Negotiating the labyrinth: Female executives in higher education leadership in Vietnam and Australia

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Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all my wonderful family members. A special devotion goes to my Mum and Dad, who made sacrifices throughout their lives, worked hard to bring me up, give me an education and encouraged me during this very challenging journey, especially my Dad, who could not wait until I commenced my PhD studies. This is also dedicated to my wonderful parents-in-law who have supported me and taken care of my family so that I was able to concentrate on my studies in Australia. I sincerely thank my husband and my two sons for their patience and understanding. A special devotion goes to my younger sister and brother who have supported me and cared for our mother.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AUS	Australia
AUSP	Australian survey respondent for open-ended questions
AUSP (1, 2, 3 …)	Australian interviewee (respondents' codes: 1, 2, 3 ….)
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
HELP	Higher Education Loan program
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals.
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs.
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NCFAW	National Committee for the Advancement of Women
NGO	Non government organisations
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SAGE	Science in Australia Gender Equity
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals SDG
SWAN	Scientific Women's Academic Network
STEMM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine
UAEW	Universities Australia Executive Women Group

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational Education Training
VN	Vietnam
VNP	Vietnamese survey respondent for open-ended questions
VNP (1, 2, 3…)	Vietnamese interviewee (respondents' codes: 1, 2, 3…)
WIEL	Women in Educational Leadership

Abstract

Women are under-represented in leadership roles in higher education, especially at senior levels, although they represent the majority of those who study and complete higher education degrees across the world (Berman & West, 2008; Black, 2015; Eagly & Carly, 2007; UNESCO, 2014, p. 6). Despite the fact that the number of females in executive leadership positions has increased over the last decade, there are still fewer women than men in these roles. In contrast to their male counterparts, women who have been successful in securing senior leadership roles in tertiary education continue to face a number of barriers to maintaining their employment status (D. R. Davis & Cecilia, 2015).

Given these discrepancies, I investigated the strategies used by women who have successfully negotiated the "labyrinth", a metaphor which implies the complicated set of obstacles that women face. What confronts women seeking career equity is not just a single "glass ceiling" that they need to break through once, but a maze-like journey through a series of different barriers which are often more obscure than obvious.

In light of the inequities confronting women, and the labyrinthine nature of their career journeys, my aim was to determine the extent to which women's acquisition of leadership skills is an essential factor in overcoming the confronting challenges and covert barriers which impede their success. This research focused on the extent to which participants' leadership styles and competencies have empowered them, allowing them to acquire executive leadership positions in tertiary education which would otherwise have been reserved for men. This research also explored the extent to which leadership strategies need to be continuously developed by successful women to maintain their current career trajectories, in spite of the many barriers they face.

I used complementary Mixed-Methods, online and paper survey questionnaires and semi-structured face-to-face interviews, which I conducted in the higher education sector in Vietnam and Australia. My respondents included 380 current executive female leaders who took the online survey, and included 24 current women senior-executives who agreed to participate in a follow-up interview. My analysis of the findings reveals that leadership strategies, opportunities and leadership training are the three most significant areas enabling or preventing women from attaining executive positions.

Key words: leadership, female executives, higher education, competencies, labyrinth, strategies, framework, empowerment.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

What do Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Mitt Romney and Elizabeth Arden have in common? They are all amongst the most successful entrepreneurs in the world (European Commission, 2009). Across the world, the number of successful people grows year by year, and there are an increasing number of high profile women in traditionally male-dominated areas, such as government and business (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013). In business, there are many successful female entrepreneurs. For example, Arta Bazovska from Latvia became the leader and founder of a company named VentEK that provides services in environmental engineering and consultation. Maria Fermanelli from Italy is a famous entrepreneur with her own company, Cose dell'altro, while Veronica Hedenmark from Sweden is famous for her company, VH Assistants, which provides services such as coordination, education and the supervision of personal assistants (European Commission, 2009). In addition, in the United States a number of women currently hold positions as State Governors: Gina Marie Raimondo of Rhode Island (since 2015), Kate Brown of Oregon (since February 2015), and former Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina (in 2011-2014 and re-elected in November 2014) who recently became a United National Ambassador (Rutgers, 2015). Theresa May is Prime Minister of Great Britain and Angela Merkle is Chancellor of Germany. In Australia, two females currently serve as heads of government: Anastacia Palaszczuk is the 39th Premier of Queensland since February 2015, and since January 2017 Gladys Berejiklian has been the 45th Premier of New South Wales. In Vietnam. Thi Kim Ngan Nguyen is the first female Chairman (since January 2016); Thi Ngoc Thinh Dang has been Deputy Chairman

since April 2016; Thi Phong Tong is Vice-President of the National Assembly (since July 2016); and Thi Mai Truong was elected as Head of the Central Commission for People Mobilization in February 2016.

In education, especially in higher education, there are notable female leaders around the world. For instance, Professor Olive Mugenda has been Vice-Chancellor of Kenyatta University in East Africa since 2006. She was awarded the Ernst & Young Lifetime achievement Award in 2013, and is known as a successful female leader due to the innovation, leadership and entrepreneurial skills that have helped establish an international reputation for her university (Kenyatta University, 2012). Professor Janet Beer, Vice-Chancellor at the University of Liverpool since February 2015, is well-known for her national leadership roles. She also occupies a professorial chair in the Equality Challenge Unit and is respected as a leader of high ability, vision and drive (Bangassa, 2014). Chancellor Linda Pisti Basile Katehi became the sixth female Chancellor of the University of California in 2009, and has contributed to the university's international reputation (National Academy of Inventors, 2015).

Women leaders in Australian and Vietnamese higher education.

In the education sector in Australia and Vietnam, there are similar success stories. Professor Emerita Di Yerbury - the first female Vice-Chancellor in Australia - is also the longest serving Vice-Chancellor at Macquarie University (1987-2006). Professor Fay Gale was appointed in 1990 as the first female Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia (UWA) and the first woman to be elected as President of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (AVCC). Adjunct Professor Rashda Rana was recently named as the first female Professor at Sydney University Law School. She was responsible for developing a new course on international commercial arbitration and published a textbook to complement this course. She became the first female President of

the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb) in 2013 (Australian International Disputes Centre, 2013).

In Vietnam, there are not as many famous women leaders in the position of university Vice-Chancellors, though there is a notable success story about one women leader, Professor Bui Tran Phuong, Vice-Chancellor of Hoa Sen University in Ho Chi Minh City. After being appointed as Vice-Chancellor in 1996, she has contributed to the significant development of the university, transforming it from a vocational school to a famous tertiary institution in South Vietnam (Hoa Sen University, 2017).

Women in many countries around the world, including Vietnam and Australia, have to varying degrees progressed the advancement of their professional career development. Among the facilitating factors, leadership competencies make a significant contribution to the progress that has been made. Women have been learning how to better use their network resources, knowledge and skills to empower themselves on the journey to success (Miklos & Ratsoy, 1992). Thus, it is hoped that my doctoral research on the paramount importance of females developing a wide range of leadership skills will contribute to increasing the number of women in executive tertiary leadership positions. My knowledge of the leadership strategies adopted by successful female leaders has encouraged me to carry out this study. Focusing on the leadership experiences of female leaders in higher education, I investigated the negotiated process of professional development, and the leadership achievements of female leaders in middle and top leadership positions in a western country, Australia, and a non-western country, Vietnam.

1.2 Background to the Study

Vietnam and Australia have different national stories with different political systems. Responding to gender equality agendas across the world, both countries have made higher education more accessible for women and encouraged more women to take leadership positions, as outlined in the targets of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in 2015. However, it is interesting to note that despite their many differences both countries share a similar issue: the under-representation of female leaders in executive roles in higher education.

1.2.1 Australian context

The Commonwealth of Australia was established to include a number of British colonies. It is located on an island continent, with an area of 7,682,300 km2 and a population of about 23 million (ABS, 2015). Australia has a federal government, which adopted the British parliamentary model drawn from the 18th century (Barcan, 1980), with the institutions of government divided into legislature, executive and judiciary. Its national capital is Canberra, where the governmental office (Parliament) is located. Australia has six states: Western Australia (WA), South Australia (SA), Tasmania (Tas), Victoria (Vic), New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland (Qld), and two territories: the Northern Territory (NT) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Each state has its own constitution, and an overall leader - known as a 'Premier' - who oversees the workings of its state government, which is also divided into the legislature, executive and judiciary arms. Before becoming British colonies in 1788, the native population of Australia included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, known as the country's Indigenous peoples. At the moment, Australia's population is diverse, because it includes not only the Aboriginal peoples who came to Southeast Australia around 60,000 years ago, but also migrants who initially came mainly from Britain, Ireland and continental Europe

(1788) but more recently from across the Asia Pacific region (Australian Government, n.d).

1.2.2 Vietnamese context

Covering an area of about 128,000 square miles (332,800 sq. km), Vietnam is a tropical, S-shaped country in Southeast Asia. It is bordered on the north by China, on the west by Laos and Cambodia, on the east by the South China Sea (Pacific Ocean) and to the southwest by the Gulf of Thailand (Terra Weather, 2013). The population of Vietnam in 2017 was about 93.7 million (Population Reference Bureau, 2017). The majority of the people (about 90%) are the Viet or Kinh, and the remainder of the population comprises of 53 ethnic minorities (Hays, 2014). Across its long history, Vietnam was dominated by the Chinese for a thousand years (from 111 BC - AD 939), and was colonised by France for almost 10 decades (1858-1954); this was interspersed for a short period (1940-1945) by Japanese occupation (Borton, 1995). In the three decades that followed, Vietnam was devastated by a North-South war, ending with the fall of the American-backed South in 1975. Since then, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has been led by the Communist Party (Borton, 1995). The most powerful political organisation is the National Assembly, which functions as the legislative office of Vietnam. It issues and supervises the implementation of laws (Office of The National of Viet Nam, 2015).

1.2.3 Similar issues in Australia and Vietnam.

Both Australia and Vietnam have recently achieved remarkable progress in terms of gender equality and women's advancement. These advances are partly illustrated by the ratio of female to male students in schooling, and the proportion of women in leadership, especially in politics. In Vietnam's 2003-2004 school year, the percentage of female students at mixed secondary schools was approximately equal to that of males at 45.2% and 45.7% respectively (T. V. A. Tran, 2005). This ratio has been continuously

increasing in favour of girls. The statistics also show that across all levels of education, fewer girls than boys quit school (T. V. A. Tran, 2005). In 2011-2012 in Australia, the percentage of female students from primary school to the early years of secondary school was two percent higher than males (ABS Census, 2011). This trend increased in Year 11 and Year 12, where there were 3% more female students. This trend continued into higher education where, as we observed earlier, there are a higher proportion of females. In higher education, more females than males complete undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications (ABS Census, 2011).

Despite their impressive qualifications, and the career advances women have made in other areas, their progress in the political arena still lags behind. The National Assembly, for example, is regarded as the highest political body in Australia, and its constituents represent the most powerful group of state office holders. Nonetheless, women account for only one third of all parliamentarians and only one fifth of all ministers in the Australian Parliament (Parliament of Australia, 2014). The dearth of executive female political leadership is not just an anomaly peculiar to Australia. For instance, the percentage of women participating in the Vietnamese National Assembly is also very low. Admittedly, from the time of its independence in 1945 till its reunification in 1975, there has been a progressive increase in female leadership in the Vietnamese National Assembly. However, in the past three terms, i.e., X, XI, XII, this percentage has reduced slightly, especially for the current term XIII (2011-2016). There are 122 female representatives in the Vietnamese National Assembly, which represents only 24.4% of its overall constituency (UNDP, 2012).

It is imperative to understand the labyrinthine difficulties women have experienced when climbing the academic career ladder, and within virtually any other employment sector. Research studies have identified some of the significant barriers that

female leaders face. For example, some of the difficulties that women seeking administration positions face are lack of mobility within a network of jobs; lack of flexibility in work schedules when balancing childcare and household responsibilities (X. Gao, 2003); personal obligations; lack of mentor support (T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013); negative male attitudes (X. Gao, 2003; Shakeshaft, 1993); and the unwillingness to take opportunities to be leaders (T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013). This study also explored factors contributing to female leadership development, such as self-support, family support and mentor support (T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013), obtaining a doctoral degree, the benefits of mentoring support, formal and informal learning experiences, networking opportunities, hard work and the desire to grow and learn (Glover, 2009). Mann (1995) has pointed out that, in addition to the abilities explored in their major area of study, women also needed soft skills such as communication, time management and self-motivation.

Although there is a large body of literature exploring barriers to women's success, there is insufficient research on how female leaders get to where they are in spite of these barriers (Madsen, 2007). I was interested in how successful women in executive positions in higher education institutions achieved their success, by negotiating the challenges of the labyrinth, and this is the gap which my thesis is most concerned to explore. Some researchers have proposed that more research is needed to develop better opportunities for women leadership programmes in Vietnam. For example, T. L. H. Nguyen (2013) suggested that further research on leadership development for female leaders should be introduced within the higher education sector. In a conference in Cape Town, Chesterman (2001) pointed out that improvements in equity related initiatives have impacted the leadership roles played by males and females, and this has continued due to "strong affirmative action legislation at both state and federal level" (p. 2). He also proposed that further research should be conducted on women executives from Australia

and other countries, and could be based on the project called Australian Technology Network - Women's Executive Development (ATN WEXDEV). This project, a strategic and dynamic career development programme that ran from 1996 to 2013, endeavoured to establish support and professional networking opportunities for senior women in Australian and South African universities, with an aim of strengthening the leadership skills of women both nationally and internationally.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

To help developing countries address poverty, in 2000 UNESCO adopted a project called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that was revised to become the SDGs in 2015. One of the themes of the SDGs that is relevant to my doctoral study is expressed by Goal 5, target 5: "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life" (UN, 2015, p. 18). Empowering women was seen as one of the "effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable" (UNEP, 2005, p. 91). Efforts to develop and promote leadership, which has been defined as a "process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" or vision (Northhouse, 2004, p. 3) represents a vital opportunity for women, in particular, to realise their true potential and thus improve their lives; it also may have a significant positive impact on the communities in which they live (Esser, Kahrens, Mouzughi, & Eomois, 2018). This goal has become a key target for many countries, which recognise the disparities in male and female employment equity, including for attaining executive positions in tertiary education.

Given the impetus of these SDGs, more women now aspire to leadership positions in higher education. Governments in Australia and Vietnam have directed their efforts towards empowering women and achieving gender equality, and the number of female in

leadership positions has been increasing, albeit more slowly than expected. Even governments adopting the SDGs have not produced their anticipated outcomes. Despite Australia's significant efforts to achieve gender equity, the movement towards full equity for women in tertiary education has, to date, been disappointing. For example, in 2004 28% (11 out of 39) of Vice-Chancellors, 26% of Deputy Vice-Chancellors and 39% of senior administrative staff were women. In late 2009, 18% of Vice-Chancellors (only 7 out of 39), 34% of Deputy Vice-Chancellors and 40% of senior administrative staff were women (Universities Australia, 2010). In total, only 30% of women occupied leadership positions in Australian universities (Lord & Vinnicombe, 2010). In 2018, I calculated statistics based on Australian university websites: as of 22nd October 2018 there were 33.3% (13 out of 39) female Vice-Chancellors. This indicates that the number of female leaders in executive position within higher education remains low when compared with male leaders.

In Vietnam, some research studies have confirmed that the number of women being promoted in the higher education sector is lower than their male counterparts (UNESCO, 2014). Data from the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has shown that although female teaching staff account for two-thirds of the total education workforce, males not females are usually appointed as the executive heads of educational institutions. The percentage of female Rectors, Deputy Rectors, Faculty Deans and School Heads remains small (T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013), especially in the 53 public universities (USAID, nd). H. S. Pham (2011) of the Women's Union of Vietnam pointed out that women currently "make up 47% of the labor force" (p. 1) in Vietnam, and that there has been an outstanding increase in the number of females in leadership positions in the National Assembly, government offices, social organisations and businesses. Although more women than ever before have taken up the executive positions of Vice

State President and political bureau members, the percentages of woman in leadership and management positions are in fact “unstable and decreasing” (H. S. Pham, 2011, p. 1).

Why is female representation in executive leadership roles important?

Much research has identified the benefits of utilising a higher number of women in senior leadership positions (Dezsö & Ross, 2012; Joy, Carter, Wagner, & Narayanan, 2007). Advancing women in leadership roles not only brings advantages for women, it also offers benefits for their organisations and the community as a whole (Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak, & White, 2015). To be specific, there are three main reasons why the representation of women in executive leadership position is necessary. The first is for reasons of social justice and equality, and for organisations to advocate, behave and treat people according to these principles; the second is because it improves leadership quality in and via diversity of practice; and the third reason is to address gender equity issues in remuneration and career opportunities (Burkinshaw, 2015).

Female leaders in academia tend to bring spiritual aspects to their workplace and provide diverse perspectives around educational and societal issues (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). The lack of diversity at executive levels limits the development of individuals and institutions, as well as the overall higher education sector (Hart, 2006). Thus, individual women in executive leadership roles can enact change via their participation and contest the entrenched pattern of gender disparity across nations. Enhancing contributions, building leadership capacities and enabling career opportunities for women to step into lead roles in higher education is definitely a significant contemporary issue. Yet while awareness of the leadership capabilities of women is growing, women’s movement towards leadership roles remains slow.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Both Vietnamese and Australian women remain under-represented at executive management levels in many organisations, but especially within tertiary education. Women in top decision-making positions, particularly in higher education, are under-represented in many developed countries, and the situation is worse in developing countries (Dollar & Gatti, 1999). This is particularly the case in Vietnam, despite the country having adopted the UNESCO SDGs. One significant justification for my doctoral project is that in light of these global gender inequities, there remains a lack of literature on how successful female leaders have managed to move up the career ladder, notwithstanding the obstacles confronting them. In particular, there is very little existing research on the leadership experiences of successful women; such research could, in turn, be analysed and repackaged into leadership programmes to show women who aspire to executive positions in tertiary education how they can develop their leadership potential and capabilities to advance their career goals. My research significantly benefits the objectives of gender equity by improving our knowledge of the various ways in which successful women have broken through the glass ceiling, and effectively negotiated various challenges to do so. This knowledge can also be reformulated into curriculum materials to contribute to the professional development of women aspiring to senior leadership positions, not just in tertiary education but in many other fields of employment.

The term glass ceiling is the term most frequently used to describe the barriers which confront women in their search for senior careers. There may, however, be a more accurate metaphor expressed via the concept of women having to negotiate a labyrinth, rather than a glass ceiling, as the latter implies a type of barrier where women can “see” what confronts them. That is, the idea of a glass ceiling implies that women can observe what it is they are confronting, and even see though the transparent glass to the career

position they wish to obtain, but just cannot break through; Similar to “glass ceiling”, “bamboo ceiling” is used to reflected the barriers that Asian American from obtaining leadership roles in American (Liu, 2018). They only get in a certain level of their career ladder. There is no doubt that these descriptions may be suitable for some situations where inequities are best represented by this metaphor. However, I believe the situation may be more complex than this portrayal suggests. My point is that many of the barriers women face in achieving equity are not easily discerned, and as a consequence they may not even recognise these barriers; challenges may be implicit and covert, and often so socio-culturally embedded that they are not immediately apparent. What confronts women seeking career equity is not just a single barrier of glass they need to break through, but a maze-like journey through a range of different barriers, which are often more obscure than obvious. In essence, women have to journey through a labyrinth in which there are many blind corners that cannot be perceived until they are experienced, and are thus more difficult to negotiate than the notion of a semi-visible glass structure in one place, challenging women to break through once and for all. The concept of a labyrinth, which I acknowledge Eagly and Carly (2007) as the inspiration, is also dynamic, while the idea of a glass ceiling is static; it is important for women to understand the subtlety and complexity of the challenges they will face in the quest to achieve success.

My aim was to derive information on the strategies and mindset of successful executives from pertinent scholarly research, along with detailed interviews conducted with women who have been successful in acquiring executive positions within the higher education sector. This is not information we currently have enough of; my aim in gathering and analysing it is to make it available to all women interested in advancing their leadership competencies in ways that empower and inspire them to become senior leaders in higher education. To achieve this goal, I shall trace the journeys of successful

women in executive leadership positions in tertiary education in both Australia and Vietnam. In my study I use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to tease out the similarities and differences in the barriers these women confront, and how successful women in both countries manage to circumvent or surpass them.

I compare and contrast the evidence via data analysis, and form conclusions around four specific research questions and the following categories: (i) (research question number 1) leadership styles and competencies which have enabled their success; (ii) (research question number 2) knowledge, skills and dispositions which have enabled them to be successful in leadership positions; (iii) (research question number 3) the barriers and opportunities that are perceived to have influenced the career development of female executives; (iv) (research question number 4) leadership strategies which female executives require to both advance and maintain their current career.

The four specific research questions that I used to facilitate and guide this study were:

Research question 1: What are the perceptions of female higher education executives in Vietnam and Australia with regards to the leadership styles and competencies that have enabled their success?

Research question 2: In what ways do female executives in higher education in Vietnam and Australia perceive that their knowledge, skills and dispositions have enabled them to be successful in leadership positions?

Research question 3: To what extent do higher education female executives in Vietnam and Australia perceive the barriers and opportunities that have influenced their career development?

Research question 4: What leadership strategies do female executives in higher education in Vietnam and Australia need to use to develop and maintain their current career trajectories?

These research questions will be addressed through my study. 380 female executives in higher education in Vietnam and Australia submitted online or paper surveys. Their roles included from Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Faculty Deans, Directors and Heads of Schools. As a follow-up, I conducted twenty-four face-to-face interviews with female senior-executives, women who were Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Pro-Vice Chancellors in higher education in both countries. The results from this complementary mixed-methodology will be used to formulate my leadership framework. This framework is grounded on the intrinsic factors of female leaders that enabled their success, an area on which there is currently not much research. These intrinsic factors together with extrinsic factors are believed to empower and inspire more female leaders to move up to higher level leadership roles.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework I have chosen for my thesis is a combination of eastern and western philosophies. I have merged the leadership theories of the west with ideas reflecting the political, cultural and social evolution of Vietnam. This research is framed by gender disparities within the larger context of higher education in Australia and Vietnam. However, it focuses on the leadership development process of women in executive leadership positions, as women have to first be equal to have a chance of being successful.

With a long history of more than one thousand years of cultural and social domination, Confucianism has impacted Vietnam's culture, philosophy, society, economy, politics and education (Ashwill & Diep, 2005; Bich, 1999; Jamieson, 1993). It

has been transmitted into the present as hidden values which impact women. Women are considered as subordinate in both workplaces and family structures. Marxism-Leninism, or communist ideology, was transferred to Vietnam in 1945 when the country achieved independence. This ideology has created opportunities for everyone to work, and to be educated, in a collective environment that is particularly meaningful for women and gender equality. Yet some Confucian views have blended with Vietnamese history, and as a result Marxism-Leninism has led to the concept of working together, creating opportunities for everyone in a collective environment, and in particular being responsible for helping women to become leaders. I call this the power of the collective.

Vietnam has become more open to the world as a result of modernisation and globalisation. Vietnam is considered to be a global country, as new social values, beliefs and norms have been adapted to achieve national change (Jamieson, 1993). New western perspectives, which are grounded in transformative leadership, represent leadership for change (Fullan, 2008). One of the most basic changes in the social context is gender, which needs to experience empowerment, and the empowerment and development of people is a core capacity in Callan (2001) framework. This involves seeking opportunities, mentoring and coaching, improving relationships, acknowledging performance and developing talent (Callan, 2001, p. 28). Transformational leadership maximises the potential of women because it links organisational strategy with psychological aspects to bring about the overall change of organisations (Burns, 1978). As such, I call this leadership for empowerment.

This collective empowerment framework is one that blends Vietnam's cultural and philosophical heritage with my new western perspectives from Australia. This connection has influenced both the research process and thinking within my study. I believe that the theoretical framework I am using is one of collective empowerment,

representing the moral imperative to work together to create opportunities for women. Equally important, in light of negotiating the labyrinth, leadership competencies that empower and motivate aspiring women leaders to confront barriers will be developed and enlarged (Yang, 2005).

My theoretical framework is grounded in the power of the communist view of collective leadership, the power of Fullan's work on transformative leadership and Callan's work on empowerment. These powers merge together as my collective empowerment framework, which acts as a lens to orientate both readers and myself, as researcher. It helps frame the issue of gender under-representation by empowerment. This is a theoretical platform that challenges patriarchal norms, oppressive power and hierarchical systems to create positive change toward women's empowerment.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Up until now, no empirical research in Vietnam has explored gender disparities in higher education across the whole country. In particular, no research has identified whether there are differences between leadership experiences in general as well as female leadership experience in western countries and non-western countries, especially between higher education in Vietnam and Australia.

There is also a paucity of literature on Vietnamese women in academic leadership. Most of the research in the field of gender focuses on other themes. These themes have included sexuality; family and society; women and work; and the socio-political dimensions of gender (Scott & Truong, 2007). In Australia, the literature has focused mainly on barriers (K. White, 2003); the glass ceiling; gender equality (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010; C. Taylor, 2015); workplace gender equality (Bell, 2010); female participation (Sachs, 2009); leadership equal opportunities (Özkanlı & White, 2009) and leadership support (Chesterman, 2001). Because of this research

practice, it seems hard for women in both countries, but especially in Vietnam, to advance to higher education leadership positions due to a lack of leadership resources and guidelines from their successful predecessors. Therefore, the findings of this research could be an important resource for academic women in both Vietnam and Australia, and perhaps also in other western countries and developing Asian countries.

In addition, the findings of this research may potentially benefit the following stakeholders:

- It may assist policy makers to get feedback from university administrators on identifiable gender inequity issues, and how executive females have overcome the obstacles confronting them, thereby improving future policy-making processes in ways which ensure equal employment opportunities for men and women.
- Higher education leaders to recognise the challenges facing them and their female colleagues, and also understand the leadership competencies they need to develop, which may ultimately benefit the way in which they deal with institutional issues.
- University administrators to understand the multiple, constructed realities of institutional challenges and leadership competencies through the diverse perspectives of past leaders' lessons, current leaders' experiences and future leaders' vision.
- Educational institutions to improve and strengthen their leadership training programmes for potential future leaders. It may also help in understanding the similarities and differences of leadership orientation in western and non-western countries, in order to formulate institutions' global leadership strategies.
- Leaders and potential leaders could learn from lived experiences and adopt leadership skills to empower both their male and female counterparts and themselves.

The purpose of this research is to expand the present knowledge base around equity issues in the employment of academic women in both Vietnam and Australia.

Addressing this imbalance and lack of research on women in executive positions in Vietnam and Australia is also likely to encourage more research into this leadership area.

1.7 Outline of the Study

This study is organised into a total of seven chapters. In addition to this chapter, they are as follows:

- Chapter Two presents and explores the literature. This chapter reviews (i) leadership in general, and effective leadership styles for the higher education sector to make changes and deal with reforms; (ii) shifting gender in higher education leadership; (iii) career development, including the challenges and facilitators of female leadership; (iv) current achievements of women leaders; (v) how successful female leaders were able to achieve career progression.
- Chapter Three reflects on the complementary Mixed-Methods used for this study, including the survey questionnaire and semi-structured face-to-face interviews. This chapter also discusses the limitations of this study.
- Chapter Four presents the results from analysing quantitative data obtained from 380 female executive participants in higher education in Vietnam and Australia.
- Chapter Five presents the results of analysing qualitative data obtained from 24 face-to-face interviews with female senior-executives in Vietnam and Australia.
- Chapter Six discusses the significant findings from the data analysis in relation to the literature review. The quantitative and qualitative findings complement each other and are used to identify the significant emerging themes shared by both countries.

- Chapter Seven discusses and makes the series of recommendations which are one of the main contributions of this study. In Chapter Seven, I reflect on the significant themes which emerged from addressing the four research questions. I also describe a new leadership framework I propose to empower and enable more female leaders to move up the career ladder. It also discusses the contribution of this study to knowledge, institutions, policy makers, university leaders, and current and future female leaders. Finally, I make recommendations for further research and summarise the study with some concluding remarks.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature that supports this thesis was collected by analysing research across the broad area of leadership, and within the specific area of women in higher educational leadership in Vietnam and Australia. I have divided this chapter into the following sections:

1) Leadership defined,
2) Shifting genders in leadership,
3) The leadership journeys of women in higher education,
4) Women's achievements in higher education leadership, and
5) Responses to leadership challenges.

My review of the literature on leadership in higher education revealed that many relevant studies have been conducted, especially in western countries. While the majority focus on barriers to educational leadership, with many focussing on school leadership and the leadership of female leaders, yet studies on the leadership of executive female leaders in higher education are relatively limited in both Vietnam and Australia. There has not been any research studying the similarities and differences in the Vietnamese and Australian contexts for women in higher education leadership positions.

2.2 Leadership Defined

Leadership is considered to be an integral part of any successful organisation. Yet there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people (Rosenbach & Taylor, 1989). Occasionally, leadership refers to a person with a particular personality characteristic who holds a position of authority within an organisation. Leadership

concepts also relate to leadership behaviour as the "incremental influence" on process, goals and vision, as well as ability and motivation. Northhouse (2004, p. 4) considered leadership as a process of influence "whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" or a vision. In addition, leadership is considered "a process of directing and mobilising people" (Ramsden, 1998, p. 107) to understand and agree upon "what needs to be done and how to do it" (Gary. A Yukl, 2006, p. 8). In order to mobilise and motivate participants, a leader needs "to set the agenda for the organization; win commitment to it" (Reeves, McCall, & MacGilchrist, 2001, p. 122). Leadership also involves "a social influence process in which an individual exerts intentional influence over others to structure activities and relationship in a group or organization" (Gary.A Yukl, 2002 pp. 4-5). Leadership occurs universally among people in different contexts (Bass, 1981; D. Harris, 2010, p. 5). It is a process that shapes or influences people to reach the goals of their organisations (Griffin, 2012). Whether it is in a western or non-western culture, a leader hopes to achieve an organisation's goals and mission, or to redirect them in accordance with a new mission or vision for the organisation.

Similarly in education, leadership is viewed "as an influence process by which school administrators focusing especially on principals, seek to work with and through people towards the identification and achievement of organizational goals" (Wallance & Poulson, 2003, p. 216), and thus create "the circumstances and context in which learning and students' growth can take place" (O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 2011, p. 45).

For the purpose of this study, the work of Northhouse (2004) and Ramsden (1998) are considered particularly relevant. Their work aligns with this research as leadership from both institutions and individual leaders attempts to make changes in organisations. Leadership does not focus on leaders as individuals, rather it is a process involving

influences and it happens in a collective context using a collective empowerment framework to achieve common goals. Within this research, leadership is flexibly defined as inclusive practices that include an informal or formal role by one person - who may influence, inspire, motivate and mobilise the participants of a group to achieve specific goals - to make an organisation more effective and successful. In other words, a leader may be nominally the head of a team, the group leader of a group, the chairperson of a meeting, who acts in a way that benefits their followers as well as the organisation.

2.3 Leadership Styles

2.3.1 Authoritarian leadership, participative leadership and delegative leadership.

Studies on leadership styles date back to at least the 1900s. Various authors have discussed the behaviours typical of particular leadership styles. For instance, Kurt Lewin (1939) proposed three leadership styles: authoritarian leadership, participative leadership and delegative leadership. In the first style, the relationship between leaders and followers is regulated by the model of those who command and those who obey. The leader represents the commander and runs the organisation by rules, controlling their followers accordingly. The leader's authority to make final decisions on behalf of the group is given the highest priority, and more important than that of the followers. The second leadership style is considered by Lewin (1939) to be the most effective of the three styles. Both the leader and the followers participate in discussions, strive for cooperation and refine decision-making procedures through shared reflection and constructive analysis in the hope of attaining the best possible explanation for why any particular decision is made. However, it is still the leader who makes the final decision, but it is a decision which should be well informed by the insights and concerns of the community of enquiry, made up of the stakeholders. Different again from the first two styles, the delegative leader does

not make a decision, but instead lets the followers do this without any pressure or guidance. Although authoritarian leadership has a high measure of control, the organisation does not necessarily function harmoniously, due to the potentially oppositional attitudes and viewpoints of the followers (Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1939). According to Lewin, Lippit and White (1939) decisions are less creative in both the authoritarian leadership and delegative leadership styles. They also argued that the disadvantages of the delegative style are little cooperation, poor management and lower motivation, while in participative leadership the followers are encouraged, engaged and motivated and thus the eventual decision is more creative. To sum up, participative leadership is generally considered to be the most successful style.

2.3.1.1 Directing style, coaching style and supporting style.

Leadership often centres on the relationship between leaders and followers. According to Blanchard (1987), there are three styles of leadership: directing style, coaching style and supporting style. In the directing style, the followers are enthusiastic, however they develop few, if any, leadership skills themselves. In this case, the leader guides them in what to do and then monitors their implementation and performance. On the other hand, the coaching style means that the followers may not be not highly motivated, but they are competent. To deal with this group of followers, a leader has to both praise and guide the followers to increase their motivation. In the delegating style, however, the leader passes responsibility to the followers who are both competent and motivated, while providing no supervision. It has also been suggested that the most efficient style is the supporting style, where followers are competent and committed (Blanchard & Zigarmi, 1987). This last style supports Burn's (1978) concept of leadership, to which we will now turn.

2.3.1.2 Transactional leadership and transformational leadership

I have chosen to emphasise two kinds of progressive modern leadership in this thesis. Transformational and transactional leadership first emerged from the concepts of James McGregor Burns in the 1970s (Burns, 1978). He proposed two main leadership styles: transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Bernard Bass modelled and developed his work in 1985, and this was later extended by Blanchard's (1987) concept of the supporting style. From their research, it is clear that transformational and transactional leadership styles have received a great deal of academic scrutiny.

Transactional and transformational leadership styles are the two most common leadership styles, even though female and male leaders are viewed differently as a result of various stereotypes. Female are generally viewed as being warm, helpful and nurturing, while males are generally viewed as being assertive, rational and independent (Carless, 1998). It is argued that the diversity of gender leadership in organisations is necessary in collective working environments. Both male and female leaders supplement each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Transformational leadership is generally considered to be one of the more effective styles of contemporary leadership (Keskes, Sallan, Simo, & Fernandez, 2018; Li, Castaño, & Li, 2018). It is a combination of four components, including intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, idealised influence and individual consideration (Bass, 1998). Transformational leaders are believed to take on high leadership positions (Gary.A Yukl, 2002). In this research, female executive leadership is explored through a focus on women's leadership characteristics.

Transactional leadership.

Transactional leaders are often very goal driven. Transactional leadership relates to the rewards and punishment which are considered by leaders to be motivational and

management factors. They guide their subordinates towards set goals and the completion of their required tasks. These processes involve a chain of command. Bass (1990) further developed Burn's (1978) concept of transactional leadership. Transactional leaders utilise rewards and prizes to motivate their colleagues to undertake responsibilities, with their staff controlled by a system of rewards and punishments (Flynn, 2009).

In order to know how to adopt these motivational techniques, transactional leaders are trained to understand the needs and desires of their followers. In such circumstances, transactional leaders have a good chance of improving the productivity of their organisations, and by doing so, keep them running smoothly. However, according to Bass (1990), transactional leadership is about following and obeying the leader's rules and regulations and, therefore, it does not really promote the qualities necessary to take on new challenges. In nature, transactional leadership is more autocratic and dominant, thus it is usually stereotyped as being more masculine rather than feminine in nature.

Transformational leadership.

Bass (1985) supported Burn's (1978) theory of transformational leadership. He argued that transformational leadership does more than transactional leadership because transformational leadership pays attention to the mutual needs of the followers and their leader.

Although transformational leaders do not use incentives to motivate their followers, they are more successful because of their focus on encouraging followers to achieve mutual benefit (Bass, 1985) and this ensures social cohesion. By working toward common goals, the followers gain a variety of advantages. As a result, these create collaborative working environments and contribute to the motivation of both leaders and followers through the organisation's vision.

Transformational leaders use their leadership characteristics to inspire their subordinates to achieve goals. They promote their beliefs to their employees by communicating their inspiration, charisma, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation. Transformational leaders trust and respect their subordinates, and have strong interpersonal connections with their subordinates (Flynn, 2009). They also create the sense of common purpose, common goals and positive values necessary to build relationships and networks.

Transformational leaders prioritise what is good for their organisations, rather than what is good for themselves. They demonstrate concern about their staff's wellbeing, provide ongoing staff development, exhibit the characteristics of supportive leaders and are innovative thinkers (Flynn, 2009). They are able to motivate their colleagues to strive to reach their potential, as well as high moral and ethical standards (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). Four dimensions are traditionally used to measure transformational leadership: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration.

1. Idealised influence: the followers respect and admire their leaders due to the leader's behaviour;

2. Inspirational motivation: the leader empowers and inspires their followers to undertake duties and institutional tasks;

3. Intellectual stimulation: the leader attempts to create benefits for their followers in innovative ways. They are creative and are willing to take risks to achieve the goals of their organisation;

4. Individual consideration: the leaders pay attention and take care of their followers' interests and career development with regards to their institutions (Bass, 1998; Burn, 1978).

2.3.1.3 Distributed leadership.

Distributed leadership is built on the basis of Burn's (1978) transformational leadership style. Distributed leadership shifts the focus onto the attributes and behaviours of leaders (Northouse, 2007) creating a more systemic perspective of a collective social process which is derived from a variety of interactions. In other words, "Distributed leadership is as an emergent properly existing in relationships, rather than an activity carried out by an individual or individuals" (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003, p. 10). Its practice relates to social and cultural contexts. It requires leaders to be successful in the process of practising transformational leadership, in order to share their vision and goals. Distributed leadership is considered an effective strategy if leaders can create a "trust-based culture" in which the followers recognise that they work collaboratively with their leaders, whose are responsible for their followers' achievement and development (R. L. Green, 2010).

"Which leadership style is most effective?" is a common question posed by scholars and leaders. To answer this question, Goleman (2000) claimed that the best leader is the one who does not use or depend on only one style. In other words, "effective leaders also vary their style in response to such factors as community expectations, organizational climate and culture, and certain aspects of the task such as timeliness and availability of resources, . . . leaders' experience, personalities" (Gammage & Pang, 2003, p. 211). Transformational leadership is believed to combine various styles (Gammage & Pang, 2003). In this field of leadership studies in general, leadership practices from transformational and distributed perspectives play important roles. Leadership practice is the cooperation and interaction between the leaders, followers and their institutions, and these scenarios do not occur just once, but happen in nearly every interaction.

In summary, these general leadership theories are gender neutral. In other words, they are silent about the specifics of female leadership. Some studies mention this silence using terms such as gender blindness and gender suppression (Ackland, Resnikoff, & Bourne, 2018; Mavin, Bryans, & Waring, 2004; The Canadian Press, 2018). Recent research has argued that gender awareness should be placed on the agenda in order to challenge the traditional perceptions of "manager equals male" (The Canadian Press, 2018; Torres, 2018; Wallance & Poulson, 2003, p. 294).

2.3.2 Leadership in higher education and effective leadership.

As previously stated, educational leadership is "a process by which school principals, seek to work with and through people towards the identification and achievement of organizational goals" (Wallance & Poulson, 2003, p. 216). Leadership in higher education is referred to as "academic leadership... academic leaders should motivate and inspire other faculty members" (Gedminiene & Kaminskiene, 2016, p. 93). A special case of educational leadership is academic leadership, which refer to maximising value to stakeholders such as students, staff, community and funding agencies (Sathye, 2004). Thus, leadership in higher education is not only responsible for improving teaching and learning as the powerful role of school leaders (Fischetti & Imig, 2018; Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008), but also is a relationship between those who are in leadership positions and followers such as staff and students.

Leaders in higher education institutions need to study how to deliver better leadership in their universities, but they also need to identify the most "effective leadership approaches" to suit their institutional context (Black, 2015, p. 55). Black (2015) identified five typical leadership paradigms in higher education. The first is the hierarchical model, where the relationship between leaders and followers is top-down, or uses a command-and-control approach, and the leadership style is autocratic. The second

is the individualistic model: the relation between leaders and followers is based on their personal status, but this model may lack collaboration due to gender bias. This, particular, may affect women's achievement. The third is the collegial model which is driven by governance, and the university community receives the greatest benefit from this approach; institutional governance creates more opportunities for followers, if their policies are implemented. The fourth is the collaborative model, where the relationship between leaders and followers is collaborative, and involves networking in a non-hierarchical manner. The fifth is the transformative model. This model tends to be a dominant model in the higher education sector because its "emotional intelligence" and follower-centred approach fits with the transformational leadership required to meet the challenges of significant change (such as those brought about by globalisation and industrialisation) (Black, 2015, pp. 62-63).

Leadership capacity is also required when he or she needs to deal with the unexpected things that happen inside and beyond their institution. The four main leadership capacities for higher education leaders are vision and goals; hands-on leadership; improvement and learning; work details in long-term period (Black, 2015, p. 61). There are 41 specific capacities across these four categories underpin what higher education executive need to know about local capacity (such as the performance of courses and/or centres), their followers' needs (for example students and staff) and their user needs (donors and funding bodies). In their research, Davies, Hides, and Casey (2001, p. 1028) identified key leadership attributes: intelligence, intellectual skills and attributes, emotional health and integrity. They believed that these leadership capabilities and attributes would contribute to the leader's effectiveness.

Higher education leaders not only have to achieve high performance, but they should also encourage innovation and optimise the development of their organisations,

staff and institutional citizens to deal with challenges during the ongoing process of change. Since globalisation and industrialisation have influenced the higher education sector, a large number of educational and academic reforms have been implemented in many countries around the world to meet the demand for a knowledgeable and skilled labour force, and the needs of under-represented groups - such as women - by reforming the higher education system.

University leaders face increasing challenges because of the globalisation of the market, a challenged intensified by the availability and spread of online learning (Bonvillian & Singer, 2013; Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). University leaders are now required to be experts in strategy, vision and networking in addition to the other requirements of the job (Sathye, 2004). As such, effective leadership is crucially important to the future of the higher educator sector.

Building on these ideas, H. Davis and Jones (2014, p. 2) pointed out that "effective leadership at the university level often points away from acting as an authoritarian and utilises more transformational styles that include collaboration and mentorship". Thus, to be an effective leader in higher education, both transformational and transactional leadership approaches need to be applied (Bass & Avolio, 1993) based on a leader's individual context and tasks.

2.4 Changes in Higher Education for Female Leaders

To meet the demands of societal and economic development across the world, most organisations restructure themselves on an ongoing basis to make themselves organisations more effective. This continual implementation of new policies and procedures is part of the realities of change. Change is a "process" (Fullan, 1993; G. E. Hall & Hord, 2006; Wood, 2017) which includes "how", "what" and "why" problem (Wood, 2017, p. 37). In other words, when change occurs there is a focus on the means

necessary to make this change, as well as what and why we need to change, and who will be responsible for making the change.

Change processes happen across a variety of contexts, such as organisational, political and social contexts and global contexts (Hickman, 2013) and these issues may be large or small in scale (World Health Organization, 2005). In the contemporary world, the following main factors contribute to change (Samli, 2007):

(1). Updated information technologies which are considered a remarkable innovation that have faciliated communication, sped-up and updated data, and transformed global markets;

(2). Globalisation has led to increasing interactions between people, companies and governments around the world, and opened up international trade and investment but – aided by information technology – has also increased competition;

(3) Speed, by which new changes, processes and practices are happening frequently and faster than previously;

(4) Complexity and paradox, as a result of change. This demands that leaders seek suitable solutions and strategies to bring stability and development opportunities to their organisations;

(5) Equity principles which aim to promote fairness and gives the support necessary for everyone to become successful.

Because of these factors, change can happen as a result of internal or external factors or as a combination of both (Nadler, 1989; World Health Organization, 2005). These external and internal forces cause a variety of changes in academic organisations, and this is experienced differently partly due to the various strategic plans of each organisation.

External factors occur outside and beyond higher education organisations. These could be political factors, new policies or new regulations which lead to structural, social, technological and financial changes (Levin, 1993). These external factors may impact the academic organisation when the organisations is driven by a new governmental education reforms or regulations (World Health Organization, 2005). Development of communication and information technology, globalisation and demographic changes also force human beings to change dramatically (Ragsdell, 2000). For example, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on 18 December, 1979 in New York. Part 3 article 10 of this Convention identified that: "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education". Responding to this Convention, the Australian Government signed the convention on 17 July, 1980. Following Australia was Vietnam, with the Vietnamese Government signing the Convention on 29 July, 1980. More recently, in 2015, the SDG was adopted to provide equal access to leadership. This goal encourages women in both Vietnam and Australia to become more involved in leadership roles. At an international and national level, this convention has put a spotlight on education, especially higher education in both Vietnam and Australia, and on equal opportunity through education. Women and men now have the equal right to access higher education.

One other factor relating to change is internal forces. These internal forces, which include technology, primary tasks, human resources and administrative structures, all impact higher education organisations. They are particularly notable when an academic organisation adopts new policies or decides to innovate or consciously restructures itself. Internal forces cause a variety of changes in organisations, such as organisational processes; regrouping; changes in values, beliefs and human behaviours; and power

relationships (Trader-Leigh, 2002) and these all shift due to the implementation of budgetary pressures. For example, the Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee (AVCC) have developed the AVCC Action Plan for Women Employed in Australian Universities 1999–2003; and the AVCC Action Plan for Women Employed in Australian Universities 2006–2010 (Universities Australia, 2010). The other strategy during in the period 2011–2014, and the Action Plan from 2016–2018, both focused on the career development of women. The target of these action plans, or internal change with the sector, contributes to increasing the number of women in senior leadership positions.

In the Vietnamese higher education context, MOET has a limited number of programmes that directly target female leaders. Most such programmes are provided by non government organisations (NGO). For example, the British Council Vietnam has developed the Higher Education Leadership and University Management programme, to support the National Higher Education reform agenda and the internationalisation of higher education institutions in Vietnam. This programme aims at building capacity for higher education leaders who are employed in the positions of Vice-Dean, Dean and above within Vietnamese institutions. This is also to prepare them for increasingly challenging roles within universities and to ensure that those who are in these crucial positions have the skills to lead successfully (British Council, 2016). However, this opportunity only has an effect on a small number of women leaders, possibly due to the financial constraints associated with attending training programmes.

In the age of globalisation, some particular challenges for academic institutions have emerged due to its associated changes. Tierney (2007) identified the following specific challenges. Globalisation creates more opportunities for more learners, especially female learners, to take classes in virtually any institution across the world. Second, relevant and contemporary technology is used widely in academic institutions;

due to such technologies, the environment in colleges and universities has become more interactive both on campus and via the internet; as such, technology affects teaching, learning and administration. Third, the competition between academic institutions is more intense due to a globalised marketplace; programmes and various kinds of institutional training need to be innovative to meet competitive demand from learners, otherwise they will become obsolete or be eliminated. Fourth, globalisation strengthens the role of privatisation and weakens the role of states, since institutions increasingly have to source their capital from the private sector rather than receiving funding from their governments. Fifth, there is more entrepreneurial activity since decisions have become more decentralised and closer to where the action happens in colleges and universities. These challenges, which have happened as a result of globalisation, have had a major influence on higher education and on how universities respond to demand in the innovation age. For instance, Australian universities are highly competitive and map their success against international benchmarks, such as improving their position in international university rankings with specific criteria: self-governing communities, multiple missions, combining research and teaching, offering combined qualifications and community engagement (Grattan Institute, 2018). These changes in many aspects of higher education administration and research are as a direct result of globalisation. This requires university leaders to know where their universities stand and how they can be improved.

In many higher education institutions, changing technologies, government intervention, cultural values and administrative process are all factors leading to change. For example, government policies which trigger substantial internal reform may deal with the right to access higher education, educational justice, gender bias and equal opportunities. In order to ensure the future success and survival of institutions, institutional leaders are required to highly adaptable to the external forces which place

pressure upon their institutions. Institutional leaders also need to be properly prepared to deal with the demands of the global environment. Awang-Hashim, Mohammad, and Kaur (2016, p. 6) shared their finding that:

> Women through their participation in the leadership positions can become agents of change in fighting the gender disparity battle around the world. Therefore, capacity building and the opening of other avenues for women to take the lead positions in academia are a matter of utmost importance. (p.6)

Change happens continuously in higher education institutions due to either external factors, internal factors or a combination of both. The complexity of the leadership role in higher education involves ongoing and highly strategic responses to change. The issue of leadership effectiveness during change processes is becoming more important in higher education, for example the pressure created by sector reforms. This also helps explain the importance of leadership diversity, including male and female leadership in higher education.

2.4.1 Higher education leadership initiatives.

The global context significantly affects higher education across the world, yet a global survey is beyond the scope of my research. I have chosen three countries - Singapore, Finland and Denmark - as an example of leadership initiatives which have significantly contributed to the success of higher education reforms. Singapore, Finland and Denmark were selected because these countries all have high Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings (OECD, 2016; Yeasmin & Uusiautti, 2018), and these countries have progressive approaches to leadership initiatives. In the global context, the higher education sector in both developing countries such as Vietnam, and developed nations such as Australia, has introduced reforms to deal with substantial change and ongoing challenges.

Likewise, Singapore is one of the top ranking countries in PISA terms (Yeasmin & Uusiautti, 2018). Responding to global trends, Singapore's higher education reforms have centred on developing a knowledge-based economy (Sarvi & Pillay, 2015) which benefits this nation's human resource capacity. With their target set at a world-class level, two main policies were implemented across Singapore's higher education sector: expanding postgraduate education and research in higher education, and reviewing the undergraduate curricula with a focus on students' creativity and thinking skills (Mok & Lee, 2003). With these higher education reforms, progress in leadership initiatives has contributed to the improvement of the Singaporean higher education system.

Responding to the impact of globalisation, in 2010 the Finnish university system enacted a remarkable series of operational and legislative reforms. Through the implementation of the new Universities Act, this enabled these universities (including private universities) were given more autonomy in terms of their finance and operation. This took effect in 2009, with a target of merging 20 universities into 16 universities, for the purpose of modernising higher education and retaining the sector's competitiveness in a globalised market. This enhanced the internationalisation of higher education, with world-class research, innovative systems and improved working lives (Aarrevaara, Dobson, & Elander, 2009). This Act was remarkable as it established Aalto University, which is the first university to recruit qualified board members from outside the university. It is surprising that the first new President of Aalto University is a woman - Professor Tuula Teeri - who created a new approach and vision: "our new visual identity expresses the ideas of Aalto University regarding creation of new connections, being multidisciplinary, and having a diversity among its values. It also reflects our focus on the basics – i.e. in-depth research and first-rate teaching" (Aula & Tienari, 2011, p. 19).

Thus, the primary objectives of Aalto University are high-quality teaching and research for innovation.

Recently, Finnish higher education institutions have implemented a national Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions 2009-2015 (Finnish Ministry of Education, 2009) which has required them to restructure their organisations and activities to meet the demands of the international market. This strategy highlighted five essential targets for internationalisation: speeding up higher education to become part of the international community; improving the quality and attractiveness of higher education; promoting the export of performance; raising global responsibility; and enhancing multiculturalism (Finnish Ministry of Education, 2009). Finland is regarded as one of the most innovative countries in the world in terms of education (Aula & Tienari, 2011; Yeasmin & Uusiautti, 2018). For example, the University of Helsinki is considered as "one of the best multidisciplinary research universities in the world", while the University of Eastern Finland is considered to have broad international networks. Finnish universities are also among the top ranking countries in terms of PISA results (Yeasmin & Uusiautti, 2018).

Yet there are still controversies around the merging of a number of universities. The resistance to merger and innovative university practices may occur due to insufficient preparation of students and employees. For example, to be a top university leader, Professor Tuula Teeri faced a double challenge. The first was dealing with resistance to creating Aalto University from the Helsinki University of Technology, the University of Art and Design Helsinki and the Helsinki School of Economics. The second was resistant attitudes towards female leaders because policies have not fully succeeded or ensured gender equalities (Rolin & Vainio, 2011).

During the process of change and improvement, leaders of Finnish universities dealt with various internal and external challenges, particularly hidden gender stereotypes. This hidden gender bias suggested that to be at the top leadership positions in universities, female leaders have not only to demonstrate their effective leadership skills but also to be persistent enough to take these opportunities. They also need leadership skills to deal with emerging issues, and this can be seen in the case of Denmark.

Denmark is the biggest investor in education per capita in Europe (European Union, 2016). With its policy of free college fees for all eligible candidates, the number of university students has significantly increased. This brought more opportunities for minority groups, and particularly working women, who could now access higher education; however, this policy also created so-called “eternity students” who never finished their studies (Weller, 2017, p. 1); such students move from university to university by changing their study programme each year. As an example, 90% of students spend six years to graduate from a combined bachelor-master’s degree instead of five years as recommended by the government, and they also take fewer courses (Marcus, 2015). To address this situation, an initiative called Study Progress Reform was implemented to make universities responsible for cutting the time their students spend at college. From this it can be seen that reforms are continuous, and these continuous reforms - whether external or internal in nature - require university leaders to put in place efficient strategies to drive their institutions forward.

2.4.1.1 Higher education leadership in Vietnam.

Vietnamese higher education has experienced four major waves of globalisation in its history. Each of these waves brought with it distinctive changes to the national education system, especially higher education. They are, respectively, the period of Chinese influence prior to 1858; the French dominated period of 1858-1945; the period

of nation building, defence and reconstruction of 1945-1986; and the period after Doi Moi (the innovation or open door policy) from 1986 to the present.

Presently, the Vietnamese higher education sector is facing considerable challenges due to the modernisation and industrialisation requirements of international collaboration, the fulfilment of international commitments and the country's fast economic growth. Current challenges include widening gaps between Vietnam and other countries; resistance to the penetration of foreign higher education institutions; potential brain drain; and the weakening of the traditional values of higher education (Liu, 2018; Wood, 2017).

The contemporary reform of Vietnamese higher education is based on the Fundamental and Comprehensive Renovation of Higher Education during 2006−2020 which is known as the 2020 plan; this reform was addressed in Resolution No.14/2005/NQ-CP by the Vietnamese Government, dated 2 November 2005 (Vietnamese Government, 2005). Targets included training a highly qualified labour force to meet the demands of socioeconomic development, national intellectual improvement, international integration, internationalising higher education; and the upgrading to an international level of several highly qualified universities, and aligning education standards to more advanced levels in Asia and around the world. These policies focused on providing higher education institutions within Vietnam with more autonomy but also required greater accountability. In terms of autonomy, university leaders are given rights over their staff's performance, recruitment, appointment and management.

These higher education reforms have put a lot of pressure on the shoulders of university leaders. Yet these leaders have experienced more recent challenges as well. Administrative staff have not yet met the demands of quantity and quality from higher education reforms, and there is a lack of highly qualified lecturers (Le, 2017). For

example, in 2017 there were only 16.514 lecturers with a PhD and 43.127 Masters qualified lecturers out of a total workforce of 72.792 higher education lecturers (MOET, 2017). There was also a lack of research experts and policy makers at higher education institutions. Furthermore, a highly centralised management structure remains in place at academic institutions. MOET still has control over students, enrolment, curriculum, budget decisions, infrastructure and facilities, as well as the assessment and award of degrees. Even though one of the requirements of these reforms is autonomy, the existing policy mechanism has not yet created self-accountability in areas such as revenue expenditure and quality of training. Thus, due to hierarchical political systems in Vietnam, university leaders find it hard to lead effectively and to introduce innovative practice to their universities which is one of the barriers to career progression discussed in Chapter Five.

2.4.1.2 Higher education leadership in Australia.

Similar to Vietnamese universities, the higher education in Australia has faced multiple reforms. The reforms of 1872-1875 aimed at achieving universal literacy, while the reforms of 1902-1916 raised concerns about religious, political and social democracy, as well as the movement towards education quality. Another reform was the Educational Ladder in 1914 - 1938, which "opened up access to secondary and higher education through a new examination system, through the abolition or reduction of fee in State schools, and through scholarships" (Barcan, 1980, p. 240).

The next substantial change was the reforms of 1938-1947, which promoted economic prosperity, state intervention and technical education. These extended the involvement of the government in education, reduced the burden of public or external examinations, and encouraged changes in curriculum. The next wave of reform was 1948-1967 and this took place within higher education. In the late 1940s, with the post-war

expansion of universities, this reform dealt with technical education, teacher training and the expanding demand for teachers. Other recent reforms include Higher Education Support Act 2003, reform in 2008 via the Review of Australian Higher Education, and the reform of 2013 with Reviews of Higher Education Standards and National VET Standards (Australian Government, 2015). The purpose of these reforms was to increase enrolments and emphasise the importance of improving teacher quality. Since then, the number of enrolments in higher education has dramatically increased.

At the end of 2017, the Australian Government moved forward with reforms to limit access to higher education. The current reforms, which are known as “the Higher Education Reform Package”, were enacted in January, 2018 with the purpose of improving the sustainability of higher education (Australian Government, 2017). The government believed that these reforms ensured the sustainability of the loan system for future generations, and would thus provide ongoing access to higher education. The first policy of this reform involved changing university budgets from 2018 onwards. The government balanced university tuition fees by increasing students’ contribution from 42% in 2017 to 46% in 2021, and reducing the base funding for Commonwealth supported places to most universities from between 2.6% - 2.9%. This meant that the government did not pay for extra student places. The second policy of this reform involved changing the Higher Education Loan program (HELP) repayment thresholds. The income threshold for repaying debt will now be lower. The minimum thresholds in 2017-2018 was $55,974, with a repayment rate 4% of income, and this will decrease to $42,000 in 2018-2019 (Parliament of Australia, 2017). This reform means that students will start paying off their loans earlier in their working lives.

With this current reform, there have been both advantages and disadvantages. For instance, the placement measures - while saving $3.8 billion over five years - reduced the

number of student debtors, as well as reducing debts which were not expected to be repaid. However, this new reform also influenced university leaders and female leaders, who may face reduced opportunities as a result of this reform. There will be fewer people attending and working at universities as a result of this non-legislated policy.

