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LEADERSHIP IN THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: This paper establishes the dearth of the application of Leadership Principles in the running of the Library and Information establishments. Using the documentary search method, coupled with general observation, the paper takes an overview of Leadership in the general context and examines its application to specific orientation in the Library and Information environment. Leadership skills and competencies create a niche for the manager in the workplace and collectively serves as a variable in corporate success. By extension, leadership development enhances professionalism, information delivery services, and social/educational relevance of information practitioners.

INTRODUCTION

An organization or establishment is made up of a group of people who have come together to form a business in the pursuit of achieving a common goal. It suffices to say that an organization is people driven. The establishment is usually manned by a personnel team who occupy different positions, perform different tasks and operations in consonance with the purpose and goals of the establishment. In order to achieve the ultimate goal, effective management is required to further achieve cohesion, order, and results. A manager is charged with the responsibility of running an organization. Such a manager, however, requires the demonstration of some qualities to achieve excellence or success in business. It is within this context that the relevance of ‘leadership’ will be considered as a critical variable of effective, efficient, and brilliant business performance.

The library and information organizations are no exception in their need for good leadership to ensure good management as well as attainment of organizational objectives. One may wish to add that the subject of Leadership has been neglected in the library and information profession until the 1980s. The ageing process itself make the education and development of future leaders very expedient (Wang & SU, 2006).

To this end, this work will take an overview on the concept of Leadership in general as well as move to the specific by considering its applicability to the library and information environment.

LEADERSHIP: AN OVERVIEW

Defining the concept of leadership is very intriguing. Literature has however revealed similarities with various emphases in its definitions. The term Leadership has been described as:

*the process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.* (Chemmers, 2002 as cited in Wikipedia 2009).
Wikipedia (2009) further cited a people driven definition of Keith 2007 as thus:

Leadership is ultimately creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen.

Again, in agreement with Chemmers (2002), another source submitted as thus:

Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and direct the organization in a way that makes it cohesive and coherent. Leaders carry out this process by applying their Leadership attributes, such as beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills.

(Concepts of Leadership, 1997).

Covey (2004) opined that Leadership is creating an environment in which people want to be part of the organization and not just work for the organization. Leadership creates an environment that makes people ‘want to’, rather than ‘have to do’.

It is important to note that the concept ‘Leadership’ is often confused with that of ‘Management’. Literature opines that being a manager does not necessarily qualify one as a leader.

Although your position as a manager, supervisor, leader, etc. gives you the authority to accomplish certain tasks and objectives in the organization, this power does not make you a Leader, it simply makes you the boss. Leadership differs in that it makes the followers want to achieve high goals, rather than simply bossing people around. (Concepts of Leadership, 1997).

Again, Wang and Su (2006) cited the summary given by Mason & Wetherbee (2004:191) in the difference in the features of leadership and management as thus:

Table 1: Leadership versus Management as proposed by Mason & Wetherbee (2004) and adopted by Wang and Su (2004).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A leader does the right things.</td>
<td>A good manager does things right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership is about effectiveness.</td>
<td>Management is largely about efficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading is about what and why.</td>
<td>Management is about how to do things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership is about trust and about people.</td>
<td>Management is about Systems, controls, procedures, policies, and structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership is about innovating and initiating.</td>
<td>Management is about copying, about managing the status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership looks at the horizon, not just the bottom line.</td>
<td>Management is about the bottom line.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further explanations offered by literature on the distinctions between ‘Leadership’ and ‘Management’ is presented in Table 2 below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaders innovate.</td>
<td>Managers administer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders ask what and why.</td>
<td>Managers ask how and when.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders focus on people.</td>
<td>Managers focus on systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders do the right things.</td>
<td>Managers do things right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders develop.</td>
<td>Managers maintain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders inspire trust.</td>
<td>Managers rely on control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders have long term perspective.</td>
<td>Managers have short-term perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders challenge the status quo.</td>
<td>Managers accept the status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders have an eye on the horizon.</td>
<td>Managers have an eye on the bottom-line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders originate.</td>
<td>Managers imitate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders are their own persons.</td>
<td>Managers emulate the classic good soldier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders show originality.</td>
<td>Managers copy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) **Leadership Theories**  
This paper has adopted the format of presentation of the eight universally accepted theories of leadership as cited in Wang, & Su's (2006) work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Man Theory</td>
<td>- Leaders are born and not made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Great leaders will arise when there is a great need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait Theory</td>
<td>- People are born with inherited traits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Some traits are particularly suited for leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- People who make good leaders have the right (or sufficient) combination of traits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Theory</td>
<td>- Leaders can be made, rather than are born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Successful leadership is based on definable, learned behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participative Leadership</td>
<td>- Involvement in decision making improves the understanding of the issues involved by those who must carry out the decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- People are more committed to actions where they have [sic] involved in the relevant decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- People are less competitive and are more collaborative when they are working on joint goals. When people make decisions together, the social commitment to one another is greater and thus increase their commitment to the decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational Leadership</td>
<td>- The best action of the leader depends on a range of situational factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Theory</td>
<td>- The leaders ability to lead is contingent upon various situational factors, including the leader’s preferred style, the capabilities and behaviours of followers and also various other situational factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional Leadership</td>
<td>- People are motivated by reward and punishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social systems work best with a clear chain of command.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- When people have agreed to do a job, a part of the deal is that they cede all authority to their manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The prime purpose of a subordinate is to do what their manager tells them to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- People will follow a person who inspires them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- A person with vision and passion can achieve great things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The way to get things done is by injecting enthusiasm and energy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(iii) **Types of Leaders**
Closely related to theories of leadership is the issue of leadership typology. The following have been identified as variation in leadership styles as enumerated in Concepts of leadership (1997):

