

The Leadership Qualities of University Librarians in Nigeria in the 21st Century

Dr. Mohammed Abubakar Bitagi¹ and Dr. Obaje Alfred Michael²

¹Federal University of Technology, University Library, Minna, Nigeria

²Federal University of Technology, University Library, Minna, Nigeria

Abstract

University Librarians are expected to exhibit leadership qualities that makes it possible for university libraries to support the achievement of the objectives of their parent institutions. This study was therefore, carried out to determine the leadership qualities of university librarians and attainment of the objectives of university libraries in the 21st century in Niger state, Nigeria. The conceptual view of leadership was explained. The primary objectives of universities and the role of their libraries in attaining these objectives were highlighted. It was observed that adequate information resources were not available while expected services were not fully provided by the libraries. The descriptive survey research method was used for the study. Questionnaire and interview were instruments used to gather required data. The population of the study was 81 professional and para-professional staff of the two institutions studied. However, only 76 questionnaires, representing 93.8% were returned and found usable. Data gathered was analysed using frequencies and percentages. The findings of the study showed that the universities studied have ever failed or granted partial accreditation of some courses due to inadequacies from the libraries while majority of the respondents, 54 (71.1%) agreed that inadequacies from the libraries could be attributed to lack of leadership qualities of the University Librarians. Consequently, it was suggested by all (100%) of the respondents that University Librarians should possess such leadership qualities as being committed, competent, confident and highly educated, among others. It was concluded that the failure of university libraries in meeting accreditation requirements is sine qua non to failing to meet the objectives for which they were established. It was recommended, among others that aspiring university librarians should possess personal qualities that could enhance their leadership capabilities of university libraries.

Keywords: Leadership Qualities, Universities, University Librarians, University Libraries.

Introduction

The 21st century academic librarianship emphasizes the demand for leadership capabilities that meet with the challenges facing academic environments in terms of attaining their core objectives of teaching, learning, research and others such as requirements for institutional and courses accreditation. That is to say there is need for change in the way and manner some academic libraries are administered by their librarians. Turnbull (2008) reiterate that change is the only constant in the lives of professionals and responding to the new demands of this century is the challenge that keeps them and their colleagues awake at night.

Many scholars in recent times have defined and provided conceptual views of leadership. In the view of Levine and Crom in Fatokun, Salaam and Ajegbomogun (2010), leadership is about listening to people, supporting, encouraging and involving them in the decision-making and problem-solving processing. Similarly, Popa (2012) define leadership as the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. In that direction, the author cited Drucker as having observed that leadership is all about results. Irrespective of the way and manner leadership is defined, these authors are of the view that leadership in the 21st century has to do with showing and paving the way for attainment of desired, expected, prescribed and assigned objectives. Consequently, it could be argued that the extent to which organizational objectives, and in this perspective, the academic libraries could be achieved, depends largely on the personal qualities and effectiveness of the university or college librarian rather than adoption of any style of management. That is why it is appropriate to assume that the failure of the university librarian to provide good leadership is tantamount to the total failure of the library to perform its expected functions.

University libraries are those that are solely established by universities to support the attainment of their objectives. Universities are charged with the primary objectives of teaching, learning and research. Their libraries, towards that direction, are expected to provide supplementary information resources in all formats and services that could enhance the attainment of the objectives of their parent institutions. In addition to providing current, relevant and adequate information resources and services needed to support teaching, learning and research, university libraries in Nigeria are expected to provide resources that meet with the accreditation requirement of the various courses offered by each university. Accreditation is an exercise carried out every five years to determine the continuity of courses offered by universities based on the available human and material resources of each Department and that of the library by the National Universities Commission (N.U.C.) which is an umbrella organization that supervises the academic activities of Nigerian universities to avoid graduating half-baked professionals in the 21st century.

From the foregoing, the role of university libraries in attaining the objectives of their parent institutions cannot be overemphasized. This is because if the university library fails to meet with the accreditation requirements that are needed to back up the curricula activities of the courses, such courses will not be accredited by the N.U.C. The effect of this may lead to lack of full recognition or suspension of such course(s). Thus, university libraries in Nigeria, in the 21st century, should be headed by librarians who have adequate personal leadership qualities to manage all the staff and other resources to meet the goals expected of their libraries.