Increasing students' financial contribution, and paying off their loans sooner, will reduce the number of people attending higher education. It will particularly impact minority groups such as people living in remote areas, those from regional areas, vulnerable women, people who do not have support networks or who are mature-aged and single mothers. These minority groups might not access higher education because the cost is going up, and even if they want to study, there are not as many places available. Reducing the budget available from government puts pressure on universities, forcing them to make choices such as whether to offer student places or remove some of their current programmes (as these programmes may increase administration costs). Reducing administrative costs by minimising the number of executives and people in administration roles needs to be considered by many administrators (Mitchell, Leachman & Masterson, 2017). This firstly threatens women currently in leadership roles, and secondly will disempower women as the newest leaders (an already under-represented group). If this happens, there will be fewer women in executive leadership positions.

In summary, since at least the 1970s, there have been dramatic changes in the structure, operation and functions of higher education systems in both developing and developed countries across the world, and these changes are largely due to globalisation and the requirements of a knowledge-based economy. The higher education reforms in developing and developed countries, like Singapore, Finland, Denmark, Vietnam and Australia, have occurred against a background of global policy trends which emphasise the effectiveness and quality of such reforms in higher education. The demand for the

restructuring of higher education is driven mainly by the demand and expectations of different stakeholders.

This competitive, globalised world and its complex interactions transform how people think about leadership, which is invested in organisational productivity, mission and individual accomplishments. So a global leader has become someone who acknowledges the work being done globally, and works toward justice, and is willing to deal with global challenges (Terrell & Rosenbusch, 2013). Higher education institutions, which have gone through the process of restructure or change as a result of pressure from the external or internal forces, also mean challenges for their leadership. Despite the differences in the process of reforming higher education in Vietnam and Australia, it is possible for each country to learn from the other. Vietnam and Australia have experienced the move from a centralised system to a more autonomous system, expansion of higher education and the challenge of developing world-class universities. Current reforms, enacted with the purpose of strengthening higher education and the economic and social development of society, place a lot of pressure on executive leaders. This puts particular pressure on women leaders who are vulnerable because they are already an under-represented group in the higher education reform processes.

The other problem female leaders may face is confronting their failure to move up to a higher leadership level due to their institution cutting administrative costs. Thus, whether through the process of restructuring higher education institutions to meet the demands of society or the new age, women suffer from these changes the most. Yet learning how to deal with change, how to be dignified and still move up the ladder, not only helps women to overcome challenges but also helps them to grow into their leadership roles. This is evidenced in my research, as we will see in Chapter Five.

2.4.2 Differences in higher education leadership.

In order to explore the context of higher education leadership more deeply, I will now move to a discussion of the differences between two countries Vietnam and Australia.

Most of the western literature on leadership over the past 20 years has focused on business. There has been far less literature on leadership in higher education, particularly about women leaders. However, there have been key literature contributions to the broader field of education. Regarding educational leadership, the literature tends to focus on high-school, primary and middle-school leadership (Hallinger, Walker, & Trung, 2015) rather than higher education leadership. In addition, most of Vietnamese-sourced literature that exists does not add to research on global educational leadership; there were only a few studies, in the context of international educational leadership, on the available education databases (Hallinger et al., 2015). Unfortunately, these studies were still too small to play a considerable role in the overall identification of my research trends.

The leadership relationship in higher education occurs within the particular political and cultural context of Vietnam. As previously noted, Vietnamese higher education is an extremely hierarchical system. Most of the public universities are monitored by the state in terms of their finance, facilities and teaching staff. Under the control of MOET and political authority, the leaders of higher education operate under two lines of authority: their own leadership and political roles (D.T Truong, 2013). University leaders are considered to be “three-role principals”, which includes the role of educator, leader and government officer.

Principals are also considered to be role models, which reflects Confucian moral values in Vietnam and across East Asia (Hallinger et al., 2015, p. 452). This role model is considered as an indigenous feature of leadership and one which relate to the writings

of Ho Chi Minh - the first President of Vietnam - rather than international leadership models, such as transactional or transformational leadership.

Confucian values have shaped the educational context, inter-personal relations, educational structures and processes (H. Tran, 2009; D. T Truong, 2004). These values, which are embedded in Vietnamese culture, are characterised by high power distance and collectivism (Hofstede, 2001). The features of high power distance and collectivism reflect a “habit of obedience” (D. T Truong, Hallinger, & Sanga, 2017, p. 91) and group harmony across hierarchical leadership levels. University followers show deference and respect for their leaders’ opinions, and are reluctant to challenge the decisions made by their leaders. The followers also lack involvement or an opportunity to offer their opinions during decision-making processes. Even when they are encouraged to get involved in their superiors’ decision-making processes, their contributions and involvement are still limited and formalistic (D.T Truong, 2013). Noticeably, university leaders show similar attitudes and behaviours to their own superiors who operate under the two lines of authority: bureaucratic and political authority and MOET (D.T Truong, 2013). The highest priorities of the Vietnamese education system focus on “the transmission of political and cultural values rather than on knowledge and skills, in the hierarchy of education goals” (Hallinger et al., 2015, p. 453). It is very hard to change hierarchical systems with their heritage of Confucian attitudes and the hierarchical nature of Vietnamese education. Under-represented leadership groups such as women find systemic change very difficult. This is evidenced in Chapter Four and Five of my study, as most of the respondents reflected that they found it hard to apply their new innovative ideas to their institutional systems. They also reported that they had developed more listening skills rather than decision-making skills.

Recent policies, such as Doi Moi responded to globalisation and industrialisation, and the associated high demand for developing knowledge workers, to meet the needs of the new “market-oriented socialist economy” (World Bank, 2001, p. 1). In the context of maintaining hierarchical structures while meeting the demands of the market economy, the important skills of Vietnamese educational leaders on their route to career advancement is better understood as know who rather than know how (Hallinger et al., 2015). In other words, maintaining relationships with superiors is essential to facilitating leaders’ development across both roles. Women leaders need to know how to cooperate, and who they need to develop long-term relationships with, particularly when they are working in a male-dominated environment.

In the Australian context, fundamental changes to the operation of universities, and their relationship with the government in the 1990s, have created some lasting changes in terms of university management and leadership. University structures have changed in relation to government, from being state referenced to market referenced. Meanwhile, Australian Government policies have become less prescriptive. The shifting from government support to government assistance, and from tight to lose regulation, encouraged universities to respond to students’ needs. Shifting demand for higher education continues to increase, especially among international students. In this broader landscape of international education, universities recognise the need to adopt an international outlook.

Australian universities are set up by an act of parliament in their legal jurisdiction. The establishing acts provide university councils as a structure to manage and control the university. The councils are responsible for academic issues, finance and property within the university. Changing the functions of these governing councils reshaped university governance in the modern era (Harman & Treadgold, 2007; OECD, 2003). Even the

decentralisation has had an impact, as power is increasingly concentrated at the political centre. The decision-making power is often in the hands of the Minister of Education and select advisers (Welsh & McGinn, 1999).

Universities have become more self-managed and responsible for areas such as staff selection and staffing levels, budget priorities and fundraising, quality assurance, research management planning, management improvements, strategic planning and budget diversity (Australian government, 2006; UNICEF, 2013). In essence, many universities have remodeled their governance and administration structure to keep pace with changing internal and external environments. The increasing complexity of universities' roles makes higher education leadership a highly specialised field that is continually in a state of flux.

This shifting landscape has placed more attention to the new university power system, with the role of the Vice-Chancellors and the executive level becoming more powerful (Australian government, 2006, p. 401; Harman & Treadgold, 2007). Executive management has been given a greater priority, with executive boards holding increasing executive power.

The ongoing challenge in many universities is using efficient management to meet the demands of a highly competitive environment. In addition, culture gaps occur between academics and senior management in many universities (Harman & Treadgold, 2007; OECD, 2003) and there is also the issue of mapping higher education institutions to improve their position in international university ranking (Grattan Institute, 2018). These requirements challenge the executive board when positioning their universities for international cooperation and the impacts of globalisation, particularly the emergence of online competition. This requires a diversity in leadership roles.

2.4.3 Shifting genders in university leadership.

As mentioned previously, leadership research is often silent about women due to male domination at the top levels of hierarchy and power. However, the trend of shifting to a more knowledge and skill-based labour force has opened up more opportunities for qualified women. Shakeshaft (1993), an education researcher, broke the silence about the disproportionately low percentage of women leaders in the female-dominated profession of education. She raised awareness among the education community about gender inequity, arguably turning the tide in educational leadership promotion practices, particularly university leadership hiring practices. Since then, there have been an increasing number of women in leadership roles.

In the higher education sector, women currently represent an increasing percentage of management boards. They comprise around 30 percent of all CEO (chief executive officer) positions and occupy around 20 percent of Deans of Instruction positions (or similarly titled roles) (Weisman & Vaughan, 2002, 2007). Although the representation of women is currently low in senior positions, it is likely that the future will see more women heading universities. The concept of the “great man” approach may shift to a more participatory orientation, including leadership and shared decision-making. This approach tends to be more associated with and familiar to women leaders (Chliwniak, 1997). As more women hold the top position in academic institution, norms, values and behaviours regarding university leadership will begin to change (Burkinshaw, 2015).

Although women are not represented at high levels in leadership positions, they can still encourage the restructuring of power, or at least more balanced power relations between men and women.

2.4.3.1 Women's leadership characteristics.

Women tend to be people-oriented, as they create favourable working environments that support their subordinates and help them to face job-related stress (Maseko & Proches, 2013). Women tend to prioritise their interactions with their followers. They inspire their followers by sharing power, enhancing self-worth and encouraging participation. Transformational leaders tend to use open communication, listen to others, build collaboration, have teamwork skills and are honest (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

There is a difference between female and male leadership styles. Women tend to be more democratic, and they generally demonstrate transformational leadership styles and display transformational leadership behaviours more frequently than men (Brown & Chu, 2012). Female leaders may possess these kinds of characteristics, so this may be beneficial to their leadership roles.

2.4.3.2 Women's leadership development.

Leadership and development programmes are believed to build female leaders' effectiveness, and many institutions have put time and energy into developing training programmes. These programmes are designed to help females confront the barriers that they meet. There are a number of different programmes in different countries around the world. An illustration is the Women's Center which is the oldest centre in the United States (Bonebright, Cottledge, & Lonnquist, 2012). It was set up by the University of Minnesota to focus on a partnership between the Office of Human Resources and women's continuing education needs. Their leadership programme was designed for women and includes guidelines such as honouring female leadership styles, leading for systemic change and equity, developing collaborations, confronting leadership bias against women and broadening networks (Bonebright et al., 2012). The British Council

also set up an action plan for improving leadership programmes and launched the new Future Leader Connect programme for emerging leaders all over the world (British Council, 2017). This focused on skills, confidence and opportunities for women. These activities have contributed to opportunities and developed the voices of female leaders.

In Australia, there are also extensive leadership training programmes available nationwide, such as the leadership development programme at the University of Melbourne. Yet these programmes are mainly for male and female businesspeople. There are some specific programmes which are for female executives, such as Women Leaders Institute, which hosts the Women in Leadership conference in Melbourne. Every year Women & Leadership Australia hosts a number of women's leadership events, such as the Australian Women's Leadership Symposiums and the Australian Women's Leadership Forum. However, despite these training opportunities, there is not much focus on educational leadership.

The New South Wales Department of Education provides support via Women in Educational Leadership (WIEL). WIEL provides support through professional development activities. Meetings, conferences, mentoring and inspiring professional development opportunities are arranged to support women in their leadership journey. In addition, the Universities Australia Executive Women Group (UAEW) hosts workshops for female executives, and also provides opportunities for networking (Universities Australia, 2018). A more specific example is a leadership training workshop organised by Liquid Learning Group Pty Ltd. This workshop apparently provided essential skills and tools to enhance female leaders' effectiveness. This workshop targeted participants who were future leaders, aspiring leaders or current leaders.

Recently, the Australian Higher Education Women's Leadership Summit was hosted by Women & Leadership Australia on 15th June 2018. This summit focused on

building skills, confidence and consolidating the future career success of female leaders. However, this summit focused on women leaders in general, not specifically on female executives. Interestingly, the SAGE (Science in Australia Gender Equity) program in Australia, adapted from the Athena SWAN (Scientific Women's Academic Network) Charter in the United Kingdom, was established to improve gender equity and diversity in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine). The total number of universities participating in the SAGE Pilot was 30. By joining this programme, the Vice-Chancellor or Director of each institution commits to making changes in policy, institutional practices and culture to drive gender equity and diversity outcomes.

In Vietnam, there are many conferences and workshops relating to women. However, these programmes focus mainly on women in the public sector (UNDP, 2012). The Cambridge - Vietnam Women's Leadership Program in 2010 was about enhancing leadership capacity for women in the public sector, in the context of the international economy and integration. Australia has also helped Vietnam train its future leaders (Australian Government, 2017). A key part of this project is increasing the number of women in and promoted to leadership positions. A relevant, current programme is called Aus4Skills Program Annual Plan 2017-2018 which has a component to help women advance in leadership, however, it targets the promotion of women to top leadership positions in business and politics. A recent workshop that Michael Sadlon - Director of Aus4Skills Program - participated in is "Chia sẻ kinh nghiệm và thiết lập mạng lưới lãnh đạo nữ trong các trường đại học thuộc vùng Đông Bắc và Tây Bắc Việt Nam" (sharing experiences among female leaders' university networks for women's leadership in Northwest and Northwest Vietnam). This workshop was reportedly about building leadership skills, exchanging leadership experiences and knowledge, developing self-

confidence and establishing female leadership networks. Yet there are no leadership programmes that solely focus on developing female executives. In the Vietnamese context, even though there are many leadership training programmes for businesswomen, there are only a handful leadership programmes for higher education leaders, and there are no training programmes that specifically target higher education leaders.

2.5 Journey to the Top: Female Leaders in Higher Education

Women's under-representation at senior levels also occurs in many countries around the world. In China, women occupy approximately 17% of heads of government department positions, position within the Communist Party, institutions, enterprises and social organisations (NBS, 2004). The career path of women to top leadership positions is often very different from that of men (Brunner & Kim, 2010). Men tend to climb the career ladder vertically and quickly, while women tend to hold off and take a longer time to go through a lateral path. Kim and Bruner (2009) also indicated that men move into administrative positions five to six years earlier than women. Men tend to move vertically up the path using direct supervisory positions, while women move horizontally through support positions. The typical woman begins her career at the lowest level of the hierarchy, and then gains more experience to move up the next level, such as going from being a staff member to Assistant Dean, and then Dean, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, etc. This path gives women more expertise in dealing with the needs of colleagues, institutions and professional development, but also means she typically begins her administrative role later than her male colleagues.

Men have typically had different experiences than women during the promotion process. They were often promoted due to gender roles. Gender bias occurs at all levels, impeding women from escaping these gender roles (Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993). The top leadership remains dominated by males, and this shows as bias during the selection

process, when the selection board is dominated by men, too. They tend to select the person who is the same as their existing “boys’ club”. Further leadership promotion clearly relates to gender in leadership roles (Brunner & Kim, 2010).

Starting their career development late, and biased promotion processes, show that women lack opportunities in their workplaces. Yet women also lacked the confidence to take on leadership roles.

Cheung and Halpern (2010) argued that:

> A half century after the women’s movement, women have only moved to the halfway mark in the corporate world and other organizations in the industrialized Western societies; most are stuck in middle management. (p. 183)

The lack of opportunity for mid-level leadership creates a paradox for women: they cannot get there because they have not been there. In an era which places increased importance on knowledge-based skills, researchers need to consider the loss of these experienced women to leadership. Qualified women have the leadership skills and credentials to successfully perform leadership positions (Kowalski, 2006), but few women rise to leadership (Brunner & Kim, 2010).

2.5.1 Overview of female leaders’ representation.

Female enrolment in higher education has been increasing since 1970 in most regions of the world, including the Arab States, East Asia and the Pacific, North America and Western Europe (UNESCO, 2012). In education, women in most regions obtained more bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Female participation rates in PhD study are lower than for men, except in Latin America and the Caribbean. And there has also been a decrease in the number of women who undertake careers in research (UNESCO, 2012). When girls have access to education, they tend to have higher levels of attainment and

persistence than boys. The retention and the drop-out rate are not critical to them, but are more important factors among male students (UNESCO, 2012).

Women's representation in leadership positions in higher education differs in various countries across the world. The percentage of female presidents in higher education increased from approximately 10% in 1986, to 23% in 2006, and then to 30% in 2016 (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017). Women held around 30% of the leadership roles in the developed world (United Nations, 2015), 15% in Africa and 13% in Asia (UNESCO, 2012; United Nations, 2015). In the U.S, the number of women in higher education management - especially in STEMM fields - is under-represented, where around 20% of Heads of Departments and Deans are women (McCullough, 2011). In Portugal, there have been only two female Rectors (Vice-Chancellors) up until 2014 (Carvalho & Diogo, 2018).

Although there is a steadily increasing proportion of women at executive levels, the ratio is still low when compared to their male counterparts (Kele & Pietersen, 2015). "For at least 25 years, women have been entering the professional and managerial ranks of many corporations at about the same rate as men, yet they remain dramatically under-represented at senior levels" (World Economic Forum, 2013, p. 10). In South Asia, women have typically been represented at lower levels of their organisations. The higher the level of leadership, the lower the percentage of women's involvement, especially if there is a general lack of being recognised, promoted and appointed into senior leadership positions (Morley & Crossouard, 2016). In Canadian universities, there are more male university administrators than female (Nakhaie, 2007).

Overall, women are mostly under-represented in leadership positions, especially senior-executive roles, all over the world. Vietnam and Australian higher education shares a similar situation.

2.5.1.1 In the Vietnamese context.

As stated, Vietnamese women are under-represented in leadership roles, particularly at senior levels. Many researches have recently identified this under-representation. H. S. Pham (2011), a researcher who is affiliated with the Women's Union of Vietnam, recognised that women occupied approximately 48% of the labour force. Although the number of women had increased remarkably in management levels in state and government offices, social organisations and businesses, and more women held high leadership positions in Party committees, such as Vice State President and Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly, the numbers of "women in leadership and management positions are not steady" (Dollar & Gatti, 1999; H. S. Pham, 2011).

The number of women who move up via educational promotion processes is lower than their male counterparts (UNESCO, 2014), despite the progress made over two decades where females have made up half of the student population in colleges and universities (T. N. Nguyen, 2009). The data from MOET showed that even though female teaching staff occupy two-thirds of the total educational staff, men are usually appointed as the heads of educational institutions. The percent of female Rectors, Deputy Rectors, faculty Deans and School Heads is limited (T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013), especially in the 53 main public universities (USAID, nd).

Research conducted by Mai (2007) on fourteen public colleges and universities in Vietnam showed the disparities between females and males at executive levels (Mai, 2007). There were 7.0% female Presidents (Vice-Chancellors); 10% female Vice-Presidents (Deputy Vice-Chancellors); and 15% female faculty Deans.

Based on information from 25 Vietnamese university websites on 1st October, 2018 (see Figure 2.1), there are 4.0 % (1 out of 25) female Vice-Chancellors;

5.7 % (2 out of 35) female Deputy Vice-Chancellors; 32.0% (33 out of 103) female Deans; 42.5% (37 out of 87) of female Vice-Deans and 22.8% (21 out of 92) female Heads of Department. Compared to about 10 years ago, the number of female Deans seems to have doubled, but in the top executive leadership positions - including Vice-Chancellor (President), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Vice-President) - there has been a slight decline.

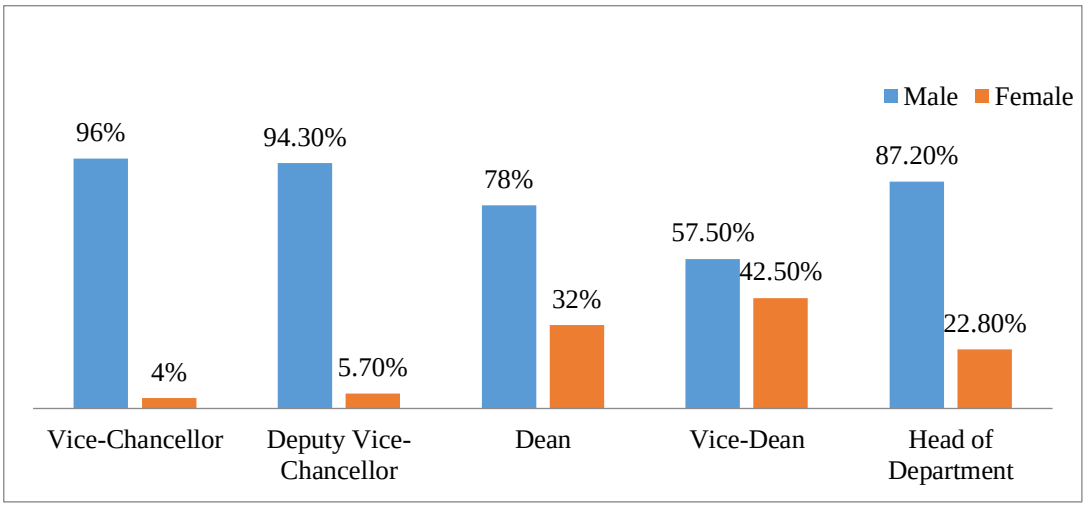

Figure 2.1: Different gender percentages of senior managerial roles at 25 public universities in Vietnam.

The statistics illustrate that even though there is an increasing number of females at the middle-leadership level, females are still under-represented at executive levels in higher education in Vietnam. The number of female leaders in executive roles is quite low. Vietnamese females who are Presidents are rare, as mentioned in Chapter One, particularly when compared to their Australian counterparts.

2.5.1.2 In the Australian context.

The higher education sector in Australia consists of 39 universities, and this group is made up of 37 public and 2 private universities. Females occupied a small number of executive levels positions at these universities (Brooks & MacKinnon, 2001). In

Australian universities, for example, 70% of leadership positions are held by men, with only 30% of females occupying the same level of leadership appointments (Lord & Vinnicombe, 2010), and approximately 40% of senior administrative staff were female (Universities Australia, 2010). The number of female Vice-Chancellors has fluctuated over the past 15 years. In 2004, there was the highest proportion (28%) (or 11 out of 39) of Vice-Chancellors. Yet this proportion had reduced to 18% (or 7 out of 39) in 2009, while in 2016 women made up 25% (or 10 out of 39) of Vice-Chancellors. In 2018, based on Australian university websites on 22nd October, 2018, there were 33.3% (13 out of 39) female Vice-Chancellors. It is clear that the percentage of females who are in leadership positions is still low. In particular, increases in the participation of women in executive roles remain slow. At the top executive level, even though there is apparently an increasing number of female Vice-Chancellors, this figure has fluctuated over the years.

Overall, it is clear that more women are accessing higher education than ever before. The number of women who obtain postgraduate degrees is rapidly increasing. However, the number of women represented in leadership positions is increasingly very slowly, especially at the top executive level of higher education organisations. This can be seen clearly in the two countries involved in my study, Vietnam and Australia, and occurs even though there is a support from various pieces of legislation (regarding legislative support see section 2.5.4 Facilitators of female leadership). A variety reasons for female under-representation in this area have been identified in the literature.

2.5.2 Reasons for the under-representation of women.

With the advancements offered by legislation and action plans (see more detail in the section: Journey to the top in the context of history, culture and the innovation age), both Vietnamese and Australian women have achieved significant progress in terms of women's representation within leadership positions. In the Vietnamese context, in 1995

the country was ranked 9th globally in the representation of women in political systems (UNDP, 2014). In the Australian context, 14.2% of women obtained chair positions, 23.6% were in directorships, 15.4% were employed at a CEO level and 23.4% were directors in ASX 200 (Australian Government, 2016).

However, the action plans in higher education in both Vietnam and Australia have not provided consistent advances for women. As we have seen, in higher education, the number of women occupying the highest leadership roles, such as Presidents, Principals (in Vietnam) and Vice-Chancellors (in Australia), has fluctuated.

While policies, laws and action plans may advocate equity for women, "these targets do not reflect the reality of women's participation" (UNDP, 2014, p. 6). Furthermore, legislation from governments and plans by organisations seem to demonstrate that the status of women and their inequalities has been resolved, and thus silences the debate about gender (Grummell, Devine, & Lynch, 2009).

2.5.2.1 The resistance to female leaders.

During change processes, as a response to global competition, a master plan is typically enacted to advocate for activities that empower female leaders in higher education and make changes within organisations. This process includes changes in organisation processes, values, beliefs and behaviours, and changes in power relationships (Simpson, Farrell, Orina, & Rothman, 2015; Trader-Leigh, 2002) that empower women to move into leadership roles. However, these organisational changes are not always readily accepted. There is often resistance to change. As G. E. Hall and Hord (2006) explained: "some people will grasp the new way immediately, while most will need some additional time, and a few will avoid making the change for a very long time" (p.7). This resistance has also been identified in several other studies (Hickman, 2013; Ryerson University, 2011). Hickman (2013) concluded that this resistance creates

both “tension and distress” (p. 40), which makes the change process exceedingly complex.

Internal resistance from people appears to be the dominant influence in higher education (Lane, 2007). “The resistance from people to change is probably the most formidable barrier to the successful implementation of innovations” (Nisbet & Collins, 1978, p. 14). Many studies have identified a variety of barriers that women leaders face during changes in their working environments, such as bias in the leadership selection process. People do not always trust the ability of female leaders. Other barriers include issues such as the glass ceiling, gender equality (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010; C. Taylor, 2015), workplace gender equality (Bell, 2010), female participation (Sachs, 2009), leadership equal opportunities (Özkanlı & White, 2009) and lack of leadership support (Chesterman, 2001), lack of reticence, confidence, ambivalence and resistance to change (Chesterman, Ross-Smith, & Peters, 2005, p. 178). These barriers all play a part in preventing females from moving upwards to senior leadership roles (Chesterman et al., 2005). It has been found that Australian university women senior leaders resist senior positions as “a response to managerialism” (i.e. work stress, insecurity of position) or work-life balance (Chesterman et al., 2005, p. 177). This resistance forms significant barriers for women leaders within their working environments, and has contributed to women’s unwillingness to apply for senior leadership roles (Chesterman et al., 2005).

Although the literature represents these themes, showing similar barriers across a variety of contexts, research is still needed to gain insights into the social reasons for why women leaders - especially women in executive leadership positions - have been under-represented and how they deal with the status quo. We will now consider the specific social and historical context of this resistance within one my research populations, across

a variety of cultural contexts, to help explicate the continued under-representation of women in leadership roles.

2.5.2.2 Historical overview of women's position in society.

a. Confucianism in Vietnam.

Vietnam has a long history of Confucianism, reflecting approximately 1000 years of Chinese invasion and control, a period that occurred between 111 B.C and 939A.D. (Bich, 1999; Jamieson, 1993; K. W. C. Taylor, 1998). Confucianism may be defined as a worldview, an ethical system and political ideology, and a scholarly tradition developed from the teachings of philosopher Confucius (551-479 BC) (Goldin, 2011; Yao, 2000). Confucianism has five basic virtues: humanity/benevolence, righteousness, propriety/rites, knowledge and integrity. The core values of Confucianism remain deeply rooted in Vietnamese society, impacting the country's philosophy, culture, society, economy and politics (Ashwill & Diep, 2005; Bich, 1999; Jamieson, 1993). "Confucianism was the dominant doctrine in the long history of China. It also permeated into the everyday life of Vietnamese in ancient time" (E. Gao et al., 2012, p. S.15). Although this quote is presented as a parable, it shows that Confucian beliefs have influenced Vietnamese society over a long period, and that they cannot be easily erased and replaced by new beliefs (D. T Truong et al., 2017). This is especially the case for women. For instance, principles such as "Tam Tòng" (Three Submissions) which require female obedience: when a woman is young, she must submit to her parents. After her marriage, she must submit to her husband. When she is widowed, she must submit to her son.

Vietnamese women have enjoyed greater equality and more opportunities since Vietnam gained its independence from French colonialism in 1945. However, Vietnam is still very much a patriarchal society due to a long-term influence of Confucianism

(Ashwill & Diep, 2005). It is not to be denied that the inequality of the sexes has not been completely eliminated. A list of feminine “do’s and don’ts” in the rubric of “Tứ đức” (Four Virtues) is still reflected in Confucianism. These Four Virtues included “Công” (work), “Dung” (physical appearance), “Ngôn” (appropriate speech) and “Hạnh” (comportment), and these Virtues are still used as official criteria to evaluate how good a women or a girl is. Vietnamese women generally accept their role as good housewives, with their husband as the breadwinner of their family (Ashwill & Diep, 2005; Jamieson, 1993; Yao, 2000).

As a result of the processes of modernisation and globalisation, Vietnam has become more open to the world. Interaction with the cultures of other countries has brought new social values, norm, beliefs and ways of life to the country. Jamieson (1993) has used two words to describe Vietnam in modern times: “change” and “continuity” (p. 307). Change is the process of accepting and adapting to the new cultural values that have been imported to Vietnam from other countries. Continuity is the process of preserving and maintaining traditional values that have been influenced by Confucianism. However, the characteristics of Confucianism have been transmitted to the present, as hidden values in doctrines, principles, ethics and public opinion (Jamieson, 1993). For example, the banner found on the main entrance of schools, as well as in classrooms: “Tiên học lễ, hậu học văn” (the first thing to learn are rites, the second thing to learn is knowledge). In other words, the most important thing to learn is human relations, and knowledge is of secondary importance.

Gender relations have changed since the collapse of the Vietnamese feudal system and Marxism-Leninism communist ideology was introduced in 1945. In particular, “Mở cửa” (Open Door) and “Đổi Mới” (Renovation) have opened up opportunities for women

with regards to the workforce, gender equity and leadership. The gap between male and female participation in workplaces has narrowed (D. T Truong et al., 2017).

Yet changes in gender equality do not mean that the traditional concept of gender has changed. Women are still deeply affected and held back by traditional ideas. They still carry dual responsibilities, such as working and fulfilling their traditional roles as a mother and a wife at home (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001). A woman is recognised as valuable if she is a "good official, better housewife" (Giỏi việc nước, đảm việc nhà). Dalton et al. (2001) concluded that "despite the economic and social advances that women have made in the past generation, support for full gender equality is still lacking" (p.11). This supports Quy's (1992) point that thinking less of women and highly of men is a result of Confucianism. Vietnamese women are continually viewed through the traditional standpoints of gender roles derived from Confucianism. Hang (2008) argued that women continue to face gender bias and stereotypes, in which they are expected to fulfil their mandated roles, including child bearing, breastfeeding, teaching children, caring for a husband and elderly relatives, and doing household chores. This has created greater dignity and granted deep power to their male counterparts.

In the Vietnamese context, men are most often in positions of power and influence in government, business and academia. Even though the National Strategy for the Advancement of Vietnamese Women, approved in 2001, also pointed out that women should hold 50% of all positions in state agencies at all levels by 2010, there is a gap between public commitments to gender equality and its practice (T. T. H. Truong, 2008). The phrase male-dominated world in Ashwill and Diep (2005) emphasises this social phenomenon in Vietnam. In this male-dominated world, most women are considered as low-level assistants and secretaries, or as holders of deputy positions who do not have major decision-making capacity (Ashwill & Diep, 2005; Lam & Laura, 2017). These

attitudes makes it very hard for female leaders to believe in themselves, and also very hard for women to challenge gender stereotypes.

Confucianism has contributed to socio-cultural attitudes make it more difficult for people to accept female leaders. Furthermore, women cannot accept themselves as a leader. Adapting western leadership styles together with Marxism-Leninism ideology could become a trend in terms of collaboration within the international context. Having considered the situation of my research population in Vietnam, I will now turn to the broader cultural and historical context of the Australian female leaders who I interviewed.

b. The Australian women's movement.

Since 1788, when European settlers arrived, the history of the Australian women's movement has showed a lack of gender equity, and faced prejudice and domination. The domination of western culture occurred in interactions between Aboriginal Australia and the British; similarly, gender prejudice has persisted for over 200 years. Due to these dominations, women have struggled to obtain equal rights. The research for equal rights was defined as a social movement where women were "capable of effecting social and/or political change, because they engage in deliberately collective action towards challenging this enemy and promoting the common interest identified" (Burgmann, 2003, p. 6). This movement, also called a wave, focused mainly on three significant historical periods that reflect Australian gender reforms.

The first historical period was from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. This period is noted as one of male-domination and the maintenance of male political power due to the subjugation of women. Burgmann (2003) argued that the campaign in this period aimed to achieve "moral legislation" that would protect women and their children from male abuse and violence. For instance, in the family

women were considered obedient to their husbands. They were denied guardianship of their children, and they were asked to pay taxes to the government, even if they did not get married. Furthermore, women were denied access to higher education. The male-dominated government did not recognise women's equal rights since they were not allowed to vote. Eventually, changing circumstances created more freedom and options for women. They were able to choose between getting married or having a better education to access various jobs (Hume, 2016; Paxton & Hughes, 2014). Many voting campaigns, known as the "suffragette" movement, rose up around the world including in New Zealand (1893), the US (1870), Norway (1900), Finland (1907), Denmark (1918), the UK (1918) and Switzerland (1971). In Australia, the women's movement that campaigned for the right to vote dates back to 1894, starting first in South Australia and then moving to the different states. The Commonwealth Parliament, which once had no female members, issued the Commonwealth Franchise Act in 1902 and this Act delivered the vote to adult women (National Museum of Australia, 2002). Women's suffrage had significant consequences for political policy, increasing social spending and narrowing the gender gap (Aidt & Dallal, 2008).

Australia was the first country where women gained voting rights, with this right granted in 1894 in South Australia, 1899 in Western Australia and 1902 in New South Wales (Australian Government, 2015). Aboriginal people were given the right to vote much later in 1962 (Burgmann, 2003). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children affected by the Act were described as the Stolen Generations because they did not receive formal schooling, but instead were sent to missionary locations to be educated on properties where they were treated like a "caged animal" (Bretherton & Mellor, 2006), often kept hungry and sexually abused (Bretherton & Mellor, 2006; McKeich, 2009). Thus, women of colour suffered a double disadvantage.

Women achieved more advancement and opportunities during the second wave of the women's movement (1960s-1980s), which became known as the Women's Liberation Movement. The invention of new technologies provided some benefits for women, and liberated them from some manual housework chores, but the demand for their work was increasing. The new technologies included refrigerators, televisions, washing machines and dishwashers and these helped women reduce their housework. In the third wave period, from 1990s to the present, there has been greater accommodation of diversity and change because feminism has engaged with women of many colours, ethnicities, nationalities, regions and cultural backgrounds. In Australia, social infrastructure policies, such as The Fair Work Act (2009), Paid Parental Leave Act, Workplace Gender Equality Act (2010) and Work Health and Safety Act (2011), and National Paid Parental Leave (2011) have supported women in the workplace. These policy frameworks are a combination of international and national legislative policy and institutional arrangements to create best practice across organisations (R. White & Heckenberge, 2012). The other achievement in this historic period involved women working outside the home. Women's active involvement in the workplace, as they substituted for male workers during World War I and II, assisted the women's rights movement. More women went to work outside the home and started serving on school boards and local authorities. They became more educated and started to access higher education. The number of women who enrolled in higher education institutions rapidly increased during the 1800s. Many more women gained higher educational qualifications.

In spite of these legal improvements, the percentage of women who undertake basic tasks remains high (ABS, 2009). The 2016 census showed that an Australian woman still spends between 5 and 14 hours a week doing unpaid domestic housework.

For an Australian man, this figure is less than five hours a week (ABS, 2017). This suggests that there has not been much change, and that women are still under pressure, especially as they take on more tasks in the workplace where they also do more hours. Even though they have to work full time to maintain their roles in their organisations, when they get home they still have a full time job (Ruppanner, 2017). The majority of women still suffered prejudice as a result of patriarchal attitudes and behaviours in their homes and workplaces (Burgmann, 2003). In the context of workplace participation across a whole century of change, the number of women in leadership roles remains low. Women's involvement in leadership still has "a long way to go before equality is achieved" (Elix & Lamber, 2014, p. 310). Sawer and Andrew (2014) have supported Elix and Lamber's (2014) research by showing the number of women in Australian parliaments. In 1999, the Australia representation of women in the national parliament was ranked fifteenth in the world. By March 2012, this rate had dropped to fortieth place, despite an effort to increase the presence of women in public decision-making.

There has been a real improvement in the way that women are represented in more workplaces, however, it may be argued that Australian women are still represented in a negative and stereotyped way, one which reflects the unequal social, economic and political position of women, especially within leadership roles. Women are still far from sharing equal power with their male counterparts. Even after three waves of feminist reform, the 2016 Census Australia revealed how far women have to go. Women have more equal right, and more opportunities, yet women are still held back.

In summary, even though Vietnam and Australia have vastly different histories, they share some similarities in their women's movements. In Vietnam, the Confucianism inherited from Chinese invaders has embedded itself in Vietnamese life. In Australia, patterns of prejudice and domination - including gender bias - arrived with

the European settlers. Although the two countries were colonised by different invaders, the current status of women is similar, with women in both countries still defined as an under-represented leadership group.

2.5.2.3 Cultural overview of women' position in society.

"Culture" is widely identified as a main function of leadership across diverse geographical contexts. Some researchers, such as Feldman (1986), Limaye and Victor (1991) and Roberts and Boyacigiller (1984) have focussed on the management and leadership of people and organisations across different cultures. The behaviours and leadership style of each person are shaped by their culture. In order to adapt and make effective changes, the culture of the working environment of an organisation is influenced by both positive and negative leadership practices. Hence, it is necessary to understand the culture and the society where the leader comes from so that we can better understand their behaviour, chosen leadership styles and strategies when dealing with challenges and change. To impact systems, leaders who can create positive conditions for change should have the ability to manage cross-cultural values and norms. Hofstede's (2010) study of cultural dimensions guides this section, and helps develop our understanding of Vietnamese and Australian cultures within the context of education leadership (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Hofstede (2010) surveyed more than 200,000 IBM employees in 76 countries across the world, including Vietnam and Australia. He proposed four main dimensions of culture: power distance, individualism, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), with these dimensions showing different measures in Vietnam and Australia (see Figure 2.2).

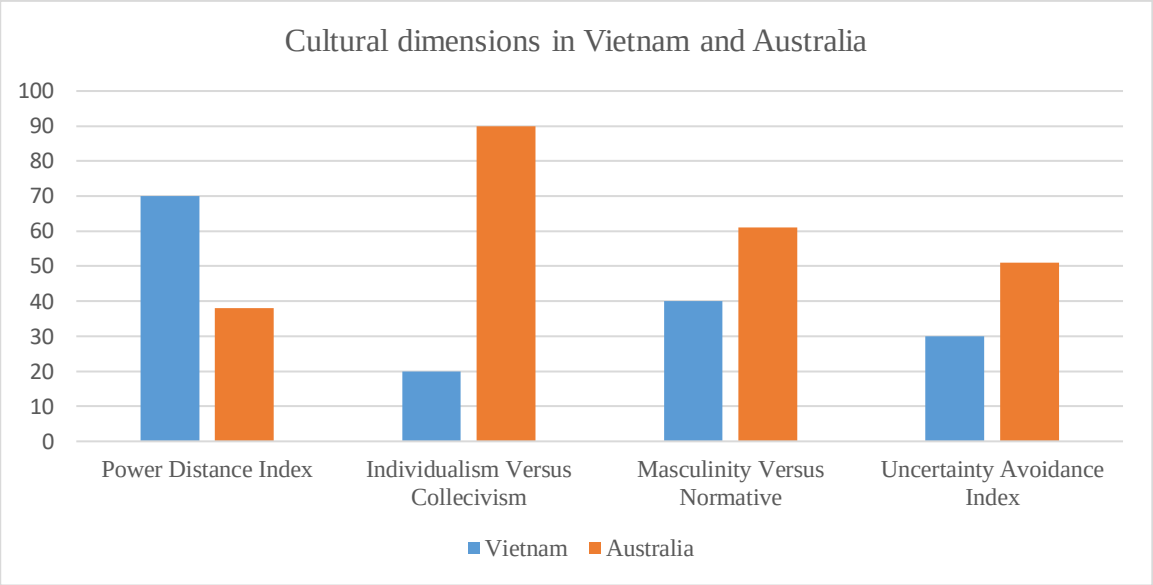

Figure 2.2: Cultural dimensions in Vietnam and Australia

Hofstede's (2010) culture dimensions are very useful in determining how executives, managers and workers behave in an organisation. The higher the power distance of a culture, the more powerful the authority that executives and managers wield. In addition, power distance is the most important determinant of leadership style, because institutional structures are more likely to be hierarchical (Javidan & Carl, 2005).

Vietnam has a higher power distance index than Australia (see Figure 2.2). As previously discussed, Vietnam's culture is deeply rooted in Confucian influences. Group, family and community cohesion is privileged over individual "self-interest". Order and hierarchy are embedded in both society and family units. Younger members of society are expected to obey senior members, with Vietnam having a high power distance index (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). In the family, the oldest members have the highest levels of authority, while within organisations the relationship between university leaders and their followers is clearly identified as subordinate-superior relationships (Q. Tran, Tian, Li, & Sanko, 2014).

Australia has a lower power distance, which makes its organisations more likely to be decentralised, with highly independent and qualified executives (Hodgetts & Luthans, 2003). Hofstede and Minkov (2010) suggested that societies with a higher power distance are more collective, whereas lower power distance societies are more individualistic. As a result, leaders in higher uncertainty avoidance societies like Australia tend to be aggressive people with high achievement drivers, whereas leaders from Vietnam tend to be the opposite (Hodgetts & Luthans, 2003). Aggressive and higher achievement leaders are those with long-term orientations; in contrast, leaders with low uncertainty avoidance are usually orientated towards the short-term (Hodgetts & Luthans, 2003).

The dominant feature of Vietnamese culture has been identified as collectivism (Hofstede, 2001). As such, the individual role is less important than the group's role in an organisation. The group's face or reputation is protected by social frameworks and formal instructions and guidelines, with "win-win situations" generally set up to avoid conflict (Q. Truong & Nguyen, 2002). Although the Doi Moi policy, which opened the country up to more international cooperation within the higher education sector (Vo, 2009), came into effect more than two decades ago, beliefs, hierarchical structure, respect for authority, cooperation, collectiveness and commitment are deeply embedded in Vietnamese values, and continue to influence leadership practices in Vietnamese organisations.

Vietnam has been found to score higher in conservative and collectivism values, while Australian exhibit more willingness-to-change, "self-enhancement" and individualism values (see Figure 2.2). With regards to cross-cultural values, the cultural values of Vietnam are generally different from the cultural values of Australia. However, the processes of global industrialisation and modernisation of technologies in the

innovation age may create changes through the “international convergence of personal values” (Barnet & Cavanaugh, 1994, p. 330). In addition, the national culture as well as the socioeconomic conditions of the global environment may create “a crossvergence of values orientations” which prioritises individualistic rather than collectivistic values (Egri & Ralston, 2004, p. 214). Global factors are tending to push Vietnam towards a more individualistic culture.

Cultural has a strong relation with leadership and plays an important role in leading organisations. Mastering culture, especially across cultures, contributes to leadership effectiveness. In research conducted in Taiwan and the U.S., researchers found a correlation between global culture competencies and leadership effectiveness in organisations (Spreitzer, Perttula, & Xin, 2005). Javidan and Carl (2005) and Erez and Gati (2004) supported the research of Spreitzer, Perttula and Xin (2005), which viewed cultural understanding as important, recognising that leadership traits valued in one society may not be valued in another, and vice versa, and that organisational cultures have an impact on leadership styles. In addition, changes to organisational culture in a working environment also affect leaders’ behaviours. Mastering culture, in some organisations, means that a leader may emerge based on their skills, knowledge of the area and communication abilities. These abilities, and knowledge of organisational cultures, may assist leaders to achieve organisational goals (Ruvolo, 2004).

Clearly, the cultural contexts of Vietnam and Australia is different. As noted, Vietnamese culture is heavily influenced by Confucianism and decision-making processes are more centralised than in Australia. Vietnamese people respect the group’s interests, while Australian people tend to prioritise individual benefit. Yet the two countries still remain in the same situation with regards to the low involvement of women in leadership roles. Culture is difficult to change (Hofstede, 1984, 1991), but

understanding cultures may help leaders, particularly women leaders, negotiate their way to the top and take advantage of positive cross-cultural norms when applying their academic leadership skills. Thus, it really comes down to opportunities, and what access to opportunities is available for women in these two very different cultural contexts.

2.5.3 Challenges for women leaders.

Women who aspire to the top leadership roles in universities have career paths with both unexpected and expected challenges. Women leaders face a maze-like journey through a range of barriers (Eagly & Carly, 2007). Many studies have identified a variety of reasons to explain the under-representation of women in senior positions. Forestier (2013) puts forward numerous explanations, including social and institutional factors, for the lack of women in leadership positions. Women have typically put their family responsibilities as their top priority. Other factors have included the so called “glass ceiling”, which refers to invisible barriers which prevent women from stepping up to senior leadership positions (Eagly & Carly, 2007), gender equality (C. Taylor, 2015), workplace gender equality (Bell, 2010), female participation (Sachs, 2009), leadership equal opportunities (Özkanlı & White, 2009), leadership support (Chesterman, 2001), lack of mobility and flexibility (L. T. Tran, Marginson, & Nguyen, 2014), balancing childcare and household responsibilities (X. Gao, 2003), personal factors, mentor support (T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013) and male attitudes (X. Gao, 2003; Lam & Laura, 2017; Shakeshaft, 1993). As such, women’s under-representation in leadership roles is caused by various factors, from ranging from organisational cultures to family pressures (Probert, 2005) and span several levels, from the socio-political and institutional to the individual (Cubillo & Brown, 2003).

Female leadership has generally been characterised by three main metaphors: the “glass ceiling”, the “bamboo ceiling” and the “labyrinth”. The term glass ceiling first

emerged in the 1980s (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). This metaphor indicated that females may obtain a certain position during their career development; however, when they move up - perhaps to an executive role - they hit an invisible ceiling. They are able to see the obstacles blocking the top leadership positions, but they cannot push through and overcome them. The “bamboo ceiling” reflects the barriers that Asian Americans face when seeking leadership roles in American (Liu, 2018); they only get in at a certain level. Both the glass ceiling and bamboo ceiling metaphors have been applied to women, who belong to an under-represented and vulnerable group. The glass ceiling and bamboo ceiling also reflect the leadership positions they are restricted to due to barriers inside and outside their workplaces. The more complicated metaphor of the labyrinth indicates that the obstacles that female leaders face occur not only once - as for the ceiling metaphor - but instead communicates the variety of barriers that impede their way during their career progression (Eagly & Carly, 2007); this is the case, even if they are in top leadership positions. It can be seen that the glass ceiling, bamboo ceiling and labyrinth metaphors look dramatically similar, and express the same kind of pattern of under-representation that happens across the world. In spite of using different metaphors, they tend to affect different groups in the same way with regards to their career progression and lack of leadership diversity. Given the notion of the labyrinth, we will now consider some barriers that exist for women; these complex barriers derive from a range of socio-political and cultural, institutional and individual factors.

2.5.3.1 Socio-political and cultural level.

Gender prejudice occurs as a result of patriarchal and hierarchical societies. Women from traditional societies are expected to maintain multiple roles within their families (Shalom-Tuchin, 2013). There is a Vietnamese proverb that is still relevant in rural areas today: “having a son means having everything, while having 10 daughters

means having nothing." From birth, a daughter is expected to obey her parents, and when she gets married she becomes part of the husband's family and belongs to her husband. Indeed, when she eventually becomes a widow, the eldest son dictates what she does and wants.

Affirmative action from government legislation has brought women, in not only Vietnam and Australia but also other countries, more freedom in choosing a job. In the Vietnamese context, it is now possible for women to pass on child caring duties to other family members: their parents, relatives and younger sisters. This is kind of problematic, as it is assuming - once again - that the caring role should be provided by a female. Women are relieved of family duties and pressured into work to earn money like their male counterparts. In spite of having greater freedom to work and choose their jobs, female employees are not preferred by most employers due to potential financial losses when they have children and take formal leave for child bearing and rearing (Vo & Strachan, 2008). As a result, women typically have to work harder to secure their positions within organisations. Meanwhile, they are still required to undertake their home duties and to maintain a positive home environment.

Women also face criticism in both the workplace and family. In the early stages of being a senior leader, colleagues and university staff may often distrust them. Their family members may be sceptical about their relationship with the male leaders who assist and promote them to leadership positions (Funnell & Dao, 2013). In the workplace, people see such women as too aggressive and too ambitious, characteristics that are seen as solely masculine traits (Funnell & Dao, 2013). Such negative perceptions have resulted in women refusing promotions. In Vietnam, women leaders also find it harder to remain for an extended period of time in any official organisation due to the difference in retirement ages between men and women. The compulsory retirement age in all public

organisations for women is 55, while men have until they are 60, five years longer than for females. This means that to get to senior positions, women need to start their career journey five years earlier than men to have a better chance at promotion. The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) has proposed to raise the retirement age in Vietnam, the retirement age would be raised to 62 for men and 60 for women, beginning in January 2021(Vietnam Law & Legal Forum, 2018). Even though there has been a proposal to revise the Labour Code and lower the gap in retirement age between men and women, it is clear that the disparities in retirement age are still embedded in national labour law.

2.5.3.2 Institutional level.

Recent studies have identified the challenges that influence women's effectiveness in their career development. Female leaders' challenges arise mostly from their workplaces. The most important challenges to women's effectiveness in their workplace were a lack of professional development for senior women leaders, lack of support and excessive workloads (Tessens, White, & Web, 2011).

Although the leadership promotion process is announced publicly, it is still subject to gender bias. Two surveys were conducted to understand the discrimination hidden in the ranking placements of Canadian Professors (Nakhaie, 2007). The first survey was conducted in 1987, with a random sample of 10,212 full-time faculty members as part of a project named The Academic Profession in Canada, with a second survey carried out in 2000. This survey replicated the above sampling procedure as part of a second project titled Academic Profession in Canada: Political and Ethic Culture of Canadian Universities. The results showed that there was discrimination in the appointment process. For example, possession of a PhD was one of the main requirements needed to influence placement; Canadian women had improved their positions by

obtaining a PhD, but their male counterparts still enjoyed similar advancement without a PhD. Women were also less advanced than men in a promotion process that was heavily reliant on academic publication. Women have less time to devote to research publications due to lack of support in the workplace and family commitments (Probert, 2005). Nakhaie (2007) also found that males, Caucasians and those born in Canada had advanced in the rank placements rather than females, migrants and minorities.

The promotion process is more biased in Vietnam, when compared to Australia, due to the nature of its highly centralised education system, a system controlled by the government and principal authorities. Positions in an organisation are not only assigned by the top leaders or a higher and powerful authority, but also rarely publicly advertised. As a consequence, Headmasters or Rectors of the universities are appointed by the Minister for Education and Training. Similarly, female leadership positions are mostly appointed by the Head of a university. This process has been described as undemocratic (Mann, 1995). A more democratic and transparent process could be achieved through a public or staff voting process. However, in Vietnamese culture, people are afraid to voice oppositional opinions against their leaders, so staff would tend to vote under the direction of their head.

Moreover, choosing a female leader based on her capacity and abilities is considered rare in Vietnam. The Head might also be biased towards an applicant based on her relationships (Madsen, 2007; T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013), such as being a sister-in-law, child, niece or granddaughter of a member of the selection panel or board, or related to somebody powerful in government, or even at a different university. This nepotism might negatively affect those who are qualified but not part of this social or professional network.

The selection of Vice-Chancellor (or university Head) in Vietnam is different from most western contexts. The selection is not transparent because it is not open to national competition and is not publicly advertised. The nominated candidates should be members working in the institution where the vacancy arises. The selection happens only within the institution and is based on the votes of all people belonging to this institution. The voting is focused on only one candidate, who is considered likely to be acceptable after consultation with staff, a process that takes place before voting begins (Khanh & Hayden, 2010). This selection process leads to a biased voting process within the institution.

Timing and career planning, including training from a young age, are other challenges for women. To be eligible for the position of university Head, women also need to hold a doctorate (T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013). The time period for getting a doctorate is around 3.5 to 4 years full time. Women who want to get a doctorate degree need to plan for an average of around 10 years to get through this. It is a significant part of their career planning. As such, it becomes increasingly hard for Vietnamese women to achieve promotion due to their earlier retirement age, and if they also take time off to look after their families.

In a study on female middle-managers in Australian universities, Wallace and Marchant (2009) noticed that the majority of academic middle-managers are aged within 5-10 years of retirement. Even though these women satisfied leadership criteria, there was still inflexibility between the different leadership levels due to a lack of awareness of women's abilities by human resources (Garavan, 2007). Empowering young leaders with intellectual tools from the start of their education is also an important factor in their later success (Fischetti, 2016). It has been argued that not only female students, but also male students, do not get the chance to learn and apply skills, such as collaboration,

problem solving, creating knowledge and entrepreneurship in the innovation age. It can thus be argued that women may be automatically “cut-off” from promotion opportunities and advancement to senior-executive positions from the early stages of their careers.

Lack of support is also one of barriers faced by women leaders, and this has been illustrated in two important pieces of research (Probert, 2005). The first was a national survey of academic and general staff in 18 Australian universities, and this research was undertaken for the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU). The second was a survey of all academic staff at the University of New South Wales. The participants included both men and women, and both genders felt that there were similar kinds of difficulties in developing their careers and that there was little support available (Probert, 2005, p. 54). Lack of support in the workplace and family also impacted academic publication, thus having a flow-on effect on promotion.

The reason why women are under-represented at senior levels has also been explicated by the concept of the care ceiling (Grummell et al., 2009). These researchers conducted a total of 13 interviews from case studies of seven top-level appointments (at the levels of Vice-Chancellor, President, Vice-President, Provost and Director) across three universities, including two institutes of technology, one further education college and an education body in Ireland. They found that both women and men mentioned workload, with a higher positional ranking generally leading to greater commitment. However, caring responsibilities were found to be more significant to women than men in both the workplace and the family. They emphasised that the care ceiling, which describes the responsibility of women to take care of people and work in their workplace, is one of the reasons for men’s advancement, but also contributes to the fact that women do not occupy senior positions. They concluded that the sheer extent of the care ceiling, which is embedded in these cultures, holds women back.

Gender bias still exists in the workplace (Lee et al., 1993; Nakhaie, 2007; T. T. H. Truong, 2008). Women are exposed to gender bias when attempting to ascend the career ladder. The phenomenon of gender bias is commonly referred to as a “culture of gender”. Though these women were based in geographically diverse countries, each having its own particular cultural norms, they experienced the professional challenges of similar forms of gender bias (Parekh & Wilcox, 2014). This culture norm becomes a burden for women who try to get to the top.

2.5.3.3 Individual level.

Yet these challenges not only derive from societies and the workplace, but also come from the women themselves. A study in different countries, including the U.K., Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Sweden and South Africa found that women were afraid of failure and would avoid taking risks (O’Connor, 2011). In this study, across these very different countries, women’s lack of confidence was a result of poor career planning and inability to market themselves and manage their domestic and family responsibilities (p.179).

Similar to many Asian countries, Vietnam experiences current challenges in its educational leadership, including higher education leadership. These challenges were identified as being due to the multiple roles of leaders at the Asia Leadership Roundtable of 2012. Women lack experience and preparation and the opportunities to participate in training programmes; they are also not willing to take risks. Even if women would like to devote more time to their job, they still lack support from their family, as Vietnamese women - in particular - are responsible for domestic chores while their husbands share only about 20% of the household work (Binh, Van, & Khieu, 2002).

Due to the history of Confucianism in Vietnam, Vietnamese women have a lower social status than men. This led to the adoption of the Marxist Leninist philosophy,

and a revolutionary increase in women's equality. Therefore, women in Vietnam today have a much greater range of opportunities, but the history of Confucianism continues to hold society back because of lasting cultural and political issues. In the Australian context, the suffragette movement has given women rights for just over a hundred years, but there are still few women in senior roles. As previously noted, although these two countries have experienced very different histories, they share similarities in the current status of women, who are defined as an under-represented group in leadership.

This historical overview has demonstrated that women carry a double burden at the workplace and in the family. "In reality, women's ability to devote time to paid work is the outcome of a complex and highly gendered set of negotiations and compromises within the household" (Probert, 2005, p. 70). Child bearing and care largely determine women's future career development. The demands of academic commitment force women to focus more on their career paths and sacrifice their family (Grummell et al., 2009). On one hand, female leaders have to fulfil their duties and their tasks in the workplace. On the other, they have to make sure that they fulfil their family obligation as women in the contexts of daughters, wives and mothers. Consequently, their workloads and family responsibilities become burdensome. Either by devoting themselves to work or family, these conflicts impact women's ability to move forward to senior positions, and family obligations may even reduce the chance of promotion for women.

The burden of family responsibilities has influenced women's careers: "childbearing, childrearing, and household management play major roles in women's lives and pose dilemmas in trying to fulfil career goals and to maintain family harmony" (Valentine, 1995, p. 350). In addition, having to balance family responsibilities with workload has a negative effect on a woman administrator's life, resulting in stress, lack of time for family and frequent travel (Court, 2004; Shalom-Tuchin, 2013). These

influences, in turn, lead to poor health and greater stress. As a result, many American female leaders choose to be single or divorced (Shakeshaft, 1993). Many British and Greek women leaders tend to give up or not seek leadership positions (Mitroussi & Mitroussi, 2009). In Vietnam, women typically try to get their family into a good social position, creating an ever increasing burden to get qualified in order to acquire a stable job or to seek promotion within their organisations. Katila and Meriläinen (2002, pp. 338-339) stated:

> Organizations and organizing are gendered both inside and outside the academic world. To resist the patriarchal articulations of their professional identity women adopt different strategies. The question is how women position themselves with respect to the dominant discourse. Some women have found fitting in the dominant discourse and culture so difficult that they have left the mainstream. Others silence their complaints and surrender their identities, consequently defining themselves and their relations with others in terms of the dominant discourse.

