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Critical educational gerontology: a third statement of first principles

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Abstract

This article elaborates upon the initial statement of first principles for critical educational gerontology [CEG] established by Glendenning and Battersby some two decades ago, whilst taking stock of the body of critique levelled at such principles by the humanist strand in older adult learning. Keeping in mind, on one hand, the gritty realities which embed older persons in structured positions of social inequality and, on the other, the difficulties for subjects to work towards the transformation of such realities in individualist and self-directed ways, this article voices support for CEG. Acknowledging a need to renew CEG in line with contemporary socio-cultural realities, it is argued that the weakness of CEG lies in its current, rather than its potential, usage. Hence, the way forward does not lie in ditching the critical epistemological framework for late-life education, but to renew CEG in a way that rediscovers its liberatory spark in an excessively globalised and individualised world. It forwards four key proposals with respect to such a goal: a transformative rationale that challenges the cultural hegemony of neo-liberalism, the centrality of directive educators, embedding geragogy in a critical epistemology, and a praxeological engagement with historically accumulated concepts and practices.

Introduction

One cornerstone of the field of older adult education is a concern not with 'whether we can or cannot teach or retrain an older adult' but 'to what end?' and 'why?' A key rationale in this respect is critical educational gerontology [CEG]. CEG is concerned with the centrality of politics and powers in the way that late-life education works, with its ultimate goal being the empowerment of older persons to confront the social system with a view to changing it. In present times, CEG is running the risk of entering a profound intellectual and conceptual crisis. Its foundations were constructed during a time of 'modern' capitalism when social inequality was structured along strict class lines and when the principal focus of ageing-related social policy consisted in bridging families' income before and after retirement. Since then industrial societies have reached a 'late' phase of modernity which not only creates flexible forms of

work organisation but also breaks down neo-corporatist relations between state and labour, whilst encouraging the development of cultural fragmentation. For some educators the time has come to close the lid over CEG, accept its analytical and practical obsolescence and embrace other more supposedly relevant rationales. This article rejects such views and argues that, on the basis that a significant section of older persons still experience social exclusion and at-the-risk-of-poverty lifestyles, the quest of linking education with transformational change remains as necessary as ever. It posits that the problem of CEG lies in its current, rather than its potential, usage - its *modus operatum* rather than its *modus operandi*. The way forward does not lie in ditching the critical epistemological framework for later life education to focus on other approaches but to renew CEG in a way that rediscovers its liberatory spark in an excessively globalised and individualised world.

Critical ideals: A statement of first principles

The critical epistemology in ageing studies emerged as a reaction to the dominant 'decline and loss' paradigm that views ageing as a series of decrements to which both older adults and society need to adjust (Havighurst, 1953). This paradigm stresses the need for older adults to find new roles following the end of work and independence of their children by either re-engaging in earlier roles or taking on new responsibilities. In this rationale, older adults have a duty to engage in educational activities to meet their coping, expressive, contributory influence and transcendental needs (McClusky, 1974). Running counter to these functionalist and individualist assumptions, critical gerontology highlights how individual responsibility depends heavily on having an adequate income, access to affordable and nutritional food, a healthy and safe neighbourhood in which to live and affordable, good-quality health care (Minkler & Holstein, 2008). In this way, it calls attention to the lifelong inequalities that play a key role in limiting people's engagement in active ageing. It therefore advocates researchers to embrace a 'critical imagination' that goes beyond superficial appearances and the unreflective acceptance of established positions, to analyse how and why gender, race, class and other inequalities are the key reasons why some sectors of the ageing population are located in subaltern and subjugated positions (Bernard & Scharf, 2007).

