

Student Number: 1601574

Module: Faculty of Education and Communities: Dissertation (ECGE7002P)

Module Lead: Junnine Thomas-Walters

Tutor: Gwilym Siôn ap Gruffudd

MA Education, Faculty of Education and Communities, University of Wales

Trinity Saint David, Swansea.

**An Exploration into Developing Independent Learners within the Primary
School Setting.**

31st March 2023

Word count: 15, 924



Contents Page

Title page 1

Contents Page 2-3

Frontispiece and Declaration Form 4

Acknowledgements 5

Abstract 6

Chapter One: Introduction 7

1.1- Overview 7

1.2- Rationale 7

1.3- Aims and Objectives 9

1.4-Hypotheses 11

Chapter Two: Literature Review 12

2.1-Overview 12

2.2-Historical review 12

2.3- Independence in the new Welsh curriculum 14

2.4- What is independent learning? 15

2.5-Benefits, Opportunities and Limitations of Independent Learning 17

2.6- Conclusion 20

Chapter Three: Methodology 22

3.1-Overview 22

3.2- Adhering to guidelines 22

3.3- Selecting research participants 24

3.4-Selecting research methods 26

3.5- Designing the research methods 27

3.6- Questioning strategies 28

3.7- Conclusion 29

Chapter Four: Results and Findings 31

4.1-Overview 31

4.2- Context of the study 31

4.3- Pupil interviews 32

4.4- Teacher Interviews 35

4.5- Interpreting and analysing qualitative data 41

1601574

4.6-Conclusion **43**

Chapter Five: Conclusion 44

5.1- Overview **44**

5.2- Conclusion **44**

5.3-Informing future practice **46**

Reference List 48

Appendix 64

Appendix One- Ethics Form **64**

Appendix Two- Parental assent form **82**

Appendix Three- Teacher interview schedule **86**

Appendix Four- Pupil interview schedule **89**

1601574

Frontispiece

This frontispiece is to clarify that except where reference is made, the work and research described throughout this research project is the result of the research carried out by the student (1601574). Also, this research project nor any part of it has been presented, or is currently being submitted in candidature of any award other than for the degree of MA Education at University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Swansea. I declare that I understand that any work I use without reference constitutes as plagiarism, which would lead to the failure of this module.

Declaration Form



Name of the Programme of Study: MA Education

Name of Student (Capital Letters): BETHAN JANE PETTY

DECLARATION

I certify that the whole of this work is the result of my individual effort, and that all sources have been acknowledged.

Signed *B.J. Petty* (Student)

Date 31.03.2023

DECLARATION

I am satisfied that this work is the result of the Student's effort.

Signed (Lecturer)

Date 31.03.2023

Acknowledgements

Foremost, I wish to mention a special thank you to Gwilym Siôn ap Gruffudd, my dissertation research supervisor. Throughout the duration of the research project, Gwilym supported me and provided me with guidance and knowledge. Moreover, the staff at University of Wales Trinity Saint David have helped me over the course of my MA Education and prior to this course my BA Primary Education with QTS, therefore I would like to say a special thank you to everyone at the University. Also, I would like to say a special mention to my family and friends who have supported and encouraged me throughout my MA Education.

I would like to make reference and thanks to all the participants within the research project, and offer my appreciation to them. Without their insightful responses and valuable contributions, I believe that the data analysed within the results and findings chapter would not have been as well-informed. As a result of help and support from certain individuals, I believe this research project has been completed to a good standard.

Abstract

Throughout this research project, I investigated the theme of developing independent learners within the primary school setting. The overarching aim of this research project was to explore how children could be encouraged to become independent learners, specifically learners within the Key Stage Two phase. As a result of professional development and personal curiosity, I decided upon this theme which is seemingly fairly predominant within the education sector at present. Moreover, I embodied the role of an action researcher in order to undertake this research project. One of the aims of the project was to gain a range of opinions towards developing independent learners from both teaching staff and the learners themselves. The main research methods utilised throughout the research project were semi-structured interviews. The pupil interviews took the form of group interviews. I interviewed a cross-section of pupils to gain pupils' insight on the idea of independent learning and how teachers and schools can provide opportunities to encourage independent learning. As a result of utilising these research instruments, I gained qualitative data which I then interpreted and analysed. Within the data analysis I was able to identify recurring themes.

Throughout the research project I became more aware of the benefits, limitation and opportunities for independent learning. Undertaking wider reading which informed the literature review chapter enabled me to shape the research project and identify any gaps in the literature base. Also, the empirical evidence gathered and discussed within the results and findings chapter, highlighted to me that there was an absence of common understanding based around what independent learning is and how it is developed within the classroom. Moreover, I discovered there are some vital strategies and principals that somewhat underpin the concept of independent learning. The primary research I collected aided me to address the overarching title of the research project and comprehend how primary schools could develop independent learners.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1- Overview

Action research is undertaken to develop or improve professional practice (Newby, 2014). The main objective of the research project is to explore how learners within the primary school sector, specifically within the Key Stage Two phase, develop into independent learners. Furthermore, the research project shall explore the benefits and limitations of independent teaching and learning experiences, and what strategies or opportunities teachers deploy to encourage their learners to become more independent. This research project shall adopt a deductive approach. Hereby, a deductive approach involves hypotheses being deduced based upon existing literature and theory (Newby, 2014). Then a research strategy shall be designed to conclude and examine the hypotheses. The strategy will consist of utilising research methods to collect empirical primary research (Cohen et al., 2018). The primary research methods shall include semi-structured interviews.

It could be suggested that the want for independent learners is arguably universally agreed upon, however, what is not so agreed upon is what defines an independent learner and the skills that accompanies the independent learner (Bayley and Featherstone, 2011). This research project aims to explore what independent learning is in more depth and seek participants' perspectives upon what principles and skills encompass the concept. Some suggest independent learning can be described as both a process and a goal (Candy, 1991). Arguably, both of which are difficult to measure using research methods. Moreover, independence can be perceived as being able to do something for oneself (Williams, 2003). There are numerous ways that scholars and theorists have attempted to define independent learning over the years. For purpose of context, I wish to clarify that throughout this research project independent learning refers to managing one's learning process through active engagement and taking ownership over one's learning. Throughout the research project, I shall be undertaking the role of an action researcher (Newby, 2014). As both an action researcher and class teacher, I shall ensure that this power balance is mediated throughout the research project. Action research can be perceived as interpretive research (Cohen et al., 2018). Whereby interpretations are made based upon collected data.

1.2- Rationale

Independence should be encouraged and fostered throughout the teaching and learning process (Donaldson, 2015). Despite the suggestion that independent learning should be encouraged and

fostered, how this is done effectively is less understood. The predominant rationale of this research project is to gain a better understanding of the nature of independent learning while becoming more aware of how independent learning is encouraged within the primary school sector. With the new Welsh curriculum being fully enrolled within the primary school sector, I believed that this research project would be beneficial and significant to my own professional practice. Upon conclusion of this research project I aim to utilise data collected to reflect upon my professional practice. Sagor (2005) proposed a four-stage action research model, which begins with clarifying vision and targets, proposing a theory, then implementing action and collecting data, and commencing with data reflection. Throughout this research project, I shall be adopting Sagor's (2005) action research model.

Arguably, within a society that is constantly changing, it could be suggested that it is important that independent learners are developed from an early age (Rauber, 2007). Hereby, this suggestion could be arguably why independent learning is a predominant feature within school development plans at present. Some would suggest that many schools in Wales identify the development of children's independent learning in their school development plan (Meyer et al., 2008). Currently, developing independent learners is a target within our school development plan. Hence, this target is a factor of how and why this topic stimulated my professional curiosity. However, one issue is that it is uncertain what independent learning means precisely, how teachers might best encourage and foster it, and how it is implemented in practice (Meyer et al., 2008).

Some sources highlight that children cannot become effective independent learners by themselves and require some support. Moreover, learners need to be equipped with a positive mindset and learn how to learn effectively, modelled by teachers (Meyer et al., 2008; Paris and Paris, 2001). One aim of the research project is to comprehend whether both teachers and learners acknowledge their role within the independent learning process. Little (1991) suggested that learner and teacher autonomy could be perceived as interdependent, therefore teachers who aim to encourage independent learners need to reflect upon personal practices. Action research permits researchers to examine their professional practice (Cohen et al., 2018). Moreover, some suggest that independent learning can also be perceived as children being engaged and productively employed with a task without hindrance (Gleason, 1967). Hence, within this research project I aim to gather practitioners' and

pupils' opinions upon independent learning. Moreover, I aim to explore benefits, limitations and opportunities for independent learning throughout this research project.

One aim of educational research is to extend knowledge and understanding in various areas of educational activity (BERA, 2018). One aim of this research project shall be to identify what perspectives and skill underpin the idea of independent learning. I wish to establish whether there are recurring or potentially interlinked skills. One aim is to discover whether there is particular guidance, resources or strategies that teachers utilise or deploy to aid children in becoming independent learners. Gilchrist (2018) suggests that action research could be one of the most effective forms of continuous professional development. Moreover, action research could be regarded as a form of self-reflective enquiry carried out by professionals, particularly within the education sector, to improve practices as well as comprehend these practices better and how they are carried out (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1998).

1.3- Aims and Objectives

Sagor (2005) discussed how action research should begin with clarification of vision and targets. Throughout my literature review, I aim to discover secondary sources and research that may potentially help form the basis of the research project. I decided upon the overarching theme of the research project, then aided by wider reading, I developed the aims and objectives. Therefore, acquiring a deductive approach. To commence this research project, I examined existing literature in order establish the skills, nature and theory related to independent learning, in order to decide upon key themes to explore during my research. Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss the idea of latent themes which delve further, the researcher examines and analyses responses and then begins to identify or examine the fundamental ideas and conceptualisations. As a researcher, I shall examine the data collected and attempt to discover latent themes. It became apparent that there were emergent themes that were referred to within several journals and books. Some of the broader, emergent themes I decided upon focusing upon for the purpose of the research project shall include self-regulation, autonomy and self-motivation.

Arguably, possessing the ability to work and act independently is one of the most important skills that a child can develop (Gershon, 2014). One aim of the research is to discover perceptions upon

how schools can encourage their pupils to develop into independent learners, and if they are equipped to do so effectively. Williams (2003) suggests that all children should have opportunities to be independent. Hereby, one aim is to examine what opportunities are provided in school to allow children to be independent. Also, I aim to establish whether both pupils and teachers value the opportunities that independent learning provides and what are the potential benefits and limitations to independent learning. Moreover, Gershon (2014) suggests that to foster to independence everyone needs to adjust their mindsets. Hereby, I aim to explore what participants' perceptions are on independent learning, and whether a need for adjusting mindsets is necessary. Part of this research project shall explore attitudes towards independent learning and whether they are generally positive or negative. Also, I aim to explore how strategies and resources, accompanied by the structured learning environment can impact upon children's development of independent learning. Although it could be argued that practitioners appreciate the importance of independent learning, the development of it is practically challenging given the nature of learners and demands of the curriculum (Gill and Halim, 2007; Meyer et al., 2008). I aim to explore whether this is the consensus of the participants within this research project or whether their perceptions differ.

Educational researchers need to read around the subject to gain an understanding of theories, principals and ideas before adding to the body of knowledge (Newby, 2014). Although current literature to an extent highlights the nature and theory of independent learning, there is inconsistency with essential themes or key principals that surround independent learners. It is evident that there is some wider reading which attempts to address how teachers could support independent learning or the procedure of acquiring the necessary skills, and incorporate them into classroom practice. Moreover, some of the literature provides a better understanding of what independent learning is, how it could be sustained, and what limitations may need to be overcome in order to have the benefits (Meyer et al., 2008). From observing the wider literature I personally feel that there is more evidence in support of developing independent learners than against, and it could be suggested that there is less evidence of how to adequately provide opportunities to encourage pupils to become independent learners. Whereby, I aim to add to these gaps in the evidence base by investigating opportunities and strategies for developing independent learning within my research paradigm. Moreover, Meyer et al. (2008) highlight that wider literature seemingly focuses on observations of independent learning, rather than focusing on the views of

teachers and pupils. Hereby, I believe that the views of teachers and pupils shall be integral to the successful outcome of the research project.

1.4- Hypotheses

Sometimes hypotheses drives the research or sometimes the research derives from the hypotheses (Cohen et al., 2018). To an extent, within this research project the hypotheses shall drive the research, as I aim to develop a research strategy that will either prove or disprove my personal hypotheses. One personal hypothesis is that children are often provided with adequate or sometimes too much support in various ways within the classroom setting and should be given more opportunities that permit them to be more independent. It could be suggested that some children will find learning independently more difficult than others. Another personal hypothesis, as a result of wider reading, is that sometimes teachers and pupils do not share the same understanding of what independent learning entails.

