

Public leadership across boundaries

Dear reader,

These are confusing times for public leaders around the globe. Inclusive leadership and innovative approaches in public services are called for to address the complex challenges of today and tomorrow. The cross-cutting theme of this special edition is: “public leadership across boundaries”. Boundaries do not only get crossed in literal terms, by studying leadership practice in other countries, but also figuratively by looking beyond the traditional approaches towards leadership, including other perspectives and exploring new ways of leading.

It is a privilege and my pleasure to present this special edition, as an off-spring of the International Leadership Association’s 2015 Annual Conference on “Leading Across Borders and Generations”. As the 2015 Chair of ILA’s MIG Public Leadership, I committed to bridging the work of scholars and practitioners around the theme of public leadership.

Connecting contexts and content, this special edition aims to provide inspiration for those who practice, study, teach and engage in leadership in the public domain. Global and local complex challenges and their leadership implications are addressed in this special edition’s papers, with a focus on political, governmental, non-profit, social and civic contexts and their representatives, organisations and institutions alike. All of these are characterised by an emphasis on serving the greater public good.

The first paper shows that unethical leaders can “cross the line” by harming the organisation for their own profit, as one of the articles on corporate psychopaths suggests. Using a historical approach, the paper finds that some ethical scandals and failures have been characterised by the presence of CEOs who scored highly on a measure of corporate psychopathy. It is argued that crossing ethical and legal boundaries could be prevented by having a clear view of what leadership entails.

The second paper strives to do so by reviewing and criticising conventional assumptions about leadership and puts forward an alternative perspective. The study demonstrates that when these assumptions about leadership are “peeled back”, a new way of understanding leadership is revealed. Leadership can then be conceived as a different form of in-the-moment action to management.

The third paper finds ways for leaders to sustain themselves and others while working in service of the common good by having public values guide their actions. This way of thinking moves beyond the individualised perspective and offers new insights in leading through transitions that occur during changing times and challenges.

Such changing times are addressed in the fourth paper, dealing with Myanmar, as well. New ways of leading and learning are explored to nurture the development of citizen leaders for building a democratic society. The research analyses how a citizen leadership development programme could contribute to Myanmar’s progress.

A somewhat similar case is studied in the fifth paper on the Philippines, where a vast human capital in the youth segment is left untapped, even though the young people can be mobilised towards ensuring a better future for their communities and the country. The research explores the experiences gained by participants of youth leadership programmes that could enhance this human capital.

Not only do boundaries get crossed by examining leadership programs in other countries, but also by studying leadership in a global context. The sixth paper explores the community development experiences of a leader who has worked with various global institutions, giving new insights into the complexity of human identity and the flexibility of decision making in a multicultural setting.

Such insights call for implications on the way leadership should be formed in an organisation or community. The seventh paper delves deeper in exploring how the competing values framework could be used by public leaders to analyse and better understand public sector leadership challenges, thereby improving their ability in leading across borders and generations.

And that leaves us with new perspectives, insights and inspiration. But with new questions and concerns as well. The *International Journal of Public Leadership* looks forward to receiving many more papers for the next editions of the journal. You are warmly invited to share your work and to contribute to a better understanding of public leadership practice and its collective impact.

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