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Leadership and Innovative Practices in Nigerian Academic Libraries

Adetola Akanbiemu

adetola22@gmail.com

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Adetola A. AKANBIEMU
Department of Information Resources Management
Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria
E-mail: adetola22@gmail.com, adetola22@yahoo.com
Phone: 08066632727

Abstract

The paper discusses the importance of leadership on innovative practices in academic libraries in Nigeria. Academic libraries are expected to provide services in all forms, they provide reference services, technical, readers' services and so on, and also providing information resources in all kinds of format .Being a routine-like organization, users will desire new methods and expect creativity. Without creativity, turnout to the library may be less. Hence, good and innovative library leadership is important to keep its relevance to the university. It is therefore crucial for academic libraries to have effective leadership that will foster creativity and innovative practices. This paper therefore stated relevant leadership traits and skills that will foster innovation and suggested innovative practices that may be adopted in academic libraries in Nigeria.

**Keywords: leadership, innovation, innovative practices, academic libraries, Nigeria.
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Introduction

Leadership can be found in any system, organization, institution. With a library system, it has become important because a library system is the heart of any learning institution and here decisions are made for both the users and the librarians. Leadership is an essential part of academic libraries especially in Nigeria. Academic libraries consist of libraries in universities, polytechnic and colleges of education and whose users are students and researchers. They have roles that are been impacted in the lives of users due to advancement in technology and changing needs of the users. Viewing academic libraries – as a collection, which is probably the most common way of viewing libraries, a space which also is a little trickier because wide accessibility to information has reduced the value of locations, as a function that places responsibility on how information can meet users' needs and a service which perhaps is most critical and this is where the importance of academic libraries is evident.

Amidst all these, academic libraries have not changed their method of service in a more creative and innovative way. Some of these academic libraries still use card catalogue when information resources presently are being catalogued using RDA and MARC 21 rules, their buildings are not conducive enough and users still find it difficult to access all

information especially electronically. All those views gives us a clearer understanding of how academic libraries must change their approach to leadership and adapt to evolving and innovative needs to serve users most effectively (Boopsie Inc., n. d.). Having all these in mind, it has become paramount for such libraries to have good and effective leadership which will contribute to them achieving dynamic, achievable and purposeful innovative ideas and results.

The objective of this paper is to look at how leadership affects innovation in academic libraries and possible innovative practices that can be adopted .For this reason, this paper will explain concept of leadership, its attribute and why it's essential in Nigerian academic libraries.it will also talk about its peculiarity to innovation and further describe innovation, its dimension, and how it can be successfully integrated into the academic library system which involves having innovative leadership and involving the users, some suggested innovative ideas that can be adopted will also be discussed and conclusion and recommendation.

Concept of Leadership

Leadership is a term that has been defined by quite a number of people, among lots of definition, Sharma & Jain (2013) defined leadership as "a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent"(p.310). From the above definition, it could then be said that a leader must be able to influence and direct with a vision of accomplishing the organisation's goals and objective. Yukl (2013) also gives compilations of leadership definition. Leadership is …

1. "The behaviour of an individual … directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal" (Hemphill & Coons, 1957, p. 7)

2. "The influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization" (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 528)

3. Leadership is … "exercised when persons … mobilize … institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers" (Burns, 1978, p.18)

4. "The process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement" (Rauch & Behling, 1984, p.46)

5. "A process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose" (Jacobs & Jaques, 1990, p. 281)

6. "The ability to step outside the culture … to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive" (Schein, 1992, p. 2)

7. "the process of making sense of what people are doing together so that people will understand and be committed" (Drath & Palus, 1994, p. 4)

8. "About articulating visions embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished" (Richards & Engle, 198, p. 206)

9. "The ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization…" (House et al., 1999, p.184)

From the above definitions, attributes of a leader can then be summarised as the ability to influence people to work together for a common cause, ability to giving purpose (meaningful direction) or visionary and the ability to innovate by seizing opportunities and accomplishing them. There are a number of different approaches, styles to leadership which are also based on different assumptions and belief. The style used will be based on their belief system, preferences and they are: Charismatic Leadership, participative leadership, situational leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, the quiet leader and servant leadership (Changing Mind, 2016)

Hauschildt and Kirchmann (2001) opined that innovation presents leadership as a role to be performed by both the leader and the employees. He further stated leadership roles as being

1. An Inventor: the leader promotes the technological know-how that is translated into innovative products and services.

2. A Champion: the leader promotes the organizational adoption of innovations.

3. An Entrepreneur: the leader initiates, drives and controls the innovation strategies and processes in the organization.