One principle of action research is reflective critique where researchers become aware of perceptual biases (Winter, 1996). Sometimes hypotheses can encourage or lead to bias, moreover, researchers should not undertake research with predetermined bias (BERA, 2018). As a researcher, I shall ensure that my hypotheses do not interfere with the research I shall carry out. Moreover, I will ensure this by carefully phrasing the questions and ensuring I do not lead the participants into providing answers that will benefit my research project in the way I wish (Cohen et al., 2018). I aim to utilise empirical evidence, triangulated with wider literature in order to conclude my research project and thus concluding my hypotheses.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1- Overview-

There appears to be a broad range of words to describe independent learning (Meyer et al., 2008). Upon initial observation of the wider literature, it became apparent that a mixture of terminology was utilised to describe an independent learner, including self-directed learners, autonomous learners and self-regulated learners. Moreover, some referred to the concept of child-centred education which seemed to draw some parallels with the principles of independent learning. As explained within the introductory chapter, throughout this research project the term that shall be utilised is independent learners. Throughout this chapter, I shall explore how developing independent learners has been prioritised or valued historically in previous curriculums. Then I shall examine any similarities or differences within the new Welsh curriculum (Donaldson, 2015). This literature review mainly focuses upon United Kingdom curricula, more specifically Welsh curriculum, as opposed to global curriculums.

2.2- Historical review

The attitude towards independent learners within schools has been argued by many scholars, theorists and various government reports (William, 2003; Gleason, 1967). However, some may suggest that both the government and educational policy-making institutions have declared their commitment to developing independent learning (Whitebread, 2000). Moreover, it could be suggested that some recent educational policies, which include trialled initiatives, are conflicted in their direct impact upon the development of children's independent learning (Whitebread, 2000). Hence, I would suggest it is evident that wider reading highlights key policies and initiatives. However, there seemingly lacks a clear and consistent understanding of the impact or priority upon the development of independent learning as a result of the policies or initiatives.

Montessori (1966) discussed the idea of auto-education, whereby children become independent and do not rely on guidance in order to self-construct knowledge. Moreover, Bruner (1961) suggested that the purpose of education was not to impart knowledge, however, the purpose was to facilitate a child's thinking skills which can then be transferred to a broad range of situations. Thus highlighting how education has a predominant role in developing pupils' thought processes and transferable

skills, thereby aiding them to become more independent learners. Similarly, Meyer et al. (2008) identified that independent learning can be divided into metacognitive, cognitive, and affective skills. Hence, arguably highlighting the importance that thinking skills have in relation to independent learning. It could be suggested that independent learning has always been predominant within the education sector. The Rumbold Report (DES, 1990) highlighted how independence should be promoted and children encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. In more recent times, Alexander et al. (1992) argued against some of the principals of child-centred education, one of which is allowing learners to think for themselves. Whereby, a balance was needed between providing more independence to children capable of working alone, awhile avoiding neglecting children who required support (Alexander et al., 1992).

Developing and promoting independent learners requires a somewhat new role for teachers, one that opposes traditional transmission of knowledge, and focuses on process-oriented teaching, which thereby enables children to become actively involved in the teaching and learning process (Bolhuis and Voeten, 2001). Some may suggest this is an interactionist approach to education whereby learners are encouraged to take a leading role within their own learning. Nunan (1994) argued that an issue of redefining teacher roles could potentially create more of a barrier, than children's ability to take responsibility and accountability for organising, planning, and evaluating their own learning. One implication would be teachers mediating a power balance between their role as leader and permitting their learners to undertake a role which aids with facilitating the teaching and learning process. Hence, this is implication is potentially why independence has been widely discussed historically, arguably often with a slightly less favourable view than how it is regarded in the current curriculum. It could be suggested that prior curriculums were more constructivist whereby teachers transmit knowledge. However, upon examining historical literature it became apparent that independent learning has always had some role within previous curriculums. Although, it could be argued that within the current curriculum there is a more holistic view whereby pupils are encouraged to take ownership over their own learning.

To summarise, some may suggest that the contributing historical and societal forces are an inadequate base for examining independent learning as they appear to cause uncertainty or conviction about the intended definitions and suggested activities that are associated with the idea

of independent learning (Gleason, 1967). However, I believe previous historical curricula has provided valuable insights into perceptions of independent learning.

2.3- Independence in the new Welsh curriculum

Effective teaching and learning encourages children to possess increasing responsibility for their own learning (Donaldson, 2015). One suggestion is that children should be entrusted with a growing responsibility for their personal progress and direction of their learning. Henceforth, it could be argued that the four purposes of the new Welsh curriculum underpin the essence of independence and are intrinsically interlinked with the idea of developing independent learners (Donaldson, 2015). To expand, learners shall be ambitious and capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives, and healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society (Donaldson, 2015). Moreover, Estyn (2020) highlighted that when developing independence skills some schools prioritise the four purposes at the core of their activities.

Upon examining wider literature there was much discussion of the role that independent learning plays within developing life-long learners. One principle of the new Welsh curriculum is to excite and inspire children to want to learn and do so independently (Donaldson, 2015). It could be suggested that this principle is shared with most primary school educators. However, teachers' pedagogical approach will undoubtedly be diverse (Pointon and Kershner, 2001). Moreover, how the curriculum becomes exciting and inspiring to the learners it could be argued, could be dependent upon the school context and the practitioners within each classroom. Each school is now encouraged to design a curriculum that is fit for purpose for their school context. As a result, this may contribute to a less common understanding of what independent learning is. Some would suggest that until the different ideas are resolved, there can be little progress with independent learning (Hill, 1991). On a primary level, it could be argued how the curriculum is inspirational and exciting to learners could be as a result to practitioners' pedagogical approach and delivery of lessons. Moreover, it could be argued that a teacher can attempt to encourage and inspire children to want to learn independently, but this may only occur as a result of intrinsic motivation.

Williams (2003) highlighted some of the practical difficulties of developing independent learners, which include curriculum constraints and ensuring curriculum coverage. However, Bullock and

Muschamp (2006) suggest that the development of independent learners is practicable even in present conditions and is actually already a growing practice in some primary schools. Moreover, with a curriculum that is arguably designed with the concept of developing independent learners at the centre, it could be suggested that this is why it is necessary for schools to encourage the development of independent learners. As aforementioned, how independent learning is fostered, developed and encouraged could vary from school to school. An example of how one school in Wales has developed independent learners includes learners setting goals for themselves and their work, creating success criteria and assessing and evaluating their own progress (Estyn, 2020).

2.4-What is independent learning?

Independent learning could be defined as being able to learn by one's self (Williams, 2003). It could be argued that many may perceive this as being the shared and correct definition. However, this interpretation would lead to the view that independent learning means working alone. In contrast, some believe that working in isolation does not encourage nor develop independent learning (Meyer et al., 2008; Mars, 2015). Moreover, Williams (2003) concurs with this suggestion and claims that when a child is isolated in their work without adult stimulation, they fail to move beyond their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). Whereas through social interaction with peers, learners can sufficiently develop higher mental functions which include reasoning and deeper thinking. Some would suggest that working with more capable peers could aid children in becoming an independent learner. However, some may abuse the freedoms of working with peers and this could then contradict or hinder the process of becoming an independent learner. Hence, independent learners need to recognise that social and physical boundaries have to be observed (Williams, 2003).

It could be suggested that becoming an independent learner is a developmental process, with various interlinked changes occurring over periods of time (Mars, 2015). Hence, this concept supports the perception of Candy (1991) of how independence is both a goal and a process. Thus, teachers could provide support and help for children in their journey towards becoming independent learners (Mars, 2015). This quote highlights how becoming an independent learning may take time for children to develop. Moreover, Gershon (2014) suggested that being able to work independently is one of the most vital skills that a child can develop. Moreover, children need to be prepared for the real world whereby adults are not there to provide support and guidance, and failing to prepare

children for the wider world would be doing them a disservice (Gershon, 2014). Thus highlighting the important role that teachers possess in developing independent learners. Teachers are arguably in a position where they could either encourage independence or risk extinguishing it forever (Whitebread, 2000). This is somewhat a startling suggestion, but arguably merely highlighting how teachers have the capability of fostering independent learning or thus risk undervaluing its importance for pupils' development. Moreover, Benson & Voller (1997) suggest that children have an internal capacity to become independent, which is sometimes suppressed by institutional education. It is important that teachers do not suppress the notions of independent learning and rather encourage it.

Creating suitable contexts whereby learners can demonstrate the ability to apply learning independently is an important part of support and scaffolding (Donaldson, 2015). Thus highlighting how teachers should provide opportunities to be independent albeit with some support and guidance. Hattie (2012) highlighted the need for teachers to provide children with regular opportunities for independent practice and apply them in other contexts. Hereby, it could be argued that without children being provided with necessary independence skills and the ability to revisit those skills, they could fail to become independent learners. Lockhorst (2010) implies the role of the classroom teacher is to encourage and inspire the development of the competencies and skills necessary for children to work independently. It has been suggested that independent learning could be fostered by providing opportunities that encourage learner motivation, curiosity, self-belief and self-reliance, and provoking learners' personal interests (Meyer et al., 2008). Thus implying that these dispositions are important factors in developing independent learners. However, independent learning is not just providing children more freedom, alternatively it requires teachers thinking about learning outcomes and learning stages and providing children with ownership over their own learning (Gorman, 1998). Moreover, highlighting that children need to be made aware of how they can become an effective independent learner prior to achieving the benefits of independent learning.

Pintrich (2000) introduced a theoretical model of self-regulated learning, the model places emphasis upon the significance of learners planning, controlling, self-monitoring, and evaluating their own learning activities. Moreover, Zimmerman (2002) extended the model by emphasising the importance of the role of motivation within self-regulation, which influences the three phases of self-regulation which are forethought, performance and self-reflection. Within Pintrich's (2000)

model there are four phases, within each of these phases there are areas which are, cognitive, motivational, behavioural and contextual. These theoretical models aided me to design my research strategy, enabling me to further decide upon key themes or areas to research more succinctly. Moreover, these theoretical models influenced some of the questions I posed within my pupil interview schedule. In support of these theoretical models, there is considerable evidence for increased academic attainment and performance if children plan their own learning (Meyer et al., 2008). Some may perceive principals such a motivation and self-regulation as micro-processes that are inter-connected with independence.

Autonomy and motivation are arguably vital to the concept of independent learning as children who are motivated to learn, are more able to take ownership of and actively self-reflect upon their learning (Biggs and Tang, 2007; Candy, 1991; Percy and Salter, 1976; Holec, 1981). Motivated children have a good ability to work independently (Williams, 2003). It could be suggested that every child is different and how they respond or are able to engage with independent learning will vary. Some children may benefit from reassurance and therefore will find learning independently a difficult process (Williams, 2003).

It could be suggested that there are varying attempts to define exactly what independent learning is. From exploring wider literature it is evident that varying terms attempt to describe similar themes and processes, including children possessing an understanding of their learning, becoming motivated to take responsibility and ownership over their learning, and collaborating with teachers to design and structure their learning environment and teaching and learning processes (Meyer et al., 2008).

2.5- Benefits, Opportunities and Limitations of Independent Learning

Independent learning should have reciprocal benefits for both learners and teacher (Williams, 2003). However, one challenge of independent learning is that teachers' and learners' perceptions may not correlate with the conceptualisation of independent learning, which arguably has many different interpretations. Some suggest that there are many words associated with independent learning yet they fail to enlighten on what the concept entails (Gleason, 1967). In an attempt to mediate this challenge there needs to be a common understanding, which could potentially be

decided upon as a result of action research. Gershon (2014) highlights the need for a common understanding as this enables a shared definition.

Some may suggest that the suggestion that mindsets need to be adjusted and an adjustment to teachers' roles may create some limitations towards independent learning. However, this barrier could be overcome through supporting teachers and ensuring that there is a clear comprehension that independent learning does not undermine or diminish their role as teachers (Wood and Millichamp, 2000; MacBeath 1993). Another suggestion that may pose an issue to the successful implementation of independent learning is that some teachers do not perceive all pupils to be capable of becoming effective independent learners (Wood and Millichamp, 2000; Nunan, 1994). It could be argued that teachers need to be made more aware of what independent learning entails and how it impacts upon their role as teachers, and the learners within their class.

It could be suggested that due to factors such as intrinsic motivation and self-belief, some children may feel under-confident in demonstrating independent learning. Drew (2018) suggests that some children may endeavour but struggle to make decisions as they feel accountable for the decisions they make and therefore are nervous to make the wrong decision. On the other hand, some learners may find it easier to be independent due to internal factors including confidence and self-assurance, but this does not limit only these learners the potential to become independent learners. Arguably, learners need to be supported and made aware of the advantage in making mistakes and learning from them. The fear of failure could be described as an obstacle to developing independent learners (Gershon, 2014). Dweck (2006) explored the concept of growth mindset which is arguably encouraged in some classrooms at present. It could be suggested that motivation which coincides with growth mindset is a major factor in independent learning. One school who aimed to further develop pupils' independence skills effectively discussed linking activities to the concept of growth mindset (Estyn, 2018). Zimmerman's (2002) theoretical model also highlights the role that self-motivation plays within independent learning.

