction. It can be easy to spot examples that Vietnamese academics cover each other’s work or not claiming their credit for the work. In addition, assessment systems in Vietnamese academia have remained their main proportion towards collective performance, which is shown earlier in this thesis in chapter 2 reporting how universities are awarded by the government because of their staff’s publications. Furthermore, social validation in the processes of collectivist identity construction sometimes can blur managerialist identity regulation. In the context of Vietnamese academia, achieving social validation from managers and colleagues, in some cases, is more important than ticking the managerial requirements’ boxes.

Although it has been discussed in this section that collectivist culture can cause tensions to academics' identity work, there was still evidence in the interviews that it does not always lead to negative emotions in Vietnamese academics. Correspondingly, the next section of discussion suggests a new way of enacting managerialist controls which can maintain collegial and positive identity work.

### **6.5.3. Effective cultural – managerial identity regulation**

Underpinned by Confucianism and collectivist ethics, Vietnamese academics desire to enact identity work which can contribute to society and hope 'to be good' (Fitzmaurice 2013). The desire of 'to be good' motivates Vietnamese academics to engage to selfless identity work which can strengthen collegial relationships in academia while contradicting the pervasive individualism embedded in managerialist controls. The findings of this study align with the argument of Reale and Primeri (2014) that collegiality can be persistent despite the efforts of legislative reforms and a willingness to reduce it.

The desire of collegial identity work has been recorded in previous studies in academics' identity work (Fitzmaurice 2013) however it lacks obvious evidence that collegiality can be realised in academic life (Bristow et al. 2019). Supported by the evidence from this present study's interviews that Vietnamese academics seem to appreciate collegiality (not overwhelming collegiality), the author argues that Vietnamese universities could achieve desired managerial performance by rewarding behaviours on a more collegial and collectivist basis rather than being shaded in the competitiveness underpinned by the individualist ideology in the Western-origins managerialism (Jones et al. 2021). In addition, effectively encouraging academics' collegial identity work can help universities avoid contradicting the strong Confucianism and collectivism ethics, but maintaining them and utilising cultural supports, to achieve harmony between personal and organisational goals (Jones et al. 2021). This approach of managerialist practices aligns with McAuliffe et al. (2003) that collectivism and individualism can interwind to maximise organisational performance. Correspondingly, collective and social motives should play the underpinning role for individual identity work. By doing that, individual academics could avoid the feeling of isolation which is reported as very common in academic profession (Hemmings 2012; Jaremka et al. 2020). At the same time, the collective vision and mission are more likely to be fulfilled because organisation's individuals perceive their roles towards collective targets. To add more motivation, individuals should have more space or autonomy to meet their personal/natural desires of constructing

distinctive selves, which suggests a balance between collective and individual orientation in both management and individual academics' identity work. In other words, individual academics should not either separate or be separated from collectives as they craft their identities or dissolve or be dissolved their selves in collectives.

In addition, the finding of Vietnamese academics' positive attitude towards collegiality can be an appropriate explanation for the enquiry of scholars who have looked for signs of collegiality in managerialist universities. According to Burnes et al. (2013), the nature of effective collegiality depends on academics' willingness to act collegially despite the practices of managerialist controls. Scholars have asserted that collegialism and managerialism can coexist within a university (De Weert 2001; Marini and Reale 2015) to fit the needs of twenty-first-century universities (Burnes et al. 2013). It is argued that managerialist controls should not be accused as the absolute cause for the erosion of collegiality (Kalfa et al. 2017) in modern academic work life.

The above argument can suggest a distinctive way to study academics' life and academia which can avoid a myopia or a trap within the sense of the dark side of academic career (Richardson and Zikic 2007; Ratle et al. 2020) which has haunted studies in the field as the ghost of Plato (Elangovan and Hoffman 2019). Stories by and about academic life do not need to be dark and gloomy. Vietnamese people have many proverbs mentioning about the collective power such as:

‘One tree cannot make a hill, but three trees stand together can make a high mountain’

In addition, the approach of CMS scholars has led research in the field to study about academics' responses to managerialism as the behaviours of subordinate. Although a number of studies have reported the activeness in academics' identity work to resist managerialist controls (Jain et al. 2009; Bristow et al. 2017; Caddell and Wilder 2018), they lack attempts to seek for evidence that academics can spread optimism as they enact their identity work. Vietnamese academics seek to spread their self-values (sharing knowledge, engaging to moral attitudes and behaviours) to their colleagues and broader community. By doing so, they can make the social validation more controllable as appreciation is emerged inside recipients of such values (I share values with you, you appreciate my values and who I am). This argument aligns with the assertion of Burke and Stets (2000, p. 347) that when one's view is verified by others/another, ‘the process of trust is activated’, which then leads to ‘a stable social structure’.

Hence, such processes do not only create positive identity work for the actors but also positive emotions to others, which initiates harmonising identity work as a phenomenon in collectivist – Confucianist cultures. Harmonising identity work, or collegial identity work, are activities that academics enacted to maintain, develop and secure their self-identities through maintaining harmony and supportive relationships with their colleagues. Engaging to such form of identity work, academics can avoid anger as reported by Ratle et al. (2020) or other pessimistic responses to managerialism (Thomas and Davies 2005; Bristow et al. 2017). The empirical finding of this present study, hence, contributes significantly to the existing literature by providing evidence to support the call for collective intellectual activism (Contu 2018; Ratle et al. 2020), ‘the collective orientation starting with ourselves and what we do since ‘personal’, our subjectivity, is political and ethical...not just in books (or articles) but in our everyday lives’ (Contu 2018, p. 284).

Briefly, the findings of this present study suggest the avoidance of the overwhelming focus on ‘instrumental individualism’ in the CMS literature (Jones et al. 2021) which has brought a gloomy and, to some extent, negative sentiments for twenty-first-century academia where managerialist practices are not avoidable. In other words, by seeking for examples of more positive and collective identity work, this study directs research interests away from instrumental individualism of academics’ identity work which has emphasised on lonely and individualist academic work. It is also suggested that managerialism can work more effectively when it can motivate and encourage collegiality in academia. Moreover, the evidence of strong cultural influences to academics’ identity work concurs with the call for ‘creative borrowing and flexible indenisation or adaptation to suit local contexts’ which are crucial for effective education reform (Tran et al. 2017, p. 1902). The findings also reminds about the argument of Chan et al. (2017) that a new Asian form of hybridisation of higher education can be enacted by selectively borrowing from the West whilst drawing upon its own traditions.

#### **6.5.4. Broadening self-meanings as strategic identity work**

In this section of discussion, Vietnamese academics’ identity work is considered consistently with the theorization in OMS that identity is ‘a dynamic, multi-layered set of meaningful elements’ (Kärreman and Alvesson 2001, p. 64) and identity work is regarded as an ongoing process (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Ashforth and Schinoff 2016; Caza, Vough, et al. 2018). From the participants’ identity narratives, it is highlighted that the experiences in different roles and contexts (e.g., workplace, conferences, oversea study) and interactions with other actors

(e.g., during their learning process) are antecedents for academics to construct their multi-layered identities. Correspondingly, one's identity spreads from core meanings (e.g., teaching and research) to expanded meanings (e.g., values and responsibilities added into and beyond core meanings).

At the beginning of academics' work life, they can put high or low expectations for the self-conceptualisation of who they are and who they want to be. Because identity can be both stable and malleable (Rhodes and Brown 2005), the self-concept is changeable, and self-aspiration can be revised through their career transition. The interviewed academics started their career with some ambiguity of the identity. Such ambiguity leads academics to mainly incorporate the managerial discourses (regulations on their academic roles) into their narratives of self-identity (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). During the development of their career, self-meanings become more specified as they gain more knowledge of their roles. Their experiences with different people, events and contexts through various learning and working experiences become antecedents for creating 'variety in possible self' (Ibarra 1999, p. 783).

The findings reveal that Vietnamese academics engaged in identity work which can broaden the meanings in their academic identity when the social feature of self became active during their career transition. They may start their career and make choices of identity work initially for their personal interests but the constructed identity (outcomes of their identity work) is subject to others' confirmation or denial in their everyday social interactions (Knights and Clarke 2017). This reminds the argument of Ashforth and Schinoff (2016) that (although their argument emphasises on newcomers) individuals' sources of information to construct their identities within their local context and roles derive from mentors, trainers, socialisation agents or even customers. In this study, the findings do not only represent the view of early-career academics, but also senior academics that they observed and contrasted (to) the behaviours of those who they saw as role models in order to craft their 'credible role performance' (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016, p. 122).

