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The Synergy between Good Leadership and Sustained Development of the Library and Information profession in Africa

Good leadership skills in an individual can be easily observed. The success of an institution hinges on the performance of leaders when exercising their leadership roles. Good leadership traits can be inborn or developed at an early stage in life, but such cases are only a few. Most of the skills are learnt, working on attitudes, behaviours and knowledge and practicing them regularly to develop and sharpen them. Skills of good leadership are not developed overnight but through patience and the investment of time for regular practice in order to perfect them.

Leadership is exhibited in various forms and styles and good leadership is also different from expertise. Leadership and expertise are both qualities but their skill sets are different. An expert can be a leader when the leadership skills are developed in addition to those of expertise. Leaders lead experts by providing direction and motivation to achieve expected goals.

The availability of leaders who deploy good leadership skills to their work is of great essence to every institution or organization that aims at offering high quality services to its clients. The situation of inadequate leadership skills employed by some management staff in libraries in Africa has become of great concern in recent times because of the unfavourable effects on the profession. Considering that effective leadership is critical to the success of every establishment, the paper focuses on what good leadership entails by defining and discussing it as well as the challenges encountered in the efforts to ensure good leadership practices. What good leadership brings towards a sustained development of the library and information profession including better trained and satisfied personnel, increase in funding opportunities, improved services to users, better use of facilities and equipment, improved image and high perception of the public towards the library and information profession and examples of best practices are then outlined.

The paper concludes with recommendations for the practice of good leadership skills that will ensure sustainability and growth of the library and information profession and professionals in Africa.

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