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Work based learning: its impact on HRD/M practitioner development and professional identity.

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Glaser-Segura et al (2010, p.200) note that new professionals are 'indoctrinated in the groups professional identity through a combination of curricula crafted by recognized members of the professional and by pedagogical means'. This study, however, wishes to explore the perspectives of experienced and time serviced professionals who choose to engage with a work based experiential professional postgraduate level qualification curricula. The aim is to understand how experience of already being a professional yet learning about that profession may change their perspective on their professional identity.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) is perceived by the UK HR community to be the major professional body that drives the knowledge, skills and behaviours expected of those that work in human resource management, human resource development and organization development. Their qualifications are based on a set of learning outcomes designed to address all aspects of such roles. Acquisition of these qualifications can lead to candidates enjoying better opportunities for acquisition of appropriate jobs, enhanced promotion prospects, increased organizational profiles. CIPD Professional Assessment is a particular work based learning route directly related to the candidate's current work experiences. It provides a framework for HR professionals to demonstrate how their work meets the detailed Standards requirements. It is normally open to those who have considerable experience of HR roles and are functioning at middle and senior levels. Therefore these candidates have already made a considerable career commitment to HR and would consider themselves to be engaged in professional work. The learning on Professional Assessment is centred around reflection on work practices (Raelin, 2008). This raises the issue of interest to this study of how the learning process has enhanced the individual's understanding of the profession and their own professional identity and commitment to HR. The concept of professionalism and being a professional for HR practitioners will draw on the literature that focuses on both organizational and personal identity for example, Glaser-Segura et al (2010), Pullen (2006), Shafer et al (2002), Webb, (2006) and Hoare (2006). Some literature suggests that self-identity is achieved through projects and plans and is significantly shaped by organizational processes (Webb, 2006). However Nichol (2011) presents a differing view that professional heritage can have an equal influence.

The study will be undertaken through an interpretivist qualitative approach. A sample of participants will be drawn from candidates who have undertaken the Professional Assessment Route in the last five years. The candidates will represent the range of HR and HRD roles and organizational types and will be mainly drawn from University of Gloucestershire students. Semi-structured interviews will allow reflection on how they have changed in their own understanding of professional identity and how, what Hoare (2006, p.348) describes as 'personal coherence, sense of authenticity and agency', is developed. It is envisaged that the participants will explore these ideas

both through practical examples of projects, metaphors and discussions as to whether their learning was merely confirmation of their capability resulting in little change in their careers/self-perception or alternatively how much their learning contributed to a differing perception of themselves in a HR role.

The paper's contribution is to develop our understanding as tutors as to what might be the learning and development triggers for changing the salience of a professional's identity in the workplace.

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