

The leadership of the Australian university library at changing times

By

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Abstract: *Leadership is documented as a complex but a critical issue for performance improvement in all organisations. Due to its rapidly changing organisational environment, leadership has gained significance to respond to emerging challenges in university libraries. This qualitative research examined the importance of leadership for effective performance in Australian university libraries (AULs). The study collected primary data from interviewing 18 chief librarians of Australian public sector university libraries. These data were thematically compared and analysed against the existing literature and library reports. Research findings suggest the significance of mixed style of leadership among chief university librarians in AULs, indicating the relevance of skills to switch to appropriate leadership styles combined with strategic thinking to address dominant issues. Practical and theoretical implications are also provided, including the need for future research.*

Keywords: *Leadership, Performance management, University library management, Leadership in university libraries.*

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Preamble

All organisations aspire to perform well to ensure their continuity. Studies disclose that leadership as one of the most critical aspects underpinning organisational success (Roe, 2020; Rassa, 2020). It is a planned process of actions to adapt to changing environments (Crosby 1996; Kotter, 1996; Warrick, 2017) and addresses moral issues, build knowledge and skills, and provides expertise for a coherent and systematic approach to managing change (Dobbs, Manyika, & Woetzel, 2015; Dumas & Beinecke, 2018; Gomathi, 2014). Hence, leadership has attracted attention to deal with challenges of change and problems of organisations to provide suitable work environment (includes culture) for satisfactory performance (Popp, 2012; Starke et al., 2011; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Complexities of the higher

education induced by rapid changes in its environment made leadership critical in their libraries to sustain relevance and add value to university business (Harland, Stewart, & Bruce, 2018; Martin, 2015; O'Connor, 2014).

Background

Advancing information technology, globalisation, capital, trade, and labour mobility collectively induced major changes in organisations (Boschma, Lammarino & Steinmueller, 2013), including organisations of higher education and its libraries (Deem, 2010; Lewis & Orr, 2018; Sandhu, 2015). Once the citadel of university education (Darnton, 2008), the library has lost its supremacy and therefore must continue to adapt suitably to the changing environmental challenges to remain as a value-adding institution in the higher educational process (Delaney & Bates, 2015; Dempsey & Malpas, 2018). Otherwise, the university library may become irrelevant and obsolete within a short period of time (Chan, 2014; Stephens & Russell, 2004). Therefore, Australian university libraries (AULs) must remain abreast of these challenges to play a useful role to support the university education and to make its library future-ready (Bell, 2014; Chan, 2014; Jefcoate, 2010). To address this challenge, effective leadership provides the necessary vigour to plan and implement strategies to meet the needs of clients and other stakeholders (Gomathi, 2014; Popp, 2012; Wells, 2007).

Defining leadership

The academic commentary claims broadly that leadership as a force or critical aspect that results in effective organisational management and satisfactory performance as it establishes direction, aligns people with organisational goals and motivates and inspires people as part of a strategic process (Basu, 2015; Gomathi, 2014; Huy & Mintzberg, 2003). As House (1995, p. 413) stated, leadership *gives purpose, meaning, and guidance to collectivities by articulating a collective vision that appeals to ideological values, motives, and self-perceptions of followers*. Effective leadership brings out the best in people by creating a strong organisational culture promoting commitment, strategy, appropriate decision making and execution of talent (Boyatzis, 2008, 2011; Bratton & Gold, 2017), and transform a good organisation into a great one (Collins, 2001). Therefore, leadership is critical in managing libraries in the 21st century, a time with challenges of rapid change (Martin, 2015) and uncertainty due to swift technological advancements in combination with ever increasing client demands, and the resultant complexity of organisational affairs (Comfort & Resodihardjo, 2013; Martin, 2015; Obolensky, 2014).

Leadership is not an exact science with a formula to provide a concise, accurate, meaningful explanation or predictable outcomes (Bateh, 2019; Goleman, 2000, Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002), but one of the most observed phenomenon (Burns, 1995; Giesecke, 2007; Rassa & Emeagwali, 2020). The concept of leadership is explained or defined based on perspectives, expectations of what an effective

leader does, or the characteristics of an effective leader (Giesecke, 2007; Roe, 2020; Yukl, 2013). Therefore, it is a widely discussed and studied topic providing differing perspectives and definitions with no agreement about its true meaning (Rassa & Emeagwali, 2020; Rosenbach, Taylor & Youndt, 2012). As Yukl (2013) argued, 'leadership' is a term taken from the common vocabulary without a precise definition or meaning, and therefore possesses as many definitions of leadership as attempts to define this complex term. Each theorist has given prominence to their individual perspective of leadership when defining it. Hence, leadership is considered a poorly understood concept (Burns, 1978; McCusker, Roseanne & Abraham, 2019; Yukl, 2013). Therefore, after examining the leadership definitions of different times during the twentieth century, Northouse (2016) concluded that leadership scholars were not able to establish a definition acceptable to all academics. Northouse identified common components central to the concept of leadership as a process, involves influence, occurs in groups, and includes common goals, and hence, defined leadership as 'a process whereby an individual influence a group of individuals to achieve a common goal' (Northouse (2016, p. 6).

While there is no agreement on the definition of leadership, experts identified characteristics beneficial for effective leadership. The current research gathered prominent characteristics identified by experts discussed in the literature and presented in tabular form (see Table 1).

