

# Developing Workforce Agility, Adaptability, and Cultural Competence in Contemporary Organizations

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**How to cite this paper:** Mujtaba, B. G. (2026). Developing Workforce Agility, Adaptability, and Cultural Competence in Contemporary Organizations. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 14, 408-434.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2026.141023>

**Received:** December 17, 2025

**Accepted:** January 10, 2026

**Published:** January 13, 2026

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## Abstract

Rapid technological advancement, globalization, and shifting workforce demographics have fundamentally altered how contemporary organizations operate. These changes require employees who are not only technically proficient but also agile, adaptable, and culturally competent to enhance productivity while eliminating oppressive behaviors from the modern workplace. Using the author's four decades of management development training and research background, this literature-based paper examines the critical role of workforce agility, adaptability, and cultural competence in enabling organizational effectiveness and sustainability in dynamic environments. Drawing on existing literature in organizational behavior, human resource development, and cross-cultural management, the study explores how these competencies contribute to individual performance, team collaboration, and organizational resilience. Key organizational practices such as continuous learning initiatives, inclusive leadership, cross-functional collaboration, and culturally responsive training are analyzed as mechanisms for developing these capabilities across the workforce. The paper further discusses the implications of remote and hybrid work arrangements on cultural competence and adaptability, emphasizing the need for intentional strategies to support heterogeneous and geographically dispersed teams to prevent oppression. By integrating theoretical perspectives with practical considerations, this paper offers several recommendations for organizations seeking to cultivate a workforce capable of responding effectively to ongoing change. Specific recommendations are provided for the building of agile, adaptable and culturally responsive organizations. The paper underscores that investing in agility, adaptability, and cultural competence is not merely a response to external pressures but a strategic imperative for long-term organizational success through the modern workforce in an increasingly complex global context.

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## Keywords

Agility, Adaptability, Oppression, Cultural Competency, Workforce Development

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## 1. Introduction

Globalization has become a central dimension of workforce management in contemporary organizations and directly aligns with the emphasis on agility, adaptability, and cultural competence. As work environments become increasingly global, business schools and academic institutions play a critical role in preparing future professionals to function effectively across cultures. While many institutions have incorporated international business management into curricula, research suggests that true workforce globalization requires a more comprehensive strategy. This includes globally experienced faculty, internationally focused curricula, and culturally competent graduates that can take risks and think critically even when deviating from the norm (Assefa & Mujtaba, 2025; Dachner et al., 2017). A disconnect often exists when institutions promote global perspectives without modeling them through faculty experiences, thereby limiting students' ability to develop critical thinking skills or authentic cultural competence, which are essential workforce capabilities in managing today's workforce.

Recent research suggests a broad societal shift toward conformity and risk aversion, a trend psychologist Mastroianni describes as the "decline of deviance" (Rudawsky, 2025; Mastroianni, 2025). According to Rudawsky (2025), this decline reflects decreases in intellectual risk-taking, creativity, and willingness to challenge established ideas. This trend presents a critical concern for higher education and organizations alike, as both rely on productive deviance, such as questioning assumptions, experimenting with new approaches, and pursuing unconventional paths, to remain innovative and effective. In the context of developing workforce agility, adaptability, and cultural competence, growing conformity directly undermines the preparation of individuals for complex and rapidly changing environments.

Higher education institutions face a fundamental tension between societal risk aversion and their core mission. Deep learning, creativity, and innovation depend on intellectual risk-taking, defined as engaging in learning behaviors that involve uncertainty and the possibility of error (Rudawsky, 2025; Beghetto & Baxter, 2012; Clifford, 1991). However, research shows that while students may value intellectual risk in theory, they often avoid it due to concerns about grades, peer judgment, and instructor evaluation (Teagarden et al., 2018). This reluctance compromises leadership development and workforce readiness, as modern organizations increasingly require employees who can think independently, adapt to uncertainty, and challenge ineffective norms in a professional acceptable manner.

The decline of intellectual deviance has major implications for research and in-

novation (Rudawsky, 2025). There is a growing pattern of intellectually nonconforming individuals avoiding or exiting academic environments (Teslo, 2023). When academic and organizational cultures implicitly reward conformity over curiosity, they limit the diversity of ideas essential for scientific breakthroughs and organizational adaptability. Such environments risk producing graduates who are credentialed but insufficiently prepared to lead, innovate, or respond creatively to global and cultural complexity in the modern workplace.

Addressing this challenge requires intentional leadership and culturally competent institutional practices that foster psychological safety and normalize intellectual risk-taking. Research indicates that students are more willing to take risks when they perceive strong instructor support, inclusive classroom climates, and assessment practices that reward exploration rather than perfection (Rudawsky, 2025; Beghetto, 2009; Dachner et al., 2017; Clark & Soutter, 2022). Strategies such as low-stakes assessments, opportunities for revision, structured debate, and pedagogies like the Harkness Method can help cultivate adaptability and critical thinking (Soutter & Clark, 2021). Importantly, leaders must model these behaviors themselves by welcoming dissent, embracing experimentation, and engaging with challenging ideas (Rudawsky, 2025).

Ultimately, fostering productive deviance aligns directly with preparing an agile, adaptable, and culturally competent workforce. Evidence suggests that psychologically safe environments support deeper learning and strong retention outcomes, countering the assumption that challenge undermines student success (Beghetto, 2009; Dachner et al., 2017). Institutions that deliberately cultivate equal treatment of everyone in the workforce through intellectual courage and comfort with uncertainty in culturally diverse contexts will develop managers and working professionals that are capable of innovation, leadership, and effective action in evolving organizational contexts, thereby fulfilling the central aims of contemporary workforce development.

## 2. Literature Review

It is a historical fact that some people groups have been oppressed due to their unique differences from the norm in society. In fact, the oppression theory argues that inequality is not simply the result of individual prejudice or isolated acts of discrimination, but rather the outcome of deeply rooted social systems that consistently disadvantage certain groups while privileging others. *Oppression theory* holds that in every society there are *constraints*, often unconscious, in terms of social inequality and group memberships that shape a person's life choices. According to this perspective, people experience oppression because of their membership in particular social categories such as race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, or nationality rather than because of personal choices or failings. These disadvantages are maintained through a web of institutional, cultural, and interpersonal forces that work together to restrict opportunities, limit autonomy, and shape life outcomes.

