

How the acquisition of literacies shapes professional identity in human resources: An autoethnography

To be literate carries many meanings. For years I thought that being able to read, write and do simple mathematics made a person literate. Scholarly research provided a new lens and profound insights into the world of literacies and what the acquisition thereof could mean to the individual.

Professions indeed require one to have very specific competencies in order to be a functional member within a field of expertise. However, the literature examined in this study shows that as we learn, we acquire literacies that can be usefully applied to make us experts within certain contexts.

This autoethnography followed a narrative approach and qualitative style; I was both the researcher and a participant. Data were collected through the narration of my life story, placing the spotlight on specific events as they unfolded within different contexts. A thematic analysis approach was followed to gain greater insights into my journey of becoming the unique human resources professional I am today.

This study aimed to examine how the acquisition of literacies shaped my professional identity in human resources, additionally, encouraging further examination on the topic in both South African and the greater African context.

Self-conscientization made me realise that professional identity is constantly being shaped through formal, informal, incidental and deliberate learning interventions. Although shaped through formal qualifications, one cannot repudiate the value that social interactions, within context, play in further enriching individual professional identity.

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