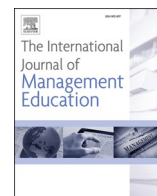


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Entrepreneurship education but not as we know it: Reflections on the relationship between Critical Pedagogy and Entrepreneurship Education

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ABSTRACT

The meteoric rise of entrepreneurship education in higher education continues apace. This expansion has however only recently begun to elicit a more critical approach as to its nature and purpose. Using Critical Pedagogy, and specifically Freire's work, we compare aspects of Critical Pedagogy to Entrepreneurship Education drawing attention to five commonalities. These commonalities relate to an action-orientation, transformational potential, freedom orientation, identity development and the power-relationship between educator and student. Overall, the conceptual comparison challenges uncritical assumptions that entrepreneurship education serves only as a means to consolidate rather than question existing socio-economic structures. It supports notions of entrepreneurship education's empowering and emancipatory potential. As one of only few studies to date that theorise the relationship between entrepreneurship education and critical pedagogy it presents a foundation upon which others may build in an expanded understanding of entrepreneurship education, its processes and place within existing educational scholarship. Practical implications are suggested.

1. Introduction

Using Critical Pedagogy (CP) as a reference point this paper explores the extent to which entrepreneurship education (EE; we include here enterprise education, see also discussion below) contains within it the seeds of a liberal/humanist pedagogical philosophy (e.g. Hannon, 2005) that extends beyond its traditional economic, utilitarian, focus. At first glance, especially regarded through current interpretations of the purpose of the university (Rhoads, 2018), it is possible to see EE and CP as being at opposite ends of the educational spectrum in relation to envisaged outcomes. As Calás, Smircich, and Bourne (2009) have argued, the traditional understanding of enterprise is one that reproduces existing capitalist market-based systems, and scholars have sought to bring to attention the often deliberately ignored ideological underpinnings of entrepreneurship (Johannisson, 2016; Ogbor, 2000). That the notion of enterprise education has been (mis)used to further entrench neoliberal discourses and structural inequalities has also been acknowledged by Lackeus (2017, 2018) and calls for more work in the area of EE's role in neoliberal societies have been made (Berglund, Hytti, & Verduijn, 2020) especially where prevailing conceptualisations of EE may be seen as upholding existing economic structures (Kuckertz, 2021) and the inequalities these structures may bring forth (Pickety, 2014).

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In trying to explore the black boxes of what EE could become (Verduijn & Berglund, 2020) we seek here to tap into a growing critical engagement with entrepreneurship and EE, especially its emancipatory function (Goss, Jones, Betta, & Latham, 2011; Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009). Specifically, we suggest a review of EE in relation to CP is timely for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is still relatively limited discussion in the literature on EE's purpose (Morris & Liguori, 2016; Mwasalwiba, 2007) despite its meteoric rise (Liguori & Winkler, 2019), an acknowledged need for reflection on EE in a rapidly changing world (Rae, 2010) and even a possible unsettling of EE in a post Covid-19 environment (Berglund et al., 2020).

Secondly, and relatedly, despite recognising EE's embeddedness in debates in philosophy and education (Jones, Penaluna, & Penaluna, 2020; Lackéus, 2015), the need for robust theoretical foundations for EE (Fayolle, Verzat, & Wapshott, 2016; Pittaway & Cope, 2007), and recognition of EE's ideological and political implications (Lackéus, 2017; Sagar, 2015), the relationship between EE and Critical Pedagogy is conspicuous by its, almost complete, absence; a further indicator that there is much scope for educators and researchers to draw on educational theory in promoting EE.

Thirdly, we suggest the relationship between EE and wider developments in higher education (HE) policy has received scarcely any critical examination notwithstanding inherent tensions (Kuckertz, 2021; Rhoads, 2018). Thus, for some such as Lambert, Parker, and Neary (2007) an excessive focus on the business (economic) side of EE is part of an ongoing instrumentalization of HE which undermines "the more social aspirations of the entrepreneurial ideal" (Lambert et al., 2007, p. 528) as well as education's role in the preparing the individual for democratic participation (Witschge, Rözer, & Werfhorst, 2019). A similar criticism is raised by Kuckertz (2021) of this narrow, utilitarian approach to EE, whereby he suggests EE aligns with the Humboldtian ideals of building character. Thus, the apparent gulf between EE and CP is due in part at least to how EE has been instrumentalised as part of a wider discourse surrounding the purpose of HE, rather than because of inherent conflicts between the two approaches. We should however, as Ogbor (2000) suggests, step outside our taken-for-granted assumptions if we are to stop perpetuating myths surrounding entrepreneurship (and by implication the teaching of entrepreneurship). This paper attempt precisely this. The paper is structured as follows: Initially we review different purposes of EE, acknowledging the prevailing economic orientation but also recognising a recent broadening of focus. The paper then reviews the limited literature that focuses on CP and specifically Freire's work in EE. A conceptual comparison between EE and CP is then undertaken suggesting five commonalities but, crucially, also with some distinctions. We conclude the paper with a review of the implications of the analysis both for practice and research in EE.

