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Effective Leadership as the Roadmap towards Academic Librarians' Service Delivery

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Abstract

Service delivery is simply the act of providing service to users, customers, or clients. It is a component of activities that defines the interaction between providers (librarians) and clients (users). Leadership is the influencing process of leaders and followers to achieve organizational objectives through change. Influencing in leadership is about the relationship between leaders and followers, it does not necessarily mean control is enforced on the followers. This paper discussed effective leadership as the roadmap toward academic librarians' service delivery. A general overview was explained of what leadership is, looking at the leadership styles that leaders of academic libraries and others alike may employ to carry out their daily activities to ensure service delivery. This paper also described the effectiveness of leadership for service delivery which showcases the ability of the individual to successfully direct the activities of the group of librarians to the attainment of stated goals and objectives. The role of leadership in academic libraries in service delivery was expatiated. The conclusion of this work stated that leadership is a function of group association and interaction. It was recommended among others that there should be effective leadership in the library so as to bring about good service delivery and information dissemination to the library users.

Keywords

Leadership, Roadmap, Academic Librarians, Service Delivery, Followership

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Introduction

In the academic library, leadership is a major driver of service delivery. In other words, effective leadership will make effective service delivery and the followers alike through the decisions that they make devoid of too many authoritative tendencies such as being too autocratic, use of hurtful words, incompetent ideas, and poor leadership skills. Starting from the managerial level, through the professionals and paraprofessionals in the academic libraries it takes leadership to run through the activities. Leadership is particularly associated with setting the values and the vision of an organization or group and also management and enactment of the vision. According to Andow (2020), leadership is a process by which the head directs, guide, and influence the behavior and work of others towards the accomplishment of specific goals in a given situation. Also,

leaders are concerned with not just managing the organization now, but in setting up a framework for future prospects of the library and for service delivery to bring about results through jobs performed by the librarians to achieve stated and desired goals as services are delivered. Through the leadership prowess exhibited, the followers (librarians) have no stress but to reciprocate the gesture of delivering their services to the users in terms of information retrieval and dissemination, classification and organization of knowledge, and other jobs that may require their attention and expertise.

Leadership is a behavioral pattern that suggests ‘taking initiative’ and bringing people together to ‘achieve the desired goal’ and service delivery. A leader in the library and information science (LIS) profession can visualize the strength and weaknesses of the profession and try to improve its status in a country or region through various means. Wong (2017) stated that for leadership in an academic library to aid effective service delivery it should be placed on three leadership modes which are emergent, team, and headship. However, Wong reiterated that team and emergent leadership have not been adequately explored. Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) opined that headship has been the very conversant mode for running the daily affairs of the academic libraries. It is through this headship mode that heads of libraries have the prime responsibility to blend the library’s resources and ensure their efficient use for the accomplishment of the library’s objectives. Jain (n.d), stated that the librarian’s effective leadership is considered to be an important element in library functioning. It is the key to success in creating a vibrant and innovative environment to achieve an excellent workforce and service delivery. He further explained that the library literature shows that leadership concepts and theories came into existence in the 1980s and that now, many leadership development programmes are available to enhance leadership skills, which help a professional create a niche. This in his word states that a blend of leadership competencies of LIS professionals in the workplace brings corporate and organizational success (Garcia, 2003).

Leadership

Leadership is all about leading and being a leader. According to Cronin in Proceedings of the 8th seminar of the committee of university librarians and their deputies (CULD) (2012), described a leader as an individual who can help create options and opportunities, clarify problems and choices. Build morale and coalition, inspire others and provide a vision of the possibilities and promise of a better community. To Henein and Morissette (2007), in Lussier and Achua (2013), leadership is like art, the artist sees beauty where another person only sees reality. The scholar further stated that in leadership, there is the need for an appealing style with no flash or ostentation but charisma, trustworthiness, humility, collaboration, attention, and based on values. Henein and Francoise (2007) opined that leadership is not just about being on top, having a bigger office, or more money but rather that it is all about taking care of your people, helping a cause, and fulfilling a purpose. It is a big responsibility with one ensuring that you are operating for the greater good of the people you are leading knowing that it is not about you but about them (Eriksson, n.d).