Embracing a critical agenda, educators are concerned that 'participation in educational programmes remains limited to a relatively small section of the age group...who are likely to be socially and educationally advantaged when compared to non-participants' (Phillipson, 1983, 25, 24), and draw upon the work of Marx & Engels (1970) to argue that the 'organisation of the learning experience must allow the individual to regain control over what is produced and created' (Allman, 1984, 87). It is in the works of Glendenning and Battersby (Battersby, 1985, 1990; Glendenning, 1992; Glendenning & Battersby, 1990; Battersby & Glendenning, 1992) that the principles of CEG are extensively and elaborately drawn. In a seminal article titled *Why we need educational gerontology and education for older adults: A statement of first principles*, Glendenning & Battersby (1990) argue for a paradigm shift away from the functionalist approach to a socio-political framework on the

basis that mainstream programmes of late-life education are generally premised upon erroneous taken-for-granted perceptions. These include the consideration of older people as a relatively homogenous group, the use of the psychological deficit model of older adults' learning abilities and assuming that any type of education improves the quality of life of older persons. Glendenning and Battersby also highlight how mainstream examples of older adult education are largely driven by middle-class ideologies whilst overlooking that older persons are marginalised to different degrees. Inspired by Freire's (1972) philosophy of education, the authors put forward four major principles for a critical epistemology in late-life education (Glendenning & Battersby, 1990, *passim*):

- an exploration of how the relationship between capitalism and ageing influences the concept and practice of education in later life

- a critique of the dominant liberal tradition that involves a negation that education for older persons is essentially a neutral uncontested enterprise

- the inclusion of concepts such as emancipation, empowerment, transformation, social and hegemonical control and what Freire calls 'conscientisation'

- developing 'the notion of praxis' to establish a 'critical gerogogy' which leads older people to greater control over their own knowledge and thoughts.

Glendenning and Battersby's vision is, therefore, to distance late-life education from patronising and condescending teaching/learning practices such as when teachers assign older learners with homework tasks of measuring pens and pill bottles, and naming body parts (e.g. John, 1983, 1988). Instead, they embed educational practice in a liberatory agenda whereby education practice is premised upon the Freirean strategies of 'authentic dialogue', 'problem-posing' and the 'codification-decodifation' processes (Freire, 1972).

CEG was a welcome counter-point to conventional philosophies of late-life education whose *raison d'être* has always been closely linked to Parsonian sociology. In fact, CEG emerged as a key catalyst towards the embodiment of late-life education in a normative engagement. Whilst in the context of long-term care Hofland (1994) discusses changes in the nursing home environment that empower residents, Cusack (2000) advances a community programme of research and teaching that made senior learners aware of stereotypical assumptions about what it means to be old so as to become more open about new possibilities. Formosa (2000, 2002, 2007) conducted fieldwork at the University of the Third Age [UTA] in Malta and highlights how it is possible for older adult educational practice to arise as yet another euphemism for glorified occupational therapy rather than as an example of either humanist or transformative practice. It is positive to note Formosa's articles included a number of proposals, some of which have since then been implemented at the Maltese University of the Third Age. CEG is also to be credited for raising the issue of how older adult education is marked by gender forms of inequality and an absence of older persons from ethnic minorities. Dadzie (1993) found that although educational activity plays a therapeutic role in keeping older minorities both mentally

alert and physically active, projects offering targeted provision to minority elders were exceedingly inhibited by short-term funding arrangements, inadequate premises and anticipated cuts in resources. Findsen's (2005) illuminative commentary on the marginalisation experienced by older Maori and Pacific people in New Zealand emphasises the need to understand better the cultural values that influence the meaning and nature of learning in later life in different cultural contexts. Researchers have also commented how, despite older women being more numerous in later life in general and as participants in educational classes, they tend to be less visible within a mixed classroom where male peers tend to dominate any arising discussion (Formosa, 2005; de Medeiros *et al*., 2007). Jackson's (2006) empirical study notes how learning in later life may serve to anchor students in choices that are located in both class and gender expectations about women's traditional roles. She concludes that 'although there is evidence that there are social benefits to lifelong learning, including more engagement with active citizenship and the development of social capital, learning can also be a mechanism for exclusion' (*op.cit.,* 88).

Humanist ideals: Second statements of first principles

CEG has not escaped criticism. An early critique included Percy's (1990) *The future of gerontology: A second statement of first principles* which - despite noting that many older people lack all or some of money, health, security, and social contact - argues that later life is marked by extensive heterogeneity so that many elders are actually positioned in advantageous positions. The objectives of CEG are perceived as too 'dubious', 'comprehensive', and 'wide-ranging', to be successfully tackled by educational classes attended by a very minute percentage of older adults:

> *Academics rarely say anything unequivocal about the large issues;*
> *if they do, there will be one academic to dispute what the other*
> *has said...Moreover, the assertion that 'central to geragogy would*
> *be its attempt to unsettle the complacency that older people feel'*
> *does give pause. Who judges? Who decides what is and what is not*
> *complacency?* (Percy, op.cit., 235).

