

# Analyzing the Degree of Consensus in Current Academic Literature on Critical Pedagogy<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Critical Pedagogy is a philosophy and approach to education which has influenced theory and practice for almost 50 years, most recently in the fields of Applied Drama and performative pedagogy. However, what exactly is understood by Critical Pedagogy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is unclear, and whether its roots still align with the ideas and practices of its progenitor Paulo Freire is uncertain. Therefore, this systematic review of literature aims to explore the interpretations of Critical Pedagogy presented in 100 peer-reviewed papers published in recent times. After identifying frequently emergent themes in the selected literature, which are associated with the work of Freire, this paper examines the degree of consensus around Critical Pedagogy's transformative aim, its associated democratic classroom approaches, and the concepts of conscientization and praxis. Through this analysis, the review distinguishes a number of peripheral discussions that are related to a modern/postmodern debate within the literature. This paper concludes by asserting that there are more points of convergence than of divergence in the various interpretations of Critical Pedagogy available in the articles surveyed. We suggest that the current branching out of Critical Pedagogy has not been rendered devoid of core meanings as an educational tradition, one which holds considerable potential for the field of Applied Drama, and for other forms of performative education.

## 1 Introduction

The term 'Critical Pedagogy' was popularized by the Canadian scholar Henry Giroux to identify a defined area of study that emerged in the last half of the 20th century (Gottesman 2016). Following the Frankfurt School's critical theory, early exponents of Critical Pedagogy recognized the political and ideological nature of knowledge production and dissemination (Kincheloe 2008). They saw schools as places where dominant views and beliefs can be legitimized and normalized, while marginalized knowledge is silenced.

However, critical pedagogues also advanced that schools could become spaces for resisting hegemony (Giroux 1981). In this, and several other aspects, critical pedagogues were greatly inspired by the writing of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Based on his literacy work with peasants in South America, Freire (1970) explored how the contradiction between oppressors and oppressed could be disarmed through education. In his seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (ibid) denounced the 'banking' model of education for promoting a view of the teacher as the holder of knowledge and students as its unquestioning recipients. As an emancipatory alternative, Freire proposed democratic methods that valued the creative power of both teachers and students and encouraged a more humane relationship between them. For Freire (ibid), education, which is a political act, can motivate conscientization (*conscientização*), whereby the oppressed develop a critical awareness of their situation and their possibilities for exerting change through praxis, that is, transformative reflection and action. Freire's theories became central for the Critical Pedagogy movement, influencing educators from all over the world (Giroux 1985; Pinto Contreras 2008).

In the Applied Drama area, perhaps the most evident example of those inspired by Freire and Critical Pedagogy is Augusto Boal. He has been recognized as a translator of Freire's theories into the domain of theatre (Darder et al. 2009). Like Freire, Boal (1974) worked with illiterate peasants in South America, using participatory theatre as a platform for critical reflection. Similar to Freire's (1970) denunciation of the banking concept of education, Boal (1974) also rejected the traditional passive role of spectators in Western theatre. As an alternative, he advanced the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) approach. Through TO, Boal (2002: 15) promoted an active stance in spectators, who influence theatrical action directly, becoming "spect-actors" rather than spectators. Beyond Boal, several Applied Drama authors have also adhered to the work of Freire and Critical Pedagogy theorists (see Aitken 2009; Alrutz 2003; Crutchfield & Schewe 2017; Dawson et al. 2011; Finneran & Freebody 2016; Manley & O'Neill 1997; O'Connor 2013). In fact, by 2003, Sharon Grady had noticed the growing value that the discourses of Critical Pedagogy had gained within the Applied Drama field. However, she also highlighted the risks of embracing these discourses without due consideration to the potential for both liberation *and* repression that they entailed, as had been denounced by poststructural feminists such as Ellsworth (1989), Lather (1998), and Weiler (2001). Grady (2003: 79) invited Applied Drama proponents to avoid "accidental" ideological alliances by thoroughly analyzing the meaning and consequences of adhering to Critical Pedagogy as underpinning of theory and practice. Attempting such analysis today becomes complicated because of the diversity of standpoints currently associated with Critical Pedagogy. Indeed, several authors presently refer to it as an umbrella term that encompasses a myriad of educational views and practices (Childers & Meserko 2013; Lee & Givens 2012; McLaren 2010). This is not surprising, considering that Critical Pedagogy has always been characterized by heterogeneity (Darder et al. 2009).

The explosion and branching out of Critical Pedagogy during the last two decades in light of postmodern critique (McArthur 2010) has added layers of complexity to an already multifaceted body of theory and practice that Grady (2003) examined.

