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August 2015

Leadership Styles and Job Productivity of University Library Staff: Interrogating the Nexus

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SEGUN-ADENIRAN, CHIDI DEBORAH, "Leadership Styles and Job Productivity of University Library Staff: Interrogating the Nexus" (2015). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. Paper 1269.

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Introduction

Libraries as hubs of information and knowledge need to possess a high degree of effectiveness and efficiency in the process of carrying out their services which centres on meeting the diverse information needs of library users. It is as a result of the expected level of effectiveness and efficiency that the issue of leadership in libraries cannot be downplayed. Leadership simply involves influencing or affecting a group of people to take collective action in a particular direction in order to achieve an organizational goal. Verber (2011) opined that leadership could be viewed as community mobilization, initiation and motivation of employees and involvement in their development. Hulbert (1998) also defined leadership as ‘the ability to guide or move people in a particular direction and is a quality that must be able to induce, persuade and motivate others to identify with the goals of an institution. The University Library is an organised formal institution and therefore has a laid down leadership pattern usually headed by the University librarian.

Every organisation or institution is established with laid down objectives which are expected to be attained and human beings are pivotal to the achievement of these set objectives. We can therefore assert that humans are highly instrumental in any organization (Shafie, Baghersalimi and Barghi, 2013). They can be referred to as the fuel used for driving the attainment of these objectives. The set objectives of any organisation or institution cannot be achieved without the calculated and effective input of human beings; hence we can say there is a positive relationship between the effective human factor available in an organisation and the level of achievement of the set objectives of that organization.

Like any tool or machinery, humans need to be treated properly in order to get the best output from them it is therefore paramount that employers and managers take without levity the issues of employee satisfaction in order to heighten the level of output and general performance. To get maximum result, organisations or institutions need to have a leader or manager that can effectively discharge his duties through the instrumentation of apt leadership styles. It is important to note that there are various kinds of leadership styles that can be employed in an organisation and each leadership style has its own peculiar advantage and disadvantage (Johnson, 2015). The underlining factor is that whatever style being used should be appropriate to positively influence the behaviour of the followers in a way to enhance the achievement of the objective of the organization.

Statement of Problem

The library as an organised institution has the ultimate objective of meeting the information needs of its clientele and that must be met through the instrumentation of human beings hence, human beings can unequivocally be referred to as the drivers of any organization (Shafie, Baghersalimi and Barghi, 2013). Similarly, Akinyemi and Ifijeh (2012) reiterated that for libraries to achieve their objectives, they require the diligent inputs of human resources made up of individuals occupying various cadres. These human resources in turn need to be properly managed by competent individuals who make use of the instrumentality of good leadership styles.

Hence the concern of this study is to ascertain through literature the relationship between leadership styles and job productivity of librarians.

Issues in Leadership Styles and Libraries

According to Ogbah (2013), leadership can be defined as the manner in which the leader executes and motivates his subordinates towards accomplishing the organizational goal. Similarly, Rarick (1987) explained leadership as ‘the ability to convince and persuade others to act on the basis of greater knowledge or competence, reasoned argument and fairness’. Leadership therefore can be explained as the skill or ability to steer people positively or negatively towards to actualization or achievement of a set of goals and objectives. In order to achieve this, a leader usually takes whatever step and actions necessary and is usually prepared to take responsibility for the product of his action either positive or negative.

The level of effectiveness of a leader can be measured by the value of output produced and the value of output is easily measured by the kind of leadership style being employed by that leader, hence Obiwuru et al. (2011) noted that ‘leadership styles are predictors to leadership effectiveness whereby leadership style in an organization is one of the factors that play significant role in enhancing or retarding the interest and commitment of the individuals in the organization’. There are a number of leadership styles that are being practiced in different organisations today but this study will be limited to just five leadership styles and they include:

- Autocratic leadership style
- Democratic leadership style
- Transactional leadership style

- Transformational leadership style and
- Laissez-affaire leadership style

Autocratic Leadership styles are usually practiced by authoritative leaders. This kind of leadership style is highly non-participative, that is little or no input or feedback is required from other members of the organisation. Nayab (2011) noted that the autocratic leadership style believes that employees are lazy and will not be productive without strict supervision; this is based on Mc Gregor's Theory X which perceives employees as lazy and will be willingly to avoid work at all cost. This is a direct opposite of the McGregor's Theory Y which sees employees as proactive and will work effectively under little supervision. In the words of Cherry (2015), an autocratic leader is one who practices the leadership style that is based on individual control over every decision and contributions from group members.

