

The Place of Mentoring in Developing Librarians' Leadership Competency

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ABSTRACT--- *This paper examines the place of mentoring in developing librarians' leadership competency. The article presents a rationale for the identification of an important component of such a statement of leadership competencies in the context of the knowledge and skills associated with mentoring. The concept of leadership is explored as a task related to but separate from management. The paper looks at the overview of library leadership competency; concept of mentoring; why mentoring; mentors' responsibilities; mentees' responsibilities; ethical issues in mentoring; mentoring and leadership style of librarians. It concludes by suggesting that library professionals in Nigeria should give mentoring a chance. This is one of the ways to build strong career life in librarianship and explore future possibilities for young library professionals. Also, authorities in the Nigerian libraries should adopt various motivational techniques that can encourage staff and increase their productivity in order to promote deserved rapid growth and development of librarianship profession in this information age.*

Keywords--- Leadership, Leadership competency, Librarian, Mentoring, Librarian development

1. INTRODUCTION

Considering the rapid development in the field of librarianship particularly with the inroad of information technology coupled with a highly demanding library user population, the need for competent and effective leadership in librarianship cannot be over emphasised. The study of leadership issues is important to be able to decide on the type of leadership needed to move librarianship forward. Therefore the experience and knowledge of seasoned professionals need to be imparted on the upcoming librarians to bring about the needed growth in the profession. The leadership competencies associated with mentoring should form a necessary component of the knowledge base and skill set for librarians, to bring about the needed professional growth and development.

The paper is structured into: overview of library leadership competency; concept of mentoring; why mentoring; mentors' responsibilities; mentees' responsibilities; and mentoring and leadership style of librarians.

2. OVERVIEW OF LIBRARY LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY

Management is about organising the functions that need to be done, while leadership is about empowering, inspiring and mentoring. According to Ogbah (2013), a leader is a person who takes the central roles in interactions and who influences the behaviour of other members of a group. He is an individual who has authority over others and he is responsible for guiding their actions. It is leadership that determines whether philosophy and vision are articulated and to what extent they are implemented. Fatokun, Salaam and Ajegbomogun (2010) posited that organizational leadership determines or values, culture, changes, tolerance and employees' motivational factors. They influence those around them to reap maximum benefit. The researchers defined leadership is in hierarchy and is usually illustrated as a triangle with the head at the apex of the triangle and authority flowing downward to all other part of the triangle. Germano (2010) on

his part defined Leadership as the ability to influence a group towards the achievement of goals. The role a leader plays is very important in any organization it goes a long way to determine the growth or the downfall of the organisation.

Ogbah (2013) noted that Libraries are complex organizations that have its own set objectives. It has its hierarchical structure, official decision making process, institutional policy and routines, to enable it to achieve set goals. Issa (2003) opined that one primary role of librarians is to provide leadership and expertise in the design, development, and ethical management of knowledge-based information systems in order to meet the information needs and obligations of the patron or institution. Electronic information provides librarians with challenges that are not necessary new. However, as librarians' roles changes, so also the challenges to professional codes of ethics changes. Issa (2003) also noted that 1998 survey published by the Special Libraries Association (SLA) found that, although the librarians' roles are indeed changing, librarians foresee their role evolving to that of consultant and planner, where they facilitate the delivery of end-user information through the corporate network (i.e. manage the content, train end-users, deal with more complex inquiries). At the strategic level, they could play an important role in managing the knowledge resources of the organization.

According to Singh (2009), there is difference between a leader and a manager, as well as competence and competencies. A leader facilitates change but a manager maintains the status quo. Similarly, competence means mastery and competencies mean a set of skills. Competence comes with experience. But before that we must have a good commonsense and formal education. Then strategic professional learning must be internalized by the Library and Information Professionals as a lifelong learning process. Library and Information Professionals must be equipped with cultural literacy and information skills for learning. Similarly, a sense of responsibility and accountability along with team spirit, motivation, and interpersonal skills should also become a part of their mind, body, and soul.

In the same vein, Ogbah (2013) asserted that leadership has a direct cause and effect relationship upon organizations and their success. Library leaders directly affect everything from patron experience to successfully executing stated missions, including resource allocation, services offered and collection development strategies. Germano (2010) further noted that the influence of leaders and their effectiveness in moving people to a shared vision can directly shape the library's people, its materials, how patrons use or interact with them and whether or not that experience is beneficial. For a library to be effective it needs an effective leadership. To Davis and Newstrom (1985), an effective manager is one who can invoke support through the channelling of a clear shared vision for the organization.

