
Editorial

Collaborative Autoethnography: Emancipatory Research for Educational Researchers

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Abstract

Collaborative Autoethnography (CAE) arises from an anthropological-critical research tradition that aligns with cultural-historical and constructivist onto-epistemologies. In CAE, two or more researchers collaborate to write about their personal experiences related to a specific topic (Gal et al., 2013) and writing is based on collaborative, autobiographical, and ethnographic principles (Chang et al., 2013). Indeed, CAE is characterized by sharing stories, collective reflections, and hermeneutical meaning-making to identify un/common themes and insights. This editorial is based on our experiences and principles we abided with CAE as facilitators, researchers, and practitioners. In this editorial, we examine constructivist and critical perspectives on the CAE, including individual, collaborative, reflective, and analytic processes. We argued that sharing experiences, reflecting on them, and making meaning collaboratively are all essential components of the CAE processes. We acknowledge that the epistemic process can be emotionally draining for researchers to write about their personal experiences. Nevertheless, we believe that researchers must reflect on their own experiences to gain a deeper understanding of their own practices, thereby working towards improving their own actions via self-reflection. In addition, we believe that it is essential for researchers to collaborate with others to share their experiences and gain new perspectives. So, in this editorial, we would like to highlight CAE as a collaborative reflection as a timely alternative research approach (Roy & Uekusa, 2020). This editorial discusses the key ideas of collaborative participatory research, social constructionist principles, critical research, culture studies, emancipatory principle, and research for all, which are processes that improve collaborative practices for enhancing emancipatory research. The editorial concludes with a brief summary of the articles and book review that are covered in Volume 4 Issue 1.

Keywords: *Collaborative Autoethnography. Emancipatory Research. Constructivist. Experiences.*

Collaborative Participatory Research

Collaboration is fundamental to the CAE. With this, how are the researchers and teachers working together to assess the effectiveness (e.g., empowerment of learners, implementation of equitable strategies, development of inclusive pedagogy, etc.) of a new and/or existing educational program that was/were being implemented? CAE is aligned with the Collaborative Participatory Research (CPR) approach that seeks to involve the active participation of researchers and community members in all stages of the research process, from problem definition to data collection, analysis, and interpretation so as in the case of CAE. Within the notion of how all participants learn together in the research process, CAE is an alternative to the conventional and challenging approach to research. Washington (2004) added that “collaborative (or, participatory) research involves a working relationship between at least one academic institution's research unit and one community-based organization.” (p. 18). Likewise, it is an approach to research that involves active participation and collaboration among researchers and the individuals or communities being studied and affords opportunities for 'listening' to the voices of 'others' (Davies, 2015; Larkins & Satchwell, 2023). In response to the question, how do you engage in CAE? These strategies place a premium on forming collaborative relationships between researchers and the communities that stand to gain from their collaborative work (Jull et al., 2017) as a social engagement. CAE within CPR is founded on the idea that research participants' insights and experience are crucial to developing relevant and reliable studies. Other goals included in CAE are involving community members in the research process and helping them identify and solve issues of importance to them with the focus of “self-reflection”. Although knowledge production is important in CPR, it is enabling community members to act and solve their own problems. Therefore, researchers and community members alike benefit from a two-way dialogue throughout the course of a study in CAE.

As such, unlike traditional research, CPR practitioners in the community are not just used as research subjects; they are also involved in the research processes, but CAE is much more focused on being humble about the research traditions where there are no rules but only the principles for all the stakeholders under the phenomenon of the study and/or inquiry. This means that they are involved in all parts of the research, from defining the problem to collecting, analyzing, and making sense of the data whilst this level of participation can help make sure that the research is relevant to the needs of the community and that the results are useful to the people in the community. At this point, Vaughn and Jacquez (2020) commented that “the research approaches engage researchers in partnerships with knowledge users and may be used to challenge assumptions about for whom, how, and what is defined as knowledge.” (p. 18). CAE gives rise to “the likelihood that research questions and designs will be more responsive to community needs, that research executions will be more accurate in capturing community nuances, and that community members will be more likely to pay attention to, agree with, and implement the recommendations of the research.” (McArdle et al., 2020, p. 163). More so, by not restricting research to a narrow discipline, the principles of CAE encompass the fundamental values and guidelines that shape the research process and the dynamic between researchers and members of the community allowing themselves to feel, lost and learn for the research process. The principles of community-based participatory research include recognizing the community as a unit of identity, building on the community's strengths and resources, facilitating a collaborative, equitable partnership in all phases of research, fostering co-learning and capacity building among all partners, and integrating knowledge and

