Identifying and Developing Leadership Skills for the Next Generation Library Directors in the Information Environment

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Abstract:

    This paper explores the need for library leaders and the causes for decline of library directors in the information sector. Library professionals are plenty but trained leaders are scarce. It briefly describes the reasons for the shortage of library leaders in the information industry. It also tries to sort out the difference between managers and leaders. Further it explains the essential qualities required to emerge as library leaders. Importantly a perfect blend of charisma and emotional intelligence are the most essential quality a leader should possess and this paper tries to describe it briefly. It stresses the need and importance for conducting leadership programs for the young professionals to mould them as future library directors. A few glimpses about the ways and means to develop the library leaders had been discussed. It also suggests that leadership programs should be included in the LIS curriculum, as the library students can develop their leadership traits while learning the professional course.

Key words: Library leaders, library directors, leadership skills, charisma.

> *Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage and sternness.*
> *Sun Tzu*
> *Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.*
> *Dwight D Eisenhower*

The nature and Importance of Leadership

There is a general perception that "leaders are born", but it is not so. An individual who has the ability, interest to develop leadership skills and also the courage to face challenge can definitely become an effective leader. There is no magical ingredient for successful leadership. The best leaders have a portfolio of styles and skills and the instinct to know when to use them. Good leadership means knowing when the time is right to change gear. It is the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people who are needed to achieve organizational goals. In the words of Josh Kuehler, "Leadership is the ability to inspire motivation in others to move towards a desirable vision". All in all, the best leadership drives change and long lasting motivation.

Leadership in the LIS was definitely not on the curriculum for most LIS courses particularly in India. It hardly seems surprising that LIS professionals are now somewhat reluctant to accept the challenges and, as Roberts and Rowley (2008) suggest, "prefer to focus on library issues". My professional friends will agree that there is not much social appreciation for the profession which in turn reflects efficient persons are less attracted to the same. Of course, there are talented, intelligent librarians but still there is shortage of competent dynamic leaders with focused vision. Ms. Davis notes, "the issue is not [just] having LIS graduates in the marketplace, the issue becomes having qualified librarians to promote into the positions vacated due to retirement."

Leadership vs. Management vs. Managers

It has been always an overlap of leaders and managers, as well as leadership and management. "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." (Peter Drucker) Leadership is one component of the functions of management. Effective leaders have to be good managers themselves, or be supported by effective managers. In short, the difference between leadership and management is one of emphasis. Effective leaders also manage, and effective managers also lead. John Kotter argues that management is about coping with complexity, leadership is about coping with change. 'Management is about doing things right. Management is survival', says Kevin Roberts.

According to Prof. Brian Morgan, leadership and management are different and distinctive but they share some complementary skills. Both are necessary to run complex organizations but the key difference is that management is about planning, coordinating and putting appropriate performance systems in a place. Leadership, on the other hand, is about being visionary, proactive and anticipating change – or even responding positively to change. In the words of Murray Johannsen, "Managers have subordinates but leaders have followers". Managers can be inspirational but leaders create the capacity for people to do something different – to do more than they would normally do. While Management is focused on tasks, leadership is focused on the person. Leadership complements management; it doesn't replace it. It has been rightly said by Stephen R. Covey that, management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall.
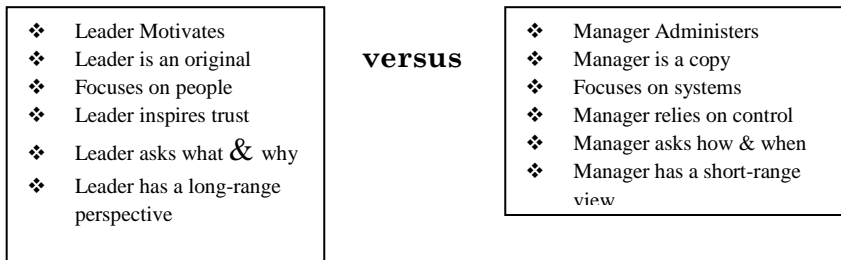
❖ Leader Motivates ❖ Leader is an original ❖ Focuses on people ❖ Leader inspires trust ❖ Leader asks what & why ❖ Leader has a long-range perspective	**versus** ❖ Manager Administers ❖ Manager is a copy ❖ Focuses on systems ❖ Manager relies on control ❖ Manager asks how & when ❖ Manager has a short-range view