Regarding the relation between social and self-identities, it seems that social characteristics (value and responsibilities) are added into Vietnamese academics' self-identities through identity work to create a multi-layered set of self-meanings. Such multi-layered identities involve personal meanings (I do this to serve my own interests) and social meanings (I do this to serve others' interests). The social notion here differs from the concept 'social identity' conceptualised from the socio-psychological approach of social identity theory (Ashforth and



Mael 1989). Accordingly, the latter is referred to the belongingness between members and social categories while the former, as argued in this present study, is emphasised as the characteristic of identity work and self-identity's target. The present study also acknowledges Watson's (2008) argument of a link between socially available discourses and self-identities. However, his emphasis is on the 'cultural, discursive or institutional notions of who or what any individual might be' (Watson 2008, p. 131) which means the others' opinions about the self. The emphasis from this present research's findings is embedded in academics' efforts in changing social construction of their self-identities. As shown above, respondents in this present study were willing to challenge the institutional notion of what an academic might become (from PhD students to professors or being pure academic staff of universities) and should do (teaching and research in universities and become members of scholar communities). The findings show that academics' identity work is not limited within academia but can create values and influence towards the community and industry, and even use such identity to practice non-academic works. Relatively speaking, the motive 'self-verification' (a need to be seen by others as one sees oneself) (Ashforth and Schinoff 2016, p. 114) for Vietnamese academics' identity construction may be expanded towards broader audience rather than being limited within universities, academic community or by colleagues. As a result, individuals through meaning-broadening processes can find it more optimistic to conduct identity work in the contemporary academia because their identity work is not limited within their assigned tasks; their academic identity-related values are not bounded within the meanings of being a university scholar but also as being a knowledgeable and valuable social member.

This study shows that meanings constituting identity can gradually be added through academics' work and life events, which emphasises on the achievable richness of identity. This aligns with findings from other Western contexts (e.g., Boussebaa & Brown, 2017). Brown (2015) critically highlights five fundamentally contemporary debates on how identity has been theorised and researched in organisations which argue if identity is self-choice or ascribed; stable or fluid; coherent or fragmented; able to be motivated to achieve positive meaning; and bound up with demands for authenticity. Underpinned by Stryker et al.'s (2000) assertion regarding identities as self-meanings and 'self-meanings develop in the context of meanings of roles and counter-roles' (p.287), this study's empirical findings add another dimension to Brown's above argument that academic identities vary from narrower to broader set of meanings, and individual academics conduct identity work associating with available meanings within their identities without changing into another self. With this strategic way to construct

work identities, academics can avoid two concerns. First, sticking to the standard meanings of academic identity whilst collecting further beneficial and valuable meanings of self can help academics avoid identity losses and negative emotions. Academics, in many contexts, have experienced existential worries about what meaningful their identity work should be (Knights and Clarke 2014) and work identity losses (Brown et al. 2019). Work-related identity losses can happen in any profession and cause negative emotion to individuals (Conroy and O’Leary-Kelly 2014). For example, Croft et al. (2015) reported emotional distress in nurse managers as they experienced loss of their professional identity or Brown et al. (2019) recorded identity losses in UK business school deans. Second, enhancing the meanings of self can help academics avoid identity struggles in picking ‘between various possible selves’ (Ybema et al. 2009, p. 313) or establishing ‘a ‘new normal’ around the changed sense of self’ (Conroy and O’Leary-Kelly 2014, p. 67). Relatively, the example for the former from this present study is when academics come to make decision of engaging to act as a researcher, a teaching lecturer or a hybrid role identity (entrepreneur or consultant and academic) (Caza, Vough, et al. 2018). The examples for the latter are when senior academics enact identity work to adapt with the new managerialist requirements or new-career academics try to fit within scholar community or to achieve social validation.

In addition, interviewed academics in this present study had a strong sense of academic identity and desired to maintain their academic identity because holding an academic identity offered them ‘*a prestigious profession in society*’ (P23), ‘*flexible working time*’ (P8) and being an academic ‘*is more humane*’ (P8), and possesses ‘*long term values*’ (P15). Some of those benefits can be added when they want to extend their profession out of universities: ‘*you are a PhD, working for a university, when you open your own business, somehow it does some marketing for your image*’ (P1). It is obvious that all of such valuable meanings of being an academic mentioned by the participants are not tied strictly to their universities or specific institutions.

Finally, this study invites discourses which appreciate and expand the notion of revisable identities. The support for this present study’s argument lays on various debates in the existing literature on authenticity (Knights and Clarke 2014; Tomkins and Nicholds 2017) and existential continuity and security (Giddens 1991; Alvesson and Willmott 2002). Hence, this study’s findings aligns with the argument that identity is unitary with multifaceted and complex mixture elements (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Caza, Vough, et al. 2018) rather than

understanding self as the container of many distinct identities (Brown 2019). Furthermore, recent studies on identity work regarding individual identity in general, and academic identity in particular have drawn attention to how one performs to cultivate a sense of distinctiveness and true-to-self (Elangovan & Hoffman, 2019; Knights & Clarke, 2018). However, there is little suggestion from the literature to understand the inner complex worlds of academics' identities, which then stop us from seeing academics everywhere no different than neoliberal subjects (Archer 2008b) or surrendering 'research robots' (Alvesson and Spicer 2016) who are obsessed by insecurity as it never feels as enough.

The understanding of the complex inner self can sharpen the implication that not every academic is the same. The argument here is underpinned by the notion 'idiosyncratic' used by March (1994) to clarify the author's argument that different individuals hold different experiences, situational antecedents and contexts through their career and role transitions. For example, some academics might focus on securing their job by fulfilling requirements of their organisations regarding their professional role such as teaching and research, while others can have a variety of identity work to fulfil requirements of their aspirational identity such as creating social values. From another perspective, the findings and argument on broadening self-meanings as strategic identity work can practically imply that managerialist controls and practices, maybe in Western countries, should be more flexible, which can create space for academics to develop their meaningful identities and avoid meaningless self by enacting multiple roles (Caza, Moss, et al. 2018). To achieve that, academics should have more freedom and autonomy (Henkel 2005; Knights and Clarke 2018) and not be stuck within limited role practices and meanings as if the only path to be a successful academic is surrendering academic autonomy (Alvesson and Spicer 2016) to publish on high-ranking journals or to join the academic games (Kalfa et al. 2017; Robinson et al. 2017). Hopefully, this suggestion can slowly lead academics close to Elangovan and Hoffman's (2019, p. 6) call:

*'those of us who are privileged enough to live the life of an academic possess a privileged opportunity to contribute to the world around us...if we were to live our academic lives in ways that are true enough, bold enough to deliver on those expectations, then maybe Plato's ghost would stop singing "what then?"'*

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion and implications**

### **7.1. Introduction**

For the last 20 years, academic professionals have experienced rapid changes in their working life regarding the prevalence of managerialism in academia (Urbina-Garcia 2020). Building from the literature of CMS and OMS on culture of performativity and accountability associating with managerialism in academia, this study has drawn upon primary empirical evidence to examine Vietnamese academics' lived experiences at work regarding the practices of managerial controls. Recent studies have paid attention on examining changes in academic profession and the nature of academia (Bristow et al. 2019; Jones et al. 2020; McCarthy and Dragouni 2020) which have been argued as leading to academic capitalism (Slaughter and Leslie 2001), identity insecurity (Knights and Clarke 2014), professional tensions (Dugas et al. 2020), and negative emotions (Smith and Ulus 2020). This list is not exhausted. Associating with such attention on researching about the impacts of managerialism on academics' daily work, various studies have focused on exploring multitude of resistance or responses of academics to managerial controls which are more creative, proactive and more collective (Barry et al. 2006; Boussebaa and Brown 2017; Contu 2018; Ratle et al. 2020). In examining those issues, studies have reported widely a number of effected aspects in academic profession including changes in academics' self-identities and collegiality (Horta and Santos 2020; Pianezzi et al. 2020). Yet the rich literature still demands for studies which can move beyond those critiques (portraying academic profession towards its dark side) and can expand our understanding of the practices of managerialism in different contexts by capturing more examples of affected aspects in academic life, academics' negotiation with management, and exclusively contextual and cultural factors influencing managerial relations. This present study follows such approach.

The final chapter will begin with providing an overview of the research by summarising the findings and the theoretical development from these findings. Then, it will advance the arguments by addressing the lessons learned from the context and the problems to be addressed for both Vietnamese and global higher education. Lastly, the chapter will consider the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research to adjust and develop the research topics.

## 7.2. Study summary

The aim of this study is to explore Vietnamese academics' lived experiences at work regarding the imposition of managerialism in the context of higher education. To achieve the research aim, two research questions were generated:

- 1. How do practices of managerialist controls influence Vietnamese academics' work life, in the context of Vietnamese higher education?**
- 2. How does Vietnamese national culture influence Vietnamese academics' work experiences in response to the practices of managerialist controls, in the context of Vietnamese higher education?**

As the study's focus is on academics' lived experiences at work, the literature of identity is employed to guide the analyses of the impacts of managerialism on how Vietnamese academics practice their professional roles. This theoretical adoption is grounded by the argument that understanding one's lived experiences is based on understanding who he/she perceives him/herself (Who am I?), what one does (What I do) and how such perceptions have (been) changed and by what. Accordingly, the theorising of identity and identity work is used to examine the inner self of academics regarding the meanings of their academic identities and how they engage to activities to create, maintain, strengthen and develop their desired notions of self-concept to protect the coherent and distinctive sense of self (Brown 2021).