action for social change (Duke, 2020; McArdle et al., 2020). Next, CAE is a social version of self-culture-others (Dahal & Luitel, 2022), the key principles are to empower community members to actively participate in the research process and drive positive change for equity and inclusion, active involvement, co-learning, and capacity building, and action, reflection, and change. Thus, the social constructionist principle is an important aspect of the CAE within the CPR framework, which is widely recognized and applied in sociology and other social sciences. This perspective highlights the significant influence of society in the construction and development of our perceptions and interpretations of reality in relation to self and others.

Social Constructionist Principles

Being humble about tradition and having no rules but only principles are the key driver of social constructionist principles that delve further into the discourse of CAE. In general, social constructionist principles are associated with knowledge theories that highlight phenomena' socially mediated nature (O'Leary, 2007). The social constructionist principles framework of CAE offers individuals to be skeptical of knowledge, to understand the assumptions behind any meaning systems of self-culture-others (Dahal & Luitel, 2022), to improve their critical thinking skills, to be self-reflective, to be aware of the value and historical and cultural relativity, and to appreciate the strengths of collaborative work in learning and research (Lit & Shek, 2007).

Skepticism of knowledge of CAE encourages researchers to approach knowledge with skepticism, meaning that they should not simply accept it at face value but exercise the power of deep learning and/or phenomenon under the study. Instead, individuals should critically examine the underlying assumptions that shape their understanding of knowledge and contemplate the processes through which it is formed. Understanding assumptions allows individuals to comprehend the underlying assumptions that accompany any form of understanding. In CAE, being aware of how our own experiences, values, and beliefs influence our understanding of the world is crucial. Critical thinking and reflecting skills are of great importance. This entails the ability to think clearly and logically, as well as assess the accuracy and reliability of information. Self-reflection is a key aspect of the CAE framework, as it encourages individuals to engage in introspection and examine their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This entails individuals being mindful of their own thoughts, emotions, and prejudices, and recognizing how these elements shape their perception of the world. Being aware of the value and historical and cultural relativity enables individuals to understand and appreciate these aspects. This implies recognizing that the interpretation and significance of things are not static, but rather are shaped by the values, history, and culture of those who are perceiving them. Appreciating collaborative work in CAE nurtures individuals to recognize and value the strengths of working together in both learning and research in communal ways. This implies recognizing that collaboration can lead to the creation of innovative and sustainable ideas, the questioning of our own beliefs, and the development of more thorough and precise perspectives on the world as a form of longitudinal research on learners' autonomy.

Next, within the framework of CAE, Burr (2015) added that social constructionism gives people the chance to make things rather than find out about themselves and other people through their interactions with them. Theories of personality, then, try to explain the many different ways people are because of how they interact with other people. No doubt, CAE offers social constructionism and emphasizes how language, culture, and social interactions shape our understanding of the world where multiple researchers work together to reflect on their shared experiences. As an outcome, social constructionist principles give rise to critical

research. Critical research is a genre of social inquiry that involves questioning and challenging existing research traditions.