2. The focus of entrepreneurship education

The expansion of EE has been described as 'explosive' (Neck & Corbett, 2018) and 'making glorious waves' (Winkel, 2013). EE has become part of the staple diet of an increasing number of students, not just those studying business, in an attempt to ensure they are ready for the labour market and the 'knowledge society' and can contribute to it (Williams, 2019; Young, 2014). Policy makers' interest in EE relates to its value to the economy, a desire to support individuals create their own businesses (Politis, 2005), to stimulate the dynamism of the small business sector (Bridge, O'Neill, & Cromie, 2003) and by implication support national economic growth (Baumol, 2002). Understood from this economic perspective, EE can be regarded as slotting comfortably into a utilitarian HE discourse, whereby HE is regarded primarily as a means of supporting economic development and growth (Maskell & Robinson, 2001; Sutherland, 2008). Indeed, as widely recognised, enterprise and entrepreneurship are key to the functioning of market economies and Capitalism (Kirzner, 1985; Schumpeter, 1934, p. 1961).

Notwithstanding EE's focus on the economic dimension (Edwards & Muir, 2012; Kyrö, 2015; Lackéus, 2015; Nabi, Liñan, Fayolle, Krueger, & Walmsley, 2017), and limited discussion of EE's purpose relative to its rise (Morris & Liguori, 2016; Mwasalwiba, 2007), calls for a reframing of entrepreneurship beyond the economic orientation are not entirely new (Calás et al., 2009; Goss et al., 2011; Jones & Patton, 2020; Kyrö, 2015). An increasing number of publications are targeting not just the 'how' of EE but also the 'for whom' and 'for what purpose' (e.g. Fayolle & Gailly, 2008; Jones et al., 2020; Lackéus, 2015) setting the scene for a more critical engagement with the nature of EE itself.

EE's economic orientation can be understood with different levels of emphasis. The economic orientation is most apparent in EE's new venture creation focus which, arguably, lies at the heart of EE (Neck & Corbett, 2018). However, an expanded understanding of EE aims to create enterprising individuals in a more general sense because "The entrepreneur may indeed exist in all types and sizes of private and public sector organisation" (Gibb, 1996, p. 312). This 'enterprising individual' focus is reflected in notions such as developing an entrepreneurial mindset or entrepreneurial capabilities (Quality Assurance Agency, 2018, p. 33), or an enterprising personality (Davis, Hall, & Mayer, 2016), or entrepreneurial propensity (Canziani, Welsh, Hsieh, & Tullar, 2015). The distinction itself is not new with the 'enterprising individual vs. new venture creation' theme underpinning the distinction between enterprise and entrepreneurship education (Jones & Iredale, 2007; Quality Assurance Agency, 2018, p. 33). This enterprising individual focus has economic implications when understood in a human capital sense, that is the development of individuals who can contribute to the economic performance of their organisations (via corporate entrepreneurship or intrapreneurship).

The development of entrepreneurial characteristics can have beneficial impacts for the individual, and society, beyond the economic domain, however. For example, Timmons suggested entrepreneurship "is not just about new company, capital and job formation, nor innovation, nor creativity, nor breakthroughs. It is also about fostering an ingenious human spirit and improving humankind" (cited in Neck, Greene, & Brush, 2014, p. 1). The development of entrepreneurial competencies may then also be understood as benefitting the individual in terms of offering a 'life skill' (Costello, Neck, & Dziobek, 2012; Sagar, 2015), where enterprise behaviours, attributes and competencies lead to the creation of cultural, social or economic value (Quality Assurance Agency, 2018, p. 33). Similarly, Rindova, et al. (2009, p. 477) write of 'entrepreneurship' defined as "efforts to bring about new economic, social, institutional, and cultural environments through the actions of an individual or group of individuals." Wiklund, Davidsson, Audretsch,

and Karlsson (2011) write of entrepreneurship as a method of human problem solving. In this sense, entrepreneurship is not the prerogative of the economy or business (Gibb, 2002), it relates to attributes that support individuals in numerous spheres of life. This broader understanding of the purpose of EE may not be mainstream, and yet it does offer an alternative perspective of EE and one that is receiving increasing attention.

Finally, it is possible to move even further away from the core of EE's business start-up orientation and focus on its unintended (Bandera, Santos, & Liguori, 2020) or 'higher-order' (Kuckertz, 2021) consequences. Specifically, it is possible to identify outcomes of EE that are neither about venture creation, nor intrapreneurship nor developing exclusively entrepreneurial traits. The classification of these outcomes as a 'purpose' of EE is potentially misplaced though they have seen some emerging research interest (e.g. Bandera et al., 2020). For example, Jones and Iredale (2007) see enterprise education as a pedagogical approach and mention freedom and citizenship as outcomes. Lackeus (2015) draws attention to EE's pedagogical potential, specifically its ability to motivate and engage learners, as well as its potential to stimulate deep learning. Jones et al. (2020) as well as Kakouris (2015) have written about EE's transformative potential for the individual, and Kuckertz (2021) suggests EE accords with the character-building understanding of traditional HE (drawing on Humboldtian ideas of a university). None of these outcomes are in essence exclusive to EE; they neither relate to business start-up, nor do they relate to creating enterprising individuals who will employ these entrepreneurial attributes in an economic function (e.g. intrapreneurship), nor do they relate to specifically enterprising traits that can support the individual tackling life's challenges (life skills). Especially from this perspective this paper identifies how EE by developing enterprising individuals contributes both to benefits for the individual beyond the economic, and may also contribute to ancillary outcomes at a societal/political level in line with the ideals underpinning CP (Giroux, 2020).