The concepts of homophobia, heterosexism, mansplaining, and whitesplaining are social attitudes and behaviors that reinforce hierarchies of power by privileging certain identities while devaluing others. Homophobia refers to fear, hostility, or prejudice toward people of diverse sexual orientations, which can result in harassment, exclusion, or violence. Heterosexism goes beyond individual hostility by assuming heterosexuality is the norm or superior, embedding this belief into laws, institutions, and cultural expectations, for example, when school curricula or workplace policies ignore same-sex relationships. Mansplaining occurs when men explain things to women in a condescending way, often assuming incompetence despite equal or greater expertise, reinforcing gendered power dynamics and undermining women's authority. Similarly, whitesplaining involves white individuals dismissing or redefining the lived experiences of people of color, especially around racism, positioning white perspectives as more objective or credible. Together, these practices silence marginalized voices, normalize dominance, and contribute to systemic oppression by shaping whose knowledge and experiences are taken seriously. Of course, there are many forms of biases as well that impact decisions in the workplace. Anchoring bias and unconscious biases operate more subtly but are equally powerful in producing oppression. Anchoring bias occurs when people rely too heavily on initial information or stereotypes when making judgments, even when new evidence is available, such as assuming someone's competence based on appearance, gender, or accent. Unconscious (implicit) biases are automatic associations shaped by culture, media, and socialization, influencing decisions without conscious intent (Mujtaba, 2022a). For instance, an employer may unknowingly associate leadership with masculinity or males, affecting hiring or promotion decisions. While these biases are often unintentional, their cumulative effects reinforce unequal outcomes across education, employment, healthcare, and the justice system. Because they are embedded in everyday decision-making and institutional practices, they help sustain patterns of domination and disadvantage, making oppression appear "natural" or invisible rather than systemic and unjust.

At its core, oppression involves systemic and unjust constraints placed on a group's ability to fully develop and exercise their capacities. For example, if a society's education system is underfunded in low-income or racially marginalized neighborhoods, students in those communities may have fewer academic opportunities regardless of their motivation or talent. This demonstrates how oppression operates structurally: harm arises not from one teacher or policymaker alone, but from policies and norms that collectively produce unequal results (Young, 1990a).

Oppression theory emphasizes that these systems create power imbalances between dominant and subordinate groups. Dominant groups benefit from greater access to resources, decision-making power, and cultural legitimacy, while subordinate groups face barriers that limit their ability to influence institutions or achieve socially valued goals. For instance, men as a group have historically held

more political and economic power than women, which has shaped laws, workplace practices, and cultural expectations in ways that advantage men and disadvantage women.

A key concept within oppression theory is intersectionality, which highlights that individuals often experience multiple overlapping forms of oppression at the same time. These overlapping identities can intensify disadvantages in ways that cannot be understood by looking at a single category alone. For example, a Black woman may experience discrimination differently than a white woman or a Black man, because racism and sexism interact to produce unique challenges in areas such as employment, healthcare, or criminal justice.

Another central idea is the structural nature of oppression. Oppression is embedded in social norms, laws, economic systems, and everyday practices, meaning it persists even without intentional hostility from individuals. For example, a company may claim to be “gender neutral” in hiring yet still promote men more frequently if leadership norms unconsciously associate authority and competence with masculinity. In this case, oppression operates through taken-for-granted assumptions rather than overt bias.

Oppression theory also focuses heavily on power dynamics, particularly the relationship between domination and subordination. Dominant groups often define what is considered normal, valuable, or acceptable, while subordinate groups are pressured to adapt or assimilate. This can be seen in language expectations, where speakers of non-dominant dialects or languages may be judged as less intelligent or professional, reinforcing cultural hierarchies.

Political philosopher Iris Marion Young’s “Five Faces of Oppression” provides a widely used framework for understanding how oppression manifests in everyday life (Young, 1990b):

1) *Exploitation* refers to situations where the labor of one group benefits another without fair compensation, such as low-wage workers generating profits for corporations while remaining economically insecure.

2) *Marginalization* occurs when groups are excluded from meaningful participation in social and economic life, as seen with people experiencing homelessness or individuals with disabilities who face barriers to employment.

3) *Powerlessness* describes the lack of authority, status, and decision-making power experienced by certain groups, such as service workers who must follow orders without having a voice in workplace policies.

4) *Cultural imperialism* involves the universalization of the dominant group’s experiences and values, rendering other cultures invisible or stereotyped; for example, when media representation consistently centers one racial or cultural group as the “default.”

5) *Violence* includes systematic threats, harassment, or physical harm directed at members of oppressed groups, such as hate crimes or gender-based violence, which function to maintain fear and social control.

Together, these concepts illustrate that oppression is not accidental or random,

but a patterned and enduring feature of social life. Oppression theory therefore encourages conscious thinking, as well as the critical examination of institutions, norms, and power relations, aiming not only to understand inequality but also to identify pathways toward greater social justice and collective liberation.

Managers can use procedural justice and distributive justice as practical tools to reduce oppression and promote equity in the workplace by ensuring fairness in both decision-making processes and outcomes. *Procedural justice* focuses on how decisions are made; by applying consistent rules, allowing employee voice, using transparent criteria, and offering mechanisms for appeal, managers can prevent favoritism, bias, and exclusion that often disadvantage marginalized groups. When employees understand and trust the process, power imbalances are reduced because decisions are less arbitrary and more accountable. *Distributive justice* concerns the fair allocation of resources and rewards, such as pay, promotions, workloads, and professional development opportunities. By regularly reviewing compensation and advancement patterns for inequities and aligning outcomes with clear, equitable standards rather than stereotypes or informal networks, managers can counter structural inequalities. Together with critical thinking skills, these forms of justice help dismantle oppressive dynamics by ensuring that both workplace procedures and results are fair, inclusive, and respectful of all employee groups.

Preventing oppressive attitudes and managing critical thinking and risks in a culturally diverse workforce presents challenges for academic institutions like those faced by contemporary organizations (Assefa & Mujtaba, 2025). Faculty and administrators must engage in fair, inclusive, and reflective decision-making to support all their stakeholders while developing their capabilities to challenge ineffective strategies locally, nationally, and globally. Developing smart leaders with cultural competence requires continuous learning, self-awareness, and comfort with cultural differences (Al-Kazemi et al. 2025). This mirrors the assertion that agility and adaptability are cultivated through intentional organizational practices rather than superficial compliance with local laws. Without meaningful engagement, institutions risk reinforcing inequities and undermining the preparation of students for culturally complex work environments.

Practical initiatives such as social celebrations, intercultural events, and professional alliances demonstrate how institutions can foster cultural competence through experiential learning. These efforts parallel organizational strategies like inclusive leadership and cross-functional collaboration. However, formal cultural competency training often lacks depth or reinforcement, which limits its effectiveness. For both academic and organizational settings, sustained development—not one-time training—is necessary to translate awareness into adaptive and culturally responsive behavior.

