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## Is Doing Research for People or on People? A Book Review of Emancipatory and Participatory Research for Emerging Educational Researchers: Theory and Case Studies of Research in Disabled Communities

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### Abstract

A book review is a critical assessment of a book. It provides a summary of the content and assesses the book's value in terms of its relevance and quality. The purpose of a book review is to help readers decide whether or not they should read the book. In with this line of purpose, the book entitled, *Emancipatory and Participatory Research for Emerging Educational Researchers: Theory and Case Studies of Research in Disabled Communities*, written by Joe Barton and Simon Hayhoe and published by Routledge in the year 2022, I conducted my review organized by the following questions – What is in the book, what are the key contributions to the field, and what are its strengths and limitations? While reviewing, I found the book to be significant in response to my interests in emancipatory and participatory research for emerging educational researchers for empowerment and autonomy.

### Keywords

critical assessment, emancipatory and participatory, emerging educational researchers

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## **Is Doing Research for People or on People? A Book Review of *Emancipatory and Participatory Research for Emerging Educational Researchers: Theory and Case Studies of Research in Disabled Communities***

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### **What Is the Book About?**

A brief introduction to two closely related models of education research—participatory and emancipatory—is provided in *Emancipatory and Participatory Research for Emerging Educational Researchers* (Barton & Hayhoe, 2022). This book introduces these research models, examines them from the perspectives of critical practice, and offers case studies as illustrations. It highlights the various data collection methods used in educational research, such as interviews and visual forms, and the techniques employed by researchers to ensure that participants are both involved in and benefit from the research process. For the novice and less experienced researchers, *Emancipatory and Participatory Research for Emerging Educational Researchers* serves as a helpful "how-to" manual. Furthermore, it draws attention to the similarities in how the two models approach data collection as well as the inherent emancipatory nature of participatory research.

### **Who Are the Authors and Contributors? Joe Barton and Simon Hayhoe and Others**

Joe Barton received his MRes from the University of Bath in the UK. He has experience coaching and competing in disability sports and now offers career advice to young people with disabilities. At the University of Bath in the UK, Simon Hayhoe holds a readership in education. He also holds center associate positions at the Scottish Sensory Centre at the

University of Edinburgh in the UK and the Centre for the Philosophy of Natural and Social Science at the London School of Economics in the UK.

Helena Garcia Carrizosa is a research associate and doctoral candidate at the Open University. From October 2016 to January 2020, she was a partner in the ARCHES project of the European Commission. She attended the Courtauld Institute of Art and University College London and worked for the National Portrait Gallery prior to joining the Open University.

Jonathan Rix is a learning support professor at the Open University. His research focuses on policies, practices, and language that facilitate mainstream inclusion; capturing diverse perspectives; and developing models that facilitate our thinking about the structure and function of education. Professor Rix has a strong and wide-ranging interest in issues pertaining to learning disabilities and equality and participation.

Kieron Sheehy is the professor of Education (Innovation Pedagogies) at the Open University. His research interests lie within the expansive field of inclusive education, frequently focusing on how effective teaching strategies or x biography services can be designed to support diverse learner populations. Professor Sheehy supervises research in this area and is interested in addressing issues pertaining to those who may be stigmatized or excluded from educational systems.

Jane Seale is an education professor at the Open University. She has established a national and international reputation in the field through key positions such as President of the Association for Learning Technology (2006–2007) and Digital Inclusion Consultant to the ESRC-funded Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Programme in the United Kingdom (2009–2012). Professor Seale served as Codirector of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods from 2007 to 2010. Recently, she served on the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) education panel in the United Kingdom, which was responsible for evaluating the quality of research conducted by UK universities.

### **What Are the Book's Contents?**

The focus of the book is based on emancipatory and participatory research among disabled communities. Whilst emancipatory research is a research approach that aims to empower individuals or groups, particularly those who are marginalized or disadvantaged, by giving them a voice in the research process and using the research results to bring about social change. This approach values the knowledge and perspectives of the people being researched and seeks to challenge and transform power dynamics and social inequalities.

Participatory research, on the other hand, is a research approach that involves the active participation of the people being researched in all stages of the research process, from design to implementation and dissemination. This approach values collaboration and co-creation and seeks to empower participants by giving them a sense of ownership and agency in the research process.