According to the American Association of Law Libraries (2010), Competencies are the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics that help distinguish superior performance. These competencies may be acquired through higher education such as library and information science graduate programs, through continuing education, and through experience. The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) identified two areas of competencies and these are Core Competencies and Specialized Competencies. The core competency area applies to all librarians, and will be acquired early in one's career while the specialised competencies are related to specific areas of practice. AALL (2010, p.) listed the following as the expected core competencies of librarians:

1. "Excellent service to users and commitment to continual service improvement by participating in regular training and by collecting, evaluating, and responding to user satisfaction data.
2. Recognising and addressing the diverse nature of the library's users and community.
3. Understands, supports, and contributes positively to the evolution of the culture and context of the library and its parent institutions.
4. Demonstrates knowledge of library and information science theory and the creation, organization, and delivery of information within its technological context.
5. Adheres to the Ethical Principles of Libraries and supports the shared values of librarianship.
6. Exhibits leadership skills including critical thinking, risk taking, creativity, negotiation, collaboration, and change management.
7. Demonstrates commitment to working with others to achieve common goals.
8. Acts within the organization to implement the principles of information management.
9. Exhibits an understanding of the importance of a multidisciplinary and cross-functional approach to programs and projects within the organization.
10. Shares knowledge and expertise with users and colleagues.
11. Displays excellent communication skills and is able to promote the library and advocate for its needs.
12. Communicates effectively with publishers and other information providers to advance the interests of the library.
13. Recognizes the value of professional networking and actively participates in professional associations and online communities.
14. Actively pursues personal and professional growth through continuing education"

Kurz and Bartram (2002) are very precise in their efforts to distinguish between competence and competency: Competence is about mastery in relation to specified goals or outcomes. The measurement of competence at work involves the assessment of performance in the workplace against some pre-defined set of occupational or work-related standards or requirements. Competencies, on the other hand, relate to the behaviours underpinning successful performance; what it is people do in order to meet their objectives; how they go about achieving the required outcomes; what enables their competent performance.” Ammons-Stephens et al. (2009) listed six areas of attributes of competency namely “leadership, planning, abilities, skills, individual traits, and areas of knowledge” These attributes are in line with leadership qualities for other professions. Ammons-Stephens et al. (2009, p.) classified competencies under three major headings:

- a. “Managerial attributes, which include managing, leading and planning;
Personal characteristics, which include dealing with others, general individual traits and individual traits pertaining to leadership;
- b. General areas of knowledge.
- c. Core Leadership Competency Model which includes four central leadership competencies for library leadership, namely cognitive ability, vision, interpersonal effectiveness and managerial effectiveness, each encompassing a number of ‘broad competencies’:
Cognitive ability, higher-order thinking skills include “creative thinking, critical, and analytical thinking, data manipulation, synthesis and decision making.
Vision includes the ability “to think globally, think creativity [sic] and foster innovation, as well as the ability to be forward-thinking.
Interpersonal effectiveness, describing leaders who can create a positive atmosphere centred on respect, responsibility, and motivation.
Managerial effectiveness, which includes the ability “to manage change, manage resources, plan for the future, collaborate with others and have the ability to be flexible”.

3. CONCEPT OF MENTORING

A mentor is a person who has acquired certain knowledge with experience and understands the need of others who desire to acquire similar knowledge and is willing to pass on the experience to them, a role model. Mentors teach responsible conduct explicitly and by example; mentoring involves verbal and practical demonstration. Mentors assist the trainees in understanding and adhering to the standards of conduct within their profession. Mentoring is one of the primary means for one generation to impart their knowledge to succeeding generations to assist the trainee in understanding and adhering to the standards of conduct within his or her profession. However, both the mentor and the trainee have responsibilities for the success of the process.

A mentor is to assist mentees in career development and preparation for the job market. This includes an understanding of the current job market, opportunities to make contact with leaders in the trainee's field of research, introduction into the network of people working in his or her discipline, and an awareness of the range of career opportunities. According to the American Library Association's (ALA) New Members Round Table (NMRT) Mentoring Guidelines, “a mentor is an experienced person who provides guidance and support to a developing professional” (NMRT, n.d., p. 4). Moore, Miller, Pitchford, and Jeng (2008) discuss the two kinds of mentors: formal and informal. The authors stated that formal mentors are matched with mentees based on program parameters, while informal mentors can be found through personal connections that focus on building relationships between the mentor and mentee.