Given that several different and even contrasting perspectives are currently located under the banner of Critical Pedagogy, questions about its unifying concepts come to the fore: what are the shared perspectives that allow its various expressions to be positioned under this umbrella term, and is it possible to distinguish such common perspectives in theory and/or practice? Or has Critical Pedagogy so expanded that there are no longer shared interpretations of its aims, concepts or practices? These questions need to be considered to pave the way towards a future analysis of its relationship with Applied Drama and performative pedagogy more generally. Moreover, considering these questions is important to preserve the self-reflexivity that characterizes Critical Pedagogy (Kincheloe 2007). Although a number of valuable volumes have been published that discuss the development of Critical Pedagogy in the 21st century (Darder et al. 2009; Macrine et al. 2010; McLaren & Kincheloe 2007), these include a select number of contributions generally by preeminent figures in the field. It is arguable that additional studies are needed that examine the way Critical Pedagogy is currently being understood by a wider audience of authors who are not necessarily specialized in this approach, but who might nonetheless find theoretical and practical meaning in this educational tradition. Examining the points of convergence and divergence among current authors interested in Critical Pedagogy is what motivates this literature review.

## 2 Methodology

This review is part of a larger study and involves the analysis of 100 articles from scholarly journals published between 2007 and 2014 that deal with the subject of Critical Pedagogy. The collection of sources was conducted via Academic Search Complete and ERIC search engines, using the relevance sort option for their display. The first 100 articles that mentioned Critical Pedagogy in their title, abstract or key words were selected and only those written in English or Spanish were included. The specific time parameter was chosen to reflect recent developments. A randomized search was deemed appropriate to enable the examination of a diverse sample that included both theoretical and practical accounts. This randomized search also allowed for the inclusion of authors coming from a variety of fields who are writing in journals of education and other areas. In this way, we hoped to gain an understanding of the interpretations of Critical Pedagogy developed by a wide sample of authors.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the academic nature of the search engines used, the vast majority of articles included refer to formal classroom practices, although a few cases of non-formal education exist within the sample. We acknowledge that Critical

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<sup>2</sup> For the full list of journals see appendix.

Pedagogy informs both formal and non-formal educational experiences and that the results of this review might have been different, and perhaps more exhaustive, had we used other strategies for the search of papers.

A thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke 2006) was employed to examine the interpretation of Critical Pedagogy visible in the 100 articles. QSR NVivo software (version 10) was used to collate and code the texts, following Saldaña's (2009) coding strategies. From this, two main theoretical points of reference emerged: principles and concepts associated with the work of Paulo Freire, and, just as in Grady's (2003) account, a debate between modern and postmodern perspectives. We realize that we are bound by our own positionalities as researchers and thus acknowledge that different readers might have centered on other themes or might have arrived at differing interpretations.

This paper will begin by identifying the principles and concepts of Critical Pedagogy most pervasive within the 100 articles. The points of agreement and conflict around these notions will then be examined, determining how unified the overall understanding of these concepts is within the selected literature. It is important to note that in exploring these questions there is no attempt to arrive to an ultimate single definition of Critical Pedagogy. Such a task would be self-defeating, and entirely contrary to its heterogeneous nature (Darder et al. 2009). Still, we hope that this review can provide a useful indication of the current state of Critical Pedagogy that can serve as a platform for discussion and further analysis in the Applied Drama field, and for those interested in critical education in general.

### 3 Setting the Scene: Different Approaches to Critical Pedagogy

An overview of the selected literature confirms that "Critical Pedagogy is as diverse as its many adherents" (McLaren 2009: 61). As shown in Figure 1, it is possible to distinguish several branches of Critical Pedagogy, which could be classified into two major groups. *Applications* implement Critical Pedagogy in specific contexts (e.g. critical literacy and decolonizing pedagogy), whereas *critiques* challenge initial views on Critical Pedagogy from particular ideological perspectives (e.g. feminist pedagogy and post-Critical Pedagogy).

Despite the 'crowded scene' that this literature presents, there are a number of concepts traditionally linked to Critical Pedagogy that surface repeatedly throughout the articles reviewed. Interestingly, the majority of these ideas can be traced back to Freire's views, who is referenced in three out of every four articles, thus supporting his reputation as the "father of Critical Pedagogy" (Lynn et al. 2013: 604). Although there are other common concepts in the literature, such as *problem-posing*, *dialectics*, and *hidden curriculum*, this paper will focus on those notions that appear most prominently: notably, the transformative aim of Critical Pedagogy, its related democratic classroom approaches, and the