Academics' work identities in this study are considered under two theoretical lenses of identity theory (IT) and social identity theory (SIT) by the emphasis that academics are both individuals to their own work and within their work units, departments, universities, communities. Through the lens of identity theory, academics engage to activities to meet social expectations of the roles they undertake (educator, researcher, field expert). Through the lens of social identity theory, academics' behaviours and experiences are considered with regards to their belongingness with their collectives (as a member of a department, a university and/or one or more communities).

Following the argument of Alvesson and Willmott (2002) that contemporary management tends to manage staff from inside through shaping and disciplining employees' identities, the study reflects the practices of managerial controls into the conceptualisation of identity regulation. By doing this, the study can examine how managerial controls have come to

regulate academics' meanings of self and how academics engage to activities in response to managerial interventions. In addition, the analysis takes an insight into the relationships among academics with other actors including managers, colleagues, students, and scholar communities to investigate how managerialism has impacted such relationships from the participants' perspective.

The study locates its research subjects within the context of Vietnamese national culture for comprehensive and deeper analyses. To elaborate the arguments and discussions, Vietnamese national culture is reviewed through adopting Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede 2009, 2011; Hofstede et al. 2010) and the literature of Vietnamese traditional culture (Nguyen 2016). This theoretical approach can benefit both the audience and the author of this thesis. Utilising the well-known model like Hofstede's 6D model to deliver an internationally under-researched culture can bring audience closer to the country's major cultural values through familiar concepts (e.g., collectivism – individualism, power distance). To enhance its analysis, the study relates Vietnamese culture values to historic and social characteristics to provide the audience with enriched understanding of the context and to explain the influences of multiple cultural values which are not included in studies of Hofstede and colleagues (e.g., Confucianism). Regarding the benefits to the author and this study, the combination of using Hofstede's cultural dimensions and broader literature of Vietnamese national culture can provide poignant discussions and arguments about the role of culture in shaping managerial practices, academics' perception of selves and their identity work in response to managerialism.

Underlined by the intensive and critical literature review of managerialism in academia, identity theorising, and national culture, this study employs interpretivism as research paradigm to understand academics' lived experiences from their point of view. With an interpretivist stance, the data is collected through in-depth and semi-structured interviews which can help the researcher to investigate enriched findings but avoid getting lost during conversations (Bryan 2012). A sample of 41 interviews with Vietnamese academics from 12 Vietnamese universities was collected and analysed through the combinative method of thematic analysis and narrative approach. This method has emerged within the interpretivist paradigm to conduct social and organisational research (Rhodes and Brown 2005) and been widely used to deal with topics of academics' identity work and education (Ylijoki 2003; Robinson et al. 2017). The approach treats interviews as narrative accounts with the focus on

interpreting the content (what narrative is told) and consequently welcome thematic elements emerging across research respondents and reported events (Riessman 2005).

Eventually, 41 narrative accounts which contain fruitful stories about Vietnamese academic life have been revealed with a number of significant themes. In reporting these themes, the strategy is to consistently answer the research questions, which generates two empirical chapters (Chapter 5 and chapter 6). Each chapter contains findings reporting research results for each research question, followed by the discussions which identify the significance of the research results and relate the evidence from the present study with the previous studies and the adopted theoretical lenses (Creswell and Creswell 2018). Figure 5 represents the main findings of the study aligning with the research questions as well as the promise to the future research. Accordingly, the right side of the model is generated from combining the third level (aggregate) themes in chapter 5 to present the significant impacts of managerial controls in Vietnamese higher education on both academics' work identity and identity work. The left side of the model is developed from combining the third level (aggregate) themes in chapter 6 on national culture's influences on the practices of managerial controls. The model contains the proposed relationships (presented in dotted arrows) between national culture, work relationships (between academics with managers, colleagues, students and scholar community) and managerial controls. The proposed relationships in this model suggest the potential to develop this current study by examining whether national culture can neutralise or reduce or increase the practices of managerialism in Vietnamese higher education through academics' relationships with other actors. More details of the main findings of this study shown in figure 5 are explained below.

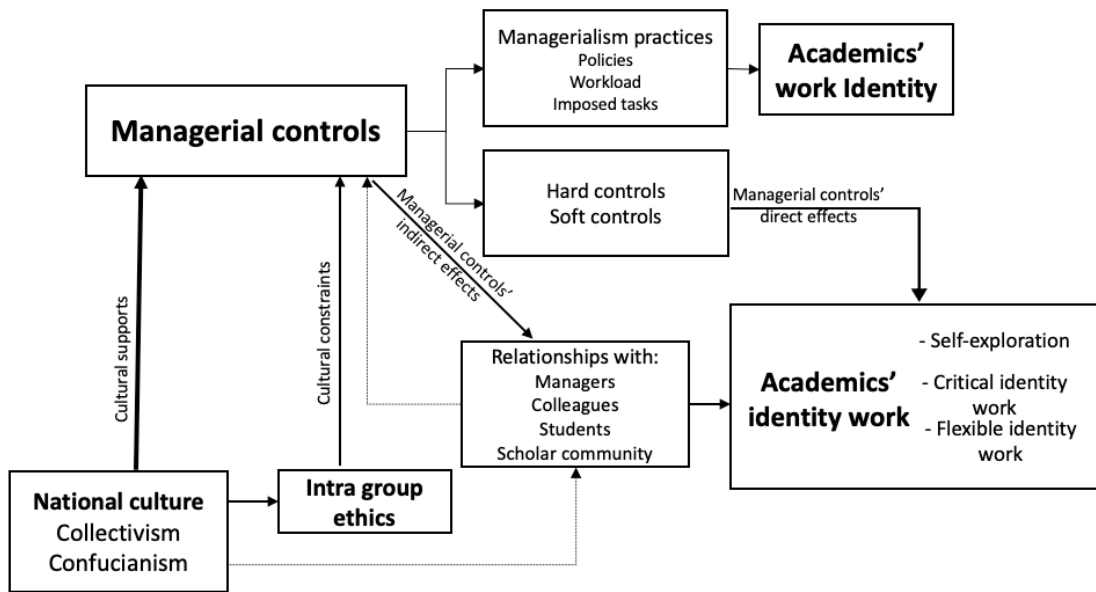


Figure 5: Impacts of managerial controls and national culture on academic identity and academics' identity work

The first research question regards to the impacts of the practices of managerial controls on their academic identity and identity work. The findings are presented into two parts. Firstly, the findings provide a lived picture of Vietnamese academia's current condition constructed from the experiences told by the respondents. Accordingly, the system was reported as at a low developmental level which resulted in the low pressures to academics in publications. However, due to the emergence of university autonomy, Vietnamese universities expanded their teaching activities for optimal revenues, which led to the tensions in allocating resources for teaching, research, and other administrative activities. Although Vietnamese higher education was aimed to catch up with global higher education's standards, especially in increasing research time and publications, most of the participants reported that they did not have enough time and organisational investment in research due to the high workload of teaching and other non-academic tasks. However, it was highlighted that the managerial practices in Vietnamese universities remained flexible in allowing academics to distribute their time between research and teaching according to their individual circumstances.

Secondly, underpinned by the theorising of identity regulation and social identity theory, the findings show evidence for how managerialism impacted academics' sense of selves and their identity work. Accordingly, Vietnamese academics seemed to comply to rules and regulations



set for their roles and they tended to construct their academic identity in accordance with such rules and regulations. However, there were both compliments and critiques towards managerial instruments under the concepts of 'hard' and 'soft' controls (Trow and Clark 1994). Most of the participants were in agreement with changes in academic management to increase productivity and work quality whilst they critiqued that those managerial instruments contained various issues resulted from normalisation and penalisation (Clarke and Knights 2015). The respondents suggested that rigid management might not be effective as academics can just find their ways to meet the requirements with the minimal efforts. Similarly, soft controls such as awarding and rewarding systems were not emphasised as so important even though the interviewees highlighted some benefits of such tools in motivating them to work. Although rules and regulations appeared as important to them, Vietnamese academics' role practices were impacted extensively by social actors including managers, colleagues, students, and scholar communities.

The suggestions from the above findings are threefold. First of all, in the context of a developing system like Vietnamese academia, this study's arguments align with the suggestion of Alvesson and Willmott (2002) that contemporary management has moved from external to internal intervention, which means more effective management should not rely on managing individuals from outside through rigid regulations or pragmatic rewarding/awarding measures. Instead, the more appreciated practices of management can focus on flexible management, management supports and effective talent management, which targets on encouraging academics to work with positive attitude towards managerial aims. Secondly, it is suggested that more attention needs to be paid on in-group relationships. In the interviewees' stories, managers appeared as the lived recognition of their identity work, which was more affective and direct to them than official 'tick box' system. Colleagues, students, and scholar communities can be considered as in horizontal relationships with academics; however, under the changes in academia, these social actors have become more powerful over individual academics. Relatively, colleagues had great influences on Vietnamese academics' identity work in encouraging ways rather than competitive ways, which contrasts to the assumption of the eroded collegiality under managerialism in previous studies (Kalfa et al. 2017). In addition, students and their evaluations of academics' work turned academics into subordinate in the relationships between teachers and learners. Scholar communities became a rich source of Vietnamese academics' identity construction, which appeared both as the evidence of collegial

way of role practices and the strategies of responding to increasing managerial requirements (Contu 2018; Ratle et al. 2020).

