**Abstract**

**US Department of DefenseCompetencies for Leading Diverse Teams**

**Purpose**

As part of a three part project, the United States Department of Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) requested Dr. Yuengling develop a diversity competency model for outcome- based diversity and inclusion training for general population mid-level civilian and military managers in the Department of Defense. The resulting competency model is the set of rigorously researched and behaviorally anchored competencies for general population managers, NOT diversity practitioners. It covers the personal leadership competencies necessary to effectively manage diversity in the workplace, and can be scaled from entry to senior executive levels.

**Design/methodology/ approach**

The model is based on rigorous methodology and grounded in the current relevant research on competency modeling as well as the socio-psychological processes related to diversity in organizations and other related disciplines. Due to the significant limitations discussed below, the methodology included both research literature and advanced expert knowledge, but not job incumbent input. The competencies focus on the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to create an inclusive diversity climate that supports the presence of representational diversity. The competencies for diversity management also map to the US Department of Defense /Defense Language Office cross-cultural competencies (3C) to the extent possible.

**Findings, if empirical**

Seven diversity competencies were identified, with 33 behavioral anchors or descriptors. Each of the competencies and behaviors has learning objectives mapped to it, from which the training modules can be developed. The seven competencies are straightforward, easy to understand, and are behaviorally anchored- that is, they describe exactly what leaders, managers, supervisors, and colleagues must do to create inclusive and high-performing organizations. Three competencies are focused on cultural ability (awareness, perspective, and adaptability), two are focused on cross cultural communication, and two focus on organizational awareness and leadership behaviors.

**Research Limitations/implications**

The research discusses the particular limitations presented by the development of diversity competencies, most specifically development of an objective measure of superior performance; as well as identification of a “successful job incumbent” or “advanced experts.” The gap between academic researchers and diversity practitioners, as well as the lack of licensure on the part of the latter group is also discussed.

**Originality/Value of paper**

To date, this is the most carefully and fully researched set of general population diversity competencies available to diversity practitioners. For the organization, the benefit is clear. The material is solidly based in current research and provides competency- based behaviors.

For the participant the benefit is also clear, the competencies with the behavioral anchors provide the elusive answer to “what specifically should I do?” The competencies give participants specific personal leadership behaviors that are clearly defined which will enable them to function effectively in culturally pluralistic environments.