

Conference abstract

Is leadership and management in inter-agency settings really that different? Perspectives from the literature

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Abstract

Introduction: Health and social care collaboration is currently a key feature of improvement efforts internationally. Moreover, leadership is increasingly considered an important driver in terms of organisational performance, in particular in relation to the implementation of policy designed to solve the wicked issues of society. Yet, despite leadership being viewed as an essential component of integrative public sector performance, there is relatively little thoughtful work analysing the relationship between the two sets of ideas. Leadership in collaborative settings is simultaneously represented as being both the same, and yet different, to these roles in more traditional settings. What this means in practice is that much of the literature appears somewhat at best platitudinous and at worst confused—posing practical difficulties for leaders and managers of collaborations who are looking for evidence or guidance on how to enact leadership.

Aims and objectives: This paper examines the literature and asks how different leadership in inter-agency settings is from more ‘traditional’ settings, before going on to map out lessons which may be useful for leaders and managers to draw upon in more effectively navigating this difficult terrain.

Methods: This research is based on an extensive review of the literature surrounding leadership, collaboration and broader theories of networks.

Results: The paper finds that this distinction is overstated; there are also significant overlaps in the types of tasks and challenges that both sets of leaders and managers will face and these should not be underestimated.

Conclusions: This has clear implications for training and development of these individuals where understanding of the contexts for and nature of partnerships—and thus the sensemaking and performance that may be most effective—may be as important as the skills and attributes themselves.

Keywords

literature study, leadership, network theory

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