

Framework for the autobiography

Inspired by Draperi and revised by Labbé

The reasoned autobiography is a personal reflection process stemming from the narrative approach in education. Invented by Henri Desroche within the framework of the International Cooperative University (UCI) between 1976 and 1984, reasoned autobiography has its own purpose, that of a meeting focused on anamnesis and then on the future of a person referred to as a "project-person." It allows for a deeper understanding of life's journey, reinforcing identity and fostering the ability to project into the future.

Reasoned autobiography is not a tool for an institution, a researcher, or an employer. It is neither a curriculum vitae, nor a coaching technique, nor a skills assessment, nor therapy, nor a personal development session, nor a guidance interview, nor a counseling session.

Reasoned autobiography comprises three stages: introspection, narration-resonance, and writing. Each stage—personal reflection, interview, writing—holds its own significance. The complete realization of autobiography requires the simultaneous involvement of three people to allow for narration-resonance. This autobiographical tool enables a person, referred to as a project-person, to recount their life journey to another person, referred to as a resource-person. The autobiographical interview is confidential and supervised by an safeguard, an ethics-vigilance person.

I. THE PROJECT-PERSON The project-person is voluntary. They can stop the autobiography at any point in the process. They owe nothing to the other two individuals. They speak for approximately 30 minutes without interruption, then listen to the produced resonance. Shortly after the interview, the project-person identifies the guiding threads of their journey, taking into account what the resource-person has said and noted. They are also encouraged to read writings or find resources related to these guiding threads. After the interview, the project-person writes a letter to themselves related to their journey and their relationship to power.

II. THE RESOURCE-PERSON The resource-person receives the narrative with neutrality and benevolence and takes notes on what the project-person says to provide resonances, recurrences, diverse power relations, etc. They trust themselves within the framework of this resonance and may relate it to their own experiences. The resource-person solicits the expression of specific memories of social and generally public experiences from the project-person. They do not consider themselves experts on the content of the project-person's discourse. The relationship between the resource-person and the project-person is respectful and friendly without being intimate. The resource-person is exclusively at the service of the project-person's expression. They listen attentively, avoid interrupting, and prompt when necessary. Their posture is benevolent and distanced. The resource-person guides the project-person's expression. They may intervene to prevent the project-person from expressing overly intimate confidences and/or traumas they cannot handle. The resource-person ensures that the autobiographical approach is centered on the expression of social facts. They maintain complete neutrality, refrain from judging, interpreting, or analyzing the facts stated by the project-person. They do not consider themselves experts on the project-person's journey. At the moment of identifying the guiding threads, the resource-person supports the project-person's reflection. They summarize the journey, repeat important passages in their eyes, and may focus on guiding threads (derived from the repetition of facts experienced by the project-person). Generally, their statement reflects words spoken in the interview. They are not character traits or general qualities. The notes written by the resource-person are returned to the project-person at the end of the interview.

III. THE SAGEGUARD PERSON The safeguard is an ethics-vigilance person who ensures the smooth running of the session and the respect of the instructions for benevolent neutrality. They can stop the autobiographical interview when they consider that the project-person or the resource-person is not adhering to the principles. They are responsible for recording the interview and returning it to the project-person (they do not distribute it and do not keep it under any circumstances). They are also the timekeeper.

1 - The motivations of the project-person can be diverse: taking stock, reflecting on their journey, reorienting themselves, undergoing training, realizing a different life project, changing professional activities, etc. Here, the focus is on their relationship with power.

2- Formal education, informal education, non-formal education, as well as social and professional experiences (leisure activities, cultural experiences, encounters, travels, etc.) are all considered. The general principle is to consider that every lived experience constitutes a source of self-reflective knowledge. Dating events is very useful, as it allows the project-person to recall and reconstruct their life journey.

3 -The autobiography takes place in a neutral location for both individuals. Homes and workplaces are particularly unsuitable. During the interview, it is desirable for the resource-person not to be too close to the project-person so that the latter cannot read what the former is writing and can fully focus on recalling their history and narration.

Bibliography

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