When a learner discovers their own learning resources, decides their own course of action, sets goals, then significant learning is maximised (Rogers, 1969). Some would suggest that when provided

with opportunities to create success criteria and set targets, pupils are equipped to become independent learners (Estyn, 2019). This could be beneficial for teachers as pupils have a significant role within the direction of their own learning, thus resulting in growing independence. Moreover, both Pintrich (2000) and Zimmerman (2002) highlight the importance of taking ownership of learning and target setting within their theoretical models. Percy et al. (1980) highlighted that learners' independence can develop from various factors including teachers, peers, and methods. However, independent learning can represent a challenge to conventional academic structures and can involve both children and teacher taking measured risks (Boud, 1988; Brook, Hunt and Hughes, 1994). This seemingly contradicts certain principals of education and can pose a degree of difficulty for both teachers and learners.

Gill and Halim (2007) highlighted the significance of independent learning as it helps to ensure children become successful individuals, who are capable of directing their own personal development. Moreover, children should be able to function in an appropriate way in the world, detached from their parents (Williams, 2003). Some may suggest that both parents and teachers strive for children to develop into independent adults who are capable of working and living independently (Mars, 2015). Hereby, highlighting the important role that education has to play in developing learners who are independent both within and outside the school context. This could be described as an autonomy-dependency axis (Williams, 2003). Some may suggest that due to varying class sizes, some children have to be more independent and less reliant on adult support. Moreover, some may suggest that due to class sizes teachers would benefit from independent learners as it may not be possible to teach all the children at once (Fisher, 1995).

Merry (1998) highlighted that children take in information and relate it to what they already know. Constructively building upon their prior knowledge and enabling them to become more independent. Williams (2003) highlighted that independent learners can draw upon prior knowledge in order to take their learning further. It is evident that there is a variety of learning and teaching approaches that could be utilised to help develop children's independent learning skills, or provide opportunities for learner autonomy (Graves, 1993; Magin et al., 1993). Moreover, teachers need to be made more aware of these approaches. Some may suggest that there is a somewhat absence of good practice guidance and examples of specific initiatives that aid developing independent learners. Therefore, if these limitations were addressed guidance could be generated for schools

based upon how to successfully promote and implement independent learning in their own context (Meyer et al., 2008). I would agree with this statement as upon wider reading it became apparent that although there was much discussion on what independent learning was, there lacked more evidence of good practice backed up by theory specifically.

Moreover, some may suggest it is indeed possible to teach in a manner that permits independence without impacting upon curriculum demands (Gershon, 2014). However, one of the major challenges is teachers' perception that the delivery of the curriculum requires some whole-class teaching strategies, which could restrict the chance for independent learning as it is practitioner directed rather than encouraging children's involvement in and responsibility for their own learning (Meyer et al., 2008). Moreover, Pollard (2000, cited in Bullock and Muschamp, 2006) suggested that whole class teaching may pose a risk and create a barrier for children from having a deeper involvement with their learning, thus posing a challenge to independent learning.

2.6- Chapter conclusion

Throughout the literature review, I gained a better understanding of my research field and was able to discover information that transformed the course of the research project. Often researchers need to undertake observation of the field to understand where to begin (Newby, 2014). This chapter allowed me to identify some core principals that contribute to independence, therefore shaping the research project in a succinct manner and providing more focus as to what to research using primary research methods. The historical review and the perception of independent learners in the current curriculum formed some of my aims and objectives, and highlighted to me how even though independence has often been explored by many theorists and priority placed upon developing skills associated with independent learning, there seems to be a conflicting idea of what independent learning actually entails. The literature review ensured that I identified key themes that I aim to explore and address within the research methods.

It could be suggested that the long-term aim is for children to be able to make correct choices and to take accountability for their actions even after leaving primary education (Mars, 2015). Moreover, it could be suggested that within prior curriculums there was some degree of focus placed upon

developing independent learners. However, within the present curriculum, combined with an ever-changing society there is more of a priority placed upon developing independent learners.

Moreover, some children may misunderstand the notion of independent learning and somewhat abuse the freedoms that are associated with it (Williams, 2003; Meyer et al., 2008). This could potentially pose a challenge for teachers. It could be suggested that it is important for independent learning to be effectively planned, structured and thus deployed. Hereby, it could be suggested that teachers need to be supported with guidance and adopting a whole-school approach may aid coherence and a shared, common understanding (Williamson, 1995).

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1-Overview

Qualitative research provides understanding of attitudes and intentions (Gonzales et al., 2008). The main purpose of this research project is to gain a better understanding of how to encourage children to become independent learners. The main methods utilised to gather empirical evidence were semi-structured interviews which provided qualitative data which shall be interpreted, analysed and explored within the results and findings chapter. Through utilising two research methods to gather primary data, I shall triangulate empirical evidence combined with wider reading to gain a better understanding of my research field. Mainly the questions within the research methods derived from aims and objectives, hypotheses and literature review. I opted to undertake research methods that would gather qualitative data as this would help me achieve my aims by providing descriptive answers that would provide me insights into my research area (Cohen et al., 2018).

Researchers should utilise methods that suit the research they are undertaking (BERA, 2018). Henceforth, throughout this chapter I shall explain how other research methods were examined and considered, then the most suitable research methods were decided upon. One limitation of qualitative data gathering is action researchers failing to assess whether the data and subjects are trustworthy (Onwegbuzie and Daniel, 2003). Hereby, I shall ensure that the data collected is trustworthy by ensuring participants answer as honestly as possible. Moreover, researchers should communicate the extent to which their data collection, and the conclusions from their findings are reliable, valid and generalisable (BERA, 2018). The validity and reliability of the answers from the research project shall be explored within this chapter. In order to adhere to ethical guidance, primary research was not gathered until the ethics form was approved (Appendix One).

3.2- Adhering to Guidelines

Researchers should ensure that all participants in the research comprehend the process in which they will be engaged, which includes an explanation on why their participation is necessary, and how their responses will be utilised (BERA, 2018). Within the research methods, I outlined the purpose of the research project and also explained the research procedure to the participants. Participants were not coerced or deceived and acknowledged that they possessed the right to withdraw from the research process at any time (BERA, 2018). Prior to commencing the data

collection, I ensured the participants verbally acknowledged the purpose of the research project and the fact that they had the right to withdraw from the process.

Children who are capable of forming their own opinions and views should be provided with the right to share these views freely, particularly in matters that affect them (UNICEF, 1989). Some may argue that children may assent to participating in research however they may not fully understand or appreciate the exact nature of their responses (Newby, 2014). Therefore, children should be facilitated to give assent. Researchers working with children need to ensure that children are made to feel at ease and understand the research process before the research begins (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2022). During the group interviews with the pupil participants, I explained the purpose of the research project on a more child-friendly level and divulged how their responses would be utilised, ensuring the procedures were all explained and did not commence the research until the children had assented to their participation verbally.

Some would suggest that due to teachers acting *loco parentis*, teachers could therefore decide whether a child is capable of participating within a research project. However, this is insufficient and should not permit myself, as both a class teacher and action researcher, to decide whether the children should participate in a research project which will benefit and contribute towards a personal academic qualification. Alas, this may also accuse me of a power imbalance, utilising my status of a teacher to decide whether children should partake in personal research. Prior to commencement, I ensured that I obtained parental and carer assent, each participant was provided with a letter explaining the research project which they took with them prior to the research being carried out (Appendix Two).

Researchers should carry out their research with honesty, trust and respect (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2022). Having worked with most of the participants within the research project, to an extent I have built a mutual relationship based on trust and respect. However, this could accuse me of bias or even conflict of interest due to familiarisation with the participants. This would hinder the validity and reliability of the data collected (Cohen et al., 2018). As an action researcher, one disadvantage is that I was not detached from the research project and therefore considered an insider (Newby, 2014; Tyson, 2017). As both a class teacher and researcher an issue that had to be overcome was the children perceiving me as an authoritative figure and to move beyond them providing responses they may perceive as being the expected answer (Lewis, 1992; Breakwell et al.,

2006; Thomas, 2017). However, in order to avoid bias, I ensured that I explained that the participants' answers did not have to be what they perceive as the right answers or certainly the answers that I would want to hear, and they would certainly not be used against them. Also, I reassured participants could be as honest as possible.

In order to act ethically, researchers should adhere to Data Protection Act (legislation.gov.uk, 2018) and adhere to anonymity procedures, participants were informed that the information gathered from the research within which they would participate, should remain anonymous. Prior to commencing with the interviews, participants were encouraged to verbally acknowledge that they comprehend that their names shall not be utilised and pseudonyms should be utilised instead enabling them to be unidentifiable from the data gathered. Also, participants were informed that the data gathered as a result would be stored securely and destroyed in ten years time.

3.3- Selecting research participants

Action research can be perceived as collaborative (Elliott, 1991). Therefore, collaboration through research methods was vital in the outcome of this research project. Sampling is a technique utilised to select a section of the population to participate within the research project (Hek & Moule, 2006; Newby, 2014). When selecting participants for the pupil interviews, I decided upon interviewing two members of each class within Key Stage Two. Convenience sampling involves choosing a sample of the population from those who the researcher has easy access to (Cohen et al., 2018). A major constraint that impacted upon distributing the research methods with the whole of the Key Stage Two phase were logistical problems. It would have been arguably impractical to interview the whole phase and very time consuming. The pupil group that participated in the research represented a cross-section of pupils, with an even gender split. Represented within the group were a mixture of children including looked after children, free school meal children, basic skills, and more able and talented children. Therefore, I believed that as a result of a cross-section of children being represented, different views would be collated and this would provide me with relevant and sufficient data to analyse. One responsibility of the school council is to feedback to their representative classes. Within the pupil interview group, some members of the school council were present. As a result of this research project and to enhance the principles of action research, the school council might be encouraged to feedback to their respective classes.

Time and accessibility are two factors that can prevent researches gaining information from the whole population (Cohen et al., 2018). One of the practical issues of interviews is that they can be time-consuming, therefore it is important to implement a time-frame and ensure that the interviews do not run on too long as this may exhaust participants. Consequently, participants may provide quicker answers in order to complete the interview and hurry the process along. In order to mediate this issue, I ensured that I phrased my questions succinctly in order to collect the data I required, while minimising an exhausting list of questions, by amalgamating them where possible. Due to the questions being open-ended, this potentially meant that participants despite having thinking time, could deviate from the question (Newby, 2014). As to not impact upon children or teachers' teaching and learning time, I undertook the research during convenient times to the participants, I clarified a timescale in order to make the research project realistic and manageable (Cohen et al., 2018). The teachers who were invited to participate in the research methods work within the Key Stage Two phase and included areas of learning and experience leads, and members of the senior leadership team. Within the teacher participants, there was also a mixture of experience including teachers who have taught previous curriculums, and recently qualified teachers.

Children within Key Stage Two would be in the concrete operational stage, where the goal is logical thought (Piaget, 1971). Hereby, it could be suggested that these children may have a greater understanding of independent learning. Moreover, in somewhat contradiction Piaget's stages are also based upon the idea of children assembling their own cognitive abilities and awareness through self-motivated actions, thereby, they cannot be directly made or taught to achieve or execute tasks beyond their level of cognitive ability (Meyer et al., 2008). Moreover, this suggestion could be incorrect, commensurate with pupils' stage not age. However, Malone and Smith (1996) suggest that intellectual abilities develop more as pupils get older. Within the concrete operational stage, the goal is that children can solve things logically within their minds (Piaget, 1971). During Key Stage Two, children will go through numerous changes within social, intellectual and emotional development. The children participating within the interviews are aged seven to eleven years old. Some advantages of group interview include time saving and collating a wide range of responses quickly (Watts and Ebbutt, 1987; Cohen et al., 2018). In order to have appropriate number within pupil groups, I believe it will be beneficial to separate into two group interviews, divided into lower Key Stage Two and upper Key Stage Two. This research study focuses upon Key Stage Two children, hence, why these children were elected to participate in the research in order to achieve the objectives of the research project.

3.4- Selecting research methods

Qualitative data can rely on interpretation (Cohen et al., 2018). Qualitative data provides researchers with responses from participants which are then open to interpretation. Epistemological assumptions give rise to methodological considerations and are based upon respondents' views (Cohen et al., 2018). After much consideration, I selected upon utilising individual teacher interviews and pupil group interviews which would provide qualitative data to analyse. Group interviewing is often preferred when interviewing children as it encourages interaction (Cohen et al., 2018). Moreover, a group interview can make children participants feel more at ease (Greig and Taylor, 1999). Ultimately, after examining other research methods, I decided that the results of interviews would provide a more in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions and motivations surrounding independent learning (McCombes, 2022). Hereby, the data gathered would aid me to achieve the aims and objectives of the research project. Moreover, interviews can be perceived as naturalistic enquiry which is interlinked with the concept of action research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

Initially at the beginning of this research project, I primarily decided upon two main research methods, whereby I would utilise questionnaires and interviews to gather data. Thus, I selected interviews as the principal research method as interviews provide an opportunity to clarify viewpoints whereas questionnaires do not (Grigg, 2015). However, as the research project developed it became apparent that interviews would provide opportunities to gather responses and viewpoints on independent learning. Questionnaires can provide helpful data however they do not provide critical information that interviews provide (Cohen et al., 2018). After some consideration, I concluded that the questionnaires would provide potentially similar data to the data collected in the interviews. Questionnaires can provide quicker answers which can be easier to analyse, however, it can be difficult to validate the truthfulness. Also, having examined some initiatives during wider reading, it became evident that questionnaires had been utilised in many studies regarding developing independent learners (Whitebread, 2000). Thus, I found it beneficial to utilise interviews instead as this research method had not been utilised as frequently as other research methods and therefore could generate some insightful data.

