LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN RELATION TO LIBRARY LEADERS' KEY PERFORMANCE INDEX

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the concept of leadership skills for the Malaysian public university librarians at all levels for the library to retain its role as a repository of knowledge. Katz (1955) suggested a concept that an effective administration (i.e. leadership) depends on three basic personal skills: technical, human, and conceptual skills. The role of library leaders involves motivating and inspiring people to achieve the organizational objectives. With so many teams, and groups from different grades and positions in academic libraries involved in managing change, their roles as leaders are expected to increase. They have to collaboratively work, plan, implement, administer, and evaluate services and performance efficiently. In relation to Key Performance Index (KPIs) attainment, the roles of the librarians are to idealize the vision, mission, and objectives of the library. They are expected to be able to demonstrate their abilities to deliver and achieve the organizational goals. This paper also discusses the ways in developing effective leaders in relation to preparing for succession planning for future Chief Librarian.

Introduction

There are significant changes occurring in libraries. However, the library retains its role as a repository of knowledge, and a means of organizing knowledge and providing access to it. Librarians as library leaders are supreme custodians of knowledge and partners to learning and information resource, discovery and use.

Newman (1998) defines library leader as the person who takes charge and guides the performance or activity, to lead others, to inspire others, or to direct others towards a specific set of goals and objectives of the library.

Weinberg, Lewis, Sherman, Zimmerman & Zulia's (2005) study on "How can academic librarians create value?" argue that academic librarians need to redefine their roles, manage complex governance networks, employ a strategic and public value framework to deal with change, and integrate performance measure. The study addresses statement made by McGregor (2000) that, like other public and nonprofit leaders, academic librarians face multiple challenges.

However, Stoffle, Allen, Morden and Maloney (2003) further add that such challenges include tight and declining budgets, technology-savvy users, higher performance expectations from clients and overseers, complex production networks, rapid technological change, and increased competition.

Librarians are leaders at all levels. They are the ones that craft the path to idealize the vision, implement the mission, set strategic goals, and objectives to meet the Key Performance Index (KPI) of the libraries. KPI in this context measures the performance of an organization in meeting and exceeding achievement of its goals and mission. Wolf (2010) writes on "What gets measured gets done: key performance indicators" states that key performance indicators are the most critical measurement. Lin (2001) reiterates that the academic librarian is now a manager and a leader, translating expectations associated

with the scope and complexity of the task to include marketing, community outreach, consensus building, and fundraising activities.

This paper intends to address further the important issues of personal qualities and competencies of library leaders. Attributes such as trust, creativity, innovation, adaptability and imagination are part of leadership. Problem solving, efficiency, effectiveness, and continual improvement are also needed to ensure positive performance of an organization as an outcome of effective leadership.

Moreover, the Minister of Higher Education, Y.B. Dato' Sri Mohamed Khalid (2009) suggests that an important ingredient of human capital is knowledge, and he added that human capital is characterized by higher order human capacity for intellectual, emotional, and social growths. He emphasizes the interrelated characteristics of higher order human capital as follows: they are highly educated; they are highly skilled; they possess leadership qualities that enable them to succeed in any competitive situation; they are fiercely independent with high survival capabilities; creative and innovative in transforming adversities into opportunities and they characterize people with superior value orientations which enable them to thrive under all circumstances.

Y.B. Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah (2011) Honourable Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Malaysia during his speech and official opening of Asia Pacific Conference on Library & Information Education and Practice: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities, 22-24 June 2011 at Pullman Lakeside Resort, Putrajaya mentioned about ideas of authority and authority of ideas that linked to knowledge, information and wisdom. He also mentioned about the promotions of librarians on the consideration based on knowledge or cables and linkages. What are the qualities that really constitute the main consideration for promotional exercise?

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Christopher Khoo (2011), Head, Division of Information Studies, School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, addressed a Keynote speech on Education and Training for Information

Profession in the Digital Era: Issues and Challenges at the Asia-Pacific Conference on Library & Information Education and Practice: Issues, Challenges and Opportunities from 22 to 24 June 2011 at Pullman Lakeside Resort, Putrajaya. He stressed on librarians abilities in two dichotomies, either they simply are passive observers while waiting for changes to happen and reflect on them, or perhaps they envision the future by setting the direction of the organization and work towards the direction that will meet the KPIs. He reiterated that future librarians need new competencies such as adaptability, broad knowledge, leadership, entrepreneurial, and courage to invent the future.