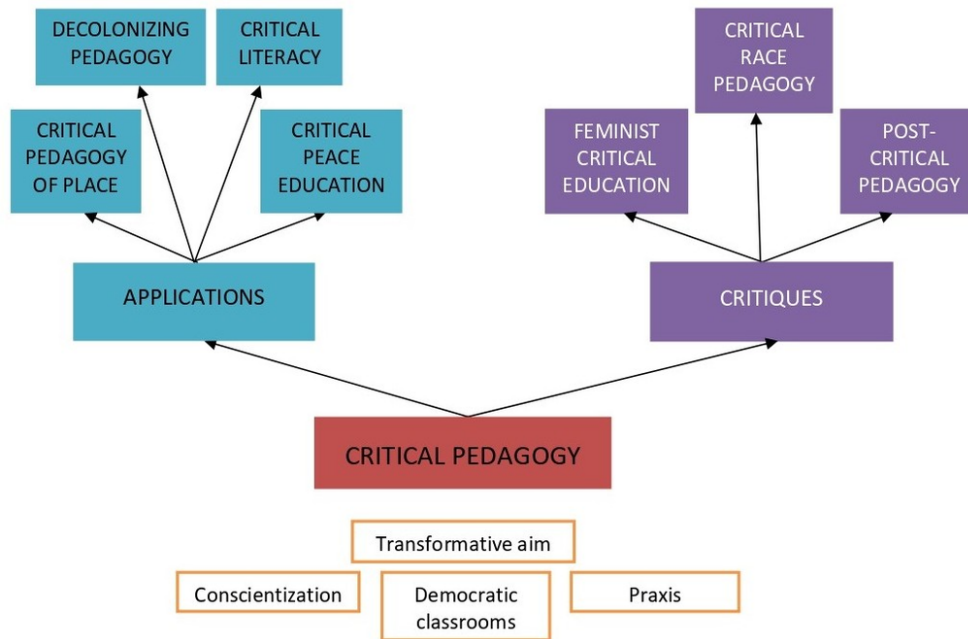


Figure 1: Main branches of critical pedagogy within the 100 articles classified into two major groups: *application* and *critique*

concepts of *conscientization* and *praxis*.

## 4 Current Views of Critical Pedagogy: Shared Notions and Important Debates

### 4.1 A Transformative Aim

An interest in the transformation of unequal social relations through education is evident in all of the articles surveyed. This confirms what the authors in the sample suggest is the characteristic that defines Critical Pedagogy, that is, the pursuit of social justice (Breunig 2009; Foster & Wiebe 2010; McArthur 2010; Tutak et al. 2011). Like Freire (1985), most authors in this sample also deem education as intrinsically political (Biggs-El 2012; Brown et al. 2014; Derince 2011; Lee & Givens 2012; Webb 2012). The notion of the political is evident in over 90% of the articles reviewed. As seems to be typical of the current zeitgeist (Cho 2010), these authors' understanding of the political does not appear related to political party affiliation but to the contributions that particular educational encounters can offer in challenging oppressive dynamics of power in society. This localist politics has consequences both for the scope of the emancipatory struggle and for the ways in which transformation can be accomplished.

Firstly, this fragmentation of political struggles is evident in the diversity

of types of oppression that the authors explore. The literature seems united in that, in its current form, Critical Pedagogy aims to combat oppression of all kinds, including that based on race and ethnicity, gender, age, ecological factors, special needs, social class, and also classroom roles (Lee & Givens 2012; Vassallo 2012; Widdersheim 2013). This diversity, as Chubbuck (2007) points out, bears testament to a strong influence of postmodern critique. While original versions of Critical Pedagogy, grounded on critical theory's modernist views, had positioned social class as the main explanatory factor for oppression, postmodernism and its suspicion of meta-narratives provoked a shift towards an analysis of multiple perspectives on domination (Chubbuck 2007). This shift is evident in the literature as no author upholds social class as a determining definition of oppression.

Secondly, this localist politics is reflected in the paths to achieving transformation that the literature presents. The majority appear to situate their approach closer to localist transformation than to revolutionary overthrowing of the structural arrangements of society. Most of the authors in the literature seem in line with Bernal Guerrero (2012) in paying heed to postmodern critique and highlighting subject agency rather than pre-imposed overarching struggles as the epicenter of emancipation. This is particularly evident in the practical experiences reported in the literature, like the social action projects organized by Vakil (2014), King-White (2012), and Bamber and Hankin (2011), which appeal to a gradual and local transformation of society. A number of authors refer to Peter McLaren's call to recuperate Critical Pedagogy's classical Marxist heredity and engage in revolutionary, anti-capitalist struggle (Breunig 2009; Ellison 2009; McArthur 2010; Rouhani 2012). McLaren (McLaren & Jaramillo 2010) seems to be concerned that by abandoning radical change in favour of small-scale, reformist transformation and identity politics, there is an implied surrendering to capitalist arrangements. However, McLaren's clarion call is not answered in the literature, with one notable exception (Fassbinder 2008). Moreover, there are authors who oppose it on the grounds of its impracticability (Ellison 2009; Neumann 2013). Hence, there appears to be clear consensus in the literature surveyed that the way towards transformation "lies in a slow evolution" (Su & Jagninski 2013: 113) and in contextualized approaches rather than radical revolution.