As Table 1 indicates, the experts have advocated that leadership is:

- Linked to a common purpose - performance improvement.
- Concerned with motivating people. People need to be aligned with organisational goals.
- About creating a learning organisation. Staff need to have necessary skills to perform their duties and add value to the organisation.
- Creating an effective team environment within the organisation for people to work together harmoniously, learning from each other, helping each other to perform effectively and continuously to be creative and innovative, and to get the best of people.
- Associating persons with effective interpersonal competencies - being willing to listen to others' views, respectfully as well as being fair, with empathy and compassion.
- Open minded, watchful and tune into what is happening outside the organisation, always challenging the status quo for improvements, and problem solving.
- Concerned with good communication and negotiation and is useful in organisational affairs when dealing with its stakeholders.
- Embracing conviction, enthusiasm, and perseverance.
- A set of processes, behaviours or people driven actions, and risk-taking aims at achieving performance goals of an organisation.

Table 1: List of positive leadership characteristics discussed in the literature

| Leadership characteristics | Theorist & Reference |
|--|--|
| Result centeredness/Cost effectiveness/Performance | Robert E Quinn (Quinn, 2005), Ronald J Walker (Walker, 2009), Richard E. Boyatzis (Boyatzis, 2011) |
| Internally directed | Robert E Quinn (Quinn, 2005) |
| More focused on others | Robert E Quinn (Quinn, 2005) |
| Open to outside signals/Open minded | Robert E Quinn (Quinn, 2005), Steve O'Connor (O'Connor, 2007) |
| Clarity of vision | Robert E Quinn (Quinn, 2005), John P Kotter (Kotter, 2005), Susan Jurow (Jurow, 1990) |
| Empowerment | Robert E Quinn (Quinn, 2005), Bruce J Avolio & Bernard M Bass (Avolio & Bass, 1999), Susan Jurow (Jurow, 1990) |
| Empathy/Compassion | Robert E Quinn (Quinn, 2005), Jane E Dutton et al (Dutton, Frost, Worline, Lilius, & Kanow, 2002) |
| Creative thinking & innovation | Robert E Quinn (Quinn, 2005), Lee Lacocca (as in McElrath, 2009), Matzler Kurt et al. (Kurt, Franz, Markus, & Susan, 2010), Florence M Mason et al. (Mason & Wetherbee, 2004) |
| Be proactive & persistent/energetic/Enthusiasm /Curiosity | Robert E Quinn (Quinn, 2005), Ray Evernham (Evernham, 2005), John P Kotter (Kotter, 2005), Fullan (Fullan, 2001), Lee Lacocca (as in McElrath, 2009) |
| Aligning people to organisational goals/ Good people person/ Managing relationships/ Brings out the best in people | John P Kotter (Kotter, 1990), R. J. Walker (Walker, 2009), Joan R Giesecke (Giesecke, 2007), Liz Wiseman & Greg McKeown (Wiseman & McKeown, 2010), Kenneth Cloke & Joan, Goldsmith (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2002), Jim Collins (Collins, 2001), Philip B Crosby (Crosby, 1996), Bruce J Avolio & Bernard M Bass (Avolio & Bass, 1999) |
| Be good listeners | Ray Evernham (Evernham, 2005) |
| Able to evaluate people | Ray Evernham (Evernham, 2005) |
| Fair | Ray Evernham (Evernham, 2005) |
| Good communication | Ray Evernham (Evernham, 2005), Lee Lacocca (as in McElrath, 2009), Susan Jurow (Jurow, 1990) |
| Managing timelines | John P Kotter (Kotter, 2005) |
| Building strong coalitions | John P Kotter (Kotter, 2005) |
| Quest for learning/Managing tacit knowledge | John P Kotter (Kotter, 2005), Michael Fullan (Fullan, 2001), Bruce J Avolio & Bernard M Bass (Avolio & Bass, 1999), Susan Jurow (Jurow, 1990) |
| Challenging the status quo/ Thinking about the future/Global in outlook | John P Kotter (Kotter, 2005), Lee Lacocca (as in McElrath, 2009), Philip B Crosby (Crosby, 1996), Steve O'Connor (O'Connor, 2007) |
| Motivating staff, mentoring & reward | John P Kotter (Kotter, 2005), Michael Darling (as in McElrath, 2009), Bruce J Avolio & Bernard M Bass (Avolio & Bass, 1999) |
| Conviction | Lee Lacocca (as in McElrath, 2009) |
| Charisma and inspiration | Lee Lacocca (as in McElrath, 2009), Bruce J Avolio & Bernard M Bass (Avolio & Bass, 1999), |
| Competent | Lee Lacocca (as in McElrath, 2009) |
| Common sense | Lee Lacocca (as in McElrath, 2009) |
| Able to handle crisis | Lee Lacocca (as in McElrath, 2009) |
| Good negotiator | R. J. Walker (Walker, 2009) |
| Leadership is a process/ behavioural perspectives/ people driven actions/ relationship between leaders and followers | E. Cameron & M. Green (Cameron & Green, 2012), J. Conger (Conger, 2005), Philip B Crosby (Crosby, 1996), Joan R Giesecke (Giesecke, 2007), John P Kotter (Kotter, 1996), A. McWilliams & C. Williams (McWilliams & Williams, 2010), P. G. Northouse (Northouse, 2016), W. E. Rosenbach & R. L. Taylor (Rosenbach & Taylor, 2006), S. Wilson & J. Fien, (Wilson & Fien, 2015) |
| Trust | Susan Jurow (Jurow, 1990) |
| Risk-taking | Susan Jurow (Jurow, 1990) |
| Leadership is a process | M. E. McCusker, R. J. Foti, & E. K. Abraham (McCusker, Roseanne & Abraham, 2019), P. Northouse (Northouse, 2016) |

Leadership theory

Leadership theory seek to explain why some are better leaders than others. These theories mostly concentrate on the leadership characteristics, while others try to explain how people can adapt and improve their leadership skills to be effective in varying situations (Cherry, 2019). Yet, there is no consensus on one best style of leadership effective on all situations (Adserias, Charleston, & Jackson, 2017; Goleman, 2017). Northouse (2016) critically examined theoretical approaches to leadership, explaining and providing the strengths and weaknesses based on the existing literature and research. He grouped theories of leadership under eleven approaches – trait, skills, behavioural, situational, path-goal, leader-member exchange theory (LMX), transformational, authentic, servant, adaptive, and psychodynamic. Table 2 provides focus or the emphasis of each approach and its strengths and weaknesses. The advantages of approaches such as LMX, and transformational are that these theories seek to explain the importance of leader follower interaction and have the backing of prominent researchers (Northouse, 2016). Although there are weaknesses, the traits approach (visionary and charismatic leadership styles of leadership) still attracts researchers' attention as these components are considered effective in motivating people and achieving the goals of organisations (Meslec, Curseu, Fodor, & Kenda, 2020; Rowe & Nejad, 2009; Walter & Bruch, 2009).