3. Freire, Critical Pedagogy and Entrepreneurship Education

Wheeler-Bell (2019) suggest CP is currently facing an identity crisis as it moves away from its roots in Critical Theory thereby distancing itself from its traditional focus on challenging oppression, domination and fostering emancipation (Cho, 2012; Gottesman, 2016). Here we return to CP as grounded in Critical Theory, with its focus on challenging oppression, domination and fostering emancipation, and as such use Paulo Freire's work as he is recognised as a one of the leading proponents of CP (Brown & Sekimoto, 2017; Giroux, 2020), whose work aligns with these ideals, and continues to serve to stimulate debate and action against oppression (Knijnik, 2021). Thus, Freire's work may be seen as located upon a broader philosophical backdrop, notably the work of the Frankfurt School and here in particular Habermas (Fleming, 2019) but also Fromm (Diaz, n.d.).

The idea of freeing oneself from oppression is addressed directly by Freire where he explains: "The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation (see also the concept of conscientization below). In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages, it is always through action that the culture of domination is culturally confronted" (Freire, 2005 (1972), p. 52). The above quote is instructive in that it provides a clear overview of the core features of CP, notably establishing CP's focus on: emancipation and transformation both at the level of the individual and society, brought about by reflection and action in the notion of *Praxis* (see also Hägg & Kurczewska, 2016 or Kakouris, 2015). It would be remiss when discussing concepts key to Freire's work on CP not to mention 'conscientization', defined as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 2000:35). Thus, CP (with clear links to Critical Theory) involves awareness raising but then also raising awareness of one's own agency, one's ability to challenge the 'system' and create one's own reality. Critical Theory, with its political connotations, goes beyond the widely used concept of critical thinking (Brookfield, 2005).

Because Freire's work plays an important role in the educational philosophy of the 20th Century one might expect to find reference to it in the literature on EE, and indeed, although scant, some literature does tackle his work. Santos, Neumeyer, and Morris (2019) draw on Freire to explore how EE could help empower individuals, subsequently leading to an improvement in individuals' economic situation. There is alignment here with Van Gelderen's (2010) contention that EE's ultimate aim is autonomous action, but recognition that the actual "theoretical foundations of empowerment have not yet been firmly established in EE" (Santos et al., 2019, p. 7).

Empowerment in Santos et al.'s (2019) work is related to economic independence which comes from entrepreneurship: "it can be argued that entrepreneurship should be grounded in the logic of empowerment (rather than control), by lessening dependencies on external stakeholders and increasing one's autonomy to make decisions about what entrepreneurial opportunities to pursue and what outcomes to create" (Santos et al., 2019, p. 10). This is also recognised in the conclusion of their paper where Santos et al. (2019) claim self-empowerment leads to the creation and capturing of value. EE serves to empower which serves to extract people out of poverty and the dependencies that this entails.

But empowerment is not the same as emancipation, and Freire's pedagogy is not solely one of empowerment but also of emancipation (Knijnik, 2021). Thus, according to Inglis (1997) empowerment is about transformation at an individual level that permits the individual to obtain economic, social and political power. Emancipation by contrast seeks to change the system that leads to oppression, it is about social and political transformation (Brown & Sekimoto, 2017; Inglis, 1997). Empowerment operates within the rules, emancipation transgresses and seeks to change the rules (Inglis, 1997). Therefore, where Rindova et al. (2009, p. 478) with reference to emancipation claim: "Viewing entrepreneurial projects as emancipatory efforts focuses on understanding the factors that cause individuals to seek to disrupt the status quo and change their position in the social order in which they are embedded - and, on occasion, the social order itself," for Freire, changing the social order is an imperative.

Alongside Santos et al.'s (2019) focus of CP in entrepreneurship education, Hägg and Kurczewska (2016) offer a further

contribution to the relationship between EE, CP and Freire's work. The concept of *Praxis*, which plays a fundamental role in Freire's pedagogy, is understood as the interplay between action and reflection and how education is about individualisation and socialisation. Crucially for the purposes of this paper, Hägg and Kurczewska (2016) relate the idea of Praxis to the purpose of education. They mention education "as a means for democratization and the development of liberate free-thinking individuals" (Hägg & Kurczewska, 2016, p. 703) which they relate to the American progressive education movement, amongst whose adherents they include Freire. Dewey's ideas of education arguably serve as a further foundation of the progressive education movement (Hopkins, 2018) and historically, the notion of liberate, free-thinking individuals in fact goes back to the Renaissance humanist ideals of education (Parrish, 2013), as well as the Humboldtian foundations of the modern university (Kuckertz, 2021).

Critical Pedagogy is also discussed by Kakouris (2015) who reviews a range of pedagogical approaches as they relate to the notion of reflection in entrepreneurship education. Here Kakouris (2015) draws attention to criticality in EE relating to how students might critically engage with the notion of entrepreneurship, recognising this differs from Freire's view of education as leading to social change. Kakouris and Liargovas (2021) pick up on Freire again in a review of the purposes and associated pedagogies of entrepreneurship education, suggesting there is place to critically reflect on the place of entrepreneurship education within broader socio-economic developments. This echoes Ogbor's (2000) call to entrepreneurship scholars to be critically reflexive when considering dominant discourses underpinning society's understanding of entrepreneurship. Drawing on Dewey, Kakouris (2015) clarifies between simple reflection and critical reflection whereby the former relates to problem-solving and the latter is about meaning making and occurs in a dialogic process with peers. These important distinctions raised by Kakouris and Liargovas (2021) between reflection and critical reflection and then also Critical Theory are found also in Brookfield (2005).