Even though over 85% of the articles recognize Critical Pedagogy as suitable for promoting transformation, some suggest that it must be rethought from a different perspective to become truly emancipatory, while a small number object to its transformational aims altogether. As will be explored in the following two sections, these latter writers claim that, in spite of its intentions, Critical Pedagogy is not invariably liberating and can sometimes do the opposite of what it sets out to achieve.

## 4.2 Democratic Classroom Approaches

Altering the verticality of traditional classroom dynamics is claimed as a central aspect of Critical Pedagogy and pivotal to its transformative aims (Kilgore 2011; Lee & Givens 2012; Motta 2013; Widdersheim 2013). Indeed, all but two of the 44 articles that examine applications of Critical Pedagogy in practice are explicit about encouraging more egalitarian teacher-student relationships. In this sense, two key ideas that are closely connected with Freire's (1970) views and which arise repeatedly within the selected literature can be identified: valorizing lived experience and engaging in critical dialogue.

Several authors refer to the cardinal importance of placing students' life experiences at the heart of any educational encounter (Markovich & Rapoport 2013; Mutemeri 2013; O'Brien 2013; Perron et al. 2010). Besides valuing the students' own worldviews as contributing to a meaningful re-construction of knowledge (Molina 2012), the fundamental role given to students' culture responds to the belief that by analyzing our own embeddedness in the larger economic, political, and ideological background we will become more critically aware (Abednia & Izadinia 2013). However, a number of authors recognize the strong emotional consequences that critical self-reflection can entail in practice, particularly when examining our different levels of unearned privilege (Czyzewski 2011; King-White 2012) and the ways in which we reproduce systemic oppression in our daily lives (Chapman 2011; Chubbuck & Zembylas 2011; Nelsen & Seaman 2011). Such self-analysis can result in students avoiding consideration of their implication in social inequities (Chapman 2011), resisting perspectives that could jeopardize their privileged position (Levy & Galily 2011), or rejecting Critical Pedagogy altogether (Nelsen & Seaman 2011). Hence, it seems that even though there is consensus about the desirability of basing learning on students' lived experiences, the evidence here suggests that the practice of critical self-reflection can be challenging and not always readily conducive of critical pedagogical aims. One possible solution to this problem proposed in the literature is to foster the development of a questioning dexterity as a preliminary and less threatening step to critical analysis of personal privilege and inequality (Nelsen & Seaman 2011). Analogously, Motta (2013: 81) believes in fostering amongst students of privilege a capacity for being "otherwise", decentering their dominant ways of seeing and acting. In this way, the selected literature is reminiscent of other developments in the area of what could be termed 'pedagogy of privilege' (Case 2013), which suggest valuable strategies for addressing the emotional taxation that critical self-examination of systemic privilege can provoke.

A second dominant issue concerning democratic methods is the use of dialogue in the classroom, which is explored in three out of every four articles. This confirms the well-established position of dialogue as a fruitful approach for the practice of Critical Pedagogy (Kaufmann 2010; Neumann 2013), again closely linked to Freire's (1970) theories. Most of the articles agree that by transforming the traditional teacher monologue into a dialogic exchange of ideas, students become empowered to critically question knowledge (Hjelm

2013), interrogating habitual ways of seeing the world and recognizing their socio-political implications (Derince 2011).

Amidst this dominant positive understanding of dialogue, a small number of articles question its democratic and empowering qualities. Kaufmann (2010) and Bali (2014) note that the feminist challenges against the alleged neutrality of dialogue were corroborated, to some extent, in their practices. In Kaufmann's (2010) experience, although dialogue was emancipatory in some cases, the power dynamics in the classroom made it unsafe for cultural minorities to speak. Similarly, Bali (2014) is concerned with the responsibility that she as the facilitator had in neglecting the voices of disempowered students in an intercultural classroom. Hao (2011) and Bali (2014) echo Ellsworth's (1989) concern with Critical Pedagogy's negative view of silence. Instead of perceiving student silence purely as failure to participate in critical dialogue, they suggest that it can also represent a conscious act of resistance (Bali 2014; Hao 2011). Moreover, Hao (2011) advocates for a less Western-centric interpretation of silence and a construal of dialogue that goes beyond speech acts, a viewpoint that has implications for the Applied Drama field, and for performative pedagogies in general (Frimberger 2017).

