

CR&DALL Seminar Series 2022-23: Can principles of educational gerontology be acquired fully through practice? Results of a senior workers study within the framework of critical educational gerontology.

Presenter: Dr Tiina Tambaum, Estonian Institute for Population Studies, Tallinn University

Date: Tuesday 31st January 2023, 1600-1700

Location: Room 234, St Andrew's Building, University of Glasgow, 11 Eldon St, Glasgow G3 6NH

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All are welcome and there is no fee for this event

Abstract

Healthy ageing (WHO, 2015) includes, among other things, learning and development in old age, as well as older people's social inclusion. In 2021, Tallinn University conducted a quantitative web-based survey to map the experiences, attitudes and knowledge of senior work practitioners in Estonia. Questions were posed on the first, second, third and fourth statements of first principles in educational gerontology (Glendenning & Battersby, 1990; Percy 1990; Formosa 2011; Hachem, 2020). In this seminar we will discuss three of these: Whether marginalized groups are integrated into activities of healthy ageing? What content prevails in senior work: whether everyday important topics and future skills are covered, or the goals are more cultural and entertaining? Do social activities offered by senior work practitioners support the dilution of age stereotypes and combat ageism?

As there is no such profession as a 'seniors' worker' in Estonia, the field of senior work can be explained through practice. Senior work includes activities for older people in the community that supports the upper level of an age-friendly environment (WHO, 2015). It differs from social work which represents a problem-based approach to older people. Senior work as a resource-based approach to older people has been implemented in day centres run by municipalities, libraries, culture houses, community centres, hobby clubs, care homes, and rarely also at schools. Senior work can be paid work or based on voluntary work.

The results of the quantitative survey conducted in Estonia among senior workers show who and supports healthy ageing in Estonia, and how. We saw that old-age stereotypes are not challenged in current senior work. One of the results, which is concurrently both expected and surprising, is that half of the respondents (n=425) do not consider professionalism to be important in carrying out activities for older people. At the same time, senior workers of older themselves, value and expect quality more than middle-aged and younger colleagues.

The results of a study raise the question, as to whether municipalities finance senior work that deepens age segregation and self-discriminative attitudes. The results of this study provide a basis for recommendations to establish quality criteria for senior work and to develop a network and in-service training system for senior workers in Estonia.

References

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Biography

Tiina Tambaum, Ph.D., MA, MBA, is a researcher at the Estonian Institute for Population Studies, Tallinn University and she teaches Educational Gerontology classes at the Institute of Educational Sciences. During the last ten years she has been engaged in SHARE project. She has published papers on topics related to intergenerational learning, older men's social inclusion, and ageism. She has explored and developed a face-to-face instruction methodology for intergenerational e-skill learning. Several intervention tools for supporting older people's intergenerational learning and cooperation have been developed under Tiina's leadership, including the methodology and a set of materials for phone befriending.

Tiina is a well-published spokesperson in Estonia on the topics of healthy ageing and educational gerontology. She is a co-founder of the Estonian NGO 65B whose aim is professional knowledge sharing for people who are facilitating older people development and activity. Her YouTube channel "Ageing for Beginners" (most of episodes are attributed with subtitles in English) aims to challenge age-specific stereotypes and share research-based knowledge about conscious ageing.