Steps to Settlement for Refugees: A Case Study

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Aims

To examine the journeys and experiences of refugees towards citizenship in the UK with a special focus on the role of ESOL pedagogy in mediating ‘active’ and ‘activist’ citizenship

Methodology

This book chapter was based on a case study of an innovative service programme at RETAS (Refugee Education Training Advice Service) in Leeds. The authors drew on a combination of data gathered through individual interviews of RETAS’s service users, ESOL tutors and advisers, and content analysis of the Steps to Settlement Programme (S2S). S2S is an innovative support programme that built on the experience of many years of work with migrants, a survey of migrant needs, and input from refugees, people seeking asylum, RETAS trustees, staff,

volunteers, current and ex-service users. It is a 10-week programme of 10 guided learning hours that focus on four interconnected steps: sanctuary, serenity, skills and settlement.

Key issues

The book chapter highlighted the importance of ‘research-based’ material that draws on the first-hand experiences and current life worlds of refugees in designing teaching materials and/or support plans. Key principles of the S2S include:

- Authenticity: S2S is authentic as it is based on the lived experience of migrants and their needs. As a teaching material, it builds on detailed knowledge and understanding of the mundane, and ‘naturally occurring’ conversations of migrants’ every day and institutional interactions.
- Timeliness: while acknowledging the value of a more formal/linear process of language learning, the S2S balances the ‘structured approach’ of language learning with that of a ‘contingent approach’ that is shaped by migrants’ lives, needs, skills, priorities, specificities of their urgency and importance/relevance. This was reflected by developing an ‘easified’ version of S2S, the English for Settlement.
- Sociality: The S2S highlighted the value of ‘sharing’ (for example, story sharing) with fellow migrants, as a crucial pedagogical approach that fosters sociality. Sessions led by refugee staff members telling their own stories were aimed at establishing the radical human-to-human relationality

built in empathy, evocation, solidaristic intersubjectivity, confidence and a means to resisting alienation, isolation, loneliness and disempowerment through the acts of citizenship.

Conclusion

The book chapter concluded that, based on embodied knowledge of migrants, the S2S contributes towards fostering ‘active’ and ‘activist’ citizenship through the multitude of acts, of participation, advocacy, resistance, story sharing, intersubjectivity and contestation that take place in the different sessions.

Recommendations

The book chapter calls for ‘research-based approach’ in the production and design of teaching materials that reflect and speak to the lived experiences of migrants, their specific needs, priorities, aspirations and possible selves.

Migrant Group
Asylum seekers
Refugees
Refused asylum seekers
Topic
ESOL
Integration
Skills
Work and education
Place
Leeds
Year

2019

Resource Type

Book section

Resource

Book: Brokering Britain, Educating Citizens: Exploring ESOL and Citizenship

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