Leadership style is a leader's method to influence others. It includes both directive behaviours and supportive behaviours of a leader (Northouse, 2016). Though he considered strategic leadership as a style of leadership in the sixth edition of his book *Leadership: theory and practice* (Northouse, 2013), in the seventh edition (2016) he considered it a critical decision that every leader should take. Yet, the others think the strategic leadership as a separate style of leadership that assists strategic alignment of an organisation that creates value by influencing others for effective decision making, promoting long-term viability through clear vision, and maintaining short-term financial health (Rowe & Nejad, 2009; Shao, 2019). This leadership style/characteristic encourages a satisfactory relationship with employees and customers, empowers employees, creates value for shareholders, sustains tight fiscal control, and maintains competent organisational management. As employees are empowered with day-to-day operations, a strategic leader devotes time to concentrate on issues such as adapting the organisation to changes of all kinds (Rowe & Nejad, 2009). Rowe and Nejad (2009) also assert that it is the leadership that encourages building organisational resources, knowledge, and capabilities to achieve a competitive fit between the organisation and its environment. They consider people as a resource in innovation and creativity and give importance to organisational learning. Strategic leadership boosts the cognitive activity of the leaders to anticipate, create and update vision for the future, enables innovation, creativity in products and services, redefines the marketplace and redraws industry boundaries (Dubrin, Dalglish & Miller, 2006).

Table 2: Theories of leadership (adopted form and based on Northouse, 2016)

| Theory | Focus | strengths | Criticisms |
|--|--|---|--|
| Trait approach (e.g. visionary and charismatic leaderships) | Focuses exclusively on the leader, not on the followers or situation. Concerned with what traits leader exhibits. | 1) Traits approach intuitively appealing. Leadership as the individuals and leading all the way, 2) A century of research to back up, 3) Highlights the leader, 4) Gives some benchmarks for one who wants to be a leader. | 1) Failure to delimit a definitive list of leadership traits, 2) Failed to take situation into account, 3) Highly subjective determinations of the most important leadership traits, 4) Failure to look a trait in relation to leadership outcomes, 5) Not a useful approach for training and developing leadership. |
| Skills approach (e.g. Robert Katz's skills of an effective administrator, and Zaccaro Mumford and his colleagues' new skills-based model of organisational leadership) | Leader centred approach. Emphasises on three basic competencies of the leader – technical, human, and conceptual. | 1) Leader centred. Stresses the importance of leader's skills and abilities and places learned skills at the centre of leadership performance. 2) Intuitively appealing. Leadership skills can be developed and improved, so it is available to everyone. 4) Explains how effective leadership performance can be achieved through educational programmes | 1) Extends beyond boundaries of leadership, e.g. for conflict management, critical thinking, and motivation, 2) Skills model is weak in explaining how a person's competencies lead to effective leadership performance, 3) Claims not to be a trait approach, yet personality plays a large role, 4) Constructed using data only from military model and therefore weak in general application. |
| Behaviour approach (e.g., Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) of Ohio State University, Leadership behaviour studies of University of Michigan in the 1960's, and Blake and Mouton's Managerial (Leadership) Grid. | Focuses on what leaders do and how they act. Two primary types of leader behaviours – task and relationship. Focus is about how leaders combine these two. | 1) Broadened scope of leadership research also to include the behaviours of leaders, 2) Supported by wide range of research, 3) Emphasises the significance of two dimensions of leadership behaviour – task and relationships, 4) Provides a broad conceptual map useful for understanding one's leadership behaviour. | 1) Researchers not been able to associate leadership behaviours with outcomes, 2) Not identifying set of leadership behaviours result in effective leadership, 3) Fails to support the importance of task and relationship dimensions. |

