Succession Planning and Young Emerging library leaders: Interrogating African Librarianship's Commitment

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Abstract

Succession planning as a concept has been touted as key in the stability, development and future of organisations and professions, libraries and librarianship included. Underpinning succession planning is leadership development and the philosophy of young emerging library leaders, an aspect well pronounced since the 1st Africa library summit in 2011. The library profession at an international level since 1994 has witnessed rapid growth in library leadership training programmes with a total of 30 such programs running in 2014 in about 84 economically developed countries, (Arabella Advisors: 2015). Emerging leaders emanate from a clear generation and their propensity towards assuming leadership posts needs to be understood. Libraries as workplaces are characterised by staff that cut across generations. Notable demographic changes are that the leadership of Libraries has been or rather is being passed on from the Baby boomer generation to Generation X which is currently passing on the button to the Millennials generation. Succession planning in this regard is occurring in the library and information profession in Africa but there hasn’t been much written about this aspect nor is there an understanding as to how libraries in Africa are developing emerging library staff for future leadership positions. This study seeks to view succession planning as a function of leadership development by assessing how current young emerging library professionals view leadership and their propensity towards taking up such roles in the profession. The paper will scan the academic Library landscape in Zimbabwe and establish where succession planning has been done and how are future leaders being prepared. To achieve this, Zimbabwe University Libraries Consortium was used as a case study to gauge the commitment of African Librarianship the development of emerging library leaders. Additionally this work seeks to provide recommendations for Academic libraries in Africa at grooming and developing future library leaders.

Keywords: Succession planning, Leadership development, emerging library leaders, African Librarianship and Academic Libraries
Problem Statement

A review done in 2014 identified 30 ongoing Library Leadership training programmes from 83 countries and of all these programmes none is headquartered in Africa, save for one in Gabon classified as “other”, (Arabella Advisors: 2015). In this study Africa only features in terms of contributing participants and a look at the countries that have contributed participants from Southern Africa are; Namibia, Zambia Lesotho, Mozambique and South Africa, however Zimbabwe has not contributed participants to such programs. As such there haven’t been deliberate efforts at staff training of new professionals on issues to do with Library leadership and associated activities. The effectiveness of such visits is questioned by (Ann and Clare: 2008), who state that “there are dynamic interactions that define the nexus between culture, community, and the continuously evolving personae of the Librarian.”

A snapshot at the past 12 International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications funded workshops held in Zimbabwe since 2007 to 2015 where mainly operational in outlook as they ranged from: Information literacy, Institutional Repositories, Anti-plagiarism, E-Book publishing, Marketing and Promotion of E-Resources and System Librarianship, (University of Zimbabwe Library documents: 2015). As such if the focus is on such kind of training how then are leaders being trained and how will succession planning occur?

From the foregoing focus on Zimbabwe’s academic libraries it is clear that these workplaces are characterised by a workforce that cuts across generations. Varleys et al, (2008) noted that libraries are not exempt from the organisational clash of the Baby Boomers and the Millennia’s where there are challenges faced due to the different characteristics of these groups and their view of Librarianship and leadership in particular. The Zimbabwean situation becomes even worse in that the generational differences are not only in terms of age but qualifications given that most Millennia’s were schooled at NUST with the first graduates completing studies in 2004. This research seeks to what this means in terms of preparing next generation of leaders and the implications on succession planning.

The lack of research on succession planning, leadership development and lack of leadership development programs in academic libraries in Zimbabwe is likely if not already leading to a plethora of problem to succession planning and leadership development.

Literature Review

In the African context, inability for academic librarians to position themselves in terms of: contextually suitable leadership development practices and programs to take up leadership positions, lack of clarity as to the future directions that academic libraries would take, management staff who are following a leadership for the sake of their job security, lack of role models within the library profession, leadership vacancies that go for a long time
without immediate replacements and difficulty in establishing vibrant national library associations,(Arabella Advisors:2015) can be viewed as a function of poor leadership development and succession planning activities