Finally, Verduijn and Berglund (2020) very directly draw on Freire's work to explore how EE can be kept 'fresh' by introducing more criticality into its delivery. The premise underpinning their paper aligns in many ways with this one; they refer to critical entrepreneurship studies (CES), drawing on Critical Management Studies (CMS), in an attempt to raise awareness of EE's broader relevance to society (not just to the economy), and a broadening understanding of its purpose (Verduijn & Berglund, 2020). Specifically, they focus on the aforementioned notion of conscientization, where students through reflection and action develop critical awareness. Drawing on Freire, Verduijn and Berglund (2020) argue for an oscillation between construction and deconstruction of the meaning of entrepreneurship in an attempt to reinvigorate EE, leading to what they term as Critical Entrepreneurship Education. Verduijn and Berglund (2020) draw here on Berglund and Johansson's (2007) earlier work where the notion of conscientization is used to explore discourses of entrepreneurship and how dominant discourses of entrepreneurship may be challenged via the notion of conscientization. Berglund and Johansson (2007) expand here on the process of conscientization whereby the notion of critical dialogue with others is offered as an antidote to the banking concept of education, with foundations in Dewey's work (Hopkins, 2018).

4. Commonalities between entrepreneurship education and critical pedagogy

Having reviewed the EE literature that draws on CP and Freire's work, the paper now seeks to undertake a further, more detailed, comparison of the two concepts whereby five 'commonalities' are highlighted. The comparison accords with Neck and Greene's (2011) proposition that entrepreneurship might best be taught as "a method of thinking and acting" (Neck & Greene, 2011, p. 62), akin to Sagar's (2015, p. 22) notion that "entrepreneurial education is an approach to teaching", that maps on to the method/approach of thinking and acting in Critical Pedagogy. Crucially, the comparison is not about subject matter or content but on method and outcomes. It is not about the 'what' of EE, but about the 'how' the 'why' and critically 'for what purpose'?

4.1. Commonality 1: action orientation

The first of five commonalities revolves around a shared action orientation: both EE and Freire's work present a direct call to action. Even though EE can be understood as 'about', 'for' or 'through' many commentators stress its action orientation (e.g. Bacigalupo, Kamylyis, Punie, & Van den Brande, 2016; Gibb, 1996; Neck & Corbett, 2018; Williams, 2019). The action orientation is very apparent in the notion of entrepreneurship itself, e.g. in Shane and Venkataraman's (2000) widely-referenced definition of entrepreneurship as involving the exploitation, not just identification and evaluation of opportunity. Although, arguably, much education focuses on action broadly understood (e.g. the study of medicine results in the application of this knowledge to treating people, the study of architecture leads to the design of buildings etc.), it is argued here that in EE there is a very direct call to action because the lack of it is what separates entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs. A doctor is still a doctor whether they treat patients or not; an architect similarly is an architect through their professional training. An entrepreneur is only an entrepreneur insofar as they take action. The importance of taking action is further demonstrated, for example, in the literature on assessing entrepreneurial intentions which tend to be typically high, and yet the number of people starting their own ventures is a lot lower. Translating intentions to behaviour is a common concern of such intent studies (Adam & Fayolle, 2016; Wraae, 2021).

Freire's pedagogy suggests transformation would come from what he terms Praxis which involves reflection plus action. This transformation might start with 'critical consciousness' but awareness of one's status without following up with action would have been anathema to Freire (and also to Mezirow, 2000, who writes about transformative learning with reference also to Freire's work), whereby the links to Critical Theory are again apparent (Fleming, 2019). "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2005 (1972), p. 79).

Here we can detect CP's roots in Critical Theory and its 'moral superiority' (Wheeler-Bell, 2019) given its attempts to change (rather than just reflect upon) the world. Lambert et al. (2007) write about the social and not just intellectual usefulness of teaching and learning in the critical pedagogy tradition further supporting the societal impact orientation. This is clarified by Freire (2005

(1972), p. 87) as follows:

“When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the world is turned into idle chatter ... It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action.”

Freire’s concept of conscientization is critical here too to the notion of action as it not only involves awareness raising of one’s status and inequalities in society, but also draws attention to individual agency in being able to tackle institutional structures.

4.2. Commonality 2: transformation orientation

Following the previous point, action should, according to Freire, lead to transformation, both at the individual and societal levels. Freire’s pedagogy describes students as “transformers of the world” (page 73), with transformation reflected in CP’s focus on emancipation (Inglis, 1997; Wheeler-Bell, 2019). This broader notion of transformation constitutes another commonality with EE. Not all EE may target transformational change, and may take a more individual-focussed interpretation of transformation (see Mezirow as discussed in Illeris (2007) and yet EE does contain the seeds of transformation, not just for the individual but potentially also for society. The transformational potential of EE for the individual is regularly acknowledged (Neergaard, Robinson, & Jones, 2020; Wraae, Tigerstedt, & Walmsley, 2020), though societal transformation less so, although it is not entirely absent. Pittaway (2005) for example discusses how an extreme functionalist approach to entrepreneurship may have led to a lack of focus on entrepreneurship’s potential to change society in unpredictable ways. Thus, there is potential for wider-scale transformation that begins with transformation of the individual and their meaning schemes (Mezirow, 2000, cf. also Freire’s notion of conscientization and Kakouris’ discussion of the meaning of critical reflection). The prospective entrepreneur who via EE is encouraged to identify new means-ends relationships, once engaged on the path of critical reflection may transcend purely instrumental learning, and engage in communicative learning where the learner learns to negotiate their own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings (Dewey, 1916; Habermas, 1984).

