

Presentation: Diversity Learning in the Professional Workplace: The Competencies Approach

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In the United States there is little discourse among diversity practitioners on methodologies for teaching diversity and inclusion in the professional workplace. (There is a considerable body of literature that addresses teaching diversity to college and university students). There is even less discussion of what diversity content should be taught, and how learning can be effectively and engagingly delivered. In the corporate, legal and education sectors, diversity training is the norm. This training is generally understood as the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies. Yet "training" connotes top-down, superficial treatment and one-off or annual sessions. The methodology behind such training and the source of the learning content is often unexamined by the purchaser of the learning program---the corporate or institutional office. Moreover, the methodology void is often filled by shifting justifications for diversity learning, such as social justice, advocacy for and by discrete identity groups, corporate responsibility, and legal requirements. These justifications may be un-explicated or controversial, thereby leading to confusion, political opposition and "diversity resistance" to learning.

The presentation will have two parts. Part One will propose a methodology for teaching diversity and inclusion in the professional workplace: the competencies approach. It will address the fundamental questions, what diversity knowledge, skills and competencies should be taught, and how? Reference will be made to an example of the competencies approach, *DiversityEdu*, a course for faculty and administrators in post-secondary education. Part Two will be open exchange of ideas among participants. Proposed topics are:

- *Is there a core diversity and inclusion curriculum for the professional workplace? What, if any, are fundamental diversity competencies?*
- *What knowledge and skills make institutional and professional offices, departments and units more inclusive?*
- *At the institutional level, what are the desired outcomes of diversity learning programs? How can diversity learning connect institutional diversity goals to personal diversity competence?*
- *What is the difference between diversity learning based on research that identifies ways to grow cultures of inclusion and increase diversity, and diversity learning based on concepts of social justice, corporate responsibility, legal exposure, and advocacy?*
- *How can learners be made to feel that diversity learning is addressed to, and benefits them, and that it will help advance diversity and inclusive culture in their office, unit or department?*
- *How can learning be designed to give learners confidence that it is neither an infringement upon personal beliefs or political viewpoints nor a comment on any one person's status or identity group membership?*
- *What delivery formats are the most engaging, accessible, flexible and cost effective?*
- *What, if any, is the place of online diversity learning?*

Keywords: diversity, learning, teaching, methodology, competencies