As the social selves emerged across the respondents' narratives which were not embedded only within managerial relationships, the data analysis stepped further and more in-depth to understanding academics' identity and identity work as they responded to the practices of managerial controls in the social structure where they resided. The data analysis at this stage is to answer the second research question. By doing this, this present study responds to various calls of scholars in the field for exploring multitude of identity work of individuals in different contexts of cultures (Brown 2015) to enrich the western dominated literature. In addition, it is argued that learning about the cultural background of identity is important to understand individuals' identities and behaviours (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Knights and Clarke 2017), yet the literature still lacks evidence which can illustrate the role of culture in shaping practices of managerial controls and academics' responses and perceptions of self. Hence, the second research question was generated and in answering it, cultural lens was used.

The findings show that national culture acts both as support and constraint to managerialism. Regarding the support aspect, under the influence of Confucianism, Vietnamese academics had strong organisational identification, they perceived managerial requirements and controls imposed upon their work as acceptable. In addition, collectivist culture encouraged the respondents to collaborate with scholars outside of their universities, which could help universities catch up with the development of global higher education. Moreover, collectivism developed academics' social responsibility which motivated them to engage in conducting identity work for the benefits of the wider society. Apart from the support aspect, the findings of this study show that Vietnamese academics' identity work seemed constrained within intragroup ethics. Correspondingly, overwhelming collegiality restrained the respondents from conducting distinctive selves, which contrasts to the individualist ideology in managerialism. Harmony tied academics' identity work to traditional social bonds which prevented them from developing critical selves, which seems to go against the academic nature and the characteristic of academia (March 2003). In line with high power distance in Vietnamese national culture, seniority reflects the burden of age and experience on academics' career development and identity construction. Nevertheless, seniority from the findings of this present study did not emerge purely as the advantage of being seniors. Indeed, senior academics in this study showed

that they also had to strive with managerialism to protect their senior identities, which beams the changes in such social structure (the younger to follow the older) in managerialist academia.

In expanding the understanding of academics' identity construction, the data was continually analysed to respond to the quest: *in such context under the influences of managerialism and national culture, what was their strategic identity work?* Three thematic narratives were revealed after the analysis. Firstly, the findings show that academics were not always compliant to what were imposed upon them. Indeed, academics engaged into processes of *self exploration* to make sense of who they wanted to be and what they wanted to do. Secondly, they also engaged into *critical identity work* to construct their academic identities which made them be true to themselves rather than surrendering their autonomy and complying to the requirements of managerial controls (Alvesson and Spicer 2016). Finally, *flexible identity work* was conducted as respondents wanted to focus on their current selves and strategically cope with stresses and ambiguity at work.

The findings in responding to the second research question highlight a significant role of national culture in shaping academics' identities and the way academics are managed (shaping the practices of managerial controls). From this point of view, national culture acts as identity regulation upon academics. The importance of national culture suggests that it exists the entwined identity regulation structure between national culture and managerialism. This argument aligns with and empirically supports the suggestion of Knights and Clarke (2017) emphasising the important relationship between the self, body, society and culture.

In addition, the study brought the Western paradigm of social identity theory parallel with the understanding of national culture regarding collectivism to emphasise the evidence of collectivist identity work. This form of identity work distinguishes itself from the familiar Western belief of collective identity work. Correspondingly, the former emphasises on the binding responsibilities and restraints between individuals, other organisation's members and the organisation (individuals to individuals, individuals to organisation) which can disrupt individual identity work. The latter, however, focuses on the relation between individuals and the organisation, which means individuals within the organisation do not have binding responsibilities for each other and individuals' identity work is less impacted by the others. The argument here highlights a precaution of the discussion in recent literature about motivating and encouraging collective sense among academic (Contu 2018; Jones et al. 2020;

Ratle et al. 2020). The suggestion here is that collective identity work needs some boundary so while working together, individuals still can preserve their own space and self-identity.

Finally, with an overview of the influences of national culture and how respondents engaged to identity work in response to the impacts of both national culture and managerialism, the study suggests that broadening self-meanings can be an effective form of identity work to cope with insecurity, ambiguity, uncertainty, and stresses in contemporary academia. This form of identity work enables academics to bridge between roles and preserve their aspirational identities, which makes their academic work more meaningful and true-to-self.

### **7.3. A further look**

Developing from the findings and discussions for each of the research questions, this section is to firstly join the discussions together to confirm the response to the aim of this study; and secondly advance the understanding to offer theoretical and practical implications.

#### **7.3.1. Responding to the research aim**

Recalling the initial desire of the author introduced earlier in this thesis that many talks and debates have occurred among Vietnamese academics about reforms in higher education, the study was conducted to justify the impacts of managerial controls in Vietnamese academia on academics' role practices in their daily work. The study can conclude that managerialism can influence academics both straight forward and through other social actors. More importantly, the experiences of academics about the practices of managerial controls were emphasised as influenced by the existence of long-time traditional culture and values, especially Confucianism and collectivism. In a broader perspective, managerialism is not the only reason for academics' motivation to work and/or the tensions in their role practices in the context of Vietnamese academia. Indeed, Vietnamese academics experienced both the harmony and contradiction between two forms of identity regulation (national culture and managerialism). In addition, they experienced managerial struggles due to the lack of managerial supports, low development of the system, and the managerial tensions in catching up with global higher education. Further discussions and implications about such cases are provided as follow.

### 7.3.2. Theoretical implications

The theoretical contributions of this current study are emphasised on its response to the call for theoretical integration to explain academics' responses to managerialism at different levels (organisational, team, individual and societal), which is related to the adoption of social identity theory, identity theory and cultural perspective. The approach is worthwhile because it enables to unveil the circumstances of academic work and how academic identities have diverged with the prevalence of managerialist controls, which helps understand universities as dynamic systems like other organisations (Ashforth 2016). Furthermore, the findings of the connections between individual academics with managers, colleagues, students, scholar communities and broader society show the effectiveness of the theoretical integration in explaining different levels of identification and diffusion of identity and identification (Ashforth 2016; Greco et al. 2021) as well as where and how identity conflicts emerge (Bristow et al. 2019; Brown 2021).

Further, based on reviewing the existing literature on managerialism, identity, and national culture, as well as collecting original evidence, the theoretical implications to combine these literature strands suggested by this study are threefold. First, the present study suggests an approach to research the relation between managerialism, academics and culture which can move beyond instrumental individualism. As justified in the introduction of the thesis, the existing literature has been dominated by the negative impression that academics have subordinated to managerial instruments both in hard (e.g., penalisation and professional requirements) and soft (reward-based system or commodity incentives) forms of management (Knights and Clarke 2017), have experienced extreme cases of identity insecurity (Bristow et al. 2019), and have coped with negative emotions resulted from managerialism (Smith and Ulus 2020). Such research results are consistent to the approach of considering academics' role practices as instrumental and individualistic (Davies and Thomas 2002; Pianezzi et al. 2020), however, not many efforts have been made to step out of criticizing instrumental individualism. Interestingly, it appears that this present study and the existing literature share the similar findings with regard to academics' compliance to managerial controls. However, the cultural approach successfully portrays the distinctiveness in nature of two forms of compliance. Correspondingly, academics' compliance as evidenced in the Western contexts with individualism and low power-distance is the acceptance to subordinate their personal life and traditional values to instrumentalism (Clarke et al. 2012), which implies a 'not happy' acceptance. By contrast, Vietnamese academics' compliance to managerial controls aligns with

the traditional values and integrity they have maintained for generations, which implies that acceptance is the right thing to do.

Second, this study offers the alternative understanding of collective actions in terms of ‘work together’ in response to the recent calls for new ways of working (Jones et al. 2020; Ratle et al. 2020). It is obvious in the findings that *work together while remaining the individual selves* (collective action) and *work together while blurring the individual selves* (collectivist action) are, to a great extent, opposite and hence, result in different outcomes. Such outcomes are related to individual benefits and identity, emotions, and interactions between individuals and organisations. Hence, this empirical study has opened a new door of looking, learning and reforming the concept of working together in contemporary academia in complex contexts.