4. A Gatekeeper: the leader gathers and processes information about changes in the organization and its environment.

5. A Sponsor: the leader promotes innovation with his/her hierarchical position.

More specifically, Nadler and Tushman (1990) explained that innovative leadership has some styles they possess, styles like being Charismatic in which the leader relays an innovation vision, encourages, energizes others to innovate, and accelerates the innovation processes, he further explained that the innovative leader is instrumental in his style by structuring and controlling innovation processes. Waters (2000) added by saying that an innovative leader is Strategic in which he uses hierarchical power in favour of organization by empowering others

to innovate and cooperates with them to innovate and finally showing them how to become innovation leaders in the organization themselves.

Leadership in Nigerian Academic Libraries

Leadership is becoming very important for managers and administrators of academic libraries in Nigeria. The effectiveness of leadership is also emphasized for changes to take place in libraries. Weiner (2003) emphasized that leadership affects a library's effectiveness, its functions in the institution and how it can adapt to new roles, functions and creations or characteristics that should be found in the person.

Nigerian academic libraries have been structured to be formalised and routine-like in its information acquisition, management, organisation, dissemination and retrieval functions, as such, its leadership has followed in that trend likewise the followers. What then makes a good library leadership, a leadership that will bring positive change, position the library, they are the same attributes that makes a good and effective leader and they have been listed above.

James Neal (2005) speaks from extensive practical experience on the challenges and complexities of librarian leadership. He said leadership is best described in the context of outcomes rather than inputs, in the sense that leadership is evidenced by the ability of an individual to inspire an organization and its people to achieve its objectives, and to have an impact on its community. . . . A leader consults with those who work within an organization and those it serves to define a direction and agenda. A leader cheerleads in the sense of being responsible for the culture and vitality of the organization. A leader has responsibility to represent the organization effectively in a whole range of external venues. . . . Also, a leader is an individual who can attract innovative people and provide the work environment for those individuals to thrive and grow individually and collaboratively to get things done.

Today's organizations need effective librarians who understand the complexities of the rapidly changing global environment of the library. If the task is highly structured and the librarian has good relationship with colleagues and patrons, effectiveness will be high on the part of the subordinates. In the course of study, a surprisingly small amount, however, has been written about leadership and management in academic libraries, particularly in Nigeria.

Concept of Innovation

As much as leadership has a lot of definitions, so innovation has too, Leadership was discussed as being in existence for a long while, innovation on the other hand is a hot topic

for organisations to be at advantaged or competitive edge. "All innovation begins with creative ideas…we define innovation as the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organisation. In this view, creativity by individuals and teams as a starting point for innovation; the first is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the second". (Amabile et. al, 1996). Luecke and Katz (2003) also defined innovation as "the introduction of a new thing or method. They further defined it as "the embodiment, combination or synthesis of knowledge in original, relevant, valued new products, processes or services". From both definitions, it could be seen that the basis for innovation is creativity and originality and for innovation to occur, there has be creative ideas and the ability to convert such ideas into action and make a change. The result of this is usually a peculiar and precise change in either, products, services or methods provided in the organization.

Innovation is a term that is used not only for products but for services and a useful definition for the service sector by, "innovations in the service sector comprises [sic] new services and new ways of producing or delivering services as well as significant changes in services or their production or delivery, an innovation has been implemented if it has been introduced to the market (product innovation) or used in producing services (process innovation)" (Djellal &Gallouj, 1999, p. 220).

Some dimensions to innovation are: product innovation, service innovation, manufacturing process and business processes (De Weerd, 2007). Innovation Management Policy (2003) listed four key types of innovation in relation to academic libraries:

- **Product innovation** – the development of new products and services, or the enhancement of existing products
- **Process innovation** – improving processes within the Library; a focus on continuous improvement to facilitate organisational efficiency and effectiveness
- **Marketing innovation** – service or product related; creating new markets; finding new or different ways to advertise, promote and/or package services and products
- **Management innovation** – the way the Library is managed; organisational structures.