Both emancipatory and participatory research approaches are focused on empowering individuals and communities and fostering social change. They are often used in educational research to help understand and address issues related to education and learning, particularly for marginalized or disadvantaged groups. Emerging educational researchers may find these approaches useful in their research as they seek to positively impact the field of education and contribute to social justice.

With this background information, in Chapter 1, this book highlights the idea of emancipatory participatory methodology, which combines the participatory paradigm with a liberatory approach to research in the field of education. This book provides a framework for creating educational initiatives grounded in a disability studies perspective. What I call "participatory practice" refers to the participatory research models presented in this book. The

emancipatory participatory methodology discussed in this book evolved from examining the historical practices of disability studies researchers. The emancipatory participatory methodology discussed herein was conceived as a result of an investigation into the canonical approaches to research in disability studies. In the context of emancipatory paradigm and participatory methodology from philosophy to paradigm from its early years, the sociological discipline of disability studies has been entwined with the concepts of emancipation and participation. Since the turn of the millennium, research projects that promote the voices and demands of people with disabilities have proliferated, thanks to the emergence of the emancipatory paradigm and the support of disability studies academics and contemporary disability organizations (Barnes, 2003) and by adopting Stone and Priestley's (1996; see introduction section) principles of emancipatory research as the values of its emancipatory model, including:

- The adoption of a social model of disability as the ontological and epistemological basis for research production
- The surrender of falsely premised claims to objectivity through overt political commitment to the struggles of disabled people for self-emancipation
- The willingness only to undertake research where it will be of some practical benefit to the self-empowerment of disabled people and/or the removal of disabling barriers
- The devolution of control over research production to ensure full accountability to disabled people and their organizations
- The ability to give voice to the personal while endeavoring to collectivize the commonality of disabling experiences and barriers and
- The willingness to adopt a plurality of data collection and analysis methods in response to the changing needs of disabled people. (p. 706)

The philosophy of emancipatory research as an emancipatory paradigm distinguishes it from other forms of emancipatory research. The authors attempted to critique the emancipatory paradigm and present a call for alternatives. Within disability studies, the political convictions underpinning the emancipatory paradigm remained worryingly unchallenged, and little evolution of thinking or practice was evident in the early years of the new millennium.

Chapter 2 details the origins of emancipatory participatory methodology. Emancipatory and participatory research models are analyzed, defined, and studied. The participatory model, a modern research method, involves stakeholders, technology users, and cultural institution visitors in data, ethics, and analysis. This model allows participants to guide data collection, critically evaluate methodologies, and provide inclusion feedback. Finally, this chapter discusses ethics in emancipatory and participatory studies and how they relate to codes and guidelines.

Chapter 3 describes a small-scale emancipatory investigation at the University of Bath involving staff with invisible disabilities. A small-scale project at the University of Bath, UK, examined attitudes toward staff with hidden disabilities. The project advised university management on equality and diversity to reduce discrimination. The lack of UK research on disabled academics and the need to study disability culture in higher education prompted it. This project used broad-ranging interviews to assess the experiences of a small group of disabled scholars who had been at the university for different lengths of time. After this analysis, recommendations were written up for the University of Bath and UK universities.

Chapter 4 describes a large-scale emancipatory participatory study in four cities in three countries. In 2016, ARCHES began as a European Union Horizon 2020 cultural access project to develop accessible technologies to promote disabled cultural institution inclusion. The

Wallace Collection and Victoria and Albert Museum in London formed its first participatory group in January 2017. From the start, project participants included anyone who regularly visited or communicated with these groups. A commitment to collective relationships was formed through visiting technologists and recording problem-solving activities. The group then created ways of working and a participation blueprint to help participants recognize that everyone had skills and experiences that could lead them in different directions. From early 2018 to summer 2019, national museum partners in Madrid and Vienna and a local museum in Oviedo, Spain, replicated this participation model.

Emancipatory participatory methodology concludes Chapter 5. This chapter summarizes previous findings and discusses emancipatory and participatory research overlaps.