The amount of leadership varies over time and across libraries in different locations. The university librarian and deputy librarian cannot succeed alone, they need to mobilize libraries and other support staff to enable them to transform and make major changes in their libraries. At present, libraries and other information agencies face increasing competitiveness, limited resources, accountability for service, and a technologically astute and demanding user population. In addition, effective organizational leadership is of growing importance. Leadership is necessary to define more effectively what types of knowledge and skills are needed for leaders to contribute to organizational success. Competency development is a major area. A recent study in the area of leadership competencies has focused on the value of identifying, knowing, and understanding users. (Winston & Gretchen 2003). Lambert (2005) assures that leadership can be performed by anyone so long as they have the following attributes.

1. A sense of purpose and ethics because honesty and trust are fundamental to a relationship.
2. A deep understanding of change and transition.
3. A personal identity that allows for courage and risk, how ego, need and a sense of possibilities thrives in a given organization.

The three leadership techniques that interact and strengthen one another are modeling, monitoring, and dialogue. Leadership stands as a function of the relationship between the leaders, followers, and the task situational characteristics. The success of any organization depends largely on leadership. Without leadership, the link between the individuals and the organization's goals may become tenuous and could lead to a situation where individuals work to achieve their own personal goals while the overall organization's objective becomes ineffective to achieve. Leadership flows through networks of roles that comprise libraries and influences individual structures, cultures, and how work is coordinated.

A leader such as a university librarian is characterized by a strong drive for responsibility and task completion, vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals willingness to accept consequences of decision and action for the library to achieve its goals, the librarians must be committed to their duties and have a positive attitude to their jobs. At all times, university librarians should provide effective leadership and control over the behavior of staff for higher-level performance. The achievement of higher development requires the knowledge and application of good leadership techniques. Jain (n.d), stated and highlighted in his study on Leaders in Librarianship, that a good leader in the profession will be able to –

- provide LIS professionals with diverse leadership roles at local, regional, state, and national levels;
- develop LIS professionals' leadership skills by reenergizing them;
- develop new leaders to replace outgoing or retiring professionals;
- build collaborative networks between communities; and
- provide mentors to establish professional support systems.

He further highlighted what a good leader should do in initiating a leadership program for helping LIS professionals under his watch, these are too -

- develop leaders with a strong sense of organization;
- Shift from the concept of managing people to leading them;
- learn about themselves and others, and improve personal skills and abilities;
- formulate and articulate ideas and communicate with each other;
- reach professionals from diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds worldwide;
- create leaders out of individuals with disabilities, and with limited functional literacy or information skills;
- develop leadership skills by identifying individuals' talents and effectively using them as leaders;
- raise their visibility worldwide;
- help individuals and organizations set goals and plan activities; and
- identify unaddressed problems in librarianship and solve them. (Special Libraries Association of Asia 2014, as cited in Jain, n.d.)

Leadership is crucial to a library's success in today's challenging global environment thus the essence of the leadership roadmap which according to Baumgardner and Scaffede (2019) has to do with the combination philosophies of both employee engagement and leaning into one concise and understandable system for leaders to follow. Therefore, leadership roadmaps outline the direction you will take to achieve a work plan and successfully meet a long-term goal which, will ensure that binding rules for the operative processes of the library are in existence where service delivery becomes a prerequisite for the growth and survival of the library (Alex-Nmecha & Okoro, 2020). Today's leaders need the ability to address complex challenges in new and innovative ways. Knowing the roadmap makes it easy because it serves as a communication tool, a high-level document that helps articulate strategic thinking.