2.5.4 Facilitators of female leadership.

Empowering women in administration and leadership is a significant goal that many countries in the world, including Vietnam and Australia, aim to achieve. The three most common facilitators, as defined in the literature, are as follows: government and organisational commitment at the socio-political and cultural level, mentoring at the institutional level, and family support at the individual level.

2.5.4.1 Government and organisational commitment within the socio-political and cultural level.

Prioritising the advancement of women's rights via community participation, UNESCO has tried to promote a notion of sustainable leadership development for women

by fostering a gender-inclusive culture, namely, the legal right of women to have equal opportunity to education, including higher education. The main instruments cited are the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, 1948; the Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1960; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979. Derived from these instruments, there have been many international United Nations conferences and initiatives that focus on women. For instance, the World Food Summit, Rome 1996; the United Nations Decade on Education for Human Rights 1995-2004; and the 5th International Conference on Adult Education (UNESCO Secretariat, 1998).

To understand what is occurring in Vietnam, it is important to appreciate that the current problem of gender inequity is not an anomaly peculiar to Vietnam. For example, nearly two decades ago the United Nation adopted the SDGs for addressing gender bias. It was anticipated that its particular objectives and goals would be achieved by 2030. Goal 5 was to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" with the subtitle that opines, "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life" (UN, 2015, p. 18). Both the Vietnamese and Australian Government adopted Goal 5, seeking to empower women and thus increase the number of women in leadership levels.

The gender equity reforms that have been introduced in public sector employment have created significant impacts, with the purpose of increasing women's involvement in the workplace. Both Vietnamese and Australian Governments have tried to increase the number of women in leadership positions. Since independence, the Vietnamese Government has issued national laws, such as the Gender Equality Law in 2001, the Gender Equality Law and Anti-domestic Violence Law in 2006, and the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in 2010 (The National Assembly, 2006), National

Strategy on Gender Equality (2011-2020) and the National Programme on Gender Equality (2011- 2015), all with the aim of protecting and promoting professional development opportunities for women. The Vietnamese Government has implemented significant actions at international and national levels in order to facilitate the career development of Vietnamese women, indeed the government has been committed to gender equity - at an international level - since early in the 20th century. In 1965, the Vietnamese Government signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, issued by the United Nations General Assembly, and then the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. In 1993, Vietnam took part in the Beijing World Conference on Women, and in 1995 Vietnam was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Responding to the CEDAW, the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW) was formed and then implemented across 64 provinces and cities in Vietnam. However, Tripodi and Sinh (2004) have argued that the target of this plan focused more on other activities, rather than prioritising the advancement of women. Following this plan was the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women. Until 2010, one of objectives of this action plan was to enhance quality and efficiency of women's performance across political, economic, cultural and social fields. Similarly MOLISA developed the National Program on Gender Equality (2011-2015) and the National Strategy (2011-2020) with the purpose of bringing gender equality in line with national laws, and promoting gender equity in Vietnam (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, 2007).

In Australia, similar to Vietnam, the Australian Government has also tried to increase women's involvement in the workplace, for example via the 1984 Sex Discrimination Act; the 1986 Affirmative Action Act; and the 1988 National Agenda for

Women. These pieces of legislation have formed a legal foundation for women's equity. As a result, women have experienced more equal rights in selection, promoting, training and development (UNESCO, 2002).

2.5.4.2 Stimulation within the institutional level.

In response to the National Strategy (2011-2020), the first Action Plan (2012-2015) was implemented across the Vietnamese education system. This first plan aimed to identify gender disparity within various education sectors, including primary, secondary and tertiary education (UNESCO, 2016). The second Action Plan (2016-2020), launched on 28 October 2016, had five important targets including that 90% of higher education institutions would include women in their Education Executive Boards by 2020 (MOET, 2016) (as discussed in section 2.4 above).

However, in higher education Australian universities have implemented wider and deeper action plans in comparison with Vietnam. They not only target women's involvement in Education Executive Boards, but also focus on women's career development and the promotion of women to senior levels.

Australian universities have implemented affirmative actions for increasing the number of women in leadership positions. The AVCC has been developing strategies and action plans for more than 20 years. For example, an action plan for women employed in the sector was implemented for the years 1999-2003. A second action plan then focused on increasing the involvement of women at senior and administrative levels between 2006-2010. Following this, a third action plan (2011-2014) focused on the career trajectories of women. More recently, the Universities Australia Executive Women's Group launched action plans for 2016-2018 to address gender issues and also women's under-representation in leadership positions, especially at senior levels. This latest action plan has four main goals:

(1). Overcoming unconscious bias;

(2). Better recruitment practices;

(3). Sponsorship and leadership development, and setting aspirational goals for the sector; and

(4). Having 50% of women in key Deputy Vice-Chancellor positions by 2026, and 50% of women in Vice-Chancellor roles by 2030 (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001).

These goals would reduce gender bias and improve gender equality in the workplace. In general, in terms of higher education there are important differences between Vietnam and Australia at an institutional level. Australian universities have implemented more stringent gender action plans. They not only target women's involvement in Education Executive Boards, but also focus on women's career development and the promotion of women to senior levels.

Mentoring and sponsorship also play an important role in advancing women's career development (Helms, Arfken, & Bellar, 2016). A variety of action plans outline different mentorship programmes, such as mentoring policy, and the responsibilities of mentors and mentees (BIS, 2012). Many studies worldwide mention the significant influence of mentoring on female career development. In New Zealand, having senior leaders as mentors was identified as one of the main facilitators that assisted women to advance their university leaderships roles (Airini et al., 2011). In America, mentoring is strongly recommended for women who would like to obtain a presidency position. This is because mentoring and networking provide women with opportunities and significant information to help advance their career (S. L. Harris, Wright, & Msengi, 2011). The mentoring and networking provided by institutions happen with the purpose of empowering their employees.

The empowerment derived from institutions is highlighted in the theory of Structural Power in Organizations of Kanter (1993), which mentions workplace empowerment for employees. Institutions support their employees to access a variety of facilities, such as information, support, resources and opportunities so that they are able to do their tasks of their ability and achieve work goals. Organisational mobility contributes to personal growth, and as a result this leads to professional accomplishment.

2.5.4.3 Family support at the individual level.

Having significant family support encourages women's career development. Similarly, having role models and daily assistance from family member creates support networks. Parents are role models for young women, with parents able to give them financial support to access higher education; their parents also shape their thinking and inspire them to obtain higher education qualifications and achieve leadership roles (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). Relatives from the extended family and husbands may provide great assistance in terms of housework and taking care of children (Cheung & Halpern, 2010). Family support as well as parental support is also important to women leaders in Mexico, America and Asia (Turner, 2007).

In general, female leaders have had support and encouragement from their government, institutions and family during their career progression. Yet although they have had support at different levels, they still confront a variety of barriers that block their movement towards leadership roles in their institutions. In order to explore how they are able to confront these barriers, I will need to understand their achievements so far.

2.5.5 Women's achievements in higher education.

Shifting norms have created more chances for women to advance in higher education. Responding to global trends, higher education institutions are now required to train a knowledgeable labour force to meet the demands of the new market economy

(MOET, 2001; H. Tran, 2009). Women have received some advantages from these changes. They are knowledgeable and skilled within the terms of the knowledge economy, and have more achievements in higher education. Since 1970, the increase of women's involvement in higher education has grown almost twice as fast as that of men (UNESCO, 2014). In addition, there are more women enrolling in higher education degrees and graduating. In Australia, much of growth in women's enrolments is in nursing and education, roles which are considered to be "women's work."

> As girls' educational expectations rise at a faster pace than those of boys, so does their academic performance as measured by persistence, repetition, academic achievement and transition into secondary education. Once they gain access to higher education, women exceed men in grades, evaluations and degree completions. This growth should be seen as a positive development that reflects the changing values and attitudes related to the role and aspirations of women in society. Also relevant is the fact that stable social processes that make demands on men's masculinity, such as serving as soldiers or demands for labour calling for physical strength for example construction or mining work, prevent men from participating in the tertiary education system, as they will have other alternatives. (UNESCO, 2014, p. 21)

Women's achievements in education have raised awareness about women's roles "One important factor that contributes to girls' success in school is the presence of female teachers who can serve as role models and send powerful messages to young girls" (UNESCO, 2014, p. 98). This pattern of role modelling may extend to higher education, with senior female executives providing role models for more junior female leaders. Furthermore, there is an understanding that "having more women as leaders and managers can promote not only gender equity but also organizational productivity and human

capital development" (T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013, p. 136). This evidence shows a defined trend, within society and the family, and demonstrates changing attitudes towards women's education and development (UNESCO, 2012). However, more could be done to motivate greater numbers of women to demonstrate their abilities and inspire them to seek leadership roles.

The achievements of women have also been shown in their behaviours and actions, especially among the younger generation. Truong, Hallinger and Sanga (2017) discovered that younger Vietnamese teachers would like to be involved in their educational organisations' decision-making processes. They are also more confident about challenging their leaders. These changes are as a result of globalisation and absorbing western culture (D. T Truong et al., 2017). In recent research on Australia universities, Burkinshaw and White (2017) discovered differences between the first generation, who are currently in senior leadership positions, and the second generation, who are younger mid-career leaders. The first generation adapted to masculine culture through an "alternative style" demonstrated by their voice, language, and assertiveness in order to "survive". The second generation resisted training programmes. Although these programmes contributed to women leaders' working skills, they considered these programmes as a training "mould" to fix every woman within masculine power cultures. As such, the younger generation demands more "social justice" (Burkinshaw & White, 2017). The increasing ambition, aspiration and greater sense of social justice among the younger generation demonstrates that academic culture is shifting, and developing women's ability to cope with change.

The role of women in the workplace and in the family is marked by historical movements, as mentioned above, and their achievements over time. In recent studies, the role of women in leadership is seen as significant. For instance, "New Zealand, Ireland,

the UK, and Australian respondents see the presence of women in senior management as important in terms of potentially influencing young people in the future, reflecting an incremental approach to change" (O'Connor, 2011, p. 181). The role of women in leadership and management contributes to the achievement and empowerment of younger women. Empowering women is, therefore, part of the transformation process required for sustainable change. UNESCO (2012) saw this under-utilisation of female potential as a critical issue:

> Even though higher education leads to individual returns in the form of higher income, women often need to have more education than men to get some jobs… Women continue to confront discrimination in jobs, disparities in power, voice and political representation and laws that are prejudicial on the basis of their gender. As a result, well-educated women often end up in jobs where they do not use their full potential and skill. (p. 84)

2.6 Responding to Challenges when Negotiating the Leadership Labyrinth

Female leaders have found many ways to ensure they do their work well and maintain their family relationships.

2.6.1 Balancing work and family.

Cultural influences still impact the ways women have been treated in leadership positions (Morton, 2007), although women are slowly making their presence felt in male-dominated leadership contexts. Some cease their career development because they prefer to spend more time with their family; others devote their life to work and sacrifice their family time. Women who sacrificed family for work did so because women who work are not universally accepted in society, and working while in a marital relationship may lead to divorce (Bahry & Marr, 2005). Some women moved up to leadership roles, although the number increased slowly, especially at an executive level. For example,

there has been a 0.4 percent annual increase in female PVCs between 2005 and 2013 in English universities (Shepherd, 2015).

Studies have shown positive trends when women are able to obtain leadership roles, if they have adequate family support. These trends were identified in nine different countries: China, Cyprus, Greece, Kuwait, Iraq, Commonwealth of Dominica, Gambia and Zambia in the research of Cubillo and Brown (2003). Parental support was a seminal influence in not only women's' education but also their career achievement. These support mechanisms enabled equity for women, while also providing them with greater opportunities (Cubillo & Brown, 2003).

Both work and family are important for women during their career development. As Spector et al. (2004) argued, managing either positive or negative work-family stressors is related to changes in job satisfaction. Thus, in order to maintain positive job satisfaction and devote themselves to work, women ask for help or support from their family. Vietnamese Deans considered family support the most important factor that helped them to occupy leadership positions (T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013). In the western context, for those who are both successful at work and care for their family tend to integrate their work and family responsibilities and share the burden with their family (Cheung & Halpern, 2010, p. 186). Women who are motivated by their work tend to combine work and family, and have shared responsibility for balancing their work and family. Women in China, Hong Kong and the US have reported similar experiences which highlight the multifaceted roles of women leaders (Cheung & Halpern, 2010).

It may be argued that the combination of family support, self-efficacy and maintaining both organisational and family support contributes to women's career progress. Although many obstacles confront females in leadership positions in higher education, female leaders have found different ways to mitigate these obstacles because

these women were also willing to improve their skills and have flexible work modes (T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013).

2.6.2 Leadership practices.

Many researchers have identified the significant role that the leaders play in effectively dealing with resistance to change (Fullan, 2003; Ryerson University, 2011; World Health Organization, 2005). Fullan (2011) suggested that in educational disciplines, in order to effect change, leaders need to use and interpret multiple sources of information, evaluate alternative points of view, and develop a reasoned and defensive argument for future practice. A better understanding of staff and colleague lives, personal or work related issues, helped a leader better deal with situations that may arise in the workplace (Eacott, 2011). In other words, change processes involved everyone in the organisation. Leaders needed to inspire positive attitudes to change by showing enthusiasm, hope and energy to keep the process moving forward and communicate with other organisations as "combination of individuals and societal agencies that makes a difference" (Fullan, 1993, p. 41). In this context, leaders work on strategies of enhancing knowledge, consolidating their values and ethics, making changes in coherent way, and fostering their relationships with colleagues (Fullan, 2003, p. 93).

Outstanding leaders possess knowledge of leadership and demonstrate their abilities by putting their knowledge into practice and being effective role models. "Knowledge refer to leaders' understanding of a concept". "Skill refers to leaders' effectiveness in operationalizing the knowledge they possess and their strategic ability to effectively act on this information" (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017, p. 100). A programme for the Center for Organizational Development and Leadership (ODL) at Rutgers University focused on critical leadership competencies, as they believed that these competencies were necessary to confront most of challenges facing higher education leaders. These

interlinked leadership competencies included knowledge, the skills necessary for collaborating effectively in complex contexts, and successfully dealing with challenges inside and outside their organisations.

Given that leadership competencies are both specific and trainable. It is surprising that there are not more highly specific training programmes for female leaders, as it is setting people up to fail if you do not give them such training.

Using competencies to obtain leadership positions.

Competencies are defined as traits, behaviours, skills, values and knowledge (Spendlove, 2007). Emerging leaders obtain benefits from leadership competencies, such as learning through the lived experiences of seasoned colleagues; learning a range of effective behaviours; and achieving self-development by understanding and developing suitable leadership competencies.

In Australia, Callan (2001) conducted research on the vocational education and training (VET) sector, examining the characteristics and behaviours of managers and leaders. The study included a total of 396 managers from all states and territories, as well as focus group meetings with 30 senior and other VET managers. The management and leadership capability framework which emerged consisted of nine core capabilities as follows (Callan, 2001, p. 5). They can be grouped as followed:

(1) Knowledge and qualification:

- Personal development and mastery.

(2) Skills:

- Develops and manages resources,
- Interpersonal relationships, and
- Business and entrepreneurial skills.

(3) Vision:

- Corporate vision and direction,
- Change leadership, and
- Focuses strategically.

(4) Goal settings:

- Achieves outcomes.

(5) Managing people:

- Develops and empowers people.

While Callan (2001) was not specifically talking about women leaders, the competencies he proposed are relevant to transformational leadership styles, recently adopted by women leaders. As a number of researchers have noted, women tend to possess and employ transformational leadership styles (Chaluvadi, 2015; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). These models were proposed for closing the training gaps (Callan, 2001). The framework that I have developed, and that is outlined in Chapter Seven, references Callan's (2001) research and builds on his ideas by seeking to develop and empower women.

As this section has explored the characteristics required in higher education, we now turn to research that has been conducted in different contexts, to give a cross-culture understanding.

In the higher education context, Yang (2005) conducted research in China using guided interviews with the involvement of 10 Chinese MOE-directed (Ministry of Education) universities, that is universities authorised by MOE. Participants included 22 administrators divided into in three groups: six university leaders, 10 aspiring leaders and six retired university leaders. Four main leadership competencies were suggested, as follows:

(1) Knowledge:

- Personal knowledge and skills.

(2) Skills:

- Administrative competence.

(5) Managing people:

- Social responsibility competency.

(3) Disposition:

- Personality and disposition.

The Staff Leadership Development Team at University of Michigan expanded on Yang's (2005) research on competencies. They proposed eight competencies that applied to executive leaders at the University of Michigan in the United States (University of Michigan, 2010, pp. 4-30).

(1) Networking and Skills:

- Building relationships and interpersonal skills, and
- Communication

(2) Vision and skills:

- Creative problem solving/strategic thinking, and
- Flexibility/adaptability to change.

(3) Disposition and Managing people:

- Development of self and others.

(4) Goal settings:

- Leadership/achievement orientation.

(5) Leadership competencies:

- Quality service definition, and
- Advancing the mission.

Compared to the research of Callan (2001) and Yang (2005), the research from the University of Michigan explored more deeply on the competencies required by executive leaders. For example, they discovered two new competencies (quality service definition; advancing the mission) which are closely related to the roles of top leaders who are responsible for the quality of their institution, as well as driving their institution's mission.

By utilising the above competencies from the research of Callan (2001), Yang (2005) and the University of Michigan (University of Michigan, 2010), leaders were generally believed to be enhancing their organisations. Even though these competencies are for both male and female leaders, they are necessary for women to develop the critical competencies required for senior leadership positions and then to apply these strategies to daily situations (Hollenbeck, Peters, & Zinkhan, 2006, p. 402). Despite the research on leadership competencies of Callan (2001), Yang (2005) and the University of Michigan (University of Michigan, 2010) occurring in different context and in different countries, they dealt with similar situation of the under-representation of female executives. Yet, there is no comparable study currently available in Vietnamese context. Thus, the competencies that they identified are integrated in Chapter Seven – in the results of my study – as leadership development needs that build up female leaders' leadership competencies by crossing eastern and western contexts.

2.7 Summary of Chapter Two

Women have assumed leadership positions since early in the development of higher education. Women began to weave themselves into higher education, promote their career development and take places in higher education leadership particularly since the Women's Rights Movement of the early 20th century.

Women now occupy leadership roles in many areas and disciplines, such as government, engineering, law, business and education. However, although the number of women obtaining undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees outnumbers that of men, the number of women in leadership roles remain very low. In higher education, the number of women in executive positions is still very low compared to their male counterparts. The literature identified different factors contributing to this phenomenon. These include: gender prejudice, biased promotion processes and a lack of support. In addition, the career path of women becomes harder as they attempt to move up to executive levels. Women are less likely to self-advocate and promote themselves (Mai, 2007). They are often afraid of taking risks when entering a higher level competitive environment, where men are traditionally considered the better leader, with this determined mostly by other men. I call this journey the labyrinth – a difficult and complex passage for female leaders through a maze of obstacles to reach the top positions. The complexity of these roles and the demands of higher education in a competitive global environment means change is always occurring. Leadership effectiveness is most sought after for executive positions in tertiary education. There is not enough research about leadership in higher education in the context of Marxism-Leninism communist ideology, and western perspectives in the transformative leadership of empowerment in Vietnam and Australia, and there is no research about the intrinsic factors that are believed to contribute extensively to female executives' career paths.

This study explores the barriers and facilitators women have to negotiate within the labyrinth, and the imperatives of leadership as one of the keys for women when obtaining and maintaining high level executive roles. The emerging factors contributing to the career development of my research population of female executives were mainly intrinsic factors, which derived more from their personal and professional leadership

capabilities. I will return to this point later in this study. One of the things about operating at the executive level, as reported by my participants - and the literature confirms this - is that by the end of their journeys, these women report the development of a number of leadership competencies. Yet it is also possible that intrinsic factors are highly relevant to their success and career progression.

To be effective leaders, they not only need to understand the change process well, but also produce fundamental changes in their organisation's vision, mission and strategy. To be successful leaders, they must facilitate necessary changes and help meet organisational goals (Nadler & Shaw, 1995). Thus, I have integrated the research covered in this chapter with the results of my study to develop a framework for female higher education leaders. The next chapter, Chapter Three, will share the research methodology used for this study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This methodology chapter includes the following sections (1) the research design, (2) the participants in the study, (3) the data collection instruments, and (4) the data analysis procedures used in my study of women leaders in higher education in Vietnam and Australia.

3.2 Mixed-Methods Research Design

Mixed-Methods research design involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative method in one study. Mixed-Methods research is defined as "the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). It focuses on collecting, analysing, mixing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a better understanding of a research problem (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005).

Mixed-Methods is used when "one type of research [qualitative or quantitative] is not enough to address the research problem or answer the research questions" and when "[m]ore data are needed to extend, elaborate on, or explain the first database" (Creswell, 2014, p. 537). Using Mixed-Methods helps to overcome the "shortcomings and bias" in one type of research, and has the "potential to be expansive" (O'Leary, 2017, p. 164). In addition, using Mixed-Methods can produce more accurate, comprehensive and richer data that provides greater insights (Neuman, 2011).

Data analysis in Mixed-Methods research, which is used as a research design in various fields of study, such as health, social and education, is known as triangulation (O'Leary, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Triangulation helps not only to understand phenomena but also to reinforce the validity of a study (Viadero, 2005). Mixed-Methods approaches that are "designed under a triangulation banner, by design, gather various types of data to look for corroboration that improves the overall robustness and credibility of a study" (O'Leary, 2017, p. 169) (see Figure 3.). Thus, triangulation strengthens and contributes to the validity of the data, and increases confidence in my study's findings.

Yet Mixed-Methods approaches do have some limitations. It can be difficult for researchers to decide when to proceed with sequential design. There are often discrepancies between different types of data. It requires researchers to have specific skills, and the process and procedures may be time-consuming (Creswell, 2014; O'Leary, 2017), particularly if the study is conducted in two countries, such as Vietnam and Australia. However, to counter such weaknesses, this project has obtained rich data from the two countries. By combining the qualitative and quantitative data, I was able to obtain more logical, comprehensive, insightful and inclusive results rather than by using one approach alone (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989, p. 10).

Mixed-Methods research design: Principles and practice.

The complementary parallel Mixed-Methods design is known as the triangulation Mixed-Methods design, which involves the researcher collecting and analysing "both quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of the research process and then merg[ing] the two sets of results into an overall interpretation" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 77). Quantitative data results and qualitative data results are independent; they do not depend on each other, and are equal in importance when addressing the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this study, the data was triangulated during

the interpretation phase. The data sets were merged during the interpretation phase, providing an opportunity to clarify, elaborate and enhance the findings of the survey phase with the findings of interview phase. The different aspects of the two phases complemented each other, so that they provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and the results of the correlation (Greene et al., 1989). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to obtain triangulated results with in the complementary parallel design (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). I implemented the two major phases to address barriers and facilitators that the executive university female leaders in my study faced, and to explain how they are able to progress to where they were. These phases are illustrated in Figure 3..

Mixed-Methods enabled me to operate from “a dominant worldview” (McMillan & Wergin, 2010), while the subject of my study required me to deal with the complexity of real-life experience. In addition, my research context was cross-cultural in which comparisons were made between a developing and a developed country. Furthermore, asking female executives to participate in this research was in itself limited due to their small number in Vietnam and Australia, as noted in the literature review. Other practical limitations, such as the low number of females in executive leadership, is that quantitative methods were required in order to obtain a larger population and ensure a representative sample across the regions and institutions under investigation. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, were used to obtain additional specific information from this wider population.

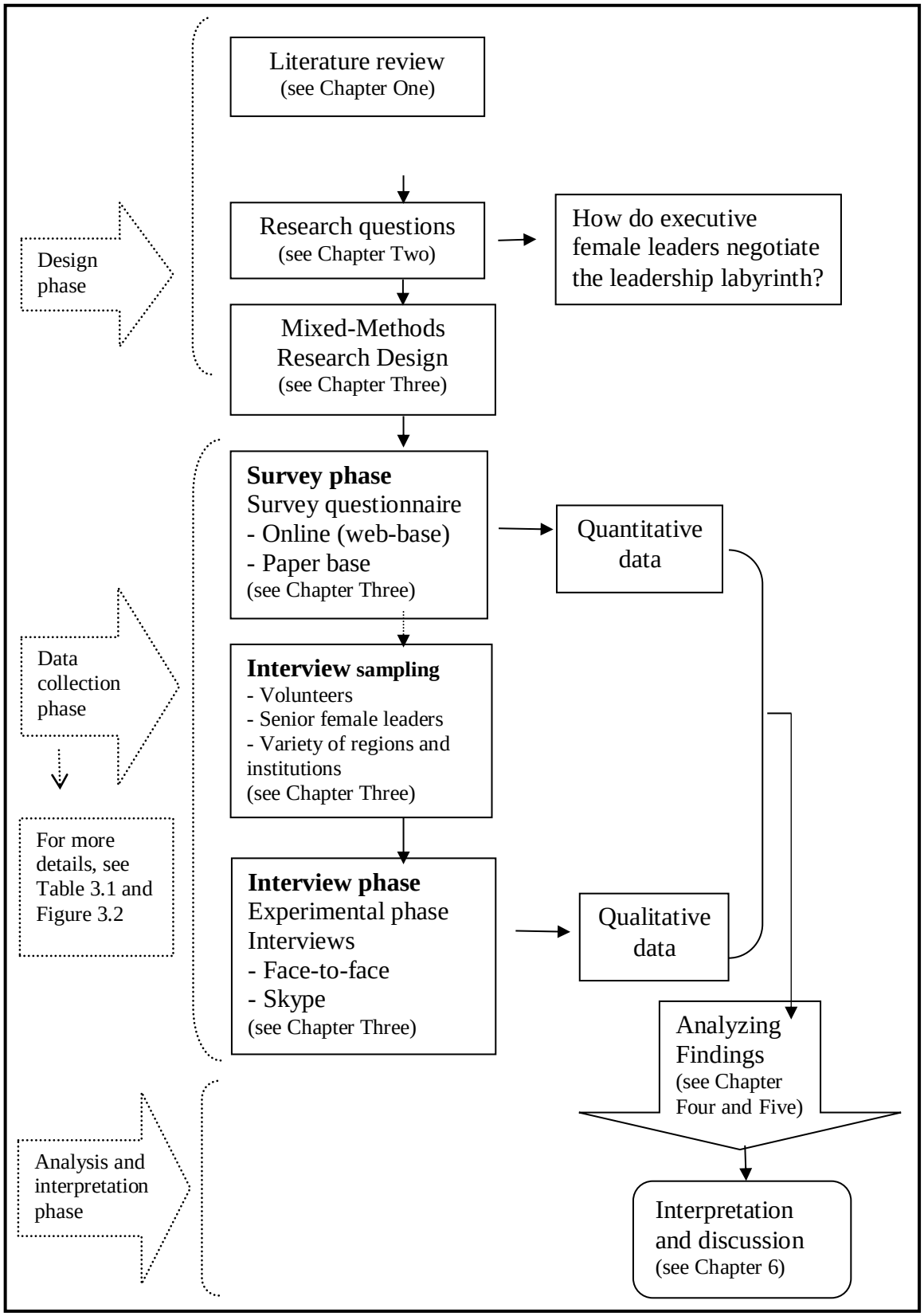

Figure 3.1: Complementary model of Mixed-Methods (Two phases Mixed-Methods)

In this study, my Mixed-Methods design had two essential phases. The first phase was a survey phase with an online survey questionnaire. An online survey, which offers "terrific flexibility in how questions can be displayed" (O'Leary, 2017, p. 237), is also known as an electronic survey or internet survey. My preference was to use an online survey method because it is easily accessible via computer (Creswell, 2014, p. 386), simplifies the process for "constructing and distributing the questionnaire" (McMillan, 2012, p. 162), is generally cheaper with low costs associated with delivery, and its responses can be automatically entered into a database.

However, it was not possible to conduct the online survey with all participants because of the lack of web penetration and poor internet access in certain higher education institutions in Vietnam. Therefore, a printed version of the online survey (in Vietnamese) was used as a back-up method of gathering data, while the online version was used wherever feasible. I sent the link of the online survey by email to those who had internet access, and delivered hard copy surveys to those who did not. In total, 27 paper-based questionnaires and 213 online survey questionnaires were completed by participants.

The second phase involved a personal interview, "a form of data collection in which questions are asked orally and subjects' responses are recorded, either verbatim or summarized", which provided "greater depth and richness of information" (McMillan, 2012, p. 167) and was "structured enough to generate standardized, quantifiable data" (O'Leary, 2017, p. 240). I used face-to-face interviews, which enabled me to "observe nonverbal responses and behaviours, which may indicate the need for further questioning to clarify verbal answers" (McMillan, 2012, p. 167). In addition, the live nature of the interviews helped to "reduce the number of 'no answers' or neutral responses, and … [allowed me to] press for more complete answers when necessary" (McMillan, 2012, p. 167). However, it was impossible to do face-to-face interviews with all participants due

to their geographical location or busy schedules in certain institutions in both Vietnam and Australia. Therefore, the majority was conducted face-to-face (18 participants), while two in each country were conducted online using Skype, the free teleconference service used by many educators around the world for research when face-to-face interviews are not possible.

The description of the data collection phase is illustrated in Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1. Figure 3..2 provides further details on how interview participants were selected form survey participants.

Table 3.1

Survey and interview research phases and data collection

Characteristics	**Survey questionnaire phase**	**Interview phase**
Data collection sequence:	Implemented first	Implemented after survey questionnaire phase to select appropriate participants
Research location:	In Vietnam: • Universities in the North • Universities in the South • Universities in the Central • Universities in the Highland area In Australia: • Universities in New South Wales	
Data collection methods:	Vietnam (250): • Online survey questionnaire (213) • Paper-based questionnaire (27) Australia (130): • Online survey questionnaire (130)	Vietnam (12): • Face-to-face interview (10) • Skype interview (2) Australia (12): • Face-to-face interview (10) • Skype interview (2)
Time frame:	Vietnam: - January 2016 – April 2016 Australia: - July 2016 – September 2016	Vietnam: - May 2016 – June 2016 Australia: - October 2016 – January 2017

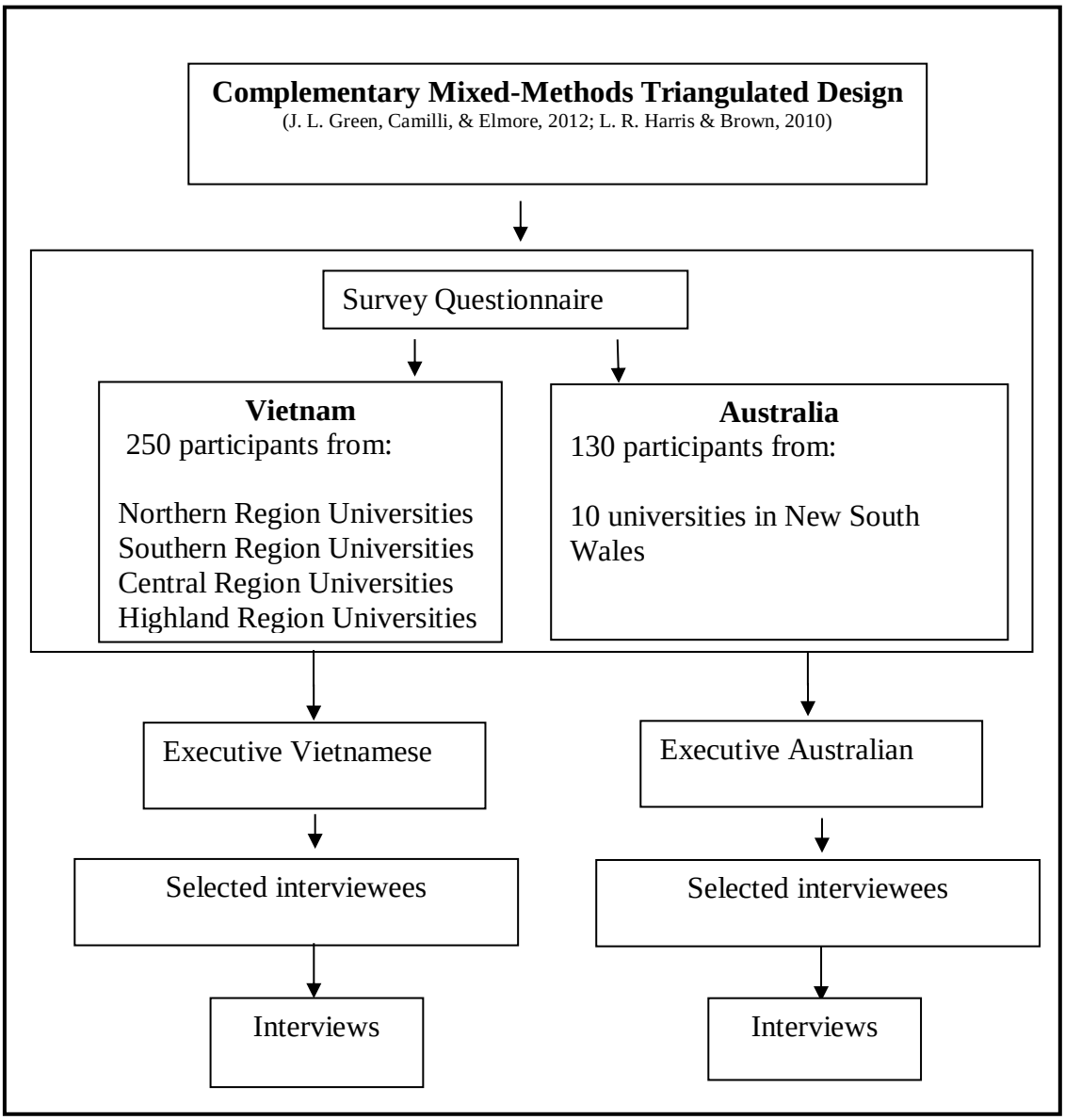

Figure 3.2: Procedures of data collection

3.3 Population

The participants or sample of a study ideally needs to be representative of the entire population. A population is "a group of individuals who have the same characteristics" (Creswell, 2014, p. 140). From the population, the sample frame or a target population is identified. The researcher then selects participants or a sample within the sampling frame for study (Creswell, 2014). The population of this study consisted of executive university female leaders in Vietnam and Australia.

Regarding the sample frame, universities from various regions in Vietnam and universities in New South Wales, Australia were involved in both the survey questionnaire phase and the interview phase. Participants from these institutions were selected through different approaches, including convenience and purposeful techniques. In order to obtain more specific samples, I chose participants who met specific criteria (see section "participant selection"). The sampling procedure and sampling description are shown in Figure 3.2 and Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Description of population and sampling

	Survey questionnaire phase	Interview phase
Population ↓	**Executive** university female leaders in Vietnam and Australia	**Senior-executive** university female leaders in Vietnam and Australia
Sample frame ↓	**Vietnam** Universities in regions: North, South, Central, Highland **Australia** Universities in New South Wales	**Vietnam** Universities in regions: North, South, Central, Highland **Australia** Universities in New South Wales
Sampling technique ↓	Purposeful sampling Convenience sampling	Purposeful sampling
Sample/participants	**Vietnam** 250 executive female leaders **Australia** 130 executive female leaders	**Vietnam** 12 senior female leaders **Australia** 12 senior female leaders

3.3.1 Participant selection for the survey phase.

Participants were selected representatively from these higher education institutions. At the time of writing, there were 170 public universities in Vietnam (Thuy, 2017) (and 39 public universities in Australia (EduAdvisor, 2017). In the Vietnamese context, I used purposeful and convenience sampling. To maximise the feasibility of this study, I focused on regions of Vietnam where my existing professional relationships were likely to increase my success in securing permission to conduct my research; in addition to official support, a reference letter from my institution was issued. In the Australian

context, purposeful and convenient sampling was also used for the survey phase. I selected New South Wales because it is the most populous state, and therefore has the largest number of higher education institutions (see Figure 3.3). All universities' names were kept confidential.

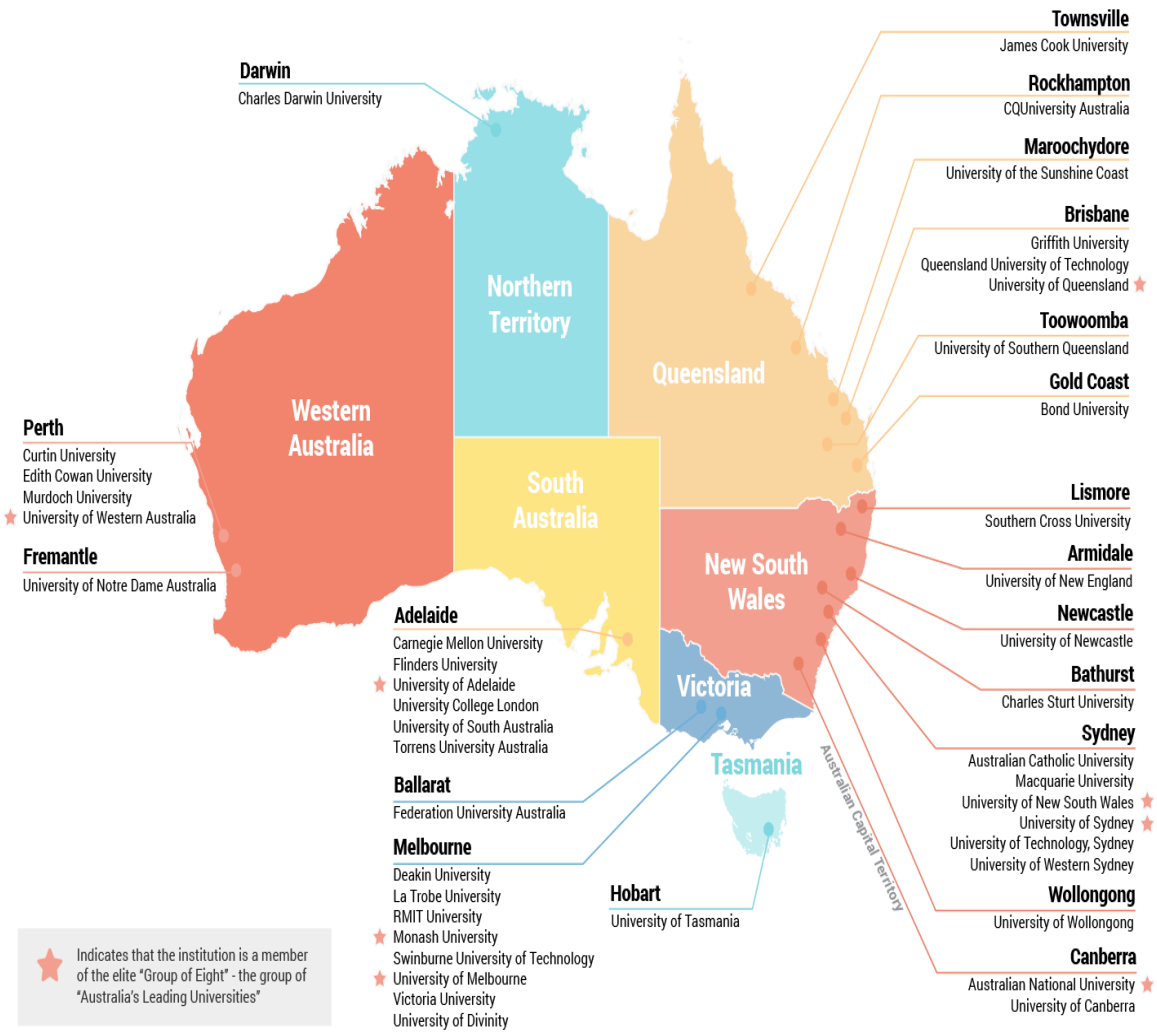

Figure 3.3: Australian Universities from which universities in New South Wales were selected. Source: EduAdvisor, (2017)

Using purposeful and convenient sampling, my research plan was firstly to select representative universities from the four main regions of Vietnam (North, South, Highland, and Central) and 10 universities in New South Wales (see Figure 3.). Potential survey participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- Participants' university websites were accessible: from the accessible websites, I identified those who were in executive positions and their contact email address;
- Participants were a representative sample of different universities and different locations:

I selected participants from different universities which were representative of a range of locations.

From these criteria, I compiled a list of the institutions and female executive leaders that met these criteria and contacted potential participants.

Regarding the contact process in the Vietnamese context, if I knew any female executive leaders personally, I sent an email inviting them to participate in my study. I also contacted the Organisation and Personnel Department (Human Resource Department) of each university using the introduction letter from my institution, requesting an introduction to any female leaders who I did not know. Through the Human Resource Department, these women would then receive an invitation via email to complete the survey questionnaire. If the Human Resource Departments were not able to assist, or if no response was received from them, I sent an email directly to the Vietnamese female leaders. The process was similar in the Australian context, but did not involve Human Resource Departments.

The potential participants of the targeted universities received the invitation email via their accessible email addresses, which included a survey link that participants could use to complete the survey. During this research phase, I collected survey data from 250 executive university female leaders from Vietnam and 130 executive university female leaders from Australia.

Aware of the potential impact of bias on the results of this study, by using personal contacts, this was monitored throughout the data collection and data analysis processes. Analysis of the data, however, showed that there was no significant difference between the survey and interview data based on the method of contact used.

3.3.2 Participant selection for the interview phase.

In order to recruit volunteer participants who were involved in the survey phase, I used purposeful sampling for the interview phase. To ensure representativeness of regions and to obtain participants at the highest levels of leadership, I conducted 24 interviews – 12 in each country – a number selected to keep my study manageable. Twelve interviews in each country was ideal and ensured that participants were matched for location and executive position. Furthermore, it had already been established that sample saturation would occur when the sample sized reach around 11 to 12 participants (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Latham, 2013). If I had conducted more interviews, there was a possibility that I would "begin hearing the same responses to [my] interview questions or seeing the same behaviours in observations; in which no new insights are forthcoming" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 101).

Twenty-four interview participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- They agreed to be interviewed: these participants volunteered their details at the end of the survey questionnaire;
- They needed to be in senior-executive leadership positions: I selected volunteer interviewees who were all senior leaders, such as Heads and Deputy Heads of universities in Vietnam, and Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, and Pro-Vice Chancellors of universities in Australia; and

- They were from various regions: these senior volunteer interviewees were from four different regions in Vietnam and different universities in Vietnam and Australia.

3.4 Instrument Development

An instrument is "a tool for measuring observing, or documenting quantitative data … the instrument may be test, questionnaire, tally sheet, log, observational checklist, and inventory or assessment instrument" (Creswell, 2008, p. 161). For this study, I conducted online questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The quantitative data was collected through the online and paper-based questionnaire and the qualitative data was obtained from face-to-face interviews. Both the survey questionnaire and the semi-structured interview protocol were designed specifically for this study, and involved reviewing the literature.

3.4.1 Online survey construction.

The survey instrument was a confidential and self-administered questionnaire. The questions were developed to target the research questions and, in the context of the literature review, to address specific areas. From this, I formulated the questions for the survey questionnaire. For instance:

- The domestic context for female executives was developed from standard demographic information, such as professional positions, age, qualification, career stage, family types, marital status and children. Demographic data helped me paint a more accurate picture of the successful female executive leaders I was trying to understand;
- Facilitators and difficulties were within contexts described in the literature (as discussed in Chapter Two, based on previous work in the field). Facilitators, which mainly derived from UNESCO, the U.N., and the Vietnamese and Australian Governments, were in the form of action plans which highlighted the commitment to

empower women around the world. Other facilitators, such as support and mentoring, were also identified in the research of Airini et al. (2011) and Harris et al. (2011). Regarding challenges, family responsibilities and child care were highlighted in the research of Binh et al. (2002) and Valentine (1995). In the workplace, the barriers identified were mainly those noted in the researches of Tessens et al. (2011), White and Web (2011), Nakhaie (2007) and Probert (2005); examples included lack of professional development, lack of support, excessive workload, bias in the promotion process and the glass ceiling. Fear of failure was also explored based on the research of (O'Connor, 2011); and

- Leadership ability, based on the work of Bass (1985), Burn (1978), Callan (2001), Cheung and Halpern (2010), Eacott (2011), Kirtman and Fullan (2016) and Yang (2005) explored several strategies, such as enhancing knowledge, consolidating one's work ethic, making changes in a coherent way, initiating and maintaining relationships, interpersonal relationships, and cooperation. Other research has identified the skills necessary to manage change (World Health Organization, 2005); leadership competencies (University of Michigan, 2010; Yang, 2005); traits, behaviours, skills, values and knowledge (Spendlove, 2007); characteristics of women leaders, such as aggression and ambition (Funnell & Dao, 2013); and styles of leadership, such as democratic, participative and collaborative styles (Eagly & Carly, 2007).

Further, certain areas that I investigated in the questionnaire came from my own experience as a female leader and from personal conversations with other female executives in the Vietnamese context. The survey allowed me to scope a wider audience relating to the barriers and opportunities for female leaders in higher education.

Based on these specific areas, the online questionnaire, which was implemented using Survey Monkey, consisted of seven sections. Each section was designed to target

specific research questions. For example, the literature review identified housework responsibilities, work pressure and gender bias as barriers to female leaders' career development. These barriers were incorporated as sub-scales in the more general scale of "barriers" to answer research question 1. The seven sections within the survey is illustrated in Table 3.3.

The survey instrument included a variety of question types including multiple-choice questions, Likert-scale questions and open-ended questions. The structured questions, which included multiple-choice and Likert-scale responses, were used in the first six sections as mentioned above. The response category "other" was also offered when appropriate. For the online survey, the progress bar was used to let participants know how much of the survey they had completed, while the filter questions at the end of the survey allowed participants to provide their contact details if they wanted to volunteer for a follow-up interview.

Multiple-choice questions are commonly used in surveys (Sue & Ritter, 2007). Selected-response or forced-choice items from which participants choose two or more options "enhance [the] consistency of response[s] across respondents", allowing data tabulation to be generally "straightforward"(Wiersma, 2000, p. 170).

Table 3.3

Sections within the survey questionnaire

Section No.	**Name**	**Description**	**Number of questions**	**Type of questions**	**Number of sub-scales**
1	Demographic	Providing a description of executive female leaders across universities.	9	close-ended with multiple choices	0
2	Barriers (Part A1)	Identifying significant barriers that influenced their career opportunities.	1 with 15 parts	Likert-type scale	15

3	Opportunities (Part A2)	Exploring the factors that have contributed to their leadership opportunities	1 with 14 parts	Likert-type scale	14
4	Leadership ability (Part B)	Investigating their perceptions regarding their own leadership abilities.	8	Closed-ended questions with multiple-choice. Some questions asked for single responses, while others required multiple answers	0
5	Strategies (Part C)	Reviewing how they empowered their staff	1 with 15 parts 3	Likert-type scale questions Closed-ended questions with multiple-choice	15
6	Assistance (Part D)	Reviewing how they empowered their staff	4	closed-ended questions with multiple-choice	0
7	Further information (Part E)	Regarding additional information not already covered above on the leadership abilities of female leaders	6	open-ended questions	0

Likert-scale questions are also commonly used in surveys due to their simplicity and reliability (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). “In a true Likert scale the statement includes a value or positive or negative direction, and the subject indicates agreement or disagreement with the statements. Likert-type rating scales, which have a different form, begin with a neutral statement, and the direction or gradation is provided in the response options” for example, strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree (McMillan, 2012, p. 157). I used a four-point Likert scale removing the central opinion “undecided” because the participants would “give [their] opinion if the neutral option were not there”(Anderson & Bourke, 2000, p. 94). The four-point Likert scale reduced the number of variables and increased the variability of the survey (Anderson & Bourke, 2000). Furthermore, the absence of a neutral response or an undecided option would help the researcher interpret data more effectively (Anderson & Bourke, 2000).

The unstructured questions or open-ended questions in section seven, as mentioned above, allowed participants to expand upon additional facilitators and barriers

to leadership experienced by women in executive positions. Using open-ended questions offer more opportunities for participants to provide alternative responses and deeper explanations.

The filter questions at the end of the survey also helped me to collect the personal details of participants who had agreed to be interviewed. From this information, I selected and contacted the participants who satisfied the interview criteria mentioned in the section: participants' selection for the interview phase.

3.4.2 Interview development.

Interviewing brought a variety of opportunities to engage with interviewees. Interviews allow researchers to "[built] rapport without ingratiating [researchers] to the point of becoming sycophantic; [left] doors open without becoming a nuisance" (O'Leary, 2017, p. 241). The interviews were "flexible enough to allow [researchers] to explore tangents; [and] are structured enough to generate standardized, quantifiable data" (O'Leary, 2010, p. 196). Interviewing provides a means by which researchers can undertake a "manipulation check", and "perhaps as a way to [directly] discuss the issues under investigation and tap into participants' perspectives and meanings will help avoid some potential problems with the experimental method" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, pp. 18-19). I designed the interview protocol with the purpose of gaining an understanding of the negotiation of the leadership labyrinth from the perspective of executive female leaders.

In this interview phase, I used semi-structured interviews in which "the respondent is asked a series of pre-established questions, with pre-set response categories" (Punch, 2014, p. 184); "the question is open-ended yet specific in intent, allowing individual responses" (McMillan, 2012, p. 168) and "allows the participant to create the options for responding" (Anderson & Bourke, 2000; Creswell, 2014, p. 216).

The main interview method I used was one-on-one interviews, known also as face-to-face interviews. This is "a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time" (Creswell, 2014, p. 217). Although face-to-face interviews are time-consuming and not cost-effective, "the advantage of being able to probe and observe nonverbal communication is invaluable" (McMillan, 2012, p. 170). As previously noted, I also used Skype to conduct interviews with two Vietnamese and two Australian participants as face-to-face interviews were not possible due to their busy schedules.

The interview phase of the study was developed within the context of the literature review, as discussed in Chapter Two and based on my research questions. It had a deeper focus on certain factors, such as leadership abilities, barriers and favourable conditions. Interviews also enabled the female executives to share additional information regarding their leadership journey that had not already been covered in the survey phase. The interview protocol included a heading table including: date, time, name of interviewer and interviewee, years of experience, and current position of interviewee. Eleven open-ended questions were designed for this study. The interview protocol were also translated into Vietnamese to ensure that Vietnamese participants who were not proficient in English were able to understand the interview questions. The translation process used the same "back translation" techniques as described in the survey translation section. The final version of the interview protocol was formally field tested by two international colleagues.

3.5 Data Collection

Prior to data collection, I obtained ethics approval to conduct field research from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Newcastle. The ethics approval number was H-2015-0453 and the date of the initial approval was 21st

December, 2015. The approved information statements and consent forms used in this study were sent to potential participants.

3.5.1 Quantitative data collection: survey.

Online questionnaire surveys were offered to executive university female leaders in Vietnam and Australia to understand how female leaders have negotiated the labyrinth to obtain leadership positions. The online survey, which I designed, was used to ask female leaders for their opinions regarding what they had done to move up the career ladder. Using online surveys allowed me to not only to gather sufficient and broad data across the two universities, but also to collect the contact details of respondents who could potentially participate in the interviews. Respondents' details remained confidential at all times.

The online survey, which was conducted first, was distributed by email to the selected Vietnamese and Australian participants across different regions and universities during a specific period of time (see Table 3.1). Survey participants were selected via the criteria mentioned above, and their email addresses were available on the university websites. In the Vietnamese context, in some cases, female leaders' email addresses were provided by their respective Human Resource Departments which manage staff information.

I used the website provider, Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com.au), to deliver the online surveys. Web-based surveys support variety types of questions with easy programming (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). A professional version of Survey Monkey was used, which offered a variety of design features and options for data collection. To assure that all data from participants would be kept private and confidential, I created a password to access, send and retrieve the survey data. Participants could also decide not to participate in the survey. For example, on the first page of the

survey, after the consent form, participants could decide whether to participate in the survey or not by selecting “agree” of “disagree”. The survey was terminated and logged out if they did not agree to take part.

In Vietnam, for those who could not access the internet, I delivered a paper-based version of the questionnaire. The Vietnamese participants used the reply-paid envelopes provided to return the questionnaires upon completion. For those who could not send the questionnaire by post, I came to their institutions to collect the questionnaire in person. The data was then manually entered from the questionnaire into the Microsoft Excel file generated within Survey Monkey.

Face validity.

The online surveys conducted with female executive leaders were accessed via a link provided in the invitation email. The surveys were made available in English to Australian participants and in both Vietnamese and English to Vietnamese participants. This online survey was first designed in English and then translated into Vietnamese, as the majority of the Vietnamese participants were not proficient in the English language. This translation process is called back translation (Douglas & Craig, 2007) or double translation. English language teachers from Vietnam, currently studying in Australia, translated the original online surveys version into Vietnamese, which was then translated back into English; together we double-checked the survey to confirm that the items had the same meaning in both languages and to ensure the face validity of the study. Face validity “is evaluated by a group of judges, sometimes experts, who read or look at a measuring technique and decide whether in their opinion it measures what its name suggests” (Judd, Smith, Kidder, & Kidder, 1991, p. 54). I chose these people to be involved in the translation process because they had the necessary language skills and were English teachers at academic institutions in Vietnam. Both Vietnamese and English

versions were tested. The informal field test, including the questions, and the survey format were reviewed by two international female colleagues who were in leadership positions to identify “misunderstandings, ambiguities, and useless or inadequate items” (Wiersma, 2000, p. 172) and to check for validity. After the review process, the final Vietnamese and English versions were made accessible online. All of the participants opted to complete the survey in their native language.

The validity of the research is enhanced by investing in instrument measures and its design (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Johnson and Christensen (2012) indicated that survey validity was based on “a judgment of the degree to which the evidence suggest that the items, tasks, or questions on your test represent the domain of interest” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 145) and need to have a peer review of the instrument content and design (Bryman, 2016). In this study, to enhance the research validity, face validity was checked by the above mentioned English teachers and two international female colleagues and proved to be consistent.

In terms of the actual measurement validity, a specific Cronbach’s alpha test was performed on the data on the basis that identified Cronbach’s alpha as “the preferred measure of internal-consistency reliability” (Judd et al., 1991, p. 52). The scales that show measurement validity (Bryman, 2016) were examined by the indicator of Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Three scales were developed, wherein a scale refers to “a set of items related to a single affect-target combination” (Anderson & Bourke, 2000) and “a composite measure of a concept, a measure composed of information derived from several questions or indicators” (De Vaus, 2002, p. 180). To create the three scales - barriers, opportunities and strategies - the responses in relative indicators were categorised based on the three scales. With multiple indicators, it helped to understand the complexity of the concept. For example, to measure barriers which I

saw as being complex in different contexts, I would ask about participants' family, work and gender contexts. These relative indicators provided a better measure of barriers than a single measured indicator (De Vaus, 2002, p. 180).

The three scales were then developed based on acceptable Cronbach's alpha scores (see Table 3.4). A score of .7 is considered acceptable, while .8 was reasonable (George & Mallery, 2003; Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Cronbach's alpha scores for the scale "barriers", "opportunities", and "strategies" were 0.855, 0.847 and 0.846, respectively. These results indicated that these scales were reliable. The sub-scales are described in the section of data analysis.

Table 3.4

Scales and Cronbach's alpha scores in the questionnaire

Scales	**Number of sub-scales**	**Cronbach's alpha**		
		Vietnam	**Australia**	**Vietnam and Australia**
Barriers	15	0.853	0.842	0.855
Opportunities	14	0.851	0.811	0.847
Strategies	15	0.872	0.730	0.846

3.5.2 Qualitative data collection: interview.

Data collection was conducted via the following process. I conducted the interviews in Vietnam and Australia at different periods of time. The data collection interviews were conducted in Vietnam in the first half of 2016, and then in Australia at the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017; 24 senior leader participants were contacted using their nominated contact details to arrange a suitable interview time. Each participant signed the interview consent form before commencing the face-to-face interview. Twenty face-to-face interviews were conducted at a time and in locations selected by the participants. The process and procedures of data collection across the two phases are presented above in Table 3.1 and Figure 3. .

For the four participants who were interviewed using Skype, interview consent forms were sent to participants via email prior to the interview. After receiving their signed interview consent form, the interviews were conducted in a computer lab using an individual Skype account. I assured participants of the anonymity of their data. Face-to-face interviews gave senior-executive leaders a chance to offer direct comments on their leadership journey.

The average time for each interview was between 30 to 45 minutes. The difference in the duration of interviews reflected the extent to which individuals expanded on their experiences or chose to give multiple examples or additional details in response to questions or prompts. All interviews were audio recorded with permission from the participants obtained via the consent form prior to beginning the interview. Field notes were also taken during each interview to assist in the recall of the conversation and record impressions of the interviewee. If I was asked during the interview not to include any comments in my written analysis, I would follow this request. After each interview, I used a research diary to summarise my thinking and reflect on each interview. All interview data, including print-outs, the research diary, field notes and transcripts were kept in a secure place, while a unique password was used to protect electronic data, such as audio files.

In the Vietnamese context, I transcribed Vietnamese interviews and then translated the Vietnamese transcription into English. In the Australian context, I used OutScribe Pty Ltd, a digital transcription service, to transcribe the interviews that were conducted in English. The process of transcribing and translating was anonymous and confidential. These interviews were coded and analysed for themes and content, and then integrated and complemented with the survey data for the final analysis. I also searched for quotes to explain any specific concepts that emerged from the study.

The interview data validation was based on the data collection procedure and instrument (Brenner, 2006), as well as the techniques used, such as member checking for format, meaning, translation and triangulation (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2012). The findings from the interviews were triangulated with the findings of the survey (Creswell, 2012). The triangulation process was conducted by complementing the results of both survey and interview phase analyses.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Quantitative data analysis.

For analysing quantitative data, I chose SPSS for several reasons. The first reason was its availability. SPSS is the most widely available statistical software for use in education research. The second reason is its accessible syntax, and the third reason is its comprehensiveness (Anderson & Bourke, 2000). The process of obtaining quantitative data for analysing is discussed below.

Online survey results were exported to Microsoft Excel from Survey Monkey to enable data analysis. Quantitative data compiled using Microsoft Excel was transferred to SPSS for data analysis. There were several steps involved in the data analysis. The first was the analysis of the descriptive data. In this step, frequencies and percentages were calculated to describe demographic information and leadership perceptions. In addition, means and standard deviations were used to measure tendency and variability, and female leaders' opinions of the three scales (barriers, opportunities and strategies). The next step involved factor analysis. For each of the scales, factor analysis was conducted, using Bartlett's test, Eigenvalues, correlation matrix, varimax for rotation, and unrotated factor solution to identify factor solution and loading.