University librarians are political appointees and professional heads of their libraries. Their appointment is for a single five-year term. They are responsible to the vice chancellors in the day to day performance of their duties, the top most of which is to effectively administer the library and its resources in order to realize the objectives for which the library was established.

Statement of the Problem

The university libraries are established to provide supplementary information resources and services to enhance the teaching, learning and research activities of their parent institutions and also meet with the requirements for accreditation of the courses offered by the institutions. In order to meet with these objectives, these libraries, in Nigeria, are provided with funds from various sources such as the Internally Generated Revenue (I.G.R.) of their institutions, allocations by the Federal Government and Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), and donations from individuals and organizations to acquire information resources.

A preliminary investigation by these researchers revealed unavailability of adequate information resources while expected services were not fully provided by the libraries covered by this study. The question at hand, then is what is responsible for these problems? Could it be due to lack of leadership qualities of the university librarians to manage the resources of their libraries effectively? The answers to these questions constitute a gap in knowledge. These researchers therefore, decided to investigate the leadership qualities of the university librarians of the libraries covered by this study to determine their effectiveness. This has become imperative because no study seems to have been carried out on this.

Scope of the Study

This research was based on the Federal University of Technology, Minna and Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (IBBU), Lapai libraries. The leadership qualities of their university librarians in line with the expectations of the 21st century were examined to determine their effectiveness.

Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Determine if the universities covered by the study have at one time or the other failed or granted partial accreditation of certain courses as a result of inadequacies from the libraries.
2. Determine if the inadequacies of the libraries could be attributed to lack of leadership qualities of the University Librarians.
3. Examine the types of qualities that are expected of the university librarians to effectively manage the available resources to attain the objectives of their libraries in the 21st century.

Research Questions

This research was guided by the following questions:

1. Has your university at one time or the other failed or granted partial accreditation of certain courses as a result of inadequacies from the library?
2. Could the inadequacies of the libraries be attributed to lack of leadership qualities of the University Librarians?
3. What are the types of qualities expected of University Librarians to effectively manage the available resources to attain the objectives of their libraries in the 21st century?

Literature Review

Abioye (2014) cited Montgomery to have defined leadership as the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose and the character which inspires confidence. From this definition, it could be deduced that leadership has to do with summing up of sufficient courage, commitment and intellectual capacity to organize and direct others in order to achieve desired objectives. It therefore, becomes pertinent that for university librarians to achieve the core and other objectives for which they were appointed in the 21st

century, they must show a lot of courage, commitment and will to organize their staff, who belong to various cadres, qualifications and experiences in such a way that the goals of the parent institutions are easily achieved. Consequently, therefore, the success of the library in performing to expectations in the provision of required current and relevant information resources and services could be linked to the effectiveness of the university librarian. Equally, the failure of the library could be blamed, to a great extent, on the leadership of the library.

It is however, to be noted that for a university librarian to succeed in the 21st century, he must possess certain qualities. These, according to Abioye (2014) include the followings:

1. Each leader must have vision(s) of the kind of future the organization (library) is aiming at and be able to carry others along.
2. Leaders should be able to harness resources towards achieving defined objectives.
3. Effectiveness in leadership should involve taking cognizance of feedback from followers or subordinates in order to ensure that visions as communicated are being followed and carried out progressively.

An effective university librarian need to have a combination of the above qualities in order to judiciously utilize all the resources such as finance, staff, and materials to meet the institution's objectives of teaching, learning and research etc.

Imoke (2014) observe that there are many opinions on what a leader should be and do, and different lists of core competences that leaders should possess in order to adequately fulfil such a role. The author however, argue that anyone who facilitate change toward some desired outcome is displaying leadership qualities. After all, Turnbull (2008) observe that leadership entails painting a vision of where you want to go, establishing priorities for getting there, building the right team, aligning the organization (library), and holding people accountable for results. These qualities of institutional librarians could be measured by comparing the achievements of one librarian and the other. That is to say that if the current librarian is more innovative by introducing new ideas and policies that lead to better attainment of institutional objectives, he could be judged to be a better leader.