Although these writers represent a minority in the sample, the caveats they put forward are significant because they reiterate postmodernist concerns, manifested decades ago, in current classroom practice. However, apart from these specific challenges, the overall picture emerging is one of consensus around the empowering value of Freire's democratic approaches, which, in the vast majority of studies reviewed, are deemed practical tools for the achievement of Critical Pedagogy's transformative aim.

### **4.3 Conscientization**

Although subverting the verticality of teacher-student practices "can be an act of social justice itself" in certain contexts (Breunig 2009: 255), there is general agreement that a key purpose of democratic classroom approaches in Critical Pedagogy is to promote conscientization, integrating social justice issues explicitly in the curriculum (Breunig 2009; Chubbuck 2007; King-White 2012; Vakil 2014).

Even though Freire (1973) coined the notion of conscientization when working with marginalized groups, the concept has been expanded in the literature to refer to the critical awareness of learners who are not necessarily on the margins, and even those who might be considered privileged (Akbari 2008; Czyzewski 2011; King-White 2012; Motta 2013). This phenomenon is explicable since the majority of the applications of Critical Pedagogy described in the literature take place in university settings, a context that is not usually considered marginal per-se. Moreover, this would respond to Freire's calling to adapt his theories to the specificities of one's own practice (Giroux 1985). Hence, a more encompassing concept of conscientization as it is available in the sample literature implies a notion of questioning and becoming "aware of the



various levels of power and privilege operating on, in, and through different aspects of [our] lives” (King-White 2012: 390), and of our possibilities for transforming oppressive ideologies and practices (Ford 2014). This notion of conscientization is explicitly mentioned in half of the articles studied, yet it is implied in the majority, with several authors focusing their entire studies on examinations of its relationship to other theoretical approaches (Hickey & Austin 2007; Lee & Givens 2012; Reza-López et al. 2014).

But beyond this consensus, some authors problematize the notion of conscientization which, once again, relates to the modernism/postmodernism debate in Critical Pedagogy. From a postmodernist perspective, Greenhalgh-Spencer (2014) argues that by trying to increase students’ awareness it is assumed that their habitual view of reality is lacking in some way and that they must be guided by the teacher towards a ‘correct’ perception. Similarly, Bali (2014) and Bruce (2013) are concerned with the role bestowed upon the teacher of ultimately deciding what counts as socially just, particularly in multicultural contexts. Sicilia-Camacho and Fernández-Balboa (2009) criticize the high moral ground that Critical Pedagogy can take by positioning itself as the one true emancipatory educational approach. Together, these authors seem to be advising against the indoctrinating, and hence oppressive potential of a Critical Pedagogy that defends modernist moral grounds too rigidly. Instead, they propose a postmodern questioning of the notion of social justice that acknowledges subjectivities and multiple perceptions of the world, as well as a less directive teacher stance that is more comfortable with uncertainties (Bruce 2013; Greenhalgh-Spencer 2014; Sicilia-Camacho & Fernández-Balboa 2009). In this sense, these authors would seem to agree to a certain extent with Masschelein’s (2010: 45) ‘poor pedagogy’, which promotes attentiveness rather than consciousness-raising, a “displacement of the gaze that enables experience” without any clear end goals. Still, some writers in the selected literature (Bruce 2013; Chubbuck 2007; Sicilia-Camacho & Fernández-Balboa 2009) are against adhering to an excessively relativistic stance where “anything goes” (Bruce 2013: 819). As Chubbuck (2007: 248) points out, the extreme relativism that postmodernism can sometimes entail “leaves little room for declaring practices and policies unjust”, making it impossible to struggle against oppression. Although not frequently visible in the literature, this debate is significant because it reveals the complex balance that critical pedagogues must achieve between promoting an emancipatory aim while avoiding indoctrinating students into a specific ideology.

This important debate does not, however, take from the fact that fostering critical awareness in the classroom is perceived by the majority of authors as integral to their pedagogical project. But the process of conscientization involves not only recognizing oppressive relations in society but also evaluating possibilities for their transformation (Morley & Dunstan 2013). As discussed below, realizing Critical Pedagogy’s aim involves praxis, that is, “the steps people take to act on their emerging critical consciousness” (Tutak et al. 2011: 67).

#### 4.4 Praxis: From Teaching Practice to Social Action

A final concept that is present in three out of every five papers examined is the notion of praxis. However, there are some significant discrepancies around what precisely constitutes transformative action and who are the agents involved in its performance. Broadly, it is possible to distinguish two main groups in this respect within the selected articles (see Figure 2): those who understand praxis as action within the classroom, and those who believe it should transcend it.