(a) **Authoritarian Leader**: (high task, low relationship)
This category of leaders are task-oriented (i.e. workaholic) but are very hard on their workers. There is no room for collaboration and the leaders want to remain unquestionable.
(b) **Team Leader:** (high task, high relationship)
This type of leader serves as a role model as he leads by positive example. Team spirit is encouraged and potentialities of members are developed.

(c) **Country Club Leader:** (low task, high relationship)
The type of leader takes advantage of people as he hangs on the use of rewards to secure cooperation and maintain discipline.

(d) **Impoverished Leader:** (low task, low relationship)
This has been aptly described as a leader who uses a “delegate and disappear” management style. There is generally lack of commitment and accomplishment is also absent.

(iv) **Leadership Skills and Competencies**
Literature has presented diverse approach to the subject of leadership skills. However, Nye (2004) has succinctly categorized leadership skills into four, although in relation to librarianship, but adopted from general leadership principles as thus:

(a) **Organization:** This includes the ability to organize people, projects, and meeting agenda.

(b) **Communication:** Ability to communicate well is very germane to fruitful relationship and success of a leader. Giving relevant and timely information as well as the expectation of feedbacks from stakeholders are desirable.

(c) **Hopefulness:** The leader requires a high degree of optimism to forge through difficult times. He must always give the assurance of a positive outcome.

(d) **Praise & Celebration:** Individual and group contributions and successes need to be acknowledged. The celebration of such gives further encouragement to those involved.

However, Concepts of Leadership (1997) further articulated eleven Principles of Leadership which had been imported from U.S. Army (1983) and tagged “To help you be, know, and do” as follows:

(a) Know yourself and seek self-improvement  
(b) Be technically proficient.  
(c) Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions.  
(d) Make sound and timely decisions.  
(e) Set the example.  
(f) Know your people and look out for their well being.  
(g) Keep your workers informed.  
(h) Develop a sense of responsibility in your workers.  
(i) Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished.  
(j) Train as a team.  
(k) Use the full capabilities of your organization.

**LEADERSHIP IN THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT**

(i) **Antecedents**
The subject of leadership has been described as a very imperative one that can never be over-flogged in management research (Wang and Su 2004). More imperative is the relevance of the theme in library and information management profession. While literature abound on the topic in management research, books on the subject as it relates to the library and information services are still terse. Western researchers even affirmed this and noted that not until the recent times that we have journal articles and short communications on the subject in LIS literature.

*General observation revealed that formal leadership training, if not totally absent in our library and information establishments, is very scarce.*
(ii) **Exigencies**

(a) There is concern within the library profession that we are short of leaders. Why is this such a common lament? Those of us who are responsible for recruitment in our organizations often get together to scratch our heads and complain about the apparent lack of colleagues within the profession who will take up leadership roles. Why is this? (Dawson 2002).

The above quote simply leads us to the first statement of exigency that:

- There is a dearth of library and information profession leaders.

(b) Of course, leadership is also hard work – managing, persuading, motivating, inspiring others is not easy, although it can definitely be rewarding. I suspect many people are scared off by what is required ... (Dawson 2002).

The second statement of exigency is that:

- Leadership qualities, skills, and competencies are hard to come by.

(c) One theory is that the typical value set of those who work in libraries are not compatible with managing people or managing physical resources such as budgets, or operating confidently in a political and business environment. Some blame the library qualification providers for not attracting the right people. (Dawson 2002).

The third statement of exigency is that:

- Even if people are not born leaders, the library and information schools should do better in teaching leadership skills to prospective library and information practitioners.

(d) (i) Librarianship as a profession has entered an area where its workforce is ageing and its leadership is becoming more "graying". Fifty eight percent of librarians in the U.S. are projected to reach the retirement age of 65 between 2005 and 2019 and forty percent of library directors plan to retire in less than nine years. (Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO, 2005 as cited by Wang and Su, 2006).

(ii) There is also an international trend of 'graying'. In Australia, over 52% of librarians are currently more than 45 years old. If they retire, at the age of 60, then about half of the population of Australian librarians are expected to retire within the next 10 to 15 years. (Hutley & Solomon, 2004, as cited by Wang and Su, 2006).

The fourth statement of exigency as derived from the above is that:

- The library and information system need succession planning – hence the need for leaders.

(e) To meet the demands of today's fast-paced and competitive business environment, people at all levels are being asked to step up and assume leadership behaviours ... companies are investing millions of dollars annually in leadership development training to meet this challenge.