One of the necessary qualities of a successful university librarian is the ability to forge a reliable and dependable interpersonal relationship between himself and the staff and among the staff themselves. Cebula, Craig, Eggers, Fajardo, Gray and Lantz (2012) corroborate this view when the authors, in a research which focused on how leaders mobilize others to create extra ordinary results, found out that the how-to of leadership- the strategies, tactics, skills and practices- are insignificant unless leaders understand the value of the social capital built by investing in relationships. The authors also cited Kouzes and Posner as having stated that followers want their leaders to be honest, forward looking, competent and inspiring. In a similar dimension, Bennis and Goldsmith in Cebula et al. (2012) identified the characteristics that constituents want from their leaders to include purpose, meaning, trust, action, and results.

Abubakar (2013) studied factors that motivate employees perform to expectations in universities and discovered that for efficient performance, the employer must manage or harmonise employee objectives and channel them to productive use through motivation. It could be observed however, that the harmonization and channelling of employee objectives to production use could only be achieved where the leadership of various sections or units of the organization is very effective by serving as an example for others to follow. That is, the attributes of leaders in any organization determines to a great extent the actual performance of staff or employees working under them. Consequently, if the leader lacks sense of direction and under rate the role of motivation in achieving desired goals, the followers will follow suit, leading to wastages of all resources put in place by the organization. In Library

practices, this situation may lead to failure of providing necessary information resources and services that best meet with the information needs of the academic community, failure of students at examinations and non-conformance with the requirements of accreditation.

In contributing to the various ways through which a university librarian could motivate the staff to achieve desired goals, Ogunrombi and Elogie (2009) observe that unless conducive working conditions are developed that will motivate library employees to attain their maximum potentials, the attainment of the goals for which the university was established will be a mirage. The authors went further to argue that the university librarian must have a good grasp in the management of human resources and a proper understanding of the psychological functioning of the individual. This, according to the authors will lead to the achievement of the goals of the library and self-actualization of the employees. Motivational qualities are therefore, what the university librarians need to give of their best. Motivation according to Luthans in Ogunrombi and Elogie (2009) is a process that raises, energizes, directs and sustain behaviour and performance, adding that it stimulates people to action to achieve the desired tasks.

Okpaleke and Uwaifo (2012) carried out a study on the relationship between librarians' background and adopted leadership styles in selected Federal University Libraries in Nigeria. The objectives of their study were to determine the leadership style of librarians, the predominant style amongst them, and the influence of their background on their styles. The findings of their study showed that librarians adopted autocratic, participative and delegative styles in their administration, with the participative style being the most adopted.

The findings from the above study show that librarians, despite the fact that they used participative style most often, used a mixture of styles to achieve desired objectives since the choice or dependence on one style may lead to failure. It could therefore, be argued that the success of librarians in the attainment of set objectives at all times depends to a great deal on the performance and commitment of their subordinates towards the task of achieving the overall objectives for which they were all employed and the traits and behaviour of the head librarian towards them. Consequently, if the subordinates are disenchanted or less committed, no leadership style is enough to achieve desired goals. Rather, the personal qualities inherent in a leader rather than the style of m

anagement could enhance productivity.

Research Method

The descriptive survey research method was used for this study. Nworgu (2006) described descriptive survey research method as that which aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The method was relevant to this study because it intended to collect data on and describe the leadership qualities inherent in university librarians in Niger state from the library staff. The population of the study was 81 comprising 52 and 29 academic librarians and para-professional library staff from Federal University of Technology, Minna and Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai respectively. This category of staff was chosen for the study because they obtain qualifications and experiences which put them in a better position to judge the leadership qualities of their University Librarians. Questionnaire was drafted and administered to elicit response from the population covered by the study using one trained research assistant for each library. In addition to that, interview was conducted with some senior professionals of the libraries. Data gathered were analysed using descriptive statistical analysis involving frequency of occurrence and percentages.