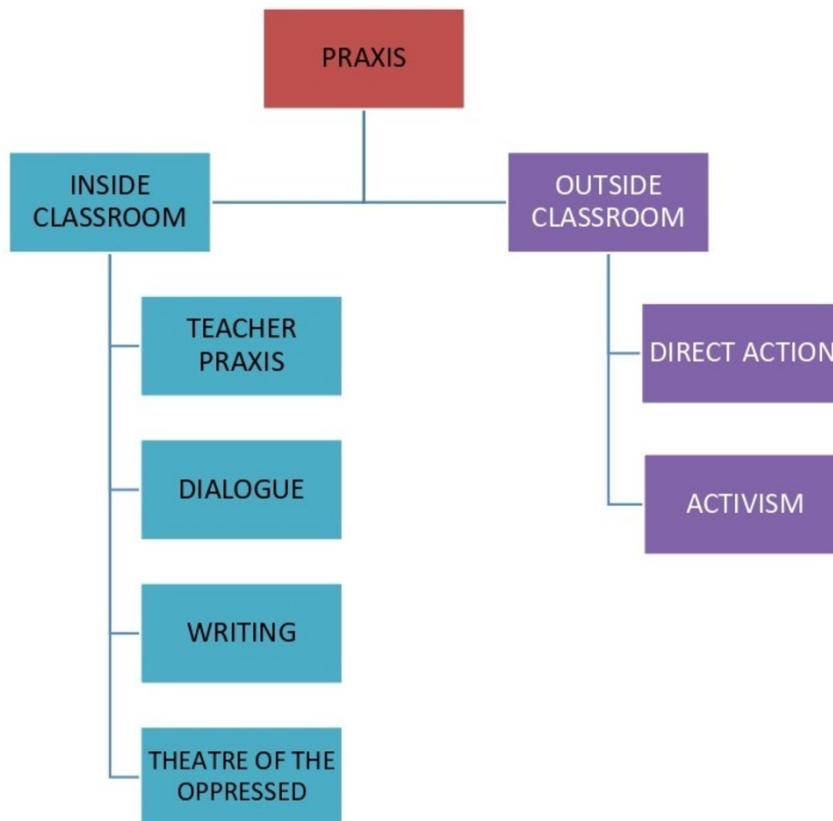


Figure 2: Different understandings of praxis' performative actions among the 100 articles surveyed

Some writers within the first group appear to use praxis to refer to the iterative process of reflection and action that teachers encounter when trying to apply Critical Pedagogy in the classroom (Motta 2013). For example, in her study, Page (2012) identifies praxis in the experiences of novice teachers facilitating a project informed by the critical pedagogical aims of challenging traditional student-teacher relations and incorporating a dialectical teaching style. For her, it seems that the critical pedagogical act is in itself a transformative action. Other writers in this first group understand dialogue involving both teachers and students as a form of praxis (Giacomelli 2012; Kaufmann 2010; Ott & Burghardt 2013; Zimmerman 2009). For Kaufmann (2010: 458), Freirean dialogue can be “a form of social praxis within the classroom”, while for others,

transformative action can be found in critical writing (Huang 2012) and the use of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (Harlap 2014).

Evidently, underlying this view is the conviction that students "will take the critical path or will at least adopt some measure of criticality into their daily lives even after they have left the educator" (Neumann 2011: 602), and that therefore, critical pedagogical efforts will not remain confined to the classroom. However, there are others (see Figure 2) who seem to believe that transformative action should have a more direct impact on the outer world (Bamber & Hankin 2011; Fobes & Kaufman 2008; King-White 2012; McInerney et al. 2011; Vakil 2014). In Su and Jagninski's (2013) research for instance, young people were constantly involved in neighborhood-improvement initiatives. Similarly, in a course on social justice taught by Cammarota (2011), students were encouraged to recognize a problem in their schools or communities and to design a solution proposal to be communicated to relevant agents. These examples illustrate an understanding of praxis as reflective actions that the students develop beyond the limits of the classroom.

Other writers within this second group have gone as far as to identify transformative action as activism (Chubbuck 2007; Chubbuck & Zembylas 2011). Noting how Critical Pedagogy has been criticized for being overly dependent on transformation within institutions, Rouhani (2012: 1730) draws on anarchist pedagogy in the belief that the latter can add "urgency by linking Critical Pedagogy to practical, spontaneous, and direct action in the present". Hence, Rouhani's participants engaged in projects such as transforming an abandoned house into a youth center and other activities that exceeded the borders of the classroom and which had explicit political motivations.

