



21st Century Leadership Webinar Interview Series

Resilient Lens Panel Summary



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The University of Lincoln's - Lincoln International Business School (LIBS) continues to lead an impact agenda orientated towards actively contributing to a global world. Championed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor and Director Prof. Craig Marsh, the 'Resilient Lincolnshire – Global' initiative framed a series of 4 lenses 'for seeing more and seeing differently'. This initiative provided a solid foundation for cementing the work of the Centre of Organisational Resilience, Chaired by Prof. Dean Fathers. With the leadership and support of the Business Development team, Mrs Ruchi Aggarwal, Head of Business Development at LIBS, this next phase of work with 4 panel sessions was launched in November 2020. These panel sessions were designed to foster a global dialogue between industry practitioners, policy makers and academics, exploring tactical ways for navigating the Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) times we are all experiencing.

The first of four events was held on the 4th November 2020 providing a focus on the 'Resilience Lens' and was orientated to explore ways in which to create 'Resilience Leadership' for a VUCA world. The main purpose of this event was to discuss global tendencies and case studies, and explore what leadership best supports organizations to develop agility.

The panel was led by Prof. Elena P. Antonacopoulou, Visiting Professor of Organisational Resilience at LIBS and the panel members were:

- Professor Anne Bardoel, Course Director of the Master of HRM, Swinburne Business School (Australia)
- Mr Luong Manh Dao, CEO, Maven Group (Vietnam)
- Professor Urs Hauenstein, President of the International Council for Education and Management (Switzerland)
- Ms Farrah Losper, Senior Director, Head of HIV, Tender & Vaccines for CIPLA (South Africa)
- Professor Kamlesh Misra, Vice Chancellor of Rishihood University (India)

Prof Antonacopoulou opened the discussion by highlighting that Resilient Leadership is called for in a VUCA world. Such leadership both at the individual and organisational level will be critical in galvanising the learning necessary to ensure that we not only react but respond to VUCA conditions. Based on published work¹ she highlighted the VUCA learning leadership framework drawing attention to the importance of responding to:

- *Volatility* by creating a new *Vision* through greater safety in *Vulnerability*
- *Uncertainty* calls for new *Understanding*, through a capacity to remain *Unnerved* by the unknown;
- *Complexity* demands *Clarity* through using *Candour* and
- *Ambiguity* calls for *Agility* through an *Awakening* of the potential future making we are invited to co-create.

¹ Antonacopoulou, E.P. (2018a) Energising Critique in Action and in Learning. The GNOSIS 4R Framework. *Action Learning: Research and Practice*. 15(2): 102-125.

Antonacopoulou, E.P. (2018b). Organisational Learning for and with VUCA: Learning Leadership Revisited. *Teoria e Prática em Administração* (8(2): 10-32.

The panel discussion elaborated tangibly on this Resilience Leadership framework, by addressing three themes: Understanding resilience anew; exploring whether resilience can be taught and learned and finally, the impact of resilience.

1. What is resilience?

From her perspective of employee resilience in the workplace context, Prof Anne Bardoel introduced the discussion by clarifying that resilience is critical to organisational effectiveness in preventing negative outcomes such as low productivity, low morale, low commitment and adaptability to change in the workplace. Organisational resilience can equip employees with an enhanced capability to respond to change and adversity, which nowadays occurs regularly and unpredictably.

In her view, the three categories of the way we think about resilience are:

1. a basic ability to maintain a state of normal equilibrium in the face of extremely unfavourable circumstances;
2. the capacity to develop a high degree of competence in spite of working in a stressful environment, i.e. how, apart from maintaining equilibrium, one can adapt and move forward;
3. a potential for growth - a form of cognitive adaptation to a threat that restores people not only to a prior level of functioning, but also enables them to find new meaning in their lives.