| Theory | Focus | strengths | Criticisms |
|---|---|--|--|
| Situational approach (e.g., situational leadership models developed by Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), | Prescriptive approach suggesting how leaders should behave based on the demands of a situation. | 1) Frequently used in training leaders. 2) Practicality, easy to understand and easily applied in variety of settings, 3) Prescriptive value. Tells what should and should not do in various contexts, 4) Emphasises leader flexibility based on the situation. Recognises that there no one best style of leadership. | 1) Ambiguous conceptualisation of subordinates, 2) No theoretical/research basis, 3) not clear in explaining how model matches with subordinate development levels. |
| Path-goal theory | Basically, about how leaders motivate followers to accomplish designated goals. Basic principle is that employees will be motivated if they feel competent, efforts rewarded. | 1) Provides theoretical framework for explaining the effectiveness of different leadership styles for productivity and satisfaction of followers; 2) Integrate motivation principles to leadership theory; 3) Provides a practical model about how leaders could help its followers. | 1) Too many assumptions making application difficult, 2) Research findings do not fully support claims of the theory 3) Do not show clearly how leaders behaviour support subordinate motivation levels 4) Very leader oriented and fails to recognise follower involvement in the leadership process. |
| LMX theory (Leader-Member Exchange theory) | Conceptualises the leadership as a process. Leadership is centred around interaction between leaders and followers and makes the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers the focal point of the leadership process. | 1) Strong descriptive approach explaining how leaders use some followers more than others to achieve organisational goals. 2) Leader-member relationship as a focal point of the leadership process 3) Emphasises the importance of communication in leader member relationships, 4) How to be even-handed in how we relate to followers., 5) Supported by many studies. | 1) Vertical linkage run counter to the principle of fairness and justice - special attention to some. 2) Does not explain how to create high quality exchange. 3) Does not explain contextual factors influencing LMX relationships, 4) Doubt about researcher's measurement methods. |
| Transformational leadership (merged from and rooted in writing of Burns (1978) and Bass (1985). | One of the current and most popular approaches and focus of much research since the 1980s. Gives much attention to charismatic and affective elements. | 1) Lot of attention by researchers, 2) Has strong intuitive appeal, 3) Emphasises the importance of followers in the leadership process, 4) goes beyond transactions to include the growth of followers, 5) Strong emphasis on morals and values. | 1) Lacks conceptual clarity, 2) Framework implies trait-like quality, 3) Sometimes seen as elitist and undemocratic, 4) Suffers from a 'heroic leadership' bias, 5) Potential to counterproductively in negative ways. |

| Theory | Focus | strengths | Criticisms |
|---|---|--|---|
| Servant leadership (originating in the work Greenleaf (1970)) | Offers unique perspective. Emphasises that leaders be attentive to concerns of followers first, empower them, help to develop their full personal capacities to the greater good of the organisation, community, and society at large. Serve first for the good of followers over the self-interest. Promising model of leadership. | 1) Unique as it makes altruism the main component of the leadership process, 2) Leaders give up control rather than seek control, 3) Shown that under certain conditions it is not the preferred kind of leadership, 4) Sound measures. | 1) Paradoxical nature of the title “servant leadership” diminishes the value of the approach, 2) No consensus on a common theoretical framework, 3) Conflicts with traditional approaches to leadership, 4) Not clear why conceptualising is a defining characteristics of servant leadership. |
| Authentic leadership | Focuses on whether leadership is genuine and real. No one definition. Leaders to be true to themselves. Because of leadership failures in the public and private sector, authentic leadership is emerging in response to societal demand for genuine, trustworthy, honest and good leadership that is transparent, morally grounded, and responsive to people’s needs and values. | 1) Providing an answer for the search for good and sound leadership, 2) it is prescriptive and give lots of information about how to become an authentic leader, 3) explicit moral dimension of what leaders need to do for the good for followers and society, 4) framed as a process developed by leaders over time. | 1) Not been fully substantiated by research, 2) moral component of the theory is not fully explained, 3) lack of evidence regarding its effectiveness. |
| Adaptive leadership (Introduced by Heifetz (1994)) | Adaptive leadership is about how leaders encourage people to adapt—to face and deal with problems, challenges, and changes. It stresses the <i>activities of the leader</i> in relation to the <i>work of followers</i> in the <i>contexts</i> in which they find themselves, and therefore, this approach occupies a unique place in the leadership literature. | 1) It takes a unique approach that leadership as a complex interactive process composed of multiple dimensions and activities, 2) Describes leadership as actions the leaders undertake to afford followers the best opportunity to do adaptive work, 3) Describes how leaders can help people confront and adjust their values in order to adapt and thrive, 4) Provides a useful and practical set of prescriptions for what leaders and followers should do to facilitate adaptive change, 5) Adaptive leadership highlights the important role of the environment. | 1) very little empirical research to support the claims and tenets, 2) The conceptualizations of the process of adaptive leadership need further refinement, 3) Interpreting the prescriptions of adaptive leadership can become overwhelming, 4) Difficult to analyse leadership behaviours in research or practice, 5) Does not show how adaptive work leads to socially useful outcomes. |

| Theory | Focus | strengths | Criticisms |
|------------------------|--|---|--|
| Psychodynamic approach | There is no single model/theory. Fundamental concept underlies is personality. Team means consistent pattern of ways of thinking, feeling and acting about the environment or other people. Personality is characterised by a list of tendencies or qualities. This approach is based on the assessment of personalities of leaders and followers. Begins with identifying personality characteristics | Emphasises the relationship of leaders to followers. Encourage the awareness of personalities and thereby reduces the degree of manipulation and control by the leader. | 1) Early works were based on dealing with disturbed people and therefore some of it does not apply to average or normal person at work. 2) Problems with the measurement and assessment of ego state and personality type. 3) Go counter to the ideals of rational and objective leader. 4) No emphasis for training because there are no skills or behaviours to learn. |

However, Northouse (2013) posits that strategic style provide autonomy and protection for people to think and implement strategies, alleviating the rigid control of managerial leadership, promoting organisational learning, innovation, and creativity.