Cultural diversity encompasses visible and invisible differences that shape learning, performance, and success. Educators and leaders must avoid bias and empower individuals to define success based on their abilities and goals (Cavico &

Mujtaba, 2017). By modeling equity, respect, and high expectations, academic institutions help develop agile, adaptable, and culturally competent graduates. This preparation enables individuals to thrive in culturally diverse workplaces and supports long-term organizational effectiveness, reinforcing the central argument that these competencies are strategic imperatives in a globalized and digitally pervasive workplace.

The modern generation of the workforce increasingly expects organizations to embrace technology and flexibility because these elements align with how work, learning, and communication naturally occur in a digitally connected world. Technology enables efficiency, collaboration across locations, and continuous access to information, while flexible work arrangements support autonomy, work-life balance, and productivity. Younger and more diverse generations value outcomes over rigid schedules and prefer environments that trust employees to manage their responsibilities. As a result, managers must prioritize technology integration and flexible policies to remain competitive, attract and retain talent, and support agility in rapidly changing business environments. Organizations that fail to adapt, risk disengagement, reduce innovation, and increase turnover.

At the same time, inclusion, or the avoidance of exclusion, has become a defining expectation of the modern workforce. Employees seek workplaces where various identities, perspectives, and experiences are respected and valued, and where psychological safety allows individuals to contribute authentically. Experiences of exclusion, whether intentional or systemic, negatively impact morale, performance, and well-being. Consequently, managers must actively foster inclusive cultures through equitable practices, inclusive leadership behaviors, and open communication. Focusing on inclusion not only meets workforce expectations but also strengthens collaboration, decision-making, and organizational resilience by ensuring all employees feel seen, heard, and empowered to contribute.

### **2.1. Embracing Technology and Flexibility**

In today's rapidly evolving global economy where artificial intelligence is creating enormous efficiencies, managers must embrace hybrid, virtual, and remote work options to remain effective and competitive (Mujtaba, 2024). Workforce expectations have shifted significantly, with employees increasingly valuing flexibility, work-life balance, and autonomy. Modern employees span multiple generations and cultural backgrounds, each bringing distinct preferences for how, when, and where they work. Managers who resist flexible work arrangements risk disengaging employees, reducing retention, and missing opportunities to attract top talent in a highly competitive labor market (Jeffers et al., 2025). By supporting flexible work options in today's digital world, managers can align organizational practices with contemporary workforce expectations, creating a culture that values both productivity and employee well-being (Nafei et al., 2025).

Hybrid and remote work arrangements also promote inclusivity and access within the workforce. By allowing employees to work from diverse geographic

locations, organizations can tap into talent pools that were previously inaccessible due to physical or logistical constraints. Remote options can particularly benefit employees with disabilities, caregivers, and those with other life responsibilities, allowing them to contribute fully without unnecessary barriers. Embracing flexibility demonstrates a commitment to equity and inclusion, core principles for developing a culturally competent and adaptable workforce and reinforces the organization's reputation as an employer of choice for culturally and generationally diverse talent.

From a productivity and engagement perspective, hybrid and virtual models can enhance performance when implemented effectively. Employees with autonomy over their work schedules often exhibit higher levels of motivation, focus, and satisfaction. Modern managers who provide clear expectations, regular feedback, and access to collaborative digital tools can maintain accountability while empowering employees to manage their time efficiently. Incorporating technology-driven platforms for communication, project management, and performance tracking ensures that remote or hybrid teams remain connected, engaged, and aligned with organizational goals (Nafei et al., 2025).

Hybrid and remote work arrangements also support workforce agility and adaptability, which are essential for navigating rapidly changing business environments. Teams distributed across different locations must develop new collaboration skills, cross-cultural communication, and problem-solving strategies (Langaas & Mujtaba, 2023). Managers play a crucial role in fostering these competencies by facilitating virtual collaboration, promoting inclusive participation in meetings, and providing opportunities for continuous learning. These practices not only enhance organizational resilience but also prepare employees to thrive in globalized and multicultural settings, thereby strengthening the organization's overall competitiveness.

Adopting flexible work models encourages innovation and knowledge sharing across departments and geographies. Virtual collaboration tools allow employees to engage with colleagues from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise to foster creative problem-solving and the generation of new ideas. Managers who embrace these models can intentionally design cross-functional teams that leverage cognitive and cultural diversity to produce synergistic outcomes that would be difficult to achieve in a traditional, co-located setting. The result is a workforce that is better equipped to address complex challenges and deliver innovative solutions in a global marketplace.

Modern managers must recognize that embracing hybrid, virtual, and remote work is not merely a response to employee preferences but a strategic imperative for organizational sustainability and workforce talent retention. Flexible work models reduce overhead costs, support environmental sustainability, and enhance the probability of higher employee loyalty and retention (Udechukwu & Mujtaba, 2007). Moreover, organizations that adapt to these models position themselves to compete successfully for global talent while maintaining high levels of engage-

ment, productivity, and innovation. By integrating flexible work options into the organizational strategy, managers can cultivate a workforce that is agile, culturally competent, and fully prepared to meet the demands of today's dynamic, interconnected, and distinct work environments.

## 2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion

In the context of developing workforce agility, adaptability, and cultural competence in contemporary organizations, the concept of inclusion in both the workplace and academia remains foundational rather than novel. Inclusion has been examined extensively in prior scholarship (Shore et al., 2011; Mor Barak, 2011; Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998). Inclusion and exclusion manifest similarly across organizational and educational settings, affecting students, faculty members, teams, and entire classes. Experiences of inclusion, such as being invited to participate, contribute, or engage in shared activities, foster belonging and engagement, whereas intentional exclusion can lead to feelings of devaluation, isolation, incivility, and interpersonal conflict. Such experiences directly influence individuals' capacity to remain adaptable, collaborative, and culturally responsive in culturally diverse work environments.

Workplace inclusion is defined by employees' perceptions of acceptance, belonging, and meaningful participation within their teams and organizations (Mujtaba, 2022a). Specifically, inclusion reflects the extent to which individuals view themselves as integral to work processes, able to access resources, and capable of influencing decision-making. When employees perceive themselves as valued and accepted by colleagues and leaders, they are more likely to demonstrate commitment, engagement, and adaptive performance. Research indicates that inclusive environments support positive psychological outcomes, including enhanced self-esteem, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, and pro-social actions that are key contributors to workforce agility and organizational effectiveness in culturally diverse contexts.

Conversely, workplace exclusion undermines adaptability and cultural competence by marginalizing individuals from decision-making processes and social interactions (Mujtaba, 2022a). Exclusion may occur through intentional incivility, bias, or hierarchical power dynamics based on rank or gender, and has been shown to negatively affect both psychological and physical well-being (Zeeshan et al., 2024; Uru et al., 2024; Shore et al., 2011). Employees who experience exclusion often report emotional distress, including loneliness, social anxiety, sadness, embarrassment, and shame (Leary et al., 2000). In contemporary organizations, persistent exclusion can lead to disengagement, reduced collaboration, and diminished contributions to organizational goals.