The fifth statement of exigency is that:

- The library and information system profession should take a cue from the business and corporate world by having leadership development agenda.

(iii) **Issues in Leadership in the Library and Information Environment: Focus on Library Directors**

Despite all the theoretical bases for leadership, the leadership role of a leader cannot be divulged from his basic functions in a specific situation. Therefore, for practicability, this portion of this presentation will hang essentially on the propositions of Versosa [2009] as depicting the functional/leadership roles of the library leadership. The highlights as submitted in her presentation are given as thus:
• Leadership is just one dimension of the managers’ work
• It involves “the exercise of social influence by infusing the parent organization with purpose and direction in order to achieve its goals.
• Leadership requires that the library director should influence members of the parent institutions to provide resources in order to (a) support expansion plans (b) accept the goals of the library as valid and deserving support.
• The 3 dimensions used to measure library leadership are (a) Leader activities (b) Management of organizational change (c) Reputational Effectiveness.

• **Leader Activities**
  + Managerial role activities
  + Professional activities and involvement
  + Membership on community committees
  + Strategies for influencing the environment.

*Note:* It should be noted that even though this involves some direct functions, innate qualities are needed to serve as strength of leadership, e.g. in the managerial role activities and strategies for influencing the environment requirements.

The managerial role/activities are further broken into six:

• **Supervisor Role:** which involves directing the work of subordinates; integrating subordinates’ goals with the library’s goals and objectives; allocating human resources to tasks; evaluating subordinates’ job performance; resolving conflicts between subordinates and providing new staff with training.

• **Liaison Role:** Involves attending social functions for contacts; attendance at conferences/meetings; maintaining informal communication networks; and relating with people outside.

• **Environment Monitor Role:** Includes initiating new ideas for services and operations; keeping up with professional trends/changes; keeping abreast of technological developments; scanning the environment for new opportunities to improve services/operations; collecting information about users touring facilities to observe and reading reports of other units.

• **Entrepreneur Role:** Involves planning and implementing changes in the library, initiating change in the library and solving problems by instituting changes in the library.

• **Spokesman Role:** Includes serving as an expert or advising people outside the library; keeping others abreast of developments in the library, attending to correspondences, and serving on committees, and representing the library.

• **Management of Organizational Change**
Changes in organizational domain vis a vis other community/cognate entities;
Internal changes

• **Reputational Effectiveness:** Includes considerations of
  - Years in managerial positions.
  - Libraries worked in
  - Continuing education
  - Professional journals scanned/read
  - No. of publications
  - Membership of Association, and
  - Services to University/Parent Establishment.
- **Key Leadership Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Energizer</th>
<th>Sustainer</th>
<th>Politician</th>
<th>Retiree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reputational Effectiveness</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Change Leader</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Activity</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Profile**

  - **Energizer**
    Enjoys a high reputation
    Dynamic as:
    - Spokesperson
    - Entrepreneur
    - Resource allocator
    - Supervisor
    - Career development is rapid
    - Low on professional involvement

- **Profile Sustainer**

  Enjoys a high reputation
  Dynamic as:
  - liaison
  - Entrepreneur
  - Resource allocator
  - Supervisor
  - Cautions introducing changes in organization.
  - Focused on providing stable and comfortable leadership.

- **Profile: Politician**

  Enjoys a high visibility and therefore reputation
  Dynamic only as entrepreneur:
  - Active in professional and community development
  - Slow in introducing changes.

- **Profile: Retiree**

  Engages in limited leader activities.
  - Held in low esteem by colleagues
  - Dynamic as resource allocator
  - Experiences little changes
  - Very high on professional involvement

Versosa [2000] summarized her library leadership innovation model as thus:

Understanding library leadership innovation is a cyclical phenomenon. Periods of high innovation are followed by periods of sustained implementation and consolidation. Alternating cyclical behaviours may find some relevance in an organization’s life. The low-change sustainers and politicians have a crucial role as the ideal Energizer.
THE LIBRARY/INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS LEADERSHIP AGENDA/STRATEGY

The following initiatives are desirable and could be found rewarding:

- Creation of awareness for need of leadership development skills among professionals.
- Self-development in leadership skills by Librarians and Information Professionals.
- Integration of leadership development into the library/information centre strategic planning.
- Leadership Development Programme to run through the ladder (i.e. from the top to bottom).
- Library and Information Schools to integrate Leadership Skills development into their curricula.
- Need for librarians and information professionals to maintain strong network within and without their organization to enhance development of skills and knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Leadership is essentially a subject of management research. It is however a theme that is relevant to all human endeavours. Business enterprises and corporations have embraced the application of leadership principles and have found them to be agents of productivity and profitability. The time is therefore ripe for the Library and Information Professionals, particularly in this part of the world, to take a cue from the latter’s experiences to enhance professionalism, information service delivery as well as social/educational relevance of practitioners. The leadership qualities of a person create a niche for him and a combination of leadership competencies of managers in the workplace brings corporate success.

It is also expedient to add that the phenomenon of the knowledge society has made cross-fertilization of ideas imperative in the process of knowledge acquisition. This, without mincing words, is the surest way of survival in an extremely competitive world.

REFERENCES


