

EnPOWER – Final Symposium

‘What is known about women’s unequal access to leadership opportunities in Higher Education in Vietnam?’

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Background/context

- Gender Equality Law in 2006 aimed to promote equal opportunities to women in all the areas (Vietnam and gender equality, 2017).
- 79% females in Vietnam in work or looking for work but representation at the top is meagre (Preet, 2019)
- Vietnam has 357 public universities and colleges and 88 private higher education institutions (HEIs) (Huong, 2018).
- Compared to other countries, Vietnamese women are underrepresented in senior roles in prestigious organizations (Pham, 2011).
- The situation for women working in the Vietnamese higher education sector reflects national figures, with women comprising 12 per cent of Head of Department roles and 8 per cent of Deputy Head of Department roles as of 2010 (Le et al., 2010; Mate et al. 2018)).
- N. B. T. Nguyen (2000) found the underrepresentation of women leaders in a university in northern Vietnam, Dang (2012) identified the same problem in the universities in Mekong Delta in southern Vietnam.
- Although Vietnamese women and men in HE are said to be equal in all spheres of life in law, women's equality with men in reality has not yet been achieved (Tran and Nguyen, 2000)

Search Parameters

Main focus: Women Leaders in Higher Education in Vietnam

Literature type: Published and grey literature

Dates: 1995 to present date

Search process:

- Follow references from initial literature included in bid (daisy-chaining or snowballing references)
- New searches of databases (ERIC, Scopus, Australian Education Index) Google Scholar and Social Media

Results: 17 shortlisted items

Key words and search terms		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vietnam• Vietnamese• South-East Asia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership• Women• Women leaders• Women researchers• Female leaders• Work• Female employees• Educational leadership• Careers• Middle leadership• Middle level management• Female academic managers• 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barriers and enablers• Challenges in leadership work• Confucian culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academia• Higher education• University• Vietnamese higher education• Vietnamese universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender• Diversity• Gender equality• Gender inequality• Gender relations• Gender and women’s university leadership,• Vietnamese femininity and masculinity,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women empowerment• Career development• Mentoring

Key authors and focus (17 items)

Journal Articles	Reports	Thesis
Tran and Nguyen (2020) Subordinate views on perceptions of gender preference in leadership	Munro (2012) Trends in women's representation / challenges & barriers	Phuong (tbc) Lived experiences as women leaders to highlight barriers
Masheshwari and Nayak (2020) Barriers and enablers to women taking up leadership roles	Kelly (2011) Women in educational leadership and management	Vu (2018) What helps and hinders career advancement.
Hong (2018) Root causes for the lack of women in senior leadership positions		Lam (2018) Female executives in HE leadership – styles, barriers, challenges and strategies
Mate et al. (2018) Narrate stories about career and leadership development and barriers and enablers		Lazarian-Chehab (2017) The effects of informal mentoring on the leadership development of women in leadership positions.
Soraly and Khon (2017) Lived experiences of women faculty attaining leadership positions		Dang (2012) The nature of the leadership development process of women in academia in the Mekong Delta (MK).
Truong (2014) Challenges of middle leadership (Barriers)		Dao (2011) Factors contributing to the career advancement of four rectors
Nguyen, Thi Lan Huong (2013) Barriers and facilitators to academic deanship.		Le (2011) How culture shaped the way women as well as their beliefs and perceptions about leadership.
		Nguyen (2000) Gender issues in higher education in Vietnam

Structural Factors: Methods of earlier studies

Reports and/or Literature Review

- Munro (2012)
- Kelly (2011)

Reports and Surveys

- Tran and Nguyen (2020)

Survey and Interviews

Lam (2018), Soraly and Khan (2017), Lazarian-Chehab (2017), Troung (2014)

Interviews

- Masheshwari and Nayak (2020)
- Mate et al. (2018), Hong (2018), Vu (2018)
- Nguyen Thi Lan Huong (2013)
- Le (2010)
- Nguyen (2000)