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) believes leadership is a skill that can be developed and that leaders are molded through experience, continued study, and adaptation. Great leaders know how to employ a range of leadership styles depending on what the situation calls for. The simple truth is that not all employees are motivated by the same factors, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach that will work in every situation. Good leaders recognize this and are fluid, while poor leaders may be stuck in their ways and unwilling to adapt to what the situation calls for. A good leader to them has some qualities that define him/her in order to carry out duties effectively (Tracy, 2017). These qualities are:

- Integrity
- Ability to delegate
- Communication
- Self-awareness
- Gratitude
- Learning agility
- Influence
- Empathy
- Courage
- Respect

Leadership Styles

Leadership styles deal with how people interact with those they seek to lead. Some of the leadership, styles include autocratic, democratic, participative, goal-oriented, and situational leadership (Koko, 2005).

Autocratic Leadership: It is leadership, in which the leader tells the group what he wants and forces them to comply with it. Leaders who take this style make decisions without consulting the employees. The leader believes that the end justifies the means. The interest of the members of the group are not taken seriously as long as the interest of the leader is met. The autocratic leader is ruthless, selfish, greedy, and wicked.

Peremodé (2004) contended that under autocratic leadership, workers may resort to eye service, reduce their output, sabotage the work, lateness to work, idleness and absenteeism; and resignation from office or transfer.

Democratic Leadership: In this style, the leader consults the employees, and receives their inputs and recommendation before taking final decisions. It allows both the library management and staff to participate in the decision-making process that concerns them in the university system. The library and their feedback are considered in the decision-making process.

Participative Leadership: Leaders who take this approach exert little control over the decision-making process, rather they provide information about the problem and allow the team members to develop strategies and solutions. This allows subordinates to take part in the decision-making process that concerns them aimed at achieving the desired educational goals.

Goal-oriented leadership: Leaders who take this approach ask their members to focus only on the goals at hand and ensure that definite and measurable contributions to accomplishing organizational goals are discussed.

Situational Leadership: Leaders who take this style select the appropriate approach that seems to be effective based on the circumstances that exist at a given time. In identifying these circumstances, the leader considers such factors as the relationship between the head and team members. It is believed that no one style of leadership is relevant or assumed to be superior to others in all sorts of organizations under all sorts of conditions.

Effectiveness of Leadership

Leadership is the ability to evaluate and or forecast a long-term plan or policy and influence the followers towards the achievement of the said strategy (Adeoye, 2009). Effective leadership is therefore the ability of the individual to successfully direct the activities of the group of librarians to the attainment of stated goals and objectives. The effectiveness in the leadership of the academic librarians is what brings out the seriousness, passion, zeal, and the lighted spirit of putting one's job high up and service delivery. For the librarians to efficiently and effectively carry out their duties, the environment and its pioneering forces of leadership should be one to reckon with. And, it is worth knowing that effective leadership goes with effective followership, definitely one breeds the other. It is what is made up of the nature of leadership that will eventually give birth to smooth service delivery.

Effectiveness in the leadership of academic librarians connotes providing guidance and direction to librarians towards the achievement of stated goals and objectives of the academic libraries. The effectiveness of leadership brands exercising influences that involves everyone because someone must lead another at one time or some other time.

It is important, as a leader in the academic library to be a role model, know his objectives, and have plans on how to see the librarians both in the libraries and the larger society through the services they deliver. Leaders of the academic libraries who happen to be the administrators have a lot to put on the ground for effective service delivery since the academic librarians are the hub around which all library activities and objectives revolve. The picture becomes clearer that if the leaders of the libraries become dynamic, the achievement of greater goals is certain. Academic libraries need effective leaders, who encourage their librarians, help them plan, implement services for the users and provide answers to questions or challenges that may arise in course of delivering their services. An effective leader is a person who does the following: creates an inspiring vision of the future, motivates and inspires people to engage with that vision. In the same vein, Max (n.d) states that the essence of effectiveness in leadership is the ability to create vision, inspiration, and momentum in a group of people (librarians). Max, in conclusion, called vision, inspiration, and momentum trinity. And so, the vision he meant to create a shared vision, and a positive image of what the library or organization could become and the path towards that destination. Inspiration, within the individuals who happen to be the academic librarians here, that make up the library, is what moves people to action. The leader (management of libraries) uses their interpersonal skills to excite their people (librarians) and help them see how they may benefit from both the service rendered and the skills acquired. Finally, gathering momentum as leaders, adds energy and problem-solving skills the librarians require to keep the vision and mission at the library on course.