Goffin(2005) stated that the need for innovation are determined by technological advances, changing customers, intensified competition and the changing business environment.

Innovation in Academic Libraries

Library organisations have been structured to be formalised and routine-like in its information acquisition, management, organisation, dissemination and retrieval. Blau and Scott (1968) concurred to this statement by saying that "they are service Organizations" primarily concerned with users. This organised structure is what distinguishes libraries from other organization that are focused on products, manufacturing processes and business processes.as such, their concept of innovation is different and has to show that difference and also seek innovation based on that difference. The key difference here in academic libraries is "routine", once routine is modified, then innovation begins and this way, it is introduced into the organisation.

Due to information explosion and the dynamicity of the information environment and not forgetting how ICT has enabled a lot of library functions, it has become imperative for library leaders to be innovative. They also need to adapt to these changing needs and also trigger ideas from their employees in a viewpoint in remaining at the fore front of knowledge (Swain, 2009). He further stated that "it has become fashionable to speak of a new librarianship and of a new image of librarians. The perception may be new, and recognition gratifying, however, in reality librarians have long been pioneering users of new technologies. Contrary to popular notions, librarians have always been among the first to adapt ad use the latest information handling and communication technologies" Mäntykangas1 and Omstedt (2012) added that libraries would gain a lot in associating more with the creativity and innovation they actually can inspire in users.

At this point, it should be emphasized that libraries cannot do without innovation.in the light of this, Ramjaun (2008) gave some reasons why innovation in libraries are inevitable, and they are:

- New services should be introduced to create a better user experience
- The needs of the users that are not met are being discovered.
- Implementing new technologies to improve library services to meet user needs.
- Adapting best practices from foreign libraries and making it suit the libraries.
- Creating collaboration among libraries or between libraries and other institutions
- Explorations of the future of libraries.
- Redefining processes that encourage finding new and better ways to make library collections and facilities more useful.

For academic libraries to be effective in successful integration of innovation into its system, two things are important; involve the users and have innovative leadership.

Involve the users

Libraries have to strategize on how to do this, Georgy (2010) suggests that the web is a place to get users to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement and new services and this strategy can communicate innovations successfully to library leaders. Adewojo and Mayowa-Adebara (2016) stated that "social media is mainly used to share or convey or communicate information with a wide range of individuals through the help of internet connectivity". This means that Social media is another forum to get feedback information that can help academic libraries innovate .based on this, it can be said that Nigerian academic libraries participate in innovation but in a dimension in which it's not broadly stated.so, consciously or unconsciously some libraries are innovating. They also added that "Social media usage is very essential in academic libraries as it will help library staff keep themselves abreast of new innovations in their career and further helps to provide services that will meet the varying needs of their patrons".

Nambisan (2002) discovered three roles that users can take on in new product development: The role of the user as a resource in idea generation phases, users role as co-creators and customers as user by service testing or service support. It can be deduced that users have roles to play that should not be undermined or push aside when it comes to innovating in academic libraries.

Having Innovative Leadership

Almost all academic libraries want to be innovative, which is a good step but how many academic libraries have innovative leaders? Academic libraries need to know what it takes to produce and innovative leader. Cihak and Howland (2002) when listing the qualities of a leader listed the leader as an innovator. Summer (2012) listed the following as qualities of an innovative leader as having passion for innovation, a long-term perspective, the courage to fail and learn from failure, deep engagement with the innovators and willingness to tolerate mavericks and defend them from middle management. Similarly, Zenger and Folkman (2014) listed in descending order of importance the 10 traits if an innovative leader, they said an innovative leader must display excellent strategic vision, have a strong customer focus, create a climate of reciprocal trust, display fearless loyalty to doing what's right for the organization and customer, put their faith in a culture that magnifies upward communication, persuasive, excel at setting stretch goals, emphasize speed are candid in their communication and inspire and motivate through action.

