



DRIVING FORCES FOR CULTURE COMPETENCY INITIATIVES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Tony J. Carrizales, PhD

Marist College

American Society for Public Administration

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CULTURAL COMPETENCY

- Contemporary public administration research is increasingly emphasizing the need for the public sector to explore culture competency initiatives underscored by the continually changing demographics of the United States.



CULTURAL COMPETENCY

- Broadly defined, culture competency reflects specific actions or policies within an organization enabling it to more effectively serve its culturally diverse populations.
- The more diverse a population becomes, the more diverse the unique cultural differences will be.



DRIVING FORCES

- Mandates
- Workforce
- Environment/Organization
- Management/Leadership
- Community



MANDATES

- Government mandates can help “drive change” fostering a more cultural competent organization.
- The origins of federal mandates for a culturally competent administration can be traced to Hill-Burton Act (1946), Civil Rights Acts (1964) and Social Security Act (1965) which emphasize providing health services to individuals who have limited English proficiency.
- Civil rights laws have also fostered in the development of language access services in health institutions and organizations with staff diversity.



MANDATES

- Federal government has also created standards for culturally and linguistically appropriate health services; however these standards are not mandates, but rather serve as guidelines and recommendations
- Although more recent legislation has sought to expand the scope of culturally competent federal mandates, the majority of such legislations revolves around those with limited English proficiency and health care service.



WORKFORCE

- Street-level bureaucrats can be key components in the development of culturally competent policies and programs within organizations.
- Civil servants are critical given their direct involvement with citizens and communities in addressing issues of critical, ethnic and religious diversity, social and political equity, and political pluralism and conflict.



WORKFORCE

- Creating a more diverse workforce can help towards achieving organizational cultural competence.
- A more diverse workforce reflects the research and literature of developing representative bureaucracy.



ENVIRONMENT/ORGANIZATION

- Sometimes, a driving force is not an individual or a group of individuals but rather the organization or environment the organization finds itself in.
- Similar to policy mandates, an organizational driving force can be derived by the availability of new resources or technology.
- One of the first steps in advancing cultural competency in the public sector is by ensuring programs and services are accessible in the primary client's language. This can be achieved by translating brochures and program materials as well as websites.



ENVIRONMENT/ORGANIZATION

- With the rapid development in electronic governance comes an associated challenge and opportunity of altering the relationship between government and the public.
- One approach toward addressing the increased dependence on technology for service delivery is to ensure that government websites are multilingual.



MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP

- Both formal and informal leadership play a critical role in organizational change. Organizational leaders are active change agents with significant influence.
- Determination of organizational leaders is required in order to overcome resistance from staff members and forces in social, institutional, and organizational environments that reinforce the status quo.



MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP

- In a 2005 research project, the NCCC sought to identify the leading efforts to advance and sustain cultural and linguistic competence. The first lesson learned from their study was that “achieving cultural and linguistic competence requires strong and informed leadership to spur the necessary changes within systems, organizations, policies, and practice.
- In the view of the NCCC, a leader is not contained to executive management, but can be anyone at anytime.



COMMUNITY

- The relationship between the organization and the community it serves can have a critical impact on the organizational change process given that a responsive and connected organization is more likely to change to address community concerns
- Collaborating with local communities can help customize programs for both new immigrants and longtime residents alike.



COMMUNITY

- The New York Tolerance Center, for example, “offers a series of programs exploring the character and consequences of racial, ethnic, religious and sexual bias,” with some programs designed specifically for public servants such as law enforcement and educators.
- An area of additional consideration in working with local communities is the perception communities have of their public administrators.



CONCLUSION

- Current research is increasingly highlighting various examples of public organizations committed to becoming more culturally competent.
- Every level of an agency needs to come together in order to achieve cultural competency: from directors to constituents to staff.
- Although five distinct driving forces for developing a more culturally competent public organization have been outlined, a combination of forces would undoubtedly strengthen opportunities and initiatives for cultural competency.



THANK YOU