Another research method that was considered was observations. Observation can be an useful tool for determining if children are capable of being independent and monitoring their progress (Blenkin and Kelly, 1992). As an action researcher, I considered providing tasks for pupil groups and observing how absorbed they become with the activity. Observations can also link into Zimmerman (2002) and Pintrich's (2000) theoretical models whereby observers could have witnessed potential motivational attitudes and approaches to independent learning. In my opinion, I believed that observations may have benefited this research project, however it could be suggested that observations could lead to subjectivity and bias. Whereby researchers would strive to observe things that would aid their research. Subjective observation bias may result in the observer noting what they may perceive having occurred rather than the phenomena itself (Cohen et al., 2018).

Moreover, another considered research method was focus groups, particularly with the pupil participants. However, after some deliberation, it was decided that group interviews should be undertaken. This was as a result of deciding that focus groups can omit important information as sometimes one participant may dominate the conversation, while other participants may feel they cannot share their answers openly (Cohen et al., 2018; Smithson, 2000). Some could suggest that this same occurrence may happen during group interviews. However, in order to mediate this issue arising during the pupil group interviews, I ensured that I explained that with each question, each participant in turn will have their views listened to and respected. Independent learners are respected and valued for their views (Williams, 2003).

3.5- Designing the research methods

When designing the research methods, I became aware of unconscious bias. Being mindful of this, I worded the questions carefully as I did not want to let hypotheses deter the participants. Kvale (1996) suggested that interviews can be open to researchers interpretation, and therefore hinder the validity of interviews due to misunderstanding on either the researchers and participants behalf (Cohen et al., 2018). Therefore, I adhered to clarify any views with the participant at the commencement of the interview, in order to validate and clarify their answers prior to analysing them within the results and findings chapter. I ensured that the interviews were structured as this enabled a degree of control over the reliability of the data findings (Silverman, 1993).

The interviews carried out were semi-structured, mostly I attempted to not deviate from the main questions within the interview schedule, but on one occasion did ask an additional question to clarify a position based upon a particular response. When designing the research methods I ensured the research methods were participant friendly, while ensuring their purpose which was to elicit views from the participant based upon independent learning was not lost. Researchers should recognise the impact that their research has upon the workloads of their participants (BERA, 2018). In order to obtain the best answers to aid the research project, but being mindful that the research methods could impact upon teacher workload, I ensured that the interview questions were succinct but worded carefully as to address the aims and objectives of the research project.

Some perceive interviewing particularly complicated with children participants, including issues such as pitching the questions at the correct level and receiving responses that the children may feel the researcher wants to hear (Cohen et al., 2018; McCormick and James, 1988). On the other hand, interviews are a suitable method when working with children as they allow the researcher to clarify answers and provide specification on questions that may confuse participants, particularly younger participants. Personally, I believed that surveys or questionnaires could be interpreted differently to what is intended and this could provide incorrect data. Thus, I believed that interviews would aid me to collect data that would help achieve the aims and objectives of the research project. Prompts were utilised within the pupil interviews as it encouraged their deeper thinking and thinking that goes beyond the surface level.

3.6- Questioning strategies

The outcome of this research project is to an extent respondent-focused and therefore open-ended questions are preferable as closed-ended questions can lead to bias (Wright and Powell, 2006; Cohen et al., 2018). When designing the research methods I ensured that the questioning strategies aided me to achieve the aims and objectives of the research project. Moreover, most of the questions utilised were open-ended which encouraged participants to be more independent as the responses do not require a single or definite answer (Gershon, 2014). Open-ended question responses can highlight how people can subscribe to different views and the researcher's interest is in exposing these (Newby, 2014). Some would suggest that open-ended questions aid pupils to become more independent as it promotes the idea of independent thinking and promotes discussion (Gershon, 2014; Caldwell, 1997). However, some may suggest that during interviews it is important

for each participant to understand the question in the same manner, therefore open-ended questions should be carefully explained to ensure validity (Silverman, 1993).

Open questions possess no response ideals imposed upon participants by the researcher and can permit the participants to respond in their own words, and the answers are valuable as they provide a sense of the respondent's own views and opinions (Newby, 2014; Meyer et al., 2008). Moreover, phrasing questions can be difficult as to not confuse the participant nor word it in a way that would lead participants (Newby, 2014). There is the risk of researchers asking leading questions, which aim to elicit participant responses that will benefit their research (Cohen et al., 2018). Careful consideration was undertaken whereby I ensured the questions within the research methods did not lead the participants into providing answers that would benefit the outcome of this research project. The style of questions I utilised were predominantly conceptual questions, which are concerned with obtaining ideas, eliciting definitions and reasoning in the area being researched (Wragg and Brown, 2001). A majority of questions encouraged participants to consider the purpose of independent learning and any associated concepts that defines it.

Experience questions require participants to elicit and divulge experiences (Patton, 1980; Spradley, 1979). In order to achieve a better understanding of how the participants feel the new Welsh curriculum (Donaldson, 2015) aids itself to developing independent learners, I posed some questions that required participants to describe their experience of independent learning and how or if it is interlinked with the new Welsh curriculum. Some questions involved the participants discussing their experiences of independent learning, as I aimed to achieve a greater understanding of what they perceive to be independent learning and how often they feel they are being exposed to opportunities that develop independence.

Wording can be perceived as a significant factor particularly in regards to attitudinal questions (Oppenheim, 1992). As a researcher, I aim to explore pupil and teacher participants' attitudes towards independent learning. Their responses would support me in achieving my aim of exploring a common understanding of what independent learning is and whether the participants perceive it to be beneficial or not. Therefore, I undertook a conscious and methodical approach when wording the questions, ensuring I did not direct the participant. Participant voice can play an integral role within interviews (Cohen et al., 2018). As a researcher, I believed that it is necessary to allow the participants to add any further comments as this permits respondents to elicit their own views which

they feel may have been omitted within the interview. In relation, some teacher participants utilised the opportunity to further elaborate on some points they had discussed throughout the interview

3.7- Conclusion

Action research can be perceived as a significant approach for researchers and is participatory, therefore research methods need to be carefully considered (Cohen et al., 2018). I personally selected interviews as I believed they would aid me to achieve the aims and objectives as I sought to gain perspectives on developing independent learners within the primary school setting. Whereas, I felt that other research methods did not suit my research paradigm. Moreover, I opted to obtain qualitative data over quantitative as I believed that this would provide valuable answers to interpret and analyse. When undertaking the research methods I strived to be honest and open (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2022). Aware of bias and utilising responses to benefit my research I shall be mindful in my interpretations. I ensured that I carefully considered my questioning strategies in order to obtain sufficient data, albeit without leading participants into providing answers that they may perceive the researcher wanting.

Chapter Four: Results and Findings

4.1-Overview

Action research usually is a small scale project carried out by a sole researcher (Newby, 2014). Throughout this research project I aimed to achieved qualitative data that would enable me to answer the overarching question. The third stage of Sagor's (2005) action research model is implementing action and analysing data. Qualitative analysis involves researchers obtaining different views and opinions and interpreting these (Newby, 2014). Hence, why qualitative research could be perceived as an important paradigm for action researchers who aim to uncover varying opinions and perceptions. Moreover, qualitative research provides a voice to participants and can uncover corresponding attitudes and actions (Cohen et al., 2018). However, this could result in the suggestion that responses uncovered as a result of utilising qualitative research methods being perceived as subjective (Newby, 2014). Moreover, some would argue that becoming an independent learner is a developmental process (Mars, 2015). In order to answer this suggestion, this research project could have benefited from a longitudinal study. However, as this research project utilised a deductive approach, there was a short time frame and action research tends to be small-scale. Moreover, despite the short time frame, some insightful responses and answers discussed during the research project highlighted some interesting perspectives that informed the results and findings chapter.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis involves the researcher seeking connections between the gathered data and inferring meanings (Davies and Hughes, 2014). Within qualitative data, it may be suggested that this form of analysis could be insightful. Triangulation could be described as the utilisation of several methods of data collection (Cohen et al., 2018). Hereby, utilising both pupil and teacher interviews, I was able to draw upon any comparable parallels or key differences. As the research project took a small scale approach it was hoped that triangulation of data could be achieved, as this would offer a greater insight into the overarching question of the research project. One limitation of action research is lack of rigour (Newby, 2014). I aim to mediate this limitation by ensuring that I am thorough with the analysis.

4.2- Context of the study

Action research is taken in situ and is participatory (McKernan, 1991) .The research was carried out at a small Catholic school in the South East Wales area. The participants within the research project

included ten children and three teachers. Some would suggest that children's perspectives can sometimes differ to adults' but can be as equally valid (Newby, 2014). Face to face interviews enabled me to explain the research process in person and clarify any questions the participant may possess. The interviews were not recorded and the responses were transcribed onto paper utilising note taking, the answers were then clarified with the participant, and later transcribed onto a word document on a password protected computer (BERA, 2018). Transcription allowed myself as the researcher to detail important aspects and comments as a verbatim record of the interview (Cohen et al., 2018). Henceforth, as I was transcribing, I was unable to see participants' body language and emotions (Chen et al., 2018). However, the instant writing down of the responses allowed myself to clarify viewpoints and ensure that I interpreted the data as the participant had intended. Both the teacher interviews (Appendix Three) and pupil group interviews (Appendix Four) followed an interview schedule.

4.3- Pupil interviews

Children are regarded as a primary source of knowledge concerning their own views, opinions and experiences (Alderson, cited Christensen and James 2004; Docherty and Sandelowski, 1999). Hence, pupil participants could provide some interesting perceptions on their views of developing into independent learners. It is important to discuss with children what it means to be independent in the classroom (Gershon, 2014). The initial question to commence the interview was 'what does being an independent learner mean to you?'. Responses from this question would instantly highlight if there was a shared understanding of what independent learning is. Also, I aimed to establish if the children perceived any particular common themes within independent learning. A majority of the pupils perceived independent learning as working alone. However, one pupil responded that being an independent learner might mean having a little bit of help from either your friends or the teacher. This was insightful as it brought an awareness of how children need to be made aware that independent learning does not necessarily mean working alone. One recommendation is that it is important that practitioners discuss with their class what it means to be an independent learner within the classroom (Gershon, 2014).

It could be suggested that whereby practitioners may have a better idea about what independent learning entails, pupils are likely to be less certain (Gershon, 2014). As a result of this finding, I believe it would be important for practitioners to share a clear understanding of what independent learning is with their pupils. Some could argue that some pupil participants viewed independence as

an isolationist approach whereby the learner works alone. Whereas, only a few participants viewed independence as interactionist (Williams, 2003). Moreover, one pupil participant suggested that effective independent learning comes from working with a friend. Another pupil participant suggested that independent learning can mean asking a friend or a teacher for help. Moreover, some would argue that independence meaning children working alone is a misconception (Patel, 2022). The differing responses from pupil participants supported my hypothesis of there being a lack of shared definition of what independent learning is.

Additionally, one pupil suggested that being independent is being able to do things automatically and being able to just get on with tasks. Black et al. (2006) also suggest that trust is a significant factor, ensuring consistency, as trust could encourage pupils to become active participants in their own learning process, thus sharing responsibility for their own learning with their teachers. During the group interviews, some pupils mentioned that their teachers provide them with responsibility to decide what strategies or resources to utilise during lessons and this aided them to become independent learners. Independent learners take an active approach to the learning task and possess insight into which strategies and learning styles to deploy (Wenden, 1998). Gershon (2014) suggest that minimising teacher talk can encourage pupils to think for themselves. On the contrary, one pupil suggested that sometimes the teacher explains the task to the class before giving them a chance to work out what the answer may be or letting them think of what the task entails.

Process questions involve participants attempting to explain a process (Cohen et al., 2018). When encouraged to provide an example of when they have been an independent learner, pupils shared a range of answers including 'problem solving', 'working a task out without much help from the teacher' and 'thinking of an answer and checking if it is right, maybe by using a book to help'. Some would suggest that the responses could be regarded as transferable skills. Hence, some may suggest that transferable skills are intrinsically interlinked with the notion of independent learning (Wisker, 2012). One pupil suggested that they are usually independent in topic work. Webb and Vulliamy (1996) perceive topic work as being a method that involves enquiry. Thereby, this pupil potentially perceives topic work as being an opportunity for developing enquiry skills, which somewhat links into independence.