Faerman (1993) describes the innovator role as follows: as innovators, leaders create the vision for change which defines the future direction of the organization. In this role they also help others within the organization to adapt to change. . . . Thinking creatively about opportunities, library administrators performing in the innovator role will search for new ideas and approaches to organization of the library, and will not be limited to current configuration or structures. Moreover, they will be concerned with establishing a climate in the library where new ideas and approaches are valued, where creative thinking is encouraged among all employees, and where appropriate risk taking is rewarded.

The qualities listed above can be developed or even adapted; this is where human resources come to play when recruiting and selected leaders in academic libraries.

Innovative practices for Academic Libraries in Nigeria

Innovation has become worlds accepted strategy in creating new ideas, products and services and as such academic libraries should not be left out. The role of academic libraries in providing access to information should no longer follow status quo but should be seasoned with innovative practices and methods and backed up with great innovative leadership traits. In Nigeria context, many academic libraries are yet to implement written or observed innovative practices when compared to their counterparts in developed countries. If in any case, any academic libraries have innovated, it would have been informally.

However, in order for academic libraries to innovate and encourage innovative practices, top leaders have to be involved in innovation and could also give employees ever support needed to innovate. Barsh, Capozz and Davidson (2008) suggested some practical steps to advance innovation; define the kind of innovation that drives growth and helps meet strategic objectives, add innovation to the formal agenda at regular leadership meetings and take explicit steps to foster an innovation culture based on trust among employees. They also stated that "Innovation is a big idea with a big potential" Once the steps above are put in place, implementing proposed ideas will be easier and from there, it can be bigger than proposed. National Assessment and Accreditation Council(2005) proposed some set of best practices for library and information services, amongst them that can be applied to academic libraries are listed below.

- **Compact storage of less used collection**

Every Library will have its less used collection. Over a period of time these collection will increase due to the syllabus changes, out dated contents etc. This will reduces the chances of the popular book to draw the attention of its users due to crowded less used books. Hence it

will be appropriate to separate the less used collection and shift to the compact shelving. The process of separating less used collection is done with the help of circulation data and the suggestions of Faculty and Students. These less used books are being stored in the compact storage unit. As all these books are already in the digital database, their location will be shown on dormitory storages. Once the user searches the OPAC and demand for any of these less used collections. The Library staff can find and supply the required book and replace after its use. The major problem of less used books can be reduced to zero. At the same time intellectual knowledge contained in these less used books will be retained for the reference of the future generation. User's time in retrieving the documents also is saved.

- **Library book exhibition**

The goal is to make awareness among the students on the latest books available in their subjects. A set of reputed book publishers and distributors will be invited to display the recent books in the exhibition.

- **Extended library opening hours**

To make available resources to the University faculty and researchers where the facility is not available and to give uninterrupted service ,to provide uninterrupted reading facilities to the users in a conducive atmosphere. Those who can't visit the library during the day-time can make use of the Library in the evening hours and also providing fruitful service for those who are unable to visit the library during daytime.

- **User Education (Information literacy programme)**

This practice is carried out by orientating the newly enrolled library user to the facilities and services provided by the library to raise awareness about the services, library resources and then usage in relation to preparation of assignments, term papers, project reports, etc. This practice also optimizes usage of the library and provides guidance on accessing electronic databases to faculty and scholars.

Formal training on using Internet to access databases is arranged every fortnight at the library for the benefit of faculty and scholars. Students find it useful to know about the resources available in their discipline. They know specific locations of different types of materials and the privileges the library provides them. Finally, this practice attracts more students to visit the library and use the resources**.**

- **Library Best User Award**

Data is gathered through visitor register maintained in the library. Usage data is compiled through circulation of library items. Based on the above data and the observations of the

librarian one best user award are given to the student who has made maximum use of the library. Cash/book in the form of award is given to best user from the each discipline

The goal of this practice will Increase in frequency of visits to the library and increase in the use of library reference materials.

- **User Feedback Practice thru suggestion boxes**

To maintain suggestion Box to get User feedback on various services provided to them. To evaluate the feedback forms or letters to improve library services. Streamlining or focusing the services with modifications, if any to meet the User needs most excellently.