Figure 1: Donald E .Riggs Quotes on Leader Vs. Manager

Reasons for Shortage in Library Leaders

Indian library and information science field are in the need and shortage of well qualified and efficient library leaders to meet the demand and growing challenges. Library assistants, library clerks are ample but to gear up the profession we need dynamic library directors who boldly can handle new ventures. Proactive professionals with excellent leadership qualities to lead the team, direct guidelines and to inspire others to help work towards the vision of the future are in acute demand. It is so common to find in Indian Universities and Colleges, Library will be functioning under the Library Director /Head, who may be from the Management or other departmental professors. The Library Director may not have the degree of LIS but he will be the decision-maker and deciding authority to decide the prominent issues pertaining to library. The Librarian will just follow the orders given the least role and importance assigned to him. There is always a discussion in LIS forums by the professionals about their teaching status which hangs in dilemma. It is the relevant time for the librarians to reinvent themselves.

The real problem starts when young talents are not attracted to LIS profession. Low salary package in academic and school libraries, confusion of faculty status to librarians, not due recognition to the profession, boom and better prospects in parallel jobs, leads to the cause of low admissions to library courses.

In the recent national seminar held at Chennai, reputed senior professional Head of the Dept of LIS, had frankly admitted that they are in a situation to pool students to get admitted to study library degrees. Another reason which can be stated is that it has been taught in distance mode in most Universities. But it alone cannot be cited as the sole cause. As Matarazzo put the critical issue dramatically when he said, "one way to get more people into the field…[:] Salary, salary, salary."

As per the report of ACRL 2002, on " Recruitment, Retention and Restructuring: Human Resources in Academic Libraries", states that "librarianship is experiencing a labor gap between increasing demand for library and information science professionals and a declining supply of qualified individuals-resulting in an increasing number of unsuccessful recruitment efforts." It also states that, "with the rapid rise in information technology and electronic information resources, the demand for skilled library professionals is on the increase".

The biggest challenge the field faces is to attract intellectual talents and grooming them as the next library leaders. Mark Winston stated, "One of the major issues facing [information] organizations in the 21st Century will relate to the need for effectiveness and proactive leadership".

How Do We Develop Good Library Leaders

Successful corporations don't wait for leaders to come along", said John Kotter in what Leaders Really Do, "They actively seek out people with leadership potential and expose them to career experiences designed to develop that potential". It is also applicable to academic institutions too. They can recruit and develop their own library leaders who will take the institution in to the future. Heather Rabbatts says that she always tries to identify "people with potential, who are ripe for the next challenge, and then put them in a project team and see how they work".

Williams quotes that "an essential ingredient for success in the library organization is an assessment process that monitors and promotes effective leadership.

Susan Goldberg Kent (1996), an American public library director, contends that one of the requisites for public libraries to 'survive and prosper' is 'solid and sound leadership' (1996: 213). Libraries, like other public organizations, require effective leadership in order to provide quality service. One way to develop leadership is to create challenging opportunities for young employees.

The skills which they lack to lead must be developed and acquired. They can be the efficient leaders and should believe they are second to none. They can lead by example, innovate new ideas, expand their creativity and sharpen their leadership qualities. LIS curriculum should include Leadership program too. Exclusive leadership programs can be conducted and provided by LIS Associations and institutions in addition to workshops and conferences. This will greatly enhance the skills of the librarians and self-motivates them to be the best library directors. Librarian's performance evaluation should be done at frequent times to identify what they possess and what has to be improved to bring out the hidden talents and help them to emerge as future leaders. Senior and experienced LIS professionals should come forward to start a network of pooling interested young talents and offer them mentoring programs to groom themselves.