Onwubiko C, et al, (2010) noted that the success and failure of any organisation is largely dependent on the leadership of such an organisation of which the library is not exempted. The purpose of leadership in any organisation has been identified as having the ability to motivate people to develop, accept and carryout a shared vision, leadership is said to exist at all levels of an organisation, (Heronon and Schwartz:2008). Riggs, (2001), noted that leadership in libraries can no longer be pushed aside and ignored as it must be brought to the centre stage and treated with a capital L. Roberts and Black: 2008, noted that there is an evident concern both within the literature and within professional practice for future leaders. Corrall in (Roberts and Black: 2008), noted that he had lost count of the number of articles, reports and papers expressing concern about the quality of leadership in Library and Information services. Shaughessy and Albritton in, (Woolls and Zummerman: 2008), noted that leadership or the lack of it, is one of the most discussed topics in the library community given that turnover in the ranks of library directors is high, and university officers are concerned about the difficulty they have in identifying and recruiting middle and upper-level managers who can successfully balance the many demands of the job.

As early as 1994 the development of Library and Information Science (LIS) leaders had become the focus of continuing professional development in many countries in the West where a number and variety of leadership institutes have been established for librarians notably Canadian Northern Exposure to Leadership Institute (NELI) initiated in 1994, Snowbird Leadership Institute in the US, Aurora Library leadership Institute in Australia and Canada, Research Libraries Leadership Fellows Program of the National Library of Medicine Libraries in the US are some of the examples,(Ingles et al :2008). In 2014 there were 30 Library Leadership training programmes from 83 countries programmes”, (Arabella Advisors: 2015).

Such leadership programs have not taken root in Africa where only in South Africa through the Carnegie Corporation of New York a grant was awarded to the Department of Library Services (UPLS) at the University of Pretoria to establish the Centre for African Library Leadership (CALL) at the UPLS and design a Library Leadership programme (Carnegie Library Leadership Academy, CLLA) aimed at addressing some of the prevalent issues (UPLS 2008). The first intake of 20 participants was in July 2009 and the last in April 2012 with 120 participants having attended the six Academies over the three-year period.

Outside this Centre for African Library Leadership, the issue of leadership development only took centre stage at the 2011 and 2013 African Library Summits held in South Africa where in 2013 theme was “African Libraries the Horizon and Beyond”. The objectives of this summit included to: establish leadership actions for the respective types of libraries,
identify programmes for leadership development, locate African librarianship development in the digital age among others. It is also at the forthcoming African Library and Information Associations and Institutions’ (an association formed in 2013) conference to be held in Accra, Ghana, May 2015 under the theme “African Libraries Rising-Leadership and Innovation for development” that the concept of young emerging leaders is going to be reiterated.

The emergence of library leaders remains a challenge for most libraries and the library profession in Sub Saharan Africa, where in Kenya for example situations have been experienced where university library directors resigned without the availability of any immediate replacement, writing in (2012), Arta and Manyao noted that 6 universities have gone for long without a substantive library director. These universities have had problems in filling vacancies of senior management. Murray (2007) concurs that ...academic libraries require strong leadership in order to thrive in an era of constant change.

The articulated human resource challenges facing library institutions are: changing demographics, retaining of key staff, in-house replacements, unwillingness by junior librarians to take leadership roles, lack of role model library leaders and general boosting of staff morale, (Hall-Ellis and Grealy: 2013, Ben Walker: 2012, Nixon: 2008, Singer: 2013,Benn and Moore 2009).

Delong (2009) noted that demographic studies of library workforce suggest that large scale retirement will occur as the baby boomers exit the ranks of the profession and library employees have began to express concern renewing their professional staff and replacing leadership skills lost through retirement. Benn and Moore (2009), reiterate that ensuring that there are enough competent new library managers willing and able to take up positions as retirements occur is an issue widely recognised in literature.

It is widely recognised that libraries contain a workforce that crosses generations and these are; the Baby Boomers (born 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979) and the Net generation born between (1980 and 2001), (Young, Hermon and Powell: 2006).Age and years of experience have been used in the selection of library leaders but however Pearl (2015) noted that age and years of library experience do not guarantee success. The perspectives and attitudes of these groups in terms of the philosophy of library leadership are said to be different and yet they ought to co-exist for continuity of libraries and the library profession. The emergence of middle management or rather new professionals in 2004 when the first batch Library and Information Science (LIS) graduated heralded a new era and generation onto the library landscape in Zimbabwe. Armed with a Bachelor’s degree and some later with Masters Degree in (LIS), this generation has found its way into most academic libraries in Zimbabwe and therefore how these develop into future library leaders is of concern. It is clear that there exists inter-generational gap amongst librarians affect leadership development activities and that forms the focus of this study. The career progression of the new professionals in academic
libraries and the associated leadership development models used to engage them has not been studied.