Applying these categories collectively, Anne pointed to the two core concepts of short-term vs. long-term *adversity* on the one hand and *positive adaptation* on the other hand, in defining resilience as '*a capacity or process of adjustment and response to change and adversity which occurs regularly and unpredictably*'. This conceptualisation of resilience is unique in that it is cast in terms of resource depletion and expansion, and contrasts with Hobfoll et al.'s (2015) notion that individuals seek to "return to their pre-stressor state".

To complement and juxtapose the academic perspective, a corporation's perspective, was presented by Mr Luong Manh Dao, CEO of Maven Group (Vietnam). He views the COVID19 pandemic as an opportunity to seize the moment to reconfigure the business model, itself an act of organisational resilience. In this sense, he advises corporations to transfer the meaning of resilience from it being a destination in the process of employee self-development to *resilience becoming a way of being*.

Based on the group reflection and brainstorming initiatives he has been leading at Maven Group, Mr Dao mentioned the three actions to reach organisational resilience:

- *respond* to situations quickly
- *recover* quickly previous strengths, leaving aside diversification goals; and
- *reconfigure* the business model

This is the Maven Group's approach to navigating the current pandemic crisis in Vietnam, by applying the 3R model – *Respond, Recovery and Reconfigure*.

Ms Farrah Losper, in her capacity as Head of HIV, Tender & Vaccines for Cipla (South Africa) explained why resilience is a core leadership capability, why it is particularly relevant in the

times we find ourselves in now, and shared some practical insights around how this capability can be fostered by organizations and leaders in their people. She expanded the learning from what organisations do to foster resilience by extending our understanding of the concept beyond the traditional view of bouncing back from adversity. Cipla is renowned as one of the largest global companies providing access to quality and affordable medicines. Ms Losper described resilience beyond just the ability to bounce back from set backs, but as those mechanisms that allow individuals to respond positively to pressure, constantly changing priorities and the demands of daily life, both at work and at home.

Given these VUCA times, and the constant pressures on people, her message to organizations is to engage with employees to build resilience and to provide them with skills and resources to cope.

This being a critical characteristic for people and especially for managers, at Cipla they foster resilience through engagement and initiatives which include:

- communicating and living our purpose of caring for life, as part of Cipla's core mission, because when the 'why' is established, it allows the organisation and employees to focus on their purpose and the bigger picture;
- focusing on various wellness initiatives on the mental and physical health balance of their employees;
- prioritizing communication with employees , to reduce uncertainty, to increase the employees' sense of overall perspective;
- fostering a culture of recognition through appreciation and acknowledgement, which results in employees' positive attitudes and perseverance in challenging and difficult times. It is particularly important at Cipla to celebrate the wins, both big and small.

Ms Losper reiterated that the resilient employee is the one who will thrive in these VUCA times, and so Cipla will continue to focus on building resilience in our employees and leaders.

Prof Elena Antonacopoulou observed how leadership is both individual and collective and organisational leadership in living our purpose is critically demonstrating organisational resilience.

Prof. Urs Hauenstein viewed resilience as a global phenomenon, especially during the global pandemic crisis, as President of the International Council for Education and Management (Switzerland) and answered the question of declaring resilience by demanding that crises such as the current pandemic were recognized as an invitation for "global resilience". He considers global resilience as the key to success in difficult situations in which a number of disorders of global magnitude are driving significant advances not only in the medical field but also through digitization, the activities of Generation i-Gen, and many other 'disruptions'. Humanity will probably not get out of the present 'Times of Disruption' for the next few decades, therefore requiring that both private individuals and organizations become 'resilient' in order to successfully get through these crises.

Experts within the International Council for Education and Management view disruption as the new norm in the long run, forcing individuals, legal entities and corporations to practise solving global problems as if they were a key, eye-opening leader in assessing what strengths are there in the affected world and what else is needed to become more resilient

worldwide. The bridge to the historically argued concept of *sustainability needs a new supporting pillar, resilience*. While resilience will be a milestone in the sustainability process in the future, others will follow.