Charismatic Library Leaders

Charisma is an indispensable concept of leadership and it is the special quality of any leadership. When turning the pages of successful leaders, it is universally accepted that they had possess charisma. Charisma is a Greek word which means "divinely gifted".

The study of charismatic leadership has become an

important way of understanding leadership. In the opinion of Jack and Suzy Welch, charisma makes the leader's job much easier. In today's fiercely competitive global economy, leaders need to energize their constituents more than ever. Helping people attain stretch goals and understand why change is necessary is done more quickly with charisma than relying solely on reasoning and logic.

Jane A.Halpert performed a statistical analysis of the effects charismatic leaders have on followers and found out three dimensions namely, referent power, expert power and job involvement.
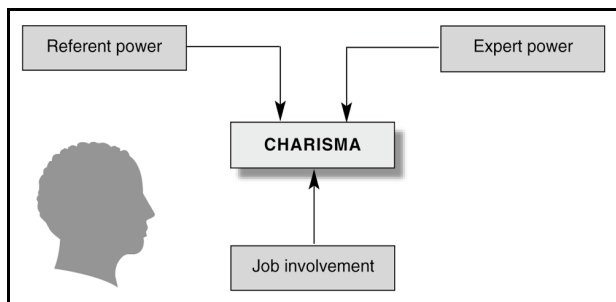

Figure 2. Halpert's Dimensions of Charisma

Referent power is the ability to influence others because of one's desirable traits and characteristics. Expert power is the ability to influence others because of one's specialized knowledge, skills, or abilities. A third dimension of charismatic leadership is the ability of get group members excited about their work, or to experience job involvement. Andrew J.Dubrin states that charismatic leaders attract, motivates, influences and lead others. It is the key component of transformational leader. A transformational leader is one who brings about positive, major changes in an organization.

Charismatic leadership suits not only for corporate organizations but for libraries too. Library directors with this unique quality can embrace changes, make a difference, can bring their energy in other team members also. As all know,

library is the place where people expects quality service with smile and optimistic, enthusiastic, energetic charismatic leaders will make it possible.

Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Gorman (1998a) wrote in the Harvard Business Review an article titled "What makes a leader"? He argues that successful leaders all have a high degree of emotional intelligence. Successful transfer of leadership skills from other industries can require strong emotional intelligence and these skills are recognized as contributing to a leadership persons.

The competencies for these skills include self-awareness & self-confidence, adaptability, empathy for others and influence so as to manage relationships. Business models are full of examples where the lack of these competencies can be transferred into libraries.

- Self-awareness is important in any career or professional position. Understanding how one feel and react in situations can prepare a leader for addressing the multitude of issues possible in a library environment.
- Self-confidence is also important, especially within libraries where patrons depend upon the librarian's credibility to trust the information they are receiving.
- Adaptability is a commonly desired trait in business and other industries. Within a library environment it is crucial to be adaptive to new technologies & new methods of information retrieval.
- Within the library environment, empathy & acknowledging people's feelings form the foundation for positive interactions.

Skill sets that evolve around creating influence are highly valued in business & demonstrate successful leadership outcomes. Together these competencies form the basis of

leadership development in many career fields. Libraries traditionally have considered professional development to be focused around improving information-seeking skills or embracing the latest technology in order to stay connected with patrons. At the same time, there needs to be some recognition of leadership development as well.

Essential Qualities for Library Leaders

Many inventories of skills needed by next generation academic library leaders are simply a repackaging of the skills possessed by current library leaders. Today libraries are enhanced by technology and change is inevitable. Library leaders should have the flexibility to adapt changes with utmost intelligence and rational thinking. Libraries always scopes up with limited budgets and definitely the library directors should have the financial skill of managing wisely, bold and prudent in making decisions. A lot of qualities have been discussed by many management gurus and researchers that leaders should possess. A glimpse of notable few can be taken.