The democratic leadership style is a direct opposite of the autocratic leadership style; it allows for contributions and inputs from employees in the organisation thereby allowing for creativity and innovation in their routine operations (Johnson, 2015). This kind of leadership style gives employees a high sense of belonging thereby getting the best inputs from them. This form of leadership style usually brings about higher level of productivity simply because the employee participation level in decision making processes is considerably high; hence it is also referred to as participative leadership style (Cherry, 2015). It is imperative to note here that despite the level of productivity attained when this leadership style is employed, it however makes the process of decision making slower because quite a number of inputs from various fellows in the organisation are considered. There could be some amendments to this style especially when a decision needs to be taken promptly.

Transactional leadership style usually gives the employees or subordinates rewards or punishments for tasks carried out. The word 'transaction' implies that rewards are given for actions taken (either positive or negative). That is, when a productive action is taken resulting in the inability to meet set goals, the individual is rewarded negatively; but when an unproductive action is taken, the individual is accorded due punishments by the leaders. Similarly Petersen (2012) reiterated that the transactional leadership style 'professes that people are motivated by rewards and punishments.'

Transformational leadership style was developed by Downton and Burns in 1973 and 1978 respectively (Chen, 2004). He noted that this form of leadership style differs from the transactional that operates a reward system among his employees; the transformational

leaders set an example for their followers and ensure dramatic changes within the organisation. The leader influences the employees through motivation and creating demanding but yet challenging opportunities for individuals in the organisation to add their quality input in order to achieve set objectives. This kind of leadership clearly outlines goals and objectives to be achieved and positively drives subordinates to its achievement. Cherry (2015) quoting Bernard Bass however outlined four components of transformational leadership namely:

- Individualized stimulation
- Individualized consideration
- Inspirational motivation and
- Idealized influence

Laissez-faire leadership style is a form of leadership where there is little or no control directed to subordinates from their superiors. Laissez-faire is gotten from the French word which means 'let it be' (National Library Board, 2010). This kind of leadership can be practiced effectively in libraries where a reasonably high level of productivity is shown by the library staff. It is a leadership style apt for individuals that can be productive with little or no supervision.

Various leadership styles, when implemented could affect the behaviour and even the output level in any organisation. The University Library as a formal organisation is made up of the management team and staff; it also has various objectives and policies underlining its establishment and operations; the achievement of these objectives is a function of various factors including the leadership style being implemented. From the study carried out by (Fatokun, Salaam and Ajegbomogun, 2010) it was revealed that the democratic and transformational leadership styles which involves an open and regular means of communication between the leaders and their subordinates bring about better output and higher productivity; the objectives of the university library are easily driven by the library staff when the leaders and management team members make use of the democratic and transformational leadership styles. Similarly Fatokun, Salaam and Ajegbomogun (2010)citing Jaiyeoba (2001), noted that employees in the library will make noticeable contributions to the attainment of corporate goals when the leader communicates with the staff regularly on personal and not just official issues. It is however important to note that the democratic and transformational leadership styles may be suitable for libraries where the subordinates have

proved to be responsible enough to work under less strict supervision; but if otherwise is the case, the autocratic leadership style maybe implemented by the leader to achieve results. Despite all these, it is however important that the university library has the right kind of leaders to bring about productivity, for the library to remain a value adding entity. Germano (2010) noted that ‘the library’s leadership must manage change (especially in this era of digitization), develop employees’ inherent skills and provoke customer commitment’.

The nature of the institution could also be a determining factor of the kind of leadership style to be employed in order to heighten productivity. Employees in public owned university libraries tend to be less productive when the autocratic leadership style is not employed by the leaders (Awan, Mahmood and Idrees, 2014); this could be attributed to the fact that the workload may not be as demanding as libraries that are privately owned (Goodrich, 2008; Sulaiman and Akinsanya, 2011). Besides the degree of workload as a factor for determining the level of productivity, the expectations and attitude of the management team in such publicly owned libraries may be quite low, that is, the leaders may not demand so much result from their employees unlike in privately owned libraries where the entrepreneur want to get the best value for remunerations paid his staff (Oghenetega, Ejedafiru and Rabi, 2014).

Awan, Mahmood and Idrees (2014) similarly noted in their study that ‘in some public sector university libraries where the laissez-fairre leadership existed, the level of achievements recorded in such institutions was quite low.