Mentoring is one form of continuing professional development that has the potential to overcome limitations it happens through formal and informal programmes however most mentoring happens informally. Unfortunately, women have less access to the kind of informal mentoring that occurs naturally between male professionals who will spend time chatting outside workplace. Such informal mentoring takes place during games at lunch or drinks after work. If there is no formal mentoring program in place, some women may receive no mentoring at all. The male librarians are simply more comfortable socializing with the younger men. Women librarians could be frustrated due to lack of informal mentoring. A good mentor therefore should ensure that women are fully accepted and had the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

Why Mentoring

According to Moore et al (2008, p.), the following are the major reasons for carrying out mentoring in any organization especially the library:

1. “**A professional responsibility:** Training of the next generation of librarian is the responsibility of the present generation of librarian and one of the ways this can be done is through effective mentoring. Librarianship

requires a clear understanding of the operation and the application of other knowledge hence the need for effective communication among professionals to ensure responsible conduct and adherence to the ethical principle of Librarianship. The service of a mentor is therefore required for the upcoming professionals. Mentoring programmes and activities have the advantage of being immediately responsive to individual learning needs, and their availability to membership of professional association can be designated as one of the advantages of professional association membership. It could serve as an encouragement to attracting new members and for retaining existing members

2. **To guide the young librarians in the profession:** The young librarians need the experienced ones to guide them. Some of the young librarians don't know their career aspirations so they need mentors to put them through in their career. Through this their career aspirations and worries would be met".

Mentors' Responsibilities.

Every mentor in the organization should carefully observe the following functions as pointed out by Moore et al (2008, p.):

- i. A mentor should be available to those he is mentoring. Accessibility between him and the trainee should not be a problem. He should be committed to the relationship just as the trainee should also be committed. But both should respect differences in their commitment to the relationship.
- ii. Mentors should help trainees develop as capable professionals. A mentor can contribute to the technical development of the trainee in many aspects of librarianship, including, directions, creative thinking, completing academic or professional requirements, and research communication.
- iii. A mentor should fit his relationship with the trainee to be such that the personality of the trainee is respected and the needs are met. So also the trainee should make allowance for differences in personalities between him and the Mentor. The success of the relationship depends majorly on the personalities of the Mentor and the trainee. While some trainees learn faster others are slow in learning.
- iv. Another responsibility of a mentor is the socialization of trainees. Socialization in this regard includes guiding ethical development of the trainee as well as fostering an understanding of the political, economic, and social elements of interacting. This training includes promotion of skills for communication, working in teams, leadership, management of people, interacting with others, listening, expressing ideas, administration and planning, and budget management.
- v. Mentors should allow trainees to make their decisions, while they are to provide advice, help and encouragement. Mentoring involves teaching by words and action. Their words and actions should be explicit for the trainees to understand. Mentors should advocate for the trainees, there are times when a mentor has to step forward and defend or advocate for the trainee.
- vi. Mentors should not be complacent, on their own they need to continue learning about effective mentoring, both through experience and the available resources about mentoring.
- vii. Trainees need career development and preparation for the job market. It is the responsibility of the mentor to assist the trainee in this regard. This includes an understanding of the current job market, opportunities to make contacts with leaders in the trainee's field of research, active introduction into the network of people working in his or her discipline, and an awareness of the range of career options. A mentor may also advise a new Librarian on career development in terms of applying for grants, what grants to apply for, and how to submit a strong grant proposal.
- viii. Mentor is to assist the trainee in understanding and adhering to the standards of conduct within his or her profession, the ethics of the profession. This can be through example, counselling, and exchange of thoughts and ideas".