2. Can Resilience be taught and learned?

Prof Kamlesh Misra, in his capacity of Vice Chancellor of Rishihood University (India), viewed resilience as *the act of inescapably bouncing forward*, in which resilience leadership must *constantly align the vision and strategy with the purpose and identity of a university*. The degree of resilience in a Higher Education (HE) institution is more profound compared with any other profession and industry, given that HE is the place from where humanity is trying to change the moving target, this making it a more erratic work environment.

Since the true test of resilient leadership only happens in rare occasions of global crisis, academics are responding resiliently in two distinctive ways:

1. by responding to the call for moving humanity forward through:
 - a timely embrace of the opportunity to research and
 - through presenting case studies;
2. by adapting and adopting the technology-based online education.

Therefore, academia must prepare for similar future crises that can hit unexpectedly, not only internally (e.g. responding to an economic crisis, when various sources of revenue close down) and also externally, by cultivating resilience through nurturing dreams, hopes and possibilities for moving us forward.

Prof Urs Hauenstein pointed out the key competencies for dealing with the three global disruptions above:

- problem solving in difficult situations
- creativity - finding new innovative ways that are not merely about change management but rather about world transformation (even a metamorphosis) during present and future difficult situations
- mindfulness
- good citizenship
- ethics and responsibility and
- social behaviour.

Prof Elena Antonacopoulou prompted the panel to reflect on the role Universities can play in supporting resilience learning not only in terms of developing competence, but also cultivate humanity by addressing the *'humane poverty'* that otherwise VUCA conditions so clearly expose.

Prof Anne Bardoel offered a typology of resilience within a framework for practical development of resilience, drawing on the concepts of *Conservation of Resources Theory (CRT)* which promotes 'acceptance resilience' and 'strategic resilience'. She clarified these as follows:

- *Acceptance resilience involves positive actions in response to adversity which are resource-preserving.*

- *Strategic resilience involves positive actions in response to adversity which are resource-enhancing.*

These two concepts stand for, respectively:

- *resource preserving* – e.g. selecting new, resilient employees; and
- *resource investing* – e.g. investing in the training of existing employees, in terms of different types of resilience.

In terms of CRT, in practice what this means is that individuals and organisations act for: obtaining, retaining and protecting resources. Such resources could be: instrumental (budgets) social (support networks) and psychological (emotions, wellbeing).

Specifically, individuals with greater resources in general may typically have a greater range of options available to respond to adversity and resources will tend to utilize strategic resilience relatively more often than those with fewer resources. Considering education, highly educated individuals may be in high demand in the job market or have a network of close friends in professional circles, making job loss a relatively minor concern, compared to someone with low levels of human capital and networks of similarly situation friends.

In the Table below are examples of characteristics related to acceptance and strategic resilience and are the basis for determining the attributes needed to be developed.

Prospective Workplace Characteristics Associated with Employee Resilience²

Characteristic type	Acceptance Resilience	Strategic Employee Resilience
General characteristics	Dangerous work Job insecurity	Dangerous work Job insecurity
Job characteristics	Limited decision latitude Close supervision Low skill levels Limited training Routinized tasks Top-down communication “Traditional” resilience training	Wide decision latitude Employee involvement High skill levels Frequent training Task variety Horizontal and vertical communication Alternative compensation systems Family-friendly work practices
Work organization	Traditional	High-performance work systems
Organizational values	Conservation Authoritarian Stability orientation	Openness to change Promote employee voice Team orientation Innovative orientation People orientation

² Bardoel, E.A. (2018). Tougling it out or figuring it out: Two approaches to employee resilience, *Work, Employment & Society Conference*, Belfast, September 12-15

Prof Elena Antonacopoulou observed that these categories need not only to be adopted, but also combined at different points in time. This creates beyond a systemic approach an entanglement (*'symplegma'*) that strengthens relating and forming bonds which are critical to organisational resilience.