This significant divergence in the interpretation of praxis within the literature leads to a consideration of which approach, if any, might better serve Critical Pedagogy's transformative aims in contemporary society. In trying to address this question, it is useful to remember the necessary equilibrium between reflection and action that praxis entails (Freire 1970). Considering this, it is arguable that the interpretations of praxis presented by both groups above are at risk of an imbalance between reflection and action. Firstly, the view of praxis as action within the classroom could be perceived by some as having a valuable emphasis on developing critical reflection but as being less successful in promoting impactful emancipatory action beyond the educational encounter. For instance, Kaufmann (2010) reminds us that a traditional challenge towards Critical Pedagogy's use of dialogue is that it can fail to go from discourse to action. On the other hand, the opposite could be said of an approach to praxis as action that transcends the classroom, the risk being in this case, of overemphasizing action at the expense of critical reflection. Bamber and Hankin's (2011: 200) appraisal of the "voluntourism industry" is useful here as it exemplifies how service learning experiences without a critical focus can reinforce social inequities. Consequently, it seems that for educational experiences that promote actions beyond the classroom to remain true to Critical Pedagogy's emancipatory aims, it is fundamental that critical

reflection is present both in the planning of the activities and throughout their implementation.

It is noteworthy that in contrast to the generally accepted understanding of Critical Pedagogy's over-arching aim, its democratic classroom methods and focus on conscientization, there are considerable differences of opinion around the element of transformative action that praxis entails.

## **5 Concluding Comments: Critical Pedagogy and Applied Drama**

The review of these 100 articles has found several points of consensus about the central principles of Critical Pedagogy. Firstly, the articles are in agreement in their overall pursuit of social change and emancipation from oppression of all sorts. Secondly, the authors share a vision of education as a political endeavour that is based on the particular acts of social justice that teachers and students can perform. Finally, there is general consensus around the valorization of lived experience and dialogue, and the promotion of critical awareness of both the existence of regimes of oppression and of human ability to promote change.

In addition, this review has found that postmodern critiques, such as the ones identified by Grady (2003), have molded current versions of Critical Pedagogy. Principally, a postmodern influence is visible in the particularism of Critical Pedagogy's political project, which entails a broad understanding of oppression as well as a tendency towards localist transformation. At the same time, the review has found that the modern/postmodern debate is still present in the literature and continues to raise important issues, one of which relates to the value of small-scale, gradual approaches to social change advocated by most articles, especially those that reflect on practical experiences. The question to consider is whether this localist tendency represents an adaptation to the individualism typical of neoliberal society or a more realistic approach that is likely to exert concrete, albeit "modest" (Tinning 2002: 224) change. These are debates which practitioners in the field of Applied Drama need to consider. Another issue pertains to the postmodern critiques of the notions of dialogue and conscientization, which question the possibility of defusing power imbalances in the classroom and of being able to denounce what is socially unjust while remaining open to multiple and more fluid moral perspectives. Although these debates are peripheral in the literature, they are still noteworthy because they problematize the ability of Critical Pedagogy to reach its transformative aim. As such, future research should examine these questions closely.

The notion of praxis revealed a core point of disagreement in the literature surveyed. Beyond the challenges surrounding its definition, what the multiple versions of this concept problematize is whether or not critical reflection and dialogic action in the classroom are sufficient to bring about Critical Pedagogy's aim, or whether social action should be promoted in order to exert meaningful transformation. Perhaps, rather than choosing one approach to praxis over the

other, Critical Pedagogy should engage with both conceptions of transformative action: (i) action that might be limited to the classroom but might have profound significance for the lives of teachers and students (Neumann 2011), as is so often reported by teachers using Applied Drama in their classrooms, and (ii) action that might have a broader impact on the outer community, as was Boal's (1974) aim through his literacy work, while presenting some risk of leaving critical reflection to one side.