Ultimately, exclusion deprives individuals of critical resources and opportunities necessary for performance, learning, and growth. These conditions negatively affect job satisfaction, well-being, and overall productivity, limiting an organization's ability to respond effectively to change. To cultivate an agile, adaptable, and

culturally competent workforce, organizations and academic institutions must intentionally foster inclusive practices that ensure equitable participation and respect for all members. Recognizing and addressing inclusion is therefore not only a moral responsibility but also a strategic imperative for sustaining performance and resilience in any modern and dynamic environment.

Appreciating, understanding, and valuing individual differences through inclusionary practices is essential for avoiding groupthink in both academic and organizational settings. Groupthink occurs when group members prioritize consensus over critical evaluation, leading to biased and ineffective decision-making (Mujtaba, 2022a). In today's complex, globally interconnected environment, such uniformity of thought at home and workplace limits innovation and responsiveness to change (Lareau, 2011). Groupthink is more prevalent in homogeneous teams, where shared backgrounds and similar values reduce the likelihood of alternative perspectives. Research consistently demonstrates that homogeneous groups are less creative and less effective than culturally diverse teams when addressing complex or ambiguous problems, which are precisely the types of challenges modern organizations face.

Culturally and cognitively diverse teams, when managed effectively, are better positioned to generate adaptive and innovative solutions. Cultural and cognitive diversity enhance problem-solving capacity by introducing multiple viewpoints, experiences, and ways of thinking. When individuals and teams appreciate and leverage these differences, they can achieve synergy, or performance gains that exceed the sum of individual contributions. Synergistic teams coordinate their efforts toward shared goals, enabling higher levels of collaboration, creativity, and productivity. This capacity for synergy directly supports workforce agility, as teams become more capable of adjusting to new information, shifting demands, and evolving organizational priorities.

However, diversity alone does not guarantee positive outcomes. Without cultural awareness, mutual respect, and inclusive practices, teams may experience negative synergy, where misunderstandings and conflict undermine performance and health (Zhao, 2021). Developing cultural competence allows individuals to work effectively across differences and transform different views into a strategic asset rather than a source of friction. In this way, awareness functions as a critical enabler of adaptability and sustains team effectiveness.

The same principles apply in learning environments that prepare individuals for modern workplaces. Differences in background, experiences, and communication styles can influence how individuals engage with and interpret information. Faculty and organizational leaders must therefore cultivate transformational environments in which all participants can meaningfully connect with content and contribute to discussions (Zareen et al., 2015). An inclusive learning environment actively engages varied perspectives, strengthens cultural competence, and equips individuals with the skills needed to thrive in dynamic, and distinct organizational as well as entrepreneurial contexts (Zaidi et al., 2023).

The Pygmalion Effect, or self-fulfilling prophecy, powerfully illustrates how expectations shape behavior, performance, and identity—an insight that directly supports this focus on developing agility, adaptability, and cultural competence in contemporary organizations. Jane Elliott’s 1970 classroom experiment, documented in *The Eye of the Storm* and later revisited in PBS’s *A Class Divided*, demonstrated how quickly assumptions and expectations can influence individual and group outcomes (Peters, 1970, 1985). By assigning arbitrary superiority and inferiority based on eye color, Elliott revealed how social conditioning and stereotypes can be created and reinforced in a remarkably short period of time. The long-term follow-up showed that these experiences left lasting impressions on students, underscoring how learning environments can either constrain or expand individuals’ capacity to grow, adapt, and succeed.

The experiment clearly demonstrated the mechanics of the *self-fulfilling prophecy*: students performed in alignment with the expectations placed upon them. When labeled as superior, children displayed confidence, cooperation, and higher academic performance; when labeled as inferior, they experienced rapid declines in self-esteem, concentration, and performance, accompanied by conflict and antisocial behavior. These outcomes parallel dynamics commonly observed in modern organizations, where employees who are marginalized or stereotyped often disengage, while those perceived as “high potential” are given greater opportunities to adapt, learn, and contribute. Such patterns undermine organizational agility by limiting the full participation and talent of diverse individuals.

Importantly, Elliott concluded that outcomes are not determined by inherent ability, but by how individuals are treated and what is expected of them, which is a core lesson for educators and organizational leaders alike. In the context of workforce development, expecting less from individuals based on culture, language, gender, nationality, or other characteristics is not only unethical but counterproductive. Leaders and educators who hold high, equitable expectations foster environments where cultural competence, adaptability, and continuous learning can flourish. By consciously rejecting stereotypes and modeling inclusive expectations from every member of the modern workforce, organizations and academic institutions can cultivate agile and resilient individuals who are prepared to thrive in local, global and evolving contexts. The question for this literature-based paper is: *What practical goals and strategies can enhance agility, adaptability, and cultural competence with the modern workforce?*

### 3. Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative, literature- and experience-based methodology to examine practical goals and strategies that enhance agility, adaptability, and cultural competence within the modern workforce. Based on the author’s three decades of management development training and research background, a structured review of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and practitioner-oriented publications was conducted across leadership, organizational behavior, human resource

development, and cross-cultural management domains. Sources were identified using key terms such as *workforce agility*, *organizational adaptability*, *cultural competence*, *inclusive leadership*, and *change management*. Emphasis was placed on recent literature reflecting contemporary workplace dynamics, including globalization, hybrid work, as well as cultural and generational diversity. The literature was analyzed thematically to identify recurring concepts, frameworks, and evidence-based practices relevant to developing agile and culturally competent organizations.

In addition to the literature review, the methodology integrates the author's professional experience to contextualize and interpret the findings. Experiential insights from leadership practice, organizational development initiatives, and workforce training were used to assess the practical applicability of the strategies identified in the literature. This experiential lens supports the synthesis of theory and practice by illustrating how abstract concepts translate into actionable goals and behaviors within real organizational settings. By triangulating scholarly research with practitioner experience, the author aims to produce a grounded and practice-oriented reflection that offers actionable guidance for human resources professionals as well as other organizational managers and leaders seeking to enhance workforce agility, adaptability, and cultural competence in dynamic local and global work environments.

#### 4. Discussion

Drawing from the reviewed literature and the authors' several decades of professional training and leadership experience, this section emphasizes that effective workforce management in the modern era requires an intentional shift toward cultural proficiency rather than minimal cultural awareness. Literature consistently highlights cultural proficiency as an ongoing developmental process that enables individuals and organizations to respond appropriately and effectively in diverse workplace contexts. In practice, this involves developing cultural agility, or the ability to adapt behaviors, communication styles, and decision-making approaches across cultural settings. The authors' training experience reinforces that organizations demonstrating cultural agility are better positioned to navigate rapid change, global collaboration, and increasingly diverse teams, as these capabilities foster trust, innovation, and resilience (Hsu & Mujtaba, 2007).