Effective leadership found to be a mix of styles (Fasaghandis & Wilkinson, 2019; Gross, 2016). As some theorists suggest, strategic leadership encompasses the advantages of visionary, managerial, transformational, and transactional leadership styles (Crossan et al., 1999; Rowe & Nejad, 2009; Vera & Crossan, 2004). Transformational leadership influences strategy, structure, values, and the future of the organisation and promotes learning and greater commitment from employees by bonding individuals for collective interests. On the contrary, transactional style concentrates on control, standardisation, formalisation, and efficiency. While transformational leadership encourages organisational learning and challenges the status quo, transactional leadership concentrates on institutionalising and putting into practice what is learnt (Bass, Waldman, & Avolio, 1987; Pawar & Eastman, 1997; Rowe & Nejad, 2009; Yukl, 2013). Despite experts predominantly agreeing on the direct association between learning organisation and the effective leadership, not all leadership styles devote satisfactory attention to learning organisation (Castiglione, 2006). For example, task-oriented transactional leadership has an aim to foster employee commitment through employee rewards and punishments (Castiglione, 2006; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Alternatively, transformational style expects organisational learning to inspire people through motivation, encouragement of strategic renewal, empowering staff to question the status quo, as well as to think, innovate, and be creative to build a collective vision (Castiglione, 2006; Chou, 2014; Gwyer, 2009; Yukl, 2013). Some argue that strategic leadership not only concentrates on strategy but also managerial, visionary, transformational and transactional issues as well as learning organisation concept (Crossan et al., 1999; Rowe & Nejad, 2009; Vera & Crossan, 2004). Given the present fast-changing and competitive environment, the strategic leader is required to be ambidextrous, and switches between leadership styles fostering exploratory and exploitative behaviours in employees to get the maximum benefit for organisational performance (Rosing, Rosenbusch & Frese, 2010; Vera & Crossan, 2004; Zacher & Rosing, 2015).

A review of the literature shows complexity and disagreement on the one best style of leadership (Fullan, 2014; Goleman, 2017; Shao, Feng & Hu, 2016). Therefore, leadership theory has been considered as complex, scrappy, and inconsistent, making the study of it exasperating and application problematic (Chemers, 2014). No single leadership approach suits all situations (Chemers, 2014; Gregory, 2015; Shao, Feng & Hu, 2016), and this notion is expressed clearly from transformational, strategic and situational approaches to leadership (Northouse, 2016; Olie & Rao-Nicholson, 2018; Rossiter, 2007). Leaders claim to develop leadership styles that suit their organisations but remain dependent on various environmental contingencies, including ethical and cultural issues (Rossiter, 2007; Shao, Feng & Hu, 2016) suggesting the benefit of using a mix of theories for best results. The

use of the right leadership style, at the right time, in the right measure, in the right situation, claimed to be the most effective for satisfactory performance (Goleman, 2000; Hannah et al., 2014). Such flexibility is complex but possible if leaders learn about different styles and change the leadership approach to suit circumstances (Goleman, 2000; Hannah et al., 2014) which demonstrate the intricacies of leadership (Chemers, 2014; Fullan, 2014; Hannah et al., 2014; Uma, 2010).

Leadership in university libraries

The leaders require a complex set of leadership skills to manage the challenge of rapid changes in the higher education environment (Hernon, 2007a; 2007b). A study involving qualified librarians from all universities in Pakistan found that librarians there favoured a result-oriented autocratic form of leadership (Awan & Mahmood, 2010). Another study found strong alignment with transactional leadership in Malaysia but respondents in Australia favoured the transformational style (Uma, 2010). A study of the strategic leadership style found the national differences in this single leadership style across countries (Olie & Rao-Nicholson, 2018). These studies back the argument that there is no single leadership style that suits all cultures (Awan & Mahmood, 2010, Uma, 2010) and therefore, highlighting the sophistications of the leadership process (Anderson, 2010; Uma, 2010; Van Wart, 2014).

The challenge of an uncertain future compels that librarians continue to find new ways to reach out to the needs of students and other stakeholders (ALIA, 2014; Lankes, 2011; Nitecki, & Davis, 2017). Consequently, evolving library skills are fundamental to address the challenges of change and perform effectively (Corrall, Kennan & Afzal, 2013; Cox & Pinfield, 2014; Piorun, 2013). Yet, there continue to be a slow workforce renewal, in addition to the ageing workforce in Australian library profession (ALIA, 2017; Hallam, 2007). While the knowledge of leadership in the public sector (including university libraries) is at the infant stage in comparison to the private sector (Orazi, Turrini & Valotti, 2013), There is lack of consensus on required skills for academic librarians (Davis, 2015; Rossiter, 2007). Yet, libraries are under pressure to realign its services to meet the educational needs of their clients to sustain relevance for the university (Campbell, 2006; Gibbons, 2007; Johnson, Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2015). Consequently, effective leadership is critical to articulate a future-ready vision and formulate strategy and its successful implementation (Basu, 2015; Jiang, 2014). Such leadership in libraries should be global in outlook, flexible in nature, open to the views of others, be able to embrace change, and redefine the future (Popp, 2012; Sandhu, 2015). Therefore, the library leadership should also engage in critical future-oriented exercises such as environmental scanning, strategic planning and implementation, and staff skill-building. Accordingly, many emphasised the need for continuing empirical research for a better understanding of leadership in the higher education sector and its libraries (Harland, Stewart, & Bruce, 2018; Johnson et al., 2015; Morehart, 2015).

This study

The objective of this qualitative study was to develop new knowledge in the field of leadership by addressing the key factors that contribute to effective leadership in Australian university libraries (AULs) from the perspective of chief university librarians. The research hypothesised that effective leadership is critical to address the stakeholder needs in AULs. Satisfactory access to information resources, developing appropriate staff skills, plan and implement appropriate strategies and adoption of required technologies to provide sustainable quality services are critical in addressing client and other stakeholder needs.

In the data collection, a sample of 20 interview participants (informants) was from 37 Australian public universities in different states and territories except for the Northern Territory and Tasmania. However, the interviews stopped at the 18th as data saturation was evident. The data gathered from interviews conducted in 2014 for the PhD thesis of Gunapala (2017) consider still valid as the same change forces continue to operate. Primary data for the research were from semi-structured face-to-face interviews of chief university librarians for which interview questions were based on themes and concepts from reviewing the literature. AUL reports/plans/policies (e.g., strategic plans, performance reviews, and development policy) relating to the management of libraries concerned were also other sources of primary data considered. Most of the library reports were accessed from web pages of AULs or the Internet. Secondary data used consists of journal articles, books, websites, and reports that have been used in the literature review. Transcribing interviews, finding and coding concepts/themes were manual. Two Microsoft Excel matrices created assisted data analysis, one to record primary data and the other for secondary data.