Data Presentation and Discussion

Copies of Questionnaire Administered	Copies of Questionnaire Returned	Percentage (%)
81	76	94

Table 1: Response Rate

Table 1 shows that 81 copies of questionnaire were administered while 76, representing 94% were retrieved and found usable.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	76	100
No	0	0
TOTAL	76	100

Table 2: If the universities have at one time or the other failed or granted partial accreditation of some courses as a result of inadequacies from the library.

Table 2 reveals that all, 76 (100%) of the respondents agreed that certain courses have at one time or the other failed or granted partial accreditation as a result of inadequacies from their libraries.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	54	71
No	22	29
TOTAL	76	100

Table 3: If inadequacies of the libraries could be attributed to lack of leadership qualities of the University Librarians

Table 3 shows that majority, 54 (71%) of the respondents agreed that the inadequacies of the libraries in meeting with the accreditation requirement of certain courses could be attributed to the lack of leadership qualities of their respective University Librarians while only 22 (29%) of them did not agree.

S/N	Qualities	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
1	Ambitious	0	0
2	Broadminded	45	59
3	Caring	70	92
4	Commitment	76	100
5	Competent	76	100
6	Confident	76	100
7	Consistent	76	100
8	Cooperative	72	95
9	Courageous	76	100
10	Creative	76	100
11	Delegative	76	100
12	Dependable	76	100
13	Determined	76	100
14	Enthusiastic	65	86
15	Ethical	69	91
16	Evaluative	71	93
17	Fair minded	69	91
18	Flexible	25	33
19	Forward looking	58	76
20	Highly educated	76	100
21	Honesty	76	100

22	Imaginative	67	88
23	Initiative	73	96
24	Inspirational	73	96
25	Intelligent	76	100
26	Interested in feedback	71	93
27	Open minded	70	92
28	Optimistic	73	96
29	Organised	76	100
30	Positive attitude	69	91
31	Proactive	76	100
32	Purpose driven	76	100
33	Resourceful	76	100
34	Respectful	68	90
35	Result oriented	76	100
36	Social	73	96
37	Supportive	69	91
38	Trust worthy	76	100
39	Upright	65	86
40	Visionary	76	100

Table 4: Qualities expected of University Librarians to effectively manage available resources to attain the objectives of their libraries in the 21st century

Table 4 reveals that all, 76 (100%) of the respondents expected University Librarians to be committed, competent, confident, consistent, courageous, creative, delegative, dependable, determined, highly educated, intelligent, organized, proactive, purpose driven, resourceful, result oriented, trustworthy and visionary. These qualities were closely followed by 73 (96%) of the respondents who argued in favour of initiative, inspirational, optimistic, and social among others. At the bottom of the expectations were that their librarians should be too flexible and ambitious as rated by 25 (33%) and 0 (0%) of the respondents respectively.

Discussion of Results

The findings in Table 2 revealed that all the respondents agreed that their universities have at one time or the other, failed and or been granted partial accreditation of some courses as a result of inadequacies from the libraries. This position corresponds with the result of interview conducted with some senior professionals of the two libraries. They were categorical when they opined that between 2004 and 2014 the stringent guidelines coupled with the lackadaisical attitude from TETFund and University Librarians respectively, the financial support from TETFund could not be accessed to acquire current, relevant and adequate information resources. That according to them left their libraries with mostly outdated information resources which could not meet the National Universities Commission (N.U.C.) accreditation teams' requirement for some courses offered by the universities.

In Table 3, majority of the respondents, 54 (71%) agreed that lack of leadership qualities of their university librarians could be attributed to the reasons why their libraries could not meet up with the accreditation requirements of the N.U.C. on some courses. This argument was also supported by the result of the interview conducted with some senior professionals who argued that their librarians were not consulting with them on matters that affect library development. They observed that meetings which are supposed to be ideal fora for sharing ideas and taking good decisions were not organized at all. Consequently, every staff was on his own. This may be as a result of management style adopted by the University Librarians. Okpaleke and Uwaifor (2012) in this respect, discovered that librarians adopted

The Leadership Qualities of University Librarians in Nigeria in the 21st Century

autocratic, participative and delegative styles of management in their libraries. However, the authors argued that though participative style was most often adopted, there is the need to combine the three since the choice or dependence on one style may lead to failure in achieving desired objectives. From the findings of this study, these researchers have however, found out in Table 4 that personal leadership qualities of librarians are what they need to effectively manage human and material resources of their libraries to achieve expected objectives.

