

Introduction

Over the last two decades, biographical research has grown in importance within the social sciences (Lalak 2010; Całak 2013; Kaźmierska 2013; Dubas, Stelmaszczyk 2014; Piorunek 2016; Karkowska 2018; Seul 2022). Biographies are typically understood as records of individual destinies or reconstructions of collective experiences, all the while remaining embedded within specific socio-cultural contexts of a given era. Simply put, biographies reflect the life stories and experiences of individuals, as well as those of groups or communities. While they often have a unique and unrepeatable character, they may also share common threads, such as the time and place in which the protagonists live, grow, study, or work.

The criteria, research strategies, and theoretical and methodological frameworks adopted by researchers determine the scope and content of biographical studies. In life stories, past events are reconstructed based on their significance to the storytellers. These narratives may cover entire lifetimes or specifically narrow in on turning points or breakthroughs. Storytellers may also focus on selected “snippets from life,” such as their educational journeys. According to Waldemar Segiet, “An educational biography, as part of a complete biography, is a life story of a specific kind because it centers on the learning process. It includes the history of the subject’s participation in education, intertwined with various life events, experiences, and changes that ultimately shape the

educational biography” (Segiet 2021: 304). Looking back at one’s life path allows individuals to organize their experiences and reevaluate the choices they made in a specific context of time and place.

However, it should be remembered that reconstructing the course of one’s life may carry certain risks. Biographies are shaped by subjective experiences and the meanings attributed to them, as well as the personal narratives connected to life events. Nonetheless, this does not diminish their importance as such. Every individual biography is also situated within collective biographies—whether familial, professional, or otherwise—and can, therefore, be perceived and studied from an objective perspective.

Looking at individual, collective, family, social, and political biographies within educational contexts offers an understanding of the course of human lives, which have been conditioned by specific educational experiences. These past biographical experiences are important for understanding thought processes, actions, and decisions and often shed light on intergenerational relationships.

We extend our gratitude to the authors of the contributions featured in this issue for sharing their scholarly reflections on the role of biographies in educational contexts. We also thank the authors of the studies included in the sections “Research Reports” and “Miscellanea” for presenting the outcomes of their pedagogical research. We wish all our readers a pleasant and intellectually rewarding experience, hoping this issue acts as an invitation for deeper reflection on the diverse contexts in which contemporary pedagogy evolves.

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