Instead, Percy champions a humanist epistemology for late-life education, a standpoint essentially based on an existentialist standpoint that reacts against the idea of behaviour as being predetermined by either the environment or subconscious. This rationale perceives people as fundamentally good, free to act and to choose and responsible for the development of their own full potential. Percy (*ibid*., 236) thus underlines that the 'aims and purposes of education and learning for older people should, in fact, be no different from those of people of any age group'. Inspired by the humanist emphasis on the 'freedom to learn' and 'self-actualisation', he argues that learning

> *is essentially a matter of personal quest. Learners begin from where*
> *they are; they follow the thrust of their own curiosities in order to make*
> *what is around them more meaningful; ideally they should be free of*
> *external constraints so that they can learn until they are satisfied, until*
> *they have achieved the potential that is within them* (Percy, ibid., 236).

Percy (*ibid.,* 237) does not attribute the educator with any special vision and stresses that the benchmark of older adult education is the notion of 'older people as teachers, facilitators of learning, role models, educational resources, [and] repositories of wisdom'. If there needs be an educator, his/her role 'is to facilitate the process of learning for the learner, not necessarily to persuade him to social action or to be dissatisfied if a certain political awareness is not achieved' (*ibid*., 236). Finally, as regards the question as to whose interests are to be served, Percy responds unequivocally that the answer has to be the interests of all people generally and the interests of older people in particular. This is because he believes that the argument that the general preference for liberal, non-vocational, education in later life as an expression of middle class values is simply ideological reductionism. The truth is, Percy concludes, that the liberal preferences of older people are precisely the result of having reached a point of the life-cycle where they have more leisure interests and are generally free of vocational and domestic concerns.

Another body of work that grapples with Glendenning and Battersby's vision is that authored by Withnall (2000, 2002, 2006, 2010). On the basis of an empirical study on the choices and experiences of older adult learners, Withnall (2006, 30) claims that 'the drive towards emancipation and empowerment implicit within [CEG] is inappropriate in that it assumed an unjustifiable homogeneity among older people and appears to be imposing a new kind of ideological constraint'. Withnall refers to the difficulties experienced by critical educators (Findsen, 2005; Formosa, 2007) in leading older learners to satisfactory levels of emancipation as evidence that power is a slippery entity and, hence, of the self-defeating nature of critical standpoints:

> *individuals within groups often seen by educators as powerless may in fact possess considerable power within other networks in which they operate so it is probably too much of a generalization to talk of people as completely 'powerless' or as having been disempowered* (Withnall, 2010, 35).

Influenced by the work of Usher & Edwards (1994), Withnall (2006, 30 - italics in original) argues that since nowadays retirement is far from being a uniform experience there is a need to shift 'the debate away from the policy maker and practitioner perspectives on *education* towards *learning* and ensure that the voices of older learners themselves, hitherto largely ignored, can emerge'. In line with pragmatic views on lifelong learning (e.g. Aspin & Chapman, 2000), the searching for a grand narrative for late-life learning is posited as a 'vain quest' on the basis that learning is an essentially individual undertaking with different meanings for different learners. Seeking to establish learning in later life as a solution for older persons to meet their need to respond to a fast changing world due to rapid technological development and changing values, she contends that

> *what is required is a new insight into how people make sense of their own attitudes to learning and how they have acquired beliefs and values about what education and learning mean in the context of their own lives. Such an analysis would offer a distinctive perspective on the factors that might influence older people to continue or take up learning activity* (Withnall, 2006, 30).

Withnall (2010, 116) thus advocates that 'an alternative formulation might be to think in terms of 'longlife' learning that would straddle economic, democratic, personal and other concerns across the life course in an inclusive way'. This is possible, she argues, if learning in all its forms would then come to be seen as a more broadly based endeavour that incorporates the need for economic progress and social inclusiveness in tandem with the recognition of individual desires for personal development and growth as people age.