Pintrich (2000) discussed behavioural affects within the theoretical model. Secondly, I posed the question to children whether they perceived independent learning as a good or bad thing. Nearly all

pupils responded that it was a good thing. Although, one participant suggested that sometimes independent learning can be a little bit scary, when they are having to work things out by themselves. One pupil added that being an independent learner can set you up for adult life and things like college, work or university. Moreover, one pupil suggested that it is important to develop the skills now as it may be harder to develop later in adult life. As a researcher, this highlighted that pupils recognise the significance of being an independent learner.

With regards to the new Welsh curriculum (Donaldson, 2015) the pupil participants agreed that the four purposes are interlinked with the idea of independent learning. The school council have delivered in-school assemblies based upon the four purposes of the new Welsh curriculum (Donaldson, 2015) and there pupils have a fair awareness. Hence, when posed with the question 'which one of the four purposes links to independent learning the most?', most pupils stated 'healthy and confident individuals' and 'ambitious and capable learners'. One pupil suggested it was healthy and confident individuals that linked with independent learning the most because you need to be confident when you are trying your hardest to be independent. Moreover, one suggested it links more with enterprising and creative contributors as when you are being independent you need to be creative and think of your own answers. Duffy (1998) highlighted that children's intrinsic motivation is more likely to flourish in classrooms where the environment inspires them and where creativity and imagination are valued. Furthermore, another pupil participants suggested that it is ambitious and capable contributors that links mostly to independent learning, as 'you have to believe that you are capable and won't just have to ask a teacher for help and will give tasks a go before asking for help'.

One pupil suggests that sometimes they are encouraged to reflect upon their work and correct any mistakes to make it right. However, Gershon (2014) highlights that in order to encourage children to take a more independent approach, practitioners should help their learners recognise failure as an opportunity to learn. One pupil responded and explained that their class teacher 'tells us to put our thumbs up or down to show how well we understand our work'. Another suggested at the end of lessons, sometimes the teacher tells them to write what they have learnt in the lesson. Potentially, highlighting the role that assessment for learning contributes towards independent learning and thus empowering children to recognise their personal progress. Moreover, Meyer et al. (2008) highlighted that formative assessment may increase pupils' feelings of motivation and achievement. Hence, within the theoretical model, Zimmerman (2002) highlighted that self-reflection is an

important factor of independent learning. One pupil mentioned that their teacher gives them some time to reflect upon their work but sometimes the time is not long enough. Gershon (2014) also discusses the important role that self-reflection has upon developing independent learners. Hence, some pupil participants' responses highlighted that pupils perceive reflecting upon their progress as an important part of becoming an independent learner.

Some may suggest that when children become participants in their own learning, it results in increased independence (Bucknall, 2012). One child suggested that when they can make choices in their learning and help to decide upon things such as creating success criteria and using self-assessment, they are being independent. Galton (1989) explored the significance of providing children with an increased role in decision-making in the classroom, thus providing children with-responsibility for, and ownership over their own learning. When asked to describe anything that helps them to be an independent learner, the pupil participants described various things which included differing resources in the classroom. One pupil responded that there are posters that are around the class that help them remember how to be an independent learner. One case study highlighted how posters can encourage and remind children how to overcome problems (Williams, 2003).

Some pupil participants suggested that their class teachers encourage them to think for themselves. Moreover, one pupil suggested that sometimes their class teacher encourages them to help develop the success criteria, but not all the time. This highlighted that sometimes pupils are encouraged to possess a shared role in the direction of their own learning. However, a pedagogical approach that encourages contributions from pupils recognises the importance of independent learning (Williams, 2003). A few pupil participants also discussed the idea of pupil voice in their responses, they suggested that sometimes they are invited to share pupil voice based upon their topic work, thus directing their learning.

4.4- Teacher interviews

The teacher interviews undoubtedly highlighted some similarities with the pupil interviews, such as identifying and recognising the benefits of developing independent learners. Some of the responses correlated, however some responses also differed. Hence, two of the teacher participants suggested that working independently means pupils are able to work on their own. However, one teacher

articulated that independent learning means both working alone and with a peer, and that the 'necessary conditions for fostering independence included having good motivation, self-belief and not just relying upon the teacher as the provider of knowledge'.

In order to achieve the aim of discovering benefits and limitations of independent learning, I posed the question 'What do you think are the benefits of having independent learners within your class?'. This question pro-offered participants the opportunity to solicit their personal responses and opinions on independent learning. Upon analysis of the data it was evident that the teachers who participated in the research, believed that the benefits outweighed the limitations. Many teacher participants discussed increased self-worth and responsibility. However, some identified issues such as presentation not being of a good standard or potentially pupils abusing the freedoms of independent learning. In contrast to this Williams (2003) highlighted a case study whereby both pupils and teachers had high expectations for effort and presentation, which then made independent learning successful.

Risemberg and Zimmerman (1992) discovered that more-able and talented pupils spontaneously utilise independent learning strategies more often than other pupils. One teacher participant highlighted that more-able pupils may find it easier to be independent learners. Whereas in contrast, another teacher participant suggested that their more-able pupils lacked the resilience necessary for independence learning, and that this could have potentially stemmed from home learning whereby pupils are used to adult support. Some theorists highlight the attitudes and influences that prevail from the home environment (Williams, 2003). Moreover, during the interviews, one teacher added that their pupils could lack resilience due to lack of motivation or self-esteem, and thus need to seek reassurance from the teachers. Sammons et al. (1995) suggested that an approach whereby pupils have an active role and shared responsibility over their learning, results in their self-esteem growing. Similarly, Gershon (2014) suggested that fear of failure could hinder pupils ability to become independent learners. This somewhat fear of failure could contribute towards pupils unwillingness or reluctance to become effective independent learners. However, some would suggest it is important that teachers appreciate the range of attitudes and experiences that children possess and create an environment in which they can increase in independence (Williams, 2003).

Williams (2003) suggested that benefits of independence include children being more socially adept and working to higher standards. Within the pupil interviews, a majority of pupils perceived being

an independent learner as a good thing, and recognised some benefits which provided some generalisable results. In contrast to this, one teacher suggested that sometimes independence does not always result in a positive outcome as sometimes independence needs encouraging and a shift in mindsets. Moreover, one teacher suggested that some pupils are not capable of being truly independent and there was a lack of resilience and motivation within some pupils that created a barrier to independent learning. Motivation and resilience could be regarded as two important factors of independent learning (Estyn, 2018; Williams, 2003).

Independence requires adequate resources and minimising teacher talk (Gershon, 2014). Hence, independent learning is aided with effective questioning and dialogue. Moreover, some may argue that teacher instruction is necessary in order for children to become an independent learner (Christodoulou, 2014). Additionally, one teacher suggested that they encourage independence by providing the children with their tasks equipped with some resources, along with bare minimum instructions, they then proceed to ask the children what they think the task may involve. Moreover, another teacher participant highlighted the idea of self-differentiation and how this aids independent learning. One teacher highlighted that they believe that open-ended questions and 'playing dumb' by omitting some knowledge can aid independent learning. Gershon (2014) suggests that this tactic encourages pupils to think actively and draw upon their existing knowledge and figure out answers independently. However, some may suggest this could lead to pupils gaining incorrect understanding and this tactic should be exercised with caution.

One teacher suggested that one limitation of independent learning is that children could create misconceptions or errors, it is important that the teacher monitors the learning of all pupils to ensure that there are no misconceptions or errors in the process or strategies children are utilising. Furthermore, the participant added that if this is the case whereby pupils are creating frequent errors or glaring misconceptions, the teacher will need to intervene again to address these issues. Moreover, when working independently there is the risk of learners not understanding or misinterpreting the task (Williams, 2003). One teacher participant suggested that some practitioners may be tempted to intervene too early, rather than giving pupils autonomy to solve answers independently. Pascal and Bertram (1997) suggests that one of the most difficult things is standing back and not completing an activity for pupils. However, it could be advised that practitioners observe before they intervene and thereby encourage learners to be less reliant on adult support.

Developing independent learners through the teaching and learning process is predominant within the new Welsh curriculum (Donaldson, 2015). I aimed to gain a better understanding of whether teacher participants agree or disagree with this suggestion, and believe the new Welsh curriculum aids to developing independent learners. All teacher participants agreed that they believe the new curriculum does place focus upon developing independent learners. However, interestingly, one teacher suggested that as an Upper Key Stage Two teacher, possibly the children haven't had the full effects of the new curriculum and therefore are not as independent, whereas foundation phase children are more exposed to the new curriculum and will be better prepared. In somewhat support of this suggestion, Estyn (2018) highlighted that in some good practice, pupils who develop independent learning skills well in the foundation phase can then apply them purposefully as they progress through the school. However, in somewhat contrast to this suggestion, one case study acknowledged that children's independence grows as they move through school (Williams, 2003). Thus potentially highlighting how the curriculum only has a small part to play in developing independent learners. Thereby, several other factors such as motivation, maturity and confidence can contribute equally to developing into independent learners.

Moreover, one teacher participant stated the benefit of independent learning is that teachers can create a somewhat more engaging curriculum, particularly with the new freedoms of the Curriculum for Wales (Donaldson 2015). Further, the teacher participant suggested that the new curriculum encourages the development of children who can think for themselves and have the capacity to set things such as goals and success criteria. In order to achieve another objective of this research project, I aimed to identify any strategies or resources practitioners utilise in order to encourage the development of independent learners. One participant highlighted how with the new Welsh curriculum (Donaldson, 2015) schools can devise their own curriculum, relevant for their learners and school context, which then provides a great opportunity to further develop pupils' independence, as teachers can choose topics and areas that interest pupils and engage them in such a way, they are motivated to work independently. One teacher suggested that the resources they utilise are usually adapted to meet the needs of their learners in their class. Fisher (1996) highlighted how children should be encouraged to be curious, creative and independent through resources and well-selected materials. One teacher participant highlighted that children could utilise strategies that encourage independent learning such as using a book, using their brain or using a buddy.

Moreover, one teacher participant highlighted that one benefit of independent learning is that it allows practitioners to take a step back. In support of this suggestion, Williams (2003) suggested that well equipped independent learners can alleviate pressures on teachers. One teacher highlighted how having independent learners may allow teachers to take more of a 'back seat'. Whitebread (2000) claims that the aim of a teacher is to make themselves somewhat redundant, enabling pupils to lead learning. On the contrary, another teacher highlighted that one limitation of independent learning is that it can lead to confusion in their own knowledge, sometimes learners' cognitive abilities are not developed fully enough to take in the information or processes, and this in turn can lead to misconceptions that become embedded in their long term memory. However, in contrast to this, one teacher suggested that independent learning enables learning to be a lot more meaningful and therefore it remains in the children's longer term memory.

Zimmerman (2002) and Pintrich (2000) both highlighted the importance of self-reflection within independent learning. One teacher suggested that self-assessment allows children to become more independent learners and possess ownership over their own learning. Moreover, it is believed that self-assessment contributes to independent learning as it helps children enhance the clarity of the learning outcomes, monitor the learning process, and facilitate reflection (Brown and Harris, 2013; Nicol and McFarlane-Dick, 2006; Williams, 2003). Self-assessment is regarded as a strategy whereby children are encouraged to reflect on their learning independently (Gershon, 2014). Moreover, one teacher suggested that independent learning permits them to create a somewhat more engaging curriculum as the learners can think for themselves and have the capacity to set things like goals and success criteria. However, one teacher participant highlighted that sometimes pupils need to be encouraged to self-reflect, and do not do so automatically, and sometimes with curriculum constraints there is little time to reflect.

Some would suggest that there are appropriate strategies that practitioners can utilise to encourage their children to be independent learners. When questioned upon which strategies they utilise, teacher participants' answers included good resources, self-differentiation and building mutual trust. Merry (1998) suggested that trust can encourage self-esteem and motivation to develop. Permitting children to become independent learners requires acknowledgment of children's potential for responsibility and awareness of varying levels of independence shall be realised when children are trusted and allowed to be independent learners (Williams, 2003). Trusting children to be independent does require some resolve and equipping them with effective strategies and resources.

Some would suggest that some learners seem to instinctively understand how to work independently, but most need to be taught strategies to become effective independent learners (Harvey and Chickie-Wolfe, 2007). One teacher participant suggested that some learners would find it easier to be independent than others, and they would all be independent but potentially in their own way. When asked to elaborate upon this, the participant suggested that just as children may have strengths and weaknesses in particular areas, this may also be the case within independent learning. Another teacher participant suggested that they were unsure whether all pupils were fully capable of becoming independent learners. However, all pupils should be provided with opportunities to become independent (Williams, 2003).

