

# Partially participatory research

## A way to make researcher-led projects more equitable

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### Why fully participatory isn't always desirable

- Designs can be more complex, more ambitious (e.g., multi-site), leading to findings that may be generalisable and more widely useful.
- Opens up participation to a wider range of research designs (e.g., case study, ethnography, etc.).
- Participants don't always have the time, interest or skills to conduct research; researchers can take away the burden of this while also allowing participants to have a say in the design.

There must, as a minimum, be meaningful interaction at the early design stage, when "the most important distinctions centre on how and by whom is the research question formulated and by and for whom are research findings used". (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995, p. 1668)

### Example: Anderson, 2021; see Anderson, 2023a, for more details on participatory element

| Phase                                   | PhD study  | Participatory element  |
|---|--|--|
| Preparatory phase<br>↓                  | Conducted exploratory research with teachers in a relevant community (an Indian teacher association) to investigate their understandings of teacher quality.                             |  |
| 1. Theorising expertise<br>↓            | Developed theory and definition of teacher expertise. Appropriate criteria for recruiting participants for the main study were identified.   | Equitable approach to participant recruitment was adopted.                   |
| 2. Recruitment of participants<br>↓     | Participants were recruited through a call for expressions of interest via the Indian teacher association used in the preparatory phase, through self-evaluation of a range of criteria. |  |
| 3. Planning of study and outputs<br>↓   | One-day meeting was conducted with participants to plan the study (incl. study focus, research questions, approach, outputs, participant welfare).                                       | Agreed on outcomes of interest to all participants (incl. co-authored book). |
| 4. Data collection<br>↓                 | Data collection tools were tailored to agreed focus. Initial pilot study led to minor modifications. Visits to remaining participants went largely to plan.                              |  |
| 5. Data analysis and writing<br>↓       | Data analysis for individual cases was conducted, including transcription, coding and analysis of data to build individual case descriptions.  | Participants wrote chapters for co-authored book.                            |
| 6. Comparative analysis and review<br>↓ | Cross-case comparison was conducted. Participant validation was conducted carefully over two phases.   | Peer-review of each other's chapters.  |
| 7. Completion                           | Thesis completed.  | Book published.  |

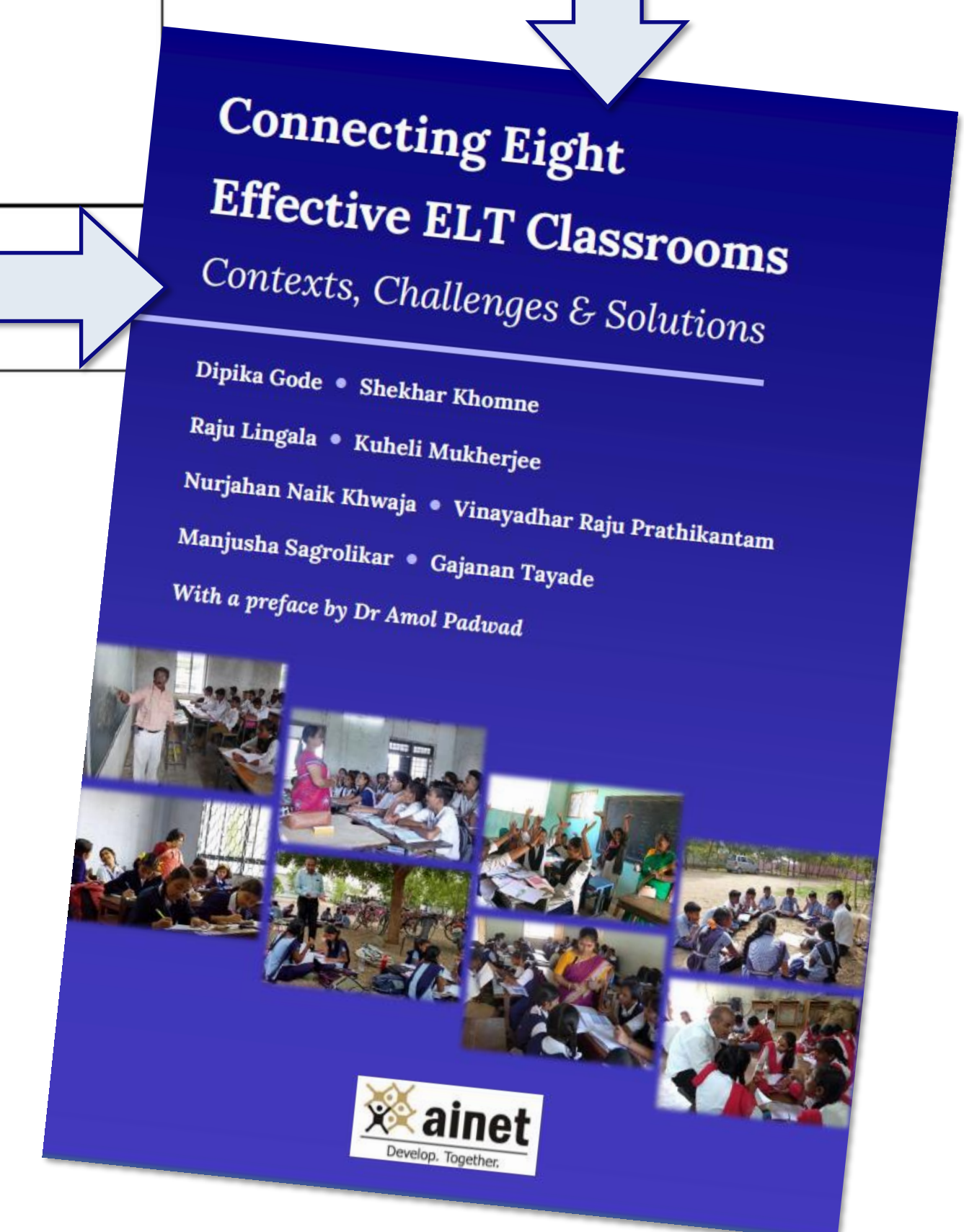
Figure from Anderson, 2023b, used with permission.

Potential participants would be invited to express interest in the project and then invited to interview to discuss it further before committing.

Participants selected from a range of viable case study designs and research questions. This enabled the case study to retain its original focus of interest (Southern teacher expertise).

They peer-reviewed each other's chapters to ensure the researcher didn't become the editor (see Gode et al., 2021).

After 2 stages of participant validation, participants chose NOT to be anonymised in the study or subsequent publication. They were proud of their participation and expected acknowledgement.



### Advantages

1. Greater equity
2. Increased relevance for practitioners
3. Sense of shared community and purpose
4. Participants can help with logistics

### Potential dangers

1. Tokenism or manipulation (Arnstein, 1969)
2. Conflicting goals within the group
3. What happens if participants don't like the findings?

### References

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