Job Productivity and Libraries: The Determinant Factors

The fact that the university library is an organised institution set up with outlined objectives that needs to be achieved cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore the responsibility of the employees and management team in the library to see to the successful attainment of these objectives. It is in the same vein that Ugah (2008) opined that it is the responsibility of the library management to discover the inherent potentials in each library staff and apply all needed strategy to ensure these strategies are harnessed; this is the only way productivity will be achieved in the library.

Job productivity as defined by the Business Terms Glossary (2014) refers to the measured output of an employee within a specified period of time. Similarly job productivity can be explained as ‘the ratio between output and total factors required to achieve it (Owizy, 2015). From these definitions, it is clear that efficiency and effectiveness are the core of

productivity of any organisation, including libraries. Citing Babalola and Nwalo (2013) libraries are 'traditionally regarded as non-profit and service oriented organisations but yet the issue of productivity cannot be ignored in libraries.' Taking a critical look at the five laws of Ranganathan:

1. Books are for use.
2. Every reader his book.
3. Every book its reader.
4. Save the time of the reader.
5. The library is a growing organism.

These laws are vividly hinged on the theme productivity which in this case is captured by the high level of satisfaction derived from library clientele; this simply explains the whole essence of the establishment of libraries.

Existing literature both in past and recent times have revealed that a number of factors affect the productivity of employees in any organisation (libraries inclusive) and some of these factors include: motivation, training and retraining, condition of working infrastructure, working environment, qualifications, work experience, job security, management/leadership styles, etc (Agyen-Gyasi, 2013; James, 2011; Chughati and Perveen, 2013). However Haenisch (2012) reiterated that leadership style is obviously the single most influential factor affecting productivity in the 21st century workplace, this is because the leaders in any organisation are decked with the responsibility of driving the attainment of set objectives based on their methods of operation, reward systems, communication methods and policy formulation.

Leadership Styles and Job Productivity of Librarians: Any Role?

Desirable level of productivity in libraries cannot be achieved without proper leadership styles established and operated. Root (2015) opined that 'the way in which a leader makes decisions, delegates responsibility and interacts with subordinates could either affect the organisation positively or negatively'. The leader who intends to see a high level of productivity among his subordinate should learn to show good example. He leads by examples thereby setting a stable platform of hard work for his subordinates. This stable platform serves as a spring board for the attainment of a high level of effectiveness and productivity from his subordinates in the library. He doesn't necessarily achieve productivity

by lording it over his subordinates; he leads them through the productivity lane, painting the picture to his subordinates through the proper use of chosen leadership styles or a combination of leadership styles that hard and smart work is the core of productivity in the library.

The attitude of any leader towards the members of his team is very important in the achievement of high level of productivity. The leadership style being implemented in a library or any organisation by the leaders is displayed in the character of the leader; that is, overtime the leadership style rubs off on the attitude of the leader towards his subordinates. It is also pertinent to note that, the act of seeing members of the workforce in the university library as a team will without doubt lead to improvements in the productivity level of staff of the library (Azhar, 2013), this is because no gaps or loop holes will be allowed, everyone will work visibly in a synergy to ensure high level clientele satisfaction which in the library context is indeed productivity.

Therefore the appropriate leadership style must be practiced by leaders in the university libraries in order to achieve productivity. It is also important to note that a combination of styles could be used depending on the subordinate or subordinates in question and the situation at hand. There are times when the application of transactional leadership style will be apt in a library and there are also situations when it will not be proper; the responsibility therefore lies in the hand of the university librarian or any member of the management team in the library to use his/her discretion in such situation.

The adoption of right leadership styles in the management of library activities and operations could also encourage innovation and creativity. In the present information and communication age, the proper use of the transformational and democratic leadership skills will foster creativity and innovation among librarians, library assistants and other library staff. This is because there is ample room for library staff to share their views and participate in decision making process. This in the long run heightens productivity because a worker who knows that he has a platform to be heard by his leaders or employers will be motivated to put in his/her best into responsibilities assigned. The University Librarian encourages creativity and the birthing of new ideas in the library operations by carefully weighing the various opinions, inputs and suggestions from staff in the library, he/she doesn't see himself as having a monopoly of knowledge.

On the other hand, the use of transactional leadership styles by library leaders could also enhance productivity through capacity building programmes. The reward for positive performance could be opportunity for capacity building through further studies, trainings and

re-training, attending conferences, etc. This form of reward system if applied by the leaders in the library will push library staff towards high level of productivity; the staff could even go beyond expected limits in order to ensure that set goals and assigned responsibilities are achieved and if possible surpassed. The reward system imbedded in the transactional leadership style also encourages healthy competition among staff of the library.

