Learning through work: How can a narrative approach to evaluation build students’ capacity for resilience?

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This paper considers the way professionals talk about their capacity for resilience in stories of their careers. The way narratives could be used to construct stories about resilience and other capacities is considered relevant to gaining insight into professional identity. In using the term ‘professional identity’ we acknowledge that some professionals have a conscious purpose-driven identity and others learn through social interactions about the culture of the workplace and the experiences they have that are valuable in the workplace. The empirical research draws on the narratives professionals at different life and career stages share about their professional development over their careers. The research findings highlight the importance attributed to building resilience, but also the themes associated with building professional identity. Vignettes of the stories told are presented in this paper to highlight ways in which resilience is acquired through building networks and being adaptable. Based on the findings of this study, it is proposed that building students’ understanding of resilience should be an important element of work integrated learning (WIL). Developing resilient qualities through participating in communities of practice may improve the quality of the students’ experiences and improve their chances of having successful, fulfilling and enduring careers.

**Keywords:** Narrative analysis, professional identity, work integrated learning