One pedagogical technique that has been developed to aid independent learning is co-operative group work (Forman and Cazden, 1985), whereby children are involved collaborative tasks that encourage them to explain their own understandings, evaluate their performance and be reflective upon their progress. Moreover, independent learning can be perceived as children being engaged in a curriculum activity without immediate interpersonal mediation (Gleason, 1967). In contrast to pupil participants' responses, most teachers participants mentioned the significant role of peer interaction within independent learning. One teacher highlighted how they utilise a strategy that encourages pupils to learn from their peers, in order to encourage independent learning. The strategy is called think, pair and share and was developed by Lyman (1981). Gershon (2014) suggested that encouraging learners to seek advice from peers can contribute to developing independent learners. Moreover, Estyn (2018) also highlight how good practice in some schools involved pupils talking and working collaboratively. In contrast to pupil interviews, most teaching participants recognised the somewhat advantage that peer interactions has within the independent learning process.

In both interviews, participants were required to think of maximum three words or sentences that they associate with the concept of independent learning. Moreover, word-association questions can reveal information about the development of particular areas, and this questioning strategy is utilised in order to perceive if the participants' perceptions and experience correspond with the concept of independent learning through comprehending associated words (Fitzpatrick, 2007; Bahar

and Hansell, 2000). Upon completion of this question I was able to identify any words that participants' associated with independent learning, which I would utilise to create a shared understanding.

One teacher highlighted how well-organised classrooms aid pupils to become independent learners (Williams, 2003). One aim of this research project was to gain a better understanding of resources and strategies that can aid developing independent learners. One teacher suggested that pupils knowing their classroom well and being aware of where appropriate resources are located can aid them to become more independent. By children knowing that materials will be constant, it aids them to assume more responsibility without the constant hindrance of adults (Nutbrown, 1999). Another discussed the importance of working walls and utilising independent challenge cards. Thus highlighting two particular strategies that practitioners could deploy in order to aid the development of independent learners. Gershon (2014) highlighted various displays that would aid independent learning including literacy-based, fact-based, rule-based, work-based and criteria-based. Thus highlighting that the classroom climate is an essential factor for developing independent learning.

The relationship and collaboration between teachers and children is an essential component of independent learning, however, it is not solely sufficient (Meyer et al., 2008). Moreover, it could be suggested that the importance of the supportive and engaging classroom environment indicates that independent learning rarely happens in isolation. Hence, many theorists have discussed the importance of an enabling and supportive environment (Bates and Wilson, 2002; Alexander et al., 1992 Williams, 2003; Gorman, 1998). However, this concept has often been discussed without the theorists identifying or recognising what the vital parts of an enabling and supportive environment entail (Malone and Smith, 1996; Sharp et al., 2002; Paris and Paris, 2001).

4.5- Interpreting and analysing qualitative data

By interpreting data, researchers can witness any emerging patterns (Newby, 2014). Overall, the teachers' interviewed held a positive attitude towards independent learning and described the benefits with enthusiasm. However, many teachers had varying opinions on what actually defines an independent learner. This trend proved my personal hypothesis, whereby I suggested a lack of common definition. Thus, highlighting the need for a shared definition in order to create a common understanding. On the contrary, more participants could have been interviewed to better disprove or

prove this hypothesis. Upon analysis of the data, I sought to discover patterns within the responses. One theme that emerged within the teacher interviews was a recurrence of the mention of positive role-modelling, motivation and encouraging self-regulation.

All teacher participants mentioned the importance of being a positive role-model for their pupils and modelling a positive mindset and explaining their own thinking process. This correlated with the pedagogical principle of reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984). This principle requires teachers to model the teaching of a particular activity, and then children are then encouraged to teach the task to their peers. Moreover, another form of instructional practice is self-explanations (Siegler, 2002) which encourages children to provide explanations, and then requires children to give interpretations of their own and an adult's reasoning. One teacher suggested they encourage their pupils to explain a particular task back to them in order to check for understanding or misconceptions. Within the interviews, one pupil explained that sometimes their teacher instructs them what to do with the work or just provides them with a particular task and sometimes they have to work it out for themselves. One hypothesis that was only partly proved correct was that pupils are provided with too much support and not given enough opportunity to develop into independent learners. A majority of pupils did not mention too much adult support in the class.

Independent learners are active and curious (DfES, 2006). One pupil participant highlighted that that independence can develop a sense of curiosity and wanting to know more. Some of the pupils suggested that being independent learners means being curious and taking some risks. Some may suggest that learners need to be made to feel safe to be creative and take risks in their learning (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010). One teacher participant suggested that one benefit of independent learning is that children can further develop a sense of curiosity as they are not restricted by the class teacher's interests and can take their learning in their own direction and at their own pace. Estyn (2019) highlighted that when pupils see value in engaging tasks they become active and curious. Thus highlighting the need for a curriculum that enthuses and engages pupils in order to develop their ability to become independent learners. Moreover, Williams (2003) suggested that when a school supports a child's curiosity they also gain confidence in other areas interlinked within independent learning which include self-regulation and motivation.

Gershon (2014) highlighted the benefit of sharing a common understanding with your class of what independent learning is and the characteristics that coincide with it. One of the aims of the

interviews, particularly with the pupils, was to produce a working document containing key words which surround the concept of independent learning. I believed this document could contribute to a shared and common understanding. The document included subheadings such as 'motivation' and 'self-belief', the data I compiled as a result of the pupil interviews was incorporated into the working document. Although the document was school specific, it was a mutually beneficial activity, that benefited both this research project and my professional practice. One shared idea that both pupil and teacher participants agreed upon was that independent learning prepares pupils for the wider world and encourages them to be independent in other aspects of their life, including being more independent at home.

4.6- Conclusion

Sagor (2005) highlights the importance of reflecting upon gathered data and planning informed actions. It is my personal belief that the utilised research methods permitted myself to obtain a better understanding of how independent learners can be developed within the primary school setting. Utilising two main research methods suited this research project and permitted me to collect a triangulation of evidence, that was compared with primary research. It could be argued that even though common themes emerged during the data collection, there were varying opinions on what independent learning entails. Hence, this highlighted that schools could benefit from sharing a common understanding, which could be achieved through sharing good practice more regularly. Hereby providing schools with a better understanding of how to effectively equip children to develop into independent learners.

Within the interviews, I believe utilising prompts aided the pupils to assimilate their understanding on independence. In relation to the hypotheses decided upon prior to commencing the research project, some participants' responses supported the hypothesis that children should be provided with more opportunities to become independent learners. However the responses to 'what is an independent learner?' varied from each participant, thus highlighting an inconsistency in understanding and therefore a shared understanding is needed. However, some may suggest that the concept of independent learning could be perceived as subjective and therefore it is likely opinions may vary.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1-Overview

When provided with the correct strategies and resources, children have the ability to develop into independent learners. However, what may be suitable for one learner, may not be suitable for another (Elliott and Norris, 2012). Hence, particular strategies may benefit some learners to become independent learners, however other learners may not benefit from the same strategy. Hereby, it could be suggested that it is important to discuss with children what they feel may help them to become independent learners. Independent learning benefits children as it provides them with foundations to become life-long learners (Koper and Tattersall, 2004). In a society where lifelong learners are desired, fostering independent learners within the primary school setting needs to be prioritised. Motivation which appears to be a driving force for independence, allows a stimulation of lifelong learning (Williams, 2003). Some would argue that teachers need to acknowledge and provide an environment whereby children are motivated to work with an increased independence and therefore are capable of becoming independent (Williams, 2003). Most children are capable of being independent particularly when the expectations are realistic and have been made clear (Cook and Finlayson, 1999). If both pupils and teachers share a common understanding based upon consistent expectations it could benefit the process of developing independent learners.

It could be suggested that children's independence is perceived as an indication of academic quality. Which arguably is paradoxical in nature or contradictory to some points raised within the primary research methods. Personally, I perceive developing independent learning as a positive paradigm which aims to empower children to take an increased responsibility for their own learning and therefore further develop their academic and personal potential. As a result of this research project, I personally believe that all pupils possess the ability to become independent learners. Despite numerous different terms being utilised to describe independent learning, the concept in its various forms and descriptions has at its core, various factors that are important to the learner (Meyer et al., 2008). As a result of this research project, I believe these factors include self-motivation, self-belief and ownership over learning.

5.2- Conclusion

Meyer et al. (2008) suggest that effective independent learning is reliant upon various internal and external factors, which include resilience, self-motivation and self-belief. Independent learning is something that needs to be fostered and encouraged. Moreover, there are numerous benefits of

independent learning which include positive attitudes to learning and self-regulation. As both a researcher, I acknowledge that these skills and attributes take time to develop. Arguably, independent learning is a long-term process and can involve significant adjustments to practice and more so, participants' mindsets. However, as an action researcher, I recognise that when provided with a suitable learning environment, supportive class-based resources and equipped with appropriate strategies, children can develop into effective independent learners. Moreover, practitioners should have the capacity and capability to provide children with opportunities to develop these independence skills, in order to become independent learners. This research project has helped change my perception on what I would regard independent learning as. Arguably, I believe that independent learning occurs when a learner has a significant role in choosing their own directions in learning and takes ownership over their work.

Independent learning emerges effectively when children have an important role in selecting their own direction, discovering and utilising their own strategies and resources, concluding their own actions and self-reflecting upon the outcomes and processes. Gleason (1967) highlights how resources and learning materials need to be designed in order to maximise efficiency of independent learning. It could be suggested that pupils need to be given the correct freedoms in which to act as independent learners. However, one significant challenge is evolving a balance between too much freedom and too much structure. Even though through both wider reading and gathering empirical evidence, I can conclude that there appears to be numerous benefits of independent learning, but there are undoubtedly some limitations too. The limitations include curriculum pressures which may limit teachers' ability to devote the time necessary for developing independent learners. Moyles (1992) discussed the dilemma that teachers face between controlling curriculum delivery awhile balancing an approach that acknowledges children's right to be independent. Moreover, careful consideration and reflection may enable teachers to provide opportunities for independent learning harmoniously alongside or within the curriculum delivery.

In order to address the overarching question of this research project, I have undertaken research on the development of independent learners within the primary school setting. Schön (1991) discussed the idea of reflecting on action. As a researcher, through reflecting upon collected data, I have gained a better understanding of how to develop independent learners within the classroom setting. Furthermore, having interviewed both pupils and teaching staff, I have reflected upon my professional practice and have gained a better insight of how to develop and encourage independent

learners within the classroom. One issue that arose was the varying views of whether independent learning is isolationist or interactionist. Therefore, this would need to be addressed in order to achieve a more coherent understanding of what independent learning is.

Action research is sometimes perceived as practitioner based research and can be a powerful tool for improvement on a local level (McNiff, 2002; Taber, 2013). The aim of this research project was to mostly benefit a localised group, discovering opinions and perceptions on independent learning within a specific primary school setting. However, the findings can be generalisable and applicable for other primary schools, as the findings discussed throughout the research project highlight some resources and strategies that aid developing independent learning, and explore the implications and benefits of independent learning. Moreover, at a more national level it could be beneficial to have a shared understanding on principals that interlink with developing independent learning as this would ensure consistency across schools (Whitebread, 2000).

5.3- Informing Future Practice

Action research can be regarded as a form of self-reflection (McNiff, 2002). The research has been most beneficial for my professional practice. It has shaped my perception on developing independent learners and provided me with some insightful opinions. Educational research is often undertaken to improve professional practice (Newby, 2014). The findings, as a result of this research project, may not only benefit my professional practice but if shared with colleagues could contribute to an improvement of developing independent learners across the school in order to mediate the target on our school development plan. With children living in an ever-changing society, independent learning is arguably vital. One could argue that with a desire for education to prepare children for adult life, the need for children to work independently is essential. Helping children to become independent lifelong learners is important and this research project has been most insightful in developing my professional practice to aid children become more independent.

Schön (1991) suggested that action research works effectively as it permits practitioners to submit their practice to conscious reflection. As a result of this research project, I reflected upon the results of this research project and aim to implement some strategies that help motivate and develop independent learners. Moreover, prior to undertaking the research, I observed within the wider literature there was much discussion about the theory and nature of independent learning. Whereby

I aimed to obtain a better understanding of a practical approach to developing independent learners. Hence, I will ensure that my pupils are equipped with the necessary resources and encouraged to become independent learners. The evidence from this research project shall be shared and disseminated with colleagues. As a school we shall endeavour to ensure pupils are encouraged to develop into independent learners. Sometimes researchers undertake action research to make a judgement and inform policy (Newby, 2014). Hence, this research has permitted me to comprehend what adjustments could be made at a policy level in order to be sufficiently implemented at our school.

It could be suggested that independent learning is a continuum (Williams, 2003) With schools and teachers playing a vital role within that continuum. Therefore, any encouragement of developing independent learners shall need support from a clear and consistent definition. Moreover, it could be helpful within the definition to explain the relationship between independent learning, and the corresponding terms and concepts (Meyer at al., 2008; Gershon, 2014). By discussing with children what they perceive to be independent learning, they can share an intriguing insight into their conceptualisations. Sharing good practice with pupils and teachers from local primary schools has strengthened pupils' independence (Estyn, 2020). This quote may suggest that by sharing good practice with cluster colleagues, it may ensure consistency. Post conclusion of this research project, I wish to observe more good practice of developing independent learners, as I believe this action would allow me to correlate empirical evidence with first-hand experience.

