SRHE 2016: ‘Exploring Freedom and Control in global higher education’

Exploring the processual nature of Human Resources Graduate Employability (HRGE): a line manager perspective

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Overview of research topic

• Widely acknowledged ‘skills gap’ claimed by UK graduate employers (Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Cramner, 2006; Jackson, 2014).

• Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) under increasing pressure from employers and Government to produce ‘employable’ graduates in a changing Graduate Labour Market (GLM).

• Increasing attention being paid to employability initiatives by UK HEIs (Sewell and Pool, 2010; Helyer and Lee, 2014; Finch et al., 2016).
Theoretical underpinning

• Dominant GE approaches: human capital theory (HCT) (Schultz, 1971; Becker, 1993) and skills-focus.


• Impact of workplace characteristics (Jackson, 2014).

• Utilising Holmes’s processual approach for exploring employer perceptions of GE.
Research context: Human Resources (HR) graduates

- Professional status of the HR profession (Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015; CIPD, 2015)
- Increasing diversity in HR graduate destinations and career trajectories (Sincoff and Owen, 2004; Morse, 2006)
- Increasing numbers of HR graduates in UK GLM (Elias and Purcell, 2004; Hallier and Summers, 2011)
- Limited qualitative inquiry into HR graduate employability (Senaratne, 2004; Giannantonio and Hurley, 2002; Hoell and Henry, 2003)

Rationale for HR graduate focus
Research methodology

- Interpretivist enquiry
- Twenty-two semi-structured interviews
- Line managers of HR graduates at work
- Open and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990)
- Cross-industry: Public Sector, Finance & Banking, Manufacturing, Fuel & Utilities, Retail/B2C
Research findings: the processual nature of line managers’ perceptions

Increases in confidence:

- Potential to learn and develop quickly
- Potential as future HR talent
- Demonstrating individual/organisation ‘fit’

Initially ‘asking questions’ at work.
- Demonstrating curiosity and inquisitiveness

Translating potential into practice: workplace performance
- Contributing innovative ideas and influencing change

Translating potential into practice as a senior HR professional

Provision of support
Research findings: processual influences on line managers’ perceptions

- Workplace relationships
- Attitude
- Behaviours of aspiring HR professionals
Final thought…

Are we teaching what the workplace actually requires?
References


• Elias, P. and Purcell, K. (2004). Researching Graduate Careers Seven Years On: A research project jointly funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Higher Education Careers Services Unit. *No. 6 SOC (HE): A classification of occupations for studying the graduate labour market*.


References


References