A collection of essays published in 1990, Developing Leadership Skills: A Source Book for Librarians, identifies a number of leadership qualities, including, for instance, self-esteem, intuition, interpersonal communication skills, effective time management, relevant values and ethics, the ability to handle stress, and managerial delegation.

Karen Wittenborg has pointed out in her essay "Rocking the Boat," the leaders she most admires are those who are "visionaries, risk takers, good collaborators and communicators, mentors, and people with uncommon passion and persistence."

In Physician Executive, Lyons (2002) identified the general traits of a leader as given in Fig:3

Traits of a Leader
- Being a team builder and leader
- Projecting a Vision
- Understanding Systems
- Thinking strategically

Peter Drucker described it this way: "Leadership is not magnetic personality that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not 'making friends and influencing people,' that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations."

Carol A. Brey-Casiano, Director of Libraries, El Paso Public Library offers "Carol's ten steps to being a great library leader," in his leadership qualities for future library leaders.

- Step #1: Find a good mentor/ BE a good mentor
- Step #2: Learn how to follow first
- Step #3: Be Visionary
- Step #4: Be a Good Servant
- Step #5: Take risks
- Step #6: Take care of yourself
- Step #7: Maintain a positive attitude
- Step #8: Never turn down a leadership position…even if it means managing yourkid's soccer team.
- Step #9: Learn how to motivate people effectively
- Step #10: Keep your sense of humor

One of the most challenging aspects of leadership is striking the right balance between making decisions as a leader and encouraging a creative atmosphere in libraries where innovation and ideas can develop. Ron Dennis says, " Decision-making lies at the heart of any leader's role".

Laurence Corbus, president of Corbus Library Consultants, states that, "a director must inspire confidence in at least three groups – the board of trustees, the staff, and the public." Furthermore, that person needs a vision of the library's role in the community, must "inspire confidence in that vision," and must also be resourceful, a team player, accountable, a people person, politically savvy, able to exercise good judgement and a consensus builder."

Dana C.Rooks, of the University of Houston Libraries, believes that "some of the most significant…[qualities] include "management, technical, human relations, and legal skills."

Hernon, Powell, Young in the Next Library Leadership has defined a lot of attributes personal, managerial, professional and also the assessment techniques to measure their performance after conducting an extensive study about library leaders. To mention a few, "being creative, dynamic, firm commitment for quality, service oriented, high energy level, excellent oral and communication skills, integrity, knowledge of collection development, experience in marketing of services and resources and public relations, experience in data archiving" are the essential attributes required for the library leaders.

In the words of John F.Kennedy, "Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other." Particularly speaking library leaders should be life-long learners as they very well know learning never ends. So, they should never stop learning. It is the essential energy required for them to keep up their momentum.

It is always said that leaders should be good listeners too. Lowe-Wincentsen (2006) states that "Listening creates a sense of value. When followers feel respected and valued, they are more likely to provide honest feedback". Only when they listen to people, talk to people, others will express themselves. So that, there will be a friendly interaction with their fellow team members.

Making commitment to profession, encouraging colleagues, being compassionate, conducting researches on professional topics, diligent in following library projects, staying up to date in latest library softwares and technologies, introducing new services, conducting library events, being creative in implementing new ideas can be listed few. It is endless and it is the individual interest that one can enhance these qualities.

Conclusion

Library leaders have a strong impact in making the knowledge centre to delivers its information service to its maximum. We need passionate skilful library directors who not only carry out mission but create mission to tackle the future challenges ahead. Many intelligent professionals are serving in Indian libraries but they are uninterested or doesn't want to take up any sort of risk in strategic politics, so that they avoid extra office pressure of being a leader. To bring them as leaders is the real challenge of the concern institution or the individual himself. Good library leadership is one of the important component of an institutional success. The professional community should come forward to take up the leadership crown by enhancing their skills in the coming years.

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