

A STUDY ON COMPETENCIES FOR MANAGING WORKFORCE DIVERSITY: EVIDENCES FROM MULTI-NATIONAL ENTERPRISES IN SWITZERLAND

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Abstract

Managing diverse teams has become an important issue in the globalized business world. This study aimed to explore management competencies that facilitate the performance of diverse teams. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with eight managers and eight team members leading or working in a diverse team in Switzerland. The results confirmed the five competencies managers need to possess in order to manage diversity effectively, namely Intrapersonal Competence, Interpersonal Management Competence, Leadership Competence, Actional/Business Management Competence, and Diversity Management Competence. The analysis highlighted some unique requirements that stand out in the Swiss Context. Some gaps of competencies that managers think are important and what team members think or expect from their managers were observed and underlined.

Keywords: Workforce Diversity, Management Competencies; Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Leadership, Actional/Business management and Diversity management competencies; Swiss context

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of globalisation has turned the world into a global village where barriers and perceived distances between countries and continents are shrinking and international exchange is increasing. International companies inevitably have the challenge to deal with a more diverse workforce.

Many researches have proven that the ability to manage diversity is key and an important source of competitive advantage, synergies, creativity, and increased opportunities for knowledge recombination and innovation (Amadeo, 2017; McGuire & Bagher, 2010). Saxena (2014, p. 83), for example, suggests, “diversity stimulates innovation and productivity and creates a world class culture that can outperform the competition”. Diversity can be seen as a recognisable source of creativity that can provide a basis for competitive advantage as diverse teams are likely to have a greater variety of resources to avail themselves of when generating and combining ideas influencing the team’s performance tremendously (Bassett-Jones 2005, p. 169). Livermore (2016, p. 2) agrees by stating that “there is no question that cultural diversity provides one of the greatest opportunities for global innovation” and “diversity is one of the greatest resources for coming up with innovative solutions”.

On the other hand, some research has pointed out the negative effects of a diverse team workforce, such as a source of misunderstanding, communication problems, suspicion, and conflict in the workplace which prevents the expected synergies. Research has showed that a

diverse workforce only brings strength if it is part of the organisation’s philosophy and if all members of a team are dedicated to a common goal. A diverse workforce with a broad mix of talents alone does not ensure innovation, but the challenge is to create an inclusive environment where everyone has a voice (Steele & Derven, 2015).

A vast array of research has explored the competencies managers needed to possess in order to manage diversity effectively. Leslie, Dalton, Ernst, and Deal (2002), for example, identified the five competencies necessary to manage a diverse workforce, namely business knowledge and skills, inquisitiveness, personal character, the capacity for managing uncertainty, and being business savvy. Chang and Thorenou (2004), on the other hand, proposed five completely different key competencies – cultural empathy, learning on the job, communication competence, general managerial skills, and personal style. Chuang (2013) highlighted the importance of self-awareness and the appreciation of individual uniqueness. Yet, the question remains as to what management competencies facilitate effective and efficient diverse team management remain open for debate.

This research aims to highlight management competencies that facilitate the diverse team’s performance. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers and team members of diverse teams in Swiss-based multinational organisations. Differences in the perceived relevance of competencies from managers and team members’ perspectives are observed, as the perception of leaders and team

members may vary (Lorber & Savič, 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Management Competencies Needed for Facilitating Diverse Team's Performance

Companies can greatly benefit from team diversity if managers know how to design and orchestrate effective collaboration between heterogeneous actors. But how to orchestrate diverse teams effectively the way these teams want to be managed remains an open issue (Sandberg et al., 2015). Vast amounts of literature discuss the competencies needed by leaders for managing team diversity and fostering team spirit and willingness to work together. For example, Lorber and Savič (2011) suggested the team enabling competencies, namely knowledge, cognitive and practical skills, attitudes, abilities, and behaviors. Whereas Mikušová and Čopíková (2016) highlight the importance of each individual's combination of characteristics, experience, knowledge, abilities, skills, motivation, attitudes and personal qualities, which have been acquired through experience and developed through practice.

Steele and Derven (2015) has found that diversity and inclusion can be leveraged to bring out innovative products, services and business solutions. The leaders are therefore required to support diverse ideas and inputs from a wide spectrum of talents in order to ensure innovative solutions and sustainable business value. Additionally, leaders must

nurture an ecosystem of inclusion where different opinions, perspectives, and ideas are implemented and rewarded. Lastly, leaders must serve as a role model for leadership that leverages diversity for team performance which may be measured by innovation.