Despite the presence of discrepancies around the notion of praxis, this review discovered more points of convergence than of divergence, and from this it is possible to conclude that the current fragmentation of Critical Pedagogy into diverse branches has not rendered it devoid of meaning and significance as an educational theory, and one which holds considerable potential for the field of Applied Drama, and for other forms of performative education. This literature review's findings highlight some hypotheses in this respect. It can be inferred that the communitarian quality frequently associated with drama work (Edmiston 2012; Neelands 2009) might increase the likelihood of transcending power imbalances in the classroom and of promoting collective reflection about the meaning of social justice from multiple perspectives. It can also be inferred that the emphasis on students' creative ownership advocated by drama exponents such as Dorothy Heathcote (1984) and Cecily O'Neill (1995) might help counteract the repressive risks associated by some to the notion of conscientization. Additionally, as Frimberger (2017) suggests, the fictional worlds explored in drama might help lessen the taxing effects of self-reflection of more direct approaches to conscientization, offering a safer space for students to critically reflect. Moreover, it may be that drama's performative nature can open opportunities for embodied critical dialogue, thus responding to critiques posed by Hao (2011). It can also be suggested that the experiential quality commonly attached to drama work, and its understanding as a 'rehearsal' for real action (Aitken 2009; Boal 1974), can emphasize the impact of educational praxis beyond the classroom walls. In her study of working with teachers from primary to secondary school levels in Chile, Villanueva (2019) found that while Applied Drama did not result in transformation in traditional Freirean terms, it did 'open up' several spaces for Critical Pedagogy in the teachers' practices. It enhanced the dialogic quality of their lessons by encouraging them to collaborate with their students more equally, particularly through the teacher-in-role strategy. Adopting a performative pedagogy helped them to exert their authority in non-authoritarian ways and allowed them to enhance participation opportunities for students, by involving them physically, emotionally, and cognitively. Applying elements of drama in a performative pedagogy approach also helped some teachers to promote conscientization, that is, critical reflection and action in relation to social oppression and transformation (Freire, 1970). Villanueva (2019) found that there was potential in performative strategies, like still-images when used in teachers' classrooms, to behave as Freirean codifications (Freire, 1970; Pompeo Nogueira, 2002), eliciting conscientization in students. This potential was also found in role-playing. However, such

potential was restricted in these teachers' practices due to a disconnection between the drama lessons devised and their students' thematic universe, which decreased the relevancy of the experiences for students' lives. Significantly, it was found that Applied Drama helped teachers working in different subject areas to promote critical thinking, metacognition, and motivation, which are key precursors of conscientization. Additionally, aligned with process drama theory (Dunn & Stinson, 2011; Piazzoli, 2018), Villanueva (2019) found that teachers' opening of spaces for Critical Pedagogy through Applied Drama required a degree of artistry. This included planning, flexibility, risk-taking, belief, and questioning abilities, which take time to develop. Teachers' knowledge of Critical Pedagogy and teaching values were also important factors as they seemed to determine the aspects of Critical Pedagogy embraced by teachers when practicing performative pedagogy.

Finally, as this review appears to indicate, there is a symbiotic connection between the four principles explored here which need to be co-occurring for an educational encounter to become critically pedagogical. In this way, it could be argued that if democratic classroom methods are emphasized while critical consciousness is neglected we would be facing a constructivist approach to education but not necessarily a critical pedagogical, emancipatory-oriented one (Breunig 2011). Correspondingly, it could be said that a pursuit of critical consciousness that neglects students' diverse lived experiences and does not welcome their reconstruction of knowledge is closer to indoctrination than to emancipatory education. Again, the challenge for critical drama educators is to continuously reach a reciprocal relationship between reflection and action in all aspects of teaching and learning so as to develop a Critical Pedagogy that is true to its transformative goal.

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## **A Appendix**

### **A.1 Number of articles per journal included in the literature review**

Journal title	Number of articles
Active Learning in Higher Education	1
Adult Education Quarterly	1
Advances in Nursing Science	1
Antipode	2
Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education	1
British Journal of Educational Studies	1
Canadian Journal of Communication	1
Capitalism Nature Socialism	1
Christian Higher Education	1
Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education	1
Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études critiques en improvisation	1
Cultural Anthropology	1
Cultural Studies	1
Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies	3
Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education	1
Education & Training	1
Educational Philosophy and Theory	2
Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice	1
Educational Studies	3
Educational Theory	2
ELT Journal	1
Equity & Excellence in Education	1
European Journal of International Relations	1
European Physical Education Review	1
GeoJournal	1
Information, Communication & Society	1
International Journal of Art & Design Education	1
International Journal of Community Music	1
International Journal of Education through Art	1
International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology	1
International Journal of Pedagogies & Learning	1
International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education	1
International Review of Education	1
Journal of Arabic Literature	1
Journal of Business Ethics	2
Journal of Community Practice	1
Journal of Geography in Higher Education	1
Journal of Health Organization and Management	1
Journal of Latinos and Education	1
Journal of Management and Organization	1
Journal of Multidisciplinary Research	1
Journal title	Number of articles
Active Learning in Higher Education	1
Adult Education Quarterly	1
Advances in Nursing Science	1
Antipode	2
Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education	1
British Journal of Educational Studies	1
Canadian Journal of Communication	1
Capitalism Nature Socialism	1
Christian Higher Education	1
Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education	1
Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études critiques en improvisation	1
Cultural Anthropology	1
Cultural Studies	1
Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies	3
Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education	1
Education & Training	1
Educational Philosophy and Theory	2