Critical Research

Critical research is a type of social investigation that interrogates and critiques existing knowledge and worldviews, which are at the core of culture (Given, 2008; Luitel et al., 2022) wherein CAE could function as a tool for further professional development within the culture. In critical research, the relationship between the researcher and the participants is rethought as one of collaboration, with the participants coming up with research questions that are important to them and the goal being social actions (Blyler, 1998). Feminist, radical educational, and participatory action research are all types of critical research that promote self-reflection. Likewise, within CAE, the critical perspective seeks to foster the empowerment and emancipation of the researcher and research participants. Adopting a critical perspective requires scholars in professional communication to reconsider their research questions and sites, their views on research ownership, and their funding sources. So, critical research is a form of qualitative research that centers on comprehending the significance of social phenomena through the viewpoints of the individuals implicated (CQ, 2021), frequently employed for the examination of power dynamics, inequality, and social justice. Further, various forms of critical research encompass the problematization of knowledge, the critique of ideology, and the promotion of emancipation by offering the development of research reflexivity. In CAE, the problematization of knowledge involves questioning the underlying assumptions that are commonly accepted about the world. Its aim is to explore the processes through which knowledge is generated and employed to serve power dynamics among the researcher and the research participants. So, CAE critically analysis the ideology that aims to identify and question the ideologies that influence and shape our comprehension of the world. Ideologies encompass a collection of beliefs and values that function to rationalize and legitimize the prevailing social structure. The objective of promoting emancipation in CAE is to facilitate individuals in challenging prevailing norms and fostering a society characterized by greater fairness and equality. Hence, critical research is part of cultural studies in CAE. Cultural studies are an interdisciplinary field that investigates the production, circulation, and consumption of cultural artifacts and practices.

Culture Studies

Cultural studies investigate the interconnections between cultural practices and various aspects of human existence, including but not limited to everyday life, historical contexts, power dynamics, emotional experiences, ideological frameworks, economic systems, political structures, knowledge production, technological advancements, and environmental considerations. Hence, cultural studies with CAE conceptualize the term "culture" as a dynamic and comprehensive construct, emphasizing inclusivity rather than exclusivity. CAE approaches involve the integration of personal experiences from multiple research participants and/or authors in order to investigate a specific cultural phenomenon. Culture plays a significant role in shaping our identities, experiences, and relationships, making it a potent instrument for comprehension (Dahal & Luitel, 2022). Within CAE, cultural studies are an academic

discipline that encompasses a comprehensive understanding of culture, extending beyond the realm of textual or artistic artifacts such as literature, music, or films. Instead, it examines culture as a multifaceted and dynamic framework that encompasses interconnected aspects of human existence (Pakaja, 2023). On the whole, CAE in cultural studies investigates the cultural practices that contribute to the emancipatory principle, which prioritizes freedom and liberation as fundamental principles in processes aimed at empowering individuals and questioning established norms and values.

Emancipatory Principle

Paulo Freire (1921–1997) was a prominent philosopher in the critical education tradition. He criticized didactic educational practices, arguing that they can be oppressive by objectifying and stifling students. In a didactic educational setting, the educator has all the power, while the student is simply a receptacle for knowledge. The educator controls the content of the education, and the way it is presented, reinforcing the belief that the student is inferior (Obiageli, 2016). When it comes to pedagogy, emancipatory pedagogy, also known as liberatory pedagogy, is an innovative educational approach that is theoretically supported for educational plans and policies by the works of Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren, and P. Leonard. There is valid evidence that endorses its practical potential (Freire, 1970; McLaren & Leonard, 1993). Within the foundation of Freire, McLaren, and Leonard, the emancipatory principle of CAE is a set of ideas and theories that aim to promote freedom, power, and social justice (Antonio, 1989) in the research. On the contrary, belief in intellectual inequality leads to educational engagements that prioritize equipping the educated with reproductive abilities, rather than fostering a creative will to engage in conscious, reflective, and responsive actions in the face of the physical and social challenges that humanity currently faces, as well as those that lie ahead in the future (Obiageli, 2016). Therefore, the emancipatory principle in CAE is important in light of our interests in emancipatory and participatory research for young educational researchers in order to promote empowerment and autonomy (Dahal, 2023).

