



# 21st Century Leadership Webinar Interview Series

## Emotional Lens Panel Summary



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## Emotion LENS

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 second of four panel events was held on the 12th November 2020 and focused on the 'Emotion Lens' of leadership to explore the key traits of an emotionally connected leader in VUCA times. It covered concepts such as awakening self-awareness, inclusive leadership, strategic coaching/mentoring for success and accepting our own vulnerability as a sign of inner strength.

The panel was chaired by Prof Craig Marsh, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Director of the LIBS and the panel members were:

- Ms Simone L Bove, International Speaker & Advisor to Global Leaders (Bahamas);
- Dr Silvio De Bono, Managing Director, IDEA Educational Group (Malta);
- Prof Abigail Powell, Professor of Sociology and Social Policy, the Eleanor Glanville Centre and Consultancy Lead in the College of Social Science, University of Lincoln (UK);
- Prof Uday Salunkhe, Group Director, S.P. Mandali's Prin. L.N. Welinkar Institute of Management Development & Research (India);
- Dr Kalyani Unkule, Associate Professor and Head of Alumni Relations at O.P. Jindal Global University (India).

Prof Marsh opened the discussion by referring to Daniel Goleman's book 'Emotional Intelligence' to highlight the connection between strong performing leaders and emotional intelligence (EQ) - defined as *'the ability to monitor one's own and other people's emotions, and to use understanding of different emotions to guide one's thinking and behaviour'*.

Goleman's contribution to management thinking has steered the understanding of leadership effectiveness in relation to improved social relations, better psychological wellbeing and transformational leadership styles orientated towards compassion and empathy.

The panel proceeded to a lively discussion which addressed the following themes:

- Understanding EQ in relation to leadership, gender and age
- Developing EQ through mentorship
- The role of EQ in our drive for authentic leadership
- Global perspectives on EQ.

## **1. What role does emotion play in leadership, from the different perspectives of age, gender and leadership level?**

Pointing at the gender aspects in relation to both positive and negative emotions, Prof Abigail Powell presented emotion as a gendered concept - an example being the common stereotype that men are perceived as the rational leaders while women are described as emotional, the latter often carrying negative connotations. With this backdrop, EQ transpires in the way leaders deal with their internal emotions and also those of the people they are leading. The fact that women are probably socialised at a higher degree in terms of dealing with emotions may make women more comfortable in the realms of emotional leadership, but it commands caution about becoming too essentialist in working with stereotype-based concepts -evidence that women lead in one way and men in another way are lacking.

Considering whether our society is still burdened by this stereotype, Prof Powell acknowledged a positive progress away from this traditional thinking, at least theoretically and in publications, where the tendency is to leave the emotional discrepancy behind. However, examples of practical situations in a very male dominated industry (e.g. construction) reveal a preference toward a heroic and autocratic model of leadership and this can be challenging for both genders. Emotions are indeed used in this context, but they tend to follow the workplace culture, e.g. expectations of long working hours and presenteeism. In this context, a reward system that uses the emotion of shame exemplifies how emotions can be used in both positive and negative ways, almost as a 'weapon'.

Within the same context of the construction industry, Prof Powell explored the age-related tendency in leadership, to reveal whether EQ is in fact the benefit of senior leadership, not found so much at the junior levels. She observed that the notions of 'emotional leadership', 'authentic leadership', 'shared leadership' and 'systems leadership' are imparted through leadership training, usually at the senior levels and they tend to take a while to filter down through the ranks. While there are opportunities to display leadership, the workplace culture can set norms around expectations and behaviour rewards, causing further challenge in exposing emotional leadership.

Prof Kalyani Unkule highlighted the need to differentiate between 'emotional leadership' and 'emotional labour'. In this context emotional labour is performed by way of steady diversion of women's nurturing energies to the benefit of the organisation without any commensurate compensation or recognition. Gendered socialisation leads to normalisation of a disproportionate contribution of emotional labour by women creating conditions similar to the domestic sector where care-giving does not duly count towards aggregate output/productivity, despite being indispensable to the latter. It is often the case that pastoral care (e.g. in Universities) may be typically extended by women with the intention of supporting the smooth running of life at work in many organisations. Additionally, creating a welcoming work environment, making sure that everyone feels accepted and supported, minding the cleanliness around the coffee percolator and the bin - this kind of work can be conceived of as 'emotional labour' and must be noted that it is not measured nor factored in the routine evaluation procedures, so nobody receives any credit or additional appreciation for this kind of work. Two visible outcomes of this fact may be a slower career

progress to the top for these individuals and possibly it explains a lack of emotion and empathy at top leadership levels.

The chair, Prof Marsh concluded that, if this kind of labour falls unequally on women may be due to historical and socialisation reasons, causing a detrimental effect at the senior leadership level. This calls for rethinking the way different emotions work at different levels of an organisation and the need to recognise that emotion and leadership aren't necessarily entirely positive.