Taking stock of the debate

Humanism is by far the most popular tradition in adult education as many believe that human motivation is intrinsically related to self-actualisation. The problem, however, is that humans interact with the world around them, including other humans, dialectically (Freire, 1972). This means that 'subjects cannot think alone' so that there is no 'I think' but 'we think' (*op. cit.*, 137). Indeed, the humanist position is embedded in a neo-liberal ideology that encourages individuals to become 'entrepreneurs of themselves', behaving according to the ideal of economic markets and choosing the optimal courses of action that maximise their interests. More specifically, the humanist rationale is premised on three crucial premises (Finger & Asún, 2001). First, that the human being is active and free - that is, fundamentally good. Second, that human beings have an inner drive, an intrinsic motivation, for self-development. And finally, that as a result of being situated in a favourable environment all humans become capable of reaching their full potential. Unfortunately, such premises are situated in a social vacuum, entrenched in therapeutic and individualist approaches to personal development, and assume that a disparate group of self-actualised individuals lead automatically to an improved society. Persons may be inherently 'good', but are ultimately situated in a 'turbo-capitalist' social reality characterised by an irreversible destruction of nature, society, and cultures, so that everyday experiences may be anything but 'humanisable' (Luttwak, 1999). Percy and Withnall overlook that in 'turbo-capitalism' the intrinsic drive of human beings to self-develop tends to be captive to the ideological hegemony of the commodification of culture. As Fromm (1941) asserts, most inner drives of humans in capitalism are nothing more than subtle and culturally deeply embedded forms of domination that serve the interests of the status quo. Another lacuna consists of treating 'learning' as synonymous with 'development' when knowledge is neither immutable nor transhistorical. Rather, knowledge 'is a tool that we constantly test in order to ascertain whether it is enabling us to develop a more complex and comprehensive understanding of the world and our existence and experiences within it' (Allman, 2007, 61).

The underestimation of the influence of historical forces - as well as material, political, and cultural conditions - on human lives arises as a key lacuna in the humanist position. Older persons are not entirely free to pursue their own interests as they please and are constrained by the persistence of lifelong positions in repressive locations in terms of class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and, especially in our case, age. In such a scenario, advocating a non-directive approach, where educators adopt the role of a facilitator, is tantamount to a 'laissez-affaire' approach. As Mayo

(2004) argues, this particular strategy constitutes pedagogical treachery of the worst kind that often results in the violence meted out to learners by those members of an in-group in possession of the required cultural capital. Percy's claim that the dominance for liberal interests in later life is a natural phenomenon, grounded in life-cycle permutations, so that late-life education is to serve the interests of all people and older people in particular, is also problematic. Sociologists, such as Bourdieu (1984), have provided exceptionally informed analyses of the relationship between domination, official and popular culture and the way that these things are appropriated, mobilised and then used to subjugate groups of people - a trend that has been found to be present in analyses of some Universities of the Third Age (Morris, 1984; Formosa, 2000, 2007). Finally, while it is true that the practice of lifelong education with diverse cohorts rests on a continuum, Percy's claim that late-life education should not be different from those of people of any age group cuts too many corners. Despite unequal resources of material and symbolic capital, all older persons experience some level of ageism and age discrimination (Calasanti, 2003). Moreover, people in the latter stages of the life course possess unique development traits that surely have an effect on their motivation towards, and participation in, late-life education. As Andrews (1999, 309) asks, 'old people are in fact young people? Really? What happens to all those years they have lived, the things they have learned, the selves they have evolved from and the selves they are becoming?'