Ms Farrah Losper then offered two key points about learning and building resilience in teams emphasising that resilience leadership at Cipla is developed, nurtured and practised, by embedding awareness (what it means and why does it make a difference both at work and in one's personal life) as a starting point. Some practical steps for fostering and building resilience, drawn from experience at Cipla in 2020 drew attention to the following:

- encourage individuals to find their 'why', with the effect of calming the mind and increasing focus, thus acting purposefully
- communicate regularly and in different forums, this will serve to reduce uncertainty
- encourage the mindset of problems as learning journeys – individuals and teams need to know that it is ok to make mistakes, the focus needs to be on learning
- fostering employee wellness by:
 - reducing uncertainty as much as possible
 - reassuring employees, comforting and clarifying
 - prioritising the wellness (mental and emotional) of employees and their families
- encourage teams to build their social networks in peer teams; and
- celebrate wins through acknowledgement and appreciation.

In this perspective, the stepping stones in achieving resilience leadership in teams are:

- starting with awareness
- nurturing an individual ability to commit to building their skillset in resilience and
- the organisation's commitment to support, enable and foster the individual actions with adequate programmes and initiatives.

All these measures were applied at Cipla and a key lesson from this process is that *resilience arises when individuals have clarity and ability to commit to building skillsets over time* – it doesn't just manifest overnight.

Ms Farrah also highlighted that fostering resilience is a *joint responsibility* between individuals, and individuals and organisations. The individuals need to commit to building their skillset and capabilities, and the organization needs to support and enable this journey of the individual. Building and fostering resilience should be a key item on the Human Capital Agenda.

3. What is the impact of being resilient, as an individual and as a community?

Mr Luong Manh Dao added a new perspective regarding the sustainability of a business working in a developing country (Vietnam). He highlighted the appreciation of all the present economic disruptions as a call for *resilience as a way of being*. This perspective transforms resilience from a crucial ability, given all the present disruption and so many

unforeseen factors affecting a brand, to a way of living and working. Resilience today is a vital factor in individuals' and organisations' way of being.

Thinking about metrics for measuring resilience and its impact, Prof Anne Bardoel noted that there are a considerable number of measurements at the individual level, much of this work having been pioneered within the military industry. Moreover, there are also a lot of frameworks and tools to measure resilience in different contexts, such as those in organisational behaviour which include: leadership, strategy, wellbeing (e.g. income and food access). Resilience training, such as HardiTraining (Khoshaba, 2012), the Penn Resilience program, the U.S. Army Ready and Resilient program, and the Mayo Clinic's resilience education and training program³, each train individuals to be resilient without management interventions to promote employee voice.

In terms of resilience measurement at work, organisations have a very important role in providing resilience enhancing practices and initiatives for their people, e.g. social support and employee assistance programmes for people who work from home and are facing mental health issues and domestic violence. Observing that there are also some great programmes focusing on developing resilience in people, e.g. occupational health and safety systems or risk and crisis management systems, one metric she suggested was to look at what exactly is an organisation providing to its employees. e.g. development of social supports at work; work–life balance practices; employee assistance programs; employee development programs, such as resilience training; flexible work arrangements, reward and benefits systems; occupational health and safety systems; risk and crisis management systems; and diversity management⁴.

Ms Farrah Losper extended our understanding of what can help businesses think about investing in resilience programmes. The very core purpose of a business being a return on investment together with the uncertainty spurred by the present pandemic are sufficient pressure to discourage firms from investing in people initiatives presently, treating resilience programmes as a 'nice to have' but not a priority. However, at a closer look, higher employee engagement, morale and productivity, teamed with lower absenteeism and lower attrition rate are signs of employee centred investments as part of the company's strategic priorities, which ultimately translates to the bottom line as well, in terms of profits. Therefore she concludes that resilience and a growth mindset are winning capabilities in a VUCA world. She prompts business executives to consider not only the impact of investing in resilience but also *at what cost, in such uncertain times, would companies avoid investing in ensuring that their biggest asset, their human capital, is able to adapt, respond and thrive under pressure.*