Entrepreneurship’s connection to transformation is further found in its focus on innovation. Innovations inherent to entrepreneurship can transform (see for example Schumpeter’s notion of creative destruction: Schumpeter, 1934, p. 1961). We are not considering here incremental innovations but rather those radical (e.g. Ettlie, Bridges, & O’Keefe, 1984), disruptive (Christensen, 1997) or breakthrough innovations (Cooper, 2013) that have the potential to bring about large-scale changes. Entrepreneurship’s transformational potential is also evident in the notion of Transformational Entrepreneurship with its focus on creating change at scale rather than just locally (Maas, Jones, & Lockyer, 2016; Marmar, 2012) and specifically within the context of CP Freire’s thoughts are reflected in Santos et al.’s (2019) work which sees the empowering and transformational potential of EE, also picked up by Morris, Kuratko, Audretsch, and Santos (2022).

4.3. Commonality 3: freedom orientation

A third overlap concerns the notion of freedom and related concepts such as autonomy, empowerment and emancipation. Entrepreneurship occurs when the status quo is changed (Kirzner, 1997). Stasis and entrepreneurship are antithetical. Assuming entrepreneurship is a deliberate act (Bird, 1988), the act itself that brings about change contains within it the notion of freedom. As Isiah Berlin argued (Fukuyama, 2013), freedom can be understood as freedom from something (negative freedom) or freedom to do something (positive freedom). EE promotes positive freedom: “in that it establishes the right to start or not start a business” (Jones & Iredale, 2007, p. 14). Entrepreneurship requires freedom to bring about change and as such entrepreneurs must value freedom. Personal agency lies at the heart of entrepreneurship just as it is fundamental to CP.

Entrepreneurship is understood as occurring within specific contexts (Autio, Kenney, Mustar, Siegel, & Wright, 2014; Thomassen, Middleton, Ramsgaard, Neergaard, & Warren, 2019; Welter, 2011). Structural constraints bind entrepreneurs (Williams, Pritchard, Miller, & Reed, 2020; Morris et al., 2022). However, it is precisely for this reason that EE can assist in overcoming these constraints where autonomy has been recognised as ‘the guiding aim of entrepreneurship education’ by van Gelderen (2010) and where entrepreneurs are often characterised as valuing their autonomy (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Lange, 2012).

Autonomy is related to self-determination which in turn is a key component of empowerment (e.g. Rauch & Frese, 2007; Santos et al., 2019; van Gelderen, 2010). Empowerment concerns the shifting of power, it involves thereby a process of change (Page & Czuba, 1999), just as change is inherent to entrepreneurship. As Santos (2012) has argued, entrepreneurship should include lessening dependencies on external stakeholders and increasing one’s autonomy to make decisions about which entrepreneurial opportunities to pursue. The overlap with critical pedagogy and specifically Freire’s work in its aim to inculcate empowered, autonomous individuals is apparent (see also the concept of conscientization).

We see here also parallels to Suddaby, Bruton, and Si (2015) who with reference to the nature of entrepreneurial opportunities distinguish between reflexivity and imprinting. Reflexivity places greater emphasis on the individual and their awareness of the social, political and economic context in which they find themselves, which relates directly to Freire’s notion of conscientization (to become aware of one’s own situation and one’s agency to address oppression). This awareness then involves envisioning an alternate institutional arrangement. Imprinting on the other hand sees the environment as more fixed and the individual entrepreneur having to manage within the institutional constraints rather than try to tackle them. It is clear from Suddaby et al.’s (2015) work, that entrepreneurs may envisage and alter political and economic structures.

Whereas the focus on empowerment and autonomy in EE tend to focus on the individual (individual transformation), emancipation

as understood by CP is about changing societal structures (Inglis, 1997) (societal transformation). Or, as Freire (2005 (1972)) suggests, a liberating education tries not to adapt students to the world, but seeks the opposite. The extent to which EE explicitly seeks to change the politico-economic status quo is debatable. In Suddaby et al.' (2015) work there is reference to this in the concept of reflexivity. Overall though, there is minimal literature that seeks to explore this political dimension of EE (or indeed entrepreneurship, e.g. Audretsch & Moog, 2020) though Jones and Iredale (2007, p. 14) touch upon this when they claim EE calls into question "taken-for-granted erroneous assumptions about work, employment and the nature of a market economy" and Verduijn and Berglund (2020) also recognise a political dimension to EE. For Jones and Iredale (2007) this political aspect of EE has been undermined by pressures for EE to conform to the instrumentalization in higher education, i.e. an almost pure focus on the economic outcomes of EE (see also Ogbor's, 2000, reference to regimes of truth). Others such as Calás et al. (2009) or Goss et al. (2011) concur with Jones and Iredale (2007) suggesting the literature on entrepreneurship has been too narrowly focussed on functionalist discourses that define entrepreneurship as an economic activity. Nonetheless, even here (Calás et al., 2009; Goss et al., 2011) as in Santos et al.'s (2019) work emancipation is about individual liberation from power, as opposed to a targeted effort to tackle societal structures, i.e. a political act.