Leslie et al. (2002), however, used different approach by analysing a mix of characteristics and competencies of successful managers and identified five important dimensions to manage diverse workforces: (1) context specific knowledge and skills, (2) inquisitiveness, (3) personal character (connection and integrity), (4) duality (the capacity for managing uncertainty and the ability to balance tensions), and (5) savvy. Other researchers came up with another set of key competencies necessary to manage culturally diverse teams where certain competencies discussed to be important include cultural empathy, learning on the job capability, communication competencies, general managerial skills, and personal style (Chang & Thorenou, 2004).

For Chuang (2013), a global leader's essential characteristics combine with leadership skills in order to manage a diverse workforce effectively; these include self-awareness, which refers to the understanding of one's own strengths and weaknesses, the appreciation of individual uniqueness, and, finally, a focus on similarities rather than differences in a multicultural environment. Additionally, leaders need to understand cultural stereotypes in order to avoid biases and respect the individual character traits of their employees. Self-assurance, as well as communication skills, are also essential in leading a

diverse workforce. Communication skills thereby refer to the manager's awareness about communication practices and the ability to adapt communication style to different contexts. In addition to that, global leaders must have the ability to create and sell a vision to their subordinates (Livermore, 2016).

Emphasizing communication skills, Gentry and Leslie's (2007) research focused on the interactive competencies of leaders relying heavily on communication skills, which include leaders' capabilities to build and foster relationships and inspire people by communicating visions and goals. This is consistent with Mintzberg (2004), who believes an engaging interactive leadership style is required to establish a positive experience in a situation of diversity. Mintzberg's and Chunang's required leadership domains refer to the work of Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) who categorised managerial competencies into four main components (intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, leadership skills and business/technical skills) defining manager's competencies for the benefit of a team's performance.

Visagie et al (2011) combined the leader competency domains of Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) and of Mintzberg (2004) with the diversity management components found by Chang and Thorenou (2004) for a holistic leadership model. The model's framework offers an interactive engaging leadership competency model inclusive of a diversity management category for leaders in interaction with the situation of

diversity in which they find themselves. Visagie et al (2011) empirically proved that the diversity management domain is a part of the leadership competencies framework offered by Mintzberg (2004) to influence co-operative work towards achieving organisational goals in a diverse workplace.

Theoretical framework:

Based on the domain model of managerial competencies introduced by Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) and extended by a diversity management domain based on Visagie et al (2011) the framework for this paper contains five domains as illustrated in Table 1.

METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the different perceptions of managers and their team members, managerial capabilities, attitudes, and personal experiences, a qualitative method was chosen. Qualitative methods allowed the researcher to continuously form and test new insights and to compare the factors mentioned by different interviewees in the course of the interviewing process (Davies, 2007). In line with the research the goal of the chosen methodology is to "arrive at new interpretations, achieve a deep understanding and rich narrative, and present strong and vivid evidence" for what to conclude (Rubin & Rubin, p. 200) without necessarily claiming to generalize the results.

Table 1: Domains and Elements of the Five Managerial Competencies

Domain	Elements (<i>a manager needs to have/ be able to ...</i>)
Intrapersonal Competence	self-awareness and self-management, emotional stability and intelligence, capability to handle disappointments, positive attitude towards authority, ability to adapt and to respect supervisors, non-impulsive, self-controlled, possessing integrity, ambiguity tolerance, open to improvement by learning
Interpersonal Management Competence	initiate, build, and maintain relationships, approachable, empathic, ability to anticipate another's expectations, promotion of inclusion, supports new ideas and inputs, capability to deal with conflicts
Leadership Competence	ability to attract, recruit and nurture new talents, retain skilled and motivated staff by coaching and mentoring, motivate and reach staff's outperformance, ability to delegate, visionary, be a role model for leadership
Actional/Business Management Competence	cognitive abilities and technical knowledge to get the job done, ability to deal with complexity, strategically thinking, planning and administrating
Diversity Management Competence	capability to adapt to diverse context situations, understands and values differences and similarities, openness to diversity and capability to manage diversity, aware of their own and others cultural strengths and weaknesses

Sources: Adapted from Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 2003 and Visagie et al, 2011.

The companies and respondents in this research were chosen based on a purposive convenient sampling with the following criteria: 1) companies have international firms; 2) interviewees needed to work in or lead a diverse team which contained members which show diversity in at least three of the six types of diversity: gender, country of origin, age, career path, industry, and academic background; 3) managers need to be in charge of a certain set of leadership tasks,

or responsible for a certain division of an organisation, or they work in a permanent management position and were responsible for a group of team members reporting to them; 4) managers and team members must work in different departments and have no direct connection in daily business to ensure their independence of opinions.