Data analysis and discussion

Management literature consider leadership as a critical skill for organisational performance (Castiglione, 2006; Chou, 2014; Yukl, 2013). Changing higher educational environment made leadership an essential expertise in managing university libraries, and therefore, AULs have been implementing various methods to develop leadership skills of their staff. When asked about the leadership skill development methods within their institutions, the informants cited the most important methods they considered implementing. Among them, the university's and the library's training programmes (U1, U4, U6, U8, U10, U11, U13, U14), external training (U6, U7, U11, U8, U10, U13, U14), and mentoring/coaching programmes (U1, U7, U8, U10, U13) were shown to be the most widely used. Though informants have not mentioned all the methods implemented in their libraries, reports/plans/policies/websites of AULs are of evidence to various staff development methods that include short-term acting leadership positions, project leadership positions, celebrating achievements and new recruitments as methods implemented for training and improving knowledge and skills of library staff. Slow staff turnover was indicated as a problem (U11, U18) in recruiting new staff with

leadership skills. Creating new positions is also a difficulty in an environment of declining public funding and shrinking staff numbers. Consequently, turnover of staff is an opportunity to improve the leadership skills of staff as it provides openings for others to act in positions of leadership or to recruit new staff with the required new knowledge and skills (U11).

Informants of the research (except U17) highlighted the leadership characteristics they thought critical in managing their libraries (see Table 3). Among the leadership characteristics, informants emphasised the significance of communication to motivate their staff, align them with the vision of the library and the university to work towards achieving institutional goals. Literature also emphasised communication with stakeholders as a critical factor in management for better performance (Basu, 2015; Cole, 2018; Woodward & Shaffakat, 2017). The informants employed varying communication approaches, such as encouraging two-way communication, managing by walking around, getting to know every staff member by name, attending team meetings from time to time, sending emails, and attending all staff meetings. Informants emphasised the need for communication to be open, honest, and consultative. As a cost centre of the university, informants also identified the importance of upward communication with senior university management to demonstrate the value the library adds to university business, and thereby secure their support for funding. Understandably, Library reports, strategic plans as well as staff meetings of AULs are methods employed for leadership to communicate and discuss such issues with their staff. These findings are consistent with findings in the existing literature that recognises the significance of communication skills for leadership to enquire, listen, understand the needs of clients and other stakeholders to foster a market-driven organisation (CAUL, 2014; Gomathi, 2014; Woodward & Shaffakat, 2017).

The answers to a question on their leadership styles demonstrate the diversity of styles among the informants (see Table 3). As shown on the table, the informants identified their leadership styles as enthusiastic, visionary, transformational, collegiate, humanist and team-oriented, motivational, family-oriented, inclusive, agile, strategic, management by walking around, adaptive, people-oriented, delegator, cautious, motivational, situational or mixed. An analysis of the leadership characteristics of informants' shows the differences and similarities between these leadership styles of different informants (see Table 4).

All leadership styles of the informants conceded the critical value of communication to gain staff support or align with organisational strategy and goals which were mentioned as essential by almost all the informants. One informant (U1) stated the need for engaging with the staff across the whole university as essential to align with the university environment to meet stakeholder needs since the library is a branch of the university. As discussed before, all informants use various staff development methods to develop the leadership skills of its staff. Therefore, it is evident that all informants'

Table 3: Leadership styles of interview participants (informants)

| Leadership style | Characteristics | Participant |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Enthusiastic | Good communication, keen, engage with staff across the library and the university, align with what is happening in the university environment, be visible, listen and be clear about where the library is heading. | U1 |
| Visionary | Set direction and vision, consultative, want people with different talents on senior leadership team, astute to how organisation work, looks at the big picture, trustworthy, transparent, respectful, ethical, brave, continue learning, keep an open mind, bring in as many different bodies of knowledge, good communication, knowledge in finance and HRD, looking for best practice, strategic thinking, negotiation skills critical, alignment of people to organisational goals, suitable culture. | U2 |
| Transformational style | Using the most appropriate style at a given time but mostly transformational, good inter-personal skills, good communication, vision, well-developed goals and objectives, manage by walking around, occasionally become directional as necessary, and thinks important to get the support of rest of the staff. | U3 |
| Collegiate | Rely on staff support, set the direction with the help of the leadership group, makes hard decisions, do not dictate what should happen, build trust, transparent, consult and collaborate, encourage two-way communication, need to be able to make decisions and to take risks, everybody work together to deliver what is needed, vision, alignment of people to organisational goals, suitable culture. | U4 |
| Humanist, and team-oriented | Team oriented, respectful of people, transparent process, use a mix of styles, good communication, empowerment of staff, good culture, vision, and alignment of people to organisational goals. | U5 |
| Motivational style | Change leader and a motivator, committed to metrics management, good communication, decisive and impatient when it takes a longer time than anticipated, vision. | U6 |
| Family comes first culture | Supporting people in flexible work arrangements and wellness culture, optimistic and happy, communicates well, recognises that staff has another life – family, decision making by consensus as well as by the leader when necessary. | U7 |
| Inclusive | Openness and listening, respectful and cordial, two-way communication, alignment of people to organisational goals, transparent, suitable culture. | U8 |
| Agile & strategic | Making connections with strategic direction, connections with people and demonstrate the strategy to the organisation, good communication. | U9 |
| Inclusive and strategic | Strategic planning and implementation of it through projects, openness, communication in all directions, vision, alignment of people to organisational goals, transparent, suitable culture. | U10 |
| Management by walking around | Uses various communication channels, use of bibliometrics for information. | U11 |