4.4. Commonality 4: identity orientation and reflection

A further point of overlap between EE and Freire's pedagogy relates to identity development, specifically the role of critical, in-depth reflection in offering the potential for identity development. There is a connection here to the transformational nature of EE and CP in the sense that any change in identity goes beyond superficial change. More specifically, for Freire liberating education which is problem-posing (or 'problem-based') "affirms men and women as being in the process of becoming" (page 84), indeed who transcend themselves. This notion of transcendence has been associated with traditional, liberal aspects of higher education (Lyotard, 1984; Maskell & Robinson, 2001) and is referred to by Hägg and Kurczewska (2016) as reflecting the ideals of the American Progressive Education movement.

The individual transformational potential of EE is demonstrated in studies that point to a change in the individual's identity, especially their entrepreneurial identity (Donnellon, Ollila, & Middleton, 2014; Wraae, Tigerstedt, & Walmsley, 2020). van Gelderen (2010) associate identity development with the development of autonomy brought about by EE and further studies support the relationship between EE and identity development (Nielsen & Gartner, 2017; Pepin, 2012).

Critical reflection is key to identity development and transformation both in EE and in CP. Freire argues that reflexivity is a part of the process to become a self-conscious human being. Brockbank and McGill (2007, p. 65) explain how reflection can engage the learner "at the edge of their knowledge, their sense of self and the world as experienced by them". Reflection has a crucial role to play in EE not only making sense of experiences, but can also lead to reassessments of 'the reality' and thereby have transformative consequences for the learner (Hägg & Kurczewska, 2016). Both EE and Freire's liberating pedagogy have implications for the learner in terms of their transformation which may encompass identity development.

4.5. Commonality 5: teacher-student reconciliation

The fifth overlap between CP and EE relates to the relationship between the teacher and the student, an issue that has also been the focus of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). The banking concept of education, which Freire regards as the traditional approach to education (Knijnik, 2021), seeks a clear division between teacher and student. Freire calls this a 'contradiction' (page 72) between educator and student. Summarised very briefly, in this situation the teacher is the authority, knows everything whereby the student is ignorant, the teacher decides the content, the student complies, the teachers is the subject of the learning process while the students are object (Freire, 2005 (1972), p. 73).

While such a characterisation is stark, with Freire seeking to make a point of distinction to the notion of a liberating pedagogy, the legacy of this literal interpretation of the notion of pedagogy, i.e. 'the education of children' (see Neck & Corbett, 2018) can still be felt in much higher education, and is not entirely absent in EE practice (Sagar, 2015; Verduijn & Berglund, 2020). By way of contrast, in CP:

"The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (Freire, 2005 (1972), p. 80).

For Freire, true learning is dialogical and dialogical relationships are also at the heart of EE, notably also between student and educator (Jones & Matlay, 2011; Wraae & Walmsley, 2020). Neck and Corbett (2018) also touch on a change in the teacher-student dynamic in EE as does Sagar (2015). Neck and Corbett's (2018) suggestion for EE to move towards heutagogy where the student is at the centre of learning moves closer to the precepts of CP and also Mezirow's (2000) notion of transformative learning. This heutagogical dimension of EE is also recognised by (Jones, 2018) and has seen further attention in Jones, Penaluna, and Penaluna (2019) where it is also closely linked to transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). Thus, we suggest that both EE and CP lessen the power imbalance between educator and student and push towards andragogy and even heutagogy in their approaches to teaching/learning.

5. Discussion

The starting point for this paper was the limited work on the theoretical underpinnings of entrepreneurship education (Fayolle et al., 2016), where an overriding economic, utilitarian orientation persists (Kyrö, 2015). Possibly because of this economic orientation few studies have referred directly to CP and Freire's work (Berglund & Johansson, 2007; Hägg & Kurczewska, 2016; Kakouris, 2015;

Kakouris & Liargovas, 2021; Santos et al., 2019; Verduijn & Berglund, 2020) despite Freire’s important contribution to educational theory in the last half century (Giroux, 2020; Torres, 2019). A further reason for exploring the EE-CP relationship was provided by the, at first glance, contrasting natures of EE and CP: the former supporting a system that reinforces inequalities in society (at least in a laissez-faire, free marketeer form of Capitalism), the latter challenging precisely the economic and political structures that support the existence of these inequalities (Giroux, 2020; Knijnik, 2021). At their extreme, enterprise and entrepreneurship lie at the heart of a capitalist society which may be regarded as presenting the foundations against with CP rails.

What we have tried to demonstrate is that both CP and EE, while clearly distinct, nonetheless have much in common. They both share a focus on action, on transformation (of the individual and society), on individual freedom (empowerment), on identity development and on educator-student reconciliation. Although creating a more (politically) emancipated individual may not be a primary purpose of EE, this does not lessen the fact that, in theory at least, it can. That it may not be the primary purpose could in part be down to the continuing neoliberal ‘regime of power’ which underpins modern notions of the university (Rhoads, 2018) rather than something inherent in EE itself. Furthermore, we also recommend further exploration of these similarities because while there is some congruence, there is arguably still much that sets both CP and EE apart.