To conclude the overarching question, in order for effective development of independent learners, there needs to be a consistent approach and a clear understanding within the primary school sector of what independent learning is. Arguably, this could vary from school to school, and can sometimes pose a challenge for schools. One result of action research is that it renders results that can be utilised and shared on different levels (McKernan, 1991). However, as a result of this research project I have achieved a better understanding of what independent learning is and how it is regarded within a localised setting, and thus impacting upon my professional practice. Action research can be a powerful tool for leading school improvement (Cohen et al., 2018). It is evident that teachers need to equip their learners with the correct resources and foster a positive mindset towards learning independently in order for them to develop into effective independent learners.

Reference List

Alderson, P. (2004) 'Children as Researchers: The Effects of Participation Rights on Research Methodology', in Christensen, P. and James, A. *Research with Children*, London: Routledge Falmer, pp 241-257.

Alexander, R., Rose, J., & Woodhead, C. (1992) *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools*. London: HMSO.

Bahar, M. and Hansell, M.H. (2000) 'The Relationship Between Some Psychological Factors And Their Effect on The Performance of Grid Questions And Word Association Tests', *Educational Psychology*, 20, (3), pp. 346-364. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.04.173>
[Accessed on: 2nd February 2023]

Ball, C. (2004) *Start Right: The Importance of Early Learning*. RSA: London.

Bates, I. and Wilson, P. (2002) 'Family and education: supporting independent learning', *Learning and Skills Research*, 6(1), 3.

Bayley, R. & Featherstone, S. (2011) *Independent Learning in the Foundation Stage*. London: A&C Black Publishers Limited.

Benson, P. & Voller, P. (1997) *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning*. London: Longman.

Biggs, J. and Tang, C. (2007) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University, Society for Research into Higher Education (Fourth Edition)*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Black P., McCormick R., Mary, J. and Pedder, D. (2006) 'Learning how to learn and assessment for learning: a theoretical inquiry', *Research Papers in Education*, 21 (2), pp. 119-32.

Blenkin, G. and Kelly, V. (1992) *Assessment in Early Childhood Education*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Bolhuis, S. and Voeten, M.J.M. (2001) 'Toward self-directed learning in secondary schools: what do teachers do?', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(7), pp. 837-55.

Boud, D. (1988) *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*. New York: Kogan Press.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, pp.77-101.

Breakwell, G. M., Hammond, S., Fife-Shaw, C. and Smith, J. A. (2006) *Research Methods in Psychology (third edition)*. London: Sage.

British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) Ethical guidelines for educational research (Fourth Edition) [online]. Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018-online> [Accessed: 21st January 2023].

Brook, I. Hunt, J. and Hughes, P. (1994) Constraints on Student-Centred learning Practices, In: Gibbs, G. (ed.) *Improving Student Learning: Theory and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

Brown, G. T. L., & Harris, L. R. (2013) 'Student Self-Assessment', in McMillan, J.H. (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Research on Classroom Assessment*. California: Thousand Oaks, pp. 367-393.

Bruner, J. S. (1961) 'The act of discovery', *Harvard Educational Review*, 31, pp. 21–32.

Bucknall, S. (2012) *Children as Researchers in Primary Schools: Choice, Voice and Participation*. London: Routledge.

Bullock, K. & Muschamp, Y. (2006) 'Learning about learning in the primary school', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 36:1, pp. 49-62, Available at: DOI: [10.1080/03057640500491112](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640500491112) [Accessed on: 15th December 2022]

Caldwell, L. B. (1997) *Bringing Reggio Emilia Home: An Innovative Approach to Early Childhood Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Candy, P. C. (1991) *Self-Direction for Lifelong Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Christodolou, D. (2014) *Seven Myths About Education*. London: Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018) *Research Methods in Education (Eighth Edition)*. New York: Routledge.

Cook, D. and Finlayson, H. (1999) *Interactive Children, Communicative Teaching*. Birmingham: Open University Press.

Davies, M. B. & Hughes, H. (2014) *Doing a Successful Research Project: Using Qualitative Or Quantitative Methods*. London: Red Globe Press.

Department for Education and Skills (DES) (1990) *Starting With Quality. The Rumbold Report of the committee of inquiry into the quality of the educational experiences offered to 3-and 4-year olds*. HMSO: London.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2006) *2020 vision: report of the teaching and learning in 2020 Review Group*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.

Docherty, S and Sandelowski, M. (1999) 'Focus on qualitative methods: interviewing children', *Research in Nursing and Health*, 22 (2), pp. 177-85

Donaldson, G. (2015) *Successful Futures: Independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales*. Caerdydd: Llywodraeth Cenedlaethol Cymru.

Drew, C. (2018) 'Problematizing 'student choice' in classrooms', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 67(4), pp. 541-55

Duffy, B. (1998) *Supporting Creativity and Imagination in the Early Years*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Dweck, C. S. (2006) *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York City: Random House.

Elliott, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Elliott, J. and Norris, N. (eds) (2012) *Curriculum, Pedagogy and Educational Research: the work of Lawrence Stenhouse*. London & New York: Routledge.

Estyn (2018) *Creating strategies to develop pupils' independence*. [online] Available at: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/creating-strategies-develop-pupils-independence> (Accessed on: 2nd March 2023)

Estyn (2020) *Developing pupils' independence and life skills*. [online] Available at: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/developing-pupils-independence-and-life-skills> (Accessed on: 14th January 2023)

Estyn (2019) *Enabling pupils to become independent learners*. [online] Available at: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/enabling-pupils-become-independent-learners> (Accessed on: 24th January 2023)

Fisher, J. (1996) *Starting from the Child?*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Fisher, R. (1995) *Teaching Children to Learn*. Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes.

Fitzpatrick, T. (2007) 'Word association patterns: Unpacking the assumptions,' *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17, pp. 319–31. Available at: 10.1111/j.1473-4192.2007.00172.x [Accessed on: 2nd February 2023]

Forman, E.A., and Cazden, C.B. (1985) 'Exploring Vygotskian perspectives in education: the cognitive value of peer interaction', in: Wertsch, J.V. (Ed.) *Culture, Communication and Cognition: Vygotskian Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Galton, M. (1989) *Teaching in the Primary School*. London: David Fulton Press.

Gershon, M. (2014) *How to develop independent learners: Practical ideas and strategies for creating a more independent learning environment*. [online] Available at: https://www.tes.com/sites/default/files/tes_strategies_to_develop_independent_learners.pdf [Accessed on: 15th December 2022]

Gilchrist, G. (2018) *Practitioner Enquiry*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Gill, G. K., & Halim, N. A. (2007) *The 'I' in Independent Learning: The Rise of Self-Managing Learners. Research Impacts: Proving or Improving*. Fremantle: Australian Association for Research in Education .

Gleason, G. (1967) *The theory and nature of independent learning*. Pennsylvania: International Textbook Company.

Gonzales, L., Brown, M.S., Slate, J. R. (2008) 'Teachers who left the teaching professions: a qualitative understanding', *Qualitative Report*, 13 (1), pp.1-11.

Gorman, M. (1998) 'The 'structured enquiry' is not a contradiction in terms: focused teaching for independent learning', *Teaching History*, 92, pp. 20-5.

Graves, N. (ed.) (1993) *Learner Managed Learning, Higher Education for Capability*. London: Routledge.

Greig, A.D. and Taylor, J. (1999) *Doing Research with Children*. London: Sage.

Grigg, R. (2015) *Effective Use of Data and Research Evidence*. Cardiff: Welsh Government

Harvey, V.S. & Chickie-Wolfe, L.A. (2007) *Fostering Independent Learning: Practical Strategies to Promote Student Success*. London: The Guilford Press.

Hattie, J. (2012) *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning*. London: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1983) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Routledge.

Hek, G. and Moule, P. (2006) *Making Sense of Research: An Introduction for Health and Social Care Practitioners (Third Edition)*. London: Sage.

Hill, T. E. (1991) *Autonomy and self-respect*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Holec, H. (1981) *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (1998) *The action research planner*. Australia: Deak University Press.

Koper, E.J.R. and Tattersall, C. (2004) *Learning Design: A Handbook on Modelling and Delivering Networked Education*. Berlin: Springer. Available at: DOI: 10.5334/2005-18 (Accessed on: 2nd March 2023).

Kvale, S. (1996) *Interviews*. London: Sage.

Lewis, A. (1992) 'Group child interviews as a research tool', *British Educational Research Journal*, 18, (4) pp. 413-21.

Legislation.gov.uk. (2018) *Data Protection Act 2018*. [online] Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/part/2> [Accessed 7th January 2023]

Little, D. (1991) *Learner autonomy: definitions, issues and problems*. Dublin: Authentik Language Learning.

Lockhorst, D. (2010) 'Educational Dialogues and the Fostering of Pupils' Independence: The Practice of Two Teachers', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 41. Available at: [10.1080/00220270903079237](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270903079237) (Accessed on: 20th February 2023).

Lyman, F. (1981) The Responsive Classroom Discussion, in Anderson, A.S. (Ed.), *Mainstreaming Digest*, College Park, MD: University of Maryland College of Education, pp. 109-113.

MacBeath, J. (1993) *Learning for your self: supported study in Strathclyde schools*. Strathclyde: Strathclyde Regional Council.

Magin, D., Nightingale, P., Andresen, L. and Boud, D. (1993) *Strategies for Increasing Students' Independence*, SCED paper 77, Birmingham UK: Staff and Educational Development Association.

Malone, G. and Smith, D. (1996) *Learning to learn: developing study skills with pupils who have special educational needs*. London: National Association of Special Education Needs.

Mars, H. (2015) 'Fostering Independence in Children: Tips for Parents', *National Association of School Psychologists*, 44(3), pp. 28.

McCombes, S. (2022) *What Is a Research Methodology? Steps & Tips* [online]. Available at: <https://www.scribbr.co.uk/thesis-dissertation/methodology/> [Available at: 25th January 2023]

McCormick, R and James, M. (1988) *Curriculum Evaluation in Schools (second edition)*. London: Croom Helm.

McKernan, J. (1991) *Curriculum Action Research*. London: Kogan Page.

McNiff, J. (2002) *Action Research: Principles and Practice (second edition)*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Merry, R. (1998) *Successful Children, Successful Teaching*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Meyer, B., Haywood, N., Sachdev, D., & Faraday, S. (2008) *Independent learning: Literature review*. Great Britain: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Montessori, M. (1966) *The secret of childhood*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides Publishers.

Moyles, J. (1992) *Organising for Learning in the Primary Classroom*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Newby, P. (2014) *Research Methods for Education* (Second edition). Abingdon: Routledge.

Nicol, D., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006) 'Formative Assessment and Self-Regulated Learning: A Model and Seven Principles of Good Feedback Practice', *Studies in Higher Education*, 31, pp. 199-218. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075070600572090> (Accessed on: 21st January 2023).

Nunan, D. (1994) *The Learner Centred Curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nutbrown, C. (1999) *Threads of Thinking: Schemas and Young Children's Learning*. London: Sage Publications.

Onwuegbuzie, A.J., & Daniel, L.G. (2003) 'Typology of analytical and interpretational errors in quantitative and qualitative educational research', *Current Issues in Education*, 6(2). Available at: <http://cie.ed.asu.edu/volume6/number2/> [Accessed on 14th March 2023]

Oppenheim, A. N. (1992) *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*. London: Heinemann.

Palincsar, A.S., and Brown, A.L. (1984) 'Reciprocal teaching of comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activities', *Cognition and Instruction*, 1, pp. 117-75.

Paris, A. and Paris, S. (2001) 'Classroom applications of research on self-regulated learning', *Educational Psychologist*, 36(2), pp 89-101.

Pascal, C. and Bertram, A.D. (1997) *Effective Early Learning*. London: Hodder.

Patel, H. (2022) *How to promote independent learning in the primary classroom*. Available at: <https://doodlelearning.com/post/promoting-independent-learning-in-the-primary-classroom> [Accessed on: 26th January 2023]

Patton, M. Q. (1980) *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*. Beverly Hills, California: Sage.

Percy, K., Ramsden, P. and Lewin, J. (1980) *Independent Study: Two Examples from English Higher Education*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education.

Percy, K.A. and Salter, F.W. (1976) 'Student and staff perceptions and 'the pursuit of excellence'

in British higher education', *Higher Education*, 5 (4), pp. 457-73.

Piaget, J. (1971) *The theory of stages in cognitive development*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Pintrich, P.R. (2000) 'The role of goal orientation in self-regulated learning', in Boekaerts, M., Pintrich, P.R. and Zeidner, M (eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation*. San Diego: Academic Press., pp. 451- 502.

Pointon, P. and Kershner, R. (2001) 'Organising the primary classroom environment as a context for learning', in Collins, J., Insley, K. and Soler, J. (eds) *Developing Pedagogy, Researching Practice*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Rauber, M. (2007) *Non-cognitive Skills and Success in Life: The Importance of Motivation and Self-Regulation*. Konstanz: Centre for European Economic Research.