Finally, studies on academics and their work life mainly consider academic identity as a whole and limited within academia (Feather 2016). This present study suggests that academic identity is certainly rich in layers of meanings, which offers opportunities for academics to preserve their sense of self, maintain their identities in front of others, and avoid identity loss (Alvesson and Willmott 2002; Brown et al. 2019). The study, hence, importantly contributes to the limited literature of very few studies investigating academics’ coping strategies towards increasing academic requirements (Urbina-Garcia 2020). It is also suggested from this research that the social nature of academic work and academic identity is important and deserve more attention by scholars in the field. As academics become more social, from the limited scope within their relationships with colleagues to the broader scope within/towards the society, it is more likely for them to reach social recognition and avoid work stresses.

### **7.3.3. Practical implications**

Based on the review of contemporary literature of academics’ work life and the findings of this study, there are three practical implications suggested for the practices of managerial controls in Vietnamese higher education.

Firstly, Vietnamese academia has been developed rapidly, however little understanding of academic identity and well-being has been reached by academics themselves, managers, and rule makers. The findings of this study show that academics, at some stages of their career, might cope with career ambiguity, identity insecurity and identity struggles. For career ambiguity, academics need to be provided with mentoring programs during which they can

gain knowledge about who they need to become, who they should become and what they are expected to do and achieve. To avoid identity insecurity, it is shown in this study that Vietnamese academics are exposed to social criticism as their work is subject to collective assessment within their work units or department. Such evaluation system should be reduced to protect academics from being shamed by their colleagues. Regarding identity struggles, Vietnamese universities need to provide more financial supports, accessible research resource like e-library, and design collaboration frameworks to help academics connect with wider academic communities.

In addition, the findings of this study reveal that academic work is strongly emotion related and specifically their emotion is highly influenced by social interactions with other actors in significant relationships such as colleagues, students, and managers. The systematic review of literature conducted by Urbina-Garcia (2020), mental health in academic profession has been left under-researched. Apparently, the managerialist models have been critiqued as to be related to mental illness in academics (Guidetti et al. 2020; Jaremka et al. 2020; Smith and Ulus 2020). However, the attention on this issue is still mild and has only been related to very recently. Concerning about this massive missing space in critical management studies, Smith and Ulus (2020) conduct their study to suggest more care for academics' emotional illness. To support this emerging concern, this present study provides evidence of abandoned mental health in Vietnamese academia. As the practice of managerialist controls in Vietnamese higher education has not been as intense as in other developed economies such as the UK, Australia and America, the findings of this study appear as the warnings for the sustainable development of the system. The practice of managerial controls needs to be related closely with the nature of academic work and the nation's cultural characteristics to prevent possible harms to the profession consisting of more than 70,000 employees who relate to millions of students' studying and careering, and the nation's intellectual development.

The second implication for Vietnamese higher education regards to the preoccupation with the harmony between managerialism (the Western managerial ideologies) and Vietnamese national culture. The value that this study can bring to the practice of managerialism in Vietnamese higher education lies within its invitation of the rich literature from the West to elaborate its findings and discussions. Although the existing literature is dominant by studies in Western contexts, the rich knowledge is significantly helpful in providing the fundamental understanding of the phenomena, lessons, and manifestations. Indeed, managerialism was first

introduced in Anglo-Saxon countries and scholars of CMS and OMS have attempted to seek for improving its ideologies and practices. Through over four decades, various examples of academics' work life have been highlighted and numerous hidden stories have been revealed in previous studies. Vietnam has only been exposed to the phenomenon for half of the time and lacked empirical studies conducted in the context. Hence, examples from the West are obvious to reference but it is myopic to learn from such lessons or ideologies without considering contextual characteristics. The findings of this study suggests that national culture cannot be taken for granted in designing and practicing managerialism. Accordingly, the careful adaptation of managerialism with cultural values in Vietnamese higher education can promise effective processes of identity regulation where universities can grow academics' organisational identification which encourages them to work proactively and positively towards collective benefits and aligning with managerial targets. Moreover, from a comparative lens, the study suggests that there should be a precarious transition of Vietnamese higher education to adopt Western ideology because traditional cultural values still remain their dramatical influences upon social activities in Vietnamese work context. Hence, the suggestion is that a balance between traditional – Western and cultural – managerial values need to be encouraged.

Last but not least, a considerable part of stories shared by the respondents is about Vietnamese universities striving to catch up with global higher education. It is suggested from the findings and discussions of the current research that relying exclusively on either rigid or flexible management or even both cannot guarantee effective outcomes. As argued by Knights and Clarke (2014), academics have a self-discipline and creative autonomy, this study suggests that management should be mindful about particular instruments to encourage academics to work while respecting for their self-values and aspirations.

#### **7.4. Limitations and future research**

While this study has clear contributions to the growing literature of managerialism and identity in the context of higher education, it has a number of limitations.

The first limitation regards the absence of a larger and representative sample of Vietnamese academics. Most of the participants of this study had tenure with their universities. In the future, a more representative sample should be conducted to examine the experience of tenured and non-tenured staff.



The second limitation is referred to the nature of this qualitative research which employs interpretivism and narrative approach. As this study recruited a limited number of participants, it is acknowledged that only limited experience was captured. Although the author was mindful about any left-out aspects, further analysis combining with recruiting a bigger number of respondents will be needed.

The third limitation of this study comes from its interpretivist nature with research findings relying on the author's interpretation of the interviews and her understanding. In fact, the author is an early career researcher and at her 30s, there are limits in her knowledge of Vietnamese universities in the past and present. Her interpretation of the participants' words was majorly informed by theories and literature in English which is also dominated with studies of Western contexts. Hence, there can be gaps between her understanding and interpretation versus participants' reality. In addition, the author was an academic in the researched context, which can face the challenge to 'transform research subjects into objects of our representations' (Knights and Clarke 2014, p. 353) and influence her data interpretation. Although the author tried to avoid this issue by taking the neutral approach throughout research stages (collecting data, analysing and presenting findings) and that the author had chance to distance herself from the research context for over 2 years (from the time she started her PhD until the time of data collection and analysis), it cannot be eliminated.

Apart from the above limitations, there is a number of suggestions for future research from this study. Firstly, the depth and breadth of understanding the nature of collective actions is needed. Academics' loneliness and isolated feelings are not hard to be spotted in studies of academic work, mostly in individualist contexts (Hemmings 2012; Brown et al. 2019). There are many examples in the literature which can lead to the assertion of 'a far from happy place' to describe academia (Ratle et al. 2020, p. 453). In addition, the individual nature of academic work in combination with the individualisation of performance (Harris et al. 2019) resulting from academic capitalism has generated academics' painful experiences in their career (Robinson et al. 2017). Understanding such labour pains, scholars coming to write about themselves (Learmonth and Humphreys 2012) and others (Clarke and Knights 2015) have showed their desperate demand for more collective activism (Contu 2018; Jones et al. 2020; Ratle et al. 2020). Conversely, this present study's findings suggest that scholars need to be clear between collectivist and collective forms of identity work. Taking the evidence from Vietnamese higher education, collectivist identity work is not ideal to some extent as it blurs the boundaries

between individual and collective benefits. Vietnamese academics appreciated collective interests, but it does not mean that they ignored their individual selves. The argument of this study is supported by the suggestion of Pham and Hayden (2019) that individualism should be nurtured and protected in Vietnamese academia rather than totally discarded. Instead of providing a solid answer or solution for the enquiry of the choice between collectivism and individualism, this study with its two-sided evidence, could suggest further debate and studies for the solution in managerial techniques and social interactions within academia. The solution, therefore, should be able to both encourage healthy collegiality and remain self-recognition so that academics can feel both supported and self-motivated.

The highlighted loyalty in the respondents' narratives draw the attention on the relationship between academic staff and universities in future research. Regularly as reported by previous studies, academics tend to develop more professional identification than organisational identification and commitment (Knights and Clarke 2014, 2018). Noticeably speaking, organisational identification in academics has not been clearly studied. Existing literature has paid attention on exploring and telling the stories of academics working under neoliberalism and managerialism, but little stories have been told about how academics develop the sense of belongingness towards their organisations or if they have 'some'. Vietnamese academics show their strong organisational identification which is supported by the culture of collectivism and patriotism. There is clear evidence from the participants about the relation between organisational identification and motivation to work. For future research, it is worth to utilise the theorising of organisational identification to explore sources of academics' work motive.

Widely in the literature, studies have been conducted mainly in Western contexts such as the United Kingdom, America and Australia where they are well-known as low power-distance cultures<sup>11</sup>. However, evidence of academics' effective resistance to 'technologies of power' in universities (Clarke and Knights 2015) has been hardly shown. Rather, there are various stories about frustration, disengagement (McCarthy and Dragouni 2020), surrendering (Alvesson and Spicer 2016) and powerless (Anderson 2008; Pianezzi et al. 2020). Have we thought of academia as particularly high power-distance context? By contrast, the findings of this study have recorded precious evidence of the ability to negotiate of Vietnamese academics who are influenced by a high power-distance culture. The evidence highlights significant movements

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/>

in organisational culture in academia which deserve more attention of scholars. Future research is needed to explore such cultural movements and changes.

