**The first meeting of the EnPOWER Cop was held on July 27th 2022.**

We had lively and wide-ranging discussion about the issues facing women in leadership positions in both the UK and Vietnam which reinforced the importance of a space for sharing ideas, stories and experiences such as the EnPOWR CoP

Issues covered included the difficulties of studying a doctorate alongside the responsibilities of work, and family, especially, as was the case with several of the CoP members, this was done whilst studying abroad. It was a case of, as someone said, ‘a need to bring the everyday along with you too’ and the importance of planning all aspects of one’s life carefully in order to fit everything in.

We shared stories of surviving working and studying, often through a patchwork of arrangements that emphasised the important for women of building relationships in the workplace (especially with other women), with friends and family.

The usefulness of self-care and mindfulness were also felt to be important as helping us to overcome challenges and change in our lives. As was kindness, honesty and love towards ourselves and others in our lives. There were many examples of how partners, children, pets and hobbies helped to keep us grounded in difficult times

The need to stop, think and take stock, and to not feel that we were being selfish if we took time for ourselves was agreed by everybody to be something that women needed to do if they were going to realise their ambitions!

There was also the problem of stereotyping, the idea in both our cultures that women should not be openly ambitious, that they should be seen to put their families first over work was felt strongly by many in the group. We decided however that women needed to support each other to own this idea of being women being leaders and to think about how they used the language of leadership and different ways of leading.

**Next time….**

**The next CoP online meeting is on September 21st 9.30 -10.30 UK time**

We decided that the next CoP was going to narrow down the discussion to a focus on alternative, potentially more female friendly ways of leading in HE.

* Do we need a new vocabulary for female leadership in HE?
* What kinds of working practices would make it easier for women to become leaders?
* How can we create sustainable and aspirational models for female leadership that would help pave the way for future female leaders?

**Suggested reading**: (both available online through Google Scholar)

Sang, K., Powell, A., Finkel, R. and Richards, J., 2015. ‘Being an academic is not a 9–5 job’: long working hours and the ‘ideal worker’ in UK academia. *Labour & Industry: a journal of the social and economic relations of work,* 25(3), pp.235-249. Available at:

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10301763.2015.1081723?casa\_token=wNLxy3xdabIAAAAA%3A-2G0k\_KtRyV2LZSzw4Jl4DYIeFKPb7N5W5\_Y7WVaRz5NUVtPfXHNsENGnUuo\_Vqg8j5lqNfJH7sUxQ

Mayer, C.H. and Surtee, S., 2015. The leadership preferences of women leaders working in higher education. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies*, 4(1), pp.612-636. Available at:

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