Equally important, both the literature and experiential insights underscore the role of intentional training and development practices that acknowledge and leverage differences while actively involving adult learners. Effective workforce development strategies move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches by recognizing individual backgrounds, learning styles, and professional experiences. Managing differences constructively through inclusive policies, facilitated dialogue, and collaborative problem-solving supports adaptability and psychological safety. Furthermore, engaging adult learners through experiential, reflective, and problem-centered learning methods enhances knowledge retention and behavioral change.

Together, these practices create learning environments that empower employees, strengthen cultural competence, and support sustained agility within the modern workforce.

#### 4.1. Aiming toward Cultural Proficiency

In the pursuit of developing workforce agility, adaptability, and cultural competence in contemporary organizations, responses to cultural diversity can be understood along a continuum that ranges from culturally destructive behaviors to institutionalized cultural proficiency. Cultural consultants and scholars emphasize that culturally destructive responses may be overt, such as militant actions aimed at eradicating cultures or values, or more subtle, including practices that restrict individuals from expressing or sustaining their cultural traditions (Royeen & Crabtree, 2006). Such behaviors undermine trust, collaboration, and adaptability, thereby limiting an organization's ability to function effectively in an increasingly global and culturally diverse environment (Kanaris & Mujtaba, 2024).

Less overt but equally limiting is cultural blindness, which occurs when individuals or institutions fail to recognize or validate cultural differences. While cultural sensitivity reflects an initial awareness and appreciation of diversity, it can remain superficial or even unintentionally patronizing. To move beyond this stage, organizations must intentionally cultivate cultural competence. Cultural competence requires ongoing self-examination, recognition of personal and systemic biases, and deliberate, evidence-based decision-making that fosters inclusive and equitable environments. As defined in this research, *cultural competence* is a continuous learning process that enables individuals and organizations to function effectively across cultural differences in both academic and workplace contexts (Mujtaba, 2022a).

Over time, sustained cultural competence can evolve into cultural proficiency, which is an advanced and institutionalized practice. *Institutionalized cultural proficiency* occurs when organizations embed culturally responsive standards, policies, and behaviors that reflect an immersed respect for different beliefs and values (Royeen & Crabtree, 2006; Senathip et al., 2017). Culturally proficient organizations avoid overt and covert judgment or discrimination and instead create environments that support mutual learning, psychological safety, and collaboration (Khanfar et al., 2024; Kendrick et al., 2023; Cavico et al., 2013). This approach is essential for workforce adaptability and team building, as it enables units to navigate differing cultural norms such as contrasting views of time, productivity, or success without imposing hierarchical or ethnocentric judgments (Lawrence et al., 2022; Lopez et al., 2022).

Cultural proficiency also requires an understanding of the socialization processes that shape individuals' identities within diverse organizations. Enculturation, acculturation, and assimilation describe different ways individuals relate to dominant and non-dominant cultures (Royeen & Crabtree, 2006). Rather than expecting assimilation, culturally proficient organizations embrace a pluralistic

approach akin to a “fruit salad,” where individuals maintain their cultural identities while contributing to shared goals. By suspending biases and valuing diverse perspectives, organizations can create synergistic teams that enhance agility, adaptability, and long-term effectiveness in an interconnected global workforce.

*Cultural blindness* typically refers to the tendency to ignore, minimize, or deny cultural differences, often under the assumption that treating everyone “the same” ensures fairness (Mujtaba, 2022a). In contemporary organizations, cultural blindness can undermine workforce agility and adaptability by overlooking how cultural backgrounds shape communication styles, decision-making, and expectations. Rather than fostering inclusion, this approach may unintentionally privilege dominant norms and limit employees’ ability to fully contribute. Developing workforce agility and cultural competence requires moving beyond cultural blindness toward recognizing, valuing, and leveraging differences as strategic assets in today’s global work environments.

*Enculturation* is the process through which individuals learn and internalize the values, beliefs, and norms of their culture of origin, typically beginning in early childhood. *Acculturation* occurs when individuals are exposed to a new or dominant culture and gradually learn its practices while still retaining aspects of their original cultural identity. In contemporary organizations, understanding enculturation and acculturation is essential for leaders and teams working across cultures, as employees bring deeply rooted assumptions shaped by their early socialization while simultaneously adapting to organizational or national cultures. Cultural competence enables organizations to support this adaptive process without forcing conformity.

*Assimilation* differs from acculturation in that it involves relinquishing one’s original cultural values and practices to fully adopt those of the dominant culture. While assimilation has historically been promoted in some organizational and societal contexts, it can restrict creativity, engagement, and adaptability by suppressing different perspectives. In contrast, developing an agile and culturally competent workforce requires environments that allow individuals to maintain their cultural identities while contributing meaningfully to shared goals. By acknowledging these cultural processes, contemporary organizations can foster inclusion, enhance adaptability, and strengthen performance in an increasingly complex global landscape.

## 4.2. Developing Cultural Agility

In the context of developing workforce adaptability, and cultural competence in contemporary organizations, cultural agility represents a critical capability that enables individuals to function effectively across cultural boundaries. Cultural proficiency and competence serve as foundational precursors to cultural agility, equipping individuals with the awareness and skills needed to navigate diverse work environments. *Cultural agility* refers to the ability to comfortably engage with people from different cultural backgrounds, adapt to unfamiliar norms, and

continue learning while performing effectively. This includes global or cultural fluency, rapid integration into new environments, strong intercultural communication skills, and the capacity to collaborate across national and cultural boundaries. These competencies are among the least developed in today's workforce, in part because individuals rely on cognitive shortcuts shaped by biases and stereotypes when faced with unfamiliar situations (Caligiuri, 2021).

Academic institutions, managers and modern organizations play a pivotal role in fostering cultural agility by providing intentional development opportunities such as cross-cultural awareness training and immersive international or multicultural experiences. However, training alone is insufficient without deliberate introspection and self-assessment. According to research, individuals must first understand their baseline level of cross-cultural competence in order to identify developmental gaps (Caligiuri, 2021; Mujtaba, 2022b). Cultural agility development is supported by assessing competencies across three key domains: self-management, relationship management, and task management. Together, these domains enable employees to remain effective, reflective, and goal-oriented while adapting to culturally diverse contexts.