Here we extend Audretsch and Moog’s (2020) work which recognises the limited discussion of the political dimension of entrepreneurship, and specifically autonomy’s role in connecting entrepreneurship and democracy, even though one of the core tasks of education is to prepare citizens for participation in democracy (Dewey, 1916; Witschge et al., 2019). The paper also responds to Verduijn and Berglund (2020) who recognise the need to take a more critical approach at EE, which includes moving it away from its traditional economic focus. It also, in a less direct way, responds to Ogbor’s (2000) call for entrepreneurship scholars to move beyond taken-for-granted assumptions (ideology) in their approach to the subject. Although autonomy is key to EE (van Gelderen, 2010), as was demonstrated, it is not the only link between EE and CP, and by implication between entrepreneurship and democracy. In fact, we acknowledge the interrelationships and co-dependence between the dimensions we have used to undertake the comparison (individual transformation and identity development or societal transformation and action, for example). We distil our comparison into a framework (Fig. 1).

In assessing similarities between CP and EE we acknowledge that despite commonalities CP and EE are distinct, not just in terms of subject matter, but also in envisaged outcomes. Most clearly, CP’s focus is on societal transformation led by emancipated individuals. Although entrepreneurship education may support emancipation (Calás et al., 2009), there has to date been no emancipatory agenda in EE. Even if EE focuses on transformative education (Mezirow, 2000) individual transformation does not have to result in societal transformation (see Illeris, 2007 who confirms differences between Freire and Mezirow’s approaches to education). EE may empower the individual (Santos et al., 2019; Volkmann et al., 2009), it should support the individual’s autonomy (van Gelderen, 2010) but it does so without necessarily confronting societal (institutional) structures. Thus, for CP societal transformation must start with individual transformation (see Mezirow, 2000). While EE supports individual transformation, not least bringing about a change in an individual’s identity, an individual utilitarian-orientation continues to underpin much delivery of EE (Rhoads, 2018) though, as mentioned, it is beginning to be challenged (Calás et al., 2009; Goss et al., 2011; Jones & Iredale, 2007; Kuckertz, 2021). It is clear that any attempts at introducing a more CP-orientated form of EE may clash with institutional structures that uphold a more traditional understanding of the purpose of EE.

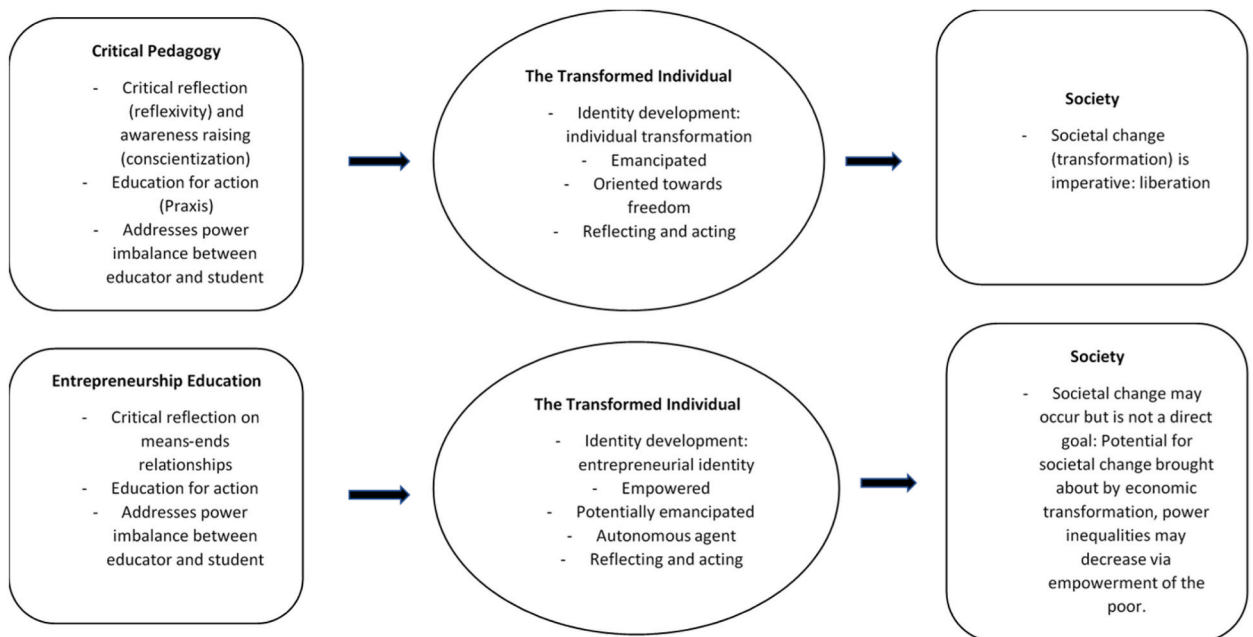


Fig. 1. Entrepreneurship education and critical pedagogy: Individual and societal transformation.

The second issue that makes a comparison between EE and CP difficult lies in the arguably indeterminate nature of EE. Thus, there is an ongoing debate about the nature and purpose of EE (Fayolle et al., 2016; Neck & Corbett, 2018) and we have therefore tried to capture different levels of purposes of EE extending from the core of business start-up, through intrapreneurship, the development of enterprise skills as life skills, and then ancillary outcomes. However, the dimensions presented here are applicable to EE irrespective of whether EE is defined broadly or narrowly. This was facilitated by the focus on EE as a process (Neck & Greene, 2011) or method of teaching (Sagar, 2015) that focuses on reflexivity, identity development, the development of autonomy rather than as a core body of professional/technical knowledge.