| Leadership style | Characteristics | Participant |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------|
| Adapt | Consultative, build relationships, collects information and act systematically, open to learning, manage the capacity of people, respond to what organisation wants, like everyone in the organisation to succeed, empower people, good communication, and sometimes uses other leadership styles as necessary. | U12 |
| People-oriented | Giving recognition and appreciation when something is done, consider the willingness of people to follow you as essential for achieving goals and objectives, compassionate, respectful and timely, three-way communication, vision, alignment of people to organisational goals, transparent, suitable culture. | U13 |
| Delegator | Leadership as setting direction and clear goals, no micromanaging or control, set standards, leading by example, fair, good communication with staff, moving around to be seen by staff, remembering names of all staff as important, make people understand the responsibility of leadership – looking after the interest of the library as of primary importance, likes hierarchical organisation with a clear understanding of responsibilities and accountabilities. | U14 |
| Cautious | Strong views, listen to people, compliment people when good work is done, cautious because of continuous change in every level – university level as well, good communication, alignment of people. | U15 |
| Motivational | Encourage staff to be creative and experiment, uses a directive style when necessary, good communication. | U16 |
| Situational | Collaborates, engages, and communicates, encourage people to learn, directive when necessary, different people need different leadership styles. | U18 |

libraries were using staff development programmes to develop necessary skills of library staff, and therefore, endorsing that all informants' consideration of the learning organisation concept as significant. Support or the engagement with staff (15 informants) and the strategic alignment of the library (12 informants) also proven as essential leadership characteristics. Out of 15 informants who valued engaging with staff, U7 is a noteworthy characteristic with the family-oriented relationship. Among other leadership characteristics, nine informants valued ethical aspects of leadership, and among them, U7 is again unique with family comes first leadership style. Seven informants cited vision as a necessary leadership characteristic. Six of the informants had symptoms analogous to charismatic leadership. They were either motivational, like to move around and be visible, wanted to remember all staff by name (U14) or wanted staff members to be creative (U16). Library culture was also an essential characteristic of six informants. Three informants also valued the transactional/ managerial styles or micromanaging at times, and therefore, one of them (U14) preferred the hierarchical organisation. Among the informants, five informants indicated that their preference for mixed style of leadership of whom U3 preferred transformational style, U3 and U16 directive at times, and U18 used diverse styles based on the situation and the characteristics of different people.

Table 4: Leadership styles and characteristics of key informants

| Leadership Characteristics Leadership styles | Communication | Strategic alignment | Vision | Staff support | Culture | Charismatic Motivational Visible | Ethical Trustworthy Respectful | Managerial Micro-management | Learning organisation | Mixed style |
|---|---------------|---------------------|--------|---------------|---------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Enthusiastic (U1) | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | ★ | | | ★ | |
| Visionary (U2) | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | ★ | |
| Transformational (U3) | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | ★ | ★ | | ★ | ★ |
| Collegiate (U4) | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | ★ | |
| Humanist & Team-oriented (U5) | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | | ★ | | ★ | ★ |
| Motivational (U6) | ★ | | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | ★ | ★ | |
| Family comes First (U7) | ★ | | | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | ★ | |
| Inclusive (U8) | ★ | ★ | | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | ★ | |
| Agile & Strategic (U9) | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | | | | ★ | |
| Inclusive & Strategic (U10) | ★ | ★ | | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | ★ | |
| Management by Walking around (U11) | ★ | | | | | | | ★ | ★ | |
| Adapt (U12) | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | | | | ★ | ★ |
| People-oriented (U13) | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | ★ | |
| Delegator (U14) | ★ | ★ | | ★ | | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | |
| Cautious (U15) | ★ | ★ | ★ | | | ★ | | | ★ | |
| Motivational (U16) | ★ | | | ★ | | ★ | | | ★ | ★ |
| Situational (U18) | ★ | | | ★ | | | | | ★ | ★ |

As Table 4 demonstrates, leadership styles of informants were not mutually exclusive. Still, some characteristics were common to most leadership styles demonstrating the complexity and not having widely accepted classification of leadership styles. Consequently, the research found the Leadership styles of AULs as a mixture of different styles based on the need of the situation. The leadership styles would alter depending on the circumstances, such as a mandatory imprimatur from above or being in control of needed change, but open to negotiation, consultation, discussion, or directional at times based on one's perception and ways of handling and solving problems.

