Learning From Biographies

Lifelong learning can be described as a concept spanning an entire lifetime in a process of “transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and the senses” (Jarvis, 2002, p. 60). This learning includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that extend well beyond formal education. In a world of rapid change, people come under the influence of circumstances that create new experiences and challenges from which they can continue to learn throughout their lives. The lifelong learning concept goes further than ‘permanent education’; its innovative dimension lies in a new approach to the process and context of learning.

Graduates need to be lifelong learners in order to adapt to continuous change. This encompasses more than just taking courses in the framework of continuing professional development. It is clearly important to establish how new graduates can strengthen their identities as entrepreneurial and reflective professionals. One of the most powerful ways of illustrating this is with the narratives of professionals with diverse career paths.

In addition to the profiles presented by the eSage project, musician profiles developed for a volume on music careers (Bennett, 2012) can be accessed at The TILE Approach website. It is our hope that colleagues will share similar accounts from other disciplines to build a biographical resource.

When working with biographies, it is useful for students to develop questions that will guide their reading. Whilst these questions can be developed utilising some of the other Graduate Employability resources, particularly those focused on identity, preferences, and goals, the questions overleaf may give students a head start.

References


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SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. What might be the value of lifelong learning for you personally?

2. What does this biography suggest you might need to do in order to keep learning?

3. What differences, common issues, and links can you make to your own biographical account?

4. Identify and reflect on the crossroads - key decision points - in your personal and professional development, and then consider:
   a. Who played a significant role at these times?
   b. To whom did you go to for advice?
   c. What can you put in place for the next time you face a major decision?

5. Biographical accounts raise a number of challenges and opportunities. For example, innovative collaborations, work within other sectors, diverse locations, and different modes of work. Look for examples of these and reflect on what might be of interest to you:
   a. What interests you, and what can you do to make this a reality?
   b. What is the first step, and when will you begin?

6. Biographical accounts often tell us something about the interests, passions, and motivations of the people involved. What is the relationship between your interests and your future work?

7. What might you look like as a professional?