### **7.5. Reflections and final thoughts**

For the final paragraphs of this vital work of my career, I would be brave to step out and share with you about what I have experienced since I decided to start this journey. I stop using ‘the author’ here as I feel comfortable to communicate with the examiners, the readers, and my supervisors where I could be identified as myself talking about my own story.

First and foremost, I have learned enormous amount of knowledge, skills and attitudes in research and academic profession from my supervisors, especially who have stayed with me to the end of this journey. I started as a big Zero that I had little idea about what I would need to do in the next 4 years (which ended up 5 years). My initial approach was such an ambiguity within a too broad scope of research. As I mentioned early on in the introductory chapter, the motivation for me to choose the topic about academics was that I attended numerous talks and arguments about changes in Vietnamese higher education, some were compliments, some were just no better than constant annoyance. I was keen to explore what actually caused such sentiments. The first thing I looked at was about public service reforms, then downsized it to higher education reform. However, this approach could just provide me with a shallow understanding of the impacts of managerial controls. I was suggested by Professor Jones, who was at the time my first supervisor, to look at the impacts of managerialism on academics’ identity. It was when I started to really work with my thesis after over 18 months registered to the program, which I always feel very grateful for.

As Professor Jones became my third external supervisor, Dr Nordberg and Dr Yang have guided me through this journey with their untiring efforts. They have taught me to be an independent researcher who knows what to focus, where to be creative and critical, and when to be strategic. Indeed, going through this journey is a brand-new adventure with various surprises and knowledge as well as traps. Many times, I was stuck with specific theorising or ideologies and made up my mind those were what I needed. My supervisors helped my step out of those muddy traps by encouraging me to talk and write about my ideas, ‘again’ and ‘more’. I realised that their encouragement has been extremely beneficial for me, and eventually for the readers of this thesis. I am also grateful for the resources they sent to help me update my knowledge and arguments constantly.

Finally, from my own career perspective, I might understand Vietnamese academic career, but I have little understanding of the real world here in the UK as an academic. I really hope that my worry as being a junior academic will not frighten me for too long, the UK system would welcome my collective (maybe unconsciously collectivist) actions, and my enthusiasm to be an academic – a lecturer – a researcher – an expert – a social activist will not be replaced by pragmatism and instrumental individualism.

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## Appendices

## Appendix 1: Participant Agreement Form



### Participant Agreement Form

**Full title of project: Academic responses to managerialism through their academic identity process.**

**(Sự phản ứng của người làm việc học thuật đối với chế độ quản trị thông qua quá trình định nghĩa bản thân.)**

**Name, position and contact details of researcher:**

**(Thông tin người nghiên cứu)**

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Associate Professor David R Jones

Head of Department for Leadership, Strategy and Organisations

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Please Initial  
or  
Tick Here

<p>I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above research project. (Tôi khẳng định rằng tôi đã đọc và hiểu phiếu thông tin được cung cấp cho nghiên cứu này.)</p>	
<p>I have had an opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily. (Tôi đã có cơ hội để xem xét thông tin, đặt câu hỏi và được trả lời xác đáng.)</p>	
<p>I understand that my participation is voluntary. (Tôi hiểu rằng sự tham gia của mình là tự nguyện)</p>	
<p>I understand that I am free to withdraw up to the point where the data are processed and become anonymous, (so my identity cannot be determined) and included in the publications, without it affecting any benefits that I am entitled to in anyway. I do not have to give a reason. (tôi có quyền rút khỏi nghiên cứu cho đến khi dữ liệu được xử lý, (nên danh tính trở nên không thể nhận diện) và được chứa đựng trong các công bố khoa học, mà không ảnh hưởng đến bất cứ lợi ích nào mà tôi có quyền hưởng. Tôi không cần phải cung cấp lý do.)</p>	
<p>Should I not wish to answer any particular question(s), I am free to decline. (Tôi có quyền từ chối bất cứ câu hỏi nào mà tôi không muốn trả lời.)</p>	
<p>I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the researcher. (Tôi hiểu rằng bất cứ thông tin nào được đưa ra bởi tôi có thể được sử dụng cho những báo cáo trong tương lai, các bài viết và thuyết trình được thực hiện bởi người nghiên cứu.)</p>	
<p>I understand that any data gathered during the research will be stored according to the regulations laid out in the Data Protection Act 1998. (Tôi hiểu rằng bất cứ dữ liệu nào được tập hợp trong nghiên cứu sẽ được lưu trữ theo các quy định trong Luật Bảo vệ dữ liệu 1998 Anh Quốc)</p>	
<p>I understand that in order to protect my identity, the researcher will ensure that any personal data gathered during the research is coded. (Tôi hiểu rằng để bảo vệ việc nhận diện cá nhân, người thực hiện nghiên cứu sẽ đảm bảo rằng tất cả thông tin cá nhân trong suốt quá trình thực hiện nghiên cứu sẽ được mã hoá.)</p>	
<p>I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the outputs that result from the research.</p>	



## **Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet**

### **Participant information sheet**

**Study title: Academic responses to managerialism through academic identity process.**

#### **Invitation to participate in the study:**

You are invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish to do this, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Thi Thu Trang Vu. I am undertaking this study for my PhD. You will find my contact details at the end of this information sheet. Thank you for reading this.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this research is *to explore Vietnamese academics' experience in respond to managerialism\* through their academic identity process\*\* in Vietnamese higher education context.*

(\*) Managerialism refers to the way by which universities manage their staffs and organise their work force and work-load. Managerialism also includes the predication of accountability, flexibility, quality and transparency in work.

(\*\*) Academic identity process includes identity construction, maintenance and development.

#### **Why have I been chosen?**

Regarding the purpose of this study, you have been chosen because you are an academic who is teaching and researching in Vietnam universities, hereinafter mentioned as universities and/or academia. In addition, universities you are working for, have been applying new management processes that are conceptualised in literature as managerialism. The researcher will endeavour to approach the number of participants from 30-50. In the pilot project, the sample will be 5-7.

#### **What type of information will be sought from me?**

You will be interviewed about the effects of managerialism on your working life, then the way your academic identity has changed and how you have responded to managerialism.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in the study. If you decide to do so, please keep this information sheet. You will be asked to sign a participant agreement form. During your participation, you are still free to withdraw at any time, up to the point of anonymisation

where the data are processed and become anonymous (your identity cannot be determined) and included in the publications, without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in anyway. You do not have to give a reason. Deciding to participate in or not will not impact upon/adversely your career or collegiate relationships (or that of others).

### **What will happen if I decide to take part?**

If you respond to the invitation to participate into this study which is attached with this information sheet, I will send an email to you, attaching the participant agreement form and you will be asked to sign or demonstrate your agreement in the interview. Then, I will make plans of interviewing you.

Regarding in person interview, you can be interviewed by being invited to a place for one-to-one interview. Place and time will be discussed between researcher and participants, taking into account the convenience and the assurance of personal identity protection.

In terms of the length of interviews, they will often take up to 1 hour (it can be longer if participants allow to do so). The research method is semi-structured interviews, which means in addition to proposed questions in the researcher's interview protocol about their working life and identity in the new managerial mechanism and how they have responded to it, participants can be encouraged to open up and give idea in more detail. The participants are free to decline to answer any questions that they wish not to.

The researcher will make audio record of the interviews. Participants can ask to listen to the record again after their interviews. If you are not happy with being recorded, the researcher will just write down her own observations. The writing will also be shown to participants to ensure the presence of honesty.

### **What are the benefits of taking part?**

There are no benefits for you personally, but I anticipate the findings will contribute to the understanding of academics' behaviour, managerialism and public service reform. In addition, the findings will also be able to help improve academics' working life.

### **Are there any disadvantages to taking part?**

Taking part in the study will take up your valuable time. The study may cause you to reflect on experiences that you find upsetting. Thus, I will try my best to support and provide the best convenience for you to take part into the study and interviews.

### **How will my information be kept?**

All information in the form of hard copy collected as part of this study will be seen and heard only by myself and my supervisors and where requested, university research auditors. All of the copy and information will be coded (referred to only by a number) and kept strictly in accordance with the current Data Protection Regulations. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications without your agreement.

After the study is finished, all personal data will be kept securely for 5 years from the date of publication of the research or presentation of the results to the sponsor. BU will hold the information we collect about you in hard copy in a secure location and on a BU password protected secure network where held electronically.

As we search through and analyse the information, we will take steps to protect identities by changing names, locations and other significant information. You will have the opportunity to review this and ensure that you are happy with this process before we share the findings with others.

I recognise that this study will generate a lot of information (audio and written) that I may not be able to fully analyse as part of my PhD. At the end of the study, I will ask for your agreement to use the information for my future studies.

Even though you sign the agreement that I can use materials (audio and written) for my study, I will still ask for your written permission before sharing them to public and other researchers.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

I will write up the findings in my PhD thesis as well as for publication in journals in management and higher education.

### **Who is funding the research?**

This study is conducted independently by Thi Thu Trang Vu.