Self-management, or cultural self-awareness, involves the ability to tolerate ambiguity, remain resilient, and suspend judgment in unfamiliar environments. This competency allows individuals to observe and learn before reacting, which is essential for adaptability in complex global settings. Relationship management focuses on openness, humility, empathy, and the ability to build trust across differences. Task management ensures that individuals remain focused on professional standards and outcomes while adapting processes to align with local norms and expectations. These competencies collectively support agile performance by balancing flexibility with accountability.

Effective cultural agility development requires more than surface-level training on behavioral norms. Organizations and educators must guide learners to examine underlying beliefs, values, and assumptions that shape behavior. Assessing individuals' capacity and readiness for cross-cultural learning before placing them in international or high-stakes multicultural roles reduces anxiety, culture shock, and counterproductive stress. Gradual exposure to cultural differences, paired with appropriate developmental support, helps individuals build confidence and adaptability without becoming overwhelmed. This approach mirrors best practices in workforce development, where learning is scaffolded to promote sustainable growth (Ly & Mujtaba, 2025; Nguyen et al., 2013).

Finally, building cultural agility is not defined by the length of international experience alone but by the quality of engagement, reflection, and learning opportunities. Some individuals develop cultural agility quickly through meaningful collaboration and learning from mistakes, while others may remain culturally rigid despite extensive exposure. Cultural agility is a continuous learning process shaped by the interaction of biological predispositions and cognitive development. Because human cognition does not naturally evolve at the same pace as en-

vironmental complexity, organizations must intentionally cultivate cultural agility through awareness, training, social support, and immersive practice (Mujtaba, 2022b). Doing so strengthens workforce adaptability and positions organizations to succeed in an increasingly diverse and globalized world.

### 4.3. Training and Development Practices

In the context of developing workforce agility, adaptability, and cultural competence in contemporary organizations, fostering an inclusive learning and work environment is essential for preparing employees to not just get along with colleagues, but to also thrive in culturally diverse and dynamic settings (Mujtaba, 2019). Inclusive facilitation, whether in classrooms, training sessions, or online learning platforms, ensures that all participants feel valued and engaged. As highlighted by Lin and Kennette (2021) and summarized in Shark Notes (2021), inclusive teaching strategies provide practical guidance for educators and trainers to create equitable learning experiences that translate directly to workforce development. By embedding inclusivity into training, organizations can enhance employee engagement, collaboration, and long-term adaptability across culturally diverse teams.

Addressing microaggressions and stereotype threats is central to cultivating inclusion and maximizing potential. *Microaggressions*, such as subtle verbal or behavioral slights, can diminish motivation and performance, particularly among minority or marginalized groups. Strategies such as anonymous grading and sharing student or employee work without attribution reduce bias and prevent unwanted attention (Shark Notes, 2021). Similarly, stereotype threat, which arises when individuals feel at risk of confirming negative societal assumptions about their group, can undermine confidence and achievement (Mujtaba, 2025b; Roberts & Mujtaba, 2024). Providing feedback emphasizing that skills can be developed through effort, and highlighting diverse role models, helps counteract these effects while fostering resilience, confidence, and intellectual risk-taking in learners and employees alike (Lin & Kennette, 2021).

Inclusive practices through engagement and fun activities can strengthen teamwork and collaboration, which are critical for workforce agility and cultural competence (Mujtaba, Lawrence, & Gibens, 2025). Facilitators can rotate group members, assign collaborative projects, and use digital tools such as interactive exercises, breakout rooms or Google Docs to encourage meaningful and comfortable interaction across diverse perspectives (Shark Notes, 2021). These strategies not only enhance learning outcomes but also mirror real-world organizational settings where employees must navigate different viewpoints, adapt to varying work styles, and contribute effectively to collective goals. By integrating inclusive training methods, organizations build a workforce that is culturally competent, adaptable, and capable of thriving in a global environment.

### 4.4. Managing Differences

Understanding and effectively managing diversity is a critical competency for de-

veloping workforce agility, adaptability, and cultural competence since the current workplace is very different from the past (Mujtaba & Lawrence, 2024). The U.S. workforce, as well as the work teams of multinational corporations, are increasingly diverse due to global immigration trends, demographic shifts, and evolving social dynamics. Today, approximately one-third of American workers are African American, Hispanic, or Asian; women comprise much of the working-age population; and roughly one in ten workers has a legally recognized disability, many of which are not immediately visible (Cooper & Mujtaba, 2022). Additionally, English is becoming a second language for many residents in states like California and regions such as South and Central Florida. This demographic complexity creates both opportunities and challenges for organizations seeking to remain competitive in a globalized economy.

Historical studies, such as the Hudson Institute's *Work Force 2000* (mid-1980s), identified long-term trends shaping the workforce: a growing presence of women and minorities, increasing numbers of immigrants, a decreasing pool of younger workers, and the rising importance of high-skill service and information jobs. These trends illustrate the pressing need for organizations and educational institutions to adapt (Mujtaba, 2025a). Leaders, managers, and educators must prioritize inclusive practices that recognize and leverage these demographic realities. Failing to do so risks reduced innovation, engagement, and performance in a workforce that thrives on collaboration across culturally diverse backgrounds (Subramaniam et al., 2023).

Creating an inclusive environment is foundational to managing differences effectively. For both faculty and organizational leaders, the classroom or workplace serves as a laboratory for practicing inclusive behaviors. Inclusion requires eliminating bias and stereotypes while promoting equitable participation, open communication, and mutual respect. By modeling inclusive behavior and encouraging learners or employees to do the same, educators and managers prepare individuals to work successfully in culturally and cognitively diverse teams, which is a key element of workforce agility and adaptability.

Valuing diversity means intentionally designing strategies to manage differences toward collective success for the modern workforce. Leaders, trainers, facilitators, and managers must cultivate environments where individuals' unique skills, competencies, and perspectives contribute to organizational or classroom synergy. Practical approaches include structured group work, guided brainstorming, and collaborative problem-solving that integrate opposite viewpoints. Facilitators and managers can ask critical questions, such as: "How can I recognize and effectively manage diversity to ensure both productive learning and superior performance outcomes?" Through continuous reflection, dialogue, and application, organizations and educational institutions can develop a workforce that is culturally competent, adaptable, and capable of excelling in complex, globalized contexts.

#### **4.5. Involving Adult Learners**

In the context of developing the modern workforce, understanding how adults

learn is essential for preparing employees and leaders to succeed in the global work environments. Unlike children, adult learners voluntarily engage in learning and bring multiple responsibilities, including work, family, and community obligations. Their motivation to learn is often tied to practical application and achieving specific goals, rather than learning for its own sake. Barriers such as limited time, financial constraints, and competing responsibilities can inhibit participation, which makes it critical for educators and organizational trainers to design flexible and relevant learning experiences that accommodate adults' unique needs. Adults are more likely to engage fully when they see clear connections between learning opportunities and their professional or personal growth.