In Zimbabwe, whilst there is a consortium of 15 university libraries known as Zimbabwe University Libraries Consortium (ZULC) formed in 2001 there hasn’t been clear outright research on and programs for developing library leaders. In Zimbabwe’s University Libraries less is known about: demographics of current library leaders, management staffing levels, the integration of new professionals and their preparation into leadership roles and the factors that act as barriers to leadership engagement amongst ZULC member libraries. Murray (2003) emphasized that, it is a professional responsibility to develop leaders and leadership capacity within library organisations and the profession as a whole, and then building infrastructural strategies to do this.

Theoretical Framework
The workplace is said to be the place where most learning takes place and this is called experiential learning based on Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle shown on the next page

![Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle](Source: Google Images 2015)

Figure 1. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle (Source: Google Images 2015)

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) provides a holistic model of the learning process and is a multi-linear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with what we know about how we naturally learn, grow, and develop. The theory is called "Experiential
learning" to emphasize the central role that experience plays in the learning process, (University of Leister: David Kolb). From this theory it can be concurred that the academic libraries as workplaces are conducive environments for leadership development and succession planning. The development of effective leadership is viewed as a complex process, summarised by Adair, (Roberts and Blacks: 2008), as encompassing: leadership quality, leadership situation, leadership functional and leadership qualities. Library is defined as : the ability to build a shared mission for a library, to foster participatory management, to be innovative and risk taking, to have and communicate ethics and values, to build community relationships and to possess a sense of humour, Cloonan (Sirdorko:2008).

**Design/Methodology/Approach**

A qualitative research methodology was adopted. Questionnaires were used as the primary data collection method for this study. The questionnaires were designed to gather information that would help the researcher understand the state of leadership development and emerging library leaders in Zimbabwe. A qualitative methodology was adopted because this study sought to explore how emerging academic library leaders view leadership and how they are being prepared for future leadership positions. The questionnaires were distributed through e-mail to librarians who were identified as new professionals or emerging library leaders (2-7 years experience in an academic library). A total 10 respondents from 10 out of 15 universities that make up the Zimbabwe Universities Library Consortium (ZULC) were identified for this study. 100 Questionnaires were sent to all the 10 universities in the consortium. A total of 60 questionnaires were returned.

**Specific Research Questions**

1. What are the professional demographics of current library leaders and new professionals in ZULC members?
2. What are leadership roles are currently being undertaken by new library professionals in ZULC libraries?
3. What are the perceived contemporary leadership competencies by emerging library leaders in ZULC libraries?
4. What should be done to stimulate leadership interest amongst young library professionals in Zimbabwe?

**Results and Discussion**

A total of 70 questionnaires were received. The results of the research are categorised according to the headings that emerge from the questionnaire:

- Demographics of current University Librarians and emerging leaders
- Current Leadership Roles being practiced by emerging leaders
• Succession plans awareness and Workplace trainings attended
• Impressions on library leadership job demands and contemporary competencies of a library leader
• Adequacy of University training and Opportunities for generating library leadership interest among young professionals

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of University</th>
<th>Year Established (University)</th>
<th>Current Librarian</th>
<th>Number of Years as Librarian at this Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Bindura University of Science and Education</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Mrs A. Mhlanga</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Chinhoyi University of Technology</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Mr.B. Nyagwaya (Acting)</td>
<td>Since 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Great Zimbabwe University</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Mr. L. Chikwanha</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Harare Institute of Technology</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Mr. L. Maenzanise</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lupane State University</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Ms S. Ndlovu</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Midlands State University</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Ms N. Chibanda</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. National University of Science and Technology</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Ms. K. Matsika</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. University of Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Mrs. A. Chikonzo</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Women’s University in Africa</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Ms. P. Chaitezvi</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Zimbabwe Open University</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the current University Librarians only 4/10 were said to be active members of the Zimbabwe Library Associations. From the table above the average number of years current librarian has been in office is 10 years. This shows that the post of University librarian is quite stable but however the case of above 15 years in office could mean a lot
for succession planning, leadership development and how emerging leaders view this. Given that most librarians first assumed other managerial posts before being University Librarians the trend is not standard in that 60% of these are inaugural and 40% rose through the ranks this means the implementation of succession planning and leadership developments amongst these libraries is affected negatively.

