

Introduction: Perspectives of Leadership and Communication at KUIS

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Introduction: Perspectives of Leadership and Communication at KUIS

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The concept of leadership may be perceived and explored in multiple ways. Ilie and Schnurr (2017: 2) “call for a new strand of research that is no longer quantitative, rooted in social psychology and focused on what leaders are, but qualitative, orientated towards discourse and interested in what leaders do and how leadership is enacted.” In Knight (2015: 84), I view leadership itself as “a conceptualization drawing on a number of positions, experiences, practices and ideologies,” and my interest has been in exploring the leadership conceptualization process with discourse analytical approaches. One conceptualization of leadership, which is discussed by my students, appears in a TED Talk by a management professor at Harvard Business School who has investigated leadership practices for promoting collective creativity (Hill, 2015):

... our role as leaders is to set the stage, not perform on it. If we want to invent a better future... then we need to reimagine our task. Our task is to create the space where everybody’s slices of genius can be unleashed and harnessed, and turned into works of collective genius.

This special issue of the journal of the Global Communication Institute (GCI) at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) is such a stage intended to showcase multiple perspectives of leadership in the articles of professors who have agreed to share their

“slices of genius” so that we may together create this “work of collective genius.”

In the first article, Sau Kuen Fan writes that leadership may be seen as making “real a vision in collaboration with others” (Knight & Candlin, 2015: 16). In order to reveal language problems confronted by editors for the publication of Chinese community newspapers in Australia, the paper discusses two driving forces which appear to be significant behind their meta-linguistic behavior: one derived from the process of their language management as a language user, and another one from the process in their development as a leader. She concludes that the approaches of language management and leadership studies are complementary for the understanding of the complexity of language problems in multicultural societies.

In the second article, leadership is defined as communicating to create and achieve visions (Knight, 2013). The focus is on two new leadership communication courses created and taught by me and offered to KUIS students of all majors in April 2019. The paper initially explores the historical context of my course development at KUIS before considering the design, implementation, and evaluation of Leadership Communication I & II. In the light of the instructor’s motivational relevancies to prepare his students for success in the global workplace, the paper concludes that the two courses expose students to the language/discourse of leaders and provide them with approaches to analyze conceptualizations of leadership and to frame their own leadership experiences in professional settings such as job interviews.

In the third article, Tim Murphey and Kirk Johnson describe leadership development in terms of the teacher’s role in preparing students to be activists/proponents for positive change in the world. The scholars share their personal experiences with student groups who have taken the initiative to promote socio-ecological causes. Murphey provides accounts of student-generated and research-

based publications about education problems that became popular YouTube videos, as well as petition efforts sent to MEXT and school authorities. Johnson describes how a small group of students organized themselves into an active student organization that took part in the worldwide protests against land mines and cluster bombs. The article concludes with the description of a project that involves students sharing widely messages of peace.

In the fourth article, Takashi Kosaka writes about leadership as a decision making process. He envisions the creation of a society in which such leadership (or decision making) occurs through dialogue (e.g., discussion and negotiation). He notes that dialogue has been used in diplomacy, healthcare, and the private sector. However, ambivalence and contradiction appear in the language of dialogue and the transcripts of leadership discourse studies. Accordingly, he argues that the nature of dialogue needs to be reevaluated in leadership communication research and Japanese compulsory education.

In the fifth article, Noriaki Tajima views leadership in terms of judgment and decision making and the activities of a “leaderless” group of activists. Applying insights from rhetorical studies, he argues that leadership studies should focus on how leadership is performed rather than on what a leader is. Drawing upon the communicative perspective of Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014), he makes recommendations for future research in the field of leadership.

My expectation that leadership would be presented in different ways by the scholars who agreed to contribute to this special issue have been met. Their articles reflect their specific academic and professional fields of expertise and their creative choices in addressing the concept of leadership. In addition, the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations have been promoted actively at KUIS, and from the articles in this issue, it may be implied that

KUIS students are receiving communication training to act as leaders and to shape the world in good ways. In effect, the interactions and activities of the professors and the students reflect the mission of the university: “KUIS weaves the world together through its network of communication.”

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