A number of practical and research implications of the study are offered. With reference to the delivery of EE, educators might begin to consider the political dimension of EE. More concretely, educators might consider the extent to which students are not simply aware of institutional facilitators and constraints (North, 1991; Scott, 2001) but they also consider tackling those constraints, for themselves but also for other entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship educators could, for example, promote resilience but at the same time encourage students to reflect on how it is possible to overcome challenges (Bernard & Barbosa, 2016; Gonzalez-Lopez, Perez-Lopez, & Rodriguez-Ariza, 2019). More fundamentally, the extent to which the individual entrepreneur sees themselves as part of a wider, immutable system or not, whether they take an empowering or emancipatory stance, goes to the heart of debates on opportunity recognition or creation in entrepreneurship (Suddaby et al., 2015).

A further practical implication relates to the transformational potential inherent in EE. Although this transformational potential is recognised, the question arises as to how it can be realised. As a starting point it would require a move towards pedagogies that shift the power imbalance in education away from the educator (Mezirow, 2000). A key aspect of promoting empowerment relates to the role the educator plays in relation to the student as argued above. Our study reiterates calls therefore for the educator to reflect on their role and how this then impacts how they teach (Neck & Corbett, 2018; Wraae, Brush, & Nikou, 2020). We believe entrepreneurship educators, armed with the knowledge of the empowering potential inherent in EE are better placed to encourage this empowerment to manifest itself, than for educators for whom this empowering (even emancipatory) potential is ignored. More pragmatically, educators could experiment with different teaching methods, for example using case studies of scenarios where institutional environments constrain to different degrees entrepreneurship, and what could be done address these. Educators could also draw on the increasingly International body of students in higher education to explore different cultural scenarios and how these frame understandings of enterprise and entrepreneurship and what the implications of this are for bringing about political change.

In recognising EE's emancipatory potential, researchers could explore the extent to which EE affects political attributes (see for example Walmsley & Wraae, 2023) such as political interest (Prior & Bougher, 2018), civic engagement (Chan & Mak, 2020) and political orientation (van de Werfhorst, 2020). Education is never value neutral (Soltis, 1968), it assumes a political role (Mezirow, 2000; Rexhepi & Torres, 2011). Certainly, EE's political ramifications could be explored, not least because it has been suggested the notions of entrepreneur and entrepreneurship have ideological and political implications (Ogbor, 2000), not least for teaching entrepreneurship (Sagar, 2015). This also accords with Jones et al.'s (2020) call for a more holistic development focus on the impact of EE.

A further angle that could be of interest to researchers of EE is how the empowering and emancipatory functions are supported or constrained by the entrepreneurship education ecosystem (Brush, 2014). What educators can teach and how they can teach needs to be legitimised in a series of dialogic relationships within the entrepreneurship education ecosystem (Jones & Matlay, 2011; Wraae & Walmsley, 2020). It is one thing the educator desiring to offer a more emancipatory (i.e. CP-underpinned) form of EE, it is another being able to do so within their educational setting. This also raises the issue whether entrepreneurship educators themselves attempt to change the ecosystem, or whether they largely accept and acquiesce to it (in a broader sense the educator who tries to develop critical, self-reflective students is sowing the seeds of change, Giroux, 2020). There is a certain irony here if on the one hand entrepreneurship educators promote empowerment, possibly even emancipation, and yet themselves unquestioningly accept the institutional structures that surround them, whether at a micro (university) or broader political level.

Finally, though the paper acknowledges that EE is not typically regarded as a tool for political change, this does not mean its political implications are negligible or should be ignored. As discussed, others have recognised an empowering (Santos et al., 2019) and even an emancipatory dimension to entrepreneurship (Calás et al., 2009; Goss et al., 2011; Rindova et al., 2009) and yet this aspect has remained largely outside discussions of the nature and purpose of EE (Kuckertz, 2021; Wraae, 2021). It is important to recognise that the paper is not primarily arguing that EE should align itself with CP, rather that there are elements of EE that align quite closely with CP, and that as a consequence the entrepreneurship educator might reflect on this to then, if this be their want, offer a more liberatory form of EE.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore the relationship between Critical Pedagogy, especially as outlined by one of its key proponents, Paulo Freire, and Entrepreneurship Education. The reason for this is the recognised need to tie EE more closely to educational theory, as well as the relatively limited discussion of CP specifically as it relates to EE. The paper thereby adds to other emerging literature that either critically queries the foundations of EE (e.g. Ogbor, 2000; Rhoads, 2018) or that offers a broader focus of the purpose and nature of EE (e.g. Berglund et al., 2020).

While EE and CP are clearly distinct, the review has resulted in the recognition that EE and CP do not, possibly contrary to accepted wisdom, find themselves at opposite ends of an educational spectrum. The paper has clarified that in some important respects they are not that different at all with commonalities relating to an action orientation, to transformation, individual freedom (empowerment), identity development and educator-student reconciliation becoming apparent (see Fig. 1 also). In a wider sense it is hoped the analysis

demonstrates the value in engaging with key educational theories, which in turn contributes to the further legitimisation and development of EE itself.

Author statement

We can confirm that both authors have made substantial contributions to this paper. Both authors have been involved in (1) the conception and design of the study (2) drafting the article and revising it critically for important intellectual content, (3) final approval of the version to be submitted.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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