



**CIPRIANI COLLEGE**  
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES



# **WORK MATTERS**

**COLUMN**

**April 2024**

# A Conversation to be had: 'Leaders need to be Emotionally Intelligent'

Today's workplace can be considered a microcosm of society which incorporates unique personalities, multicultural backgrounds, diverse groups, and a plethora of volatile emotions. The workplace is a dynamic and ever-evolving space, in which the importance of leaders possessing emotional intelligence (EI) adeptness cannot be overstated. According to a report from the Robert H. Smith School of Business from the University of Maryland: '71% of hiring leaders said having EI was more important than IQ, and 51% of them said that they would not hire someone with a high IQ but a low EI.' I am arguing therefore that emotional intelligence, is critical for effective leadership and success of any business entity.

EI refers to a range of internal capabilities that enables an individual to manage their emotions as well as recognise, influence and relate to other people's emotional experience. Over a decade ago, in an interview with the Harvard Business Review, Goleman highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership. He opined that 'the most effective leaders are all alike in one crucial way: They all have a high degree of what has come to be known as emotional intelligence. It's not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant. They do matter, but...they are the entry-level requirements for executive positions.'

Other commentators provide positions supporting the hiring of emotionally intelligent leaders. An emotionally intelligent, organizational leader must be skilled at 'driving the collective emotions in a positive direction and clearing the smog created by toxic emotions.' Also, the emotionally intelligent leader can motivate optimal performance through 'resonance', being the ability of highly effective leaders to elicit the best of the followers.

According to one commentator (Morton) the leadership philosophy is centered on influence. To influence others to commit to a set of institutional goals, leaders use power. Since leaders have a significant impact on the team and the organization, it is critical for them to be ethical and demonstrate high levels of EI. This description of the leadership process and philosophy does not only clarify the complexities of motivating staff to work together with the aim of accomplishing a shared goal, but it also underscores the need for leaders to possess qualifying levels of EI.

Arguably, there are five elements of EI. To be sure, appre-

ciating these elements would provide greater context of EI and also aid in the identification of leaders who possess low levels of EI. They include self-awareness which is an individual's ability to perform introspection and assess and appreciate the impact that they have on the team; self-management which is the ability to control and manage one's emotional responses, staying composed and adaptable even in stressful situations. The leader, therefore, must exhibit the ability to regulate his/her own emotional state especially in overwhelmingly stressful situations. This is followed by self-awareness which refers to the recognition of the environmental stressors, emotional state of team members and subordinates and further appreciates the dynamic implications of organizational politics. Social awareness competences include, but are not limited to interpersonal skills, scenario analysis, knowledge of conflict resolution techniques, and the ability to 'read the room.'. Further, there is the issue of social skills/relationship management, which is sometimes used interchangeably but essentially, refers to the manager's ability to influence, coach, and mentor staff in an effort to deduce and resolve conflict effectively so that it causes very little or no disruptions to operations. It is noteworthy that employee relationship management (ERM) is also an element of strategic human resources management, the aim of which is to focus on creating and maintaining strong, healthy relationships among employees. Finally, there is the issue of empathy, which can be described as 'seeing and understanding the feelings of another ...it helps you to manage your moods in the midst of that recognition.'

It goes without saying that leaders with high levels of EI can positively impact their teams and organizations. Human resource practices relating to the recruitment and selection of leaders have traditionally favoured predictors such as intelligence and personality emotional intelligence. It is believed that higher levels of EI ensure leadership effectiveness, as the ability to connect with staff on that emotional level creates an undeniable 'oneness' and camaraderie. One Gallup Study revealed that employees, who felt that their leaders cared about their well-being and were emotionally supportive were more likely to stay with the organization and deliver their best performance.

Gone are the days of the whip and the payment master's ledger. Employees are now expecting and demanding higher levels of respect and consideration. To that end, leaders need

to be cognisant of the emotional state of workers and this is supported by theory, statistics, and anecdotal evidence.

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