Withnall's call for programmes that make possible the diversification of learning opportunities and meanings for different older adults does not necessarily ascertain that learning environments will, without fail, meet the needs of older persons. As others have argued (e.g. Darder, 2002; Mayo, 2003), learning activities modelled upon the 'politics of self-actualisation' (Giddens, 1991) tend to engender a mindless support for change - that is, an attitude of uncritical adaptation whose relevance will not help learners judge what type of learning is best suited to their social predicaments. Generally, such an approach runs the risk of becoming tied to a managerialist agenda, one that is interested predominantly in skills-based learning, and obsessed with measuring competencies. The point here is that lifelong learning should not be accepted uncritically as an unmitigated good simply because *prima facie* it seems to offer to aid the survival of older adults in a rapidly changing world. Educators need to recognise that 'learning' is nested in an ideology of individualism that spawns various hegemonical priorities where the needs of 'knowledge-based' societies take absolute precedence. A case in point is the European Union's vision for learning in later life which is embedded in a notion of the autonomous and free-floating individual learner who is rewarded for abdicating any responsibility for the public good (Formosa, forthcoming). Indeed, at the heart of Withnall's position is a support for the neo-liberalist agenda for education, one that refrains from delinking the social from the economic and which sustains the converting of education - undoubtedly, a public good - into a consumerist artefact. When education follows the 'ideology of the marketplace', consumer-learners who do take advantage of available opportunities will be blamed for any arising repercussions. Unfortunately, such a position functions only to take us back to the drawing board, to the 'decline and loss' paradigm, a standpoint that ties late-life education with a performativist agenda.

Of course, the above criticisms of the humanist position should not derail us away from the fact that CEG, as it is currently formulated, is far from a finished product. As touched upon in the introduction, CEG's principles are undoubtedly characterised by a structural lag, as they hark back to a social and political universe that was very different from that of today. The 1970s and 1980s were characterised by slow economic growth, rising public deficits, and increasing unemployment, so that ageing policy was focused on bridging wages with retirement pensions (Phillipson, 1999). Nowadays, industrial societies have a reached a 'late/second' (Giddens, 1991; Beck *et al.,* 1994) phase of modernity, typified by extreme individualisation, globalisation, and rapid advances in information technology. Subaltern statuses in later life are no longer solely tied to financial deprivation but also arise from social, civic, service, and neighbourhood exclusion (Scharf *et al.,* 2003). In this respect, CEG as formulated by Glendenning and Battersby is limited for clinging to a traditional view of social power characterised by a zero-sum theory of collective movements. This lacuna is nowhere more present in its discussion of gender (my work included - Formosa, 2005) where women and men have been accorded subordinate and dominant social statuses respectively. Nowadays, however, both men and women occupy positions of advantage and disadvantage, with empirical studies finding that late-life education discriminates both in favour and against older men and women simultaneously (Formosa, 2010). Admittedly, CEG was modelled upon a critical pedagogical framework that in the late 1980s was only a work-in-progress, blinkered by an excessive focus on the capitalist-worker dialectic. Indeed, it was only in the 1990s that Freire's most complex and articulate works (1993, 1994, 1996, 1997, 1998; Horton & Freire, 1990; Freire & Macedo, 1995, 2000) were published, works which address the structural production of social inequality on the basis of class/gender/race bases and which arise from the cultural hegemony of neo-liberalism. The next section has the task to renew CEG so that it becomes reflects such current facets of oppression.

Renewing CEG: A third statement of first principles

Much water has gone under the bridge since Glendenning & Battersby's (1990) first principles for CEG. Marxism has gone out of fashion, superseded by the celebration of neo-liberalism, with theorists noting how humanity is now characterised by record levels of human agency that has lead to the fading of social inequalities. The truth could not be more opposite. As Mayo (2003) affirms, current societies are still characterised by a

> *scenario of mass impoverishment in various parts of the world caused by the ruthless dismantling of social programs, the ever-widening gap between North and South, the concomitant displacement of people from this very same South and Eastern Europe to create a Third World in the first world, the constant rape of the earth...for profit, besides the persistence of structures of oppression in terms of class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability* (Mayo, 2003, 42).

