Chapter 5
Competency-Based Learning for Organizational Managers

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ABSTRACT
The chapter focuses on the organizational manager’s competency-based learning and the assessment of such learning. Through a broad assessment, the reading provides insights for approaches in learning institutions and corporate environments. Clear linkages are discussed for partnering to meet business needs. Competency-based learning in this chapter is addressed from behavioral perspectives, which are teachable and learnable approaches to develop talent. This assessment identifies problems and provides certain solutions to focus on, and offers key messages throughout the reading. The reader will grasp that competencies are measurable, that they must meet certain business needs, and are developed in partnership work best. Finally, the chapter provides readers with certain insights regarding behavioral competencies’ future as a continued tool, and how innovations enhance the appeal of continued utilization and growth of behavioral competencies in businesses and education.

INTRODUCTION
Today, with the pace of change in organizations, and for organizations to remain competitive in the marketplace, it is imperative for them to have a well-trained and qualified workforce. One training model complementing other models and notable leadership approaches is competency management (Richards, 2008; Warsaw, 2014). Competency management is an individual and organizational tool for developing talent. Competency management and competency-based learning are also two of the most innovative tools in education in the last decade. Competency-based learning provides effective identification and communication of relevant skills necessary for success in the organization, and of the measures by which performance will be judged in organizational environments. This is great for learners, because it helps them understand what organizations really expect of them. Competency-based learning is also great for organizations; it allows for alignment, and focus to be placed on what is most important.

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Assessing competencies has a history dating back forty years. Its roots are in labor as a method for integrating occupational learning with a standard of proficiency that is observable, measurable, and sharable. The word competency specifies learning skills that are necessary for organizational success and accelerating that learning in ways that have never been experienced outside of academic environments (Bowden & Masters, 1993). Traditional behavioral individual competencies are the building blocks of organizational capability, of which analysis of performance paints a robust picture of gaps and strengths.

Managerial competencies specifically are those areas of focus that have strategic value and, therefore, fulfill a specific organizational need. Managers play a critical role in the organization. In managerial positions, strategic initiatives are influenced, and organizational success can be most measured by how managers perform in their roles (Fottler & Khatri, 2010). To focus on organizational growth and to ascertain where labor intersects best with academic development of competency-based education and the needs of the business market, three competencies are prominently utilized. These three competencies are focusing on the customer, focusing on industry opportunity, and focusing on the market. These three competencies have been identified as tying directly to organizational performance. Managerial competencies naturally intersect with postsecondary educational institutions’ programming (Brown & Kurzweil, 2017). Strong competency-based educational platforms are integrated to meet multiple needs (e.g., individual, institutional, and organizational). Therefore, technological advances will have to play an important role in the future in improving the efficiency of their use, their accessibility, and the value of how competency-based education is viewed.

COMPETENCY

In literature, there are various definitions for competencies, and there are various functions of competencies (Job & Robotham, 1997; Sangha, 2016; Schippmann, 2000). In the U.S., the idea of competencies dates to the seminal work of McClelland in the 1970s, *Testing for Competence Rather than for Intelligence*. McClelland described competencies as behavioral, and characteristics of competencies as knowledge, skill, self-concept, trait, and motive competencies, which represent the central personality. McClelland stated, “Competencies are underlying characteristics of people and indicate ways of behaving or thinking, generalizing across situations, and enduring for a reasonably long period of time” (McClelland, 1973, p. 10).

Currently, there appears to be confusion in literature about what competencies are (Abraham, et al., 2001; Antonacopoulou & Fitzgerald, 1996; Lievens et al. 2004; Sanchez & Levine, 2009). This appears to be, in part, due to the fact that scholars have moved away from the originally intended purpose of competencies and the original description of what competencies are. McClelland proposed competency as a way of testing proficiency in occupational environments when it comes to performing certain activities. His work was not exclusively focused on occupational labor. Instead, he was focused on determining better ways of identifying successful organizational candidates and making a conscious shift away from considering scores from aptitude tests, which highly favored Caucasians and discriminated against non-Caucasian and less affluent individuals (McClelland, 1973). McClelland was frustrated because he kept observing the over utilization of aptitude testing to measure academic success, while ignoring life success. Based on his findings, McClelland concluded that aptitude testing did not equate to how an individual performed in certain occupations. He discovered that competency proficiency explained