Foreword

Valeria TERMINI

President of IASIA (2010-2012)

The Congress in Bali on “Public Sector Strategy for overcoming Growing Global Inequalities” provided a great opportunity for posing questions on Global Trends in Public Sector Reform.

Throughout the years, the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) has promoted the diversity of ideas and experiences, bringing together practitioners, academics and experts from all over the world, embracing different cultures and experiences representing different regions of every continent. IASIA is evolving following the pace of the ever-changing background against which its members and partners operate worldwide. The role of Public Administration itself has changed following a variety of trends within States and societies, its actions and policies following many different patterns ranging from Weberian, to New Public Management, neo-Weberian and open Government models.

Evolving as they do in an increasingly complex environment, Public Administrations are called on to innovate, improve and support economic and social growth and to focus ever more on values and outcomes. Innovation is a crucial element which can be implemented following a multitude of approaches and models. There will never be a one-size-fits-all approach, nor a single ‘best practice’ and I am firmly convinced that the notion of a globally valid ‘best practice’ is a misleading one. Preferring instead to adopt a more inclusive and concrete attitude, I would support a more constructive profile by looking at the opportunities for developing common reflections while taking into account the specificities of each region. Implicit in this is the crucial need for rigorous and relevant case studies and comparative research.
This is one of the reasons why promoting research in the field of Public Administration is crucial. It is a complex, varied, multi-faceted and heterogeneous sector, with different backgrounds, perspectives, views and ideas. Such complexity leads to progress in this field which is perhaps less steady and linear, but it also constitutes a key strength: the ability to look at reality through differing lenses.

This book, which collates some of the best papers presented at the 2010 IIAS/IASIA Congress in Bali, fully reflects this concept. Its originality also resides in it. The authors, from varying cultures and backgrounds, have contributed, each in their own way, to identifying, analysing and drawing realistic conclusions on complex issues. The richness of the perspectives offered and the quality of the research work in this book are essential to provide researchers and practitioners with a thorough, comparative and updated look at the current debate on theory, practice and reflection on Public Administration. This is of particular relevance at a time when the implementation of reforms takes place against a background of globalization and economic crisis as well as social and environmental turbulence.

The editors of this publication, Michiel de Vries and Juraj Nemec, have perfectly grasped these points. This book appears in a timely and much-needed way: when challenges for States and local authorities require deep reflection as to how and how far some of the major interpretation models used up to now, such as New Public Management, have proved to be useful or are limited in their scope. This book says a lot about where the obstacles and hopes lie. Above all, it shows that there is no one-size-fits-all magic bullet for governments and also States clearly why the first steps towards successfully responding to today’s challenges are understanding the issues and sharing practices.

On behalf of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my warm thanks to the editors, Michiel De Vries and Juraj Nemec, and commend them for their enthusiasm as well as their generosity with their time and talent. My thanks go, as well, to all the authors for their friendly and fruitful contributions which have helped to make this publication a truly global one.