Correlation coefficients and the significance of this relationship were measured. For example, Pearson correlation was used to assess the relationship between the sub-

scales of barriers and subscales of strategies. Moreover, a series of statistical analysis – including the independent sample *t t*est – was conducted to examine the differences between participant characteristics. *t* tests were conducted to identify whether or not there were significant differences between the barriers, opportunities and strategies in the Vietnamese and Australian contexts.

The results of the quantitative data analysis provided information about executive female leaders. The correlation analyses provided insights about the relationship between barriers and the leadership ability of participants. The correlation matrix was used to identify key factors. This information that emerged from the quantitative analysis was used to complement the qualitative analysis. The information also provided general themes for exploring and understanding the experiences of executive female leaders on ways to move upwards into leadership positions, and especially the strategies they used to negotiate the leadership labyrinth.

3.6.2 Qualitative data analysis.

Both manual coding and NVivo were used to analyse qualitative data. I firstly analysed the responses manually to establish an overview of the themes and categories, and then used the qualitative software package, NVivo (version 11), to facilitate analysis of the interview data. Using NVivo offered some benefits; for instance, it made data, such as interview transcripts and fields, more manageable. It also provided a way to visualise the data, and the relationship between categories, through the use of graphs. In addition, I found it was easy to manipulate the data because features of the software, such as visual graphics, nodes and memos, worked the way I worked.

I chose to use the transcription format for both Vietnamese and English transcriptions using Microsoft Office 2007, as provided by OutScribe Pty Ltd, for a number of reasons:

- NVivo accepts documents saved under .doc., and
- Auto-coding can be done using headings that are available in Microsoft Office.

In developing documents, I also ensured that the first few lines of the document encompassed detailed information about the interviewees, such as position, years of experience, and age. Such information was useful when I wanted to examine leadership ability from different perspectives based on demographic data.

Interviews were transcribed and the data was cleaned before importing into NVivo. The interview data was analysed based on an interpretive approach (Mason, 2002). The interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed for themes and content (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process enhanced the reliability of the research findings as well as the outcome and quality of the research. The use of qualitative data not only gave me full explanations of the survey data but also added supporting details to the survey data. Analysing the interview data gave me more in-depth information regarding participants' leadership abilities. For example, I used comparison diagrams to compare two cases, one Vietnamese and one Australian executive female leader, to identify similarities and differences in terms of the challenges they had confronted during their career development.

Both quantitative and qualitative data was triangulated after data analysis. The survey instrument was used to develop in-depth interview questions that were natural and triangulated with that of the survey data. In this research, natural triangulation was built in because the survey led to the development of the interview questions.

3.7 Methodological Limitations of the Research

The sample size of my research was not enough to generalise across all higher education institutions in Vietnam, Australia or other countries. However, the participants

in my study were female leaders employed at executive levels in universities. Female executives are an under-represented group in their workplaces, thus my population size was inherently limited. In addition, there was a similar study about female executives in America, but this used a smaller sample size of 36 females in executive positions (Chavez, 2011).

The survey questionnaire and the semi-structured interview protocol were formulated by reviewing the literature and my professional and personal experience. They were not piloted across a large population due to a limited time-line and cost restrictions. However, I brought my inside knowledge of Vietnamese higher education to the study; using the research methods employed, I was able to minimise my bias and to use my connections in Vietnam and Australia to review and pre-pilot the survey questionnaire and the semi-structured interview protocol.

3.8 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter has detailed the complementary Mixed-Methods approach and data analysis used for this study. The complementary Mixed-Methods design used to investigate the leadership ability of executive university female leaders was validated. The sampling procedure and selection of potential participants has also been described. The data collection methods for both the survey and interview phase were outlined in this chapter. Two main data collection methods were used to investigate how executive university female leaders negotiated the labyrinth: an online and paper survey questionnaire and interviews. These data collection methods were triangulated to answer the research questions (see Table 3.5.

Table 3.5

Specific questions in survey questionnaire and interview protocol answering the research questions

Research questions	**Survey questionnaire**	**Interview protocol**
1. To what extent do higher education female executive leaders in Australia and Vietnam perceive barriers and opportunities that have influenced their career's development?	• Demographic information (Question 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) • Part A1 (Question A1: barrier scale) • Part A2 (Question A2: opportunities scale) • Part E (Question E1, E2)	• Questions 1, 2, 3 • Question 9 • Question 10
2. In what ways do female executive leaders in higher education in Vietnam and Australia perceive that their knowledge, skills and dispositions have enabled them to be successful in leadership positions?	• Part C (Question C5, C6, C7: strategies scale) • Part E (Question E4, E5)	• Question 6 • Question 7
3. What are the perceptions of female higher education leaders in Vietnam and Australia about leadership styles, competencies that have enabled their success?	• Part B (Question B3, B4, B5, B6) • Part D (Question D3, D4) • Part E (Question E5)	• Question 5 • Question 6 • Question 7
4. What leadership strategies do female executive leaders in higher education in Australia and Vietnam need to do to develop and maintain their current career?	• Part C (Question C6, C7: strategies scale) • Part D (Question D3, D4) • Part E (Question E3, E5, E6)	• Question 4 • Question 6 • Question 7 • Question 11 • Question 8

With multiple data sources provided by the survey and interviews, measures of the research findings' reliability and validity were established. Analysis of the data collected from the two phases was also described. The findings from the interview phase complemented the findings from the survey phase. The data from both the survey and interviews provided a large pool of emerging themes for analysis and discussion in Chapters Four, Five and Six. The full questionnaire and the interview protocol are provided in Appendix B. In Chapters Four and Five, results from the analysis of the

quantitative and qualitative data will be presented; in Chapter Six, both quantitative and qualitative findings are discussed together in relation to my research questions.

Chapter Four

Data Results of Online Surveys:

Vietnamese and Australian Executive Leaders

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will report on the data obtained from the online survey during the first phase of the study in Vietnam and Australia. I will present the data analysis of female executive leaders across Vietnamese universities and Australian universities in New South Wales. The chapter begins with a description of the sample and demographics of the respondents, as well as the barriers and opportunities for women in executive positions, as perceived (or described) by these leaders. Following this, strategies that respondents used to achieve executive leadership positions and maintain their career trajectories will be presented. Finally, participants' survey responses to open-ended questions are described at the end of the chapter. To provide a clearer picture of the participants, their demographic information is described below.

4.2 Vietnamese and Australian Participants' Demographics

The total number of Vietnamese and Australian university leaders who completed the online survey was 250 and 130 respondents, respectively. These respondents shared the following professional and personal criteria.

4.2.1 Professional information.

The participants were all employed in executive leadership positions at Vietnamese or Australian universities, as shown in Table 4.1. Participants' roles ranged from Vice-Chancellor to Head of Department; despite the difference in position titles used between the two countries, all participants held executive roles at their respective institutions. The majority of both Vietnamese and Australian participants were in the

middle of the executive level. Those at the top levels of leadership, such as Vice-Chancellor and Head of University comprised the lowest proportion of participants in the study sample. The comparative levels are illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Comparative levels of position, which have different names

Viet Nam		**Australia**	
	n (%)		***n*** (%)
Head of University	1(0.4)	Vice-Chancellor	1 (0.8)
Deputy Head of University	6 (2.4)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor	3 (2.3)
Dean of Faculty	123 (49.2)	Pro Vice-Chancellor	6 (4.6)
		Dean/Executive Dean	30 (23.1)
		Head of School	28 (21.5)
Head of Office/Department	105 (42.0)	Head of Office/Department	21(16.2)
Director	15 (6.0)	Director	41 (31.5)
Total	250 (100.0)	Total	130 (100.0)

Regarding their qualifications, the majority (*n* = 204, 81.6%) of Vietnamese respondents held a master's degree, while only a minority (*n* = 46, 18.4%) had attained a doctoral degree. On the contrary, the majority (*n* = 102, 78.5%) of Australian respondents held a doctoral degree, while only a minority (*n* = 28, 21.5%) had obtained a master's degree.

The participants' age range, as shown in Table 4.2 (from "25 - under 30" to "70 - above 70"), is interesting to note. The Vietnamese respondents were represented across seven categories according to their age groups compared with nine for the Australian respondents. This may be explained in part by the difference in retirement age, which is typically earlier in Vietnam. The Vietnamese respondents in the age group "35 - under 40" were the most represented age group (*n* = 78, 31.2%), followed by the age group "40 - under 45" (*n* = 59, 23.6%). The least represented age groups were "25 - under 30" and "55 - under 60" (*n* = 2, 0.8% and *n* = 1, 0.4% respectively).

Table 4.2

The age group distribution of Vietnamese and Australian respondents

Age groups	Respondents		Stage of career					
			Early career		Mid-career		Late career	
	n (%)		*n* (%)		*n* (%)		*n* (%)	
	VN	AUS	VN	AUS	VN	AUS	VN	AUS
25 - under 30	2 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
30 - under 35	34 (13.6)	1 (0.8)	10 (4.0)	1 (0.8)	24 (9.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
35 - under 40	78 (31.2)	5 (3.8)	9 (3.6)	2 (1.5)	69 (27.6)	3 (2.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
40 - under 45	59 (23.6)	17 (13.1)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.8)	53 (21.2)	16 (12.3)	5 (2.0)	0 (0.0)
45 - under 50	36 (14.4)	18 (13.8)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.5)	17 (6.8)	15 (11.5)	19 (7.6)	1 (0.8)
50 - under 55	40 (16.0)	36 (27.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.8)	26 (20.0)	38 (15.2)	10 (7.7)
55 - under 60	1 (0.4)	35 (26.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (5.4)	1 (0.4)	28 (21.5)
60 - under 65	0 (0.0)	12 (9.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	12 (9.2)
65 - under 70	0 (0.0)	4 (3.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (3.1)
70 - over 70	0 (0.0)	2 (1.5)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.5)
Total	250 (100)	130 (100)	22 (8.8)	6 (4.6)	165 (66.0)	60 (46.1)	63 (25.2)	36 (27.7)

The Australian respondents in the age group “50 - under 55” were the most represented age group (*n* = 36, 27.7%), followed by the age group “55 - under 60” (*n* = 35, 26.9%). The lowest represented age groups were “30 - under 35” and “70 - over 70” (*n* = 1, 0.8% and *n* = 2, 1.5% respectively).

In general, the sample of Vietnamese participants’ age was positioned between the thirties and forties in the “mid-career” stage, and the distribution of Vietnamese participants’ “late career” was mostly “50 - under 55”, while the sample of Australian participants’ age was in the middle of fifties as in the “mid-career” stage. In general, the Vietnamese respondents tended to be women in their mid-30s and mid-40s, while the Australian respondents tended to be women in their mid-50s and mid-60s who had completed postgraduate qualifications and were employed at an executive level. Interestingly, in Australia, those who were in the age range “50 - under 55” were in the mid-career stage, while in Vietnam they were approaching retirement age.

Interestingly, age was not a factor influencing female executive leaders; they assumed these roles at both a relatively young age and older, as per my above comment.

4.2.2 Personal information.

Although the participants were executive leaders, they were still responsible for the primary care of their families. Results suggest a connection between their family structure and their professional development; in other words, their family structure had an influence on their professional achievement. This influence can be seen in their family structure, which was examined in term of family types, marital status, number of children, and children's age.

4.2.2.1 Family types.

The majority of Vietnamese participants indicated that they were from a "nuclear family" (n = 178, 71.2%). The lower proportion of Vietnamese respondents were from an "extended family" (n = 49, 49%), a "sibling household family" (n = 16, 6.4%) or a "single-parent family" (n = 7, 2.8%). The majority of Australian respondents were from a "nuclear family" (n = 95, 74.8%), with the lowest proportion identifying that they were from a "single-parent family" (n = 15, 11.8%), an "extended family" (n = 12, 9.4%), or a "sibling household family" (n = 5, 3.8%). Interestingly, the majority of both the Vietnamese and Australian participants lived in a nuclear family. Compared with their Australian counterparts, a greater number of Vietnamese participants lived in extended families with their parents or relatives.

4.2.2.2 Marital status.

The majority of Vietnamese respondents were married (n = 230, 92%); only 8% of them (n = 20) were divorced or separated, single, or widowed. Similarly, a great proportion of Vietnamese participants were also married (n = 84, 68.3%). However, the percentage of Australian participants who were "single but with partner" or "divorced or

separated" (*n* = 30, 24.4%) was triple that of their Vietnamese counterparts across the same categories.

4.2.2.3 Participants' children.

Whether or not the respondents identified as being busy at home depended on the number of children they had and their children's age. The majority of Vietnamese participants (*n* = 184, 74.2%) reported having two children, while the number of those who had no children was small (*n* = 11, 4.4%). Similarly, the majority of Australian participants (*n* = 59, 45.7%) had two children; however, in comparison with their Vietnamese counterparts, a greater proportion of the Australian participants (*n* = 30, 23.3%) had no children. Interestingly, Vietnamese participants reported having up to three children, compared to a maximum of six for Australian participants Within the Vietnamese sample, however, having three children was reported infrequently (*n* = 4, 1.6%). This may be explained in part by Vietnamese Government regulations that restrict Vietnamese governmental workers from having more than two children within each family.

In addition, as shown in Figure 4.1, the number of Vietnamese participants (*n* = 53, 21.2%) whose children were over 18 years of age was higher than that of Australian participants (*n* = 66, 50.7%). It is interesting that Vietnamese participants whose children were more than 18 years old reported that their children still lived with them. This is in contrast with their Australian counterparts, none of whom had children over the age of 18 still living at home.

Overall, the experience of getting married, having children and taking care of children were reported by most of the participants. This suggests increased responsibilities within their families, which are likely to have affected their work. These

potential barriers facing female leaders in both Vietnam and Australia are reported below in further detail.

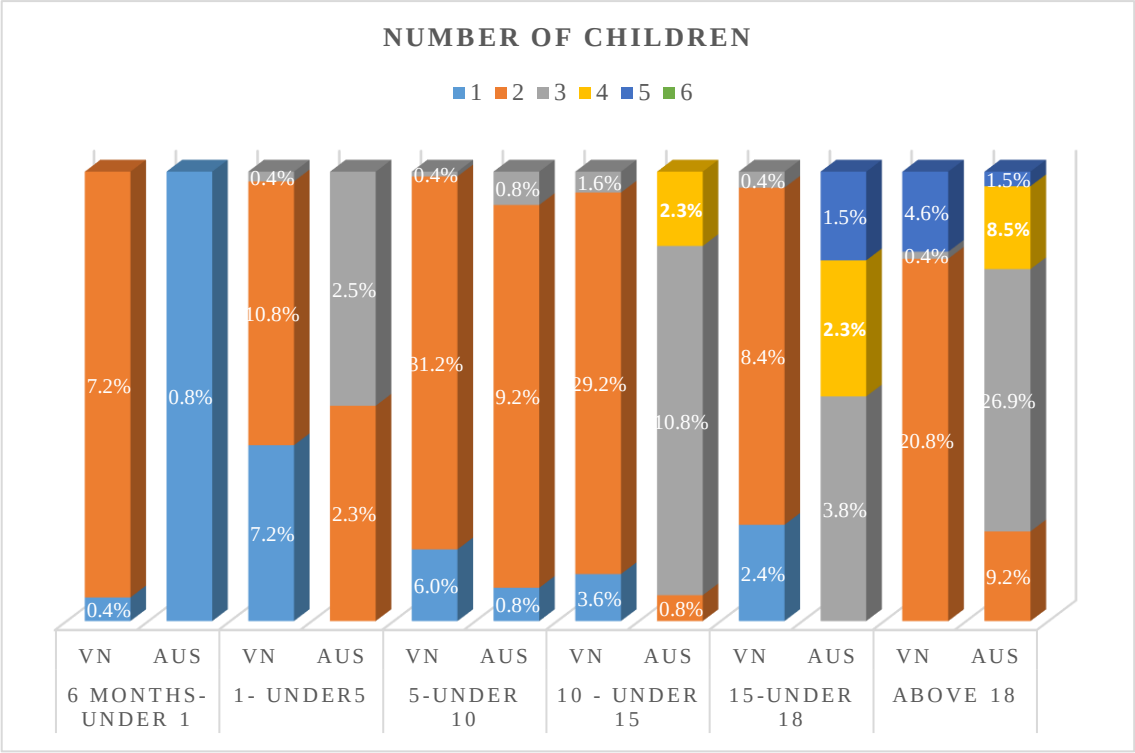

Figure 4.1: The distribution of number of children across age groups of Vietnamese and Australian participants

4.3 Barriers Confronting Vietnamese and Australian Female Executives

The barrier scale, which included 15 items, demonstrated high reliability. Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach's alpha = 0.857) was higher than the residual Cronbach's alpha if the item was deleted. However, if this item was deleted the Cronbach's alpha would not be significantly improved. Thus, the "household responsibilities" item was retained within the overall scale.

A variety of challenges, including potential personal and professional barriers, were identified by participants as having impacted on their professional development. These challenges came from within their communities, their workplaces and their

families (see Table 4.3 below). The most frequently cited barrier was "household responsibilities" (*M* = 2.70), followed by "work pressure" (*M* = 2.54), "leader selection process" (*M* = 2.32), "lack of salary incentives" (*M* = 2.28), "lack of work-related assistance" (*M* = 2.20) and "unequal job assignment" (*M* = 2.16). The least reported barriers included "religious discrimination" (*M* = 1.22), "sexual relationships with male or female colleagues" (*M* = 1.25) and "lack of physical beauty attributes as socio-culturally defined" (*M* = 1.54). When these challenges were examined for Vietnamese and Australian participants, a number of similarities were noted between the two groups. For both sets of participants, the same three barriers were most frequently reported: "household responsibilities", "work pressure", and "leader selection process". This is an indication that these barriers were perceived by participants to have had a strong impact on their career development. This was observed among Vietnamese and Australian participants whose least reported barriers were also the same: "religious discrimination", "sexual relationships with male or female colleagues" and "lack of physical beauty attributes as socio-culturally defined".

Conversely, Vietnamese and Australian participants also reported different barriers unique to their own contexts. Other barriers that were identified, although less frequently than those mentioned above, included: "lack of salary incentives", "lack of work-related assistance", "unequal job assignment" and "lack of motivation". These were reported more frequently in the Vietnamese than the Australian context, particularly in relation to "lack of salary incentives" (Vietnamese participants, *M* = 2.63; Australian participants, *M* = 1.62) and "lack of motivation" (Vietnamese participants, *M* = 2.18; Australian participants, *M* = 1.28).

Table 4.3

The distribution of barriers confronting Vietnamese and Australian executive leaders

	Total *N* = 380		Vietnam *n* = 250		Australia *n* = 130	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
• Household responsibilities	2.70	0.942	2.78	0.883	2.53	1.031
• Lack of salary incentives	2.28	0.974	2.63	0.865	1.62	0.819
• Work pressure	2.54	0.896	2.57	0.844	2.49	0.990
• Leader selection process	2.32	0.957	2.36	0.957	2.24	0.955
• Lack of work-related assistance	2.20	0.945	2.33	0.877	1.95	1.022
• Unequal job assignment	2.16	0.910	2.26	0.852	1.95	0.983
• Attitudes of male colleagues and gender stereotyping amongst them	1.97	0.907	1.90	0.888	2.12	0.929
• Gender discrimination and bias	1.93	0.911	1.88	0.921	2.04	0.884
• Lack of motivation	1.88	0.965	2.18	0.977	1.28	0.600
• Competitive relationship with male colleagues	1.83	0.888	1.96	0.902	1.76	0.925
• Competitive relationship with female colleagues	1.79	0.849	1.86	0.87	1.48	0.770
• Fear of failure	1.74	0.833	1.82	0.828	1.59	0.823
• Lack of physical beauty attributes as socio-culturally defined	1.54	0.732	1.70	0.767	1.22	0.530
• Sexual relationships with male or female colleagues	1.25	0.602	1.33	0.681	1.09	0.362
• Religious discrimination	1.22	0.546	1.32	0.635	1.02	0.196
Scale average	1.96	0.4975	2.06	0.486	1.76	0.842
Cronbach's alpha	0.855		0.853		0.842	

1 to 4 scale (1= Not influenced; 2= Nominally influenced; 3= Influenced; 4= Strongly influenced)

These results suggest that, even for women in executive leadership positions, their careers are not without their own particular challenges and difficulties. Participants indicated that the higher the positions they obtained, the more challenges they confronted.

4.3.1 Barrier sub-scales: factor analysis.

I used factor analysis so that similar items were grouped and sub-scales were created. These sub-scales were established based on my analysis of the correlation between items. Using Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Appendix C) where KMO = .840 > 0.5, p = .000), which allowed me to check the adequacy of the correlation matrix, it was

identified that there was significant correlation among variables (with a value of 1934.933, $p < .0001$). My analysis of the scree plot suggested a four-factor solution, which accounted for 61.01% of the total variance.

Correlations between the variables of the barrier scales are shown in the Rotated Component Matrix; full details of the component are contained in Appendix C. Within the barrier scale, this matrix initially presented a four factors solution after the varimax rotation. One factor, factor 4, which included the three items - "lack of physical beauty attributes as socio-culturally defined", "sexual relationships with male or female colleagues" and "religious discrimination" - were identified as having a low relationship to the scale (M = 1.54, M =1.25, and M =1.22, respectively) (Table 4.). Thus, these three items were eliminated from the scale concerning significant barriers influencing participants' ability to take advantage of their career opportunities.

Overall, potential personal or professional barriers were grouped into the following sub-scales:

(1) Workplace governance (five items):

- Attitudes of male colleagues and gender stereotyping amongst them
- Gender discrimination and bias,
- Competitive relationships with female colleagues,
- Leader selection process, and
- Competitive relationship with male colleagues.

(2) Lack of workplace support (five items):

- Work pressure,
- Lack of work-related assistance,
- Lack of salary incentives,
- Unequal job assignment, and

- Household responsibilities.

(3) Personal lack of incentives (leading to less extrinsic motivation) (two items)

- Lack of motivation, and
- Fear of failure.

The three sub-scales were reliable in the measurement of barriers (Cronbach's alpha = .831, .739, and .719, respectively) (full details of the reliability scale are contained in Appendix C. The high reliability score indicates that the internal consistency of the items within the three sub-scales was highly acceptable. The most frequently reported barrier was "workplace competition", then "lack of workplace support" and "personal lack of incentives". The highest mean for sub-scale 2 (lack of workplace support) indicated participants' agreement that "lack of workplace support" had the greatest influence on their career development.

4.3.2 Significant differences of barriers: independent sample *t* test.

The independent sample *t* test was conducted to compare the Mean of the Australian and Vietnamese participants. The results of this test were that most of the items' scale were higher/appeared more frequently in the Vietnamese group than they did in the Australian group. In other words, these challenges had more negative influences on the Vietnamese leaders than on the Australian leaders. Using an independent sample *t* test, significant differences in barrier overall scale, sub-scales, and scale items for Vietnamese and Australian participants were identified. The items of the independent sample *t* test was significant at $p < 0.005$ level, 2-tailed. Eight of the barrier items were statistically significant (see Table 4.4). There was a significant difference in four of the items within the three barrier sub-scales based on the independent sample *t* test.

Table 4.4

The barrier sub-scales and items significant

		Significant	Significant value		
			Sig. (2-tailed)	t	d
	Overall scale	✓	.000	5.736	375
Barriers	**Sub-scale 1: Workplace competition**				
	• Attitudes of male colleagues and gender stereotyping amongst them				
	• Gender discrimination and bias				
	• Competitive relationship with female colleagues				
	• Leader selection process				
	• Competitive relationship with male colleagues	✓	.000	5.158	378
	Sub-scale 2: Lack of workplace support	✓	.000	6.112	377
	• Work pressure				
	• Lack of work-related assistance	✓	.000	3.842	378
	• Lack of salary incentives	✓	.000	10.937	378
	• Unequal job assignment	✓	.000	3.271	378
	• Household responsibilities				
	Sub-scale 3: Personal lack of incentives	✓	.000	6.939	378
	• Lack of motivation	✓	.000	9.596	378
	• Fear of failure				

A significant difference was observed not only for individual items but also at the sub-scale level and the overall scale barrier. These items included:

Sub-scale 2: Lack of workplace support:

- Lack of work-related assistance,
- Lack of salary incentives, and
- Unequal job assignment.

Sub-scale 3: Personal lack of incentives:

- Lack of motivation.

A significant difference was noted at the individual level and overall scale barrier (but not at the sub-scale level) for only one of the items “competitive relationship with male colleagues”

"Lack of salary incentives" had a greater influence on the Vietnamese participants than the Australian group. There were more Vietnamese participants who were doing more than one job and working extra hours. "Lack of work-related assistance" was higher in Vietnamese participants. The Vietnamese group also had less support in their workplace. "Lack of motivation" seemed to affect the Vietnamese participants to a greater extent than their Australian counterparts. The female Australian leaders in this study reported greater self-motivation along with a more motivating work environment. Regarding the item "competitive relationship with male colleagues", although there was a significant difference between the Vietnamese and Australian participants, the mean score for both groups was low (M = 1.96 and M = 1.48, respectively).

In general, most of these barriers were perceived to have originated from within participants' respective institutions. These barriers were also revealed in their responses to the open-ended questions within the survey, as reported below.

4.3.3 The correlation between barriers items.

In order to establish how strongly two variables from my survey were related to each other, the bivariate Pearson correlation was used (see Table 4.5).

Regarding the process for appointing female leaders, "leader selection process" had a high correlation with "competitive relationship with male colleagues", although the correlation was lower for Australian participants (Pearson's r = .515, p=.000) than it was for their Vietnamese counterparts (Pearson's r = .624, =.000). This suggests that the process of appointing female leaders in both countries was perceived by participants as being more difficult for them than it was for their male counterparts. This influence was found to be more significant in Vietnam.

Table 4.5

The correlation between barrier items

Correlation of barriers items

		• Leader selection process	• Work pressure	• Unequal job assignment	• Fear of failure	• Competitive relationship with female colleagues	• Attitudes of male colleagues and gender stereotyping amongst them
• Competitive relationship with male colleagues	Pearson Correlation	.520**				.558**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				.000	
	N	380				379	
• Lack of work-related assistance	Pearson Correlation		.557**	.504**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000			
	N		380	380			
• Lack of salary incentives	Pearson Correlation			.438**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000			
	N			380			
• Unequal job assignment	Pearson Correlation		.505**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000				
	N		380				
• Lack of motivation	Pearson Correlation				.568**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000		
	N				380		
• Household responsibilities	Pearson Correlation		.337**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000				
	N		379				
• Gender discrimination and bias	Pearson Correlation						.736**
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.000
	N						380

"Lack of self-motivation" was also a factor which caused the under-representation of female leaders in leadership roles. "Lack of motivation" had a high correlation with "fear of failure" (see Table 4.5), although the correlation was observed to be higher for the Vietnamese participants (Pearson's r=.627, p= .000) than it was for the Australian participants (Pearson's r= .456, p= .000). It is more likely that the female

executives surveyed were hesitant about taking risks and moving into higher leadership positions. This tendency was found to be more significant in the Vietnamese context.

The other barrier was workload, as illustrated by the high correlation between "lack of work-related assistance" with "work pressure" and "unequal job assignment." These correlations were found to be higher in the Australian context (Pearson's r = .624; .561, p= .000) than in the Vietnamese context (Pearson's r =.515; .436, p= .000). As executive leaders, both Vietnamese and Australian respondents faced a variety of work commitments, which they perceived to be overwhelming. This overload was identified as more prevalent in the Australian context.

"Lack of salary incentives" had a modest correlation with "unequal job assignment". This correlation was stronger in the Vietnamese context (Pearson's r = .455, p = .000) than in the Australian context (Pearson's r = .350, p = .000). "Lack of salary incentives" also had a modest correlation with "lack of motivation" (Pearson's r = .355, p = .000). However, this correlation was very weak in both the Vietnamese and Australian groups. In other words, Vietnamese respondents were more concerned about salary incentives than their Australian counterparts, indicating that financial burden may pose a barrier to Vietnamese respondents' interest in advancing their educational careers.

There was a strong correlation between "gender discrimination and bias" and "attitudes of male colleagues and gender stereotyping amongst them". This correlation was also found to be high in both Vietnamese (Pearson's r = .682, p= .000) and Australian participants, but more so in the Australian context (Pearson's r = .835, p= .000). Interestingly, even though the culture in Australia is not influenced by Confucianism as it is in Vietnam, Australian participants also reported biased attitudes from their male counterparts.

It is also worth noting that "household responsibilities" did not have significantly high correlation with any other barriers. There was only a modest correlation with "work pressure". This correlation was observed similarly for both Australian (Pearson's r = .353, p= .000) and Vietnamese participants (Pearson's r = .321, p= .000). In general, both Vietnamese and Australian participants found family commitments to be a challenge that somewhat impacted their career development. In addition, household responsibilities permeated the entire set of responses. It stands out on its own; it did not match significantly with any of the other barriers and was reported by every participant in the study, regardless of their level of leadership.

4.4 Favourable Conditions Supporting Vietnamese and Australian Respondents

The scale measuring respondents' opportunities included 14 items. These scales are reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.847) (see Table 4.6). The scale "supportive network of family" had Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach's alpha = 0.854) higher than the general Cronbach's alpha if the item was deleted. However, if the scale "supportive network of family" was deleted, little would be gained. Thus, the scale "supportive network of family" was still considered to be an item for measuring opportunities.

Different conditions were cited as being favourable to the career development of both Vietnamese and Australian participants, as illustrated in Table 4.6. The opportunities cited most frequently by participants were "good leadership skills" (M = 3.35), "personal leadership experience" (M = 3.23) and "upgrade qualifications" (M = 3.18). Although "network of colleagues in leadership roles" (M = 2.91) and "professional career network" (M = 2.78) were cited less frequently than the first group, they were still considered factors that increased the opportunities of participants. The opportunities perceived to have the least influence were "support from other male leaders" (M = 2.50) and "support

from other female leaders" (*M* = 2.48), "parents' support" (*M* = 2.45) and "participation in self-development programmes" (*M* = 2.43).

It is interesting to note that the top three facilitators, as cited the most frequently - "good leadership skills", "personal leadership experience" and "upgrade qualifications" - were reported by both Vietnamese and Australian participants. In addition, support from others including family, friends and other male and female leaders were not likely to be factors supporting participants' career progress. This is because these factors were low on the scale.

There were several opportunities that were significantly different between the Vietnamese and Australian participants. The first of these was "workplace policies/practices", which was reported more frequently by Vietnamese respondents (*M* = 3.03) than their Australian counterparts (*M* = 2.16). This may be explained by the factor, "participation in self-development programmes", which was low on the scale in both the Vietnamese and Australian contexts. "Workplace policies/practices" also caused a lack of motivation. Furthermore, although "parents' support" was not frequently reported by either Vietnamese or Australian participants, this factor was lower on the scale in the Australian context. In addition, "mentor support" was reported to be quite similar on the scale - for both the Vietnamese (*M* = 2.85) and Australian (*M=2.54*) contexts. It is possible that the career development of the Vietnamese participants in this study involved more support from their parents in comparison with their Australian counterparts.

Table 4.6

Opportunities supporting Vietnamese and Australian leaders

	Total N = 380		Vietnam n = 250		Australia n = 130	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
• Good leadership skills	3.35	0.671	3.34	0.690	3.36	0.637
• Personal leadership experience	3.23	0.692	3.24	0.639	3.22	0.787
• Upgrade of your qualifications	3.18	0.836	3.35	0.636	2.85	1.053
• Network of colleagues in leadership roles	2.91	0.772	3.02	0.652	2.70	0.929
• Professional career network	2.78	0.780	2.96	0.617	2.44	0.932
• Mentor support	2.74	0.902	2.85	0.815	2.54	1.020
• Workplace policies/practices	2.73	0.853	3.03	0.713	2.16	0.805
• Participation in leadership programmes	2.68	0.895	2.91	0.773	2.23	0.948
• Supportive network of family	2.61	1.023	2.60	0.961	2.61	1.138
• Supportive network of friends	2.52	0.836	2.61	0.770	2.34	0.928
• Support from other male leaders	2.50	0.827	2.52	0.788	2.47	0.900
• Support from other female leaders	2.48	0.849	2.51	0.808	2.42	0.922
• Parents' support	2.45	1.111	2.70	1.031	1.98	1.114
• Participation in self-development programmes	2.43	0.886	2.58	0.773	2.15	0.936
Scale average	2.76	0.495	2.87	0.453	2.54	0.502
Cronbach's alpha	0.847		0.851		0.811	

1 to 4 scale (1= No increase in opportunity; 2= Nominally increased opportunity; 3= Increased opportunity; 4= Strongly increased opportunity)

4.4.1 Opportunity sub-scales: factor analysis.

Regarding favourable conditions for both Vietnamese and Australian participants, the correlation between items was grouped to identify general categories. The Barlett's Test of Sphericity (full details are outlined in Appendix C) checked the adequacy of the correlation matrix (KMO=.821, p=.000). The correlation matrix had significant correlation among variables with a value of 2041.915 (p < .0001). My analysis of the scree plot suggested a four-factor solution, which accounted for 65.57% of total variance.

The Rotated Component Matrix (full details of the components are outlined in Appendix C) produced four factors following varimax rotation. “To identify what these factors represent, it would be necessary to consider what items loaded on each of the factors. The clustering of the items in each factor and their wording offer the best clue as to the meaning of that factor” (Ho, 2006, p. 232). Simply put, grouping items helped to identify favourable conditions more clearly. The significant rotated factor loading was >.40 (Field, 2013). Clustering of the opportunity items is reflected in the following sub-scales:

(1) Workplace relationships: workplace networking and collaboration (four items):

- Support from other female leaders,
- Support from other male leaders,
- Supportive network of friends, and
- Network of colleagues in leadership roles.

(2) Motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (four items):

- Participation in leadership programmes,
- Workplace policies/practices,
- Participation in self-development programmes,
- Professional career networks, and
- Upgraded qualifications.

(3) Leadership abilities: competencies, skills, and experience (four items):

- Personal leadership experience,
- Good leadership skills,
- Mentor support, and
- Personal leadership experience.

(4) Family support (two items):

- Parental support,
- Supportive family network.

The four sub-scales demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .780, .763, .697, and .779, respectively) (full details of Cronbach's alpha are outlined in Appendix C). Cronbach's alpha is acceptable at .60, especially in social science research and exploratory studies (Hair et al., 2006). All measures indicate this was a valid and reliable set of sub-scales for the measurement of favourable conditions, which facilitated career development for female executive leaders.

Some of these items, such as "professional career networks" and "mentor support", appeared to belong in more than one category and tended to overlap in meaning with other factors. For example, the item "professional career networks" in factor 2 appeared to reflect workplace networking, and thus overlapped in meaning with factor 1 ("workplace relationships"), while the item "mentor support" in factor 3 seemed to indicate workplace support, and thus also conflated with factor 1. This four-factor model represents the combination of 15 original items and appears to adequately reflect the four main favourable conditions: workplace relationships, motivation, leadership abilities, and family support. These items might not cover all the favourable conditions that appeared in open-ended questions and in the semi-structured interviews, but they do at least help to group favourable conditions and to identify those groups that are significant.

The most important opportunities were "workplace relationships", followed by "motivation", "leadership abilities" and "family support". The high means of the four sub-scales indicated that these sub-scales nominally increased leadership opportunity of female participants. Significantly, the highest mean of sub-scale 3 (leadership abilities)

(M = 3.11) indicated that leadership abilities strongly increased the opportunities of female participants.

4.4.2 Significant differences of strategies used: independent sample *t* test.

Similar to the above section, the independent sample *t* test was conducted to compare the Mean of the Australian and Vietnamese participants. The results of this test was that within the opportunity scale, most of the items were similar for both the Vietnamese and Australian group. In other words, these opportunities had a positive influence on the Vietnamese leaders and the Australian leaders. An independent sample *t* test was conducted to identify significant differences between the Vietnamese and Australian participants in terms of the opportunity scale overall, sub-scales and items. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in the scores, which are illustrated in Table 4.7. With 11 significant favourable condition items, using the independent sample *t* test, a significant difference was also identified in the eight items of the four opportunity sub-scales (see Table 4.7).

There was a significant difference not only for individual items but also at the sub-scale level and the overall scale barrier. These items were:

(1) Sub-scale 2 (Motivation):

- Participation in leadership programmes,
- Workplace policies/practices,
- Participation in self-development programmes,
- Professional career network, and
- Upgrade qualifications.

(2) Sub-scale 4 (Family support):

- Parents' support.

There was a significant difference for the following individual items and at the overall scale barrier, but not at the sub-scale level:

- Network of colleagues in leadership roles, and
- Mentor support.

Table 4.7

The favourable condition sub-scales and significant items

		Significant	Significant value		
			Sig. (2-tailed)	t	d
Opportunities	Overall scale	✓	.000	6.471	372
	Sub-scale 1: workplace relationships				
	• Support from other female leaders				
	• Support from other male leaders				
	• Supportive network of friends				
	• Network of colleagues in leadership roles	✓	.000	3.855	378
	Sub-scale 2: motivation	✓	.000	10.207	373
	• Participation in leadership programmes	✓	.000	7.484	376
	• Workplace policies/practices	✓	.000	10.777	376
	• Participation in self-development programmes	✓	.000	4.579	377
	• Professional career network	✓	.000	6.573	378
	• Upgrade qualifications	✓	.000	5.781	378
	Sub-scale 3: leadership abilities				
	• Personal leadership experience				
	• Good leadership skills				
	• Mentor support	✓	0.001	3.256	378
	Sub-scale 4: family support	✓	0.001	3.433	378
	• Parents' support	✓	.000	6.205	378
	• Supportive network of family				

Sig (2-Tailed) value ≤0.005

The majority of mean scores for items in sub-scales in the opportunity overall scale and sub-scales were higher for the Vietnamese group than those for the Australian group. This suggests that Vietnamese participants might have more favourable conditions available to them than their Australian counterparts.

Overall, these results suggest that Vietnamese participants and Australian participants were statistically significant different in terms of workplace relationships, motivation, family support and mentoring.

4.4.3 The correlation between favourable condition items.

Vietnamese and Australian participants had some favourable conditions supporting their careers. The correlation between favourable conditions is illustrated in Table 4.8.

Regarding leadership programmes that women leaders completed to advance their careers, "participation in leadership programmes" had a high correlation with "participating in self-development programmes". This correlation was similar in the Australian context (Pearson's r = .673, p= .000) and in the Vietnamese context (Pearson's r = .540, p= .000). Those who indicated that they "participated in leadership programmes" were more likely to also "participate in self-development programmes". This indicates that female respondents were willing to take any leadership programme available to them. They were willing to upgrade their leadership abilities in order to seek out further opportunities. However, in response to the open-ended question, most of the Vietnamese female executives reported that they had not attended any leadership programmes. Results were more positive in the Australian context; more Australian respondents had participated in leadership training. However, Australian female respondents stated that most of the training did not meet their leadership targets.

Associated with leadership programmes, networking was also identified as contributing to their success. "Professional career network" had a high correlation with "network of colleagues in leadership roles". Both Vietnamese and Australian respondents had similar correlations (Pearson's r = .680, p= .000; and Pearson's r = .628, p= .000, respectively). In other words, those who developed their professional networks were more

likely to take advantage of leadership networks. However, Vietnamese respondents built up their networks mostly inside their own institutions, while Australian respondents developed their networks across regional and international institutions. This pattern was explained in further detail in the open-ended questions.

Leadership skills were also important favourable conditions. “Good leadership skills” had a strong correlation with “personal leadership experience”. This correlation was stronger for the Vietnamese respondents (Pearson’s r = .705, p= .000) than the Australian respondents (Pearson’s r = .562, p= .000). “Personal leadership experience” had a high correlation with “upgrade qualification”, and was similar for both the Vietnamese participants (Pearson’s r = .505, p= .000) and the Australian participants (Pearson’s r = .424, p= .000). These high correlations related to the knowledge, skills, and experience of respondents. Knowledge, skills and experience were not only significant favourable conditions facilitating female leaders but also contributed to their leadership competencies.

“Parents’ support” also had a high correlation with “supportive network of family. This correlation was critically stronger in the Vietnamese participants (Pearson’s r = .640, p= .000) than in the Australian participants (Pearson’s r = .546, p= .000. Vietnamese participants were more likely to receive support from their parents, while their Australian counterparts tended to live independently.

Table 4.8

Correlation of favourable conditions items

Correlation

		• Professional career network	• Mentor support	• Participation in self-development programmes	• Participation in leadership programmes	• Personal leadership experience	• Network of colleagues in leadership roles	• Supportive network of family
• Network of colleagues in leadership roles	Pearson Correlation	.669**	.557**					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000					
	N	380	380					
• Participation in leadership programmes	Pearson Correlation			.624**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000				
	N			377				
• Workplace policies/practices	Pearson Correlation	.450**			.484**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			.000			
	N	378			376			
• Participation in self-development programmes	Pearson Correlation							
	Sig. (2-tailed)							
	N							
• Professional career network	Pearson Correlation		.462**		.443**		.669**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000		.000		.000	
	N		380		378		380	
• Upgrade of your qualifications	Pearson Correlation					.444**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000		
	N					380		
• Parents' support	Pearson Correlation							.640**
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.000
	N							380
• Good leadership skills	Pearson Correlation					.648**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000		
	N					379		

4.5 Strategies Used by Vietnamese and Australian Respondents

4.5.1 Leadership values.

The scale utilised to measure the strategies included 15 items. These items demonstrated high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.846) (see Table 4.9). Thus, the overall scale of these 15 items was highly acceptable.

Vietnamese and Australian participants used a variety of strategies in their leadership. The results in Table 4.9 show that the overall mean (*M* = 2.83) of using strategies across universities was high. "Being an active listener" was the strategy they reported using the most (*M* = 3.60), followed by "adapting to new circumstances and change" (*M* = 3.45) and "being capable of resolving problems amongst colleagues" (*M* = 3.31). "Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills" (*M* = 3.19) was not among the most frequently reported strategies, but they were reported with a high score. Furthermore, they were less likely to report "using punitive measures to discourage negative staff behaviours" (*M* = 1.89) and "your willingness to rely on male mentors (*M* = 2.24) and female mentors" (*M* = 2.34) to help advance their careers.

Both Vietnamese and Australian participants had similar top frequent strategies, such as "being an active listener", "adapting to new circumstances and change", and "being capable of resolving problems amongst colleagues". Variables that had the lowest response rates included "using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours" and "your willingness to rely on male mentors and female mentors" to help advance career.

Vietnamese and Australian participants also had some differences regarding the strategies used. Australian participants (*M* = 2.91) scored lower for the item "improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills" than Vietnamese participants (*M*

= 3.33). “Seeking opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills” was also reported more frequently by Australian participants (*M* = 3.01) than Vietnamese participants (*M* = 2.96).

Table 4.9

Strategies used to maintain and develop Vietnamese and Australian respondents’ career trajectories

	Total *N*=380		Vietnam *n*=250		Australia *n*=130	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Being an active listener	3.60	0.589	3.68	0.577	3.45	0.585
Adapting to new circumstances and change	3.45	0.621	3.47	0.647	3.42	0.569
Being cable of resolving problems amongst colleagues *	3.31	0.646	3.32	0.691	3.30	0.551
Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills	3.19	0.754	3.33	0.732	2.91	0.720
Matching your leadership priorities to the goals of your current organisation	3.08	0.781	3.09	0.824	3.07	0.695
Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organisation	2.98	0.889	3.15	0.909	2.65	0.904
Seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills	2.98	0.753	2.96	0.780	3.01	0.699
Being a membership of a professional organisations	2.89	0.923	3.05	0.895	2.59	0.904
Having a mentor	2.66	0.933	2.74	0.948	2.49	0.883
Having immediate access to a network of influential colleagues	2.66	0.912	2.73	0.913	2.53	0.899
Using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours	2.62	0.885	2.66	0.932	2.55	0.784
Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organisation	2.59	0.982	2.79	0.835	2.22	1.011
Your willingness to rely on female mentors to help advance your career	2.34	0.871	2.33	0.848	2.35	0.919
Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career	2.24	0.935	2.26	0.895	2.22	1.011
Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours	1.89	0.825	2.10	0.829	1.47	0.638
Scale	2.83	0.467	2.91	0.494	2.68	0.366
Cronbach’s Alpha	0.846		0.872		0.730	

1 to 4 scale (1= Not at all; 2= Not well; 3= Well; 4= Extremely well)

4.5.1.1 Strategy sub-scales: factor analysis.

The strategy scales consisted of 15 items identifying leadership strategies. In order to classify the general categories, as well as the correlation between items, I used the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to check the adequacy of the correlation matrix (KMO = .833, *p*= 000) (full details are outlined in Appendix C). The correlation matrix had significant correlation among variables with a value of 1848.416 ($p < .001$). My analysis of the scree plot suggested four groups of strategies which accounted for 61.19% (32.326+12.612+8.600+7.657) (the percentage of total variance accounted for by each factor).

The Rotated Component Matrix showed the correlations between the variable and the factor of leadership strategies (full details of the components are outlined in Appendix C). The correlations produced four main strategies following varimax rotation (with a rotated factor loading > .40). The item "seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills" was eliminated because this variable had a low factor loading and was not strong enough.

After eliminating the variable "seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills", the factor analysis was conducted again with 14 items within the strategies scale. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (KMO = .824, *p*= 000) showed the adequacy of the correlation matrix (full details are outlined in Appendix C). The correlation matrix had significant correlation among variables with a value of 1712.204 ($p < .001$). My analysis of the scree plot suggested four groups of strategies which accounted for 63.541% (32.685+13.512+9.170+8.173) (the percentage of total variance accounted for by each factor; see Appendix C).

The Rotated Component Matrix (full details of components are contained in Appendix C) identified the four components factors (four item sub-scale). However, the

fourth component was eliminated because the Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach's alpha = .581) was not reliable and their means were low. Clustering of the leadership strategy items are reflected the following sub-scales:

(1) Leadership skills (four items):

- Adapting to new circumstances and change,
- Being an active listener,
- Being cable of resolving problems amongst colleagues, and
- Matching your leadership priorities to the goals of your current organisation.

(2) Mentoring (four items):

- Your willingness to rely on female mentors to help advance your career,
- Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career,
- Having a mentor, and
- Having immediate access to a network of influential colleagues.

(3) Professional preparation (four items):

- Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organisation,
- Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organisation,
- Membership of a professional organisations, and
- Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills

(4) Encouraging staff (two items):

- Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours, and
- Using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours.

The four sub-scales were reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .736, .782, .771, and .581, respectively) (see full details in Appendix C). In theoretical studies, modest reliabilities of .50 are acceptable with a small number of items (Nunally, 1967). Thus, given the exploratory nature of the scales and the small number of items in fourth sub-scale, the four sub-scales were considered acceptable.

The scale means of the four sub-scales indicate that both Vietnamese and Australian respondents developed their careers in strategic ways. Significantly, the highest scale mean (M = 3.36) indicated that participants used "leadership skills" most frequently to obtain their leadership roles.

Overall, these leadership items (see Table 4.9) help to group leadership strategies and identify significant groups of leadership strategies. These groups of leadership strategies also had high scales, with the highest being "leadership skills", followed by "mentoring" and "professional preparation". Of all these items, Vietnamese participants scored higher on the scale and were more likely than the Australian participants to use these strategies well. However, there were some items for which the Australian participants scored higher on the scale, such as "seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills" and "relying on female mentors to help advance career".

4.5.1.2 Significant differences between strategies used: independent sample t test.

To explore whether there were any significant differences in strategies used, I used the independent sample *t* test to identify the differences in the strategy overall scale, sub-scales and items between the Vietnamese and Australian participants. Nine items were significant, as illustrated in Table 4.10. There was a significant difference in six of the items of the four strategy sub-scales based on the independent sample *t* test.

Table 4.10

The strategies sub-scales and significant items

		Significant	Significant value		
			Sig. (2-tailed) (* *p*)	**t**	**d**
	Overall scale	✓	* *p*=.000	4.521	371
Strategies	**Sub-scale 1: Leadership skills**				
	• Adapting to new circumstances and change				
	• Being an active listener	✓	* *p*=.000	3.669	378
	• Being cable of resolving problems amongst colleagues				
	• Matching your leadership priorities to the goals of your current organisation				
	Sub-scale 2: Mentoring				
	• Your willingness to rely on female mentors to help advance your career				
	• Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career				
	• Having a mentor				
	• Having immediate access to a network of influential colleagues				
	Sub-scale 3: professional preparation	✓	* *p*=.000	6.959	378
	• Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organisation	✓	* *p*=.000	5.602	378
	• Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organisation	✓	* *p*=.000	5.320	378
	• Being a member of professional organisations	✓	* *p*=.000	4.693	378
	• Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills	✓	* *p*=.000	5.390	378
	Sub-scale 4: encouraging staff	✓	* *p*=.000	4.787	375
	• Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours	✓	* *p*=.000	7.562	378
	• Using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours				

There was a significant difference not only for individual items but also at the sub-scale level and the overall scale strategies. These items are as follows:

(1) Sub-scale 3 (Professional preparation):

- Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organisation,
- Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organisation,

- Being a member of professional organisations, and
- Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills.

(2) Sub-scale 4 (encouraging staff):

- Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff.

There is a significant difference between individual items and the overall scale barrier, but not a significant difference at the sub-scale level. It is:

(3) Sub-scale 1 (leadership skills):

- Being an active listener.

From the strategy questions, it appears that both Vietnamese and Australian participants utilized their leadership skills well.

4.5.2 Individual considerations.

4.5.2.1 Leadership characteristics of respondents.

To further investigate which characteristics were regarded as most useful in the Vietnamese and Australian contexts, characteristics were ranked in order of success as perceived by the respondents (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11

The most successful characteristics for advancing an executive career

Rank	Vietnam		Australia	
	Characteristics	***n* (%)**	**Characteristics**	***n* (%)**
1	Good listener	178 (71.2)	Conscientious	81 (62.3)
2	Conscientious	134 (53.6)	Open-minded	56 (43.1)
3	Caring	125 (50.0)	Generous	49 (37.7)
4	Inspirational	116 (46.4)	Good listener	46 (35.4)
5	Generous	85 (34.0)	Inspirational	45 (34.6)
6	Humble	82 (32.8)	Caring	35 (26.9)
7	Open-minded	75 (30.0)	Humble	18 (13.8)
8	Patient	75 (30.0)	Patient	15 (11.5)

In terms of leadership characteristics, these included eight main categories, as seen in Table 4.11. Characteristics that had the greatest number of responses by Vietnamese participants were “good listener”, “conscientious” and “caring”, compared

with “conscientious”, “open-minded”, and “generous” for the Australian participants. The leadership characteristics that participants perceived as most important for advancing their careers were ranked differently by the Vietnamese and Australian participants. However, they also shared similar characteristics even though their rankings differed. Both Vietnamese participants and Australian participants rated “conscientious” as a highly useful characteristic, with “humble” and “patient” as the least useful.

4.5.2.2 Leadership competencies of respondents.

The six main categories of leadership competencies (see Table 4.12) was investigated further. The Vietnamese respondents identified the most effective aspects in their leadership competencies as being “strong knowledge based on their discipline”, “work ethic” and “strong experience in their field”; for the Australian respondents, these were “strategic vision”, “ability to mentor effectively” and “work ethics” (see Table 4.12). The highest response rate was “strong knowledge based on their discipline” for the Vietnamese participants and “strategic vision” for the Australian participants. “Work ethic” was in the top three most effective aspects of leadership competencies for participants from both countries. Similarly, “taking risks” was ranked the lowest for both Vietnamese and Australian respondents.

Table 4.12

The most effective aspects of leadership competencies in advancing an executive career

Rank	Vietnam		Australia	
	Competencies	N (%)	Competencies	N (%)
1	Strong knowledge based on your discipline	182 (72.8)	Strategic vision	78 (60.0)
2	Work ethic	168 (67.2)	Ability to mentor effectively	63 (48.5)
3	Strong experience in your field	133 (53.2)	Work ethic	47 (36.2)
4	Strategic vision	121 (48.4)	Strong experience in your field	38 (29.2)
5	Ability to mentor effectively	69 (27.6)	Strong knowledge based on your discipline	27 (20.8)
6	Taking risks	46 (18.4)	Taking risks	12 (9.2)

4.5.3 The correlation between strategies.

The bivariate Pearson correlation was used (see Table 4.13) to identify significant correlations between items.

Listening was a personal skill of both Vietnamese and Australian female leaders. “Being an active listener” had a high correlation with “being capable of resolving problems amongst colleagues”. This correlation was higher for Vietnamese respondents (Pearson’s r = .554, p= .000) than for Australian respondents (Pearson’s r = .442, p= .000). “Adapting to new circumstance and change” had a high correlation with “being capable of resolving problems amongst colleagues”. This correlation was also found to be high in the Australian participants (Pearson’s r = .400, p= .000) and Vietnamese participants (Pearson’s r = .606, p= .000). Those who listened to their colleagues were more likely able to be able to solve the problem at hand. Vietnamese participants used listening skills more often than their Australian respondents; however, Australian participants were flexible and more adaptable to change than the Vietnamese participants. Both of these items may be the result of cultural differences.

Respondents also reported that they benefited from training programmes. Those who participated in leadership training programmes outside the organisation also participated in leadership training programmes within their organisations. The correlation of “being a member of professional organisations” with both participating in leadership programmes inside and outside institutions demonstrated the strategy that female leaders used to build professional and leadership networks. These professional and leadership networks, which facilitated the career ladders of the female participants, were mentioned above in the section “The correlation between favourable condition items”. Although female respondents attempted to take advantage of leadership training courses that were

available to them, the number of leadership training programmes that addressed the specific needs of female leaders were limited.

Despite the limited provision of leadership programmes, female respondents reported improving their skills to further their opportunities. For example, they improved their interpersonal skills. They perceived that these skills would open up their leadership opportunities. This was illustrated in the modest correlation between "improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills" and "seeking opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills" (see Table 4.13). Vietnamese respondents (Pearson's r = .558, p= .000) had a higher correlation than Australian respondents (Pearson's r = .371, p= .000).

It is interesting that, "using punitive measures to discourage negative staff behaviour" had only a modest correlation with "using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours". In other words, those who used punitive measures were more likely to use rewards to encourage their staff.

Mentoring was also a strategy used by participants. It is interesting to note that in the Australian context, Australian respondents were more likely to rely on female mentors (Pearson's r = .516, p= .000) than male mentors (Pearson's r = .463, p= .000), while in the Vietnamese context, this was the reverse (Pearson's r = .522, p= .000), with male rather than female mentors (Pearson's r = .480, p= .000). "Relying on female mentors to help advance career" also had a high correlation with "relying on male mentors to help advance career". In other words, those who reported "relying on female mentors to help advance career" were more likely to cite "relying on male mentors to help advance career".

Table 4.13

The correlation between strategies items

Correlation strategies

		• Being cable of resolving problems amongst colleagues	• Adapting to new circumstances and change	• Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organization	• Being a member of a professional organizations	• Seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills	• Using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours	• Your willingness to rely on female mentors to help advance your career	• Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career
• Being an active listener	Pearson Correlation	.511**	.528**						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000						
	N	377	379						
• Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organization	Pearson Correlation			.582**	.452**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.000				
	N			380	380				
• Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organization	Pearson Correlation				.502**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.000				
	N				380				
• Being a member of professional organizations	Pearson Correlation								
	Sig. (2-tailed)								
	N								
• Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills	Pearson Correlation					.472**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)					.000			
	N					380			
• Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours	Pearson Correlation						.411**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)						.000		
	N						377		
• Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career	Pearson Correlation							.681**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.000	
	N							378	
• Having a mentor	Pearson Correlation							.485**	.498**
	Sig. (2-tailed)							.000	.000
	N							378	378

4.6 Survey Results from Open-ended Questions

By the end of the survey questionnaire, there were seven open-ended questions, which captured more of the ideas of respondents relating to their career development.

4.6.1 Results from Vietnamese female respondents.

In the survey, seven open-ended questions explored the Vietnamese participants' opinions regarding their career trajectories. Each open-ended question generated a variety of responses. The data was organised into four categories: favourable conditions, barriers, strategies and leadership competencies.

4.6.1.1 Favourable conditions.

Respondents commented that the following six factors helped them to obtain their current positions.

Professional competencies: knowledge, professional skills, and experience.

Respondents had strong professional competencies, including professional knowledge, expertise and skills. The most important career facilitator was professional knowledge appropriate to their leadership level. They regularly honed and improved their professional knowledge by obtaining higher qualifications, including postgraduate degrees or overseas qualifications. The second factor that facilitated their career was their professional skills. They reported that leadership skills and leadership experience, which were "necessary to vacant leadership positions" (VNP), were important in applying for leadership positions and advancing their career.

Skills development and extensive experience brought them more opportunities. Therefore, they regularly consolidated, advanced and fostered their professional expertise.

Management skills.

For most respondents, management skills were the most important. These management skills included soft skills, vision and building credibility. Soft skills, such as communication and diplomacy, advisory skills, as well as flexibility, contributed to their opportunities since networking and relationships were considered crucial to building professional connections in the workplace. Vision was also important. Respondents reported that when they had a target vision, they focused on this target and had a clear view and were able to work towards their institution's goals. Finally, they understood that building credibility was achieved by demonstrating their abilities. Therefore, although they were assigned many tasks, they "worked seriously and actively" and "focused on the assigned task". They applied for and obtained scholarships to advance their education, or they gained the wining prize in a competition or achieved break-throughs in their teaching methods. With these personal achievements, they gained trust not only from their staff and colleagues, but also from their higher level leaders.

Characteristics and disposition.

The third facilitator enhancing their career was their characteristics and disposition. Dedication to work received the highest response, followed by enthusiasm, listening, responsibility and self-confidence. They indicated that individual characteristics - such as loyalty, honesty, not being conservative, not being bureaucratic, bravery, patience and being sociable - also played an important role in optimising their career development.