Exploring the topic of how resilience could be extended in ways that can be measured, Prof Kamlesh Misra viewed it in a layered process:

³ For descriptions of the latter three programs, see <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/services/penn-resilience-training>, <http://readyandresilient.army.mil/>, and <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/resilience-training/care-at-mayo-clinic/pcc-20394949>, respectively

⁴ Bardoel, E.A., Pettit, T., De Cieri, H. & McMillan, L. (2014). Employee resilience: An emerging challenge for HRM, *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 52, 279–297

- starting from a mindset and *making resilience a value system and an organisation culture would ensure that resilient leadership is to be found at all levels – individual, team and organisation;*
- viewing resilience as an antidote to the present global crisis, then everybody would need to have such a '*resilience culture vaccine* – this should be universal, not just an organisational culture;
- for a practical step, he advocated the creation of a second line of defense, initiated at top leadership levels, in spite of how their insecurities might interfere with this initiative. Creating this crucial second line of defense would help toward solving all crises even in the absence of top leadership and this would be in itself a sign of great and resilient leadership, potentially generating lot of progress.

Finally, Prof. Urs Hauenstein made it clear that the necessary implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for transforming the world as a holistic and inclusive approach is an important basis for further work and offered as reference the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) of the UN (2015)⁵. He mentioned the new project of the International Council for Education and Management (Switzerland): "One world for us all", from which some suggestions for learning for the future are made:

- We all have to ask ourselves what is a good world for us in the future?
- How can we improve corporate behavior in the world at government level as well as, in the management of NGOs or organizations?
- What is good citizenship and how do we get it?
- How can we work to strengthen real peace in all processes worldwide and
- How can we eradicate poverty?

A question from the open chat about helping young people to develop resilience by providing tangible support, sparked suggestions such as:

- building and maintaining supportive social networks (Prof Anne Bardoel); Social support has been identified by COR theorists as playing an important role in widening an individual's pool of available resources and replacing and reinforcing other resources that have been lacking (Hobfoll 1989). Caring relationships, defined as those that involve the interplay of self and others, play an important role in employee resilience and workplaces that enhance such relationships are associated with employee resilience.
- the concept of pervasive learning culture in universities (Prof. Kamlesh Misra);
- encouraging curiosity, inquiry and quick learning from mistakes (Prof. Kamlesh Misra);
- practising active listening (Prof. Kamlesh Misra); and
- giving active hands-on help (Prof. Kamlesh Misra).

Key Lessons

The panel sessions were designed to show how the co-creation of actionable knowledge by connecting the voices and perspectives of multiple stakeholders can provide practical support. From this discussion, we distil the following key lessons:

⁵ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

1. Resilience should be a ubiquitous way of being, which can be developed through the commitment of employees and organisations to join forces in nurturing wellbeing through a blend of purposeful individual learning, a resilience-oriented organisational culture and practical supportive initiatives.
2. Resilience can be learned in the presence of:
 - awareness of purpose and vision
 - readiness to take action responsibly in navigating the unknown and
 - readiness to take on new learning curves with curiosity and candour in identifying innovative ways for bringing about world transformation.
3. The impact of resilience is the outcome of our actions that promises both our own individual quality of life, as well as purposeful potential in the collective pursuit of bouncing forward from adversity in a supportive workplace, based on a partnership of intent both at the individual and on the organisational level.

We are delighted that at LIBS these learning agenda is now informing the launch of a series of Masterclasses to support Resilience Leadership development. We invite you to explore this new program of work and join us and be part of delivering the impact of Resilience Leadership through strong *Partnerships*, renewed *Purpose*, honouring the *Promise* to serve the common good and investing in *Potential* growth. These dimensions are distinguishing our work at LIBS and the Centre for Organisational Resilience.