### Table 2

**Professional Demographics of current emerging Library Leaders in Zimbabwe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Qualification</th>
<th>Entry Level Post</th>
<th>Current Post</th>
<th>Total Years Experience</th>
<th>Membership to Library Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Msc LIS (40)</td>
<td>Assistant Librarian (60)</td>
<td>Assistant Librarian (55)</td>
<td>(2-4) 10</td>
<td>Members 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bsc LIS (20)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Acting Sub Librarian (5)</td>
<td>(5-10) 40</td>
<td>Non Members (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total 60</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above it can be seen that while the bulk of emerging leaders have gone on to acquire Msc in LIS and have garnered experience only 5/60 have ascended 1 level higher in the Library employment hierarchy. This indicates rigidity in career progression and lack of succession growth, these tallies well with the number of years current librarians have been in office the conditions cannot be said to be favourable for leadership development and succession planning.

### Table 3

**Current Leadership Responsibilities being practiced by emerging leaders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>%Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management of a Library Section</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairing a Library Committee</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Leader in Library Project</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representing the Library/University at National/International events</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As postulated in the literature review while emerging library leaders have been exposed to the workplace environment they still largely remain line managers responsible for the achievement of tasks, where 80% manage sections, 10% chair committees or lead a library project. The opportunities for networking and growth are further low given that only 2%
of the respondents have had the opportunity to represent their library or university at national or International events.

Table 4
Succession Plan Awareness and Workplace Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aware of a succession plan and practice at workplace</th>
<th>% Percentage</th>
<th>Workplace Training Attended by Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Aware</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>• Author Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Pedagogy of Senior IL Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Institutional Repositories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Information Literacy Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Systems Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Marketing of Electronic Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Evaluation of E-Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question sought to find out whether emerging leaders were aware of succession plans and the practice of such at their workplace and what major library trainings have they been exposed.

The results here show that most of the trainings held at these libraries focused on information sources and services offered by the library and as such there hasn’t been a respondent who attended a leadership or leadership development program.

Impressions on Leadership Demands and Competencies of a Library Leader

Emerging library leaders were asked to give their opinion on how they view the demands of Library Leadership post and what competencies did they consider key for one to become a successful library leader, the responses were presented as follows:

Impressions on Leadership demands

- Pressure to manage in scarcity and excel
- Less home life
- Solving problems
- Networking
- Reporting
- Communicating
Key Competencies identified for a Library leader

- Honesty
- Strategists
- Innovator
- Trendsetter
- Visionary
- Emotional Intelligence
- Ability to Inspire and groom others
- Thorough

The perceptions about the Library leadership post were positive and 100% of the respondents indicated that they would want to lead a library at some point and the major reasons were to make an impact in the institution and profession. 45% of the respondents noted that the remuneration and benefits associated with the post were attractive and their reason for stating that they would like to lead.

Leadership Development and the interest of emerging leaders

The last part of the questionnaire sought to find out what the respondents thought about the barriers to leadership development and the opportunities they thought could enhance leadership development as well as succession planning. The respondents noted a gap in the Library school where Leadership and associated components were not taught. The curriculum for Bsc and Msc at the library school are said to emphasis more on management of resources than leadership. Opportunities for grooming and mentoring were said to be scarce and as such most respondents felt with such opportunities and adjustments would go a long way in making feel confident about their ability to lead.

Conclusion

Leadership development is a tool that can be used to achieve succession planning and management. The nature of academic libraries such that there are various levels at which leadership can be practised and as such emerging leaders do not necessarily need to get to the top post in the library to practice leadership. The generation referred to as Millennials has a propensity towards leadership but however there seem opportunities and platforms to learn more and practice leadership are very scarce. The issue of leadership has gained recognition at various continental library platforms but academic libraries in Zimbabwe do not seem to have taken strides at implementing such. The commitment of African Librarianship will only be seen if Library Leadership training programs are based in Africa and more and more Library leaders emerge within the ranks of the institutions they work for. Workshops for emerging leaders should include the competences that are required of the Leader Librarian today rather than routine and operational basis.
References


Maha. K,(2012) Leadership in school, public, and academic libraries in the US, the UK, Canada and Australia