Gerontologists have also pointed to the greater affluence and individual agency of incoming cohorts of older persons (Gilleard & Higgs, 2000) to the extent that in some quarters the concept of 'social inequality' has been ditched in favour of 'social diversity' and 'social differentiation' (see Daatland & Biggs, 2004). However, critical research finds that the experience of older persons is far from that of flying freely into space free from the fetters of structural inequalities (Bernard & Scharf, 2007). Whilst one must agree with Percy (1990) that many members of the *status quo* are drawn from the older generations, it remains true that the majority of older adults have diminished prospects for effecting change to improve the quality of their lives (Findsen, 2007). Indeed, one feature of retirement in late/second modernity is not the abolition of social inequality but the growth of new inequalities alongside the continuation of traditional social divisions. Far from class, gender and other types of inequality becoming less important, it is more a question of having become redefined and experienced in different ways to earlier periods (Phillipson, 1999). Suffice to say here that as much as 19 percent in the European Union (16 million or one in five) are living at the risk of poverty (Zaidi, 2010). Life-histories highlight strongly how structural productions of social inequality and exclusion arise from cumulative advantages or disadvantages during institutionalised phases of the life course. For instance, the 'feminisation of ageing' - a reasonably well-documented feature of later life - cannot be explained by referring to the individual talents or insufficient efforts of the women concerned, but is ultimately the result of gender-specific education, labour market dynamics, and pension systems (Baars *et al*., 2006). The same is the case with respect to the subjugated position of the working-class, ethnic minorities, and the frail, as such subordinate states of life are socially determined (*ibid*.).

The above indicates clearly that Glendenning and Battersby's choice to embed CEG in a Freirean philosophy is still highly relevant and warranted. For Freire (1972, 34) education is a political act, arising as either a domesticating agent that facilitates the reproduction of unequal social relations among the human beings or a liberatory activity by means of which 'men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world'. Freire's philosophy does not lead, as simplistic interpretations would augur, to an immediate transformation of the oppressive social reality in which elders may be situated. Its potential is to generate a critical awareness which guides learners towards more ethical personal choices and, consequently, participation in social movements pushing for wider cultural and political transformations. On one hand, it pushes for greater attentiveness to the fact that popular consciousness is grounded in a hegemonical neo-liberal ideology - that is, becoming cognisant of the fact that seemingly 'free' choices and aspirations may in reality function to increase 'dehumanisation' rather than otherwise. Indeed, Freire shows a deep concern at the 'fatalism of neo-liberalism' (Araujo Freire, 1997, 10) - that is, a 'nihilism that denies the people the chance to dream of a better world' (Mayo, 2004, 98). Freire's (1994, 1997) philosophy also leads learners to become aware that one cannot explain everything in terms of the class struggle and that much social inequality is structured by the weight that is given to specific human biological constructions such as race and gender:

> *We 'are' not racist; we 'become' racist, and we can also stop being*
> *that way. The problem I have with racist people is not the color of*
> *their skin, but rather the color of their ideology. Likewise, my difficulty*
> *with the 'macho' does not rest in their sex, but in their discriminatory*
> *ideology. Being racist or macho, progressive or reactionary, is not an*
> *integral part of human nature* (Freire, 1997, 85-86).

Freire does not refer specifically to the marginalisation of older adults on the basis of ageism and discrimination. On the other hand, Freire seems to hold an overly-optimist view of later life, as the sense of 'making up for one's lost years' constituted a constant theme in his later works. In *Pedagogy of the Heart* he writes

> *As I write this at seventy-five, I continue to feel young, declining - not*
> *for vanity or fear of disclosing my age - the privilege senior citizens are*
> *entitled to, for example, at airports... People are old and young much*
> *more as a function of how they think of the world, the availability they*
> *have for curiously giving themselves to knowledge* (Freire, 1997, 72).

Nevertheless, as hooks (1993) reacts to fellow feminists who criticised Freire's early literature for the sexism present in his language (e.g. Ellesworth, 1989), it is myopic to let this discourage us from embracing his philosophy. Whilst it invites a critical interrogation of this flaw in his work, an overall dismissal is counter-productive. Freire's contribution is based on political commitment and identification with subordinate and oppressed groups. The fact that older people qualify as such is a sufficient rationale for late-life education to follow a Freirean discourse. Turning our attention to the other side of Freire's epistemology, his work is from beginning to end 'a fight for the reinvention of power' (Freire, 1993, 124). The classroom is posited as a 'workplace' where progressive educators sow the seeds of imminent and future social movements. The educational environment reaches its culmination when it achieves a dialectic relationship between objective and subjective worlds. As Darder (2002, 85) asserts, Freirean education 'is not an educational politics of individualism and abstraction, but rather a living politics anchored in a personal and collective practice that that is fuelled by our dreams of justice and liberation'. It is hoped that the following third statement of first principles leads late-life education to engage more extensively in overturning the numerous chimeras that currently pass as justice, freedom, autonomy, and democracy.