### **Contact for further information**

If you have any further questions, please contact Thi Thu Trang Vu on

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My supervisor\*

Associate Professor David R Jones  
Head of Department for Leadership, Strategy and Organisations  
Head of Research Cluster: Organisational Analysis in Critical Management Issues  
Head of Proposed Research Centre for Critical Organising  
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In case of complaints, please contact:

Prof Mike Silk  
The Deputy Dean for Research and Professional Practice  
Faculty of Management  
Bournemouth University  
Email: [researchgovernance@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:researchgovernance@bournemouth.ac.uk)

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

(\*) Dr Nordberg and Dr Yang became my supervisors after the form was sent.

[Dịch tiếng Việt<sup>12</sup>]: **Phiếu thông tin cho người tham gia vào nghiên cứu**

**Tên đề tài:**

**Lời mời tham gia vào nghiên cứu:**

Anh chị được mời tham gia vào một nghiên cứu. Trước khi anh chị quyết định liệu có muốn tham gia vào nghiên cứu này, điều quan trọng là anh chị hiểu tại sao nghiên cứu này được thực hiện và nó chứa đựng điều gì. Xin hãy dành thời gian đọc thông tin dưới đây một cách cẩn trọng và thảo luận với ai đó nếu anh chị thấy cần thiết. Nếu có bất cứ điều gì anh chị không hiểu, hoặc nếu anh chị có câu hỏi nào, xin vui lòng liên hệ với tôi, Vũ Thị Thu Trang. Tôi thực hiện nghiên cứu này cho đề tài nghiên cứu sinh của tôi. Anh chị sẽ tìm thấy thông tin liên hệ của tôi ở cuối phiếu thông tin này. Cảm ơn vì anh chị đã đọc phiếu này.

**Mục đích của nghiên cứu này?**

Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu này là để nghiên cứu về cách người làm việc học thuật đáp lại chế độ quản trị (\*) thông qua quá trình định nghĩa bản thân(\*\*) trong phạm vi Việt Nam.

(\*) Chế độ quản trị liên quan đến cách mà nhờ đó những người quản lý quản lý nhân viên và tổ chức nguồn lực lao động và công việc phải làm. Chế độ quản trị bao gồm sự xác nhận về tính chịu trách nhiệm, tính linh hoạt, chất lượng và sự minh bạch trong công việc.

(\*\*) Quá trình định nghĩa bản thân bao gồm việc tạo ra, gìn giữ và phát triển danh nghĩa bản thân.

**Tại sao bạn được chọn?**

Tương ứng với mục đích của nghiên cứu này, anh chị được chọn vì anh chị làm việc như một người làm việc học thuật tại trường đại học, người đang giảng dạy và nghiên cứu tại các trường đại học ở Việt Nam, sau đây gọi chung là các trường đại học và giới học viện. Ngoài ra, các trường nơi anh chị làm việc, đã áp dụng cơ chế quản lý mới được khái niệm hoá trong tài liệu lí thuyết là “managerialism”-thuyết quản trị. Người nghiên cứu sẽ nỗ lực tiếp cận số lượng 30-50 người. Trong dự án thí điểm, mẫu được chọn sẽ là 5-7 người và người tham gia làm việc tại Đại học quốc gia Việt Nam, Đại học Đà Nẵng, và Đại học kinh tế quốc dân.

**Loại thông tin nào sẽ được lấy từ tôi?**

Anh chị sẽ được phỏng vấn về những ảnh hưởng của chế độ quản trị lên công việc, sự thay đổi việc định nghĩa bản thân và cách anh chị đáp lại chế độ quản trị.

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<sup>12</sup> Researcher’s Vietnamese translation.

## **Tôi có bắt buộc phải tham gia?**

Việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu này tùy thuộc vào lựa chọn của anh chị. Nếu anh chị quyết định tham gia vào nghiên cứu này, xin hãy giữ lại phiếu thông tin này. Anh chị sẽ được đề nghị kí vào văn bản đồng ý. Nếu anh chị quyết định tham gia vào nghiên cứu này, anh chị vẫn có quyền rút khỏi nghiên cứu này bất cứ khi nào, cho đến thời điểm ẩn danh, đó là khi dữ liệu được xử lý và trở nên không ẩn danh (danh tính của anh chị không thể xác định) và được đưa vào trong các công bố khoa học, mà không ảnh hưởng đến các quyền lợi mà đáng nhẽ anh chị được hưởng. Anh chị không cần đưa ra bất cứ lí do nào. Quyết định tham gia hay không sẽ không ảnh hưởng bất lợi đến nghề nghiệp hay các mối quan hệ đồng nghiệp của chị (hay bất cứ cái gì khác).

## **Chuyện gì xảy ra nếu tôi quyết định tham gia?**

Nếu anh chị đáp lại lời mời tham gia nghiên cứu đi kèm theo phiếu thông tin này, tôi sẽ gửi thư điện tử đính kèm văn bản đồng ý cho anh chị và nhờ anh chị kí vào văn bản này. Sau đó, tôi sẽ lên kế hoạch phỏng vấn anh chị bằng cách trực tiếp.

Với phương thức phỏng vấn trực tiếp, anh chị có thể được phỏng vấn qua các cách được mời đến 1 địa điểm để phỏng vấn trực tiếp. Địa điểm và thời gian được thảo luận giữa người thực hiện và người tham gia nghiên cứu, có tính đến sự thuận tiện và tính bảo đảm quyền riêng tư của người tham gia nghiên cứu.

Đối với các phương thức phỏng vấn trực tiếp, các buổi phỏng vấn thường diễn ra từ 1 tiếng (có thể lâu hơn nếu người tham gia cho phép). Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc, nghĩa là cùng với các câu hỏi trong phần chuẩn bị của người nghiên cứu về cuộc sống và định danh trong cơ chế quản lý mới của người làm học thuật và cách mà họ ứng phó, người tham gia có thể được động viên cởi mở và đưa ra ý kiến chi tiết hơn. Người tham gia có thể thoải mái từ chối bất cứ câu trả lời nào mà họ không muốn.

người thực hiện nghiên cứu sẽ ghi âm các cuộc phỏng vấn. Anh chị có thể được nghe lại các bản ghi âm. Nếu anh chị không hài lòng với việc bị ghi âm lại, người thực hiện nghiên cứu sẽ ghi lại chính quan sát của mình hoặc tự ghi chép cụ thể. Việc ghi chép cũng được gửi đến anh chị để đảm bảo tính trung thực.

## **Có lợi ích gì khi tham gia vào nghiên cứu này?**

Không có lợi ích cá nhân riêng nào cho anh chị, nhưng tôi cho rằng những kết quả của nghiên cứu sẽ đóng góp vào các nghiên cứu về hành vi của học giả đại học, thuyết quản trị và cải cách dịch vụ công. Ngoài ra, kết quả nghiên cứu cũng sẽ có thể giúp nâng cao chất lượng công tác của người làm việc học thuật.

## **Có bất lợi gì khi tham gia vào nghiên cứu này?**



Việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu này sẽ lấy đi thời gian quý giá của anh chị. Nghiên cứu này có thể mang lại những trải nghiệm khiến anh chị không vui. Vì thế, tôi sẽ cố gắng hết sức để hỗ trợ và mang đến sự thoải mái nhất khi anh chị tham gia vào nghiên cứu này.

### **Thông tin tôi cung cấp có được bảo mật?**

Tất cả thông tin được lưu dưới dạng bản là một phần của nghiên cứu này sẽ chỉ được nghe và xem bởi tôi và những người hướng dẫn tôi và thành viên thanh tra nghiên cứu của trường đại học khi được yêu cầu. Tất cả các băng ghi và thông tin sẽ được mã hoá (chỉ kí hiệu bằng số) và được giữ nghiêm khắc tuân theo các quy định Về Bảo vệ Dữ liệu. Anh chị sẽ không thể bị nhận diện trong bất cứ bản báo cáo hay công bố khoa học nào mà không có sự đồng ý của anh chị.

Sau khi nghiên cứu hoàn thành, tất cả dữ liệu cá nhân sẽ được giữ an toàn trong vòng 5 năm kể từ ngày nghiên cứu được công bố hay kết quả nghiên cứu được thuyết trình cho những người tài trợ. Đại học Bournemouth sẽ giữ các thông tin mà chúng tôi thu thập về anh chị dưới dạng bản cứng ở nơi an toàn và mạng làm việc có mã khoá điện tử.

Vì chúng tôi phải chọn lọc và phân tích thông tin, chúng tôi sẽ thực hiện các bước để bảo vệ sự nhận diện bằng việc đổi tên, địa điểm và các thông tin quan trọng khác. Anh chị sẽ có cơ hội xem lại việc này và đảm bảo rằng anh chị hài lòng với quá trình này, trước khi chúng tôi chia sẻ những phát hiện nghiên cứu với người khác.