In addition, in order to help determine the set of interviewees for the strategic sample, the snowball method

was also applied. In other words, interviewees were asked after their interview to suggest a further interviewee who matches the requirements of the sample for a following interview. This approach may provide “access to a hidden group”, which may offer a broader set of perspectives (Davies, 2017, p. 147).

In-depth semi-structured interviews, containing 18 questions were conducted in 16 different internationally operating companies based in Switzerland (13),

Germany (2) and Korea (1) with legal entities in Switzerland. Interviewees were employed in different functions and management hierarchies. The semi-structured interviews contain open ended as well as closed questions and were recorded. The interview outline and questions were the same for managers and team members. Interviewees and companies’ profiles are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Interviewees and Companies’ Profiles

	Position	Country of Origin of the employee / manager	Work experience in other countries	Industry	Headquarter of company	No of employees in Switzerland
Manager 1	CEO	Switzerland	yes	Music and Event Management	Switzerland	< 50
Manager 2	Head of Research & Development	Switzerland	no	Hygiene Products	Switzerland	500 – 1,000
Manager 3	Head of Packaging & Labeling	Germany	yes	Chemical	Switzerland	100 - 250
Manager 4	Team leader Automation	Switzerland	no	Aviation and Aerospace	Switzerland	50 - 100
Manager 5	Head of Corporate Development	Germany	yes	Steel	Germany	100 - 250
Manager 6	Head of Corporate Affairs	Switzerland	yes	Consumer Electronics	Korea	100 - 250
Manager 7	Head HR Competence Center	Switzerland	no	Mechanical Engineering	Switzerland	2,000 – 2,500
Manager 8	Head of Process Management	Switzerland	no	Steel	Germany	100 - 250
Team Member 1	Transport Management	Netherlands	yes	Chemical	Switzerland	50 - 100
Team Member 2	Project Manager Open Innovation	Poland	yes	Logistics	Switzerland	50 - 100

	Position	Country of Origin of the employee / manager	Work experience in other countries	Industry	Headquarter of company	No of employees in Switzerland
Team Member 3	Development Project Management	Switzerland	no	Travel Gear	Switzerland	50 - 100
Team Member 4	Innovation Management	Switzerland	no	Transportation	Switzerland	> 2,500
Team Member 5	Process Development	USA	yes	Pharmaceutical	Switzerland	500 – 1,000
Team Member 6	Multimedia Management	Germany	yes	Education	Switzerland	100 - 250
Team Member 7	Packaging Development	Switzerland	no	Packaging	Switzerland	< 50
Team Member 8	Business Development	Austria	yes	Investment and Real Estate	Switzerland	< 50

Source: Authors

FINDINGS

For the domain **Intrapersonal Competence**, traits and abilities mentioned by most of the managers as having utmost importance for the domain of intrapersonal competence are self-awareness, regarding one's own strengths and weaknesses and a manager's openness to change. It is highlighted that "it is important for a manager to be aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses" and that a manager is willing to learn and continuously improve themselves. (Manager 1, 4, 8). Other intrapersonal competencies stated as important for diverse team management include the ability to evaluate themselves as well as others honestly (Manager 4); know his/her own culture/behaviour pattern (Manager 3); having empathy (Manager

6); tolerance for other people's opinions (Manager 6); and self-confidence to allow and support the change needed for the team (Manager 7).

From team members' perspectives, it is surprising to find out that all team members placed emphasis on the manager's understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. Team member 1 explained "it is important that everyone deals with weaknesses openly. It is a sign of self-confidence". It was suggested that team leaders need to know when it is necessary to ask for help or advice from colleagues or their subordinates (Team member 5) and by understanding of their own capabilities, a manager is better able to react to different management situations (Team member 4). Other intrapersonal competencies being stated as important for diverse team

management include manager's self-confidence (Team member 6) and self-esteem (Team member 7).

Interpersonal Management Competence is perceived by managers as the ability to approach different people and have an open door for the team members. The team leaders confirmed that the leadership as well as the communication style need to be adapted in order to deal with diversity.

