

“The Living Library. Learning (about) Otherness in Communities of Practice”

Słowa kluczowe:

adult learners, living library, otherness, situated learning, communities of practice, education for change, critical pedagogy

Streszczenie monografii

The dissertation “The Living Library. Learning (about) Otherness in Communities of Practice” investigates the Living Library as a phenomenon that first appeared in Poland in 2007. Research project of the Living Library mainly focused on its practices in order to understand and depict it as a method of action in encounters with the Other/Otherness. Hence, the learning of people who permanently relied on the Living Library method in their work was the key object of empirical research under a project that founded a space for members of minority groups and Living Library organisers to discuss the method. In interviews, people engaged with the Living Library recounted their experiences and shared their personal experience-based knowledge of the method. This dissertation aspires not only to augment the practical knowledge of the method itself but also to become part of the scholarly discourse on learning Otherness, citizenship, the public sphere and social change.

The dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter One describes the contexts and conditions in which the Living Library operates in Poland. It addresses social, political and educational aspects of Otherness. Chapter Two looks into the major theoretical frameworks relevant to the methodology of studying the Living Library. Theoretical frame brings together theories related to social learning and critical education. Chapter Three details the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of research design and implementation. In Chapter Four, the data collected is analysed and an attempt is made to understand how and by whom knowledge of otherness is produced and how otherness functions in the public sphere. Chapter Five offers post research reflections on and a critique of the Living Library method in Poland. It outlines questions and dilemmas that surfaced in the research process and that are relevant to the production of discursive academic knowledge on and practice of the Living Library and to work with minority groups.