Effective adult learning relies on active engagement and stimulation of multiple senses to enhance understanding and long-term retention. Traditional educational approaches, such as relying solely on formative or summative exams, often fail to involve learners in meaningful ways and encourage short-term cramming rather than deep comprehension. In the modern workforce, training programs must move beyond passive learning to actively involve participants in applying concepts through real-world exercises, case studies, role-plays, and team-based projects. By doing so, adult learners can internalize information and practice skills in a context that mirrors workplace challenges, increasing both retention and the ability to transfer knowledge to new settings.

Long-term retention and transference of learning are critical for developing workforce agility and adaptability. Adult learners must not only understand new concepts but also retain and apply them effectively in the workplace. Managers, educators, and trainers play a central role in facilitating this process by providing repeated opportunities for practice, reflection, and application. Non-threatening assessment tools, including quizzes, projects, debates, and presentations, should be designed not only to evaluate learning but also to reinforce it, thereby enabling learners to integrate new skills into their professional roles. These strategies foster self-confidence, competence, and adaptability in the workforce to successfully navigate complex, multicultural, and evolving organizational environments.

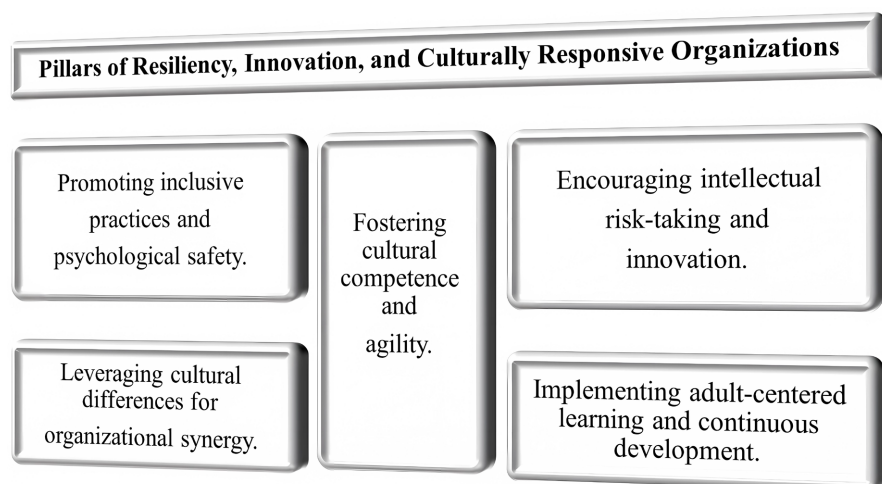
Ultimately, involving adult learners in the learning process aligns directly with the development of cultural competence and workforce readiness. By respecting adults' experiences, accommodating their unique learning needs, and actively engaging them in applying knowledge, organizations can cultivate employees who are agile, adaptable, and capable of collaborating effectively across diverse teams. The focus on adult-centered learning ensures that professional development programs not only convey information but also build the practical skills and cognitive flexibility required for success in the modern, global workforce.

## **5. Recommendations**

For modern educators, managers and leaders, fostering cultural competence and agility is no longer optional but essential in an increasingly global, diverse, and hybrid workforce. Cultural competence enables leaders to understand and respect

differences in values, communication styles, and worldviews, while cultural agility allows them to adapt quickly and effectively across varied contexts. When leaders promote inclusive practices and psychological safety, they create environments where employees feel respected, heard, and valued regardless of background or identity. Psychological safety encourages open dialogue, reduces fear of judgment or failure, and allows individuals to contribute fully, which is critical for engagement, collaboration, and trust in both virtual and in-person work settings. Inclusive leadership directly supports adaptability by ensuring that different perspectives inform decision-making rather than being silenced by conformity or bias.

Equally important is encouraging intellectual risk-taking and innovation while supporting adult-centered learning and continuous development. Modern organizations require employees who are willing to question assumptions, experiment with new ideas, and learn from mistakes, which capabilities that thrive only when leaders reward curiosity and learning rather than penalizing failure. Adult-centered learning recognizes that employees are motivated by relevance, autonomy, and practical application, making continuous development more effective and transferable to real work challenges. By leveraging cultural differences for organizational synergy, leaders can move beyond mere diversity toward high-performing, collaborative teams where varied perspectives enhance creativity, problem-solving, and strategic outcomes. Together, these recommendations as foundational pillars, shown in **Figure 1**, enable managers to build resilient, innovative, and culturally responsive organizations that are well equipped to succeed in today's complex and rapidly changing workforce environment.



**Figure 1.** Pillars of building responsive organizations (Source: created by the author).

***Foster cultural competence and agility.*** Modern workforce managers should proactively prioritize the development of cultural competence and agility through affirmative action programs to ensure employees can navigate increasingly diverse organizational environments (Mujtaba, 2023). Organizations can achieve this by offering structured cross-cultural training, immersive international experiences,

and opportunities for reflective self-assessment (Caligiuri, 2021). Leaders should model culturally competent behaviors, demonstrating respect for diverse perspectives and encouraging employees to adapt to unfamiliar cultural contexts. Embedding cultural proficiency into organizational policies and performance expectations ensures that cultural differences are not just recognized but leveraged as a strategic asset, enhancing collaboration, innovation, and global competitiveness.

**Promote inclusive practices and psychological safety.** To develop workforce adaptability and engagement, organizations must create inclusive environments that actively involve all employees and minimize microaggressions and biases. Managers should implement practices such as anonymous feedback, equitable evaluation, and deliberate rotation of team assignments to encourage collaboration across different backgrounds (Lin & Kenette, 2021). Providing forums for employees to voice dissent, debate ideas, and challenge assumptions fosters psychological safety, which is directly linked to creativity, intellectual risk-taking, and problem-solving. When employees feel included and valued, their motivation, commitment, and performance improve significantly.

**Encourage intellectual risk-taking and innovation.** Workforce agility and adaptability depend on employees' ability to take intellectual and creative risks. Organizations should design learning and development programs that normalize experimentation, tolerate mistakes, and reward innovative thinking (Mastroianni, 2025; Beghetto & Baxter, 2012). Assessment metrics should measure problem-solving, collaboration, and idea generation rather than merely task completion. Structured controversy exercises, cross-functional projects, and exposure to unconventional approaches provide employees with opportunities to expand their thinking and challenge entrenched practices. Leaders play a critical role by modeling intellectual humility, acknowledging uncertainty, and visibly embracing new perspectives.