Leadership styles employed undeniably affects the productivity in any organisation including the library because the leaders in libraries are equipped with the authority to make critical decisions that will keep the organisation running properly or corrupt the activities of the organisation. It is in this light that the National Library Board (2010) unequivocally highlighted some steps that should be considered in order to achieve high productivity level, they are:

- Employee ownership and accountability: this simply involves the leader in the university library clearing stating out responsibilities of different individuals thereby making them have a proper sense of responsibility, accountability and ownership. When the individuals assigned these clear responsibilities fall short of the expectation of the leaders, they take the blame for their actions. By doing this, the leader knows which member(s) to hold responsible for the achievement or otherwise of a particular task.
- Goals and Project definition: the leader in the university library does not work on the assumption that all members of his team are aware of the expected goal and project at hand. He clearly paints these pictures to them and this allows them to work towards its achievement. With the employment of appropriate leadership style, there should be regular briefing and debriefing, existence of proper communication channels and feedback fora where the present state of projects or goals are made known to team members. When this is effectively done, the gaps in the library will be drastically reduced and tasks cheaply achieved.
- Management of Employee satisfaction: the way a leader manages his workforce goes a long way to affect productivity. The leaders should leave the level of being mere leaders to inspiring leaders who will drive the workforce towards the achievement of the library's goal by whatever means possible. The leader needs to be firm but yet should not downplay on activities like public recognition and appreciation of team member(s) for the successful completion of set goals; this will go a long way in improving the morale of employee(s) and also serve as a means of spurring other individuals to higher levels of productivity in future.

- **Communication:** the role of communication in the practice of any leadership style by leaders in university libraries cannot be over flogged. Better communication methods give the employees a sense of belonging and acceptance and these enhance hard work which leads to productivity. Though, open method of communication can be employed it doesn't mean the leader will not be firm and frank towards his subordinates. When feedbacks are necessary from subordinates, they should be received and also punishments and rewards should also be properly communicated as the case may be.
- **Recognition and Incentives:** the library is not established for profit making in monetary terms but the individuals driving the goals of the library need to be properly motivated through simple incentives as this will push them to further positive actions geared towards increasing productivity. Simple actions or gestures like verbal appreciations from leaders, giving out awards like 'staff of the month', public appreciation among colleagues, etc.; as simple as it may look will set a stage for healthy competition among employees in the library. They will realise that everyone will be judged and rewarded according to their actions, productivity, timeline of accomplishment and level of discipline.

Perceived Challenges of Leadership Styles and Job Productivity

From available literature, it is evident that no one leadership style is suitable because human beings are different and possess different characters. This could be a challenge especially in a situation where the university librarian is used to one style of leadership. The leadership style used for employee A on a specific day may not be effective if used on that same employee 'A' another day depending on lot of present circumstance or situation; for instance, the emotional state of mind of that employee could change from time to time. In the same vein, the leadership style used for employee 'A' may not be suitable for employee B; this is because human beings have different personalities and characters.

It is a fact that job productivity could be affected by the kind of leadership style employed by the University Librarian, but it is important to note that leadership style is not the only determinant of productivity in a university library. It could therefore be a major setback if consideration is given to only leadership style as a fuel to high productivity level in the library.

Conclusion

Without doubt, leadership and leadership styles employed affects productivity and general performance of librarians, library assistants and library staff (National Library Board, 2010). The leader(s) in the library besides the responsibility of coordinating should ensure that objectives are smoothly and speedily achieved through the employment of proper leadership styles or a combination of leadership styles as the situation demands. The University Librarian should use his inherent and acquired leadership skills to create an environment that will sell the vision and mission of the library to the employees and thereby bring out the best in them which will without doubt lead to productivity.

Recommendations

1. The leadership style(s) being used by the university librarian should be a function of the values and philosophies of the institution; the nature of the subordinates and the present situation at hand could also affect the leadership style employed. Therefore there should be balance and discretion in the application of varying leadership styles.
2. The University Librarians should adopt leadership style(s) that will give the library staff a high sense of responsibility, leading to a high level of productivity, competitiveness and effectiveness. The management team in the library should create a favourable work environment that will serve as a platform for library staff to put in their best, be creative and innovative.
3. There should be establishment of better communication channels in the university library, though this should be done with discretion in order to avoid misuse of such communication channels.
4. The Library Management should recognise good feats and accomplishments of library staff in the process of carrying out their responsibilities. Though they are paid to carry out these responsibilities, recognition of outstanding efforts boosts the morale of staff and gears them towards greater feats.