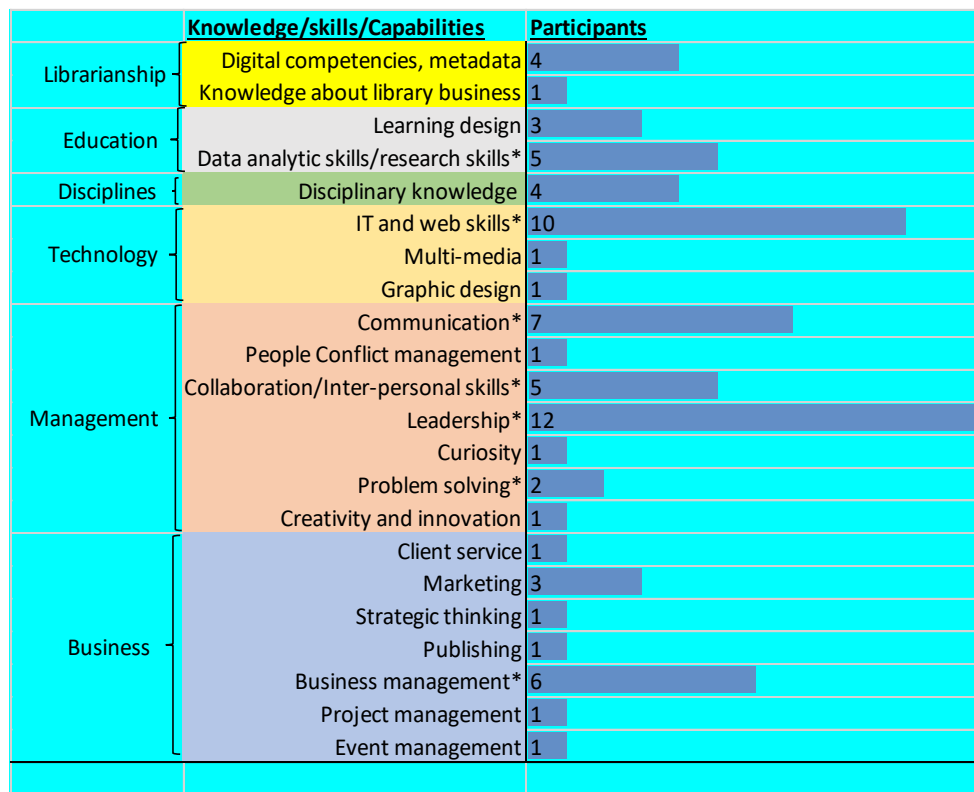
Findings of the research confirm the views in the academic commentary that no single leadership style fits all situations (Jasper, 2018; McCleskey, 2014; Northouse, 2013) and the complexity of the leadership process as it concerns with people in a rapidly changing organisational environment (Linburg & Schneider, 2012; Obolensky, 2014; Rothman & Melwani, 2017). It is widely accepted the possibility

of developing leadership skills through education and training (Flinn, 2018; Gordon & Gordon, 2017; Northouse, 2016). Yet, the differences in leadership styles of informants of this research also confirm the findings of other researchers that personality, trait and culture as vital factors influencing one's leadership style (Awan & Mahmood, 2010; Hassan, Asad, & Hoshino, 2016; Sahraee & Abdullah, 2018; Uma, 2010). Moreover, different leadership styles of informants of this research also back the claim that the leadership in a globalised world and multicultural societies as a challenge for communication and managing organisations (Chin, Trimble & Garcia, 2017; Barnett & Carter, 2018).

Some informants of the research also commented on the barriers to library management. With the impact of advancing ICT and the resultant paradigm shift (Gunapala, 2017), university library leadership is experiencing the need for new knowledge and skills for its effective management. Informant U9 mentioned that many library staff holding the view that the physical library as their world and changing that attitude as a challenge. This revelation possibly demonstrates the gravity of leadership to educate staff concerning the impact of disruptive technologies on university libraries. Informant U16 considered a unionised workforce as a distinct barrier to their change processes. This issue is also a problem connected with leadership involving communication, negotiation, and problem-solving. Therefore, effective leadership to overcome obstacles to change in AULs is essential or critical as suggested in the literature on managing change (Düren, 2013; Feldmann, Level & Liu, 2013; Hussain et al., 2018). Table 3 and Figure 1 also demonstrate the significance informants attached to business and management knowledge such as vision, communication, human resource management, strategic planning, and leadership. Therefore, to swiftly adapt AULs to the changing environment, some mentioned the relevance of knowledge of business management as critical new knowledge. In contrast, others identified branches of business management such as client service, marketing, strategic thinking, publishing, project management and event management as new knowledge essential for managing libraries.

This research endorses the proposition in the literature that the significance of business management knowledge in library management, as the competition libraries experience and the value the university library must contribute to the higher education enterprise to remain a relevant organisation (Corrall, 2010; Marcum, 2016; Raju, 2014). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 has profoundly impacted on higher education and its libraries (Jæger, & Blaabæk, 2020; Brammer, & Clark, 2020; University of Illinois, 2020). This situation has created an unanticipated obligation for university library leadership to speed up the adoption of necessary technologies and the business management knowledge and skills to modernise library operations and access to information to address the associated challenges successfully.

Figure 1: New knowledge requirements



Conclusion

This study empirically examined the key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of leadership in AULs. Findings of the study confirm the perception that the changing environment challenges the model of the traditional university library. In the present time of paradigm shift, AULs are modernising operations, and therefore require new knowledge and skills for sustainable performance of its libraries. The challenges of COVID-19 pandemic provided an unprecedented push to recalibrate library services. This study provides an understanding of the resulting challenges for library leadership and the importance of new knowledge and skills to think outside the box and promptly and effectively address the problems to continue remaining as a value-adding constituent of the university. Among such skills, library leaders may find it necessary to switch to different styles of leadership as appropriate for effective library management. The theoretical contributions of this research may also have relevance to university libraries in other countries depending on the environmental factors such as the impact of technological advances, market forces, and financial constraints. It is a limitation of this research that the sample of interview participants was limited to chief university librarians. Also, using the mix-method of research may have helped in consolidating the findings. Taking appropriate caution is also necessary when applying the findings of this research for libraries outside Australia depending on the socio-economic differences. Similarly, the applicability of the findings to other libraries (other than

university libraries) in the public sector in Australia can also have limitations depending on the circumstances. Therefore, continuing research is necessary to understand the role of leadership to manage university libraries effectively.

As it is a time of paradigm shift, managing university libraries is both complex and changing. The library leadership strategy must ensure adaptability, adding and creating value to teaching, learning and research outcomes of universities. There appear to be no clear future direction apart from that the library leadership should remain mindful of satisfying its stakeholder needs and continuing to add value in transforming the university enterprise. Managing university libraries is not about trying to preserve the traditional university library. Library leadership must explore new opportunities and directions, and exploit non-traditional knowledge, skills and capabilities that are becoming critical in exploring their way forward. Historical evolution of the library is a story of change. Therefore, appropriate leadership is paramount for the transformation of the library to the future.

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