Governance.

The fourth facilitator fostering their career development was their governance, such as reorganising the Executive Board, meeting political standards, and being in the middle leadership level. Changes in the make-up of the Executive Board as well as in

institutional structures in many cases led to new organisational needs and new approaches to leadership. For instance, many leadership positions have opened up for younger people and females. This current change in leadership culture has opened up opportunities for younger women. In a hierarchical system, meeting the political standard for instance, or being a member of the Communist Party - for those in the Vietnamese context - was identified by participants as a leadership criterion which also facilitated their career progress. Furthermore, to be appointed to a middle-level leadership position was considered a step towards leadership preparation and thus executive positions.

Support.

Associated with favourable conditions from governance, support was also an important facilitator. In the workplace, they received support not only from their higher level leaders, but also from their colleagues. Outside the workplace, they had support from former leaders. In their personal lives, they had assistance especially from their parents, relatives, and then their partners.

Luck.

The final facilitator was luck. Luck occurred when leadership opportunities opened to them at the right time, and at the right place. One Vietnamese participant reported: “I got a Doctoral degree and returned to the University at the time my Faculty became autonomous and would need a person in the Faculty’s leadership position”. Having met their organisation’s requirements, they were appointed to leadership positions. In addition, their higher level leaders had retired or moved to another workplace, which also contributed to their luck. Being in deputy positions, they were considered for more executive roles.

4.6.1.2 Predictive barriers.

This section explores the barriers that Vietnamese respondents thought may affect their future career trajectories. On the whole, they observed that most of these barriers occurred at a societal or institutional level.

Barriers from the working environment.

At an institutional level, barriers could be seen in the working environment. This included workplace culture and a lack of leadership training and opportunities.

Workplace cultures were critical to leadership selection processes which played an important role in their career development. Leadership selection processes were influenced by where people came from and their gender. Those who were not considered as being from the local area or community, were perceived by others to be affected by the culture of their own communities and reported having fewer opportunities than those who were from the local area. They reported: "the cultural heterogeneity of communication behaviour in the workplace sometimes causes inhibition and inconvenience when planning and managing work" (VNP). They also perceived other difficulties because of their gender. One participant reported: "I was met with difficulties in the organisations in which I worked due to being female. This affected my career paths, as fewer women were accepted" (VNP).

Furthermore, because their work was incompatible with their training, they experienced challenges in fulfilling their assigned work. Some of them found that aspects of their skill-set needed development. For example, they recognised that their social and diplomatic communication skills made moving up the career ladder daunting. They reported that these weak skills were exacerbated by having little leadership training. This can be seen in the online data, with more than 67% (n = 112) of the 165 Vietnamese participants reporting that they had never attended any leadership training courses.

Instead, they learned from the experiences of their precursors, former leaders and self-study. As a consequence, they communicated little with their higher level leaders, and they had fewer interactions with their staff outside of work. In addition, less experience in time management skills meant that they found balancing work and family difficult, especially between teaching and leadership responsibilities. One participant responded: "I would like any opportunity to participate in any training courses" (VNP). It is clear that even though the participants were in executive positions, they did not have enough training; instead, they learned from experience or self-study. Although they were willing to learn more, and were particularly eager to undertake leadership training courses, these were not made readily available to them.

The lack of opportunities was also the result of few promotions in their workplace. This could be clearly seen in their working conditions. Many of them reported that they faced workplace pressure due to inappropriate income, poor working environments, and lack of funds for activities or multidisciplinary management which limited their opportunities to apply knowledge from other countries. They also dealt with challenges from their staff and colleagues. Many reported experiences of professional jealousy from colleagues. Their colleagues "often found small mistakes or would try to manipulate minor errors so that they appeared much worse" (VNP). Their experiences were further compounded by negative opinions of staff or a lack of responsibility from their colleagues.

Cultural barriers.

Vietnamese respondents perceived that gender prejudice hidden within their families also affected their careers. The social function of women was clearly demonstrated in the Vietnamese participants' observations about their families. They had family responsibilities: household chores, family care, birth, child care and the care of

elderly parents. These burdens may eventually result in limited time at work. One of them said that “because of family circumstances, there would be no opportunities to advance at an academic or professional level” and “enhancing knowledge and upgrading information would meet more difficulties” (VNP). Furthermore, they were also responsible for heavy household chores. Family economic conditions forced them to work even harder, and yet they still received little support from their partners. This prevented them from being able to focus on their work and professional development.

Low sense of wellbeing.

Besides having challenges in society and the workplace, Vietnamese participants also experienced other barriers, such as low levels of wellbeing, long-distance commuting and family finances. Wellbeing, including quality of health and age, may have been reported by Vietnamese participants as they were getting older and closer to the age of retirement (typically 55 years old). Commuting a long distance from home to their workplaces was also a barrier. Furthermore, difficulties in family finances may lead to a reduction in their effectiveness at work.

At the higher levels of leadership, the female leaders in this study still faced challenges at societal, institutional and family levels. The strategies they used to negotiate these challenges are explored below.

4.6.1.3 Strategies used to confront challenges.

In the open-ended questions, Vietnamese participants shared that they utilised a variety of methods to confront challenges and maintain their current positions. The most important strategies were enhancing their professional knowledge, improving their personal skills, working hard, combining characteristics and recruiting support.

Enhancing professional knowledge.

The first important strategy related to professional knowledge. Participants studied post-graduated programmes to increase their professional knowledge, which included advanced qualifications (n = 12) and improve their professional knowledge competencies (n = 9). They believed that "leaders are those who go ahead and acquire knowledge" (VNP). Thus, they learned and studied independently, and regularly updated their knowledge in many areas. For instance, they improved their leadership skills by participating in training courses to upgrade their qualifications.

Improving personal skills.

The second strategy was personal skills, which they developed on a daily basis. Their personal skills included soft and hard skills, education and training skills, and personal development. Soft skills and hard skills were frequently used in their working environments.

The skills they used most were organising skills in planning, assigning, and supervising work. For instance, they arranged work, made plans and then implemented these plans, assigned duties, determined assigned tasks with their staff, and collaborated with staff to implement and supervise them.

- The other important skill was goal setting. They set targets for each task and had a strategic vision for the work process: they made a plan, developed this plan, carried it out and then assessed its effectiveness. They reported that they always made plans for work, scheduled specific tasks in detail in collaboration with their colleagues, and then developed detailed plans to reduce any potential risks. They were always persistent in the pursuit of their goals and strategic direction. Finally, they assessed their work by identifying the progress made.

- Cultural competencies were used regularly. They not only built trust in higher level leaders, colleagues and staff, but they prioritised relationships with these people. They also formed good relationships and expanded relationships with those with whom they worked.
- Global mindedness was also an essential skill as participants inspired their communities through their strength and their vision. They also decided when to take opportunities depending on global trends and changes.
- Adapting to such changes could be seen in their creativity and innovation, too. They always sought the information necessary to empower them and allow them to overcome their weaknesses.
- Critical thinking was also a necessary skill. They reported that serous thinking and thinking in a critical way helped them to cope with challenges.
- Cooperation was another vital skill. Understanding their staff well and understanding their perspectives helped strengthen their collaboration with staff.
- Other skills related to work management, enabling them to address tasks, manage time and work long hours, conduct presentations and undertake public speaking.

They learnt from experience and listening to their staff whenever they had a chance. They also made plans to participate in leadership training courses, and took advantage of training programmes. Unfortunately, they reported that very few training courses were made available to them.

Making an effort.

A significant personal development effort was necessary and important to develop these skills. In order to fulfil their tasks well, the above skills were needed. However, if they did not make an effort and try their best, their work would not be effective.

(a) They showed this effort by ignoring minor barriers; working harder and longer hours; being committed to teaching, learning and leading; overcoming gender barriers; and, balancing work and family at a higher level.

(b) In addition, they always found opportunities to demonstrate their professional competencies and leadership abilities.

(c) Taking risks was also a part of their individual development efforts. The participants always motivated themselves and accepted risks, as well as failure, so that they were better able to adapt to changes.

Characteristics.

The other important strategy was their disposition. The characteristics they found most important were self-confidence, listening skills, dedication, and conscientiousness, followed by optimism and enthusiasm, and finally, passion and responsibility. These created positive attitudes toward their work. As a result, they believed in themselves and had the perseverance to overcome challenges.

Recruiting support.

Recruiting support from others was also a key strategy. They sought support not only from their workplaces, but also from within their families. In the workplace, they created and enhanced the cooperation of their staff and other members of their institutions; for instance, asking for assistance from male colleagues in relation to travelling. Within their own family, they mobilised the resources of family member, such as asking for help from parents to take care of their children.

From the above evidence, it can be seen that Vietnamese participants have used a variety of methods - including professional knowledge, personal skills, such as soft and hard skills, education and training skills, as well as personal development, characteristics, and recruiting support - to confront challenges. They have used these strategies to

negotiate various challenges. In order to negotiate these challenges well, leadership competencies were also perceived to help acquire success, as outlined below:

Knowledge competencies.

One of the most important competencies was knowledge, and this included professional skills, competencies and experience. Twenty-six responses of the 175 participants, who responded to this open-ended question, reflected that professional ability was essential, such as broad professional knowledge and "having extensive knowledge in the field of work" (VNP). Professional competencies and experience contributed to their career achievement.

Technical skills.

Another important component that many of the participants particularly stressed or highlighted was skills, such as leading organisations and teams, as well as self-management. In terms of leading organisations, strategic vision "tầm nhìn chiến lược" had the highest response rate (n = 251/261). Participants defined strategic vision in terms such as: "the ability to predict", "having far-sighted vision", "covering the work", and "setting the goal" (VNP). They thought "setting a range of goals is achievable, and then you need to plan to achieve these goals" (VNP). After this, the second most important skills were interpersonal abilities. Communication skills had the highest response, followed by building good relationships, as well as decision-making, problem solving, and motivational skills (i.e., the ability to convince and inspire colleagues and staff). The third most important skills related to planning, organising and management skills. Female leaders needed to have clear and specific plans, then employ human resources and utilise them effectively. This was followed by handling tasks at an appropriate level, which was also considered necessary.

Self-management was also identified as a skill that contributed to the leadership of others. Self-management consisted of a suite of skills including self-development, self-promotion and a willingness to take risks. Regarding self-development, the participants developed their leadership abilities and leadership qualities by learning experience. They also improved their professional qualifications by doing more research and participating in higher education. Furthermore, they were persistent and applied great effort to every task. They were highly motivated and were willing to sacrifice personal interests, such as going to the cinema, going on holidays and hanging out with friends. Besides self-development, they promoted themselves through their leadership experience, creativity, reputation, innovation, and use of mentors (advisory staff). In addition, they were ready to take risks and accept the consequences of those risks. They reported that they "dared to do, dared to take responsibility" (VNP). It can be seen that these participants identified and set up their career targets to move forward.

Another important leadership skill was leading others, including empowering and mentoring staff and role modelling. In terms of staff, they knew how to effectively utilise their human resources. They empowered their team and their professional staff to set goals and implement them. They knew their staff's abilities and had an in-depth knowledge of their staff's strengths and weaknesses. They trusted, respected and promoted their staff; for example, they "were always humble and created opportunities for institutional members to share their thoughts and ideas" (VNP). They tended to put their team's interests above their own individual interests. Not only did they understand their own staff well, but they also had a close relationship with their higher level leaders. They sought to understand their higher level leaders' psychology, anticipate their needs and encouraged them through positive communication and occasional praise. These

results demonstrate that the participants considered their professional and personal relationships with not only their higher level leaders but also with their staff.

Disposition.

Together with leadership competencies and skills, participants reported that their disposition also contributed to their leadership competencies. The most important characteristic they reported was their readiness or willingness to listen (n = 21/50), followed by being decisive and assertive (n = 18/50) and having a strong ethical sense (n = 14). These characteristics were in turn followed by patience and dedication, with confidence, a caring disposition, and a willingness to share all perceived as equally important. Conscientiousness and a sense of responsibility had a slightly lower response rate, followed by enthusiasm and intelligence.

In sum, Vietnamese survey respondents utilised a variety of strategies to overcome their difficulties. Among these strategies, professional knowledge, personal skills, and making an effort were considered to be the most important. Interestingly, in order to make more time available for their work, they recruited support from their relatives, such as parents, brothers and sisters, who helped them take care of their children and household chores. Significantly, listening had the highest response rate in relation to leadership characteristics. This may have been affected by traditional Vietnamese culture, a characteristic which we may discover is different in the Australian context.

4.6.2 Results from Australian respondents.

4.6.2.1 Favourable conditions.

While participants tended to identify the challenges impacting their career trajectory, there was also some significant evidence about positive opportunities. The open-ended question, “As a female leader in higher education, what have been the most

important opportunities provided to you to obtain executive leadership positions?" generated some significant information.

Mentoring.

The most important favourable condition that facilitated their entry into executive positions was mentoring. The participants tended to have good mentors, and this included female and male mentors, both inside and outside their institutions. They described these mentors as people who "worked behind the scenes" (AUSP) to give them advice and coaching. It is interesting that more participants reported having received outstanding mentorship from both female and male colleagues, but that these people were "usually mostly female" (AUSP). Female mentors included female colleagues and senior women both in and outside their university, who looked for opportunities for them and who also provided a range of opportunities. Male mentors encouraged them to apply for executive positions and provided them with opportunities to access executive networks. With the assistance of male colleagues came, the potential to break the gender glass ceiling and to bring more women, as an under-represented group, to the fore within senior leadership and executive roles.

Leadership experience.

The second most important favourable condition was previous experience in leadership roles. Some of the participants have been leading teams for many years, with others involved in institutional decision-making. A number of them had worked across a range of positions at different universities, while others were in Board positions outside education, or had been in different areas, such as finance and health, before moving into education. Having occupied a spectrum of leadership positions, across both low and middle levels of leadership, they had become competent and acquired transferable skills from their previous roles which were helpful when they applied for senior roles. Previous

experience in leadership roles was particularly important because it contributed to their management skills, which facilitated the success of female leaders.

Open opportunities.

Another important positive condition was support, and this support occurred across different levels. The most important support was perceived as that which came from the participants' institutions. This support included the encouragement of career development and available vacancies in the organisation. Participants received various invitations "to take on different high level roles/responsibilities within my organisation and to participate in external high level conferences etc. relevant to these roles" (AUSP), which came from their own institutions or from others. In addition, they were encouraged to take on different roles and higher leadership levels. They were being "tapped on the shoulder" (AUSP) to apply for leadership roles, pushed forward, and then "supported along the way" (AUSP). Receiving this kind of support was a demonstration of trust, as participants had built up credibility within their institutions through their performance. Participants had established the trust of their supervisors and senior leaders and, as a consequence, these people believed and trusted in their abilities, supporting and pushing them upward. Besides having this support from senior leaders, participants also had support from their colleagues, who believed they were effective leaders. However, support also came from outside their institutions, from people such as their partners. Two of the participants reported that they had strong and consistent support from their partners, so they felt "comfortable to take on executive level work" (AUSP). Thus, support from inside or outside institutions was essential to engage women in senior leadership roles. Most importantly, these women believed in themselves and took the opportunities that were suggested and provided by their institutions and senior leaders.

Different forms of professional learning also enhanced the participants' career opportunities. They attended leadership courses and training provided by their institutions. They also found leadership courses outside their institutions, and took these courses to prepare for advancement. In addition, academic achievements, such as completing a PhD, also opened doors to senior positions. Thus, qualifications were also a criteria that women in this study identified as necessary to obtain to secure leadership positions.

Vision.

Having a clear sense of vision, or a clear sense of professional destiny, also contributed to their career development. Participants mentioned they had aims, and from these aims they decided which direction they wanted to go, and then created a professional pathway. They also sought new opportunities and challenges and were ready to negotiate these challenges. In addition, in order to move forward, they did not remain in one position or one institution, but were able to change their employment and always seek circumstances in which they could demonstrate their abilities. These participants were also aware that there were various current policies that encouraged women to apply for leadership positions. Therefore, having vision as well as an awareness of favourable policies helped these participants in terms of their career development. A participant responded: "University policies support gender equity in principle, even if not all individuals adhere to them and not all work functions fit" (AUSP). Thus, "being aware of changes in the workplace and providing strategic vision" (AUSP), as noted by one participant was necessary for their career development.

Networking.

Associated with vision was the practice of networking. Participants had access to networks where they were able to develop their professional relationships. In addition,

such networks sometimes created leadership opportunities. For instance, one participant reported that “people nominated me for positions that allow me to develop my leadership skills” (AUSP). Thus, it can be seen that building networks is necessary for a leader to be effective, and this is confirmed by Luthra and Dahiya (2015), who suggested that a key aspect of improving leadership effectiveness is communication via networking.

Work ethic.

Finally, disposition was a crucial factor. These participants tended to have a strong work ethic. They worked very hard and tried to create their own opportunities by trusting in their abilities. One respondent reported that “I trusted in my abilities and my rather unusual approaches” (AUSP). One notable comment about this women’s approach to professional development was “being a woman in a world where senior leadership is really seen as a male prerogative” (AUSP). However, they were confident, trustworthy and dependable, and had the tenacity to cope with challenges. Furthermore, they were very effective in their roles. Therefore, it may be argued that their dispositions played an important part in their career development.

Luck.

Some Australian participants mentioned luck, that luck had facilitated their career development. They indicated that some positions became vacant in their institutions at the right time. Furthermore, one participant noted “the availability of positions I have applied for – or in this particular case, simply being asked to take on the role of Dean” (AUSP). They took advantage of these vacancies by applying for the positions at the right time.

As discussed above, these respondents identified both favourable conditions and barriers in terms of advancing their career development. Yet their barriers were overwhelming, in spite of the favourable conditions. In order not to give up on their career

development, these respondents used a variety of strategies to overcome their difficulties, which stemmed mainly from their institutions.

4.6.2.2 Predictive barriers.

This section describes responses to the open-ended question: "What personal and/or professional barriers do you think will affect your future leadership trajectory?" In relation to this open-ended question, the data was analysed using manual coding and thematic techniques. From those who provided a response (n = 111), the challenges they reported were summarised into three categories: (1) institutional barriers, (2) societal-cultural barriers, and (3) personal barriers. Of these three categories, institutional barriers were most prominent.

Hierarchical systems.

Participants reported that biased institutional environments and higher level male-dominated leadership had created a generally negative and bureaucratic work environment. Higher level leaders were reported as being unsupportive; they were described as "ill-prepared" and "poor leaders", as having "ineffective leadership" with "male and female senior colleagues protecting their own interests" (AUSP). Within this system, the applicant moving to higher executive roles faced "considerable" opposition, and the process was competitive because these participants did not receive support and encouragement as a result of the systemic gender bias mentioned above. The career step of moving upward was more competitive because their senior leaders wanted "to work with someone they know", and they looked to "bring in external expertise at every opportunity rather than promote from within" (AUSP).

The participants reported that women were given fewer opportunities due to their institutional environments and higher level leadership. In other words, they did not have many opportunities to move forward to their next career level as a result of institutional

cultures which favoured their male counterparts. Participants reported similar kinds of cultures, using terms such as “boy’s club”, “white males”, and “male-dominated” (AUSP). More broadly, they used technical terms such as “patriarchal places”, “gender ceiling”, “systemic gender biases and issues” and “traditional hierarchical organisational structures”. Participants identified that they had “hit the ‘glass ceiling’ at their institutions, and that they were usually “invisible” and “over looked”. In order to enter the next leadership level, they reported needing to be “very political to get promoted”. However, this seemed to be harder since “not many leadership positions were available for female academic staff because most of senior positions were dominated by males” (AUSP). In addition, within this structured of systemic bias men in leadership roles often “do not think of including women in some conversations and so [women] do not have a seat at the table” (AUSP). One participant reported that “I have been the only female Director in a Division where my supervisor and my five peer Directors are all male”. She emphasised that “[i]t is definitely a gender ceiling” (AUSP). Thus, women only get to a “certain level” and often do not reach the most senior-executive levels. Even from the perspective of a few women in top leadership positions, they still had to deal with “conflict and difficult conversations” with males, especially “controlling and micro-managing senior men” (AUSP). These circumstances might makes the upwards leadership journey for female executives seem like a leadership labyrinth, one where they needed to negotiate continuous challenges when advancing their career development.

Overall, their male counterparts did not pay attention to the participants’ value. Even when participants were members of their executive team, their top leaders did not acknowledge the work of individuals in their teams. In the institutional hierarchical system, they were passively appointed rather than applying for a position. Thus, participants’ career development was blocked by the hierarchy within which they worked,

and especially by their higher level leaders, who objectively or subjectively did not recognise their value; the result was that participants became invisible within their own leadership systems. Yet it is exciting to know that they were still able to promote in invisible conditions, that they were "always up for a challenge" (AUSP).

Workload.

Associated with the lack of opportunity in the workplace, participants also found that work pressures may influence their future careers. They wrote that they were "burnt out" with a huge workload, such as writing new strategy documents, supporting supervisees, travelling, preparing work documents and so on. As a result, they also felt exhausted from "dealing with trivia and things that were not important". Furthermore, participants had "a strong sense of duty", with a willingness to work and a "tendency to say 'yes' to things". Work overload took away time that they could invest in other things and impacted their wellbeing and personal relationships. As a consequence, balancing work and family with personal and professional responsibilities, and balancing what should be done from an organisational perspective with activities to support their career trajectory, was more challenging because of lack of time and the burden of many duties.

Lack of interest.

The other challenge in the workplace that was also perceived to affect participants' future careers was their own motivation. This was mainly because of their lack of interest. Participants sometimes lacked interest in further leadership roles, and preferred to undertake other roles, particularly when they had been in the same position for a long time. They felt bored and had strong desire for change; however, their institutions did not promote them or motivate them to move upwards.

Participants reported that they were uncertain about what they should do next in their careers, and how they should make a move from their current role to a senior

leadership one in their institution. This indicates that these participants did not have somebody to guide them or show them the way to further develop their career.

Family commitments.

Besides institutional barriers, socio-cultural factors were also considered one of the most important challenges affecting their career development. A majority of participants reported family commitments as a barrier to professional development. They were responsible for most of the work in their families, from bearing children, caring for elderly parents and supporting other family members. Due to family demands, these participants spent more time on their families and, as a result, their working time was likely to have been limited. Even when they were asked to apply for a full executive position, they chose not to take up this opportunity because it required them to relocate, to a place far from their families or where their families could not join them. Explaining their family responsibilities, a participant wrote: “I am aware that my obligations to family will always come before career advancement” due to “my own gender socialisation” (AUSP). Thus, cultural factors may have contributed to the risks they were willing to take in terms of career development, and perhaps they were not able to step away from gender bias in order to move their careers forward.

Personal factors.

Although not many participants mentioned personal factors, these were still considered as one of the barriers to their future professional development. Fifteen of the participants mentioned their age. They were getting older, and especially at middle-age were easy to overlook and easier to drop off the short list for executive positions. However, one participant did not see age as a problem. She explained getting older “has given her a useful outsider’s perspective on organisational politics” (AUSP) which is valuable for higher leadership job applications. In addition, five of the participants

reported that not holding doctoral qualifications may affect their career. For instance, “I am not sure at what point lack of a PhD will rule me out of future roles”. Thus, lack of a doctoral degree may affect their confidence in terms of their leadership roles.

No barriers.

Interestingly, there were some participants who reported that they did not foresee any barriers in their future careers. Others were happy with their current level and did not want to move upwards. One of them noted that this question was not relevant because they were retiring the following month. For those who did not report any barriers, it is possible that they were well prepared for their career development. For those who were happy in their current position, they may not be anticipating any difficulty in moving into the next executive level. To avoid dealing with difficulties, they seem satisfied with their current safe working environment. For the participant who was due to retire, she may have already given up on her professional development at a certain age. These participants were in the minority within this study. The majority kept going, wanting to move forward and to be successful, despite professional and personal challenges.

4.6.2.3 Strategies.

Australian participants reported in the open-ended questions that they had used a variety of leadership strategies to confront professional barriers. These strategies included leadership skills, work ethic, seeking opportunity (effort), using vision, networking, mentoring, and knowledge competencies and dispositional characteristics.

Leadership skills.

Australian participants utilised different leadership skills. They reported prioritising their tasks, by “working out my own priorities” (AUSP). They prioritised by thinking carefully (“it is a carefully thought through choice about the sort of work I find most rewarding”) (AUSP) and focusing on the things they would like to do “[f]ocusing

on things that I consider genuinely worth achieving and important in regard to bigger picture outcomes affecting others over my own career advancement" and "[d]oubling efforts on the home front to ensure those obligations are met") (AUSP). They also demonstrated a high level of concentration on their tasks when they wrote "ignoring the environment, concentrating on the work" and "being confident to say 'no' to additional tasks and justifying this response by outlining the aim for quality in work outcomes and the importance of a work-life balance" (AUSP). They also reported using listening skills, and how they "listen and try and anticipate the way the wind is blowing" and how they have "tried to soften my approach and listen to others' perspectives before stating my own." They managed their time very well and also mentioned other skills, such as organisation and negotiation.

Work ethic.

Many participants mentioned that they worked very hard, and that they worked long hours. There were however some purposes for working hard. The first was creating opportunities: "Work extra hard, put myself 'out there' all the time, create my own opportunities to lead" (AUSP). The second was to do with learning: "I have developed and work hard to maintain deep expertise in my field. As long as I know I am truly expert, I feel I have value to my organisation" (AUSP). The third is achieving what they would like to obtain: "I work hard to achieve well, network strongly and try to focus on the goals" (AUSP). They furthermore reported about the need for being patient, resilient, demonstrating integrity and perseverance: "Being patient and persistently putting forward good strategies" in order to "keep applying for senior roles" (AUSP).

Seeking opportunity.

The participants reported seeking opportunities in many ways. They advised their employers when they had commitments. They also reported the need to identify the

person or the organisation to work with ("[i]dentifying the people that you want to work with. Working effectively with these people" and "working closely with someone that enjoys networking") (AUSP), and the resources necessary for their careers ("tried to access all sorts of information on careers") (AUSP). They took opportunities when available, even if with some trepidation, and were willing to take any chances, "putting my hand up for important leadership roles like the Deputy Presidency of ACDICT mentioned, or the Directorship of the ACS ICT Educators Board", "gaining more visibility and networks outside the organisation but in higher education" (AUSP). Even when they were on leave, this did not stop them looking for another chance: "Keeping in touch with research programmes/ organisation whilst on leave and negotiating strategies/ opportunities for return to work" (AUSP). It can be seen that these Australian female leaders were very active in their careers; they always tried to find opportunities to demonstrate their abilities and ways to further their career development.

Using vision.

Australian participants had targets and goals and worked toward these goals. They learnt the politics of their institutions and took advantages of policy. With an understanding of the approach and direction of their institutions, they were not afraid of changing institutions in order to work toward their goals. For example, they changed organisations, they took on extra staff, and undertook personal reorganisation. They were not afraid to take a step back to clarify their vision: "Deliberately finding time to reflect and take a step back. Does it REALLY matter?" (AUSP). Even those who were near the age of retirement still had a strategic vision for their institutions: "I am forging a new direction for pre-retirement" (AUSP). Thus, using vision was important for their whole career development process. These Australian participants recognised its significance, so

ensured that they kept their eye “on the light at the end of the tunnel” (AUSP) toward career development.

Networking.

Australian survey participants utilised different types of networking, such as professional networking, and networking with the colleagues and people they trusted. They developed their own professional networks. For instance, “sometimes I tried to do this through celebrating the contributions of others” (AUSP). They also developed networks with their colleagues so that these people could provide support. They also kept in touch with organisations whilst on leave and negotiated opportunities for their return to work. Furthermore, they had a network of people they trusted, not only in their workplaces but also in their family, from whom they could receive advice and support. This suggests that networks were considered an important part of their leadership strategies.

Mentoring.

For Australian participants’ career success, the participants identified that it was necessary to have mentors, especially good mentors, and that this included both female and male mentors. Mentors were not necessarily their senior leaders or experienced leaders; their mentors could be their partners who understood their working environment: “Talking things through with my partner, who is also an academic” (AUSP). Working with mentors, they did not only seek advice (“[s]eeking advice from informal mentors, having conversations”) (AUSP) but also directly discussed the challenges they had met.

Knowledge competencies.

Knowledge competencies also played a vital role in Australian participants’ career development. They obtained doctoral degrees, and this higher qualification secured their positions or opened up more chances for them to move into higher leadership positions.

Even though they were executive leaders, they were willing to open their minds to learning and gain more knowledge from external sources. For example: “I have taken courses, although these are sometimes of limited value because difficult situations vary so much. I have read books” and “undertaken extra curricula things that will provide additional credibility for the CV and broaden exposure across the sector both nationally and internationally” (AUSP).

In summary, Australian survey participants had utilised some significant leadership strategies to facilitate success in their careers. Combining these strategies brought meaningful progress to their journeys.

4.7. The Similarities and Differences between Vietnamese and Australian Survey Respondents

From the results of quantitative data analysis, there are significant similarities and differences between Vietnamese and Australian respondents regarding their career facilitators, barriers and strategies.

4.7.1 Favourable conditions facilitating female executives.

Vietnamese respondents and Australian respondents identified some similarities and differences regarding the conditions that facilitated opportunities in their executive leadership roles.

4.7.1.1 Leadership skills.

In Vietnam and Australia, the most helpful conditions that increased leadership opportunities for female leaders were similar (see Table 4.9). Leadership skills (Vietnam: M = 3.34, SD = 0.690); Australia: M = 3.36, SD = 0.637) and leadership experience (Vietnam: M = 3.24, SD = 0.639; Australia: M = 3.22, SD = 0.787) both showed a high score. The two groups of participants mentioned their skills and experience in the open-ended questions. For example, participants from both countries spoke about “having

professional qualifications and leadership skills" (VNP, AUSP), and "experience accumulation, soft skills preparation, professional skills, relationships building, patience, always actively learning" (VNP, AUSP). In the Australian context, typical participant responses were as follows: "From early in my career I have been on multiple committees …. This provided me with valuable experience and a strong network" and "recognition of leadership potential and achievements by a series of supervisors over 30 years which naturally leads to more leadership opportunities and achievements as a result of increasing experience and expertise" (AUSP). From these participants' point of view, the favourable factors that increased their leadership opportunities were their leadership competencies including leadership skills, experience and networking.

4.7.1.2 Qualifications.

Aside from leadership skills and experience, upgrading qualifications and workplace policies/practice also brought increased opportunities for female participants. They mentioned in the open-ended questions that the factors that had increased their leadership opportunities were "qualification, professional knowledge", "qualification; professional skills; work skills; skills to advise" and "enhancing professional qualifications" (VNP). In the Australian context, one respondent noted the importance of "good qualifications, effectiveness in a variety of senior roles", and "higher education completing a PhD" (AUSP). In the open-ended questions, the Australian participants did not talk much about their qualifications, unlike the Vietnamese participants, but they nominated a high value for qualifications. Thus, the effort of improving the qualifications of participants from both countries led to increased opportunities for career development.

4.7.1.3 Workplace policies/practice.

In institutional environments, workplace policies/practice were also considered an opportunity by both Vietnamese and Australian participants; for instance, "workplace

policies" (VNP), and more specifically gender-based policies. Yet the practices that evolved from such workplace policies were also significant in the Australian context: "I have been given the freedom to take initiative when put into positions of leadership, and fortunate enough that my supervisors take the credit for my work" (AUSP). Australian participants had more opportunities to demonstrate their ability: "[I have the] opportunity to make a difference, recognition, creation of new positions that have provided challenges on several occasions" (AUSP) and "I had autonomy and I was able to create a space that would provide a window into early childhood education for research staff and early childhood students, while ensuring what was planned for children was the very best it could be" (AUSP). They had more advantages from given opportunities, such as "[t]he opportunity to undertake the role allowing for my own innovation and decision-making" (AUSP) and "being given an opportunity to show my ability" (AUSP).

Changes in institutional policy also provided the participants with more opportunities. In the Vietnamese context, these institutional innovations were reflected in some changes, such as a "shift of Executive Board", "rejuvenating trend toward leaders", and "changing the organisational structure" (VNP). These changes caused the following: "former leader moved to another workplace", "former leader retired" and "the unit needs a new leader". Being in the institution at the right time, the participants were nominated to become leaders. There were five Vietnamese participants who mentioned grasping opportunities due to changes: "seize the opportunity", "when the opportunity comes, I grasp immediately" and "participate in the best teachers' competition to have the opportunity to express my own ability" (AUSP). However, Vietnamese participants were not active enough to take opportunities, because they waited for their "boss" to appoint them as: "higher level leaders trusted, and granted and appointed" (VNP) their employees

to be in certain career positions. This may result in a longer wait time for Vietnamese participants to be appointed to leadership roles.

In the Australian context, more participants recognised the significance of changes within the institutional context and ensured that they were prepared; for example, "clearly stating an interest in a leadership role; taking leadership courses to be prepared. Working well with people and listening to what is needed" (AUSP). In addition, they did not wait and did not hesitate to say yes to any opportunities. Australian participants explained: "[I] always took up an opportunity" and "I have tended to put my hand up and said 'yes' ... at times when I was busy" (AUSP), especially the "[c]hance to perform 'higher duties' position and deliver great outcomes in that role – gave organisation a 'try before they bought' opportunity" (AUSP). It appeared that the Australian participants were motivated and more active in taking advantage of chances in their workplaces than the Vietnamese participants; they did not wait to be "tapped on the shoulder" before applying for executive leadership roles.

4.7.1.4 Support.

Support was considered a favourable condition, even though it appeared not to be a significant factor in helping the career development of participants from either Vietnam or Australia. However, results also differed between the two countries. The most significant difference was parental support, which was higher for the Vietnamese participants (M = 2.70, SD = 1.031) than it was for their Australian counterparts (M = 1.98, SD = 1.114). In addition, Australian participants received more parental support early in their careers; this level of support was lower during their mid-careers and lowest during the later stages. Vietnamese participants had similar trends with parental support in the early and mid-stages of their careers; in late career, the support tended to increase a little rather than in the mid-career. Thus, the Vietnamese participants received much

more support from their families and their relatives than the Australian participants. The Australian leaders in my study appeared to be more independent than my Vietnamese participants.

4.7.1.5 Luck.

Some Vietnamese and Australian participants also reported luck as a factor. In the Vietnamese context, "luck" happened at the right time. For example, "my higher level leader retired" or "[my] former leader moved to another workplace", therefore, they needed a new leader. In the Australian context, luck also happened in a similar institutional context, for example, "positions being vacant". In contrast Vietnamese participants recognised that there were "not many opportunities" for senior leadership roles.

4.7.2 Barriers confronted by female executives.

In the open-ended questions, participants from both Vietnam and Australia shared their opinions about their predictive challenges. Some challenges were similar to those terms reflected above, while some emerged from the open-ended questions. These challenges were situated at different levels: from their institutions, their culture, and specific individuals. Both sets of participants elaborated on these challenges in greater detail.

At the institutional level, participants from Vietnam and Australia shared similar challenges, such as: work pressures, lack of opportunities and biased leadership selection processes.

4.7.2.1 Work pressures.

Participants from both countries reported workload anxiety, conceding, "I am burnt out now" (AUSP), or reporting the demands of "work pressure" and "multidisciplinary management" (VNP). They reported a "lack of work-related

assistance". Vietnamese participants suffered more from "lack of work-related assistance" as shown in the independent sample *t* test result above. They explained: "the lack of work assistance is clear in assigned work performance" in their institutions (VNP).

4.7.2.2 Lack of opportunities.

Regarding "lack of opportunities", participants in both countries mentioned career blocks when they were "at the same position for a long time" (AUSP), and had "no motivation to move on" or "no motivation to [move to] the next step" (AUSP). Vietnamese participants also noted that "there are few opportunities" and that "there is a lack of open opportunities" (VNP). As a consequence, they had a "lack of interest" (AUSP) and a lack of motivation. One participant confirmed: "My own desire to undertake more senior positions is limited as I have been in these positions for some time, and no longer am interested in going any higher" (AUSP). Furthermore, support from the institution was important to motivate participants; however, they reported that they lacked support from their "boss" and their colleagues. For example, there was a "lack of mutual support from superior leaders" (VNP), and "the bosses [prefer to] work with somebody they know" (AUSP). In addition, disagreement between participants' bosses and their colleagues also had a negative effect on participants' motivation. One participant commented: "inconsistency between the leaders" (VNP) and "jealousy from my colleagues" affected her task. A "lack of promotion", "lack of open opportunities", and a "lack of support" caused a "lack of motivation" (VNP). This "lack of motivation" adversely affected the Vietnamese group more than it did the Australian group (consistent with the result of the independent sample *t* test above). Although both Vietnamese and Australian participants did not receive much motivation from their bosses, or their colleagues from within their institutions, Australian leaders had more self-motivation,

while Vietnamese leaders passively waited for assistance. An Australian confirmed: "[I] put myself 'out there' all the time, create my own opportunities to lead" (AUSP).

4.7.2.3 Biased leadership selection processes.

Participants from Vietnam and Australia also identified the leadership selection process as a particularly challenging. The committees used in selection processes were in senior leadership positions. However, most of the "senior positions are dominated by males" (AUSP); thus, females found it harder to enter male-dominated positions. One participant explained: "[in a] traditional hierarchical organisational structure, men in leadership roles often likely limit women's career development (AUSP). In addition, in this hierarchical organisational structure, female leaders found that being accepted into an organisation is difficult when you are female. Male senior leaders tended to underestimate their female counterparts. One participant also recognised her lack of options in a culture of male-dominated leadership positions: "Universities are still very male-dominated and patriarchal places" and "I have hit glass ceiling at my institution" (AUSP). Thus, although female leaders achieved a certain level, they often do not ascend to the most senior-executive levels.

Yet respondents from Vietnam and Australia also experienced some different challenges in terms of salary incentives, limited professional training and family commitments.

4.7.2.4 Salary incentives

There were a number of identified barriers that differed between the Vietnamese and Australian participants. First, there was a "lack of salary incentive". There was a significant difference between the participants from the two countries in terms of the "lack of salary incentive" (as indicated in the independent *t* test above). Vietnamese participants especially commented on their salary. The salary they received was not

enough to support their families. They had financial difficulties; thus, many participants worked more than one job. A “lack of salary incentives” influenced the Vietnamese participants more than their Australian counterparts. It may be argued that the Australian participants likely had more workplace facilities and higher salaries than the Vietnamese participants.

4.7.2.5 Limited professional training.

The second barrier that differed between the two groups of participants was “not enough training”. Even though the Vietnamese participants were in executive leadership roles, they still mentioned the lack of certain [or specific] skills, such as communication skills, due to limited training. In the Vietnamese context, if somebody worked for a longer time in her institution and she was older, she was more likely to be appointed to leadership roles, whether she was trained or not. In contrast, in the Australian context, they tend to promote and bring in external expertise. Australian leaders were selected not only from inside their institutions, but also from outside. In addition, Australian participants reported ageism as they got older. It is difficult to get their names on the “short-list of leadership roles” (AUSP). Yet in the Vietnamese context, the older a woman became, the more respect she had from her institution. However, the retirement age in Vietnam is 55, earlier than that of their male counterparts and Australian female leaders. Finally, knowledge application was also noted. Some Vietnamese leaders said that they obtained scholarships to study abroad, but they were unable to apply knowledge from other countries. The process of application was blocked, which prevented them from demonstrating their abilities. In the Australian context, respondents were able to develop their career in their organisation, as one Australian respondent reported “working on being successful in my own organisation” (AUSP). They are still able to work at the age of 55. The number of Australian respondents reported to take leadership training

programmes was much more than the number of Vietnamese respondents. However, most of Australian respondents reported that they did not take away much from this training.

4.7.2.6 Family commitments.

Associated with institutional challenges, socio-cultural bias also had a negative effect on the career development of female leaders in Vietnam and Australia. Both groups of participants talked about their family commitments. They had "family responsibilities" and they considered the family responsibilities as "the social function of women" (VNP). Balancing work and family was likely to have affected their working lives. Vietnamese participants reported more family difficulties when they talked about their financial burdens, especially as they did not have much support from their partners. One Vietnamese participant reported: "[I had] no support from [my] husband in my work" (VNP).

Although personal difficulties were not a significant factor, these were identified as a challenge in the career trajectory of Vietnamese and Australian participants. Both groups of participants revealed their health and age as potential challenges. In the Vietnamese context, participants noted that they were at the late stage of their careers and near the age of retirement. In the Australian context, participants indicated that they were "perhaps considered too old for higher level roles" (AUSP), and that "[p]possibly Australia's system is more intensely competitive; I think age might be a barrier for me as a woman as I head into my 50s in the next few years" (AUSP). Thus, health and age may have an impact on the progress of participants' careers.

Of the three main challenges - institutional, socio-cultural, and personal - it is interesting to note that in the Vietnamese context, socio-cultural challenges was most dominant, while in the Australia context the dominant challenges came from their institutions.

4.7.3 Strategies used by Vietnamese and Australian female executives.

Respondents reported utilising various strategies to confront barriers. Vietnamese and Australian participants reported using similar important leadership competencies, such as:

- Leadership skills,
- Knowledge competencies,
- Work ethic, and
- Vision.

They also had some differences in strategies in terms of:

- Networking,
- Mentoring,
- Recruiting support from family, and
- Seeking opportunities.

4.7.3.1 Leadership skills.

Both Vietnamese participants and Australian participants identified leadership skills as the most important skills for developing their career. They used a variety of skills, such as: (1) organisation skills, (2) adaptability, (3) culture competence, (4) problem solving skills, (5) critical thinking, and (6) communication skills. (Collaboration and adaptability skills will come later from the interviews). These skills were built up from their experience and increased knowledge. A participant explained: “demonstrating that I have transferable skills and that the expertise demonstrated through a doctoral qualification can be demonstrated through other qualifications and experience” (AUSP).

4.7.3.2 Knowledge competence.

Improving professional knowledge, completing a PhD and gaining experience were the significant strategies reported by both Vietnamese and Australian participants.

In the Vietnamese context, more participants mentioned that they were seeking to advance their qualifications in comparison to the Australia participants (most Australian participants had already earned a PhD). They also participated in learning courses and attempted to gain insights from other colleagues. One Vietnamese participant said: "[I] accumulate professional, solid foundation" (VNP). Vietnamese participants also mentioned that they were learning or updating their skills in a foreign language. This might suggest that Australian participants need to look at international contexts or international leadership positions, so that they may need to learn a foreign language.

4.7.3.3 Work ethic.

Working hard is the common strategy of Vietnamese and Australian participants. Since they obtained leadership roles, they "worked harder": "[I] work twice as much" (VNP) and "[w]orking over and above the hours I am supposed to be in the office including on my days off" (AUSP). One significant finding was the persistence of Australian participants. In other words, they "kept applying for senior roles" (AUSP) until they got those roles. Vietnamese participants tended to wait to be invited to apply for or to be appointed to other positions (Dang, 2012).

4.7.3.4 Vision.

Both Vietnamese and Australian participants indicated that vision was also an essential leadership strategy. They set "personal priorities and goals" (AUSP) and tried to achieve these goals; they set "specific goals for the job" (VNP), and "work[ed] hard to achieve" and were "focus[ed] on [my] goals" (AUSP). These goals were not only aligned with their institutions' goals, but also brought benefits to their colleagues.

4.7.3.5 Making an effort and seeking opportunities.

Vietnamese participants commented that they worked hard, "worked more than double" (VNP), and tried their best to fulfil their career responsibilities. They also tried

to demonstrate their ability to their colleagues and their boss by participating in professional learning programmes. They "attend[ed] training courses to improve professional knowledge" (VNP) and planned to "attend leadership training courses" (VNP). Similar to the Vietnamese participants, Australian participants worked "harder and harder", "long hours" and "extra hard" (AUSP) when they obtained higher leadership roles. One Australian participant explained: "I have developed and worked hard to maintain deep expertise in my field" (AUSP). Associated with making an effort, Australian participants also looked for opportunities, "tak[ing] opportunities when available" (AUSP). Significantly, many Australian participants did not hesitate when seeking advanced opportunities. As previously noted, Vietnamese participants tended to wait for opportunities, unlike their Australian counterparts.

4.7.3.6 Networking.

Many Australian participants mentioned they had different networks, such as friends, colleagues, mentors and professional providers. They tended to build up networks outside their institutions. One Australian revealed: "[I] gain more visibility and networks outside the org[anisation]" (AUSP). In contrast, Vietnamese participants talked about narrower networking parameters, mostly at the institutional level rather than at cross-institutional and international levels like their Australian counterparts. For example, "[I] expand communication with other leaders [in my institution] (VNP), and "[k]eep a good relationship with colleagues" (VNP).

4.7.3.7 Mentoring.

Only two Vietnamese participants commented about their advisers. In contrast, many Australian participants talked about their mentors. Working with a mentor ("seeking advice of mentors" [AUSP]) was a strategy used to guide their career

development up to this point. However, most indicated they no longer relied on these mentors in their leadership roles.

Recruiting support from family.

In order to balance work life and family, many Vietnamese participants indicated they relied on support from their relatives. They asked for and mobilised support from their extended families. For example, they asked their grandparents to look after their children during long working days. On the contrary, Australian participants recruited support from their institutions. The way they obtained support was also different from Vietnamese participants. They did not depend on people; instead, they would let their "employer know that I have other commitments" (AUSP). Thus, Australian participants were more independent and autonomous, while their Vietnamese counterparts were more interdependent and collective.

4.8 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter presented the analysis results from the quantitative data. Overall, female executives still face a variety of barriers. Key challenges included household responsibilities, work pressure, leader selection processes, lack of salary incentives and lack of work-related assistance. Although they faced a variety of challenges, they did not give up; they tried their best to negotiate these challenges in order to get where they are today. The summary of this chapter will complement the results of the qualitative phase of this study in the following chapter (see Chapter Five), and will be further discussed in Chapter Six.

Chapter Five

Qualitative Analysis and Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings from the qualitative phase of the study, an overview of which was provided in the Methodology Chapter (see Chapter Three). The qualitative phase involved 24 semi-structured interviews in which 12 interviews were conducted with participants from each of the two countries, Vietnam and Australia. Participants were female executive leaders who had completed the survey. This enabled the researcher to gain valuable perspectives regarding participants' experiences in negotiating the leadership labyrinth within the tertiary education setting in both Vietnam and Australia.

This chapter is organised into four sections which reflect the key themes that emerged from the interview data. The first section covers demographic information relating to the respondents and their institutions. The second explores the senior female leaders' views about the specific contexts that facilitated their career development and practice methods. The third and fourth sections provide an overview of the challenges that were perceived to negatively impact their professional career development.

5.2 Demographic Information

Demographic information was collected from representative participants who were selected from volunteer survey respondents for a follow-up interview. An overview of these respondents' backgrounds is illustrated in the Table 5.1. The demographic information was obtained from the participants' responses to interview questions regarding their current position, years of experience, qualifications and location.

Table 5.1

Demographic information of both Vietnamese and Australian interview respondents

	Respondent codes	Current leadership positions	Years of leadership experience	Qualifications	Location
Vietnamese Respondents	VNP1	Dean	27	Master	Thu Duc
	VNP2	Dean	10	Doctorate	Tay Nguyen
	VNP3	Dean	18	Master	Nha Trang
	VNP4	Dean	7	Master	Gia Lai
	VNP5	Head of University	4	Doctorate	Nha Trang
	VNP6	Deputy Head of university/DVC	17	Doctorate	Nha Trang
	VNP7	Dean	7	Master	Phu Yen
	VNP8	Dean	14	Doctorate	Nghe An
	VNP9	Deputy Head of university/DVC	20	Master	Ha Tinh
	VNP10	Deputy Head of university/DVC	21	Doctorate	Quang Binh
	VNP11	Dean	9	Doctorate	Hue
	VNP12	Deputy Head of university/DVC	12	Doctorate	Hanoi
Australian Respondents	AUSP 1	DVC	12	Doctorate	NSW
	AUSP 2	DVC	15	Master	NSW
	AUSP 3	PVC	10	Doctorate	NSW
	AUSP 4	PVC	25	Doctorate	NSW
	AUSP 5	PVC	13	Doctorate	NSW
	AUSP 6	VC	12	Doctorate	NSW
	AUSP 7	PVC	17	Doctorate	NSW
	AUSP 8	DVC	10	Doctorate	NSW
	AUSP 9	DVC	20	Doctorate	NSW
	AUSP 10	PVC	13	Doctorate	NSW
	AUSP 11	PVC	16	Doctorate	NSW
	AUSP 12	PVC	20	Doctorate	NSW

5.3 Barriers Confronting Interview Respondents

Respondents faced a variety of obstacles during their career development. Discussion of these obstacles revealed the following themes.

5.3.1 Absence of workplace encouragement for promotion and career development.

Most of the respondents reported that they had limited work promotion and career development opportunities. They commented that it was challenging to obtain senior

leadership positions, as their workplaces did not encourage career development for female executives. In addition, most of the respondents suggested that the hierarchical system in higher education governance was the result of male domination at the top, biased leadership selection processes and a lack of female role models. Both Vietnamese and Australian executives reported that senior leadership positions in their institutions were dominated by their male counterparts. For instance, the respondent VNP8 commented that: “many leadership positions in my university are usually occupied by men, whereas women often focus on their professional work and research”. The respondent AUSP2 gave a more specific example about working in a male-dominated world:

> There was one time when I walked into the general workplace and found there were lots of men clubs. I was there for a breakfast meeting and I have a British colleague whose wife is Spanish, and he was speaking in my ear and said, “Do you realize you’re the only woman in this room?”

Although there were policies on gender equality at the international and national level, on an institutional level there was a hidden gender bias geared towards males. As the respondent VNP10 commented, “in social work, men have more advantages. Although they talk about gender equality, the story that takes place is not like that”. In other words, the hidden bias remained present. This respondent implied that the hidden bias was evident in the procedures of the selection process. The respondent VNP8 reflected on: “those who were my faculty leaders, although the men are younger and have fewer workplace experiences female in these positions”. Consequently, moving forward has been more difficult for female executives until now. Similarly, this view was also shared by another respondent:

> I think that being a woman has been an issue. In the 80s, I was the first woman to be head of that department and there were not many role models to follow. (AUSP6)

5.3.2 Limited institutional integration.

Associated with limitations in the workplace, political commitments for female executives, workplace cohesion, integration and resistance were also perceived to have a negative influence on the career development of the female executives in this study. For instance, female leaders struggled to be trusted by some of their colleagues, especially by their male leaders, even when they wanted to contribute to their institutions. For example, the respondent AUSP11 reported that:

> I had several years in my career where I was very unhappy, because I had very negative colleagues in the institution. The Dean who was the Dean of the faculty was a very negative and unhappy person for some years; this is going back a long way. You could not talk to him at all about anything, and I remember actually crying in his office because he just would not listen. I was struggling because I really wanted to have opportunities to do things, and he was just really very bad at his job. (AUSP 11)

Not only did male leaders make the work of female executives more challenging, but their male counterparts did not trust their abilities. As commented by the respondent VNP4:

> At the beginning, when I was a leader in this Centre, most of my staff were men and the majority of them were older than me. So, having come from a different environment, when I moved into the leadership role, these people did not have any confidence in me. (VNP4)

Their leadership journey was made harder when some of their female executives also questioned them. Respondent AUSP4 reported:

> I'm not going to name names. However, sometimes paradoxically some of the female leaders were giving me a hard time and were a little bit jealous, blocking and undermining. This was similar as with male colleagues. (AUSP4)

Furthermore, biased selection processes also created a harder working environment for potential female leaders, since male leaders who were less qualified than them were often selected. As the respondent VNP8 reported "Fewer qualifications, the men consciously strive to leadership roles as well as higher and better positions than me. As a result, they were appointed as faculty leaders".

The journey to the top for female executives was harder due to a lack of female role models. It was also noted that the lack of female executives in top positions is a pattern that extends back into the past, especially in countries where Confucianism was embedded in everyday culture. As commented by respondent AUSP2: "Again, they never have a female executive position [as Deputy Vice-Chancellor], they never have Chinese or Asian females in these positions". Consequently, moving forward has been more difficult for female executives up until now. Similarly, this view was also shared by respondent AUSP6 who stated that lack of role models would impact her moving forward to senior-executive roles.

Although gender equality has been addressed in legislation and via many action plans, as mentioned in Chapter Two, resistance to change, and especially towards female leaders, was still commonplace. For instance, the respondent VNP4 stated that "in society, gender prejudice still exists and is still ingrained in the minds of higher level leaders. As a result, people do not put full faith nor assign full tasks for women leaders". Their potential seemed to be ignored because they are female. Respondents reported that

this resistance could be seen from the people who assigned set tasks for them, as well as from their own staff. As commented by two respondents regarding the working attitudes of their staff: "[U]sually they do not object, but they would rather make it slow and sluggish" (VNP8), and "Employees went to the union when I wanted to make changes" (AUSP10). In the case of one young female leader, she suffered significant resistance as others seemed not to trust her leadership abilities. Female executives also reported having to deal with "suspicions from friends when [they] took their leadership role" (AUSP11).

5.3.3 Limited workplace incentives.

In association with limited workplace encouragement for promotion and career development, most respondents noted that lack of work incentives, including heavy workload, limited career opportunities and family factors also hindered their career development.

5.3.3.1 Workload.

Several female respondents reported that their extreme workloads figured as one of the major challenges they faced. Extreme workloads included unreasonable working hours and unexpected amounts of travelling. Respondent AUSP1 said: "I went through all the steps. It is hard work and you need to do a lot of work outside normal working hours". Respondent AUSP12 also shared the following:

> It's probably the travelling that is the most punishing, particularly when you have a family. So, particularly at this level where the university that I'm in has multiple campuses, you may need to travel to a different campus for different purposes at any given time. So that does impact on my family time, and I do a lot of work to try and protect the amount of time I have to be away from home.

In addition to multiple tasks at work, female executives also were responsible for their families. This double workload caused more work. Respondent VNP11, for

instance, commented: “As a woman, I not only worry about my tasks at university, but also my responsibilities to the family, my children, so sometimes I feel overwhelmed” (VNP11).

5.3.3.2 Limited career development.

Most respondents indicated that their career development was limited due to workplace competition, especially at higher levels on their career ladder. As the respondent AUSP6 reported:

> So, some of the barriers in the workplace can be that as you move from being a protégé, you come out of your PhD, then you’re a young lecturer. As a lecturer, people cooperate more with you. But when you begin to compete for research grants or good papers being published, people begin to want to limit your progress as they think you are their competitor.

The female executives reported that the higher they were on their career ladder, the more barriers they faced. In addition, working in a field that was still in development also created obstacles and prevented them from progressing their careers. As noted by respondent AUSP6: “I think that I was in the university sector at a time when professional development was not well developed”. In addition, the process of applying for a job was seen as being very competitive as leadership vacancies were also limited and thus harder to obtain at higher levels. This process could also be described as bias, as discussed above. As respondent VNP8 observed: “With my professional ability I should be assigned to be a Deputy Head of the University, not to hold the Dean position in my institution for 12 years”. It was also perceived that having limited opportunities may have had a negative influence on their career development: “[M]y progression would have been slower because I didn’t have opportunities to show that I could lead or do an important role outside the university, which led back into my career development” (AUSP3).

Obtaining opportunities appeared to be harder in the Vietnamese context because leaders were appointed via a formal application process. This was a distinguishing feature between the experiences of the female executives in Vietnam and Australia. In Australia, anyone can apply for a vacant position in the higher education sector as long as they have the qualifications to fulfil the role. On the other hand, in Vietnam those in higher education need to be selected or appointed to put forward an application.

5.3.3.3 Family impact.

Most of the Vietnamese respondents referred to the impact of family on their leadership trajectories. They mentioned that they struggled to maintain work-life balance due to family responsibilities. Some respondents reported that sometimes they devoted a lot of time on their family responsibilities, and that they gave up some opportunities to participate in leadership training programmes. As a result, they were not ready to take leadership roles. For instance, respondent VNP9 noted that: "Because of the traditional role of women in the family, I have to spend a lot of time caring for my baby, family and parents, even during New Year's holidays and anniversaries." Some female executives juggled both child rearing and self-directed study at the same time, such as: "I had to raise children while upgrading my qualifications at the same time" (VNP3, VNP5).

Elaborating on her family situation, respondent VNP2 noted her financial burden:

> My parents are farmers, and I have many family members! I have responsibilities to take care of my family, too. So, I would have to bear the cost of supporting my brothers and sisters and their children as well.

Respondents reported that they had multiple responsibilities, such as caring for family members (VNP9), raising children (VNP2), and being the bread winners in their families (VNP12). Further, whilst they were employed in leadership positions, they still had "limited income" to support their family. Even though they worked harder to ensure

financial support for their family, they also received limited support from their partners; this was especially the case in the Vietnamese context. Respondent VNP5 reported, for instance, that “my husband was away for 10 years, leaving me at home raising the children, and studying by myself”.

Working harder and taking care of family doubled the burden on their shoulders; as such, these respondents tended to give up on their career development. Respondent VNP8 noted that “because I need to take care of my families, so I rarely think I will undertake certain leadership positions”.

Family obligations also reduced the amount of time available for work. More importantly, they were sometimes denied the opportunity to participate in training courses and upgrade their higher qualifications. As a result, they had fewer opportunities to apply for leadership positions.

5.4 Favourable Working Contexts that Facilitates Female Executives’ Career Development

Respondents reported different working contexts that facilitated their career development, such as open opportunities, knowledge competencies, and support from family and workplace.

5.4.1 Open opportunities.

The majority of respondents indicated that open opportunities which were available for them to step into had been a tremendous contributor to their sucessful journey. These included opportunities to undertake leadership positions or to be appointed to do certain tasks. Being appointed to a leadership role also opened up opportunities for female leaders to step into executive leadership positions in the Vietnamese context.

Respondent VNP8 revealed that “the older I got, the more experience I had, so I was appointed to the role of Dean”. She also reported that having access to different positions in leadership roles played an important part in opening up leadership positions for female leaders, especially when they performed different roles in the international context. As respondent AUSP9 commented: “I was offered a position in the United States at Berkley and I was able to do that”.