## 2. How do junior leaders develop EQ through mentoring?

Ms Simone Bowe addressed this point by drawing attention to the following aspects:

- any skill can be learned and perfected, including the concept of using emotions in a positive way;
- regulating emotions to a gender is a false idea, because as human beings we all have emotions that need to be expressed, without gender differences;
- with 97% of the people (including senior CEOs who have a mentor) mentoring can make a difference in leadership by:
  - improving productivity and increased profitability
  - encourages diversity, in particular advancing women and minorities
  - supports career advancement and progression as well as, retention particularly within the millennials' strata;

Daniel Goleman's model of EQ frames mentoring in four quadrants based on two aspects:

1. on the side of the 'who' we become:
  - self-awareness
  - social awareness
2. on the side of the 'doing' aspect of work:
  - self-management
  - relationship management



Fig. 1 – Mentoring + EQ [Source: Panel speaker PPT]

Drawing on her consulting work with global clients, a new challenge she found in the process of mentoring EQ, is the importance of keeping these two sides separate for the sake of understanding the difference between the 'what' one plans to become (usually in childhood) on maturing, which belongs to the 'doing' aspect of work and the 'who' we become, implying a state of being - in other words, *who we are and how we turn up at work vs. what we do and how we manage ourselves in our emotional states, including how we*

*cultivate and nurture relationships*. Thus, when we look at EQ in this diagram, the left side focuses on ‘who’ one is and how they show up in the world, with an understanding of themselves and other people; the right side focuses on the ‘do’, i.e. one’s actions or how they manage themselves in their emotional state and then how they cultivate and nurture relationships. The lesson here is that it is important for us to have strong self-awareness as leaders - understanding who we are (identity), why we are (purpose) and perhaps most importantly, our pain and struggles. It is these areas that greatly impact how successfully leaders can manage their emotions, communicate effectively, give and receive feedback, build and develop work relationships and teams while providing strategic, transformational, and inspirational direction.

Attention was drawn to the toxic side of this equation when it becomes apparent that people do not understand who they are and why they act the way they do, leading to certain things triggering off behaviours which may confuse other co-workers.

EQ can be especially helpful for young leaders to realise how they are supposed to show up in their work environment and, through mentoring, they can learn about their leadership brand from modelling their senior colleagues and the crucial subsequent feedback. In a relationship based on trust and respect, where open dialogue and feedback are encouraged, this helps young leaders acquire the crucial skill of navigating the workplace culture, relationships, office politics and varying dynamics in the workplace.

Ms Bowe expanded the discussion by emphasising the leadership difference will transpire in the open work environment, once a leader becomes intentional in growing the behaviours that EQ can provide. Leadership effectiveness becomes a catalyst for transforming the organisational culture *‘when organisations develop leaders who know ‘who’ they are, who are self-aware, who can identify what they’re feeling and when and can positively express that, when they can regulate their actions, when they can inspire other people, when they can show empathy and cultivate positive relationships.’* A way to account for such a cultural shift could be the lower statistics of people who leave their managers when they leave their jobs.

Looking at how these points are relevant at the senior leadership levels, she confirmed a perceived deficiency in EQ and a need for more empathy at this level, and also a reduction of their detached and disconnected behaviours expressed through decision-making and communication or lack thereof, in order to avoid escalations in which the HR professionals are called to mitigate.

To see if this state of facts is related to the concept of power, Dr. Silvio De Bono pointed out an exception to the previous discussion – the fact that leadership cannot be understood by categorising and labelling mechanically, giving as an example a paradox whereby:

- leaders may be highly emotional - thinking about themselves, family and their wellbeing, the future and the organisation as a whole;
- yet they are invisibly self-centred, appearing cold and unemotional externally.

Thus, when assessing leaders’ behaviours, awareness of a number of parameters is necessary, in open discussion to account for variances of:

- the types of organisational structure - mechanistic vs organic structure environments;

- the internal/external culture;
- the assumed risk of becoming lonely and unpopular for merely being the decision making leader in difficult times;
- leaders' emotionally detached behaviours may be a mirroring of the lack of emotion they are facing in the first place.

In other words, maybe senior leaders are not unemotional, but often in the context of their role, they may be perceived as such by others.

### **3. How is EQ helping our drive for authentic leadership?**

Prof Uday Salunkhe explained that the ratio of 80-85% EQ with 10-15% IQ is normal for success in senior leadership positions. Possessing high EQ is a non-negotiable part of senior leadership, but it must be and it has a greater chance to develop in a young and eager person when nurtured and mentored for leadership positions. In the context of a divided society, between opulent and deprived populations (India), Prof Salunkhe offered empirical evidence in the case of two ambitious youths whose survival skills in the face of adversities during their growing up stages were in fact the very teamwork and collaboration skills needed in effective leadership. They demonstrated innate EQ, service orientation, empathy and 'giving back' generosity and adaptability and they could reciprocate with life values for the nurturing and mentorship received in training.

Such 'community leadership', can only be nurtured from the grassroots-level, where empathy is deeply rooted in its essence, as a survival skill, in parallel to investments in teaching, training and nurturing. One of the youths exemplified in the example is currently at the helm of a leading bank in India, still governing by retaining his 'give back' nature. Prof Craig Marsh noted that, while in traditional cultures leadership is an individualistic characteristic, especially when one belongs to an elitist culture like France, EQ stems more from the empathetic regard for 'the other' rather than from the drive to prove one's own capabilities as an instinctive possession of EQ.