Likewise, CAE advocates for an educational approach known as *currere*, which aims to foster intellectual equality and empower individuals to freely develop their independent and creative thinking abilities (Pinar, 1975). This approach in CAE aims to empower individuals with mindfulness and critical thinking skills, enabling them to effectively tackle both present and future challenges in the research process. The proposed principles of *currere* with the principle of emancipatory in CAE aim to promote the development of educated individuals who are independent and autonomous critical and creative thinkers. These individuals possess the ability to think independently and devise solutions to the challenges they encounter during the process. Additionally, they will be able to critically analyze their surroundings and take appropriate action when required in the research process. *Currere* in CAE is an educational approach with immense power to bring about transformative changes in research participants' and researchers' lives. *Currere* can contribute to creating a fair and equal world by promoting intellectual equality and empowering individuals to think critically and creatively. In the next section, we discuss the epistemology of research for all, aiming to develop, deliver, and drive better research.

Research for All

CAE is aligned with the empowerment model. This model is a process that empowers individuals and groups by addressing the social barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential. In response to the question—is doing research for people or on people? (Dahal, 2023), CAE focuses on collaborative research between researchers, research participants, and communities by welcoming contributors from both inside and outside of the phenomenon under the study. So, the engagements of all the parties of the research come at the center. Engaging with research extends beyond mere participation in the research process. The engaged participants—individuals and/or communities play an active role in research by initiating, advising, challenging, or collaborating with researchers—considering emancipation is at the centre aligns with constructivist and critical approaches. These types of research are consistently engaged and play a vital role in shaping the research process, including its design, methods, outcomes, dissemination, and future usage.

With the above ethos, in CAE, *Research for All* is devoted to promoting collaborative research efforts that involve individuals and communities working together towards shared aims and goals as a communal approach. Indeed, Osborn and Brewe (2022) added that research focuses on providing solutions to the current needs of the research as a collaborative project by bringing together researchers, participants, policymakers, practitioners, community-based organizations, and schools. The main objective of the collaborative project is to encourage active public engagement in order to facilitate rigorous academic research, foster the growth of engaged communities, and maximize the impact of research outcomes. Hence, the CAE process aims to foster engagement with various groups and their cultures. It encompasses a diverse range of topics from different academic disciplines, professional sectors, and types of engagement. Undoubtedly, the purpose of research for all is to enhance the quality of engaged research by initiating a discussion on the effectiveness of engaging with researchers, as well as the outcomes and processes of research with all the parties working collaboratively by sharing their stories, collective reflections, and the hermeneutical meaning making to identify un/common themes and insights.

Volume 4 Issue 1 Covers

With this editorial, Volume 4 Issue 1 includes five original articles and one book review. In the section of original articles, *Aryal* highlighted the conventional linear pedagogical model that promotes rote memorization and sees learners as knowledge recipients. He argued that the existing pedagogical approach ignores alternative inquiry-based and meaning-making methods, which degrades educational values. Likewise, *Nepal and Shrestha* explored their storytelling approaches as innovative pedagogical methods in teaching mathematics in Nepal for connecting mathematics to their life worlds and make learning more meaningful. Further, *Khanal* offered the ways of contextualized teaching as an innovative approach to English language teaching that has not yet been widely adopted in Nepal to improve learning outcomes by linking English language instruction to students' real-world experiences. Next, *Thapaliya* unfolds teachers' perspectives on reflective practice in the workplace and imagines the potential for changing their practice by embracing auto/ethnography as a research methodology. She discussed how reflective practice is necessary for comprehending and altering our deeply rooted dominant cultural practices. In the final original article, *Dahal* demonstrates his accomplishments by enhancing teachers' transversal skills. In his autoethnographic reflection,

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he charts the course for empowering teachers' transversal skills. Finally, *Baskota* offered a book review that can be considered a valuable resource within educational environments. The book offers a thorough examination of the current body of research on spatial ability and its potential implications for educational practices. The book encompasses a diverse array of subjects, spanning from the biological underpinnings of spatial aptitude to the ramifications of spatial aptitude on scholastic acquisition.

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