Respondent VNP5 said that “I get the chance to participate in conferences, foreign training courses, and engage in international networking; thus, I gain experience and opportunities for both me and my staff”. Respondents felt, however, that such opportunities would be more effective and have greater impact if they were made available to female leaders early in their careers. Respondent AUSP1, for instance, reported that:

> I think it starts from a very young age; you build up your resilience like my family did with me, and then through education, you get opportunities to lead so that the boys can see that girls can lead. It’s not just a girl thing. Often the males are just not aware that some of the females can and can’t do really good jobs because they haven't experienced it. So right back to school, if you’ve got a leadership role, be it in sport, in the classroom, it’s got to be equal opportunity for girls and boys to lead, and then it becomes normal. (AUSP1)

In order to meet the demands of these opportunities, the respondents themselves demonstrated their extensive abilities which will be discussed in further detail in the next section, “Strategies used by female executive respondents”.

Available vacancies.

Having opportunities also depended on the availability of vacancies. Vacancies may become available due to the need of an institution. As noted by respondent VNP9,

"the provincial authorities invited me from Ha Noi capital to work here". Respondent AUSP11 added that many people were not interested in taking on the leadership role:

> In my previous place of work, which was a university faculty in New Zealand, there was a sense among other academics that they didn't like taking on those kinds of roles. A lot of academics are suspicious of leadership and management roles, and in the department where I became the leader there was a real vacuum. There was no Professor, there was no leadership position by nature, so everybody who'd been occupying that role had been doing so at a lower level. (AUSP11)

In addition, an uncompetitive working environment also made leadership positions available for potential female leaders. As respondent VNP12 explained, the proportion of female staff in the tertiary setting generally is not high [= 20%]; therefore, competition in the workplace is not so competitive, and as a result she was able to progress relatively smoothly.

Potential female leaders not only understood their working context, but also took advantage of whatever opportunities they had.

5.4.2 Individual competencies.

Most of the respondents indicated that individual competencies, including professional knowledge, skills, experience and characteristics, played an essential role in motivating female executives.

5.4.2.1 Professional knowledge.

Respondents reported that their professional competencies, such as academic knowledge, qualifications and training, were important in their career development (VNP7, VNP11, AUSP2, AUSP5). They demonstrated a high level of academic knowledge and academic ability since becoming a scholar. As respondent AUSP8 said, "[W]ell, one thing that I think has made a big difference to my career was I was a

Fulbright scholar from my PhD". They also showed they were able to do "tough" research, especially when the research area had not been well established or was relatively new. Giving an example, respondent AUSP3 reported:

> This is back in the early 1990s that I did something on climate change. It wasn't a very fashionable topic in those days but I decided it might be quite useful. I got into the sort of climate change research area relatively early which was unusual for a woman, I think, because most of the climate change research being done at that time was being done by climatologists, climate scientists. (AUSP3)

Obtaining a PhD also facilitated their applications for significant positions in their workplace. As respondent AUP12 stated: "So the combined impact of the role that you have at the university and the need to develop a new career, do a PhD, become a researcher". Achieving a PhD actually helped female executives access new positions and promoted their career development, as reported by two respondents: "Well, before I was in a position that you'd call a leadership position, I have a PhD" (AUSP8) and "[A]fter doing a doctorate in 2010, I was appointed to be a Director of an Institute. Previously I had never been in any leadership positions at all" (VNP5). Respondent VNP5 also revealed that she was able to create prestige for her institution by organising international conferences and providing exchange programmes with other institutions since obtaining a PhD.

It can be argued that having a high academic qualification, such as a PhD, enabled female executives to step into executive positions and also helped them to access more opportunities. Academic ability as well as academic qualifications made it possible for female executives to obtain leadership roles. In the Vietnamese context, a political certificate, foreign language certificate and information computing certificate were also necessary for the leadership application process.

5.4.2.2 Skills.

Another important component of individual competencies was skills. Most of the respondents indicated that their technical skills and personal skills helped them in leading and managing people and in their work. Technical skills related to managing work. As respondent VNP6 indicated, the four main skills she used in work were planning, organisation, implementation, as well as supervision and assessment:

> For example, the leadership context in an institution includes organisational management, i.e. management of human services; administrative organisation; professional career; finance and work facilities. This is the segment in the school management that is important to note. They are about people, facilities, financing. (VNP6)

Respondent VNP5 also noted other skills, such as communication skills and presentation skills ("Presenting in a way to attract people, to make people understand"), organisation skills (e.g., organising meetings and seminars), and foreign language skills (this skill was emphasised mainly in the Vietnamese context). Self-learning was identified as an important technical skill for leaders as well (AUSP6).

Interpersonal skills also contributed to career development when they were able to inspire people in the leadership role. These interpersonal skills were also considered as soft skills, such as communication, presentation, and persuasion skills (VNP10), which were used to establish effective relationships with people in the workplace. Participant AUSP9 also indicated the essential role of her interpersonal skills:

> I've talked about the direction setting, getting people, I think people skills, and what I might call people skills – so communication, relationships – because it's all about working with people; so that's really important. (AUSP9)

These skills helped the female executives to communicate better and manage work in different parts of the university, such as office administration, within their faculties, and at the central level (VNP10).

Both technical skills and interpersonal skills were highlighted and summarised in the response from respondent AUSP1:

> Technical skills in the area that you're managing in, definitely; strategic planning skills including being able to set visions and encourage people to rally around that vision and to strive towards achieving it; people skills, I think you've got to be incredibly good at communicating what it is that you want and need; and I think the last one is obviously the capabilities to keep an eye out in the much broader context of what's going on around you, because if you just focus on your little part of the world, which in a lot of jobs you can do, you will be squashed. So, you must be very aware of what's going on around you. (AUSP1)

Female executives had a wide range of skills: working in different types of organisations, and having a breadth of skills and experiences in a variety of organisations. These enabled female executives to do different kinds of work, which further widened their leadership opportunities. Gaining these skills and then developing these skills are leadership strategies that female executives in my study used to succeed. These will be discussed further in the following section, "Strategies used by female executive respondents".

5.4.2.3 Prior Experience.

Most of respondents indicated that professional experience was a favourable condition in their career development. The most important experience they gained was by being placed in various acting roles and in different positions in their workplace. For example, respondent VNP10 had worked in different positions in her university – as the

Dean of Social Science Department from 1995 – then Deputy Head of Department of Training, followed by Head of Department of Training, and finally, Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Respondent AUSP4 not only worked in different leadership positions, but also worked across faculties in her workplace. As stated by respondent AUSP4:

> I was Dean of Medicine in 2011 and then in 2013, I was still Dean of Medicine and also became Executive Head of a broad Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health. About three months ago, I became full-time Executive Dean of Science, Medicine and Health and the Vice-Chancellor then also asked me to take on Pro Vice-Chancellor Health Strategy across the whole university, pulling Health together across five faculties and beyond, so a whole-of-university role, rather than managing the faculty role and doing both. (AUSP4)

In addition, female executive respondents also gained experience in different sectors and different disciplines. For example, respondent AUSP1 worked as a pilot trainer in the Air Force before working in the education sector. Respondent AUSP10 had experience working in the cultural, non-profit and business sectors, and as a result had a lot of experience in securing funding as well as managing people (AUSP10).

Respondents also worked internationally across some universities and countries around the world. For example, respondent AUSP8 worked in different institutions, such as the University of Georgia, University of Canberra, Australian Research Council, the Fulbright Commission and Charles Sturt University. She had also worked in different countries, such as Ireland and Australia. The respondent AUSP2 also stated that she had years of experience and had worked in different countries around the world: “I have had eight jobs in the last 26 years …. And I’ve worked across countries, so I’ve worked in the United Kingdom, I’ve worked in Hong Kong, I’ve worked in Nigeria, and now in

Australia".

The respondents also believed that gaining experience from the time when their career started was quite useful in their later career development. For instance, respondent AUSP10 noted that:

> I think that early experience that I got has helped me enter a fairly specialised sector, so I had experience in the specialised sector and broad management experience early on, so I'd say that's been what's really contributed to my success. (AUSP10)

In addition, respondent AUSP6 commented that early experience allowed her to step up into executive positions:

> Experience is really helpful in working out what you're worried about as a leader, what you haven't seen before and what you're not worried about because you have seen it before, you may have done something that worked or didn't work as well as you wanted it to and you can use that experience the next time that you face it. (AUSP6)

In the current context of globalisation and demand for innovation, the international experience as well as early experience, which these respondents had obtained, enabled them to become global leaders. They are able to work across countries, institutions and disciplines.

5.4.3 Encouragement from workplace and family.

Most of the respondents mentioned that support from their family and institution also facilitated their career development. Support from family, in general, was reported more frequently than support from their institutions.

5.4.3.1 Institutional support.

Associated with encouragement from family, female executive respondents also

obtained support from their workplace, including their bosses and colleagues. They had good support from their bosses and the people they reported to. Respondent AUSP10 shared: “I had a very good boss, for about six years I had a very positive relationship with my boss. And probably within the university here, I have had good support from the people I report to”. Respondent VNP1 also commented: “[T]he biggest advantage is that my higher level leader trusted me and boldly assigned tasks for me”.

Another respondent also mentioned the working environment: “The third is from my university, they always created favourable conditions for individuals who wish to improve the level of education” (VNP2). In addition, they also had support from their colleagues, as reported by respondents VNP1, VNP6, VNP10 and VNP11.

The female executive respondents had support from both their families and their workplace. These supports partly contributed to their career development. However, family support outweighed institutional support, as noted by respondent AUSP4: “very strong friendships and strong family makes a huge difference in the ability to have resilience, to bounce back and to recover”. The respondents also reported that they had extensive support from their bosses. It seemed that support from their bosses was similar to the support given by employers to their employees, so that the latter could complete their work and fulfil their roles. These internal supports, however, may not be the same as providing opportunities for moving up into higher positions. This will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

5.4.3.2 Family support.

Respondents reported that they received extensive support from their family members, particularly in the Vietnamese context. Their parents not only encouraged them to work well, but also helped them with their family responsibilities. As respondent AUSP1 reported: “I also think coming from my family who had ... encouraged me to try

and do my best at whatever it was that I was doing, [this] really made a big difference". In addition, their parents also helped them with their professional career and knowledge. Respondent VNP8 noted that: "he [my father] has shared with me and my sister's strategies on how to undertake research, how to self-improve and guide the journey of research and how to implement ways of doing it". She also found it easy to share her difficulties with her parents: "In the process of working, if there were any difficulties, I asked my Dad for his opinion" (VNP8).

Their parents also helped them with their family responsibilities, such as caring for children and housework: "Thanks to my parents, they supported me a lot since I had children, and when they were sick" (VNP6).

They had a supportive family and open-minded parents who were always ready to help them:

> I come from a family where we have six girls, and actually a very traditional family where boys would traditionally have the advantage, but my parents have been very open-minded. So, we are all very well educated, supported and successful. (AUSP2)

Not only parents, but partners, also contributed to their success, especially in the Australian context. Their partners not only encouraged them, but also shared ideas on how to get there with them.

Respondent AUSP2 explained: "[M]y husband is very supportive so he never says 'no'". Their partners also contributed to their career development, as reported by respondent AUSP10: "I have had a partner for the last 20 years who has supported my career advancement". Respondent AUSP12 explained in more detail how their partners had encouraged them to move forward:

I guess one of the things I didn't say before was one of the most helpful things that I found was the debriefing and briefing that I do with my partner. So, early on, I remember him saying to me, "Have you told anyone that you're interested in that job?" and I went, "Oh, no, of course I haven't. No, I wouldn't do that." And he said, "Well, you should." (AUSP12)

Parents' encouragement especially in the Vietnamese context, and partners' encouragement in the Australian context created intrinsic motivation, more time and more chances for female executives, so that they were able to devote their efforts to their work.

5.5 Strategies Used by Female Executive Respondents

As outlined in Table 5.2 below, Vietnamese and Australian respondents used a range of strategies to further their career development, such as networking, mentoring, vision, skills, work ethic, building credibility and self-effort. The frequency they used these strategies were also different from each other.

Table 5.2

Frequency of responses: Strategies used by executives

Strategies	Vietnam	Australia	Total references
Networking	3	11	14
Mentoring	1	10	11
Knowledge competencies	5	5	10
Skill	10	8	18
Vision	9	8	17
Work ethic	8	7	15
Building credibility	8	6	14
Resilience	4	6	10
Character	8	6	14
Taking risk	3	6	9
Empowerment	2	5	7
Experience	2	6	8

5.5.1 Networking.

Most of the respondents, especially the Australian respondents, reported that their relationships with people around them had contributed to their career development success. Networking involved establishing and building relationships with the people

around them, such as having lunch, meeting and doing extra activities together, and developing every dimension of their early career through research, strategies, and networking (AUSP3). As respondent AUSP12 indicated:

> When I'm on different campuses I strive to make the best of the social interaction that sits beside the professional interaction, as much as you can within the busiest schedule of my calendar. So, every time I go to another campus I'll meet with another member of either my portfolio and/or the executive team of my peers for breakfast or dinner. I'll do those sorts of things so we catch up. (AUSP12)

Besides having breakfast or dinner together, respondent VNP4 also "arranged meetings, picnics to build relationships, and linkages between staff", to help improve efficiency and productivity within the workplace.

In addition to developing relationships within their organisations, female executives also focused on expanding their connections outside their institutions. For instance, respondent AUSP8 noted that her academic qualifications enabled her to widen her network beyond her institution: "Well, one thing that I think has made a big difference to my career was I was a Fulbright scholar from my PhD and that has certainly allowed me to access different networks and different positions".

Both respondents AUSP8 and AUSP3 also recognised the importance of extensive networking. As reported by the latter:

> When I first got the PVC role, I decided that one of the first things I wanted to do was to develop an early career researching strategy and network, which Macquarie didn't have. We basically developed that from the ground up. That's still going. (AUSP3).

Respondent AUSP3 explained more about how she chose networking as her leadership strategy. Knowing certain people, and belonging to certain networks, presented her with various work opportunities:

> The more people you get to know, the more opportunities arise via those people knowing you. So, I think I have gone from opportunity to opportunity via a growing network of people that I have met. …. I think being able to get along well with a diverse range of people is very important because I think people look for other people that they can work with or recommend that they know will be reasonably competent and knowledgeable, but also just get along. (AUSP3)

Networking was also identified as a critical way to overcome their barriers, as noted by respondent AUSP9:

> I think the other thing in terms of barriers is just to be visible, to be out there, as a leader. Not to sit in an office like this but to be out talking with people, trying to understand what's happening, listening, being visible.

The literature confirms the power of networking, which the female executives did not emphasise, and I will discuss this in my analysis in Chapter Six.

5.5.2 Mentoring.

Mentoring was reported mostly by Australian respondents who found that it contributed to their career success. They emphasised how took advantage of mentoring. For example, mentors helped respondents recognise their strengths and weaknesses and shared experiences with them. This was the case for respondent AUSP11, who actively sought and found mentors who were relevant and suitable

> I've sought out mentors; I've sought out advisers, people who can provide me with a little bit of balanced and honest sort of feedback about where I've headed, or where I am heading …. I sought out a person back in New Zealand who was

> not a colleague in the same university, but was an academic woman, who was based in the sciences, so not in my area either, and I asked her if she would mind mentoring me. (AUSP11)

They sought advice from mentors regarding their institutional work and on how to develop their leadership skills. Associated with leadership skills, seeking support from mentors to gain promotions was another important strategy, as reported by respondent AUSP11:

> I'd gone to have my baby and the new Professor was a woman and my age and she supported me and helped me get promoted to Associate Professor and so through that process I was able to get a bit more through the stages and up the ladder. (AUSP11)

Respondent AUSP12 confirmed that mentoring was necessary not only for females but also for males in their workplace:

> I'm very supportive of mentoring, not only for women but young men as well in the university, to enable them to understand how to play the game, because I don't think it's just women that don't get enough – young men that I see in the university also don't get it. So, "How do you actually learn how to do that?" And I think what's really important, to have mentors – people who are authentic – in that mentoring really enables people to facilitate people's practice, tell them what to do. So, it really enables them to develop new skills. (AUSP 12)

Most of the Australian respondents used a mentor during their career development. For example, respondent AUSP1 identified "I think from even as a very young sports person I had a mentor and continued to have mentors right up until today". In addition, respondent AUSP8 reported that she had both female and male mentors:

> So, when I first moved into management I had a male mentor. He was also one of my senior directors at the time but somebody with a similar background to mine, so he was able to advise me [on] how to navigate a new role in management. And since I came to Australia, I've actually had a very strong female mentor for the past eight years who is in a similar discipline to me and has employed me on occasion. But it's given me mentorship and that's not on how to do this particular job, but how to work in a role like this. (AUSP8)

They not only sought relevant mentors, but also tried to use mentoring effectively to advance their career. As shared by respondent AUSP1: "getting a mentor or mentors, and use them very wisely, and tak[e] responsibility for driving that relationship".

5.5.3 Administrative skills.

Vietnamese and Australian respondents utilised both technical and interpersonal skills, which facilitated their career and their leadership strategies. Strategies were used differently between the two countries, yet the skills they used were not different. As there was no difference between the skills used, the data from the two countries will be reported together. The skill Vietnamese and Australian respondents reported using most frequently in their leadership role was problem solving. These skills are illustrated in Table 5.3 and were extracted from NVivo data analysis.

Table 5.3

The frequency with which management skills were reported by female executives

Management skills	**Number of coding references**	**Aggregate number of coding references**
Problem solving	12	17
Collaboration	9	9
Communication	9	14
Flexibility - adaptability	8	8
Self-confidence	7	7
Inspiration	6	6
Time-management	6	6
Negotiation - convincible-consulting skills	5	5
Presentation	1	1
Understanding	1	1

5.5.3.1 Problem solving.

Problems are at the centre of what many people do at work every day. Problem solving is an essential skill in the workplace (Monge & Frisicaro-Pawlowski, 2014), and also means the ability and skill to resolve conflict (Foxx & Faw, 2000). Respondent VNP3, for instance, described one situation in which she was able to identify and resolve conflict between her teams:

> I must have clear objectives; this was critical to resolving the discord/disunity in my workplace. I defined which difficulties I had at the time by analysing the task. Then I had to solve these problems, like solving the relationship discord in the group there. (VNP3)

They appreciated receiving inquiries from their staff, and having the opportunity to take a uniquely positive approach, by examining what was working well around them to obtain the best outcome. But it was their decisiveness that allowed them to work in alignment with their institution's goals. Respondent AUSP4, gave an example of her decisiveness, explaining that:

> I have had [to problem solve] quite a bit because we've managed to secure out of the university quite a lot of strategic funding. I have had to make decisions where we are having to strategically invest in some areas and not in others. I'm very, very open about why that is, and it's based on the performance and the trajectory and opportunity. (AUSP4)

In general, solving problems involved both analytical and creative skills. This was considered the most important management skill because "problems" more broadly could be defined as difficulties, challenges, resistance to change, and even opportunities, all of which happened continuously in their workplaces.

5.5.3.2 Collaboration.

Most of the respondents identified collaboration as one of the most important skills impacting their leadership. However, they had different perceptions about the extent of this impact. Some respondents explained that collaboration was the combined efforts of each individual in a team which in turn produced a good working environment. Respondent AUSP3, for instance, stated that collaborating with a diverse range of staff and interacting with people was important.

Respondents considered collaboration as a targeted, team-based activity used to share updates and information about their joint work with their staff through a shared purpose and vision. As a result, people were able to work together towards shared goals. Respondent AUSP4 talked about what her team achieved, their shared goals, and how they built collaboration as an organisational change strategy. Female executives described collaboration as a change in attitude and the behaviour of people throughout an organisation. Thus, the respondents also helped people in their workplace develop relationships. They believed that they would achieve better results if they got their team to know one another. In developing these relationships, team members would discover each other's strengths and weaknesses, build personal ties, and then establish a common understanding about the shared target and goals, as noted by respondent VNP7: "Even though I am a leader, I usually work together with my staff. I do what my staff do. In this way, I can be involved with the task in detail whilst maintaining a good relationship with everyone as well."

In summary, collaboration was described by respondents as one of their most important management skills. They considered collaboration as a strategy to get team members together to work toward common goals. As explained by respondent AUSP9:

> I think [it's about] setting clear goals and targets that are achievable, in a reasonable time, and just working towards them. And then getting other people on board with those, so that there's a goal, there's something that we're all doing, so it's not just me as the leader but the whole faculty, for example, is working towards. So, getting people to work together on that. (AUSP9)

5.5.3.3 Communication.

Communication was identified as another important skill by most respondents. It involves the ability to communicate effectively in different working environments (Batts, Breslin, & Winter, 2012). As respondent AUSP3 stated: "In fact, in some ways, I think it's more important than what you know. It's how you interact with people".

Respondents used different means of communication, such as verbal and non-verbal language. They used informal verbal language like "come and have lunch with me" (AUSP12). At other times, they were quite firm about "turning off Microsoft Outlook [and] telling the team, "Don't disturb me unless it's critical" (AUSP12).

One respondent also found her own voice in communication. Voice refers to knowing how to talk to one's staff in a way that does not make them feel inferior (Batts et al., 2012). As respondent AUSP4 said: "Sometimes I will have very straightforward conversations with people and say, you know, 'You and I don't have to see eye to eye on things but for the university we do need to grow potential".

They used communication as a strategy to engage with people, and to make themselves known to people. Respondents preferred to engage directly with people rather than being the person behind the computer working with emails and memos.

Respondents reported that an important aspect of communication is the ability to listen. Active listening should always be a goal: it involves concentrating on listening to

the other person. As explained by one respondent: “I’ve got two ears for a reason, and one mouth, and I’ll listen” (AUSP1).

One strategy used by the female executives to enhance their communication skills was to attend training classes or programmes that focused on effective communication. However, there was a lack of training courses available, which was identified by most of respondents.

It is clear that the use of different communication methods helped female executives achieve success in their leadership careers. Developing strong communication skills should receive great attention as it enhances leadership skills.

5.5.3.4 Flexibility and adaptability.

Flexibility and adaptability was also nominated by more than half of the respondents. Rapid changes in technology have caused internal and external change in their organisations (see Chapter Two). In order to adapt to change, respondents explored different avenues for fostering creativity and accomplishing their work goals which fitted the common goals of their institutions. As respondent VNP2 explained, she found ways to help her and her husband in the hierarchal system: “I had to get away to Hanoi headquarters to meet and discuss with them so that my husband and I could learn foreign languages; this opened up an opportunity for my husband to study abroad” (VNP2).

Respondents were flexible in confronting challenges by learning from their colleagues. As respondent AUSP1 said: “I’ll listen, and I’m not scared to change my decision if I think what they’ve put forward is reasonable”.

Female leaders adapted their plans to changing circumstances. Planning was an essential part of the success of their team’s work. Although they made plans, these were often modified to adapt to changing circumstances in their workplace, even when a degree

of ambiguity was involved. They would make suitable adjustments which enabled them to move forward with their beliefs and core values. As respondent VNP4 explained:

> I had to study other countries, other cities or in larger institutions where they have many years of experience, then I summarised the strengths and weaknesses and applied them to my institution accordingly.

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to manage and identify one's emotions, and is required in the development of flexibility and adaptability (Berman & West, 2008). The respondents felt it was easier to adapt when they were required to work with a new team to deliver specific plans. Respondent AUSP4 gave the following example:

> It's top-down and bottom-up, so we need to have all of the plans strategically aligning, so obviously, we have to go with the overall strategic direction of the Vice-Chancellor for the university. Then we work with each of the schools to factor in what will be part of the faculty, planning and make things work together that way. (AUSP4)

The respondents also shared that their ability to maintain or shift focus in a way that agrees with their institution's changing priorities to achieve their goals. This indicates high levels of adaptability and flexibility in the respondents. As respondent AUSP12 said, "I flex things around so there are times [I] just put the hours in because [I] need to". Respondent VNP6 also described her flexibility in shifting focus between her roles as a wife, daughter, mother and leader:

> Women generally have to do lot of work, many functions at the same time. The first function is as a wife, the second function is as a child, a mother, and then the function of leadership, management, etc. Thus, there are many other functions to perform, all of which I need to perform equally well. (VNP6)

Flexibility was reported as being necessary (i.e., the participants' perception was that female executives needed to adapt to change). This process required updating knowledge and skills in order to think creatively in relation to the ever changing context of the working environment. Increasing one's focus on developing and establishing flexibility and adaptability was essential for leadership across all levels of the workforce hierarchy (Berman & West, 2008).

5.5.3.5 Self-confidence.

Self-confidence was raised as an important management skill in the context of both Vietnam and Australia. It was necessary for the leaders in this study to take risks in order to accomplish goals. My respondents showed their self-confidence and dealt directly and immediately with workplace problems. They did not procrastinate, ignore or pass problems onto others. As respondent VNP3 acknowledged, her faculty at the time was new and increasing the number of their enrolments was perceived as a challenge. Nevertheless, she asserted her confidence and demonstrated her leadership ability by increasing the number of students enrolled in the faculty as well as the quality of her teaching staff.

The respondents also developed greater self-awareness. By developing self-awareness, they were able to understand their weaknesses and strengths in a balanced way. Acknowledging weaknesses and strengths in the area of development helped respondents improve and to see problems as challenges rather than as obstacles.

Respondents with self-confidence were also not afraid to fail, because they recognised that fear of failure prevented them from achieving their goals. In the process of making decisions appropriately and deliberately accurately, leaders were willing to take risks in order to accomplish goals (Horth & Buchner, 2014). Thus, respondents tackled challenges which allowed them to move forward and reach their target.

Respondent VNP3, for example, felt confident in taking up her position upon being assigned to a leadership role: “There was a decision to assign me as a Dean; I have opted to take on the role” (VNP3).

Respondents also showed their confidence by believing in themselves and then asking for feedback to improve their practice. Asking for feedback and being open to feedback shows a huge amount of courage. By doing this, respondents were able to help themselves as well as others see their blind spots. As noted by one respondent: “Well, some of it is fortuitous when you apply for positions. When I have applied for positions and been unsuccessful I always get feedback” (AUSP8).

5.5.3.6 Inspiration.

Motivation involves inspiring followers toward one’s goals and targets (Voon, Lo, Ngui, & Ayob, 2011). The respondents not only told their staff that they were deeply committed to the experiences of their staff, but also demonstrated this commitment and their passion in meetings, presentations and in how they handled situations. Respondent AUSP8 stated the following:

> It was a natural progression to what I had done previously. But it was in a new organisation and part of that was because I could kind of reinvent myself. I could start afresh and having had a break, I knew what my requirements were now. (AUSP8)

Associated with vision and passion, respondents’ integrity was also considered important because they needed their staff to trust them in order to inspire them. The respondents gave their staff what their staff wanted, within their capabilities. As respondent VNP4 indicated:

> Inspirational skills and vision are very important. When I had a vision, then I inspired the employees. So, they could see what benefits they would get, what benefits their institution would have, then they would support me. **(**VNP4)

The respondents also prompted individuals. For instance, respondent AUSP11 explained that "[O]ne strategy I've used, is getting people to tell me what they really think". The respondents also facilitated change and empowered their staff. They understood that, aside from using money as a motivator, praise, recognition and rewards also contributed to the success of a team. Inspiration also involved speaking directly to their staff about the value of their work to the institution. As described by respondent VNP4: "The leader inspires her staff by using her ability to build on her trust, and letting them know which duties, benefits and rights, interests and responsibilities they have" (VNP4).

In general, the actions that these female executives take every day at work are powerful. If they incorporates forms of inspiration into their actions, this could bring out the best in their staff.

5.5.3.7 Time management.

Time management was viewed as an important skill. Female executives used these skills to manage their work effectively. Effective respondents put their time management skills into play to make sure that they maximised their available time and accomplished their target. For example, respondent AUSP12 initially found that travelling was an obstacle, but this became less of a hindrance once she was able to manage her time.

Time management skills also helped respondents know how well they had managed themselves in order to manage their time – a form of self-evaluation. For example, "I become more, I suppose, serious at protecting my diary and protecting my

time" (AUSP12). Respondents also used time management to maintain the balance between work and family life: **"**[I] arrange a reasonable time to take care of my tasks at work and family chores" (VNP11). Another strategy was to develop a "to do list" that was used to manage their time (VNP8).

Besides the abovementioned management skills, respondents also mentioned other skills, such as motivation, negotiation, understanding and recognising individual contributions, and presentation. Negotiation is the ability to discuss, then convince and persuade listeners to pursue shared targets. Understanding and recognising individual contributions is the ability to acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses, personalities and motivations of team members. Respondents also learned which skills their team members had mastered and which skills their team members needed to improve. Presentation skills were perceived as the ability to adapt to a variety of speaking situations. This could be presenting an idea, information and data or delivering a decision fluently in front of others. This skill was considered necessary for those who work in an educational environment.

There were other emerging skills that were reported by Vietnamese respondents but not Australian respondents, and vice versa. In the Vietnamese context, mastering computer skills was mentioned, while speaking was considered essential for the leadership selection process: "This process involves constantly striving for all aspects of professional, political, and moral development. In general, people must have professional qualifications, professional skillsets, political qualifications and other skills such as foreign languages, information computing, etc." (VNP6).

Obtaining a political certificate was more critical in the Vietnamese context, especially in government institutions. In the Australian context, building a personal brand was important. Australian respondents were not only open to opportunities, they also took

any opportunities that were presented to them. In particular, they created opportunities themselves in order to stand out from others. For example, they employed people who were experts in different disciplines so that they could learn more from them. They also moved positions to get promoted. If they were still not recognised, they would try another way to do things and worked their way through so that they could make sure their voice was heard. The outcomes of these actions were about getting known and trusted, and helping others to recognise them as the right person to fill the gaps wherever there was an opportunity. These actions showed who they were, what they stood for, highlighted their strengths and helped them make professional connection.

5.5.4 Vision.

Most of the respondents reported that having a clear vision was one of the most important strategies for career development. Vision related to where and what their institutions wanted to be in the future. It set clear directions and a purpose for the institution, and was reflected the institution's culture, beliefs, values, unique strengths and direction, as described by respondent AUSP7:

> I think first of all you've got to have a vision based on a number of things in which one is about the overall collective. And what I mean by the collective is that vision has got to be somewhere where you're headed and you've got to be able to sell and articulate that in a good way, but you've also got to align it to what other people feel as if they can do it, they should do it because otherwise you don't bring people along with you. (AUSP7)

An important aspect of vision was setting target and strategic objectives to achieve shared goals. Respondent VNP7 also gave a specific example about how she came up with her strategic vision to improve her faculty:

> I could give another example such as the time I was assigned to be Head of Faculty [which was a new Faculty] …. At that time, the faculty was very weak, the students were not yet matriculated. I had to define how the faculty existed. Leaders must have two responsibilities: one is training for the faculty team, training manpower/human resource for the faculty; second was survival, the faculty must have ongoing students. So, I had to take action, do consulting work, advising education enrolment to increase student numbers. So, at the beginning of my assignment, there were only 32 students; after 3 years of my leadership, students reached up to 600 to 700 students. That success was possible because I was able to define clear targets of leadership for myself. (VNP7)

The respondent set not only short-term goals to increase the quality of her staff and the number of students to ensure the sustainability of her faculty, but also long-term goals to build her faculty as a leader in the professional pedagogy discipline: “After that I performed professional duties well; for example, enhancing this Psychology-Education group to become a leading group in the field of professional pedagogy. This was all about identifying the target, the objectives” (VNP7).

Having a strategic vision not only helped the leaders qualify their leading abilities, it also helped them make better decisions and collaborate with their staff more effectively, even when their staff did not always agree with them. The respondents had a clear vision for the future and believed that it was doable. They also used that vision to motivate people to take action.

Leaders not only needed to have a clear vision for the future, they also used that vision to communicate with people clearly, compellingly and passionately in order to inspire their teams toward a successful leadership vision.

The ways that respondents inspired people included their enthusiasm, commitment, passion, belief and excitement: “So being, you know forging strong networks, talking to your colleagues about what’s working, what isn’t, in a very open, transparent way and being able to communicate your vision, your message, in a real positive but honest way” (AUSP5).

In order to communicate their vision effectively, they provided people with clarity and drew on their passion to motivate them:

> When I had a vision then, I was inspiring to employees. If they were able to see how they would benefit and how the institution would benefit from my vision, they would then support me. (VNP4)

When communicating vision, the respondents also helped their team members believe that if they took action it would benefit them and their organisation, and that the change was much bigger than their daily work. The determination of the respondents was essential in making the vision come true, as reported by one respondent: “[W]hen I set out a task, I set a goal and do whatever I can to get there” (VNP7).

The respondents learned about the importance of having vision from their past experiences. Their vision also derived from self-reflection, since they had learned to perform their work well by mastering the disciplines that they had led. As explained by respondent VNP4, she thought ahead, learning and equipping herself with knowledge about human resources and financial management, which served her in leadership roles of disciplines to which she was new.

Respondents also took advantage of their mentors to shape their vision. Their mentors helped to formulate the skills that they had gained, and then encouraged them to address their future career needs. With this assistance, female executives in my study reported making constructive changes to serve their future careers.

> She [my mentor] looked at my CV and she sort of talked to me about what skills I had probably. And she encouraged me to think about how I was going to create a strategy, and, in fact, it was interesting, because I was torn between strategies in some respects. (AUSP11)

In general, the respondents aligned their visions with targets and strategic objectives that addressed both the short and long-term needs of their institutions and those who worked within them. Using their vision, they were able to make better decisions, collaborate effectively, as well as motivate and inspire people toward shared goals. They learned the importance of having a vision from self-reflection as well as from their mentors.

While I did not get specific information as to how they developed their visionary mindset, each participant shared the importance of her vision.

5.5.5 Knowledge competencies.

Building knowledge competencies was related to professional knowledge, qualifications, expertise, and doing something new.

5.5.5.1 Professional knowledge.

Respondents prepared and obtained professional knowledge, recognising the importance of having such knowledge if they wanted to gain more self-confidence. As shared by respondent AUSP12: "[T]he more knowledge you have if you do walk into something … you have a better capacity to manage in that space" (AUSP12).

Being aware of professional interactions and preparation actually brought a variety of career benefits to the female executives. For example, their bosses supported and encouraged them to do academic research, while their staff respected their professional skills and knowledge (VNP8). They were able to monitor and empower their staff with certain levels of knowledge.

Professional knowledge contributed to the successful leadership practice of the female executives in my study. Improving their professional knowledge was their most important target, so that their work could be done smoothly. By doing so, they demonstrated leadership abilities in their current roles. One participant stated that:

> Having a grasp on the professional knowledge of the field that I managed, I was able to work more specifically, could work in an energetic way, and monitor the assigned task. Monitoring the assigned task also promoted the development of the organisation. (VNP6)

The respondents "always strive[d] for professional work and unprofessional work which are outside activities" (VNP12). They took up opportunities for further professional training. As respondent AUSP12 said: "I have been given the opportunity to go to Cambridge and Harvard for professional development". She tried to take advantages of social interaction and the professional interaction that she had.

Professional knowledge was certainly a strategy that female executives perceived as contributing to their success. With this knowledge, they worked with people, provided direction, used resources, managed themselves and improved their personal skills, and then built up their self-confidence. This made them visible in their workplace, they were able to demonstrate their abilities, and then found opportunities to move forward. As one respondent noted: "And also other competencies I think is [being] professionally confident because you will have to be able to walk into a room and have a voice [to be] heard, [to be] visible" (AUSP2).

5.5.5.2 Qualifications.

Qualifications were an essential aspect of knowledge competencies. The respondents undertook postgraduate study in order to improve their leadership knowledge, as explained below by respondent VNP4:

> I taught general education, and then I was the Deputy Director of the Centre. At that time, I did not have any idea about leadership. So, when I got a scholarship from CEEVN, I decided to study education management to learn more about how to lead in education. (VNP4)

Making an effort to complete further study not only facilitated their professional knowledge, but also contributed to their leadership career development as "qualifications are also a contribution to [their] strengths" (VNP7), and "qualifications are an essential criteria for becoming a leader" (VNP1). In the case of obtaining executive positions, qualifications, especially a PhD, was perceived as necessary to provide progression opportunities. The following respondents reported how their PhD qualifications provided them with opportunities to take up leadership positions: "Well before I was in a position that you'd call a leadership position I had a PhD" (AUSP8) and "Yes, that's true because most people in higher education, most people have been an academic and then move into the leadership positions, so to be an academic they have to have the PhD, that's right" (AUSP9).

The respondents recognised the necessity of obtaining a PhD qualification and professional knowledge because "without a Professor and a discipline it's really hard to get promoted, because nobody sees your talents and abilities" (AUSP11). Those who had obtained postgraduate qualifications and a PhD perceived them as facilitators to their careers.

5.5.5.3 Cultural competencies.

Cultural competencies were also considered to be important for successful leaders. When the respondents worked with business partners, they developed an array of methods and strategies to maximise the efficacy of their interactions with them. Educational leaders in these contexts needed to be able to trust their staff with the tasks

assigned to them, be understood and to interact with people from different cultures. Hence, the respondents became more aware of others' worldviews, their attitudes and expectations. One respondent identified the cultural differences between her male and female colleagues: "A lot of the men will put themselves there and then they'll keep pushing even if they haven't done everything properly" (AUSP10). The respondent was aware that because of cultural gender bias, male colleagues tended not to trust female leadership (VNP4).

Respondent AUSP1 explained more details about the role of culture in her career development:

> "Well, who's going to fit into the organisation?" and if they've got a bloke who's senior management group and a female comes in and she's a little bit lady-like, for example, they're not going to pick her because she won't fit that culture. (AUSP1)

Understanding the worldviews of people helped the respondents build on the strengths of each colleague, and inspired their team have positive attitude toward cultural difference. As reported by respondent VNP6:

> Each person has their own personalities and characteristics. To please them, I must understand the psychological characteristics of each person I communicate with; that is, to understand people and understand myself. I believe in the idiom "a hundred battles, a hundred wins", so I have to understand my staff and I have to have the right behaviours. (VNP6)

One respondent noted that "[i]t is hard to inspire others by myself. I must recognise the strengths and weaknesses of each staff member, then rouse their strengths in order to facilitate their work assignment" (VNP4), while another respondent explained how important it was to engage with people effectively:

> We spent quite a bit of time talking about what my role would be, not just the practicalities around what I'd be responsible for but the culture in the organisation and how much flexibility there would be …. So, for me, that conversation helped me adapt really quickly to a leadership role here at UNSW because I felt I had a strong sense of the culture, of how other leaders operated, and what my flexibility was, what my parameters were, and so that was really helpful in adapting here pretty quickly. (AUSP 5)

While respondents did not directly mention cultural competencies, they did discuss how useful it was to capture and understand differing worldviews and perspectives so that they could engage with people more effectively.

5.5.6 Building credibility.

The respondents also identified building credibility as one of their main strategies for overcoming barriers to leadership development. In order to be viewed as credible, the respondents had to earn the trust of those around them. The respondents placed themselves into positions that demonstrated their trustworthiness so that others, including their boss and their staff, believed what they saw. As respondent VNP3 explained:

> At the time that I was transferred from the Faculty of Management Science – Education to the Education and Training Division, I identified that my objective was to improve professional pedagogy for the whole university. I targeted that as a goal and determined that it had to be better than it was. As a consequence of my leadership, after two years, the district education department recognised my professional ability of professional pedagogy across the university. (VNP3)

The respondents did not try to win people's hearts by mere speeches, they showed people what they were capable of through their actions. Even though they were aware

that they had power, they still behaved in the right way so that people respected them. They maintained the righteous utilisation of their power. As respondent AUSP8 stated:

> I think in terms of being in the position I'm in, it's about not being aware of it but not letting it change how I behave. So, I'm in the position I'm in as a result of the competitive process, and so if other people have perceptions about me being in that position I probably go the extra mile to try and convince them that those perceptions are unfounded. I'll possibly overcompensate on occasion, but I think mostly I just again make sure you've got a solid business case and that people's judgment of me is based on my ability to do the job, not any other factors. (AUSP8)

Building credibility also involved demonstrating their loyalty to their institutions. They were able to earn others loyalty by fulfilling their duties rather than passing these on to someone else. Respondent VNP4, for instance, described how she earned the loyalty of her staff and leaders:

> When I was assigned to work, I tried doing everything in my power to complete the task…. And when higher level leaders assigned tasks to me, I tried to complete the tasks efficiently and thoroughly so that they recognised my ability. (VNP4)

The respondents were also consistent; they ensured that their words and actions were always reliable and remained the same over the time.

> As soon as I feel those values are compromised then I'll check in on myself pretty quickly, because that's what's made me a good leader, being very clear about what my values are and making sure that people see me consistently acting in accordance with those values. (AUSP1)

For these female executives, building credibility was essential to their leadership. They started by building relationships to build credibility with others, ensuring

consistency in their actions and gaining others' trust.

5.5.7 Work ethic.

Work ethic was considered to be an important leadership strategy used by the female leaders. Respondents had different ways of showing their dispositions to advantage. Most of them talked about the importance of working hard. As respondent VNP12 reported: "I just work hard and try to fulfil my professional duties. To balance my personal life, work and family, then I identified myself that I have to work more"

In addition to work ethic, respondents noticed the absolute importance of character and high ethical standards (such as integrity and responsibility). One respondent emphasised the importance of responsibility: "It's not about having control; you can't control everything. But it's about taking responsibility and making things happen as well" (AUSP11). The respondents not only showed their work ethic, but also their leadership characteristics, such as integrity, respect, resilience, honesty, courage, consistency, generosity, unbiased attitudes, empathy, sociability, open-mindedness and their positive outlook. To build these characteristics, not only did respondents work hard, but they were also passionate on what they contributed to their institutions and their communities. As explained by respondent AUSP3: "I think you have to have something you really believe in and, for me, that's always got to be bigger than me".

In general, during the career development process, Australian respondents utilised an array of strategies, including mentoring, formulating a dynamic vision and networking in and outside the primary work environment. As indicated in the previous discussion, the concept of work ethic also featured prominently in a number of different ways that supported and enhanced their career success. Most of the Australian respondents have relied more or less on their own amalgam of these leadership strategies.

5.5.8 Taking risks, prior experiences and supporting teams.

The other strategies that respondents reported were taking risks and prior experience. In terms of taking risks, Australian respondents mentioned their risk-taking more frequently than their Vietnamese counterparts. There were two Vietnamese respondents who did indicate that they "dare[d] to do and take responsibility". This showed their courage and determination when implementing new, innovative, and creative ideas. Australian respondents showed a greater variety of risk-taking in their strategies. Their risk-taking more likely showed their confidence and ability to overcome fear of failure, which in turn created opportunities for them to stand out as potential leaders. As illustrated by AUSP5: "I also had the conversations with the Vice Chancellor to say, 'I'm ready'". In addition, taking risks also opened them up to new paths and new possibilities in their careers: "I changed organisations. So, I resigned from my position, I took six months off, and then during the second half of that six months I started to apply for new jobs" (AUSP8). Taking a risk did not mean that the respondents ignored the values of their organisations, or that they were not aware of what was happening around them. They were prepared to take those risks that they perceived might bring both professional and personal benefits.

More Australian respondents indicated that supporting their team was another leadership strategy because they believed that supporting people was the responsibility of leaders. As reported by AUSP2: "[I]n higher education, for example, one of the things that I think is you have to be there to empower people" (AUSP2). When they provided support to their staff, they were able to involve their team in decision-making processes, motivate them, and increase their commitment to the organisation. Respondent AUSP7 stated that: "[P]eople still feel in this area of expertise that you're open to their ideas and concepts so that you've got, they've got that ability to feel as if they're still empowered"

(AUSP7). Supporting was also establishing essential trust in an institution, but they still held accountability and legal authority to be responsible for their team. As respondent VNP11 said: "[We] trust [our] staff but we must still pay constant attention to and supervise any work that is delegated to them" (VNP11).

In terms of experience, respondents, particularly those from Australia, changed and moved to different organisations and positions in order to better prepare themselves with new experiences that could potentially open up opportunities to other leadership roles. As reported by respondent AUSP5, who changed jobs to gain experience:

> That was a commercial role working for an independent business, family business. I moved then to work in the public sector in a new role that was heading up customer service and business development for Historic Scotland, which is a public sector heritage agency, and worked there for five years developing a new strategy for the organisation. And then moved into higher education and worked for the University of Glasgow in a new role pulling together recruitment, marketing, international affairs. I spent three years there and then came to UNSW to take on a very similar role but focused initially on international recruitment and international development. (AUSP5)

Respondent AUSP4 also had the experience of getting stuck at her prior institution. She found her career development was blocked due to prejudice and age discrimination. She decided to move to her current institution in order to achieve career promotion.

Thus, respondents who planned their career development sought out opportunities for developing experience. They used their experiences to build their skills at different stages of their leadership. In other words, they leveraged their previous experience in order to progress to the next stage of their leadership development.

5.6 Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter presented the result from qualitative data analysis, which set out to explore the leadership journey of 24 university female senior-executives in Vietnam and Australia. The interview results showed that the leadership journey of both Vietnamese and Australian female executives was characterised by three main themes: career barriers, career facilitators and leadership strategies. Female executives in both countries shared some similarities and differences across different contexts. They noted that barriers came from their institutions, their cultures, and from specific individuals. Vietnamese executives had to retire earlier than Australian executives, and this affected their career development. Both Vietnamese and Australian executives identified similar facilitators that supported their career development, such as well-developed leadership skills, a strong work ethic, professional knowledge, prior experience and networking. In the Australian context, respondents reported having been in different leadership positions, different institutions, and working in different sectors, such as finance, economics, and aviation, while the Vietnamese respondents were more likely to have worked for only one or two institutions throughout their entire careers. Australian participants also had more training in leadership in comparison with their Vietnamese counterparts. Regarding leadership strategies, both Vietnamese and Australian executives reported using similar strategies, such as management skills, upgrading qualifications, gaining experience, strong work ethic, building vision and supporting colleagues. In the Australian context, mentoring played an important role in facilitating their career success. Australian respondents were also able to access more international and cross-institutional networks, in contrast to the Vietnamese executives. The similarities and differences of these executives will be discussed in further detail in the discussion chapter. However, the focus of my study is not on offering a comparison. I looked at the differences and the similarities

to formulate a leadership framework that empowers and inspires female leaders in general.

Chapter Six

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The aim of my research was to explore the career trajectories of female executives in higher education, in Vietnam and Australia, who have been successful in obtaining executive positions, in order to encourage more female leaders to obtain executive roles. To obtain my results, I gathered data based on research questions that responded to different themes. These themes were developed from the perceptions of 380 quantitative respondents and 24 qualitative respondents and focussed primarily on leadership strategies, career facilitation and the barriers to women in leadership in higher education in Vietnam and Australia.

This chapter draws together and puts into context these research findings, as well as relating the themes to specific research questions. I compare and contrast the evidence described in the literature, and form conclusions around four specific research questions and the following categories: (i) (research question number 1) leadership styles and competencies which have enabled their success; (ii) (research question number 2) knowledge, skills and dispositions which have enabled them to be successful in leadership positions; (iii) (research question number 3) the barriers and opportunities that are perceived to have influenced the career development of female executives; (iv) (research question number 4) leadership strategies which female executives require to both advance and maintain their current career.

6.2 Leadership Styles and Competencies Enabling Female Executives to Obtain Executive Roles

During their career progression to senior positions, female executives demonstrated a comprehensive range of leadership practices and competencies that enabled them to succeed. This section links the findings of the quantitative and qualitative sections to more fully understand how their leadership styles and competencies have contributed to their career success. This section also responds directly to research question 1:

What are the perceptions of female higher education executives in Vietnam and Australia with regards to the leadership styles and competencies that have enabled their success?

6.2.1 Leadership practice with regards to leadership styles.

Transactional leadership is used extensively as a leadership style in Vietnamese higher education, as opposed to the Australian context, as it is highly structured. Many subordinates receive delegation of authority and support from their leaders, but still remain under the control of these leaders. Recently, MOET stated that leaders need to develop their transformational style, and identified this as a central criteria. MOET suggested that this reform would support reforms and transformation, and help embed changes across the higher education system. The other factor that has had an effect on these changes in leadership styles is Vietnam's open door policy. The whole context in Vietnam is constantly changing and becoming more outward facing; in general, people accept the fact that Vietnamese traditional culture is becoming more open in order to adapt to international trends (Cameron, Pham, & Atherton, 2018). More foreign people are coming to Vietnam for their career development, and there are also many Vietnamese people who gain degrees and certificates overseas and who return to Vietnam to seek

career opportunities. The expansion of working partnerships with local, regional and international governments requires not only female leaders, but also that male leaders should adapt to the new environment, in a context in which the transformational leadership style is more relevant.

This transformational style is similar to the style that Australian leaders use to solve their institutional problems. A large number of leaders in Australia drive their team towards a shared vision and challenges. The quantitative findings of this study showed that the three main characteristics of female executives were that they were conscientious, open-minded and good listeners. These characteristics have been associated with the transformational style (Bass, 1998). In addition, transformational leadership styles were not used alone, but were instead based on transactional leadership styles as many respondents used rewards and work incentives to promote their staff. This is found in Bass (1998) “transformational leadership styles build on the transactional base in contributing to the extra effort and performance of followers” (p.5). The best leaders are those who use both transformational and transactional leadership styles (Bass & Riggio, 2006). My research findings are consistent with the research of Bass (1998), even though I used different data from a different period of time.

In addition, these findings strongly suggest that leadership styles were often established through decision-making, and how leaders exercised power in their role. The least common leadership styles in Vietnam and Australia seemed to be authoritarian, charismatic and laissez-faire styles. However, leadership styles may depend on the working environment and culture of collaboration within the respondents’ organisations and communities.

6.2.2 Leadership practice with regards to competencies.

6.2.2.1 Knowledge competencies.

As well as leadership style, knowledge competence – such as professional knowledge and qualifications – were also considered important. The academic respondents I interviewed in Vietnam and Australia understood the importance of obtaining a doctoral degree, as obtaining a doctorate helped them secure leadership positions. Because fewer people have a doctoral degree per capita in Vietnam than in Australia, this qualification is considered even more essential in leadership selection processes. Hiring panels look at where someone studied and what kinds of qualifications they received. The respondent VNP3 emphasised this point, stating that: "The first condition must be qualification. Because when looking at a person's resume for a vacancy, one must look at where that person studied and what kind of qualifications did she/he obtained." This is reflected by policy that was created based on an understanding that qualifications have become much more central to selection processes (Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2014). There is an evidence that this policy, and its implementation in higher education in Vietnam, has been put into place to ensure that leaders obtain a doctoral degree in order to apply for executive roles. Similarly, what my study found is consistent with what is required by this policy. Even though respondents perceived that to be an executive required at least doctoral qualifications, this understanding was not reflected as much in the Australian criteria. However, both Vietnamese and Australian female executives still perceived this as being an important factor.

Vietnamese and Australian respondents shared the perception that a PhD was typically a necessary prerequisite to holding an academic executive leadership position. Specific leadership training was also an important factor that contributed to their leadership skills. In the Vietnamese context, a political certificate from the Communist

Party, as well as a foreign language certificate (mainly English proficiency) and ICT competence were also deemed necessary for people in leadership roles. This is validated by my results. VNP6 responded that:

> In general, a person must have professional qualifications, professional skill, political qualifications, and other skills such as foreign languages, information computing, etc. (VNP6)

Both Vietnamese and Australian respondents considered ongoing training as a significant factor that contributed to their knowledge competence. The skills they obtained from training were applied to both their work and daily life. The process of applying their research skills to training helped them to improve and develop their leadership skills and style. This training could be used as a preparative tool to further their career. The knowledge obtained could be used to build their portfolio and to meet professional standards required at an executive level, and help them to be ready to move forward to other leadership roles. This is not significantly reflected in Vietnamese leadership styles due to a lack of leadership training, and is instead based on individual's own ability and experience.

6.2.2.2 Leadership competencies.

Data analysis from the online questionnaire and interviews indicated that leadership skills were the most important factor contributing to female executives' career development and their leadership strategies. Both Vietnamese and Australian participants said that they had developed good leadership skills from their professional experience, leadership strategies and leadership practice (AUSP, VNP) and that they also developed the ability to manage in different contexts (AUSP). These leadership skills included: organisation and management skills, goal setting, communication skills, decision-making, problem solving, collaboration, flexibility and adaptability, self-confidence,

inspiration, time-management, presentation, understanding, all of which built up their leadership competencies. I have grouped these skills into four main categories: social intelligence skills, political skills, collaboration and entrepreneurship skills.

Social intelligence skills are defined “as a combination of a basic understanding of people, a kind of strategic social awareness, and a set of component skills for interacting successfully with them” (Albrecht, 2006, p. 3). The majority of my population of female executives highlighted strong communication skills as being important to their success. Communicating appropriately enabled them to get people on board and gain their confidence. These female executives used other techniques, a combination of negotiation, persuasion, presentation and inspiration. In addition, analysis of my data showed that setting goals was beneficial and enabled them to move forward. In seeking to achieve goals, female leaders usually translated or transformed their targets into actions. Working toward a plan helped make them successful and able to deal with workplace challenges.

Female leaders stated that they frequently used their political skills as part of their leadership practice. They felt that they were not only a player in workplace politics, but also the person who managed political behaviour. Vietnamese and Australian respondents perceived themselves as having high competencies in organisation and management skills, and that these formed part of their political practice framework. They usually utilised four essential steps within the implementation of their role: planning, assigning, conducting and supervising. During the planning steps, they presented their ideas in their plan very well, and used their time management skills to estimate and measure their expectations. They appeared to understand their colleagues’ strengths and weaknesses, and used this knowledge to assign tasks to suitable people. They also knew how to inspire their colleagues to undertake tasks, communicated their vision and passion to their staff and also motivated them to do their assigned tasks. Throughout the process, they shared

common goal with clear targets. They were able to define their difficulties and they then prioritised the steps needed to achieve their targets.

They also developed the skills necessary to problem solve in their institutions. For example, they resolved conflicts amongst their colleagues. They also had creative solutions for other problems that occurred within their institutions. Decision-making skills are a highly important facet of practice and leadership styles. In the process of making decisions, participants turned their ideas into action, and they were thus able to implement their goals. Interestingly, the process of decision making in the Australian context was more decisive than in Vietnam. This was due to deputy executives within Vietnamese higher education not having any real power in their professional positions; the literature indicates that this may be as a result of patriarchal culture (Ashwill & Diep, 2005). In contrast, Australian executives were more decisive in their decision-making, but this may be because they acquire more skills and training within their work, something that Vietnamese executives do not receive. This is reflected in my data, as only a few Vietnamese executives accessed training. In Australia, even though most of the respondents accessed training, they did not feel there was enough training, and this was due to a lack of specific training. About 66.7% Australian female executives in my research participated in at least one leadership training programme, however, most of them noted that they did not take away many ideas from the training and that some training programmes were not relevant to their executive roles. Policy may not help much because respondents still said that they lacked leadership training in particular areas.

Collaboration skills enabled female leaders to interface productively with their staff and colleagues. These skills relate to the specific ways in which female executives were expected to behave in order to achieve common goals. Collaboration meant not only working together, but also respecting diverse cultures when female executives worked

with different organisations and countries. Leaders highlighted their ability to resolve conflicts and disagreements among others, recruit and inspire people toward common goals, and then build trust by delivering quality work.

Entrepreneurial skills were also a specific skill demonstrated by female executives. These include creativity and innovation, and their ability to be flexible and adaptable to new environments and cultures. Creativity and innovation have now become critical skills for achieving success not only in business but also in education. The need for positive educational change is seen as increasingly important, and it requires creative insights to find relevant solutions to make these changes. In the process of implementing change, innovation skills were involved, helping leaders to think differently and clearly understand their ever-changing options. This was seen as a good way to improve themselves, and this is possibly reflected in my data.

6.2.2.3 Executive competencies.

Associated with leadership competence, executive competencies – as an emerging theme of this study – played an essential role in female executives' career development. Executive competence are the competencies required to effect change within institutions. The respondents thought that the executive competence included factors such as networking, mentoring/sponsorship, strategic vision and self-empowerment. These concepts will be discussed further in section 6.5.

6.2.2.4 Leadership self-efficacy.

Leadership self-efficacy contains two dimensions that relate to leadership behaviour:

- Attaining leadership skills, and
- The ability to use these skills in a leadership process (Bandura, 1997)

The respondents developed and built skills from their own experience and knowledge, and they also understood how to lead. Their self-efficacy could be observed from their willingness to take risks in order to attract more opportunities and demonstrate their abilities. One Vietnamese survey participant commented about her risk-taking behaviour: "(I) motivate myself and accept that I might fail" (VNP). An Australian survey participant supported this idea – that taking risks was linked to finding opportunities – stating that "I have been willing to move in the past to take advantage of good positions. I come from the USA and have held positions in the USA and in Europe and now here in Australia. I am willing to take personal risks" (AUSP). All these quotes fit within a leadership scaffold, and indicate how they attained and used these leadership skills.

In addition, the respondents believed that they had demonstrated self-determination during their career development. An Australian survey participant shared how her self-determination worked: "I volunteer for leadership roles in different projects and committees". Their self-determination was higher when they felt committed to their institutions, for example: "I have developed and work hard to maintain deep expertise in my field. As long as I know I am truly an expert, I feel I add value to my organisation". They improved their leadership skills, and they demonstrated their skills development, through their performance. For example, they performed their assigned tasks well, their passion and vision inspired their colleagues, and they were ready to act on opportunities.

Leaders' self-efficacy also revealed that they are truly confident. Self-confidence was perceived by participants not only as a favourable condition, but also as a strategy to enable success. In order to lead others, leaders must first believe in themselves. As Dao (2008) stated, "Self-confidence is the fundamental basis from which leadership grows" (Dao, 2008, p. 1). Vietnamese and Australian respondents felt self-confident in showing

their work ethic, critical thinking abilities and life-long learning. Their confidence is as a consequence of building up various experiences since childhood.