Manager 1 stated "working in this job, you must like dealing with people". It was also recommended that managers must be approachable in order to serve different team member's needs appropriately (Manager 7) i.e. offer an open door policy for team members to get to know them well enough to understand their needs and to establish a personal relationship that ensures they feel comfortable receiving specific individual consideration (Manager 4); ability to speak other languages also helps with better communication with the team (Manager 3). Managers must be open and willing to adapt to improve relationships within a team (Manager 3) and empathy is viewed as a basis for understanding the different needs of people in a diverse team (Manager 1, 3, 7, and 8).

From team members' perspectives, managers' interpersonal management competence was rated as very important and emphasis was placed on the relevance of the manager's ability to build relationships and trust to foster relations within the team, to approach, and include different people, and to show empathy. Team member 8 stated "managing relationships is one of the most important things a manager needs to do. A manager

must foster trust and team spirit and create an atmosphere that allows a team to work together effectively", where "no one should feel left behind" (Team member 7). Managers must create an atmosphere of trust, as it is important for individuals and for the team learning processes (Team member 4, 5). It fosters the exchange of ideas (Team member 4), facilitates team involvement (Team member 3), generates empathy for team members (Team member 4), and an ability to balance the different needs of team members (Team member 1). Team member 3 raised some concerns that a manager must be careful not to "prefer" certain team members.

Leadership Competence: Managers emphasized the importance of choosing the right leadership style according to the different needs of the people in the team. To motivate team members effectively, managers need to adapt their leadership style (Manager 4 and 6). They stressed that managers must have empathy to understand the different needs of their team members in different situations. Furthermore, managers confirmed the literature, stating that they must act as role models for the team and lead by example – "to walk the talk" (Manager 3, 5).

Manager 3 explained that a manager must make it clear that goals can only be achieved by teamwork and a manager must share credit with team members. Constant mentoring and development of team skills are important and a team leader must be supportive when experience and knowledge are transferred and shared within a diverse team (Manager 2, 3, 8).

Managers also must have the ability to set a clear vision and strategy while still

offering sufficient freedom of choice (Manager 1 and 6). Manager 1 added that “the right balance between structure and flexibility must be found, to let people develop themselves within the framework of an organisation”.

All team members ensured the importance of leadership competency in order to manage team diversity. Team member 3, for example, stated that “acquirement and constant development of leadership skills is a central task of a good manager and, therefore, very important to ensure a team can function as a team”. Team members emphasize the ability of managers to foster the team spirit, and this requires managers to have empathy to understand team members’ needs. In addition, mentoring and coaching skills and the ability of a manager to support team members in developing and improving themselves, were highlighted as important for team members (Team member 1, 3, 5, 7, and 8).

In addition, managers must establish fair and transparent rules (Team member 2, 6, and 7), have the ability to unite the team based on a common goal (Team member 8), and to make sure that everyone works as part of the team (Team member 4). Also the ability to solve conflicts (Team member 6 and 8), ability to motivate and inspire the team (Team member 5 and 8), and the manager’s willingness to make decisions even in uncertain situations, and an ability to give clear directions (Team member 4, 6, 8) were mentioned as crucial for team management.

Actional/Business Management Competence was confirmed by all managers. This includes the importance

of context-specific knowledge, business savvy, and general managerial skills as mentioned by Leslie et al. (2001). Some managers argued, for example, that personal skills are more important than technical business skills (Manager 7); certain knowledge and specific business skills may be helpful; however, general experience with diversity is important (Manager 1) such as the ability to listen (Manager 2).

Manager 3, however, rated business skills to be equally as relevant as social skills. He stated that “without a solid foundation of classical business and management skills, leadership will not be effective”. Similarly, Manager 8 stated that “both business skills and social skills are very important because a manager who does not have sufficient professional management competence will not be accepted in a leadership role while always relying on others’ help, and a leader who only has limited social competencies will not be able to achieve the goal”.

On the contrary, team members all shared the view that business skills are as much important as managers’ social skills. Although qualified team members in general can offer business skills and can support their team leaders, “business skills should not be underestimated. Every manager should have a good entrepreneurial and managerial understanding to organize and supervise the team’s performance” (Team member 3).

Diversity Management Competence

In line with the literature the interviewed managers confirmed the importance of diversity management

competence. Managers should appreciate diversity, and its potential benefits, as well as having awareness that people from different backgrounds, cultures, genders, and ages handle business and authority differently. One manager stated “it is a prerequisite for a manager, to understand that heterogeneity can bring added value” (Manager 6), and the awareness, that people from different backgrounds, cultures, genders, and ages handle business and authority differently, is essential for a manager’s effectiveness in leading diverse teams (Manager 1, 3, 5, and 7).