- **Broad band Internet Centre (Internet access facility)**

To provide Internet access facilities to the users in the library for e-mail, browsing Internet, accessing e-journals, databases, institutional repository, Web OPAC and accessing other libraries etc. Entire Campus is networked with OFC connecting all the Schools, Departments and other central facilities. All the services in the library are computerized. These systems are connected to the UPS for reliable access without interruptions. Designated library staff members help the users and maintain the systems with minimum downtime.

- **Digital Repositories**

To create in-house generated publications and other information resources in digital format in a repository for wider access. University generates lot of information resources every year as internal publications apart from faculty publications, theses & dissertations regularly. These resources are presently not accessible widely. Academic publications relate to primary sources and valuable for the end user. Creation of Institutional Repositories by the Universities enable wider access 24/7 basis.

- **CD Mirror Server Facility**

To disseminate the information from magnetic sources like CDs, Floppies and DVDs. Library non-book materials are mounted on CD mirror server on regular basis and the users can access these materials through the Campus.

These CD and DVD resources are very delicate and users are not allowed to take them outside the library. These resources are copied to the CD Net Server and the connectivity to this server on the Intranet enable the users to access these resources.

- **Digitization Of Manuscripts**

To harness the knowledge embedded in the manuscripts, preservation and conservation of the cultural heritage of our Nation and enhanced digital connectivity for wider access. Use of

manuscripts has increased manifold. Users are both National and International. Several research Scholars access these materials on regular basis as primary texts.

- **Campus-Wide Local Area Network (LAN) Facility**

The goal of this idea is to network the information resources of the library with the entire academic and research activities on the campus, to evolve user friendly environment by using the Information and Communication Technology Tools, to provide quality and quick retrieval to the information sources along with the resources available in other libraries at their desktops. Library card catalogue is converted into a structured machine readable database with all the international standards. All the automated activities are stabilized and made available on the Camp-wide.

- **Electronic Surveillance System**

The goal of this practice is to create a system that can arrest pilferage of books or unauthorized issue of books. Library is kept open for more than 16 hours a day and it is proposed to open round the clock. It is necessary to create a system that can arrest pilferage of books from the library. All the books are inserted with electro-magnetic (EM) tags that are invisible and a security gate is installed with electro-magnetic field that detects unauthorized books going out from the library with a beep sound to alert the staff. Since library is open for longer hours with limited staff working in shift duties, the security gate is helping in arresting pilferage of books from the library. Since the libraries don't have frisking facilities, this system will detect pilferage and save the library collection.

Conclusion

Leadership and innovative practices in Nigerian academic libraries are interrelated, because leadership on one hand is the ability to influence others, to be visionary and to innovate, innovation on the other is the introduction of a new thing and method. Both influence library services in academic libraries. The ability for a library leader to influence, to be visionary and innovate will influence ideas from other library staff and turn such ideas into great results. Innovative practices create enhanced existing library services. Some of the listed practices here are well accepted practices that have been experimented in different library in developed environments in optimizing the use of library and information services. It has to be encouraged for wider adaptation of all higher education institutions.

The innovative practices outlined in the document should be reviewed periodically and relatively due to the changing needs of the libraries. We do hope that these practices would initiate the best innovative practices in the Nigerian academic libraries.

Recommendation

Since its people and ideas that foster innovation, the following recommendations should be noted:

1. Human resource managers have a key role to play when recruiting into libraries, they must take into cognisance, employees that have leadership traits, skills and abilities. Ammons-Stephens et al. 2009, p. 65) grouped the attributes to be considered under three major headings namely:
   - Managerial attributes, which includes managing, leading and planning;
   - Personal characteristics, which includes dealing with others, individual traits (general) and individual traits (leadership); and
   - General areas of knowledge.

   Academic libraries need to be awakened on the need for innovation in every possible means if they want to retain being the heart of the university.

2. Before looking into innovative practices, Innovation literacy which will involve training programme for academic librarians for continuous professional development, where innovation is taught at depth, apart from specific library competencies, should be practiced. Academic librarians can then have an insight on advocating a library school in their tertiary institution in the absence of none.

3. For Nigerian academic libraries to regain competitive edge, a new generation of young and talented innovative leaders need to take over roles and also be participative in innovation processes.

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