In addition, they generally believed in themselves and showed optimism throughout their career trajectories. Their extensive professional and personal experience, and their professional knowledge – which contributed to their professional confidence – encouraged them to confront challenges and deal with difficulties. This ability helped them to keep going and pursue goals in the face of setback, and was a key reason for their success.

From my analysis, self-confidence has two main aspects: general and specific. Their general self-confidence, which included their personality traits, was developed in their early childhood. Their specific self-confidence, associated with their situation and specific set-tasks, mostly derived from their extensive experience. More experience, as in section 6.4.1, helped respondents to become more self-confident by providing some different ways to be more self-confident in their work.

Participants' professional and personal experiences helped them obtain executive positions. As noted, they had prior experience in different positions, including voluntary work and official work, that helped them to gain experience. In the Vietnamese context, most of the participants had experience in the educational sector and had primarily spent their career in educational institutions. Most of them also worked in one institution, and only a few of them had experience in working in two or more institutions. As demonstrated, in the Vietnamese context obtaining a political certificate from the Communist Party, mastering computing, and being fluent in a foreign language were necessary to considered for appointments. In the Australian context, building a personal brand was important. Australian respondents showed high self-confidence in terms of collaboration and flexibility. Improving their leadership skills was also a strategy they

used to build up their self-confidence. Leadership skills were mentioned in the list of the most utilised skills, as mentioned in section 6.4.1.

Both types of self-confidence are essential strategies for gaining leadership roles and successful leadership. High levels of both types enabled the leader to influence his or her collaborators, or followers, and strengthened their job performance. By extension, developing both types of self-confidence helped prepare them for new challenges.

6.2.2.5 Cultural and cross-cultural competencies.

Respondents in both Vietnam and Australian reflected that an understanding of culture, and their cultural and cross-cultural competence, were vital to their success as leaders; however, perceptions differed between Vietnamese and Australian participants. In the Vietnamese context, institutional culture was extremely important to female leaders as compared to their Australian counterparts. Respondents tried to understand the culture of their colleagues' background, based on their colleagues' daily practices, communication and sharing of cultural norms. I reflected that these factors are what they need to have the capability to model sound behaviours. Vietnamese participants also wanted to master an understanding of their colleagues' culture, such as learning how to show respect to superiors, how to please their superiors, and how to maintain gender balance in the workplace. This institutional culture demonstrates the "top-down" culture, and is similar to Hofstede's (2010) finding that Vietnamese has a higher power distance as explained in Chapter Two. In the Australian context, the range of cultural competence was broader. Australian participants were not only aware of the culture of their own institutions, but also other institutions in order to maximise the advantages of networking. Particularly, for those who had the opportunity to work in different countries, they not only enriched their cultural knowledge, but also had a chance to optimise their knowledge of cultural differences in different countries.

The results from my data analysis indicate that the influence of institutional culture had a positive impact on the effectiveness of respondents' leadership. Institutional culture may influence and shape their leadership style. The collegial culture prevalent at their institutions created harmony within their institutional community. The collaborative and "bottom-up" culture, as well as an autocratic and "top-down" culture, enabled them to focus on their ability to collaborate, collegiality and interpersonal relationships as part of their approach to leadership. In the past, some aspects of this institutional culture have inhibited women from leadership.

The literature underlines the central role of institutional culture, as demonstrated by S. L. Harris et al. (2011), Griffin (2012) and Gammage and Pang (2003). These studies showed that culture plays an important role by providing the context for higher education leadership practice. Leaders' thoughts, actions, effective leadership practice and leadership styles are all shaped by culture.

In my study, female executives believed that their success and their ability to lead effectively had been impacted by their cross-cultural competencies, with regards to their exposure to both eastern and western cultures. They prioritised harmony in interpersonal relationships over set tasks, motivation and collaboration. Both Vietnam and Australia used a people-oriented approach in their leadership style. This finding appears to support the view of Q. T. N. Nguyen (2016), who found that Vietnamese culture encourages cooperation and interpersonal relationships, which has a critical influence on leadership practice. This view was mentioned by Hofstede (2010), who noted differences between Asian and western cultures in terms of cultural values. Asian cultures emphasise collectivist values, while western cultures value self-orientation and individual interest. Thus, mastering international culture was also an important key in facilitating leadership careers.

Even though Vietnamese and Australian have different cultural contexts, gender prejudice is still embedded in their institutional working environments. Some of this institutional culture has inhibited women not only in the past from leadership positions, as identified by the literature review, but this has also been identified through data analysis in the contemporary context of this research. Being competent in cultural understanding not only developed leaders' ideal long-term vision, but also helped them to reduce conflicts, and consequently encouraged autonomy and openness within their institutions. This point will be further addressed in my framework.

6.3. Impacts of Barriers on Achieving Executive Positions.

Sections 6.3 and 6.4 focus on both quantitative and qualitative findings to explore the negative and positive influences of barriers and opportunities on female executives' career development. These sections respond directly to research question number 2:

To what extent do higher education female executives in Vietnam and Australia perceive barriers and opportunities that influenced their career's development?

6.3.1 Institutional barriers

Most of barriers that my female executive respondents identified come from their work-places. The barrier that influenced their career progress was their institutional leadership selection processes, which included more of their male counterparts in the selection panels. Workload, socio-cultural barriers and other barriers challenge them in terms of work-life balance and seeking leadership opportunities.

6.3.1.1 Leadership selection processes.

My survey revealed that women indicated workplace competition, such as the leadership selection processes, adversely influenced opportunities to advance their careers. This is due to the fact that most of the top leadership positions have traditionally been male-dominated. Most of my participants believed that when men occupy the

highest leadership positions in the workplace, and the selection board is constituted mostly of executive males, there is virtually no question that women will be disadvantaged in their journey to career success. Many participants believed that men often stereotype women as being less efficient than themselves, and doubt the ability of females to achieve standards of workplace efficiency, as defined by executive male leaders. The literature indicates that women have equal rights in selection, promoting, training and development (UNESCO, 2002), while policy states that women have equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making (UN, 2015); however, my participants still felt that there were limited leadership opportunities available to them due to gender bias. It is clear that current policy does not work particularly well, so I explored female executives' barriers so as to create a framework to change this dynamic.

In the Vietnamese context, participants shared similar perceptions about the problem of executive positions in their institutions being dominated by males. However, in relation to their working environment, there was general agreement in Vietnam that both men and women have an equal opportunity to achieve career success, depending upon which candidate has the longest employment history at the institution. In fact, it would seem that women would be more likely to be appointed to a senior position, by virtue of their having a longer history of work experience in their institutions, as a factor that is independent from being trained for leadership roles. Nonetheless, this situation is more complex than it might at first seem, because there are many cases in which males and females may have the same length of experience, but the females are not likely to be selected for executive positions so long as the panel is primarily made up of men. Moreover, there is a substantial disparity embedded in the very structure of the employment system which advantages men and disadvantages women. The reason for this is that females are obliged to retire at the age of 55, while males do not have to retire

until they reach the age of 60. This means that every woman who retires at 55 is deprived of five years of salary to help support herself and her family, possibly losing the opportunity to be appointed to an executive position had she been able to remain employed at the institution (see Chapter Two).

In the Australian context, participants shared similar views to Vietnamese participants on selection processes, which they believed were due to biased decision-making by the males who dominated executive leadership positions at their institutions. In this study, Australian participants indicated that their working conditions were more favourable than the Vietnamese participants. For instance, Australian female leaders had access to more employment opportunities, because leaders were recruited not only from inside their institutions but also from outside. In addition, a female of the age of 55 identified herself as being at the mid-stage of her career, whereas Vietnamese women of the same age were under an obligation to retire at exactly the same age that this woman – and many other Australian women – were being promoted. Moreover, Australian women were under no obligation to retire at any age, and thus have far more employment and career promotion possibilities than their Vietnamese counterparts. It is salutary to remind ourselves that this significant advance in understanding of age discrimination has only been a recent political phenomenon (Stypínska & Nikander, 2018).

Although provisions providing for compulsory retirement were removed from the Commonwealth Public Service Act in 1999, and it was not until 2001 that they were more generally abolished in the federal public sector when the Abolition of Compulsory Age Retirement (Statutory Officeholders) Act 2001 was passed. A federal prohibition of age discrimination was achieved in recent year (Smith, 2008) with the recent implementation of the Commonwealth Age Discrimination Act 2004 (the Age Act).

Nonetheless, Vietnamese and Australian women share similar contexts of gender discrimination in employment, given that most of the executive positions in both countries remain male-dominated, a conclusion supported by my results. As I wanted to discover if there was male domination on the top levels, I gathered statistics from some famous universities in Vietnam and Australia to see if this was correct. When I conducted my online and paper-based survey and interviewed women in separate universities, I found the same things, and this backed up my evidence that the executive leadership of this sector is male-dominated. My evidence is that in 2018 (I calculated these statistics based on the Australian university websites on 22nd October, 2018), there were 33.3% (13 out of 39) female Vice-Chancellors. In Vietnam, based on twenty five Vietnamese university websites on 1st October, 2018, there are 4.0 % (1 out of 25) female Vice-Chancellors; 5.7 % (2 out of 35) female Deputy Vice-Chancellors; 32.0% (33 out of 103) female Deans; 42.5% (37 out of 87) female Vice-Deans and 22.8% (21 out of 92) female Heads of Department. Thus, male domination crosses institutional, country and cultural contexts, and is extensive.

This covert structural barrier, which favours males, constitutes an intractable impediment which female aspirants to executive positions inevitably confront during their careers. The more that women endeavour to climb the career ladder, the more they are met with complex challenges, especially at the senior-executive level. It is clear that career development for women in Australia and Vietnam has not been as easy a journey as has been a case with male aspirants, and this is due to the hierarchical and patriarchal dominance of the organisational structure of employment in both countries.

Furthermore, the hierarchy of power in Vietnamese institutions required the lower-level leaders to follow the career instructions of the higher-level leaders. Some of them also thought that they could not apply their knowledge or their ideas to demonstrate

their leadership potential. They were under-represented and dominated by the top male leaders. Thus, even Vietnamese respondents who were in executive leadership positions found it hard to exercise real decision-making and influence via leadership.

6.3.1.2 Workload.

In addition to the biased male-dominated leadership selection processes, female participants perceived that their workload adversely affected their career trajectories. Participants from both countries expressed their consternation regarding the overwhelming workload that their role required of them. On numerous occasions, they found themselves having to work many hours overtime to complete their tasks. The standard working hours in Vietnamese workplaces is 8 hours per day (Vietnamese National Assembly, 2012) and in Australia working hours are generally considered to be from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. The results from my data analysis found that female executives work more than standard working hours, and some Vietnamese participants needed to work more than two jobs to financially support their families, because they did not receive sufficient remuneration from their salary. One Vietnamese participant complained that after the working hours of her first job finished, she then had to go directly to her second job. She explained, “I am a visiting teacher in several institutions, after which I have to do a second job tutoring in my own home” (VNP12). This being so, many women endeavoured to transfer to other institutions with less demanding workloads and better pay, but it seemed that realising opportunities in other institutions proved to be very difficult and competitive.

Given that Vietnamese and Australian participants have full workloads, they reported that they did not receive enough support to manage extra work from their institutions, particularly from their superiors. In addition, their own lack of interest in some of their work had served to create an unproductive working environment, which in

itself put more pressure on them and their capacity for efficacy regarding the quality of their work. The main reason they gave for their lack of interest was that they had become bored by virtue of occupying the same position, and doing the same things, for such a long time. Being in the same position for so many years has also diminished their ambition and willingness to advance their careers. Many Vietnamese and Australian participants perceived that their lack of interest in their work had in large part been caused by their institutions, and also by their own lack of ambition to persist at finding new employment. This problem has been shown by the study to affect the Vietnamese participants more than the Australian participants, because the Vietnamese tended to wait for an appointment to be offered to them, while Australian participants made it clear that they ambitiously searched for employment relevant to their own field of study.

6.3.1.3 Socio-cultural challenges for women.

Previous research has found that cultural competence, such as understanding people and their surrounding environment, determined some respondents' success (Rogers, Graham, & Mayes, 2007). I found female interview executives also learned how to negotiate situations where they had to lead their male counterparts. Respondents in Vietnam and Australia differed in their understanding of the importance of cultural competencies. In the Vietnamese context, interview respondents paid more attention to their national cultural working context, as mentioned in Chapter Five. In contrast, Australian respondents were more focussed on the international cultural context since they worked in different executive positions in different countries. As AUSP2 observed, she was born in an Asian country, she studied in Australia and had worked in the United Kingdom, Nigeria and then Australia. She had to understand the working environment of these countries really well so that she could maintain executive positions in their organisations.

The barriers arising from socio-cultural factors in Vietnam and Australia are to some extent similar in that both cultures have well-developed stereotypic expectations of the role which women should play in society. Societal expectations for both Australian and Vietnamese women involve them being primarily concerned with fulfilling responsibilities related to the birthing of children and some degree of parental care, depending on family circumstances. In Vietnam, considerable assistance for child care is generally enthusiastically given by the parents of the mother and father of the child, which is not always the case in Australia (Berlyn, Wise, & Soriano, 2008; Mestechkina, Son, & Shin, 2014). This study makes it clear that both Australian and Vietnamese women contribute to the shared burden of family finance. On the other hand, the role played by Australian women focuses upon child bearing and the care of their children, along with the provision of household chores, and unlike Vietnamese participants, Australian women have greater support from their partners in sharing household chores and the burden of adequate family finances. This study also established that in the case of Australian women, it is the husband who generally assists with the burden of financial assistance, whereas for Vietnamese women it is the parents of the husband and wife who provide financial assistance, thereby helping them to balance their family and work responsibilities. However, upon close analysis of my data, participants from both Vietnam and Australia revealed that despite the financial support provided by their family members, the actual sum of money provided was insufficient to sustain the wide range of responsibilities associated with raising families.

6.3.1.4 Other barriers.

Vietnamese respondents found it difficult to find leadership opportunities when they transferred to different institutions. When they moved from one job to another, and relocated to a different institution, they stated that it took considerable time for them to

demonstrate their abilities to colleagues for a number of reasons. They needed to take time to acquaint themselves with the new working environment, including the possibility of different computer technology, becoming conscious of the way in which new colleagues thought and behaved, along with gaining at least a modest understanding of the politics which shaped and informed the nature of the institution and their working environment. Their difficulties seemed to stem from a lack of leadership training that made it hard to adjust to their new working environment. In the context of the Australian respondents, it is clear that their motivation for transferring from one institution to another was to secure a promotion. While they may still have to adjust to the new working environment, their promotion generally involved them doing the same kind of work they had previously done because they were highly competent in their area of expertise. The Australian respondents reported that they found it relatively easy to transfer from one institution to another, and had little trouble quickly adjusting to their new working environment. As one participant declared, "I think there were some challenges and barriers to promotion in my previous institution and discovered that I would have a better chance to get promoted by accepting a new job in a different institution" (AUSP4). The fact is that they had to leave their job because they did not get promoted. It is also clear that if they were treated well enough to obtain promotion, they would not have left their institution for another job.

It is quite the opposite situation in Vietnam, even though Vietnam is a different context. In the context of Vietnam, those who had worked the longest in their institution were more likely to get promoted up the leadership ladder than those who had less experience (VNP4). The successful applicants were mostly men. Yet even though they were able to get promoted based on their seniority, it does not follow that they were the best trained person with leadership skills. Being in an institution for a long time would

ensure that they had considerable experience, but the experiences they have had may have little or nothing to do with their having the appropriate leadership skills to match their executive positions. One reason for this is that Vietnamese workers rarely have an opportunity to be trained in leadership, or even in their own field of work, while they are still employed by the same institution.

6.3.2 Individual barriers

Two of the most significant challenges confronting female leaders from both countries relate to their age and health. Without question, participants from Vietnam and Australia expressed the view that their heavy workload had adversely affected their health. Women from both countries admitted that they regularly felt too exhausted to work as effectively as they would like. Moreover, women from both countries also conceded that as they got older, the stress from their job increasingly compromised their health. Not only did it adversely affect their well-being, but aging also had a marginalising effect on their career development. As previously stated, Vietnamese women were obliged to retire at 55 meaning that the issue of aging was not as pertinent for them as it is for Australian women, who continue working beyond this age. As Australian women grow older, they find themselves facing more serious challenges to their health and career efficacy. As they age, they see themselves as confronting what has been called “ageism”, such that the older they get, the more difficult it becomes to be regarded by others as productive. This makes it extremely difficult for them to advance their careers any further.

Vietnamese and Australian respondents talked about their family responsibilities. However, Vietnamese respondents talked more about family care and household chores than the Australian respondents. Although female Vietnamese respondents had the considerable responsibility of looking after their home and families, their male partners

proved themselves unwilling to share the burden of these responsibilities. For example, one Vietnamese participant pointed out that her husband gave her no help whatsoever: “My husband was away for 10 years, leaving me at home for me to raise my children, and also care for the elderly members of the family, including my husband’s family and my own….” (VNP5). In the Australian context, it seems that male and female have more equal responsibility for working and providing for children, but in the Vietnamese context the cultural standard is women looking after their families (Vo & Strachan, 2008). Although Australian respondents did not comment on the importance of family to the same extent as the Vietnamese respondents, they admitted that – in general – their husband or male partners were quite willing to share the burden of household responsibilities, even though they talked less about the importance of them doing so.

Based on respondents’ feedback, it is possible to conclude that in general barriers arise from both workplaces and family, with workplace barriers being the most dominant. This is addressed in my framework (see Chapter Seven, Figure 7.2) by using leadership strategies to overcome barriers and as a scaffold to bring about change.

6.4 Career Facilitators Enabling Female Executives.

Both executive participants in Vietnam and Australia indicated that there have been some career advantages that facilitated their progress. This section attempts to not only explore the advantages of these career opportunities – to answer research question 2 and research question 3 – but also to explain how their individual knowledge, skills and dispositions facilitated their career development.

Research question number 3:

In what ways do female executives in higher education in Vietnam and Australia perceive that their knowledge, skills and dispositions have enabled them to be successful in leadership positions?

Research question number 2:

To what extent do higher education female executives in Vietnam and Australia perceive barriers and opportunities that influenced their career's development?

It is clear that even in different contexts, Vietnamese and Australians need some standard that is based on their abilities in order to create workplace change. Australian executives need more training to get promoted, while Vietnamese executives need more training to justify them staying in the same job. As we will see, this standard is embedded in my proposed leadership framework.

6.4.1 Individual ability.

6.4.1.1 Management skills.

Different women have different abilities and varying understanding of their own abilities. Despite these differences, leadership skills will now be the focus of this research. The skills that these women possessed included problem-solving skills, management skills, critical thinking skills and listening skills.

Their leadership skills came into focus when participants talked about the particular leadership strategies required to obtain and maintain their leadership roles. One participant emphasised the importance of her skills, such as goals setting, communication, personal skills, internal relationships and inspiring (AUSP9). My study found these skills played an important role in female executives' career development. Compared to their male counterparts, female leaders have similar leadership capacities and skills (Black, 2015); however, as there is still a small number of females in higher executive education roles, it seems clear that leadership opportunities are more available for male leaders than female leaders.

6.4.1.2 Professional knowledge.

Obtaining professional qualifications was regarded as a vital component in career advancement and were strongly advocated as being of paramount importance by both Vietnamese and Australian participants. For example, obtaining a PhD in one's home country, or particularly from overseas, was considered to be one of the most crucial foundational elements used to facilitate their climb up the career ladder. In the Vietnamese context, participants also mentioned that their acquisition of political certificates and knowledge of foreign languages, as well as ICT competencies, specifically contributed to their career success. This was seen as an advantage by Vietnamese female leaders, while Australian female leaders did not base their job on political views. In addition, approximately 85% of Vietnamese leader participants did not receive formal leadership training. In contrast, more Australian participants (66.7%) mentioned that their formal leadership training programmes had provided them with the knowledge required to be ready to gain higher leadership roles.

Professional knowledge was perceived differently in Vietnam and Australia. Nonetheless, both Vietnamese and Australian women leaders endeavoured to achieve professional qualifications, especially a doctoral degree, so that they could maximise their chances of obtaining an executive leadership position. The determination to achieve these higher degrees was equally valued by both sets of participants, who were eager to meet this leadership requirement characteristic of career success. Thus, enhancing knowledge competencies has become a vitally important step on the journey through the challenges of appointment to an executive leadership role. For those interested in achieving a higher level of executive leadership position, the more important it became to augment their acquisition of advanced knowledge, including higher education degrees and leadership

training, thus expanding not only their academic knowledge but their knowledge of professional management as well.

Their basic knowledge of the profession was not reflected an actual programme that they took part in. Instead, it was naturally gained from experience, and this was as a result of having no formal training programmes.

6.4.1.3 Flexibility and adaptability.

Flexibility and adaptability were also nominated by more than half of respondents. Flexibility was necessary for executives to adapt to the change. This process leads to updating knowledge and skills to a changeable context in the working environment to think creatively. Increasing your focus on developing and establishing flexibility and adaptability skills, is essential in all levels of the workforce hierarchy. During the process of change to adapt the international trend as well as their institution's reforms, flexibility and adaptability play an important role to make change effectively. Flexibility and adaptability were discussed in section 5.5.5.

6.4.1.4 Self-motivation.

My result from quantitative and qualitative data analysis in Chapter Four and Five showed my respondents' self-motivation to have the following components. They had clear ideas about what they would like to achieve in both their professional and personal life. They also exhibited positive thinking traits. Most importantly, they were not afraid of failure, since fear decreases confidence and self-motivation. They tried to look for new opportunities so that they were able to prove their leadership abilities, as well as showing what they were passionate about. Both Vietnamese and Australian executives had self-discipline, they managed themselves effectively. They worked hard on the "right things" by utilising their work ethic. They also showed their leadership self-efficacy by which their persistence and self-determination were established (see section 6.2) and set clear

goals. Most of them knew what they wanted when it came to goals and achieving something across both the short and long-term. By setting clear and specific goals, executives could achieve what they wanted and thus increase their self-motivation and results, therefore creating a cycle of achievement.

Self-confidence and self-motivation are the two most important components of self-empowerment. Female executives travelled through different leadership stages with the help of large contributions from these two components. Being at the top of the pole, executives do not depend on others to motivate them, as they are self-motivated.

6.4.1.5 Dispositions and work ethic.

Both Vietnamese and Australian respondents displayed a similar work ethic. Both countries' respondents worked very hard to obtain and maintain their leadership positions. They demonstrated their abilities, including their knowledge, skills and experience, by performing and attempting to effectively carry out their tasks.

Regarding professional and personal characteristics, participants took responsibility for their work. They reported their positive characteristics as being the following qualities: generous, brave, modest, fair, humble, patient and caring. In the Vietnamese context, doing a task was more about fulfilling a duty rather than gaining some degree of engagement through this task, while in the Australian context, respondents felt the more interesting and challenging the work was, the more willing they were to take risks. In the Vietnamese context, respondents tended not to show their own character. Female leaders tended to be passive and they tended not to do anything if they did not have information: their role was more to do with duty rather than action. In the Australian context, however, respondents not only showed their character, but also the dispositions which turned these characteristics into actions. Australian leaders were proactive with the information they had been given, and they tended to perform actions.

Vietnamese characteristics tended to make people more passive in their jobs, while Australian characteristics and dispositions encouraged a more proactive approach.

6.4.1.6 Experience.

Experience was a significant factor that contributed to the success of both Vietnamese and Australian respondents. Australian and Vietnamese respondents said that they had experience in different leadership positions from across the junior leadership level and middle leadership levels and executive leadership level. Australian respondents obtained, were in a wide ranges of leadership positions, and had experience in many different areas; this is to be contrasted with the Vietnamese respondents. As an Australian respondent reported:

> So, I was on another scholarships committee that was at another university; they'd invited me and I did that for several years. I was on a national funding body. I was on another committee, a national committee, that was involved with looking at the protocols for performance-based research funding in New Zealand, so that was a really big deal, and I was quiet, in some respects in that group, I was relatively junior. But it was a great experience for me. (AUSP11)

In the Australian context, there were more extra-curricular activities outside normal job requirements, and these were accessed because participants were proactive.

Interview respondents from both Vietnam and Australia were willing to learn from their supervisors, colleagues and their friends' experience. They continued an active approach to learning since early in their careers. Thus, they had rich experience which supported their desire to obtain leadership roles. However, Vietnamese and Australian respondents had different levels and approaches to experience. Based on their work history, Vietnamese respondents had experience in different educational leadership positions, while Australian respondents had experience in different areas, such as

education, finance, business, medicine and airlines. It can be seen that Australian female executives were more adaptable to cross-disciplinary change, while Vietnamese female executives are not yet able to easily transfer between disciplines.

Most of my Vietnamese respondents developed their career at one educational institution, while others developed their careers at two educational institutions, as the Vietnamese standard dictates. However, Australian respondents developed their career across institutions and organisations, and even in different countries. Thus, Australian respondents had extensive international experience when compared to Vietnamese respondents. Australian participants confirmed that having such different experiences helped with the successful acquisition of executive roles.

Vietnamese and Australian participants both considered that experience should be recognised as a significant source of knowledge. Many participants perceived that the learning drawn from their work experience was extremely valuable, and could be productively shared with others. With regards to their work history, it was clear that all participants had accumulated many years of experience, ranging from seven to 29 years of workplace learning. However, it was interesting to discover that Australian women had been employed by many more institutions than the Vietnamese women, and had appointments across a wide array of challenging professional positions.

In the Vietnamese context, women tended to remain in one particular academic discipline, and most of these women ended up developing their career within one organisation. Although they exhibited similar years of work experience, when compared with their Australian counterparts, the experience of Vietnamese women was considerably narrower in this employment context. In the Australian context, a number of participants reported that they have had work experience since they were old enough to work. As previously noted, most participants not only had experience in different

education positions, but they also had experience in different areas across different disciplines. Australian women also reported that they found ways of enriching their work experience by involving themselves in external activities, such as doing voluntary work, or striving to have a leadership position in what were generally small sport teams. Furthermore, Australian participants seemed to be much more willing than Vietnamese women to take a new employment position or to just try something new. This modality of spontaneity has allowed Australian women to build up work experience across different areas, and thus this additional workplace experience facilitates their chances of advancing their career. Many of them reported that when they gained employment in a different working environment, they felt that the new ideas available to them made them feel more capable.

Overall, from the perception of Vietnamese and Australian participants, having a variety of experiences in different career positions, disciplines, areas, as well as across different institutions and a range of leadership positions in different countries, was important and typically contributed to female respondents' career development Also, having early career experience provided them with more opportunities to gain executive roles. These experiences also enhanced their knowledge of leadership and enriched their management skills.

6.4.1.7 Credibility.

Most of the participants perceived that credibility was of paramount importance in their working environments, and therefore they endeavoured to develop a level of credibility sufficient to bring values of honesty and integrity into their working environment and lifestyle. The participants expressed the view that the more they were able to demonstrate their core values, the more credible they themselves became. As a consequence, they found that their colleagues were inclined to emulate the ethical

behaviour they practiced, thereby enhancing the moral character of the workplace environment for all. The participants thus regarded this workplace transformation as an integral exemplification of good leadership. Good leaders were seen as individuals who do the right things, for the right reasons, in a moral environment. These are the kind of leaders who make promises and who do everything in their power to keep these commitments. Not only do they gain trust from their colleagues, but even those who are in a more senior position can come to a appreciate the value and dignity generated by their employees and general workers. Consequently, this raises the level of ethical consciousness in the workplace, thereby changing the workplace environment for the better. Employees monitored their behaviours and ensured that the way in which they behaved was consistent with the values which their leaders had openly espoused. In addition to building trust, participants also paid attention to completing their tasks well. They make determined efforts to meet the deadline of whatever work they or their employers had set for them. They always delivered high-quality work and controlled their emotions under stress. They did not take other's comments or opinions personally, and as a result inspired in others feelings of trust and respect. Consequently, their colleagues would believe that they would do the right things for the right reasons, and trusted their judgment. In addition, a good relationship with their colleagues and their superiors also contributed to their career success. Thus, building credibility created more opportunities for participants to receive promotion from their superiors.

This research has demonstrated that there are favourable conditions that facilitate participants' success. These favourable conditions include institutions' awareness of equal opportunities and family support, both extrinsic factors. The other important favourable conditions are individual ability, including skills, knowledge, experience and

credibility, and these are all intrinsic factors. These two main factors contribute to the success of participants, yet intrinsic factors have more influence on participants' success.

6.4.2 Institutions' awareness.

Most participants, in both Vietnam and Australia, perceived that there have been positive changes in the governance structure of their institutions relating to women in leadership positions. Both Vietnamese and Australian participants identified positive changes in institutional structures. Maintaining workplace awareness allowed the implementation of sound policies in order to make changes.

In the Vietnamese context, among the changes to governance structures, were the shifting demographics of membership of the Executive Board, the changing of structures relating to various positions across universities, and the trend to employ younger leaders. All these have contributed to the increasing availability of leadership positions. In addition, completing a political certificate with the Communist Party was also considered a favourable condition in the leadership selection process, particularly when obtaining the political certificate was an institutional requirement.

In the Australian context, being informed of new positions for which candidates could apply, and the commitment of institutions to employ new leaders, has opened more avenues for participants' career development. This is especially true for those people who already have formal professional training and sufficient experience to meet the requirements of their institutions, including qualifications and leadership criteria. Because this context is more public in nature when compared to Vietnam, Australian leaders can be much more aware of which jobs are available.

Although there was only one participant who explicitly stated that the "university policies support gender equity", it is incontestable that commitments by university authorities and government policies seemingly favour having some female participants

in leadership roles. For example, the Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee had the AVCC Action Plan across different periods from 1999 to 2018; another specific example is that the Faculty of Science of the University of Newcastle now has 50/50 male and female project called Gender Equity Action Plan 2017–2020. Yet these requirements contradict the true nature of employment. In practice, very few aspiring applicants are actually appointed. Although only one participant overtly commented on such discrepancies, most participants agreed that it was imperative that government and university policies continue to support gender equity, and that these policies are implemented and used proactively as soon as possible.

6.4.3 Family support.

Both Vietnamese and Australian respondents identified family support as an essential favourable condition that helped them to balance their work and family obligations. Although respondents in both countries had support from their families, the support was from different family members. In the Vietnamese context, respondents mentioned their support mainly came from their parents, brothers, and sisters rather than from their partners. Conversely, Australian respondents said that they had support primarily from their partners. None of the Australian respondents mentioned their relatives' or extended family's support. This provides a perfect example of cultural differences impacting different forms of work and family support.

As discussed in Chapter Four, a majority of survey participants revealed that family support for their career advancement was not significant. However, leaders in Vietnam and Australia reported that there were differences in the level of family support provided by their respective families to assist them along their professional journey. While most survey participants did not credit family support as significant, the participants who were interviewed offered more positive comments, particularly within

the group of Vietnamese female leaders. This difference is partly explained by the fact that those Australian women who chose to be interviewed were from a specific group of leaders at the top of their profession, and who no longer benefitted from family support. This being so, Australian women essentially made it clear that they were provided with more support from their partners than their parents. In Vietnam, direct support came from the family.

The female executive respondents had support from both their family and their workplace, and this support partly contributed to their career development. However, family support trumped institutional support. This can be seen in the comment of respondent AUSP4 mentioned above: “very strong friendships and strong family makes a huge difference”. These respondents reported that they had extensive support from their bosses. It seemed that support from their bosses was similar to the support from employers to employees, so that the employee could complete their work well. Yet these internal supports might not be the same as providing chances and opportunities to move up to the higher positions.

6.5 Leadership Strategies Enabling Female Executives to Develop and Maintain their Current Career

This section explores leadership strategies female executives used to both gain and maintain their leadership positions, in response to research question number 4:

What leadership strategies do female executives in higher education in Vietnam and Australia need to use to develop and maintain their current career trajectories?

6.5.1 Empowering career development.

Empowerment is a key theme that has emerged from the results of my data analysis. Empowerment with regards to leadership is defined as “a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power

and control, and to transformative action" (Rahman, 2013, p. 11). This process includes both individuals and collectives, and the process is considered as a journey of women's empowerment rather than a destination. In this journey, empowerment supports positive changes that "improves women's fall-back position and bargaining power within a patriarchal structure, and identify different causal pathways of change: material, cognitive, perceptual and relational" (Rahman, 2013, p. 11). The empowerment process is believed to raise the awareness of institutions, and develop the leadership abilities of executives across a variety of contexts to create change in entrenched patriarchal power structures. However, "it is not women's purpose to take power from men; rather, the goal of women is to develop their own power while respecting men for who they are" (C. M. Hall, 1992, p. 104).

The leadership framework I have developed takes into consideration that:

> Understanding what enables women to embark on these journeys, what pathways are available to them, which routes they take, and what assists them along the way is essential if we are to support women to empower themselves. (Michelle, 2006, p. 8)

This leadership framework also takes Kanter (1993) as the structure of empowerment. Kanter (1993) described the structure of empowerment and opportunities to access leadership roles, and discussed four aspects of structural empowerment:

- Access to opportunity,
- Access to resources,
- Access to information, and
- Access to support.

While these four elements are discussed separately, they are closely intertwined and act together to create positive change. Thus, the ability to access these four elements is necessary for action.

To support the career trajectory of women in leadership in universities, my data analysis led me to discover that the notion of empowerment was a key variable for women who may or may not have been seeking higher level executive positions. Interestingly, my research also found some aspects of Kanter (1993) (as mentioned in Chapter Two) embedded in the three dimensions of my empowerment leadership framework (see Chapter Seven, Figure 7.2).

Table 6.1

The alignment of my leadership framework to the theory of Structural Power in Organisations of Kanter (1993)

	My leadership framework	**Structural Power in Organisations (Kanter, 1993)**
1	Networking	Access to information
2	Mentoring/sponsorship	Access to support and resources
3	Opportunity	Access to opportunities to learn and grow

The concept of empowerment in my framework is closely aligned with the structural organisational empowerment of Kanter's (1993) theory. However, Kanter's (1993) theory is more about support from institutions, and what the institution should do to empower their leaders. The institutions provide conditions for leaders' success, and empower them with positive working conditions to increase their effectiveness. For example, institutions offer them access to resources, information, support and opportunities. The concept of empowerment in my framework is also about the support of leaders' institutions, but it is focusses on leaders' intrinsic factors and their abilities and efforts to empower themselves by developing their competencies to take leadership opportunities, and also take advantage of what their institutions provide for them. This is

not viewed as a complex interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic factors; instead, they are interconnected and influence each other in my framework.

Throughout my research, a main reoccurring theme has developed. Many intrinsic responses centred around empowerment. Women who felt empowered also tended to have the opportunities, resources, information and support to achieve great things. This is an important stage to achieve to be able to achieve high levels of success, and based on my data I have incorporated it as the last stage at the pinnacle of my framework. Empowerment is the apex of success in female careers. My framework, following Maslow's (1973) model, represents this as the pinnacle of female leaders' career development.

6.5.1.1 Empowerment via networking.

From an analysis of my quantitative and qualitative data, both Vietnamese and Australian participants perceived that professional networking was a significant strategy that empowered success. Vietnamese and Australian respondents developed and maintained their networks across their career development. Networking, in this research, is defined as the interaction with others to promote career development or maintain social contacts (Gibson, Hardy, & Buckley, 2014). This network involved their senior leaders, colleagues, mentors, friends, scholars, family and other relatives. To conceptualise this process, I divided these networks into two areas: internal and external. An internal network refers to relationships with people within their institutions, while an external network refers to their interactions outside their institutions, including professional connections and informal connections with their friends or colleagues. All Vietnamese and Australian participants developed and maintained their internal and external networks across their career trajectories.

In the Vietnamese context, most participants engaged with networking within their institutions. Some of them networked outside their institutions, but only one of them networked internationally. In the Australian context, most participants had a broader networking context, as compared to their Vietnamese counterparts. They also had different types of networking: internal networking and external networking, including international networks. They networked not only within their institutions, but also across regional, national and international institutions. Their networking crossed institutions and fields. Importantly, they perceived that networking could help to reduce gender bias.

Both Vietnamese and Australian participants found it was necessary to develop networks, especially in male-dominated positions and high executive roles. Developing a network with their male counterparts was a good way to address bias and to change their male counterpart's thinking about women's abilities. Female participants in a male-dominated field also could reduce their feelings of isolation by networking with men.

The Vietnamese participants were most focused on their institutional networks. The main reason for this networking difference might be the hierarchical governance structure in Vietnam. As noted, one favourable criteria for selecting leaders was years of experience in their current institutions, and thus there were fewer available opportunities when they transferred to other institutions in Vietnam. As respondent VNP3 stated: "The biggest obstacle for women is the following stages. For instance, I transferred from Quy Nhon University and moved here, but it also takes 4 to 5 years to re-establish one's career and get promoted". Participants explained that if they had close relationships with the selection board of the new institution, they may be more likely to be selected for leadership roles.

Both Vietnamese and Australian participants shared similar views about targeted groups within their networks, referencing both informal and professional networks. This

is even though in the Vietnamese context, it is extremely rare for women to have connections or an international network. Informal networks consisted of family members, peers, relatives and friends. Professional networks consisted of professional groups, academic groups and colleagues, such as their staff and senior leaders. Professional networks were reported as being more important to respondents' career success. My participants not only found networking necessary, but reported it was also a strategy to seek different resources, information, advice and support. This relates to what Birley and Cromie (1988); Gibson et al. (2014); and Valencia and Cázares (2016) found in their research, that professional networking is necessary to promote people's careers. Valencia and Cázares (2016) found that developing academic and research networks is considered necessary in higher education. While Birley and Cromie (1988) research took place in a business in Northern Ireland, they found similar advantages regarding career development via networking.

Networking emerged as the key strategy that executive female leaders used to engage in male-dominated roles. By networking, female leaders were able to obtain more support from males and create "safe working environments" (VNP6). Both Vietnamese and Australian participants identified the importance of networking and the necessity of developing and maintaining their networking, especially with their senior male counterparts. They attempted to remove gender bias and prove themselves to be at the same level as male colleagues.

Participants had different levels of networks, and they selected which network they should focus on. This demonstrated that they understood their working environment well. Networking not only helped them to develop professional relationships, but also provided mentoring opportunities. Individuals within the network could serve as direct mentors to female leaders. On the other hand, the women themselves can act as mentors

to future leaders. Networking provides a means for mentoring through personal interaction. This mentoring can be both provided by another female, or another member of the network can serve as a mentor.

Mentors empowered people by being a role model, assisting and encouraging colleagues. “When assigned any task, I handed over to them the power to regulate lower level colleagues, this means that although he/she is not in leadership positions, he/she still is a leader” (VNP3). In the Vietnamese context, the respondents empowered people by being a role model, while in the Australian context, respondents empowered people not only by being a role model, but also by providing mentoring. Thus, participants were able to develop their external and internal networks as a key leadership strategy. Vietnamese participants could benefit from expanding their external networking if their institutions enhanced more exchange programmes with other national and international institutions, like their Australian counterparts.

Correlations between network and mentor, i.e., networking, helped establish mentoring. At a certain point, and at a certain stage of their career, they gained more and more knowledge. They needed sponsorship and coaching to be able to reach the top of the hierarchy or pinnacle of their success, and this is why mentoring and sponsorship serve as a very important stage

6.5.1.2 Empowerment via mentoring/sponsorship.

Both Vietnamese and Australian participants mentioned mentoring, in different contexts. In the Vietnamese context, the mentoring role was one of advising, supervising and leadership relationships. Participants had a chat with their mentors in an informal environment. In contrast, the Australian participants were able to find formal and informal mentors. There were also different kinds of mentoring, such as supervisors, peers, superiors, external and professional mentors. Participants were able to receive

advice, support and vision from their mentors. Interestingly, I found a mentoring gap in higher positions at executive levels, in that the respondents did not rely on their mentors. This contradiction was further explored during the interviews, as interviewees tended to share more about how they were feeling, particularly the interview participants who were in the highest executive positions. They provided mentoring, however, they did not need mentoring. In addition, at the highest executive leadership level, it was hard to find mentors who were able to support them.

Mentoring was identified as a core leadership competency necessary to moving forward successfully. It enabled leaders to work effectively and the literature has identified the importance of role of mentors. Male and female mentoring are both important for leaders to progress at work (Eagly, 2007). Furthermore, female mentoring is vital to increasing the number of women in leadership positions (European Commission, 2010).

Australian respondents had mentors to assist them during their career development. Australian respondents mentioned different kinds of mentoring, sponsorship and coaching from peers and supervisors as keys to their empowerment. In the Vietnamese context, mentoring was typically about assistance on specific aspects of work rather than about the leadership journey, and this only occurred for a brief period during various career stages.

Vietnamese and Australian leaders both discussed mentoring, but the way they mentioned mentoring differed by country. In the Vietnamese context, respondents engaged in less discussion about mentoring, and they mentioned mentoring in the context of supervisorial and leadership relationships. In the Australian context, there were different kinds of mentoring, such as supervisors, peers, external and professional. Australian respondents were able to find a mentor and maintained mentoring during their

career development. Thus, mentoring occurred rarely in Vietnam, while it occurred frequently in Australia, and this is similar to my findings around networking.

Establishing mentorship through networking

Mentorship was necessary and beneficial for female leaders, and building up these networks was an important step in getting themselves out there. It enabled people in their networks to understand their leadership skills and practice. Mentors would support them and, furthermore, mentors could become sponsors who would not only support them, but also provide opportunities. At a high level, participants could do mentoring well through their networks, especially mentoring for other female leaders. They were able to empower other female leaders and advance their careers. In turn, this enabled these female leaders to successfully negotiate the labyrinth.

The importance and advantages of mentoring highlighted in this study were also identified in the research of Davies et al. (2001), which found that mentoring contributed to effective leadership. Some executives still kept their mentors and also sought mentors to help advance their career.

However, an interesting point that emerged from this research is the perception of mentoring at an executive level is quite different from that at a senior level, as demonstrated by the online questionnaire and interview results. At the executive level, female leaders relied on their mentors, however, at a senior level they found mentoring was not really helpful and did not rely on their mentors. There could be a variety of reasons for this. For example, suitable mentors were not available, or their mentors might not be in similarly senior positions. At a senior level, participants had the ability to provide effective mentoring, and they might want to provide mentoring more than using it. Their mentor may no longer be valid to their new role. At certain point, their mentor’s

knowledge would no longer be useful or applicable to the mentee. Another factor may be that not enough mentors hold high positions.

Mentoring challenges are documented in the literature, due to there being plenty of mentoring programmes out there, but these are still not doing enough to promote professional women. Universities' commitment tends to be to diversify their leadership pipelines. However, there is still a lack of real change in spite of the good intentions and resources provided by such programmes. Potential female leaders need more than encouragement and advice. The necessary key is capital which helps them to advance up their ladder career. That is not only advice on how to move forward, but also to directly offer them leadership opportunities. The people who can inspire female leaders, and offer their advice and perspectives, are sponsors. A sponsor is a person who can both deliver career guidance and actively assist to advance it. Sponsors have power via a leadership position in an organisation, and they are able to mobilise and invest their social capital to support and sponsor female leaders. For example, Loretta Lynch, who become the first African-American woman U.S. attorney general, would not have risen to the top position without the advocacy of President Obama.

Mentoring is necessary but not sufficient for female executives who move up to the top career levels. Female executives need career sponsors who gave advice, advocate and position female leaders, thus advancing their position in the workplace.

6.5.1.3 Self-empowerment.

Self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is believing in your own ability to deal with change, with various situations and to confront working barriers. Self-efficacy develops with a variety of tasks, situations and experiences. Self-efficacy is the keystone of leadership. It is discussed above in section 6.2.

Vietnamese and Australian executive females demonstrated resilience when they experienced difficult times, for example, by dealing with university politics, gossip, gender and health issues. Vietnamese executives in my study were more thoughtful and focused on relationships, while Australian executives were generally more proactive and focused on action. Both populations, however, found ways to show their integrity and their ability to work through the hardest of times. They "dare to do and dare to take responsibility" (VNP). Even when no one was watching, they still did what they thought was right. In addition, they would carefully evaluate their task by asking for feedback. This helped them to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and then keep going, moving forward by confronting every failure and obstacle. They considered their obstacles as a chance to grow and improve themselves, and then develop the resiliency they needed to have sustained success as executives. They always "Try another way to do" (AUSP7). This demonstrated that they were also more willing to take risks and make decisions quickly. Being resilient is an individual trait, and being viewed as a resilient leader requires that you bring others along with you.

6.5.2 Strategic vision.

My quantitative data analysis showed that "strategic vision" had a high percentage of quantitative responds, especially from Australian respondents. While strategic vision (48.4%) was the fourth ranked leadership competence in the Vietnamese context, it was

at the top (60%) of leadership competence in the Australian context. In an open-ended question in the survey questionnaire, respondents explained more about their aims and sense of professional destiny. My qualitative data analysis also consolidated this finding, since most of respondents raised the high importance of having a vision which guided their professional pathway. This finding is similar to the findings of Kirtman and Fullan (2016) and Black (2015) that higher education leaders need to have a vision and set plans to achieve their targets, whether this is in a western or non-western culture.

Interview respondents in Vietnam and Australian discussed vision at length. In the Vietnamese context, respondents' perceptions of vision were more general. This might be due to not having real power and accountability. They sometimes could not translate their vision to real actions and activities, because their performance had to follow their bosses' instructions and outdated institutional targets. VNP6 mentioned that:

> In the workplace, I am in the Vice/Deputy position, so many things I wanted to do but I could not because the decision must be approved by the Head. If the Head permitted to do the work, I would do, but if the Head do not allow, I must not do. Thus, so many things I would like to do but I did not have permission to do. (VNP6)

As a result, they often could not apply their knowledge. In contrast, Australian respondents felt more confident and had the autonomy to apply their knowledge to their tasks, and they were able to make positive changes for their institutions. Thus, vision in the Vietnamese context was more operational, while it was more strategic and genuinely visionary in the Australian context.

Vision was essential in developing their careers. They perceived that the higher level in executive position, the more strategic vision they needed to have. They understood what their institution needed, what their colleagues needed and what they

needed. They were then able to think strategically to bring more benefits for their institutions and the people around them. However, strategic vision in the Vietnamese and Australian contexts was different. In the Vietnamese context, due to the lack of power of female leaders in established male-dominated institutions, their vision was often held back. What female leaders wanted to do is create change and innovation, but they need permission from their superiors and to adhere to the culture of their institutions.

In general, female leaders were strategic in enhancing their vision and in both gaining and maintaining their career development. The major difference between those who got promoted to senior levels in institutions, versus those who remained at the middle level, was strategic vision. These findings add to the literature, indicating that the higher the level of leadership, the more strategic vision is needed to advance a career.

6.5.3 Professional and personal development.

My analysis of the quantitative data, in the professional preparation framework showed how respondents took advantage of leadership training programmes. The scales not only showed what their institutions provided but also programmes outside of their institutions. This strategy of taking advantage of leadership programmes had a high correlation with also being a member of a professional organisation. My analysis revealed that most of the respondents attempted to participate in a leadership programme that was designed for them, and this was particularly true of my Vietnamese respondents. Female executives were aware of the importance of ongoing learning, and tried to empower themselves by taking part in leadership programmes inside and outside their institutions. This not only helped them prepare themselves for leadership roles, but also showed their willingness to embrace life-long learning and skills development.

Associated with taking advantages of these programmes, female executives - particularly in the Australian context - took advantage of mentoring. The quantitative data

showed that although having a mentor had a higher than average mean (M=2.66), it showed a correlation with willingness to rely on female and male mentors to help advance their career. This result was quite similar in the qualitative data. Most of the interview respondents indicated that they sought help from mentors for their career development.

My respondents emphasised the importance of shadowing other people who do the same kind of work for their institutions. They had taken the opportunity while travelling and working abroad to observe and learn the way their overseas counterparts operated, led and managed higher education institutions. Learning from their colleagues, and observing and learning from higher-level leaders, also helped to strengthen their positive qualities and skills. As the respondent AUSP2 stated: "… win the confidence and influence within the room, sometimes some people learn better by visualising it and experiencing it; you can't teach it by textbook" (AUSP2).

The majority of respondents took advantage of the different facilities provided not only by their institution, but also by their communities. This was not only for their career development, but they were also committed to their self-development and ongoing training. As a leader of higher education in Vietnam and Australia, they were compelled to respond to demands for change and the challenges facing their sectors, and thus they have been able to learn more through widening their perspectives and exposure.

Their perceptions appear to confirm the view in the literature, which indicated the importance of self-development and ongoing learning, in enabling leaders to improve their weaknesses (Callan, 2001). It showed how self-confidence and continuous learning strengthened their emotional intelligence competencies through training and development activities (Cherniss, 1998). Thus, being willing to grow and explore outside their comfort zones in many areas of their lives enhanced their ability to innovate, increased their

overall effectiveness within their chosen field, and enriched their life and what executives sought to achieve.

The promotion of life-long learning does challenge the leaders of higher education in Vietnam. There is a need to change the learning culture, in a context where learning and education are not easily accessible to all. Even though continuing education and life-long learning have been developed in the Vietnamese community, this concept is still relatively new and not as well-developed and prevalent as in Australia.

6.6. Summary of Chapter Six

This chapter developed the researcher's discussion by integrating quantitative analysis results and qualitative analysis results, and relevant literature, to respond to the research questions (see Chapter One). This chapter was structured so as to address the research questions, such as leadership styles and competencies; barriers influencing female respondent's career progression; facilitators enabling their career success and the leadership strategies required to advance executive roles. I have formulated the key findings into my leadership framework (see Chapter Seven, Figure 7.2) which aims to empower and inspire more female leaders to step into executive leadership roles. An in-depth discussion of the implications of my study for theory, institutions, policy makers, university leaders, and current and future female leaders will be presented in the next chapter. My thesis concludes with the key points from my study and that both male and female leader can consider.

Chapter Seven

Recommendations and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

"Every step, positions have challenges. Challenges do not disappear. Thus, leaders have to learn to adapt" (Deshong, 2018).

Although progress has been made in the career advancement and leadership opportunities for women, there remains an under-representation of female leaders in higher education (Longman & Anderson, 2011). My research explored the career trajectories of female executives in higher education in Vietnam and Australia. The objectives were to identify and understand barriers, and help develop career paths, so that women can make advances in higher education leadership. My study aimed firstly to investigate the extent to which executives adopt leadership styles into their practice. Secondly, to investigate how the commitment of institutions and governments also influences the achievement of female executives. For example, institutional policy may not have its intended effect, and there may not be specific leadership training targets for female leaders. This study aimed to investigate how barriers and opportunities influence career development, and how knowledge, skills and disposition contribute to female leaders' success. Finally, the study also explored the strategies executives utilise to gain and maintain their leadership positions.

My research used a complementary Mixed-Methods approach to find answers to the four research questions. Both the results from an online survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were treated as equally important and complemented one another. The quantitative and qualitative data looked at three specific areas: barriers, facilitators and strategies. The interviews were used to gain a deeper understanding of

higher education leadership, examining career paths and how female executives reached senior-executive positions.

This conclusion chapter begins with an overview of the findings and links them to the research questions and aims of the study. The chapter then presents a strategic leadership framework, centred around the concept of empowerment, and provides an overview of what is required for female leaders to be successful. The findings of my research have significant implications for leadership knowledge in the context of Vietnamese and Australian higher education. This chapter also presents the implications for university leaders as well as for current and future female leaders. Following this, the limitations of the study will be acknowledged alongside some recommendations for future research. Finally, I will summarise my research with some concluding remarks.

7.2 General Findings

7.2.1 Leadership styles and competencies.

The number of females represented at executive leadership levels is small when compared to their male counterparts (Kele & Pietersen, 2015). An understanding of the career development of successful executives is critical for encouraging more female leaders to obtain executive positions. The literature review in Chapter Two underscored the point that transformational leadership styles contribute to career development.

My analysis of the data revealed that the literature-based transformational leadership styles align well with my participants' notions of success. Female leaders tend to inspire their staff to respectfully collaborate with their colleagues, to meet their expectations and work towards common goals (Cullinan, 2018). Female leaders also adapt their leadership styles to suit the person who they are working with, as well as the institutions where they are sensitive to context and individual difference. Female leaders believe that they predominantly display a transformational leadership style, and this is

not surprising in a male-dominated profession. Transformational leadership is typically associated with female leaders (Debebe, 2009; Stempel, Rigotti, & Mohr, 2015), and the respondents were able to reach executive roles by utilising leadership skills that came naturally to them. Focusing on developing their natural leadership skills is recommended as a strategy to assist females in securing these positions.

There is an emerging understanding of the transformational leadership style in the Vietnamese higher education context. Transformational leaders motivate and inspire their followers to reach a common goal. This leadership style seems unfamiliar to Vietnamese leaders, even though MOET requires leaders to be more transformational and has enacted reforms to support this. Yet a few leaders remain conservative and hesitant to implement changes, due to entrenched hierarchal and patriarchal power structures. However, the majority of leaders have tended to adopt the transformational leadership style into their practice. They demonstrated some characteristics, such as being conscientious, open-minded and using good listening skills, and these skills were similar to their Australian counterparts who also utilised the transformational leadership style. These findings in the Vietnamese context adds to the research of N. T. Pham (2010), who identified a hesitation to make changes in the leadership style of some Vietnamese leaders. Even though this trend is not definitive for all respondents, it can be presumed that there is an emerging adoption of transformational leadership styles in the Vietnamese context, partly due to the increased job satisfaction associated with using this style (Ho, Le Dinh, & Vu, 2016). In general, the emerging trend is to adopt transformational leadership styles in both Vietnam and Australia. The value of this new approach has been acknowledged and contributes to the success of female executives.

With regards to leadership competencies, the respondents gave insights into what was important to being successful in a senior level leadership position. They believed that

knowledge competence, leadership competence – including social intelligence skills, political skills, collaboration and entrepreneurship skills – were important factors facilitating their career development. These competencies were essential for career development, when considering individual leadership abilities (Esser et al., 2018; Fullan & Scott, 2009). Some of the key competencies of senior-executive women leaders emerged more from my qualitative results than from the survey data. These competencies included strategic vision, cultural and cross-cultural competence, and leadership efficacy which female executives utilised as part of their leadership strategies.

My study of the leadership styles and competencies of female executives in higher education in Vietnam and Australia highlighted many of the skillsets of successful female leaders. My analysis of the data revealed that they shared many of the desirable attributes, capacities and competencies that are crucial for successful leadership. These were developed mostly through extensive experience and the workplace situations which individual respondents had encountered. Although the extent to which they applied these skills differed from one another, the overall outcome of this was effective leadership and maintenance of their career development. This practical finding will be illustrated and embedded in the recommended leadership framework.

7.2.2 Barriers and opportunities.

There were many workplace barriers in my participants' journeys through the labyrinth. In their workplaces they faced ongoing gender bias, the burden of a very high workload and individual barriers, i.e. family responsibility, health and age. Many participants agreed that their careers have been adversely affected in a number of ways.

Higher education in Vietnam and Australia is still based on a patriarchal structure that is embedded in the nature of their institutions (Ashwill & Diep, 2005; Burgmann, 2003). An example of this patriarchal structure is the gender bias that may occur when

employing female executives. (This could be consciously or unconsciously, as women tend to be undermined by both their female and male colleagues for their efforts and contributions). It is still often a 'boys club' during selection processes (AUSP4).

There are some favourable conditions that facilitate participants' success. These conditions include institutional governance and family support, conditions categorised as extrinsic factors. Other significant favourable conditions include individual ability, skills, knowledge and experience, which all help build up leaders' credibility and are viewed as intrinsic factors by this study. These two main sets of factors contribute to career development, and intrinsic factors play a particularly important role in participant's success. External factors combine with an individual's intrinsic factors to create a highly individualised career journey. This enabled the participants to promote their strengths and was how they had achieved their executive positions. However, a lack of specific leadership training, gender bias and a lack of strong institutional commitment to advancing female leaders were also identified in the data. These were some of the causes of limited leadership opportunities, meaning that executive roles were unavailable for female leaders seeking to move up.

7.2.3 Leadership Strategies.

Respondents demonstrated many ways in which they were driven by their intrinsic characteristics to obtain and maintain their leadership positions. They demonstrated their abilities, including their knowledge, skills and experiences, by performing and attempting to carry out their tasks effectively. They formally attempted to build their prestige and credibility through task performance; they also kept going up the corporate ladder and did not give up on their career development. All of these actions were based on their efforts and leadership strategies.

During the career development process, respondents utilised an array of strategies which included mentoring, formulating a dynamic vision, networking inside and outside the primary work environment and leadership skills. As indicated in the previous discussion, the concept of work ethic also figured prominently in a number of different ways, and supported and enhanced career success. Most of the respondents relied more or less on an amalgam of these leadership strategies. Respondents were determined to focus on their specific strategies. For instance, some respondents focused more attention upon their dispositions, as mentioned above.

Besides utilising elements from all the above mentioned strategies, respondents also took avantage of support from their institutions. This may have in part been due to changes in their institution's policy on gender equity. For example, in one case there was a commitment from the President and the Vice-Chancellor to promote women into senior roles, and to address the problem of gender equality. This was done by increasing the leadership opportunities for women who were seeking career advancement within the university. Because of these serendipitous changes, a respondent was able to benefit from the advancement opportunities made available to her by her institution. As she tells the story, "so the conditions changed which helped me position myself for promotion and I think that really, really helped" (AUSP5). Thus, seizing opportunities and taking advantages of changes were some of the strategies which contributed to their career success.

7.3 Leadership Strategy Framework

Based on the same thinking as Maslow (1973), that led to the development of his hierarchy of needs, I have established a framework of leadership skills and strategies which helped me analyse my data and formulate the framework below. This framework includes five levels of leadership needs:

- Basic work needs,
- Professional needs,
- Interpersonal needs,
- Strategic needs, and
- Empowerment needs.

These needs also differ between executive leaders and leaders in general. Executive leaders are not only responsible for themselves, they are also responsible for other staff and their organisations. As previously stated, I developed my empowerment framework to assist women in their journey towards executive leadership positions in Vietnam and Australia.