Role of Leadership in Academic Libraries Service Delivery

The need for leadership in any human society, organization, etc., cannot be underestimated. Leadership, as stated by Emefu (2008) can be described as "sacrifice and selflessness". What this indicates is that leadership is not for everybody, this is because it is not everybody that can make sacrifices and show the selflessness that leadership requires. Leadership is for people who have such virtues and respond positively to the call. Leadership is not administered. It is reserved for those who have been ordained for it. The leadership of today and tomorrow's academic libraries for better service delivery by the librarians is for the faint of heart, according to Weiner (2014).

Service delivery needs strategies and a variety of processes to satisfy the users who visit the libraries. This in no small measure needs the leaders to be responsive. This is a quality known as responsiveness, which is the willingness to help customers (users) and provide prompt services. Therefore, Alex-Nmecha and Okoro (2020) reiterated that service culture is built on elements of leadership principles, norms, work habits and vision, mission, and values. These attributes of a leader drive to a large extent the services

rendered in the libraries while monitoring the users and guaranteeing their satisfaction as they use the library. In showcasing the librarians for service delivery, the leader should be innovative and creative risk-takers who are bent on putting the satisfaction of the users and patrons first. It is these innovative skills that would be transferred to the librarians who could in turn carry the users along in delivering their duties. The leadership will be such that is flexible, have the cognitive ability to deal with complex scenarios, have effective skills in dealing with people's expertise, and be willing to learn, (Martin, 1997 in Waju, 2015).

Leadership is better when it is characterized by qualities such as high intelligence, honesty, justice and fairness, exemplary living, resourcefulness, firmness, tolerance, self-confidence, democracy-mindedness, charisma, and hard work. These qualities will no doubt plant good seeds that will germinate and grow in the lives, in service delivery, and hope of better librarians. (Olsen, 2005).

For the librarians to deliver their duties, the leaders will regularly reorganize and reshape the duties of the librarians to suit the technological trends of 21st-century service delivery. Things like putting in place good computers, internet access to link all the librarians, and regular motivation.

The leadership of the academic libraries is to create room for pieces of training on the effectiveness of service delivery. Society is changing and moving from what it used to be, and so also the librarians are to change in order to adapt to the society and the services they render. When they (librarians) move with the trend, definitely the users would benefit and the system also would function properly.

Conclusion

This paper looked at leadership and its styles, and the service delivery of academic librarians. It discusses that: leadership is the most peculiar nature of human beings. Whenever and wherever a group of people or individuals come together obviously a leader will emerge. The paper explained that leadership is a function of group association and interaction.

The leadership of the academic library, therefore, must be focused on the activities that could bring about satisfaction on the services rendered to the users as a result of the inspiring leadership drop, filled with motivation for the librarians and that which will empower the librarians. Empowerment is important for continuity, according to Bill Gates "As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others."

The academic librarians are the followers of the leaders of the library (ies), and the vision which the leaders have, would either affect them positively or negatively on their service delivery. Of course, no leader would want to fail, success is the drive of all the leaders. It is based on this that the Leaders need to be relationship-oriented for proper delivery in the overall activities of the organization (library).

Recommendations

1. There should be effective leadership in the library so as to bring about good service delivery and information dissemination to library users.
2. Academic library leaders should always embrace good and brilliant leadership styles for effective leadership that will lead to the achievement of organizational (library) goals.
3. Also, good leadership will give a sense of belonging to all academic staff thereby creating a vibrant and innovative environment for the excellent workforce and service delivery.
4. With revolutionary changes, librarians should be exposed regularly to training to enable them to deliver their services effectively and efficiently.

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