Interviews and Observations

- Dang (2012)
- Dao (2011)

Photo Elicitation Interviews

- Phuong (2022)

Structural Factors: Geographical locations of earlier studies

Region	Study authors	Participants	Universities
North	• Phuong (2022)	6	1 university
	• Nguyen (2000)	40	1 university
Central	• Tran and Nguyen (2020)	638 (subordinates)	5 universities
South	• Hong (2018)	18	1 university
	• Mate et al. (2018)	6	1 university
	• Troung (2014)	10	1 university
Western	• Sorayaly and Khon (2017)	20	1 university
	• Dang (2012)	21	2 universities & 2 colleges
North & South	• Masheshwari and Nayak (2020)	21	9 universities
	• Lazarian-Chehab (2017)	34	? Universities/Colleges
	• Le (2011)	6	1 university
	• Dao (2011)	4	? universities
North, South, Central, Highland	• Lam (2018)	250	? universities

Senior Roles: Three studies focused on women in senior level roles such as Deans and Rectors (Vu, 2018; Nguyen, 2013; Dao, 2011).

Mid-Level: Four studies focused on mid-level women leaders.:

Lam (2018) Senior Executives (Heads and Deputy Heads)

Truong (2014) they were Mid-level Heads or Deputy Heads of functional offices, Directors or Vice-Directors of Centres, Dean or Deputy Deans of schools, or Heads or Vice-Heads of departments.

For Dang they were Deans, Vice deans, directors and deputy directors. Whilst Le (2010) investigated Department Heads and Heads of Division.

First level: Mate et al. (2018) stated that they were early to mid-career lecturers and researchers. Whilst Sorayly and Khon (2017) classed the participants as women faculty.

Three studies **included women leaders from different levels** (Phuong, 2022, Masheshwari and Nayak, 2020, Hong, 2018).

What is interesting here is to whether the women were actual or aspiring leaders . Dao (2011) asked the four female rectors about the themes relating to their journey but also about being a rector.

Differences in role focus from earlier studies

Barriers and Facilitators at different levels

Government / University Processes and Policies

Mentor/Role Model/Sponsor (where aware or available) (Enabler)

Community Roles and Memberships (Enabler)

Length of Employment and Service (barrier)

Recruitment / Promotion Processes (barrier)

Predecessor, Subordinate and Colleagues' View (Barrier and Enabler)

Networking Beyond Work (Barrier)

Opportunities, Networking and Skills Development (barrier and enabler)

Person and Socio-Cultural Factors

Family background & Ongoing Support (Barrier and Enabler)

Ongoing Education and Training (Barrier and Enabler)

Societal Perceptions of Women / Time Burden

Acting Like a leader

Confidence/ Assertiveness / Speaking out (barrier)

Retirement Age (Barrier)

Career Plan / Path/Luck / Serendipity

'Happy Where I Am'

Strategies for navigating the river



Women recommended **strategies** to facilitate their career mobility, there was a **lack of consensus** in the suggestions given (Dang, 2012).

Lack of consensus amongst the men and women as to the most constraining or enabling factors or how to **overcome the barriers** (Kelly, 2011).

Each female Rector had their own **set of practices** influenced by their individual circumstances. Women **did not dwell on the issues** as they recognised that the barriers emanated from the organisations and not themselves (Dao, 2011)

Most female managers maybe face 'slippery ladder" than a "glass ceiling" because **they by themselves skip the advancement opportunities**

Empowerment supports positive changes as a means to leadership opportunities, rather than the end itself. This is about the institutions and the support they offer, but also about the women's **intrinsic factors, abilities and efforts** to take on the information, support or opportunities on offer (Lam, 2018).

Each woman leader had a **different strategy**. There is not one static single challenge (glass ceiling, sticky floor) or series of static challenges (labyrinth) but **changeable challenges** that can shape the journey differently for female academic leaders like a river. The river offers challenges but also opportunities (Phuong, 2022)

Thanks for
listening.



Any questions or comments?

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