Mentees' Responsibilities:

It is expedient for mentees or trainees to observe the following responsibilities in order to be effectively groomed by mentors in the organization especially the library:

- i. “It is very important for a mentee or trainee to know his or her career aspirations through this he will be able to have a career plan and identify his needs. Once these are identified and the trainee knows his or her abilities he can now seek for someone who is knowledgeable in his career and who is willing to help.
- ii. Locating a prospective mentor is the responsibility of a trainee. Once the trainee interest is identified, locating someone who has an understanding and experience in the field is the next thing, someone who has risen from where the trainee is, to where he intends to be. The person must have interest in the trainee and must be prepared to spare sometime for him. It is also very important that they must be compatible so that they can work together. A mentor is interested in the overall success of the trainee, within and outside the institution.
- iii. A trainee should be forth coming in making his needs known to the mentor. Hence he should be clear about his needs and expectations. However that is not to say the mentors advice should be taken without questioning. The trainee need to assess the mentor advice based on his aspiration and values. It is also the responsibility of a trainee to start developing himself in the area of mentoring to optimize his experience” (Moore et al, 2008, p.).

There is considerable support for establishing mentors for school librarians within the professional literature (Bicksler, 2004; Buddy & Williams, 2001; Creighton, 2007). Yet, there is very little research that relates the benefits of mentorship to school librarianship. Solomon and Rathbun-Grubb (2009), advised that ambassadors to the profession such as mentors could be useful in recruiting and retaining new school librarians.

Similarly, Baaden (2008) went on to write that there is a need for transition mentoring between exiting school librarians and the new school librarians that replace them. Such efforts can acquaint incoming school librarians with school cultures, procedures, and policies. Everhart and Dresang (2007) reported that experienced school librarians rely heavily on mentors to navigate the National Board Certification process. The participants of their study revealed that they solicited assistance from mentors within and outside of the school librarianship field. All of the respondents found the support they received from school library mentors helpful. Though they are few in numbers, these studies make one crucial point. Their results convey that school librarianship is a unique profession that requires a distinctive skill set separate from those of a classroom teacher. While school librarians are part of school communities, they are in need of specific guidance that classroom teachers that serve as mentors are not able to offer (Baaden, 2008). Instead, school librarians need assistance from mentors who are from within the profession.

Ethical issues in mentoring

Mentor-trainee relationship can be abused by the Mentors because of the vantage position of the Mentors vis a vis the trainee. Mentors have more knowledge, experience, and status, and in most cases are in a position of authority over the trainee. The trainee has much to gain from the mentor's support and advocacy, and fear of jeopardizing that support makes the relationship especially imbalanced.

There is also the issue of supervisor and Mentor their responsibilities are overlapping thus leading to problem in some cases. Where does the responsibility of the supervisor end and that of the Mentor begin? What are the roles of trainee in this circumstance? Is there a difference between a research supervisor and a research mentor? If there is a difference, are the duties associated with mentoring optional?

A sense of insecurity on the part of the Mentor may affect the trainee. A Mentor may feel threatened by the progress of a Mentee and decide to withdraw his or her support for the trainee thereby discouraging the Mentee. Other problems can arise when a trainee is ignored or neglected, communication is inadequate, there is a lack of feedback, or the mentor gives extremely harsh criticism.

Issues of finance can cause serious ethical issues in mentoring. A Mentor may be interested in research that are more financially rewarding for example a research that may lead to a patent may interest the Mentor whereas the Mentee may be inclined towards an intellectually interesting and challenging research. This may lead to a Mentor withholding power, disengaging and failing to serve as champion, sponsor, or protector for the Mentee.

There is also the issue of publication. In the case of industry-funded research, it may be in the sponsor's interest to delay publication of results for sometime it is therefore the responsibilities of Mentors to inform the trainees working with them on the research of the condition governing the publication of the research result. This information must be made available before the commencement of the research. Both the mentor and the trainee must consider the impact of such delays on the trainee's career prospects. The most effective mentor insures that his trainee gets the maximum appropriate credit for any joint publications; encourages the trainee to attend national or international conferences, workshops, and symposia and to present research at such events; promotes the trainee's work among colleagues; and helps the trainee create important professional networks.

4. MENTORING AND LEADERSHIP STYLE OF LIBRARIANS

There is relationship between mentoring and leadership of workers in the organization. They are the basic leadership approach that emphasizes collaboration, harmonious relationships, and the ability of all community stakeholders to create positive shifts in organizational culture (Bass & Bass, 2008; Burns, 2003; Smith, 2013)). The researchers reiterated that appointed leaders can practice transformational leadership behaviours, individuals who have not been officially assigned duties can emerge as leaders too. Smith (2013) went further to acknowledge that anyone in the organization could function as a leader that makes transformational leadership possible to benefit everyone in such organization. Sheppard (1996) in Smith (2013) indicates that when transformational leadership carries out educational reforms, such reforms often continue after school administrators leave due to consensus building process. The stability created by transformational leadership in schools also has an indirect positive effect on students' achievement and progress (Griffith, 2004).

