

## Chapter 30

# A Perspective on How Counseling Curricula Can Enhance Workforce Diversity Practices

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### **ABSTRACT**

*As we become more of a global society, it is imperative for the work environment to mirror this diversity and for individuals to be supported in their professional development. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to describe how the field of counseling can contribute to the advancement of workforce diversity education. The understanding and application of counseling skills (e.g., attending skills) can positively influence interactions within the workplace and enhance workforce diversity initiatives. A case study is included with discussion questions along with an exploration of future directions for enhancing workforce diversity.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter explores how counseling curricula can contribute to workforce diversity curricula and practices. An overview of workforce diversity and workforce diversity education is included. Next, a summary of the antecedents of the counseling profession, history of multicultural counseling, and core multicultural competencies that gird the profession are explored. Following is a discussion of three specific courses within counseling curricula (Diversity and Social Justice in Counseling, Counseling Skills, and Group Counseling). Content from these courses can be integrated into workforce diversity courses to enhance interpersonal communication in the workplace.

Additionally, opportunities for reflection and discussion of the counseling skills in workplace settings are provided. Specifically, critical discussion questions and a case study are included. The goal of the critical discussion questions is to enhance critical thinking skills and initiate discussions between

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classmates and the instructor. These questions can be used as journal starters to reflect in an ongoing journal or questions for small group discussions in class. The case study provides a real-life work scenario focused on multicultural concerns. The purpose of this case vignette is to analyze the various dynamics between the employee (Ana), her supervisor (Beverly), and co-worker (Mark). Furthermore, the case study encourages classroom discussion regarding the application of counseling principles in workforce diversity situations.

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Describe the historical roots of counseling and how it relates to the field of workforce diversity.
2. Explain how counseling curricula can be applicable to workforce diversity curricula.
3. Analyze a work-related case study and brainstorm appropriate counseling skills to use in the case scenario from a culturally competent perspective.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Workforce Diversity and Workforce Diversity Education**

Workforce diversity seeks to value the diversity of all persons in the work environment, including, but not limited to, employees, customers, business partners, and consultants (Hudson, 2014; Scott, 2014; Scott & Byrd, 2012). Thomas (2011) further stated that workforce diversity addresses tensions related to demographic differences (e.g., age, race, gender, etc.) and uses managing workforce representation, managing workforce relationships, and managing diverse talent within organizations to enact change. Workforce diversity management, on the other hand, is an organizational approach to workforce diversity, which encourages management practices that are inclusive and transcend affirmative action practices that only satisfy the status quo (Thomas, 2011).

Workforce diversity is a necessary and relevant practice across various disciplines, such as healthcare, K-12, and higher education (Cohen, Gabriel, & Terrell, 2002; Milem, 2002; Mitchell & Lassiter, 2006; Tyler, Yzquierdo, Lopez-Reyna, & Filippin, 2004). As a result, programs in higher education have responded to the increased need to prepare future educators, administrators, and counselors to be culturally competent. In the field of teacher education, pioneers such as William Banks (2014; 2015) have forged the way in promoting and implementing multicultural education for pre-service and in-service educators.

In the fields of human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD), academic programs prepare students for the changing world of work by including diversity and multicultural courses in the course curricula. In a study by Day and Glick (2000), researchers analyzed 25 course syllabi from undergraduate and graduate-level business courses and identified common themes. Additionally, the study authors interviewed 81 HR managers concerning the importance of diversity skills for new and current employees. Study results indicated that course content was largely awareness-based and lacked skill-based learning (Carnevale & Stone, 1995; Day & Glick, 2000). Overall, HR managers reported that college graduates were self-aware and possessed cognitive knowledge of multiculturalism (e.g. specific group similarities and differences), but lacked critical thinking, communication, and team building skills (Day & Glick, 2000).

In order to fill the gap between self-awareness and critical thinking skills, academic programs have embraced competencies through organizations such as the Society for Human Resource Management

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