**Implement adult-centered learning and continuous development.** Recognizing that adult learners have unique needs, organizations should adopt training strategies that respect experiential knowledge and encourage active engagement. Programs should include multiple forms of assessment, such as case studies, role-plays, presentations, and project-based work, to reinforce learning and ensure knowledge is transferable to the workplace. Flexibility in scheduling, blended learning options, and relevance to professional goals help overcome barriers such as time constraints and competing responsibilities. Continuous development initiatives that integrate learning with real-world application cultivate employees who are adaptable, competent, and able to thrive in dynamic environments.

**Leverage cultural differences for organizational synergy.** Finally, effective workforce management requires strategically valuing and managing all forms of inherent diversity to achieve organizational synergy. Managers should identify and utilize individual strengths, foster collaboration across differences, and integrate distinct perspectives into decision-making and problem-solving processes. Inclusion should be viewed as an ongoing practice, where differences are respected,

and cultural, cognitive, and experiential variety are intentionally harnessed for innovation and productivity. By systematically incorporating these strategies, organizations can develop a workforce that is not only competent and adaptable but also resilient, innovative, and prepared to succeed in an increasingly global and complex business landscape.

Beyond the foundational pillars, modern workforce managers should deliberately model and reinforce high ethical standards, as today's employees are highly attuned to transparency, fairness, and social responsibility. Clear codes of conduct, consistent decision-making, and open communication about organizational values help build trust and credibility. Motivation should go beyond pay and titles to include meaningful work, opportunities for growth, recognition, and flexibility, as such factors are especially valued by the modern generation workforce. Managers who demonstrate a healthy sense of humor can humanize leadership, reduce stress, and foster psychological safety, making teams more open, resilient, and collaborative without undermining professionalism. Additionally, effective change management is equally critical in an era of rapid technological and organizational shifts. Managers should involve employees early in change processes, explain the purpose behind changes, and show empathy for uncertainty or resistance. Encouraging feedback, supporting continuous learning, and celebrating small wins can maintain motivation and morale during transitions. By combining ethical leadership, authentic motivation, appropriate humor, and inclusive change management practices, modern managers can create adaptable, engaged, and values-driven teams that thrive in a dynamic work environment.

It is critically important that modern managers serve as visible role models of cultural competence, inclusion, intellectual risk-taking, and continuous learning because employees take behavioral cues from leadership far more than from policies or statements alone. When managers consistently demonstrate respect for cultural differences, create psychologically safe environments, and openly engage in learning and self-reflection, they legitimize these behaviors across the organization and embed them into everyday practice. Leaders who model intellectual curiosity and are willing to acknowledge uncertainty or learn from mistakes signal that innovation and growth are valued over conformity and fear of failure. By living through the principles of inclusivity, cultural agility, and adult-centered development, managers foster trust, reinforce shared values, and create the conditions for organizational synergy, adaptability, and sustained performance in the modern workforce.

There are limitations to the application of any suggestions and recommendations. For this paper, the inclusion of an "experience-based" component is subjective and limited to the author's narrowly defined paradigm. Future researchers can comprehensively specify the nature of this professional experience and employ a recognized methodology to systematically integrate and analyze such observed insights. Additionally, it is acknowledged that the paper advocates for avoiding groupthink, yet it relies heavily on the author's own observations, re-

search, and publications. Future studies should broaden the scope of the literature review by integrating more seminal publications from other scholars on key topics like organizational agility, adaptive leadership, and adult learning theory. Lastly, while the recommendations are sound, they could be more actionable for immediate use. Future studies, for example, can mention established models or core components to provide managers with a more concrete starting point for workforce training and development.

## 6. Summary

In contemporary organizations, the ability to develop workforce agility, adaptability, and cultural competence has become a critical determinant of success. Globalization, demographic shifts, and evolving workforce expectations require that employees not only possess technical skills but also demonstrate the capacity to collaborate effectively across diverse cultural, cognitive, and experiential backgrounds. The modern workforce is characterized by a rich mix of nationalities, languages, genders, abilities, and professional experiences, making inclusion, cultural awareness, and respect for differences essential competencies for leaders, managers, and employees alike. Instead of allowing biased decisions and oppressive societal behaviors to continue, educational institutions and organizations must recognize that preparing individuals to navigate this complexity is central to achieving both individual and organizational effectiveness.

A key component of developing workforce competence is cultural proficiency and agility. Employees and learners must move beyond superficial sensitivity to cultural differences and engage in continuous learning that fosters understanding, respect, and effective interaction with colleagues from diverse backgrounds. Cultural agility involves self-awareness, relationship management, and task management, which enable individuals to adapt to unfamiliar environments while maintaining productivity and professional standards. Organizations that invest in culturally competent leaders and employees gain a competitive advantage by fostering collaboration, innovation, and resilience across global and multicultural teams.

Inclusive practices and adult-centered learning are equally critical to workforce development. Adults engage best when learning experiences are relevant, voluntary, and designed to accommodate their responsibilities and motivations. Active involvement, diverse assessment methods, and opportunities for practice and application enhance long-term retention and transference of learning to real-world organizational contexts. By implementing inclusive teaching and training strategies, organizations can address barriers such as stereotype threat and microaggressions, which can lead to creating environments where all employees feel valued, motivated, and empowered to contribute fully.

Furthermore, intellectual risk-taking and the management of differences are essential for sustaining innovation and adaptability. Employees must be encouraged to challenge assumptions, explore unconventional ideas, and engage in problem-

solving without fear of failure or retaliation. Leaders play a critical role in modeling openness, promoting psychological safety, and reinforcing the value of diverse perspectives. Structuring teams and projects to leverage differences in background, experience, and thought encourages synergy, drives creativity, and enhances organizational performance. Effective workforce management is therefore not merely about inclusion, but about actively cultivating an environment where different skills and perspectives are harnessed toward common goals.

In conclusion, preparing a modern workforce for success requires a holistic approach that integrates cultural competence, inclusive practices, adult-centered learning, and intellectual risk-taking. Organizations that systematically develop these capabilities enable employees to navigate complex, globalized, and culturally diverse work environments with agility and adaptability. Such an approach strengthens individual performance, fosters collaboration, drives innovation, and positions organizations to remain competitive in an increasingly interconnected modern world. By embracing these strategies, leaders, educators, and managers can cultivate a workforce that is not only skilled but also culturally proficient, resilient, and capable of thriving in the modern organizational landscape.

### **Ethical Responsibilities of Authors**

The author of this article confirms that the work complies with the principles of research and publication ethics.

### **Author Contributions**

The author confirms sole responsibility for conceptualization and design, data collection, analysis of data and interpretation of results, writing the first draft of the manuscript, and review and editing.

### **Additional Disclosure**

AI was used to improve the language content, after which the author checked the text and took full responsibility for its content.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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