Tôi nhận ra rằng nghiên cứu này sẽ tạo ra nhiều thông tin (ghi âm và ghi chép) mà tôi sẽ không thể phân tích đầy đủ trong nghiên cứu này. Tôi sẽ xin sự cho phép của anh chị để sử dụng cho các nghiên cứu khác trong tương lai của tôi.

Mặc dù anh chị kí vào văn bản đồng ý cho tôi được sử dụng các tài liệu (ghi âm và ghi chép) cho nghiên cứu của tôi, nhưng tôi vẫn sẽ hỏi ý kiến của anh chị trước khi chia sẻ chúng với công chúng và những học giả khác.

### **Điều gì xảy ra với kết quả nghiên cứu?**

Tôi sẽ hoàn thành luận án nghiên cứu tiến sĩ cũng như xuất bản tại các tạp chí học thuật về quản lý và đại học.

### **Ai tài trợ cho nghiên cứu này?**

Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện độc lập bởi Vũ Thị Thu Trang.

### **Thông tin liên lạc**

(Nhu bản tiếng anh)

### Appendix 3: Participant profile

PARTICIPANTS	GENDER	EDUCATION BACKGROUND			CAREER CHANGE/BRIEF CAREER PROFILE
		Undergraduate	Master	PhD	
P1	F	Vietnam	UK*	UK	Industry to University
P2	F	Vietnam	Australia	New Zealand	From Vietnam to Australia
P3	M	Vietnam	UK	UK	Study and work for the same University
P4	F	Vietnam	France	not yet	Study and work for the same University
P5	F	Vietnam	UK	UK	Work for the same University
P6	F	Vietnam	UK	UK	Study and work for the same University
P7	F	UK	UK	not yet	Work for the same University
P8	F	Vietnam	UK	UK	Work for the same University
P9	F	Vietnam	UK	UK	work for the same University
P10	M	Vietnam	UK	UK	Study and work for the same University
P11	F	Vietnam	Australia	not yet	Industry to University
P12	F	Vietnam	UK	UK	Work for the same University
P13	F	Vietnam	UK	UK	Study and work for the same University
P14	F	Vietnam	VN (international degree)	Australia	Industry to University
P15	F	Vietnam	Vietnam	not yet	Work for the same University
P16	F	Vietnam	UK	UK	Industry to University
P17	F	Vietnam	US**	US	Work for the same University
P18	F	Vietnam	UK	UK	Study and work for the same University
P19	F	Vietnam	Vietnam	not yet	Study and work for the same University
P20	F	Vietnam	Vietnam	not yet	Study and work for the same University
P21	M	Vietnam	UK	UK	Industry to University
P22	F	Vietnam	Vietnam	UK	Work for the same University
P23	M	Vietnam	Vietnam international degree	UK	Work for the same University

P24	F	Vietnam	Australia	New Zealand	Work for the same University
P25	M	Vietnam	UK	UK	Study and work for the same University
P26	F	Vietnam	Holland	UK	Work for the same University
P28	M	Australia	Switzerland	Not yet	Work for the same University
P29	F	UK	Korea	UK	Industry to University
P30	F	Vietnam	UK	Vietnam	Study and work for the same University
P31	F	Vietnam	UK	UK	Study and work for the same University
P32	F	Vietnam	UK	UK	Study and work for the same University
P33	F	Vietnam	France	France	Industry to University
P34	F	Vietnam	Vietnam	Netherland	Study and work for the same University
P35	F	Vietnam	UK	Vietnam	Study and work for the same University
P36	F	Vietnam	France	France	Study and work for the same University
P37	M	Vietnam	Vietnam	not yet	Industry to University
P38	F	Vietnam	Vietnam	not yet	Industry to University
P39	M	Vietnam	Taiwan	UK	Industry to University
P40	F	Vietnam	Vietnam	not yet	Industry to University
P41	F	Vietnam	Vietnam	Vietnam	Work for the same University

\*UK: the United Kingdom

\*\*US: the United States of America

## Appendix 4: Interview Schedule

(This interview schedule includes open ended questions which form a semi-structured interview format and are used as guidelines only)

### General questions

1. What is your role as an academic?
2. What is the nature of the work which you do?  
e.g. research, teaching, mixed, management
3. How your time is roughly divided up between these roles? Has this changed over time and why? Is this your choice?  
(what defines you as an academic?)
4. How do you view the relationship between research and teaching?
5. Why did you embark on an academic career?

### Questions on Research

1. How important is research to you in your personal identity as an academic?
2. How has your research been impacted by the current research policy and practices in Vietnam and your university?
3. To whom or what, in your work, is your first allegiance? or from where do you take your identity? How do you see yourself as an academic?
4. What has the policy on research meant for your freedom, values, reputation and self-esteem as an academic?
5. Have you experienced any changes in research policy and practices in your career? How have those changes impacted your subject area?
6. In response to those managerial changes and practices, what have you done to enact your role as an academic in research? (comply, challenge, improve, etc.)

### Questions on Teaching

1. To what extent has your teaching been affected by any major changes in the university?
2. what is teaching group sizes - lectures and seminars?
3. what do you think about the current student cohorts - were they different 10 years ago?
4. How are they different?
5. How has this impacted on how and what you teach?
6. what do you think about the opinion of student as consumer - can you relate to student expectations /lecturer expectations?
7. what is the impact of curriculum organisation in your department/university?
8. How have the changes (to teaching) been introduced and implemented in your subject area?
9. In response to those managerial changes and practices, what have you done to enact your role as an academic in teaching? (comply, challenge, improve, etc.)

Administration - bureaucracy - to what extent does it define you and your role regarding administration activities?

1. to what extent, does the amount of administration you have done impact your identity as an academic?
2. How much control do you have over the amount of administration which you undertake?

3. what is your opinion about academics doing administration work?

#### Management of academics

1. how does appraisal operate? How useful is it? How does it have impact on your job?
2. Do you have a voice - where can you express your views? Do you feel there are adequate opportunities for you to express your views?
3. Has the management of academics in your university changed over time? How can you describe the change?
3. What do you feel about the management of your organisation? Does it affect how you define your identity as an academic?
4. How much control do you have over what you do and the way you work?
5. if you can make some changes, what would you do to make the management better?

#### Relationships with others

1. how can you describe your relationships with your managers/colleagues? Are they helpful and supportive?
2. Can you tell me some stories between you and your managers/colleagues?
3. are there any constraints to your career from social relationships? Can you tell me some stories about them?
4. do you have any relations out of your university? What are the impacts of those relations on your academic identity and career?
5. You mentioned about culture, can you tell me about your experiences or stories you have with Vietnamese culture during your career?

#### Concluding section - Quality of your working role

1. To what extent does your work as an academic now resemble what you thought you would be doing when you started your career?
2. To what extent are you satisfied with your work situation?
3. Do you think there are any changes which could improve your working environment and help you to view yourself more positively in your role as an academic?"

Appendix 5: Example of generating findings

2-7/1-7 (not)affected by the nature of subject or disciplines	changes in responses (2-1/1-1) changes in role practice (teaching)	effects and issues from managers 2-2	effects from bad managerial decision 2-2	having break (not leaving) by Madson 2-5/1-2	helping colleagues (collectivism)	others' influence on career choice 2-4	out of uni evidence related activities 2	relations with students (Stakeholder)	target for career 2
1 ability to satisfy requirements	changes in self-identification (1) T. K. H. King's	effects from colleagues 2-4/1-4	effects from managerial controls (negative) 2-2	hidden sadness 2-1 Swain/I-Rain collectivism	out of uni development 2	relationship with managers 2-5	relationship with managers and career development (network) and career development (collectivism)	targets for publication 2	
1-2 academic identity and uni strategy	changes in self-meanings	effects from managerial controls (positive-neutral) 2-2	hopeless suggestions or resistance 2-1 discipline	out of uni evidence for academic work 2-1	relationship with managers and response 2-5	teaching and researching 1/2	teaching methods 2		
academic management (before)	changes in thinking and philosophy (daily works)	effects from others (collectivism, P3)	hybrid identity 2/1 P35, P3	outcomes or achievements of academic work 2-2	relationship with managers and uni commitment 2-1	teaching methods 2	teaching philosophy and academic identity 2		
academic role in the past	choose learning place	effects from payment 2-6	hybrid role of university 2/2-1 collectivism	particular managerial controls of uni 2-2	rely in manager's solutions 2-2	teaching philosophy and academic identity 2-1	teaching philosophy and academic identity 2-1		
1-7 academic work and practical role and activities	choose working place	effects from people's assessment or judgement (collectivism)	identification and bond with Uni (collectivism)	partnership choice 2	relying on pushing policies 2-2	tenure and contract issues 2-1	tenure and contract issues 2-1		
2-6 academic work as fun game (relaxing)	collaboration and self-development (collectivism)	2-6/2-4	identity confirmation 1	passion and motivation to work 2	remain distinctiveness 1/2	the role of middle management 2	the role of middle management 2		

Any cases that I've is non-academic? (P21) I'm not just about how what they do, but they have (change) in their role. collectivism