A transformative rationale. CEG is concerned with 'how' (Mayo, 2004, 98) and 'what we are producing, who it benefits, and who it hurts' (Freire, 1996, 84). It not only aims to dissect the realities surrounding us but also to enable learners to imagine and work together towards the realisation of a social world than is governed by life-centred values rather than the ideology of the market. In Freire's (2002, x) words, a critical pedgaogy 'reject[s] a fatalistic or pessimistic understanding of history with a belief that what happens is what should happen'. It pushes for an awareness of how social differences are ultimately structurally produced by being on the wrong side of class, gender, ethnic, sexual, and age divides - as well delving in the terrain of human-earth relationships by highlighting the negative impact of capitalism on sustainable development.

Educators yes, facilitators no! Contrary to a common misconception that critical pedagogy is 'non-directive' and a 'dialogue of equals' (Taylor, 1993, 129), in CEG the educator and learner are not on an equal footing. Whilst Freire (1985, 177) recognises that 'we have to learn from our students', he also underlines that 'at the moment the teacher begins the dialogue, he or she knows a great deal, first in terms of knowledge and second in terms of the horizon that he or she want to get to' (in Shor & Freire 1987, 103). Educators therefore hold a position of authority deriving from their competence which, in turn, commands, respect. Authority must, however, never degenerate to a form of authoritarianism since 'the educator's task is encourage human agency, not moulded in the manner of Pygmalion' (Aronowitz, 1998, 10).

Critical geragogy. Geragogical prerequisites for CEG other than those elaborated upon by Glendenning and Battersby include listening, love and tolerance. Whilst it is only as a result of listening that one can overcome 'narration sickness' which makes us talk past each other rather than to each other, a geragogy of love embraces and cherishes the hope that we could exist as full human beings, having the freedom to live passionately with an 'increasing solidarity between the mind and the hands' (Freire, 1997, 33). Moreover, the fact that education is a political act does not mean that one should be intolerant to others holding different value judgements. On the contrary, CEG must cultivate 'revolutionary virtue - the wisdom of being able to live with what is different, so as to be able to fight the common enemy' (Freire & Faundez, 1989, 18).

Revolutionary praxis. CEG entails a critical engagement with historically accumulated concepts and practices - that is, a 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it' (Freire, 1972, 52). Humanisation is only achieved through intentional, reflective, meaningful activity situated within dynamic historical and cultural contexts that at the same time shape and set limits on that activity. In CEG both teachers and learners need to extend their work outside the educational setting, and connect with what is going on in the public sphere. In Freire's (in Escobar *et al*., 1994, 37) words, 'the ideal is to fight against the system taking the two fronts, the one internal to the schooling system and the one external'. This takes the form of becoming active in age-interested social movements, founding such movements and seeking alliances with other agencies working in the interest of other marginalised groups.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to renew Glendenning & Battersby's (1990) principles for CEG for the field to become attuned to ongoing developments in both critical pedagogy and critical gerontology. On paper, the humanist position holds a lot of promise and potential. However, keeping in mind the gritty realities which embed older persons in structural positions of social inequality on one hand, and the inability of subjects to work towards the transformation of such realities in individualist and self-directed ways, this article has voiced support for standpoint of CEG. Similar to all other intellectual movements, CEG will be continuously a work-in-process, and there is still much work to be done. Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need to portray and evaluate the 'reinvention' - Freire (1998, ix) emphasises that 'it is impossible to export pedagogical practices without reinventing them' - of CEG in diverse educational and learning contexts.

Finally, one has to acknowledge that whilst one cannot explain all that is under sun through a critical epistemology, it is equally true that CEG will never have all the answers. In this respect, this article should not be taken as an attempt to close the lid on the humanist-critical debate but simply as an attempt to bring to the fore, and at the same time renew, the *critical* strand in late-life education. It is hoped that this article touches a raw nerve in the educational gerontological community so that many a future piece will complement and criticise the thoughts presented here. It is certain that everyone working in this field looks forward to such academic engagement.

Acknowledgement

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Key Words

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