On the future orientation of leaders and their ability to adapt to circumstances, Dr. Silvio De Bono, having coined the term 'anticipatory leadership', explored the emotional requirements necessary for today's leaders to continue to be future leaders, by anticipating the future. He identified three pillars in support of future leadership:

1. preparation for leadership, which he perceives as lacking in present top-level leaders in relation to learning systematically instead of guessing in anticipating the future.

### **4. Is there a global leadership competence?**

Observing both positive and negative developments in leadership globally, Prof Powell highlighted the need for levelling gender polarities in effective leadership by applying EQ in a VUCA world. A crucial requirement is the strength on leaders' part to admit that they don't have all the answers and to be able to draw insights from experts who do.



Prof Marsh commented on this and the risks of autocracy when advancing an expert in general leadership roles, concluding that the secret stands in using EQ for inclusive collaborations.

Prof Powell opined that taking risks is important and, based on the individual's capacity for humility, respect and accepting to share their vulnerability, as advocated by author Brené Brown, the paradox is that brave leadership involves showing vulnerability.

Ms Simone Bowe added her observation that, in her Caribbean culture, the need for being perceived as a strong good leader sometimes hinders the ability to really stand in their vulnerability and seek expertise outward, making leaders appear standoffish and not connecting with their team. Observing the decisions that have been made during the global crisis, when resilience is a vital skill to have, coupled with the fear of loss of relationship when one needs to take tough decisions while accepting one's vulnerability, this ultimately hinders the leader's ability to effectively stand in that role.

This may be an example of the dichotomy between the 'who' and the 'do' parts of a leader's personality. There are technically savvy people, very knowledgeable in their area, but sometimes they lack the self-awareness, confidence and courage to stand in that.

In this sense, the global leadership concept is a powerful one that needs to be developed. It is growing in certain professions ( e.g. in HR) through modern global certifications, where people are expected to straddle companies across the world and having to navigate in those environments, to present cultural awareness and ability to connect with people on so many different levels and ways.

Two crucial characteristics for this are active listening and sharing, especially in mentoring, transitioning and succession planning. Emergent leaders say that senior leaders tend to hoard their expertise in fear, easily leading to 'institutional knowledge' being lost in time and restructuring episodes, affecting the whole organisation.

Talking about common traits in the global crisis, Dr Kalyani Unkule pointed to the ability to ascertain the timing and appropriateness of using emotions at work. A solution to applying the emotional lens to leadership would be to allow for space for trial and error in decision making to an extent in such a VUCA world. At the macro level, it is advisable to re-consider the whole concept of leadership from the science of management perspective to that of an art. On the psychological side, the call is for us to liberate our emotions from the 'black box' they were renegaded to historically. Since emotional development is part of the evolution of the species, whereby emotions develop as defense mechanisms and protective strategies, actually following certain patterns. Presently, she notes that these two trends are converging in management, in leadership education and in psychology, thus she anticipates that the gaps in the academic research on EQ will be bridged.

She touched on the fact that the world of work and our relationships to work are changing and so is the place that work occupies in our lives, in the current global pandemic. Whereas previously the main concern was how to adapt to career changes throughout our lifetime, now we are all considering how to positively respond to the place that work, our jobs and our vocation occupy in our lives, including the profound changes during 2020. We cannot

yet fully estimate the impact of this global crisis on organisational values and interpersonal relationships, but it puts the focus on the way we cultivate emotional strength and resilience in the context of work and the way it configures the multiple and cross-cutting social contexts that we inhabit.

The chair, Prof Marsh shared his observation of how much more prepared the new multinational undergraduate trainees are to integrate the concepts of mental wellbeing and resilience, and the emotional side of people into the conversation.

On the practicalities of developing the ‘global citizen’, Prof Uday Salunkhe observed that, with private action having public consequences, the trick would be to not superimpose business to the society, but in fact to subordinate it. The trait of being a global citizen should be non-negotiable and it should be nurtured in all countries equally, if we are to open a global playing field for work.

### **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:

1. A new vision of emotional intelligence is called for, whereby the parameters of gender, age and position that play within and also imbue the culture and the dynamics of an organisation are integrated in a holistic, inclusive and unifying paradigm in which both subjective and objective aspects of work can be processed harmoniously, to generate an inclusive environment.
2. Such an environment has the potential to foster self and social awareness, as well as self and relationship management and support integrative learning across levels providing scope for mentorship and coaching to serve as means of personal and collective growth.
3. A systemic organisational perspective where structural, cultural, socio-behavioural and political forces are connected, ‘global citizenship’ could be catalysed organically in a VUCA world; thus anticipating a future of leadership that is impactful not least because it is orientated towards the common good.

We are delighted that at LIBS these learning agenda is now informing the launch of a series of Masterclasses to support Leadership development. We invite you to explore this new program of work and join us and be part of delivering the impact of Leadership through strong partnerships, renewed purpose, honouring the promise to cultivate emotional strength and readiness in the context of work, for today’s leaders to continue to be leaders tomorrow, by anticipating the future they can also shape through global citizenship.