The role of library leaders involves in motivating and inspiring people to achieve organizational objectives. With so many grades and positions, teams, and groups in academic libraries that involve in managing change, their roles as leaders are expected to increase and that they have to work together, to plan, implement, administer, and evaluate services and performance. Therefore, competent library leaders are strongly needed at all levels in order for them to perform effectively (Williams, 1998). Hence, Kamariah and Norliya (2010), state that employees are encouraged to think creatively, emulate innovative ideas and adopt unique problem solving methods for effective performance.

Careless (2000), claims that leadership skills are taken into account in the selection, promotion and performance appraisals of employees. Library leaders should be able to establish and communicate organizational vision, mission and customer-oriented strategies. The outcome of the leadership is the performance. Library leadership is the success factor in implementing key performance indicators (KPIs) for any library institutions.

ISO 11620:2008 (E) on information and documentation – library performance indicators on page 3 defines the term of effectiveness and efficiency. Effectiveness means the measure of the degree to which given objectives are achieved – an activity is effective if it maximizes the results it was established to produce. Efficiency means the measure of the utilization of resources to realize a given objective – an activity is efficient if it minimizes the use of resources, or produces better performance with the same resources.

Tanloet and Tuamsuk's (2011) findings on their study entitled "Core Competencies for Information Professional of Thai Academic Libraries in the Next Decade (A.D. 2010-2019)" found that the leadership capacity is needed for personal attribute of future information professionals.

Leadership can be learned, developed and nurtured. Potential leaders can be identified, although they may not naturally be born as leaders. Potential leaders need to be identified for succession planning. To date, very few studies on library leadership needs have been uncovered in Malaysia. This concept is yet to be explored.

In the light of the stated issues above, the purpose of this conceptual paper is to explore the key personal qualities and competencies required for Malaysian public university librarians as leaders. It is also towards developing effective leaders in relationship to preparing for succession planning to become library leaders.

Literature Review

Theories of Leadership

Bass and Stogdill's book entitled "Handbook of leadership: Theory, research & managerial applications" is the most complete and comprehensive work on leadership. However, Katz (1955, p.34) suggested that effective administration (i.e. leadership) depends on three basic personal skills: technical, human, and conceptual. Some classic article entitled "Skills of an Effective Administrator" published by Robert Katz in the Harvard Business Review in 1955, 1974 and 1986 addressed leadership as a set of developable skills. They are based on a field research in administration and his own firsthand observations of executives in the workplace.

Technical Skill is knowledge about and proficiency in a specific type of work or activity. It includes competencies in a specialized area, analytical ability, and the ability to use appropriate tools and techniques (Katz, 1955, 1974 and 1986). Technical skill is the most important skill at lower and middle levels of management and less important in upper management. Technical competencies are not important for individuals at the top level because they depend on skilled subordinates to handle technical issues of the physical operation.

Human Skill is knowledge about the ability to work with people. Human skills are "people skills" abilities that help a leader to work effectively with subordinates, peers, and superiors to accomplish the organization's goal. It creates an atmosphere of trust, employees feel comfortable, secure, participative in planning things. It means being sensitive to the needs and motivations of others and taking into account other's needs in one's decision making. Human skill is the capacity to get along with others as you go about your work. Human skills are important at all levels of management.

Conceptual Skills are the ability to work and deal with ideas and concepts. A leader with conceptual skills is comfortable talking about the ideas that shape an organization and the

intricacies involved. Conceptual skills are central to creating a vision and strategic plan for an organization. This skill is the most important one at the top management levels and is becoming less important as it moves down to lower management level.

Competencies of Library Leaders

Winston and Dunkley (2002) mention that the identification of leadership competencies is an important consideration as a part of identifying the educational and professional preparation needed by library leaders, and of clarifying those who are likely to be successful leaders.

DeLong (2009) describes that leadership is not just a matter of position or authority; it should also occur at multiple levels within an organization. Dewey (2005) elaborates on the need for leaders with the capacity for developing innovative strategies, contributing actively to building and shaping library and institutional missions, having priorities and plans, promoting excellent communication skills, instilling unbridled enthusiasm and regard for the library and its parent institution.

Walton, Burke and Oldroyd (2008) explore and investigate management function, trends, responsibilities and various aspects of the skills needed by the second tier university library managers of Australia and the UK. It was found that flatter organizational structures could mean fewer opportunities to develop the skills necessary for top leadership positions.