Transformational leadership focuses on the performance of organizations. Similarly, the primary purpose of mentoring is to develop the skills of an individual to improve organizations (Northouse, 2004). According to Daresh (2004); Scandura and Williams (2004), transformational leaders serve as role models within organizations. Therefore, mentoring is an indicator of transformational leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). The positive results of leadership in the form of mentoring include career stabilization through encouragement (Kram, 1985), acclimation to organizational environments and responsibilities (Daresh, 2003), and a general sense that one is in control of their career (Scandura & Williams, 2004).

Furthermore, McAlearney (2005) concludes in his study that having a mentor can frame the future perceptions a leader has about leadership development. Leaders exposed to formal or informal mentoring are more accepting of the need for mentoring opportunities. For example, formally mentored leaders are more likely to believe in allocating organizational resources for external program attendance for leadership development. In addition, informally mentored leaders typically favor the creation of internal leadership development programs. This suggests that mentorship, whether it is formal or informal heightens a leader's awareness of the benefits of mentoring for leadership development. After getting a mentor and reading the literature, the next step to become an effective and efficient librarian is to start collaborating with colleagues (Breanne, 2011). One benefit to collaborating as described by Thomas (2002) is that collaboration helps librarians to grow as professionals and become successful. There is also increase efficiency and effectiveness.

However, in order to have a good career in librarianship it is important to adapt the current trends in the profession by specializing and generalizing in Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to boost effective information dissemination services to the library patrons. In order to function as a professional librarian and be effective there is need to be flexible and be adaptable to new situations that allow him or her to function successfully. Being versatile will help make mentee, gain needed experience that could build the desired skills and qualifications for a future position. Cromer (2009) states that, "good leadership skills will enhance any librarian's individual career and the profession as a whole". Fatokun et al (2010) reported in their paper titled "*The Influence of Leadership Style on the Performance of Subordinates in Nigerian Libraries*" that there is a high level of commitment to both official and social needs by the leaders in the Nigerian libraries. There is cordial relationship in the mode of communication from leaders to the subordinates and this made the subordinate to have high sense of belonging and efficient at work.

Therefore, librarians should not wait to be asked to lead; they should create opportunities to lead in addition to jumping at the opportunity to lead when it is offered. Upcoming Librarians should find a mentor, read literature, collaborate, adapt, aspire to become a leader, and be persistence. Collaboration, adaptation, and leadership skills are three important qualifications that are desired of a professional librarian to excel and this can be learnt and acquired from competent leader and Mentor. Smith (2013) in the paper titled "The Role of Mentoring in the Leadership Development of Pre-Service School Librarians" concluded that mentors are an important aspect of school librarian education that is beneficial when incorporated into degree programs. It did not matter to the participants where mentors were located or how mentors stayed in contact with them. Instead, the participants appreciated responsive mentors who were easy to contact and provided them with advice based on experience. Accordingly the results of this study provide evidence that including mentors in degree programs for librarians can be instrumental in developing leadership skills, acclimating pre-service librarians to librarianship, and encouraging them to mentor new librarians in the future. These outcomes are crucial for preparing new librarians for the challenge of being leaders who embrace change. It is therefore recommended that library leaders should employ positive leadership that mentor upcoming librarians and emphasizes rewards in order to motivate subordinates to high organizational commitment..

5. CONCLUSION

The guiding principle in mentoring should be the interest of the trainee. Institutions should have a role in setting out reasonable expectations for the mentor and the trainee, as well as in suggesting strategies to make the relationship as productive and mutually satisfying as possible. However those who take advantage of or ignore trainees must be reminded that they have a special obligation to foster the intellectual development and independence of the next generation of librarians.

Therefore, in view of the importance of mentoring to leadership and professional development of librarians, it is very important for library professionals in Nigeria to give mentoring a chance. This is one of the ways to build strong career life in librarianship and explore future possibilities for young library professionals. Also, authorities in the Nigerian libraries should adopt various motivational techniques that can encourage staff and increase their productivity in order to promote deserved rapid growth and development of librarianship profession in this information age.

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