### Observations by a Reviewer

As an ordinary reader, I reviewed the book entitled *Emancipatory and Participatory Research for Emerging Educational Researchers: Theory and Case Studies of Research in Disabled Communities* to share my thoughts on the book. I do have mixed views on this review. In one case, the book offers the critical lenses of emancipatory and participatory research methodology, wherein this methodology was designed to explore the experiences of people with disabilities based on the theoretical framework of ableism, but the book is silent for other forms of disabilities.

By delving into the book's chapters, I offered a summary of the book's main points and then offered an evaluation of the book in the later section of the observations. The book's strength is based on the post-positivist paradigm that relies heavily on qualitative data collection methods that are appropriate for several reasons. These reasons are they help the research study and capture the deep nuances of experience that is important to help participants "tell their story"; the number of potentials, let alone actual, participants in an emancipatory and participatory study would often be too low to generate significant and reliable findings for any given research project; as emancipatory and participatory studies are generally sited within the field of disability studies, these types of study politically and socially reject the assumption that participants with disabilities are homogenous and vulnerable; post-positivist practices in particular are seen as allied to more ethical forms of research practice and other forms of emancipatory research.

The weakness of the book is based on the notion of practice as a paradigm and methodology in the field of disability studies. However, the procedure claims to offer empowerment through a process based on the principles of the social model. These studies aim to benefit people with disabilities but do not offer opportunities to those beyond this field.

I would recommend this book to other readers to evaluate the main notion of emancipatory and participatory research for emerging educational researchers. Prospective readers consider that book reviews can be a helpful way to discover new books and get a sense of what other people think about a book.

On other case, while reflecting, I considered some questions while writing a book review: What are the authors trying to accomplish with the book? Is the book informative, persuasive, or fictional? Is the writing clear, engaging, and easy to follow? Is the author's style appropriate for the subject matter? Is the book well-researched and well-written? Does the author present a balanced view, or is the book biased? Whom is the book intended for? Is it suitable for the intended audience? Was the book enjoyable or tedious? Would you recommend the book to others, and if so, who? I am convinced a book review is not a personal attack on the authors, even if you didn't enjoy the book, but respect for their contribution to the field.

Every chapter begins with a clever purpose to help readers identify their needs. The book's language is straightforward. Each chapter's (Chapter 1 to Chapter 5) knowledge-work

view integration is exciting. All chapters assisted with ethics and participant engagement discussion will help me design my own emancipatory and participatory research, and the contrast of research design approaches gives a good perspective. This book will teach researchers how to use emancipatory and participatory research methodologies.

The authors compare critical lenses of emancipatory and participatory research methodology based on the post-positivist paradigm and examine research design commonalities. Learners learn the post-positivist paradigm as a key qualitative research method in this exclusive work. Beginners learning qualitative research methods that deal with emancipatory and participatory research methodology based on the post-positivist paradigm may find this book confusing. Thus, the authors should clarify this book's concepts and support the theories in applied research approaches. Unlike other quality research books, authors share the researchers' thoughts and feelings in the overall processes, from drafting to the final version. The book will spark lively, informative discussions as readers learn how emancipatory and participatory research methodology based on post-positivist paradigm work in their future research studies.

To sum up, the book is a significant addition to the canon of literature and emancipatory and participatory research methodology, providing fresh viewpoints on the human condition. On the whole, it's a fascinating and thought-provoking read that will stay with you long after you've put down the book. Readers are free to disagree with the author's positions, but there's no denying that the book opens up important avenues for debate and discussion in the field of humanities study. A sense of optimism and possibility is left with the reader as the final chapter concludes, serving as a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there is always room for change and growth.

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### Author Note

Niroj Dahal, Ph.D. Scholar in STEAM Education, works at Kathmandu University School of Education under the department of STEAM Education as a lecturer. His research interests include ICT in education, qualitative research, mathematics education, open, distance & e-learning, STEAM education, research and development, and ICT & e-Research. Mr. Dahal has been teaching graduate and undergraduate students for over a decade. He has also been continuously participating and presenting his research and practices in more than a dozen plus national and international conferences, workshops, and seminars. He has published articles, book reviews, and book chapters in various national and international journals and publication presses in the field of mathematics education and STEAM education. He may be contacted by e-mail at [niroj@kusoed.edu.np](mailto:niroj@kusoed.edu.np).

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