Forrest (2011) writes on the concept of leadership by applying Kouzes and Posner's (2007) idea on the five practices of exemplary leadership model: getting involved, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, collaborating with others and encouraging the heart. Forrest (2011) discovers that mid-level librarians who are not in formal leadership positions can contribute to making real change within their institutions through developing outreach programs as an excellent way to employ leadership skills in order to bring about change and growth.

This study proposes the concept of leadership skills by Katz (1955) as in figure 1 of conceptual, technical and human skills that relate to KPIs implementation and achievement. Wolf (2010) states that KPIs are partly managing a process and service. This relates to Katz's concept on technical aspect of leadership skills.

The human aspect of leadership skills relate to cascading the KPIs to all levels of an organization. It is how libraries measure their impact on the enterprise and on business performance and communicate it to management and key stakeholders (Scotti, 2010). Campbell (2011) addresses that performances rely on motivation and possibility that KPI systems in organizations can possibly crowd out intangible forms of motivation.

Ambrozic (2003) acknowledges the aspect of conceptual skills that library performance measurement is considered necessary for finding the quality of library services required of the libraries to change their management methods, to draw up strategic and short-term plans, and to learn to set measurable goals.

The three-skill approach of Katz suggests that the importance of certain leadership skills varies depending on where leaders are in a management hierarchy. This approach was enhanced by Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, *et al.* (2000) with more complex picture on how skills relate to the development of effective leadership. Then, this approach was further reinforced by Mumford, Campion and Morgeson (2007).

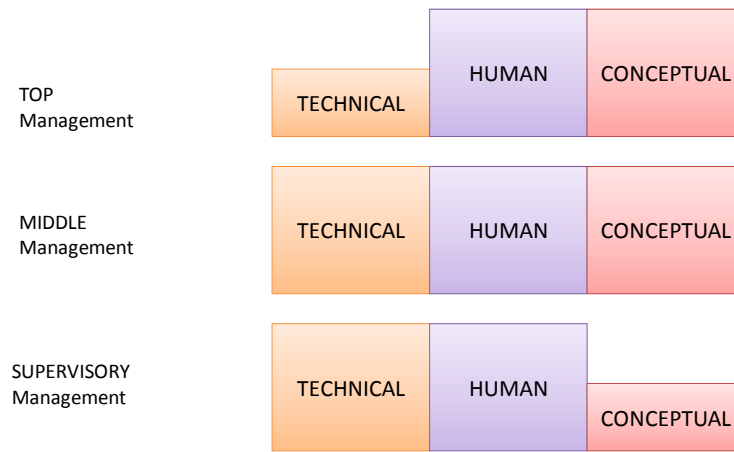|			
TOP Management	TECHNICAL	HUMAN	CONCEPTUAL
MIDDLE Management	TECHNICAL	HUMAN	CONCEPTUAL
SUPERVISORY Management	TECHNICAL	HUMAN	CONCEPTUAL

Figure 1: Management Skills Necessary at Various Levels of an Organization (Northouse, 2010, pg. 41).
Source: Adapted from "Skills of an Effective Admnistrator." by R.L.Katz, 1955. Harvard Business Review, 33(1), pp. 33-42.

Conclusion

As the ISO requirements demand (Sacchetti, 2011), a certified library is considered well managed when the customer's expectations and needs become inputs of the product/service realization, and when the outputs of the customer's satisfaction influence library's system management. The overall KPI (Key Performance Indicators) scheme aims at defining a set of indicators that could measure and supervise all the main processes in terms of efficiency and efficacy of libraries as well as of the staff (Sacchetti, 2011).

Leadership skill is a basic requirement which is relevant and strongly needed by all Malaysian Public University librarians so as to achieve the suggestion made by the Minister of Higher Education Mohammed Khalid (2009) that an important ingredient of human capital is knowledge, highly skilled and possess leadership qualities with superior value orientations which enable them to thrive under all circumstances.

This study will benefit the Malaysian university libraries, faculties and specifically the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) that laid a foundation for higher order human capital. It is hoped that the significance of the study is to strengthen librarian as a reputable profession for global leadership and career path. It is most useful for the development of librarians toward succession planning.

This paper contributes to a body of knowledge in the field of library leadership as it will add to the literature that will lead to developing the society and nation that appreciate the function of the library as custodian of knowledge and heritage.

In conclusion, this paper will benefit the researchers in terms of extending the scope and filling the gap for future research and to the development of leadership theories. Last but not least, this paper is an advantage for the purpose of enhancing library practitioners and librarians as a whole in developing their potential leadership qualities.

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