Manager 1 stated that it is important for managers to be informed of how business is handled in other cultures before dealing with people to avoid disappointments and conflicts. He believed that interculturally competent managers will have a higher chance to be more successful in leading diverse teams in general, and specific knowledge about cultural differences is necessary when operating in an international diverse team context. Manager 7 also agreed that it makes sense to have certain knowledge about the different cultural backgrounds of one’s team members in order to avoid problems and conflicts.

Some managers, however, critically mentioned that knowledge about other cultures may create stereotypes and prejudice. Manager 2, for example, explained that too much knowledge of and consideration for cultural differences can even hinder a manager in leading a team efficiently. Manager 6 also stated that it is not important to acquire specific knowledge about other cultures and cultural differences to work with people. From his perspective, managers must just

be open minded towards cultural differences and respond to them intuitively.

From the team members’ perspective, there was a high expectation that managers of diverse teams must have diversity management competence. For example, Team member 3 stated “ideally, a team leader is someone who is familiar with different cultures and knows how to bring them together and is able to handle different cultures”. It was emphasized by team members that knowledge and awareness of different cultural backgrounds is important to understand team members needs in a diverse working environment. A manager’s knowledge about different cultures and different leadership expectations is important when managing diverse teams. The value of diversity must be appreciated. It was highlighted that “you cannot work with a diverse team if you do not value diversity” (Team member 8).

DISCUSSION

It is interesting to highlight that not all elements or managers’ characteristics, in each domain stated in literature, and as summarized in Table 2, were mentioned or highlighted by interviewees in this research. Some characteristics stood out and were highlighted as very important. For example, with regard to Intrapersonal Competence, awareness of one’s own strengths and weaknesses was highlighted; for Interpersonal Management Competence, the ability to build relationships and trust within the team was emphasized; and for Leadership Competence, an ability to adapt the leadership style according to the needs of

people stood out as being important.

In addition, differences in the perceived relevance of different competencies, from managers and team members' perspectives were observed. This research revealed that, at a conceptual level, all five domains of competencies are expected and seen as important for the success of diverse team management. Potentially the reason for a common basis of understanding on how to deal with diversity can be found in the classical Swiss way of allowing team members to participate in management decisions. While participating in decision making, managers and team members may exchange their perspectives on what is the right way in leading and being lead, which may support a strong team culture based on trust.

Interestingly, this research found some gaps, regarding competencies which managers think are important, and what team members think important or expect from their manager, to orchestrate better diverse team management. For Intrapersonal Competence, the managers mentioned a wider spectrum on intrapersonal skills, for example, understanding strengths and weaknesses, willingness to learn and continuously improve themselves, ability to evaluate themselves as well as others honestly, having empathy, tolerance for other people's opinions, and self-confidence to allow and support change needed for the team. The team members mainly focus on their manager's awareness of their strengths and weaknesses as the most

important element for orchestrating teams and team performance.

On Interpersonal Management Competence, team members emphasized that managers must create an atmosphere of trust. Managers must have the ability to build relationships and trust to foster relations within the team, to approach, and include different people, and to show empathy. Managing relationships is one of the most important aspects of a manager's role. A manager must foster trust and the team spirit, and create an atmosphere which allows a team to work together effectively.

For Actional/Business Management Competence, this research discovered that from a team member's perspective general business skills are of the same importance as managers' soft skills, whereas for managers the focus is more on the leadership performance. Mentoring and coaching skills were expected from team leaders.

Last but not least, regarding Diversity Management Competence, some managers were more critical that knowledge about other cultures may create stereotypes and prejudice. Whereas, team members have not shown any concern regarding the potential downside of having intercultural awareness.

The summary of elements that "managers must have" which stood out in the Swiss-context and the competencies gaps of what managers and team members think are important for diverse team management is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Comparison of elements of “managers must have” from literature, Swiss Context Elements, and competency gaps regarding what managers and team members think are important for diverse team management.