Table 4 is a list of qualities expected of University Librarians in the 21st century, though not exhaustive, from which the respondents were to make their choices. On top of the choices were 76 (100%) of the respondents who expected their Librarian to be committed, competent, confident, consistent, delegative and highly educated among others. These options corroborate those listed in the website on leadership (www.leadership.uoregon.edu/resources/exercises-tips/skills/leadership-characteristics). Ogunrombi and Elogie (2009) also supported this finding while contributing to the various ways university librarians could motivate staff to achieve desired goals. The authors observed that the University Librarian must have a good grasp in the management of human resources and proper understanding of the psychological functioning of the individual. It is the hope that if the librarians possess qualities that were highly rated, it could serve as an impetus for the attainment of the objectives for which the university libraries and the parent institutions were initially established.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was concluded that the failure of the university libraries to meet accreditation requirement of the National University Commission (N.U.C.) is sine qua non to failing to meet the aims and objectives for which the libraries were established. The injection of a proactive, social and energetic librarians becomes imperative to tackle the challenges faced by libraries in a bid to move forward in the 21st century.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made to solve the problem of leadership qualities in academic libraries in the 21st century:

1. Aspiring university librarians should possess personal qualities that could enhance their leadership capability of university libraries.
2. University librarians must be trained and retrained on various aspects of university library and staff management for effect service delivery.
3. The University librarians should be proactive in discharging their responsibilities by carrying along their professional colleagues and other staff in order to achieve the objectives of their libraries.

References

- Abioye, D. (2014). Leadership: A biblical perspective on leadership. In T. Abioye, C. Awonuga and A. Amuwo (Eds.). *Leadership and innovation in Africa's development paradigm*. Ota: Covenant University Press.
- Abubakar, U. N. (2013). Motivational factors affecting job performance of academic libraries in university libraries, Niger state, Nigeria. *Journal of Information Resource Management (JIRM)*, 3(2), 36-42.
- Cebula, N. C. E., Eggers, J., Fajardo, M. D., Gray, J., & Lantz, T. (2012). *Achieving performance excellence: The influence of leadership on organizational performance*. Washington: Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections. Retrieved from www.nic.gov on 26th November, 2014.
- Fatokun, J. O., Salaam, M. O. & Ajegbomogun, F.O. (2010). The influence of leadership style on the performance of subordinates in Nigerian libraries. *Library philosophy and practice*. Retrieved from <http://unllib.unl.edu/LPP/fatokun-salaam-ajegbomogun.htm> on 3rd November, 2014.
- Imoke, L. (2014). The innovative leader as a cultural agent of change. In T. Abioye, C. Awonuga and A. Amuwo (Eds.). *Leadership and innovation in Africa's development paradigm*. Ota: Covenant University Press.
- Nworgu, B. G. (2006). *Educational research: Basic issues and methodology*. Nsukka: University Trust Publishers.
- Ogunrombi, S. A. & Elogie, T. A. (2009). Staff motivation and productivity in John Harris Library, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. *Library and information management forum: Journal of Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex*, 11(1 and 2), 33-41.
- Okpaleke, J. S. & Uwaifo, S. O. (2012). Relationship between librarians' background and adopted leadership styles in selected federal university libraries in Nigeria. *Middlebelt journal of library and information science*, 10(1), 224-239.
- Popa, B. M. (2012). The relationship between leadership effectiveness and organizational performance. *Journal of defence resource management (JoDRM)*. Issue 01/2012 pages 123-127, on www.cceol.com
- Turnbull, S. (2008). The 21st century leader. *Leadership trust*. Available at leadership.org.uk. Accessed on 5th July, 2015