This empowerment framework may be used as a tool to help define the behaviour, preparation and strategies that individual leaders and their organisations need to be successful. The proposed framework is a tool for strategically building leadership competencies for women, and sets a clear framework for the empowerment of female executives by their organisations. This framework is put forward as a potentially key component of boosting leadership opportunities, and is a tool to help female leaders successfully negotiate their leadership labyrinth (see Figure 7.1).

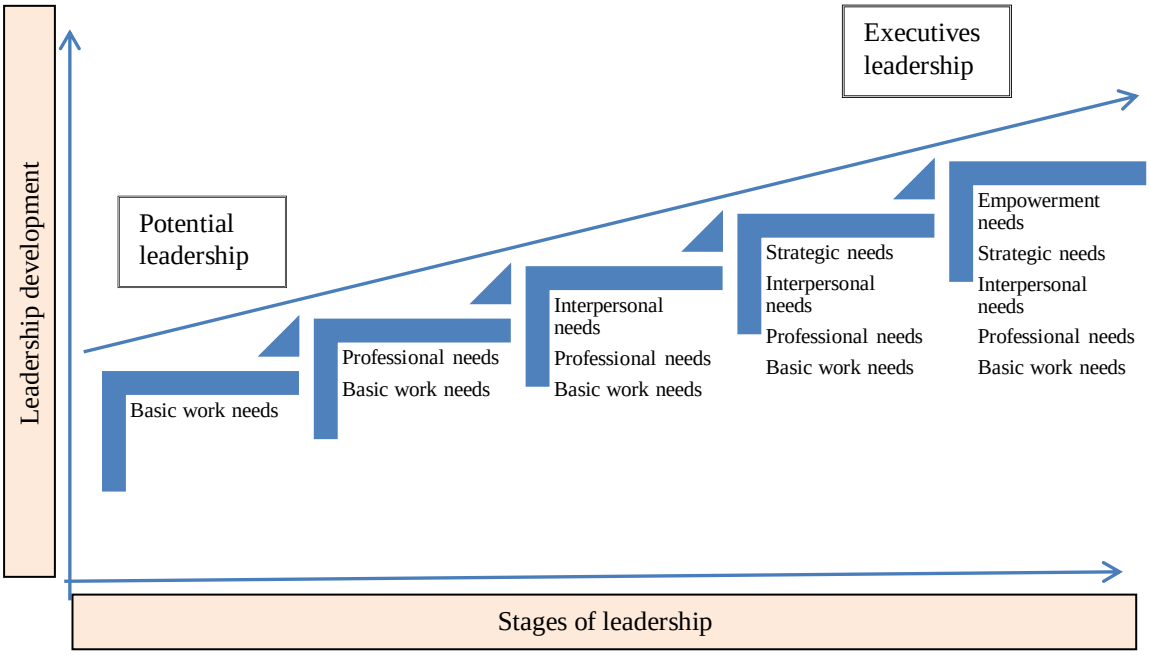

Figure 7.1: Executive leadership development

In my framework (see Figure 7.2), the first level of the career hierarchy is basic work needs, which includes early professional leadership experience, a strong work ethic, passion and self-motivation. The data showed that executives had prior experience in a variety of leadership positions, and across different areas. Work ethic is indicated by someone who works hard and is responsible in relation to their job description (Petty & Hill, 2005). Executives showed commitment to not only positive attitudes in and out of the workplace, but also demonstrated strong determination in achieving their leadership goals. Staying motivated and pursuing goals, in the face of setbacks and adversity, was a valuable asset of executives. Furthermore, maintaining a positive attitude and remaining optimistic were clear attributes of executive leadership styles. Other factors included work experience, values and ethics, commitment and self-motivation, and these are not only essential at the beginning of a career but also support a leader's entire career trajectory.

The second level of the career hierarchy is professional competencies. Obtaining a higher degree that is aligned with executive leadership selection criteria and job positions is an essential part of competency development. In addition, professional qualifications helped leaders to be recognised and valued by their colleagues. In the Vietnamese context, a political certificate, a foreign language certificate and ICT certificate are also needed in order to advance leaders' career development.

The third level of the career hierarchy is interpersonal qualities which includes personal competencies and organisational competencies. Personal competencies consist of communication, presentation and listening skills. Communication and sharing common goals with clear targets also assist in developing personal and organisational competencies. In addition, persistence in terms of ensuring organisational and personal development is also necessary to make the dramatic step into executive positions. These skills help leaders to inspire their staff and colleagues, and are embedded in organisational competencies.

Organisational competencies are crucial factors that assist leaders when dealing with identified challenges in their workplace. Organisational competencies include political skills, entrepreneurial skills, social intelligence skills, collaboration skills, cultural and cross-cultural competencies. These skills show us how female leaders are able to demonstrate their leadership qualities, as they enable executives to build on their achievements and move forward. This merger of cultural and cross-cultural competencies is necessary for executives to work across various sectors. In addition, it allows these executives to become global citizens and global leaders who respect the diversity of cultural backgrounds in their workplace. All these leadership skills contribute significantly to breaking through the glass ceiling and helped the respondents step up to leadership positions.

The fourth level of the career hierarchy is strategic needs. This includes strategic competencies and intellectual leadership skill development. Strategic vision is the most important factor and is also an emerging strategic competency, as found in my quantitative data. Strategic vision was emphasised in the interviews, as these leaders are strategic in their thinking and in how they influence people. Respondents perceived that the higher the level of an executive position, the more strategic vision was needed. Strategic vision is the major difference between promotions at senior levels as opposed to those who remain at the middle level of their institution. Female executives were being strategic in enhancing their vision, in turn advancing their career. Intellectual leadership styles include adaptability and flexibility, creativity and innovation skills. Among female executives, these talents showed a high level of applied knowledge competencies. Creativity and innovation have become critical skills in achieving success for positive educational change. These require creative insights to refine relevant solutions when making changes. In the process of making changes and creating a new strategic vision for institutions, the skills of adaptability and flexibility are vital to the success of leaders.

The top level of the career hierarchy is executive competencies, which emerged from my quantitative and qualitative data. The executive competencies are those most associated with higher education executive leadership, and with having the ability and capability to competently use key skills, knowledge and attributes to adapt to changes in the international context. This capacity, which makes executives different to leaders in general, is not only their responsibility for themselves, and empowering other people (Ewing, 1957), but also their responsibility for organisations. Executive competencies include the three most important factors: networking, mentoring/sponsorship and self-empowerment. Both internal and external networking are identified as powerful strategies to build up relationships. These relationships not only reduce bias in the leadership

selection process, but also provide more opportunities for female executives to engage with the larger tertiary education community. Mentoring/sponsorship plays a significant role in encouraging and promoting female executives. Mentoring/sponsorship not only offers assistance and relevant advice, but also provides opportunities for female executives to be promoted to higher positions. Resilience and having the self- efficacy to move forward were also emerging themes of this study. Do not give up, continue to "put your hand up" for every leadership opportunity, and implement tasks with passion is the way to confront a variety of barriers within the workplace. Believing in their abilities, leaders are willing to take risk and make decisions quickly, learning from their failure as they go along. With both resilience and self-efficacy, leaders conceptualise failure as a temporary setback that they are able to recover from and handle. They maintain a positive attitude and find ways to move forward with a strong sense of opportunity and self-confidence. Demonstrating high levels of self-confidence when working and communicating with the people around them illustrates significant levels of leadership self-efficacy, which all contribute to the success of leaders (McCormick, Tanguma, & López-Forment, 2002). Self-efficacy continues to improve during leaders' career development as they acquire new skills, knowledge and experiences. These top executive competencies are particularly emphasised by interview respondents, who were in senior-executive leadership positions (see section 5.5, 6.2 and 6.5).

In summary, the framework illustrates the skills and competencies required at the different stages of leadership development. Across these different stages of moving up to executive positions, leaders should consider different levels of need and professional qualities. The first step for females wishing to advance to leadership roles is establishing a baseline level of basic work needs; this will enable them to apply for jobs, and then obtain the knowledge they need to do these roles. Advanced qualifications are key in this

area, and they will then develop the work competencies that are required for success. Development of different leadership skills is important in this area. In order to obtain these higher leadership skills, developing a growth plan is required to formulate a short-term and long-term vision. Overall, this strategy aims to develop these skills and to achieve them. The key strategies of entering and maintaining executive roles is based on developing empowerment strategies which include networking, mentoring/sponsorship and self-empowerment. In this process of empowerment, high levels of self-determination and resilience are necessary when seeking contemporary higher leadership positions. In summary, these needs are incremental, multi-dimensional and cumulative. For instance, executive competencies could not be achieved without reliance on these four needs, and a work ethic is as important to the executive level as it is to the basic level. Thus, each of the levels of the hierarchy build on one another and develop the individual's skills and competencies, allowing people to move forward to the next level. The juggling act of maintaining a research profile in leadership roles, along with a family life, will continue throughout their career development. In addition, having a supportive workplace environment and strong family networks are key factors facilitating career success.

As we can see from the framework, the different stages of being an executive leader require different needs and leadership competencies. These leadership stages need to build on one another and go backward and forwards between development needs and stages. For example, if a person is on the executive level, they still need to consider basic work needs. This is a multi-dimensional process involving incremental and cumulative learning. On the journey of moving forward to the executive level, a person might also remain stuck at any level for a time. With this framework formulated from the intrinsic factors which play a very strong role in female executives' progress at each level, female

leaders are able to empower themselves by addressing different professional needs so that they can move upwards. This framework is generally cross-cultural in application, yet I acknowledge that in specific cultural contexts it may need to be adapted.

7.4 Implications and Recommendations of the Study

My study has contributed to an understanding of how successful female executives perceive that they have been able to obtain and maintain their leadership positions in higher education in Vietnam and Australia. The study identified several crucial factors including leadership styles and competencies, barriers and opportunities, and leadership strategies. I acknowledge that the evidence of this research may be generalised to female leaders in other countries, which share a similar context and culture. The findings may also contribute to leadership practice as follows (see Figure 7.2).

A framework for empowering women concerning executive leadership positions

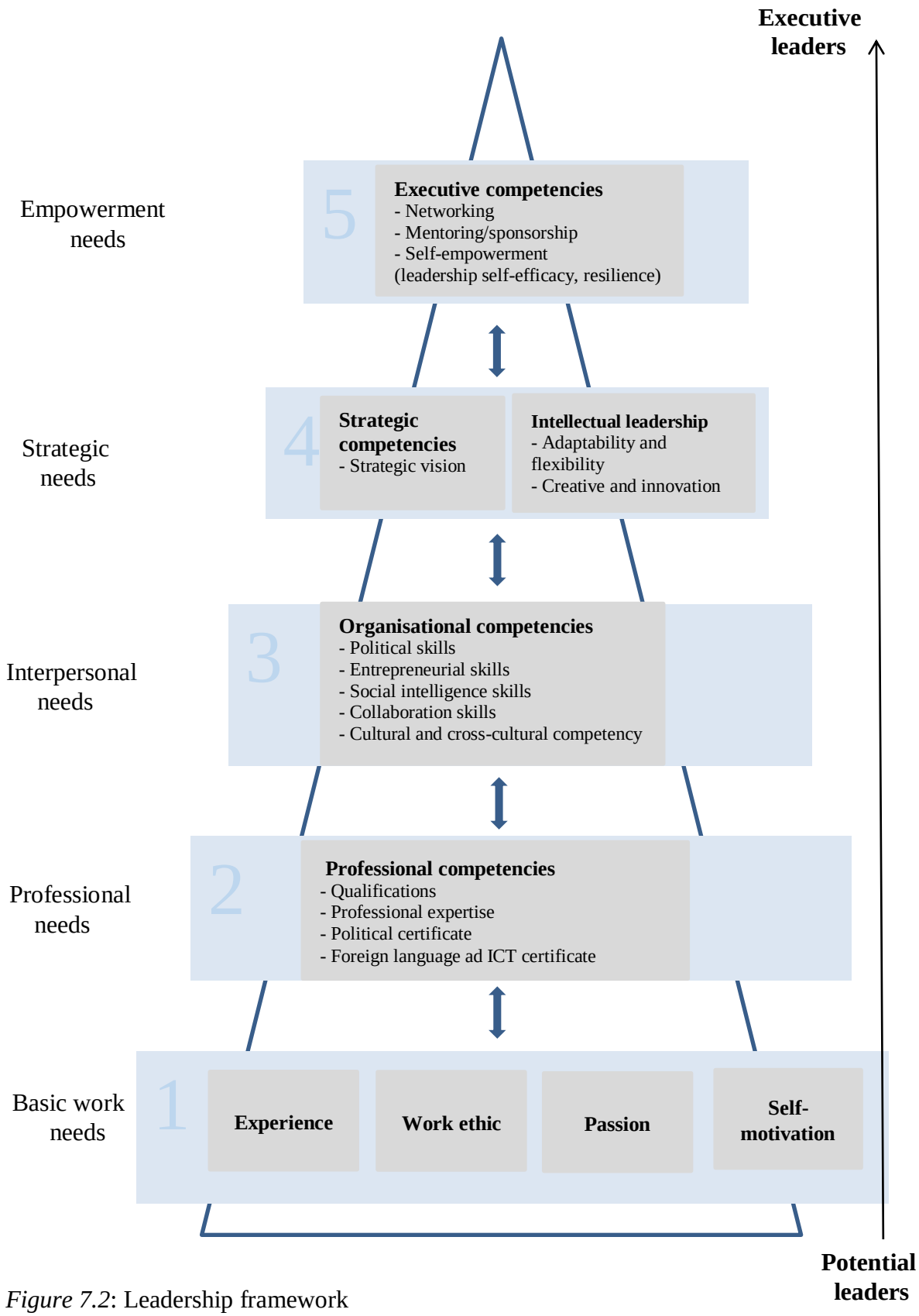

Figure 7.2: Leadership framework

7.4.1 Implications for knowledge.

The findings of my research add building blocks to the existing literature on educational leadership, which has been conducted across most school sectors. The literature reveals that there is only a handful of in-depth and comprehensive studies regarding the success of female executives in higher education (Madsen, 2007; T. L. H. Nguyen, 2013). Thus far, there have not been any comprehensive studies across both Vietnam and Australia. My research sought to contribute to and acknowledge theories around these specific leadership groups in both Vietnam and Australia. The findings specifically contribute to an understanding of the leadership styles and competencies that enable the success of female executives in Vietnam and Australia. It also revealed the possible influences, barriers and opportunities around female career development. The research findings help address a gap within the present available knowledge, particularly around female leadership in higher education. This study may provide the foundation for others to conduct further research in these areas. Importantly, each respondent discussed the resistance they faced in moving forward. This suggests that my research into developing a leadership profile is imperative in higher education institutions, in both Vietnam and Australia.

7.4.2 Implications for institutions and policy makers.

Lack of leadership training programmes was particularly significant in the Vietnamese context, while more Australian respondents were able to access training programmes in the higher education sector. However, even though Australian respondents attended leadership programmes, these training programmes were often described as irrelevant and not addressing the specific needs of female executives. As a respondent who attended such a programme stated: “Yes. No take away. Our leadership training is patronising and hopeless” (AUSP 10). It is recommended that universities

should formulate and offer leadership training programmes which target the specific needs of people at each leadership level. It is essential that cross-cultural competencies and gender empowerment should be addressed within such programmes.

Limited opportunities to lead and to access executive positions were significant findings from my data analysis. There is a need to establish commitment and consensus by providing aspiring leaders with opportunities to rise to executive positions, and to join management boards, so that they are able to refine their leadership skills. In addition, there needs to be more international cooperation and collaboration. Leaders are assumed to be able to function in the international context of higher education leadership. I recommend that universities create leadership exchange programmes, or internships, that provides opportunities for leaders to exchange experiences and strategies, and experience different university environments. Such activities would provide female leaders with networks inside and outside their institutions, their regions and their countries. National and international programmes build up their career networks, and travel also forces female leaders to create their own personal networks. These internal and external networks, and professional and personal networks, which are structured in my leadership framework, are a key part of the executive competencies necessary to achieve executive roles.

7.4.3 Implications for university leaders.

In terms of practice, the concept of "seizing opportunities" – as perceived by the respondents – is believed to have the potential to stimulate changes in leadership practice among university leaders in Vietnam and Australia. This change involves a shift in the combination of transformational and transactional styles, towards new managerial approaches. Almost all respondents claimed that they have been able to overcome the barriers, difficulties and challenges facing them by selectively applying their major

competencies. It is clear that university leaders need to empower themselves with skills, abilities, competencies and expertise in all areas to navigate the complex processes of educational leadership. This is particularly true in times of challenging and rapid change, and high workplace demand. University leaders can confront these challenges by adopting flexible ways to combine their competencies and leadership styles.

7.4.4 Implications for current and future female leaders.

Many of the respondents claimed that they "never give up" on opportunities and on moving up the career ladder. They also claimed that they had come a long way in terms of developing their capability to lead successfully. They admitted that they had utilised their extensive experience, professional knowledge, networking and mentoring/sponsorship, until they had become competent in the application of their skills and capabilities. Their participation in this study, by sharing their successful career development and providing themselves as role models, is believed to be valuable in encouraging and assisting current female leaders in both Vietnam and Australia. Their reflections on the strategies which they perceived as being the main factors for their success are crucial. These reflections have enabled them to succeed and provide invaluable insights for current or future female leaders seeking leadership positions in higher education.

In order to be successful, future female leaders may start their journey by chairing small committees and practicing dealing with minor issues so that they are able to use and practice the leadership competencies which I have proposed in the leadership framework (see Figure 7.2), such as gaining experience (level 1), improving organisational skills (level 3) and building networks (level 5). In evaluating minor drawbacks and wins on a small scale, they can use this experience – which was found to

be significant to executives' success in this study – to build self-empowerment so that they are able to deal with greater challenges and larger committees or groups of people.

In addition, when implementing multitasking, leaders integrate their various skills, such as time management, collaboration, communication and decision-making. Leaders are able to effectively use their time and make concerted efforts to get things done. They build up and improve these skills daily throughout their working lives, and this preparation enables them to move up to the next leadership level.

In terms of networking and mentoring, females who would like to be successful in higher leadership ranks need to develop mentoring networks which potentially include both male and female mentors. Particularly if future female leaders are new to a university, whenever possible they should ensure that they have a good personal connection to their mentors. Besides seeking advice from mentors, sponsorship is recommended for female leaders who aspire to senior leadership. Female leaders should develop a network with sponsors. For those who are current female executive leaders, sponsorship networking is important as it offers significant opportunities when seeking higher roles.

Success is attainable for many higher education female leaders, if they have strategies in place to assist them confront the barriers they face on a daily basis. Both current and future female leaders need to be aware of their contexts and how to stand up to it, make sure their voices are heard, and look and sound the part of a leader. Depending on the background, working experiences and challenges of organisations, future leaders should build their own strategies to make the best out of workplace and performance.

7.4.5 Recommendations for future research.

This study examined the leadership strategies of 380 successful female executives and 24 senior-executives in higher education contexts in both Vietnam and Australia. I

would suggest expanding the study to include as many female executives as possible from each country. In addition, this research studied successful female executives. As such, we do not know about the female leaders who were not able to get their desired job or who were not given a chance to rise. Thus, research on potential female leaders, those who have not been able to make it through the labyrinth, is suggested to explore whether they have experienced similar career development issues.

The initial strategies women have for obtaining and maintaining their executive positions, and the cultural implications of these roles, relate to their resilience. It was expected that female executives in this study would have the varying degrees of resilience necessary for obtaining executive roles. It was shown that resilience could break down cultural boundaries, particularly in the Australian context. Expanding the study to include a larger percentage of female executives would verify this factor.

The leadership framework relating to empowerment strategies demonstrates the need for leadership competencies for female executives and their institutions. This knowledge can be reformulated in curriculum terms to contribute to the professional development of females who aspire to gain senior leadership positions, not just in tertiary education but in many other fields of employment. Conducting a study that tests the leadership framework for effectiveness is also recommended.

7.5 Conclusion

In Vietnam and Australia, the number of females who achieve undergraduate, master and doctoral degrees is similar to their male counterparts. Yet, I was surprised to find that this level of education did not guarantee that a similar proportion of female leaders were to be found in executive hierarchical positions. It is interesting that this situation is similar in both Vietnam and Australia, albeit for different reasons. It is still a rarity to find women at the top of universities in Vietnam and Australia. For instance,

when I began this study the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle was a female leader but by the end of this year – December 2018 – she had retired, and the new Vice-Chancellor is male. Men mostly dominate the executive level of higher education. This situation highlights the relevance of my research, in which key aspects of successful female executives' careers are explored. I hope my work empowers this under-represented group, in order to open doors to the next level.

I also found that females who hold executive positions are hardworking, resilient people who love the challenges and constant change they need to manage to perform their roles. Compared to those who remain at lower level leadership stages, and due to the barriers and difficulties associated with them, these successful executives are persistent in their desire to obtain executive positions. They have many intrinsic characteristics which are necessary for self-motivation and which enable them to progress. This intrinsic drive is very important to succeed in higher education. Those who love challenges, think strategically, have positive attitudes and seize opportunities seem to be better suited to the executive role than others.

Female executives still feel that they do not have enough specific training for their allocated jobs in key areas of leadership. In my analysis of the data, I found that it was difficult to gain access to higher courses, and that due to this lack of training they cannot move up to the next stage. This is because different leadership levels have different training requirements. In my research, I have identified specific requirements for executive career progression, and therefore the specific leadership training that is needed to support these roles. These issues are embedded in the framework that I have proposed. In turn, female leaders need to be better prepared to take on these executive leadership positions. Leadership needs to be viewed as a process of growth, innovation and empowerment; this will further encourage more females to step into leadership roles.

If we truly desire to have more women in executive positions in universities in Vietnam and Australia, research such as mine is beneficial for providing accurate information. The data I have collected shows us what is happening in higher education in Vietnam and Australia. Furthermore, we have three main categories which may be used to increase the number of women who are eligible to take on executive level positions. The first is executive leadership competencies, which are driven by their intrinsic value, including networking, mentoring/sponsorship, self-empowerment and strategic vision. The second is opportunities, particularly the lack of current opportunities that women have – in many cases – to advance their career. The third is training and overcoming the lack of relevant training for women in leadership roles. It cannot be denied that if we provide women with more opportunities, and support them with my leadership framework embedded in leadership training programmes, we will enable more women to rise.

Even though females hold executive positions, this does not mean that there are no remaining barriers in their professional journeys. The more they achieve higher positions, the more additional barriers threaten to hold them back. Their leadership journey is more about negotiating the leadership labyrinth than breaking the glass ceiling. As discussed in Chapter One, the metaphor that I used throughout my thesis is of the labyrinth. I use the labyrinth as a metaphor that implies the cryptic and confusing variety of barriers that women confront during their career development. The labyrinth is always complex and difficult, and female executives have to negotiate their career development using their own abilities. While working their way through the labyrinth, they need a light and that light is the torch of empowerment and mentoring/sponsorship, opportunity, training delivered with a spirit of encouragement, and positive career development that can lead more women to seek higher levels. The framework that I have proposed would

make the labyrinth much easier to work through and negotiate. It is designed to allow people to understand the history of the journey and provide a clear pathway for women to have a future in leadership. This framework and the theoretical framework of collective empowerment I use to frame this study align so that we might enable women to achieve greater executive level success.

It is well-known in the current employment landscape that there is a large gender gap and that very few women are posted to leadership roles (Awang-Hashim et al., 2016), and I feel that my thesis has very much highlighted this concept. This is why my research is so important, prominent and especially topical for the contemporary era and necessary to help close the gender gap in higher education leadership. My specific focus was on trying to address leadership issues for women. This has enabled me to propose an empowerment framework to address the issues confronting women in higher education leadership. My hope is that this research will contribute to opportunities for women to become empowered and to seek these higher positions, and thus help transform opportunities for women not only in Vietnam and Australia but around the world.

My research did focus on women, but it does not necessarily have to be just for women. I focused on women because they are the most disadvantaged group in leadership roles. This meant creating more knowledge about the most disadvantaged leadership population in the workplace, and focusing on addressing leadership to build leadership capacity, so this research can be used as a scaffold for both male and female leaders. My research is not restricted to women, as everyone seeking advancement can take advantage of this research.

I began my research with a survey of women leaders' achievements across different areas of higher education, and then asked why - particularly given women's significant levels of participation in higher education - there were so few female leaders

in this sector. I examined the historical, cultural and social reasons that have created this situation for women in Vietnam and Australia. And I interrogated senior executives career journeys to discover what had aided their progression and what had hindered it. My resulting framework is a tribute to not only these women, who have succeeded against the odds, but also the generations of future female leaders yet to come.

As the respondent AUSP2 said about utilising her leadership abilities as a key to opening up her career development, as well as negotiating her own leadership labyrinth:

> First of all, you need to be good at what you're doing, that's number one, and good at what you're doing, but you also need to actually get it done...And I suppose women tend to have a tendency not to go to the front row if they do not need to, and I think sometimes it's making sure that if they have to, they make themselves do it. And I guess there is an important thing, I think for women in particular, because mentors and also networks do not come naturally to us; you have to be with them, and also make an effort to be with them and keep them…It's not something that we naturally go to, so professionally you need to be in a network where you're comfortable, but also you maintain that sort of mutual encouragement. (AUSP2)

And, finally, Australian participant 9 sees the labyrinth from her perspective:

> In my view it's, I mean it's probably a bit of both [glass ceiling and labyrinth] for women, but I think my personal case it's probably more of the labyrinth I think because it's this sort of a very complex pathway to getting where you want to go …. I think females are quite resilient in that circumstance, and do work long hours and work really hard to demonstrate that and to be able to feel confident to be able to do it. (AUSP9)

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Appendices

Appendix A. Survey Questionnaire

1 Negotiating the labyrinth 20-02-16 (English version)

1. **IMPLIED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS**
(Document Version 3, Dated 20 June 2016)

You are invited to participate in the study being conducted by student researcher Thi Loan Lam, a PhD candidate student at the University of Newcastle, NSW, Australia.
The research focuses on using leadership strategies to empower women, an under-represented group in higher education leadership. The researcher is particularly interested to explore leadership development which successful female executive leaders have used to confront their barriers to obtain their executive leadership positions in higher education.
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to fill an online-survey that will take approximately 15 minutes.
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from participating at any time up to completing and submitting the survey.
Your confidentiality will be protected throughout the research. At the end of the survey you are asked to indicate your interest in participating in an interview. You are advised that by doing this, your survey results will no longer be anonymous but will be treated confidentially. If you agree, the researcher will contact you using the contact information provided to arrange a time for the interview.
If you have any questions about the research, do not hesitate to contact one of the following.

Researchers
School of Education/Faculty of Education and Arts
The University of Newcastle
University Drive, Callaghan, NSW 2308, Australia

Professor John Fischetti
Principal Investigator/Head of School
Email : John.Fischetti@newcastle.edu.au

Professor Ronald Laura--Associate Investigator
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Thi Loan Lam
Student researcher
Mobile: (+61) 416860179 or (+84) 966431878
Email : thiloan.lam@uon.edu.au
lamloanhtk@gmail.com

* Please select your choice below. Clicking on the “Yes” button below indicates that
- You have read the Participant Information Statement
- You are providing implied consent to complete the survey

◯ Yes

◯ No

1 Negotiating the labyrinth 20-02-16 (English version)

2. Demographic information

Q1. What is your current professional position?

- [ ] Vice-Chancellor / President
- [ ] Deputy Vice-Chancellor / Vice-President
- [ ] Pro-Vice Chancellor
- [ ] Deputy Chancellor
- [ ] Head of School
- [ ] Deputy Head of school
- [ ] Director
- [ ] Vice-Director
- [ ] Dean / Executive Dean / Associate Dean
- [ ] Vice-Dean
- [ ] Head of Office/Department/Discipline/Student Recruitment/.....
- [ ] Deputy Head of Office/Department/Discipline/Student Recruitment/.....
- [ ] Joint-Head
- [ ] Manager
- [ ] Chair (of Discipline / ...)

Other (please specify)

* Q2. What is your age group?

- ( ) Under 20
- ( ) 20 - under 25
- ( ) 25 - under 30
- ( ) 30 - under 35
- ( ) 35 - under 40
- ( ) 40 - under 45
- ( ) 45 - under 50
- ( ) 50 - under 55
- ( ) 55 - under 60
- ( ) 60 - under 65
- ( ) 65 - under 70
- ( ) 70 - Over 70

* Q3. What is your highest level of qualification?

- ( ) Doctoral degree
- ( ) Master degree
- ( ) Undergraduate degree (Bachelor degree)
- ( ) College degree

* Q4. What stage of your career do you see yourself in?

- ( ) Early career
- ( ) Mid-career
- ( ) Late career

Other (please specify)

Q5. What type of family are you from?

- ◯ Nuclear family
- ◯ Single parent family
- ◯ Extended family
- ◯ Sibling house hold family

Other (please specify)

Q6. What is your marital status?

- ◯ Widowed
- ◯ Single
- ◯ Married
- ◯ Single but with partner
- ◯ Divorced or separated

Other (please specify)

Q7. How many children do you have? (If you have no children, skip Q8 and Q9, please)

- ◯ 0
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 4
- ◯ 1
- ◯ 3
- ◯ 5

Other (please specify)

Q8. What age group are they in? (Tick all that applies)

- ☐ 6 months - under 1
- ☐ 5 - under 10
- ☐ 15 - under 18
- ☐ 1 - under 5
- ☐ 10 - under 15
- ☐ Over 18

Q9. Are they still living with you?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Other (please specify)

1 Negotiating the labyrinth 20-02-16 (English version)

3. **Part A1: Barriers**
(RQ 1)

* A1. How has each of the following potential personal or professional barriers influenced your ability to take advantage of career opportunities?

	Not influenced	Nominally influenced	Influenced	Strongly influenced
• Household responsibilities	○	○	○	○
• Lack of motivation	○	○	○	○
• Fear of failure	○	○	○	○
• Gender discrimination and bias	○	○	○	○
• Attitudes of male colleagues and gender stereotyping amongst them	○	○	○	○
• Leader selection process	○	○	○	○
• Competitive relationship with female colleagues	○	○	○	○
• Competitive relationship with male colleagues	○	○	○	○
• Sexual relationships with male or female colleagues	○	○	○	○
• Lack of work-related assistance	○	○	○	○
• Work pressure	○	○	○	○
• Lack of salary incentives	○	○	○	○
• Unequal job assignment	○	○	○	○
• Religious discrimination	○	○	○	○
• Lack of physical beauty attributes as socio-culturally defined	○	○	○	○

Other barriers not mentioned above:

1 Negotiating the labyrinth 20-02-16 (English version)

4. **Part A2: Opportunities**
(RQ 1)

* A2. Please indicate the extent to which each of the following contributed to increasing your professional leadership opportunities.

	No increase in opportunity	Nominally increased opportunity	Increased opportunity	Strongly increased opportunity
• Parents' support	○	○	○	○
• Supportive network of family	○	○	○	○
• Upgrade of your qualifications	○	○	○	○
• Personal leadership experience	○	○	○	○
• Good leadership skills	○	○	○	○
• Mentor support	○	○	○	○
• Network of colleagues in leadership roles	○	○	○	○
• Professional career network	○	○	○	○
• Supportive network of friends	○	○	○	○
• Support from other female leaders	○	○	○	○
• Support from other male leaders	○	○	○	○
• Participation in leadership programmes	○	○	○	○
• Participation in self-development programmes	○	○	○	○
• Workplace policies/practices	○	○	○	○

Other opportunities not mentioned above

1 Negotiating the labyrinth 20-02-16 (English version)

5. **Part B: Leadership perception**s (RQ 3)

B1. How often do you have conversations in-person with your colleagues about your decisions as a leader?

- ◯ Never
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Most of the time

Other (please explain)

B2. To what extent are you aware of the professional development needs of your colleagues?

- ◯ Not at all aware
- ◯ Aware
- ◯ A little aware
- ◯ Very aware

Other (please explain)

B3. What would you identify as being the two most effective aspects of your leadership competencies ?

- ☐ Strong knowledge based on your discipline
- ☐ Ability to mentor effectively
- ☐ Strategic vision
- ☐ Work ethics
- ☐ Taking risks
- ☐ Strong experience in your field

Other (please specify)

B4. What aspects of your leadership characteristics would you identify as being most successful in advancing your executive career?

- ☐ Generous
- ☐ Caring
- ☐ Humble
- ☐ Inspirational
- ☐ Open-minded
- ☐ Patient
- ☐ Good listener
- ☐ Conscientious

Other (please specify)

B5. How confident are you in your ability to support your male colleagues?

- ◯ Not at all
- ◯ Not well
- ◯ Well
- ◯ Extremely well

Other (please explain)

B6. How confident are you in your ability to support your female colleagues?

- ◯ Not at all
- ◯ Not well
- ◯ Well
- ◯ Extremely well

Other (please explain)

B7. How well do the activities you provide to your colleagues match their interest?

- ◯ Not at all
- ◯ Not well
- ◯ Well
- ◯ Extremely well

Other (please explain)

B8. How well does your leadership style match the goals of your organization?

- ◯ Not at all
- ◯ Not well
- ◯ Well
- ◯ Extremely well

Other (please explain)

1 Negotiating the labyrinth 20-02-16 (English version)

6. **Part C. Strategies to develop and maintain their current career trajectories** (RQ 3)

C1. How committed are you to making your organization a more amicable place to work?

- ◯ Not committed
- ◯ Committed
- ◯ Rarely committed
- ◯ Extremely committed

Other (please explain)

C2. Do you believe that you make effective leadership decisions?

- ◯ Not effective
- ◯ Effective
- ◯ Rarely effective
- ◯ Extremely effective

Other (please explain)

C3. How confident are you that you can motivate and encourage your male colleagues to apply for leadership opportunities?

- ◯ Never confident
- ◯ Confident
- ◯ Rarely confident
- ◯ Extremely confident

Other (please explain)

C4. How confident are you that you can motivate and encourage your female colleagues to apply for leadership opportunities?

- ◯ Never confident
- ◯ Confident
- ◯ Rarely confident
- ◯ Extremely confident

Other (please explain)

C5. How often do you have conversations with your colleagues about the current culture and values of your organization?

- ◯ Never
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Most of the time

Other (please explain)

C6. What would you often want to understand more about the colleagues whom you work with under your supervision?

- [ ] Personalities
- [ ] Capabilities
- [ ] Interests
- [ ] Leadership characteristics

Other (please specify)

* C7. How well have you used the following strategies to maintain and develop your career and leadership trajectory?

	Not at all	Not well	Well	Extremely well
Having a mentor	○	○	○	○
Being a membership of a professional organizations	○	○	○	○
Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organization	○	○	○	○
Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organization	○	○	○	○
Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills	○	○	○	○
Seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills	○	○	○	○
Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career	○	○	○	○
Your willingness to rely on female mentors to help advance your career	○	○	○	○
Using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours	○	○	○	○
Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours	○	○	○	○
Having immediate access to a network of influential colleagues	○	○	○	○

	Not at all	Not well	Well	Extremely well
Matching your leadership priorities to the goals of your current organization	○	○	○	○
Being an active listener, ig, patiently listening, being empathetic, constructive and respectful.	○	○	○	○
Being cable of resolving problems amongst colleagues	○	○	○	○
Adapting to new circumstances and change	○	○	○	○

Other strategies not mentioned above

C8. What strengths and weaknesses of your own have effected positively and negatively your leadership success?

1 Negotiating the labyrinth 20-02-16 (English version)

7. **Part D: Assisting other colleagues**
(RQ 4)

D1. How well do you recognize the achievement of the colleagues whom you work with under your supervision?

- ◯ Not at all
- ◯ Well
- ◯ Not well
- ◯ Extremely well

Other (please explain)

D2. How effective are you at encouraging your colleagues to apply for leadership positions inside your organizational organization?

- ◯ Not effective
- ◯ Effective
- ◯ Minimally effective
- ◯ Extremely effective

Other (please explain)

D3. How often do you engage in formal or informal outside of work activities with your colleagues?

- ◯ Never
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Most of the time

Other (please explain)

D4. Do you make time to allow your colleagues to share their personal and professional problems with you?

- ◯ Never
- ◯ Often
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Most of the time

Other (please explain)

1 Negotiating the labyrinth 20-02-16 (English version)

8. **Part E. Further information**

Please, use the space below to tell us about your significant information

E1. As a female leader in higher education, what have been the most important opportunities provided to you to obtain executive leadership positions?

E2. What personal and/or professional barriers do you think will affect your future leadership trajectory?

E3. What do you perceive as the most important strategies you have used to confront these barriers?

E4. Have you participated in formal leadership training? If so, please discuss the extent to which specific ideas from the program have helped you to advance your career?

E5. What are the most important leadership competencies that an executive needs to acquire to be successful?

E6. Is there anything else you would like to share on the things which best assist women in achieving executive success in tertiary educational institutions?

E7. List of awards you have received

1 Negotiating the labyrinth 20-02-16 (English version)

9. **Interview voluntary**

Would you be willing to participate in a semi-structured interview?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

1 Negotiating the labyrinth 20-02-16 (English version)

10. **Thank you**

Thank you for your participation!

Please provide contact details below if you would like to participate in the interview.

Address

Name	
Place of work	
Email Address	
Phone Number	

Appendix B. Interview Question Protocol

Interview Protocol

For Women in executive leadership positions

Document Version 1

Code

Time of interview :……..

Interviewer :……..

Interviewee :……..

Position of interviewee :……..

Interviewee's year experience :…….

Interviewee's age :……

Please answer the following questions? Your participation is appreciated.

1. Could you please tell me briefly about your work history and whether any specific work context has led to your career success?
2. Could you please tell me about any other favourable conditions outside your employment that have served to support your professional development?
3. To what extent have you confronted any difficulties which slowed the advancement of your professional career development? (RQ1)
4. In what ways have you overcome the barriers to attaining an executive position in higher education? (RQ2)
5. What type of leadership attributes do you perceive to be the most important for leaders in higher education to possess? (RQ5)
6. Are there any other leadership competencies you perceive as important in your role as an executive leader? What are they? (RQ4)
7. What leadership preparation have you experienced that you would regard as essential to attaining an executive position in higher education? (RQ4)
8. At least two types of barriers exit as impediments to the success of women as they journey towards executive leadership in education. One barrier is represented as a "glass ceiling", and the other is described as a "labyrinth". Please discuss the impact which each of these perspectives might have on achieving success in executive leadership (RQ4)
9. In your opinion, what are the main reasons for the small number of females in executive tertiary education leadership positions?
10. What do you perceive as the most critical strategies in creating opportunities for career advancement among female colleagues? (RQ3)
11. Is there anything else you would like to share about your leadership journey to success and professional development?

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix C. Factor Analysis

C.1 Barriers confronting Vietnamese and Australian female executives

Table C.1.1

The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity of challenges from Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.840
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1934.933
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

Table C.1.2

Rotated Component Matrix of challenges from Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
• Attitudes of male colleagues and gender stereotyping amongst them	.858			
• Gender discrimination and bias	.821			
• Competitive relationship with female colleagues	.713			
• Leader selection process	.639	.445		
• Competitive relationship with male colleagues	.565			
• Work pressure		.763		
• Lack of work-related assistance		.698		
• Lack of salary incentives		.682		
• Unequal job assignment		.653		
• Lack of motivation			.800	
• Fear of failure			.762	
• Sexual relationships with male or female colleagues				.705
• Religious discrimination			.416	.583
• Lack of physical beauty attributes as socio-culturally defined				.511
• Household responsibilities		.433		-.491

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table C.1.3

The reliable Cronbach's Alpha of barriers scale from Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

Rotated Component Matrix[a]					Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Mean	Std
Barrier sub-scales		Components					
		1	2	3			
Workplace competition	• Attitudes of male colleagues and gender stereotyping amongst them	.858			.831	1.97	.698
	• Gender discrimination and bias	.821					
	• Competitive relationship with female colleagues	.713					
	• Leader selection process	.639	.445				
	• Competitive relationship with male colleagues	.565					
Lack of Workplace support	• Work pressure		.763		.739	2.37	.652
	• Lack of work-related assistance		.698				
	• Lack of salary incentives		.682				
	• Unequal job assignment		.653				
	• Household responsibilities		.433				
Personal lack of incentives	• Lack of motivation			.800	.719	1.81	.796
	• Fear of failure			.762			
	Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation						
	a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.						

Table C. 1.4

The different challenge items of Vietnamese and Australian participants

Barrier sub-scales	Items	**Independent Samples Test**		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Workplace competition	• Competitive relationship with male colleagues	5.158	378	.000
Lack of workplace support	• Lack of salary incentives	10.937	378	.000
	• Lack of work-related assistance	3.842	378	.000
	• Unequal job assignment	3.271	378	.001
Personal lack of incentives	• Lack of motivation	9.596	378	.000

C.2 Favourable conditions supporting Vietnamese and Australian participants

Table C.2.1

The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity of favourable conditions from Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.821
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2041.915
	df	91
	Sig.	.000

Table C.2.2

Rotated Component Matrix of favourable conditions from Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
• Support from other female leaders	.839			
• Support from other male leaders	.828			
• Supportive network of friends	.658			
• Network of colleagues in leadership roles	.502	.429		
• Participation in leadership programmes		.794		
• Workplace policies/practices		.739		
• Participation in self-development programmes		.725		
• Professional career network	.488	.497		
• Upgrade of your qualifications		.451	.433	
• Personal leadership experience			.848	
• Good leadership skills			.847	
• Mentor support	.454		.468	
• Parents' support				.884
• Supportive network of family				.853

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table C.2.3

The reliable Cronbach's Alpha of favourable conditions scale from Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

	Rotated Component Matrix[a]					Cronbach 's Alpha	Scale Mean	Std
Opportunity sub-scales		Components						
		1	2	3	4			
Workplace relationships	• Support from other female leaders	.839				.780	2.60	.638
	• Support from other male leaders	.828						
	• Supportive network of friends	.658						
	• Network of colleagues in leadership roles	.502	.429					
motivation	• Participation in leadership programmes		.794			.763	2.76	.609
	• Participation in self-development programmes		.725					
	• Professional career network	.488	.497					
	• Upgrade of your qualifications		.451	.433				
leadership abilities	• Personal leadership experience			.848		.697	3.11	.599
	• Good leadership skills			.847				
	• Mentor support	.454		.468				
Family support	• Parents' support				.884	.779	2.53	.967
	• Supportive network of family				.853			
	Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation							
	a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.							

Table C.2.4

The different opportunity items of Vietnamese and Australian participants

Opportunity sub-scales	Items	Independent Samples Test		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Workplace relationships	• Network of colleagues in leadership roles	3.855	378	.000
Motivation	• Upgrade qualification	5.781	378	.000
	• Professional career network	6.573	378	.000
	• Participation in leadership programmes	7.484	376	.000
	• Participation in self-development programmes	4.579	377	.000
	• Workplace policies/practices	10.777	376	.000
Leadership abilities	• Mentor support	3.256	378	.001
Family support	• Parental support	6.205	378	.000

C.3 Strategies used by Vietnamese and Australian participants

Table C.3.1

The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity of strategies used by Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.833
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1848.416
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

Table C.3.2

The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity of strategic ways after eliminating the variable "Seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills"

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.824
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1712.204
	df	91
	Sig.	.000

Table C.3.3

Rotated Component Matrix of favourable conditions from Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Adapting to new circumstances and change	.814			
Being an active listener, ig, patiently listening, being empathetic, constructive and respectful	.795			
Being cable of resolving problems amongst colleagues	.776			
Matching your leadership priorities to the goals of your current organisation	.483			
Seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills				
Your willingness to rely on female mentors to help advance your career		.871		
Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career		.842		
Having a mentor		.678		
Having immediate access to a network of influential colleagues		.506		.472
Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organisation			.835	
Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organisation			.802	
Being a member of professional organisations			.691	
Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills	.433		.479	
Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours				.819
Using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours				.734

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Table C.3.4

The Rotated Component Matrix of strategic ways after eliminating the variable "Seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills"

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Adapting to new circumstances and change	.815			
Being an active listener, ig, patiently listening, being empathetic, constructive and respectful	.801			
Being cable of resolving problems amongst colleagues	.783			
Matching your leadership priorities to the goals of your current organisation	.485			
Your willingness to rely on female mentors to help advance your career		.872		
Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career		.843		
Having a mentor		.684		
Having immediate access to a network of influential colleagues		.510		.478
Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organisation			.844	
Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organisation			.803	
Being a membership of a professional organisation			.678	
Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills	.409		.510	
Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours				.835
Using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours				.731

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Table C.3.5

The reliable Cronbach's Alpha of strategies scale from Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

	Rotated Component Matrix[a]					Cronbach's Alpha	Scale Mean	Std
Strategy sub-scales		Components						
		1	2	3	4			
Leadership skills	• Adapting to new circumstances and change	.815				.736	3.36	.496
	• Being an active listener	.801						
	• Being cable of resolving problems amongst colleagues	.783						
	• Matching your leadership priorities to the goals of your current organisation	.485						
Mentoring	• Your willingness to rely on female mentors to help advance your career		.872			.782	2.48	.709
	• Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career		.843					
	• Having a mentor		.684					
	• Having immediate access to a network of influential colleagues		.510	.478				
Professional preparation	• Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organisation			.844		.771	2.91	.686
	• Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organisation			.803				
	• Being a member of professional organisations			.678				
	• Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills	.409		.510				
Encouraging staff	• Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours				.835	.581	2.26	.718
	• Using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours				.731			
	Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation							
	a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.							

Table C.3.6

The different strategies items of Vietnamese and Australian participants

Strategies sub-scales	Items	**Independent Samples Test**		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Leadership skills	• Being an active listener	3.669	378	.000
Mentoring				
Professional preparation	• Member of a professional organisation	4.693	378	.000
	• Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organisation	5.320	378	. 000
	• Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organisation	5.602	378	.000
	• Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills	5.390	378	.000
Encouraging staff	• Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours	7.562	378	.000

Appendix A. Correlation Results

Table D.1

Correlations of Barriers between Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

Correlations

		• Household responsibilities	• Lack of motivation	• Fear of failure	• Gender discrimination and bias	• Attitudes of male colleagues and gender stereotyping amongst them	• Leader selection process	• Competitive relationship with male colleagues	• Competitive relationship with female colleagues	• Sexual relationships with male or female colleagues	• Lack of work-related assistance	• Work pressure	• Lack of salary incentives	• Unequal job assignment	• Religious discrimination	• Lack of physical beauty attributes as socio-culturally defined
• Household responsibilities	Pearson Correlation	1	.198**	.163**	.182**	.124*	.295**	.163**	.194**	-.044	.236**	.337**	.224**	.165**	.020	.116*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001	.000	.016	.000	.001	.000	.394	.000	.000	.000	.001	.693	.024
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	378	379	379	379	379	379	379	378
• Lack of motivation	Pearson Correlation	.198**	1	.568**	.197**	.144**	.203**	.275**	.103*	.267**	.319**	.218**	.355**	.304**	.312**	.287**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.005	.000	.000	.045	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Fear of failure	Pearson Correlation	.163**	.568**	1	.366**	.305**	.247**	.374**	.244**	.292**	.337**	.305**	.211**	.297**	.304**	.247**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Gender discrimination and bias	Pearson Correlation	.182**	.197**	.366**	1	.736**	.437**	.387**	.453**	.214**	.212**	.204**	.070	.338**	.211**	.222**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.176	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Attitudes of male colleagues and gender stereotyping amongst them	Pearson Correlation	.124*	.144**	.305**	.736**	1	.469**	.426**	.488**	.152**	.206**	.186**	.092	.309**	.188**	.232**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.005	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.003	.000	.000	.073	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Leader selection process	Pearson Correlation	.295**	.203**	.247**	.437**	.469**	1	.520**	.499**	.181**	.369**	.307**	.310**	.391**	.098	.280**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.057	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Competitive relationship with male colleagues	Pearson Correlation	.163**	.275**	.374**	.387**	.426**	.520**	1	.558**	.325**	.320**	.291**	.343**	.357**	.285**	.313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Competitive relationship with female colleagues	Pearson Correlation	.194**	.103*	.244**	.453**	.488**	.499**	.558**	1	.179**	.323**	.280**	.178**	.387**	.185**	.315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.045	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	378	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	378
• Sexual relationships with male or female colleagues	Pearson Correlation	-.044	.267**	.292**	.214**	.152**	.181**	.325**	.179**	1	.260**	.169**	.180**	.310**	.307**	.313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.394	.000	.000	.000	.003	.000	.000	.000		.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Lack of work-related assistance	Pearson Correlation	.236**	.319**	.337**	.212**	.206**	.369**	.320**	.323**	.260**	1	.557**	.314**	.504**	.171**	.248**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.001	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Work pressure	Pearson Correlation	.337**	.218**	.305**	.204**	.186**	.307**	.291**	.280**	.169**	.557**	1	.349**	.505**	.059	.215**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000		.000	.000	.248	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Lack of salary incentives	Pearson Correlation	.224**	.355**	.211**	.070	.092	.310**	.343**	.178**	.180**	.314**	.349**	1	.438**	.116*	.251**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.176	.073	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.023	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Unequal job assignment	Pearson Correlation	.165**	.304**	.297**	.338**	.309**	.391**	.357**	.387**	.310**	.504**	.505**	.438**	1	.240**	.290**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Religious discrimination	Pearson Correlation	.020	.312**	.304**	.211**	.188**	.098	.285**	.185**	.307**	.171**	.059	.116*	.240**	1	.333**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.693	.000	.000	.000	.000	.057	.000	.000	.000	.001	.248	.023	.000		.000
	N	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	379
• Lack of physical beauty attributes as socio-culturally defined	Pearson Correlation	.116*	.287**	.247**	.222**	.232**	.280**	.313**	.315**	.313**	.248**	.215**	.251**	.290**	.333**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	378	379	379	379	379	379	379	378	379	379	379	379	379	379	379

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table D.2

Correlations of Opportunities between Vietnamese and Australian survey respondents

Correlations

		• Parents' support	• Supportive network of family	• Upgrade of your qualifications	• Personal leadership experience	• Good leadership skills	• Mentor support	• Network of colleagues in leadership roles	• Professional career network	• Supportive network of friends	• Support from other female leaders	• Support from other male leaders	• Participation in leadership programmes	• Participation in self-development programmes	• Workplace policies/practices
• Parents' support	Pearson Correlation	1	.640**	.277**	.182**	.072	.213**	.163**	.198**	.265**	.208**	.215**	.069	.080	.222**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.162	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.178	.122	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	379	378
• Supportive network of family	Pearson Correlation	.640**	1	.180**	.211**	.104*	.165**	.077	.128*	.177**	.147**	.165**	-.045	.006	-.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.043	.001	.132	.013	.001	.004	.001	.379	.906	.962
	N	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	379	378
• Upgrade of your qualifications	Pearson Correlation	.277**	.180**	1	.444**	.274**	.357**	.291**	.313**	.243**	.144**	.135**	.336**	.203**	.322**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.005	.008	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	379	378
• Personal leadership experience	Pearson Correlation	.182**	.211**	.444**	1	.648**	.370**	.346**	.308**	.244**	.200**	.198**	.286**	.268**	.240**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	379	378
• Good leadership skills	Pearson Correlation	.072	.104*	.274**	.648**	1	.374**	.327**	.312**	.198**	.200**	.203**	.313**	.261**	.231**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.162	.043	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	379	377	378	377
• Mentor support	Pearson Correlation	.213**	.165**	.357**	.370**	.374**	1	.557**	.462**	.350**	.371**	.384**	.341**	.249**	.375**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	379	378
• Network of colleagues in leadership roles	Pearson Correlation	.163**	.077	.291**	.346**	.327**	.557**	1	.669**	.413**	.410**	.358**	.432**	.320**	.417**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.132	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	379	378
• Professional career network	Pearson Correlation	.198**	.128*	.313**	.308**	.312**	.462**	.669**	1	.499**	.409**	.348**	.443**	.356**	.450**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.013	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	379	378
• Supportive network of friends	Pearson Correlation	.265**	.177**	.243**	.244**	.198**	.350**	.413**	.499**	1	.486**	.458**	.290**	.295**	.341**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	379	378
• Support from other female leaders	Pearson Correlation	.208**	.147**	.144**	.200**	.200**	.371**	.410**	.409**	.486**	1	.683**	.320**	.335**	.296**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.004	.005	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	379	378
• Support from other male leaders	Pearson Correlation	.215**	.165**	.135**	.198**	.203**	.384**	.358**	.348**	.458**	.683**	1	.325**	.290**	.285**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.008	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	379	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	379	378
• Participation in leadership programmes	Pearson Correlation	.069	-.045	.336**	.286**	.313**	.341**	.432**	.443**	.290**	.320**	.325**	1	.624**	.484**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.178	.379	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	378	378	378	378	377	378	378	378	378	378	378	378	377	376
• Participation in self-development programmes	Pearson Correlation	.080	.006	.203**	.268**	.261**	.249**	.320**	.356**	.295**	.335**	.290**	.624**	1	.410**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	.906	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	379	379	379	379	378	379	379	379	379	379	379	377	379	377
• Workplace policies/practices	Pearson Correlation	.222**	-.002	.322**	.240**	.231**	.375**	.417**	.450**	.341**	.296**	.285**	.484**	.410**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.962	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	378	378	378	378	377	378	378	378	378	378	378	376	377	378

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table D. 3

Correlations of Strategies between Vietnamese and Australian respondents

Correlations

		Having a mentor	Being a membership of a professional organizations	Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organization	Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organization	Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills	Seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills	Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career	Your willingness to rely on female mentors to help advance your career	Using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours	Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours	Having immediate access to a network of influential colleagues	Matching your leadership priorities to the goals of your current organization	Being an active listener, ig, patiently listening, being empathetic, constructive and respectful	Being cable of resolving problems amongst colleagues	Adapting to new circumstances and change
Having a mentor	Pearson Correlation	1	.404**	.344**	.238**	.302**	.233**	.498**	.485**	.259**	.170**	.383**	.214**	.165**	.171**	.186**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.001	.001	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	378	377	379	380	380	380	377	379
Membership of professional organisations	Pearson Correlation	.404**	1	.502**	.452**	.336**	.163**	.245**	.209**	.243**	.206**	.361**	.313**	.245**	.184**	.244**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	378	377	379	380	380	380	377	379
Taking advantages of leadership training programmes within the organisation	Pearson Correlation	.344**	.502**	1	.582**	.431**	.267**	.252**	.222**	.260**	.177**	.284**	.287**	.246**	.261**	.228**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	378	377	379	380	380	380	377	379
Taking advantages of leadership training programmes outside the organisation	Pearson Correlation	.238**	.452**	.582**	1	.438**	.262**	.217**	.119*	.178**	.254**	.207**	.206**	.121*	.206**	.284**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.021	.001	.000	.000	.000	.018	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	378	377	379	380	380	380	377	379
Improving negotiation skills, interpersonal communication skills	Pearson Correlation	.302**	.336**	.431**	.438**	1	.472**	.282**	.179**	.338**	.204**	.276**	.273**	.348**	.310**	.419**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	378	377	379	380	380	380	377	379
Seeking opportunities to demonstrate your own leadership skills	Pearson Correlation	.233**	.163**	.267**	.262**	.472**	1	.303**	.267**	.312**	.140**	.311**	.295**	.211**	.211**	.264**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.006	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	378	377	379	380	380	380	377	379
Your willingness to rely on male mentors to help advance your career	Pearson Correlation	.498**	.245**	.252**	.217**	.282**	.303**	1	.681**	.268**	.157**	.427**	.154**	.063	.154**	.133**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.002	.000	.003	.225	.003	.010
	N	378	378	378	378	378	378	378	378	376	377	378	378	378	375	378
Your willingness to rely on female mentors to help advance your career	Pearson Correlation	.485**	.209**	.222**	.119*	.179**	.267**	.681**	1	.257**	.109*	.370**	.177**	.031	.109*	.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.021	.000	.000	.000		.000	.035	.000	.001	.543	.035	.984
	N	378	378	378	378	378	378	378	378	376	377	378	378	378	375	378
Using reward techniques to reinforce positive staff behaviours	Pearson Correlation	.259**	.243**	.260**	.178**	.338**	.312**	.268**	.257**	1	.411**	.376**	.274**	.221**	.189**	.243**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	377	377	377	377	377	377	376	376	377	377	377	377	377	374	377
Using punitive measure to discourage negative staff behaviours	Pearson Correlation	.170**	.206**	.177**	.254**	.204**	.140**	.157**	.109*	.411**	1	.319**	.138**	.082	.057	.071
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.001	.000	.000	.006	.002	.035	.000		.000	.007	.112	.268	.171
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	377	377	377	379	379	379	379	376	378
Having immediate access to a network of influential colleagues	Pearson Correlation	.383**	.361**	.284**	.207**	.276**	.311**	.427**	.370**	.376**	.319**	1	.344**	.172**	.217**	.190**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.001	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	378	377	379	380	380	380	377	379
Matching your leadership priorities to the goals of your current organisation	Pearson Correlation	.214**	.313**	.287**	.206**	.273**	.295**	.154**	.177**	.274**	.138**	.344**	1	.315**	.285**	.370**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.003	.001	.000	.007	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	378	377	379	380	380	380	377	379
Being an active listener, i.e, patiently listening, being empathetic, constructive and respectful	Pearson Correlation	.165**	.245**	.246**	.121*	.348**	.211**	.063	.031	.221**	.082	.172**	.315**	1	.511**	.528**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.018	.000	.000	.225	.543	.000	.112	.001	.000		.000	.000
	N	380	380	380	380	380	380	378	378	377	379	380	380	380	377	379
Being cable of resolving problems amongst colleagues	Pearson Correlation	.171**	.184**	.261**	.206**	.310**	.211**	.154**	.109*	.189**	.057	.217**	.285**	.511**	1	.551**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.003	.035	.000	.268	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	377	377	377	377	377	377	375	375	374	376	377	377	377	377	376
Adapting to new circumstances and change	Pearson Correlation	.186**	.244**	.228**	.284**	.419**	.264**	.133**	.001	.243**	.071	.190**	.370**	.528**	.551**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.010	.984	.000	.171	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	379	379	379	379	379	379	378	378	377	378	379	379	379	376	379

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).