Domain	Elements from Literature <i>(a manager must have ...)</i>	Swiss-Context's Key Elements	Competencies' Gaps
Intrapersonal Competence	Self-awareness and self-management, emotional stability and intelligence, capability to handle disappointments, positive attitude towards authority, ability to adapt and to respect supervisors, non-impulsive, self-controlled, integrity, ambiguity tolerance, open to improve by learning (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003)	Manager's awareness of his/her strengths and weaknesses is important to manage diverse teams. Willingness to learn and continuously improve themselves, ability to evaluate themselves as well as others honestly, tolerance for other people's opinions, and self-confidence to allow and support change needed for the team.	Team members expected the managers to have self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses as a key performance element for orchestrating teams and team performance.
Interpersonal Management Competence	Initiating, building, and maintaining relationships, approachable, empathetic, anticipate another's expectations, promotion of inclusion, supporting of new ideas and inputs, capability to deal with conflicts (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003)	Ability to build relationships and trust, approach different people, willingness to adapt, as well as having an open-door policy for team members and showing empathy are important to manage diverse teams.	Team members expected the managers to create an atmosphere of trust in the team, build relationships and trust to foster relations and the team spirit, and create an atmosphere that allows a team to work together effectively where “no one should feel left behind”.
Leadership Competence	Ability to attract, recruit and nurture new talents, retain skilled and motivated staff by coaching and mentoring, motivate and reach staff's outperformance, ability to delegate, visionary, be a	Ability to adapt the leadership style according to the needs of people, and the ability to set clear structures while offering a certain amount of freedom to	Mentoring and coaching skills were expected by the team members and they see it as important for teams and their performance improvement

	role model for leadership (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003)	motivate people in making their own decisions, are important leadership elements to orchestrate diverse teams and team performance.	
Actional/ Business Management Competence	Cognitive abilities and technical knowledge to get the job done, ability to deal with complexity, strategically thinking, planning and administrating (Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003)	Business ability understood as a basic fundamental knowledge, necessary to become accepted for a management or leadership position.	Team members viewed business skills as having the same importance as managers' soft skills whereas for the interviewed managers the focus was more on the leadership performance to orchestrate a diverse team efficiently.
Diversity Management Competence	Capability to adapt to diverse situations, understands and values differences and similarities, openness for diversity and capability to manage diversity, aware of one's own and others cultural strengths and weaknesses (Visagie et al, 2011)	Awareness for culture differences and sensitivity for stereotypes and prejudices.	Managers are more critical that knowledge of other cultures may create stereotypes and prejudice. Too much knowledge about and overpraised consideration for cultural differences can even hinder a manager to lead a team efficiently.

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research study confirmed that the way diverse teams are managed has an influence on team performance. This research confirmed the validity of five competencies managers must possess in order to manage team diversity effectively, namely

Intrapersonal Competence, Interpersonal Management Competence, Leadership Competence, Actional/Business Management Competence, and last but not least, Diversity Management Competence, as proposed by Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) and Visagie et al (2011).

This research also shed light on specific insights regarding competencies

that stand out more and are highlighted as important in Swiss-based organizations. For example, awareness of his/her strengths and weaknesses; willingness to learn and continuously improve themselves; ability to evaluate themselves as well as others honestly; tolerance for other people's opinions; and self-confidence to allow and support the change needed for the team; ability to build relationships and trust; ability to approach different people; willingness to adapt; having an open-door policy for team members and showing empathy; ability to adapt their leadership style according to the needs of people; the ability to set clear structure while offering a certain amount of freedom to motivate people making their own decisions; business ability was understood as a basic fundamental knowledge necessary to become accepted for management or leadership positions; and awareness of cultural differences and sensitivity for stereotypes and prejudices. This research sees these insights as a valuable contribution to the existing literature on in depth understanding of cultural variation as well as, possibly a more up to date assessment of expected competencies for the diverse workforce of the twenty first century.

In addition, differences in the perceived relevance of competencies from managers and team members' perspectives were observed and highlighted. For example, team members expected the managers to have self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. Team members expected the managers to create an atmosphere of trust in the team. Mentoring and coaching skills were expected by the team members

and this was seen as important for teams and their performance improvement. Team members viewed business skills as having the same importance as managers' soft skills, whereas for the interviewed managers the focus was more on the leadership performance to orchestrate a diverse team efficiently. Managers were more critical that knowledge of other cultures may create stereotypes and prejudice. Too much knowledge of and overpraised consideration for cultural differences can even hinder a manager to lead a team efficiently. Such gaps can be used for future analysis and can be used as inputs to further improve team management and to create a good and supportive working environment for the team.

Limitations

Certain limitations should be recognised when interpreting the findings. First of all, the findings are heavily dependent on the individuals' backgrounds, management hierarchies, expertise and experience cooperating with or in diverse teams.

No doubt, this study is limited in its scope, which affects the ability to generalize its findings. Furthermore, the results may not be generalised as all team members and managers were based in Switzerland. It would be of importance to conduct a similar study on a larger scale for comparison purposes and in other countries to compare cultural differences and the influence of national cultures on the perceptions of managers and team members, regarding the required competencies for diverse team management.

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