Risemberg, R. and Zimmerman B. J. (1992) 'Self-regulated learning in gifted students', *Roeper Review*, 15(2), 98-101.

Rogers, C. (1969) *Freedom to Learn*. Chicago: Merrill Publishing Company.

Sagor, R. (2005) *The Action Research Guidebook: A Four Step Process for Educators and Teams*. California: Corwin Press

Sammons, P., Hillman, J. and Mortimore, P. (1985) *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools*. London: HMSO.

Schön, D.A. (1991) *The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action*. London: Temple.

Sharp, C., Pocklington, K. and Weindling, D. (2002) 'Study support and the development of the self-regulated learner', *Educational Research*, 44(1), pp. 29-41.

Siegler, R.S. (2002) Microgenetic studies of self-explanation, in: N. Granott, and J. Parziale, (Eds.) *Microdevelopment: transition processes in development and learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Silverman, D. (1993) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: Sage.

Smithson, J. (2000) 'Using an analyzing focus groups: limitations and possibilities', *International Journal of Science Research Methodology*, 3 (2), pp.103-19

Spradley, J. P. (1979) *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Taber, K. (2013) *Classroom-based Research and Evidence-based Practice: An Introduction (Second Edition)*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd..

Thomas, G. (2017) *How to do your Research Project (Third Edition)*. London: Sage.

Tyson, C. (2017) 'Developing an ethics framework for school based research in the context of a large academy secondary school' *BERA Blog*, 24th October. Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/>

[blog/developing-an-ethics-framework-for-school-based-research-in-the-context-of-a-large-academy-secondary-school](#) [Accessed on: 8th January 2023]

UNICEF (1989) *The United Nations convention on the rights of the child*. [online] Available at: https://downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_PRESS200910web.pdf?_ga=2.78590034.795419542.1582474737-1972578648.1582474737 (Accessed on: 6th March 2023)

University of Wales Trinity Saint David (2022) *Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice*. Available at: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/media/uwtsd-website/content-assets/documents/research/REICoP-July-2022.pdf> [Accessed on: 2nd October 2022).

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Watts, M. and Ebbutt, D. (1987) 'More than the sum of the parts: research methods in group interviewing', *British Educational Research Journal*, 13 (1), pp. 25-34

Webb, R. and Vulliamy, G. (1996) *Roles and Responsibilities in the Primary School*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Welsh Assembly Government (2010) *How to develop thinking and assessment for learning in the classroom*. [online] Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/663d00fd-9c3b-4003-9a1f-0012bad39fad/how-to-develop-thinking-and-assessment-for-learning-in-the-classroom.pdf> [Accessed on: 2nd February 2023]

Wenden, A. (1998) *Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy*. Great Britain: Prentice Hall.

Whitebread, D. (ed.) (2000) *The Psychology of Teaching and Learning*. London: Routledge/Farmer.

Williams, J. (2003) *Promoting independent learning in the primary classroom*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Williamson, K. (1995) 'Independent Learning and the Use of Resources', *VCE Australian Studies*, 39 (1) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/000494419503900106> [Accessed on 4th March 2023]

Winter, R. (1996) 'Some principles and procedures for the conduct of action research', in Zuber-Skerritt, O. (ed.) *New Directions in Action Research*. London: Falmer, pp. 13-27.

Wisker, G. (2012) *The good supervisor. Second Edition*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wood, E.K. & Millichamp, C. (2000) 'Changing the learning ethos in school', *Journal of In-Service Education*, 26 (3), pp.499-515.

Wragg, E. C. & Brown, G.A. (2001) *Questioning in the Primary School (Second edition)*. London: Routledge.

Wright, R. and Powell, M. B. (2006) 'Investigate interviews' perceptions of their difficulty in adhering to open ended questions with child witnesses', *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, 8 (4), pp.316-25

Zimmerman, B.J. (2002) 'Becoming a self-regulated learner: an overview', *Theory into Practice*, 41(2), pp. 64-72.

Appendix

Appendix One-Ethics Form



PG2 / E1 FORM

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of research activity: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Bethan Jane Petty			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☐	Taught Postgraduate Student	☒	Postgraduate Research Student

3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Yr Athrofa, Faculty of Education and Communities, University of Wales Trinity Saint David
4	Campus:	SA1 Swansea
5	E-mail address:	1601574@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07792450133
For students:		
7	Student Number:	1601574
8	Programme of Study:	MA Education
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Gwilym Sion ap Gruffudd

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					<i>Date</i>
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): <i>Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval</i>	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in)	☒	Gwilym Sion ap Gruffudd	

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice ☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy ☒
3	BERA Guidelines ☒
4	EWG Guidelines ☒

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution	N/A			
2	Contact person name				
3	Contact person e-mail address				
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES	☐	NO	☐
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES	☐	NO	☐

6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☐
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO	☐
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☐

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☒
If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).					

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	An exploration into developing independent learners within the primary school setting.			
2	Proposed start date:	4th October 2022	Proposed end date:	24th April 2023	
Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a Non-Specialist Audience when outlining your response to the points below: • Purpose of Research Activity • Proposed Research Question • Aims of Research Activity • Objectives of Research Activity Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain • What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge • How it addresses an area of importance.					

3	Purpose of Research Activity One principle of the new curriculum is to excite and inspire children to want to learn and do so independently (Donaldson, 2015). The theme of independence relates to a target on our School Improvement Plan, linked to the new Welsh curriculum. Hence why I have chosen it as my area of research. As both a researcher and a teacher I am keen to gain a better understanding of how I can aid my children in becoming more independent within the classroom. Upon wider reading I have realised that independence has been widely researched over the years with many varying viewpoints upon it. During my research I am aim to discover the key attributes that underpin independence as aligned to the AOLES (https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/humanities). As an area of learning and experience lead, I am keen to examine the development of independent learning in line with the new curriculum, as this will benefit my school. Williams (2003) suggest that benefits of independence include children being more socially adept and working to a higher standards. Also, I want to learn whether independent learning strategies benefit children less or more effectively than when learning as part of a group or partner work. I would also like to examine the impact on independent learning in aiding children to become 'lifelong learners'. Participants may withdraw consent at any time without having to give a notice.
4	Research Question What does independent learning look like? When is learning truly "independent"? How to improve and assess independent learning strategies to understand their impact? What are the procedures of evaluating a successful independent teaching and learning experience in a classroom? What opportunities are provided for children to be independent? How are children encouraged to independent in their learning? (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity <i>The focus is to explore levels of opportunity that children in key stage two are provided with to become independent learners. Also, I aim to analyze how independent learning can be encouraged and supported within the primary school setting. One aim is to analyze what opportunities are provided to encourage children to become independent learners and what kind of environment is created to support these independent learners. Another aim is to evaluate how we as practitioners can measure or examine the impact of independent learning. The qualitative methods that aim to utilize will hopefully aid me to focus my proposed investigation.</i> (this box should expand as you type)

6	Objectives of Research Activity <i>The investigation is needed in order to effectively develop the principles of the new Welsh curriculum and the desire for independent lifelong learners within classroom. I anticipate that the results will be beneficial to my school, as the research will potentially uncover the benefits and limitations of independent learning and therefore encourage more effective practice to be developed as a result of the findings. I should anticipate that the findings will support most existing literature, however, when compiling my reading list, a lot of the relevant literature was not fairly recent nor new Welsh curriculum specific. I hope that my finding would add to that body of knowledge and understanding.</i> (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	<i>Due to the nature of the research, consideration of working with young children has been taken into account. Careful consideration will be taken into account when creating questions that they are suitable and appropriate for participants age. I will ensure to adhere to UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UWTSD Research Data Management Policy, BERA guidelines and EWC guidelines.</i> <i>Mainly qualitative methods will be utilised throughout the dissertation research. The research will be mainly carried out within my setting. These will include questionnaires, surveys, observations, focus groups and interviews.</i> <i>Participants will remain anonymous and the procedure for this will be explained to them prior to the survey methods being completed. Intended participants will be adults and children, who's consent from parents or carers will be provided. It shall be made clear to participants that their cooperation is appreciated but they will not be forced into undertaking the research methods. Also, participants will be regularly reminded they can withdraw from the research methods at any time.</i> (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	Local primary schools across South Wales (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.

9	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
---	--

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO YES	☒ ☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?		YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

Will the research activity include:		YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐

2	Use of interviews?	☒	☐
3	Use of focus groups?	☒	☐
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☐	☒
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☒	☐
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.		
	Details of any other primary data collection method:	☐	☐
	(this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and may be exempt from some of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒

4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☒	☐
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.		
	Details of any other participant groups:	☐	☐
	(this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	The participants shall include a cross section of pupils from each Key Stage Two class, which would be approximately 40 pupils. Also included shall be approximately four members of teaching staff. (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	The participants shall be pupils from Key Stage Two classes. The participants shall be mixed gender and will be a cross-section of children including MAT, basic skills and FSM. If all children undertake the research methods, this should be about approximately 40 pupils. Then the researcher will select, at random, about four to six pupils from each Key Stage Two class to interview. The participants will also include four members of staff.
12	How will you identify the participants?	The questionnaires will remain anonymous. Children and teachers who wish to participate shall be informed that they should not put their name on the questionnaires. During interviews, children shall be identified by pseudonyms such as Pupil A/B/C.

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☒	☐	☐
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.					
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended? <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>☒</td> </tr> </table>	Yes	☐	No	☒
Yes	☐				
No	☒				
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information				
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td> Risk to participants: Consent- The risk to participants is that they could be part of the research without providing either informed consent or assent. Understanding- Also, participants could be part of the research not fully understanding the purpose of the research project. Transfer of personal data- Another risk could be breaching participant confidentiality. Emotional distress- Also, another risk may be that the participants may become uncomfortable, I will endeavour to reduce any sense of intrusion to the norm and put them at ease. Another risk might be the impact upon participant's wellbeing. change (this box should expand as you type) </td> <td> <i>How you will mitigate the risk to participants:</i> Consent and Understanding- I will ensure that procedures how I will obtain consent are in place before informing children and staff about the research project. I will discuss these procedures and the purpose of the research project with the participants before commencing the project. Further, I will explain to staff and children they have the right to withdraw and can leave the research, or express that they do not want any of their collected data to be utilised, at any time (BERA, 2018). I shall seek permission from the children to use their answers in my research. Prior to this I shall ask their parents to provide informed consent. Transfer of personal data- There will be no personal data included in the research project and participants will remain anonymous. I will comply with the legal requirements of storage and use of data. All data will be saved in a password protected online account and made confidential with all names removed. Emotional distress- I will monitor the children's wellbeing and stop any activity if they become uncomfortable or distressed. I will ensure that no child is treated differently. No incentives will be offered to pupils to reduce the impact of bias on the data and to ensure the pupils don't feel pressured. I will pose questions that do not make pupils feel discontented with their language learning and will word my questions in a way that does not risk changing their viewpoints in a negative way or showing my bias towards any particular answer. Hence the questions will not be leading and will open and allow pupils to answer honestly. </td> </tr> </table>	Risk to participants: Consent- The risk to participants is that they could be part of the research without providing either informed consent or assent. Understanding- Also, participants could be part of the research not fully understanding the purpose of the research project. Transfer of personal data- Another risk could be breaching participant confidentiality. Emotional distress- Also, another risk may be that the participants may become uncomfortable, I will endeavour to reduce any sense of intrusion to the norm and put them at ease. Another risk might be the impact upon participant's wellbeing. change (this box should expand as you type)	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to participants:</i> Consent and Understanding- I will ensure that procedures how I will obtain consent are in place before informing children and staff about the research project. I will discuss these procedures and the purpose of the research project with the participants before commencing the project. Further, I will explain to staff and children they have the right to withdraw and can leave the research, or express that they do not want any of their collected data to be utilised, at any time (BERA, 2018). I shall seek permission from the children to use their answers in my research. Prior to this I shall ask their parents to provide informed consent. Transfer of personal data- There will be no personal data included in the research project and participants will remain anonymous. I will comply with the legal requirements of storage and use of data. All data will be saved in a password protected online account and made confidential with all names removed. Emotional distress- I will monitor the children's wellbeing and stop any activity if they become uncomfortable or distressed. I will ensure that no child is treated differently. No incentives will be offered to pupils to reduce the impact of bias on the data and to ensure the pupils don't feel pressured. I will pose questions that do not make pupils feel discontented with their language learning and will word my questions in a way that does not risk changing their viewpoints in a negative way or showing my bias towards any particular answer. Hence the questions will not be leading and will open and allow pupils to answer honestly.		
Risk to participants: Consent- The risk to participants is that they could be part of the research without providing either informed consent or assent. Understanding- Also, participants could be part of the research not fully understanding the purpose of the research project. Transfer of personal data- Another risk could be breaching participant confidentiality. Emotional distress- Also, another risk may be that the participants may become uncomfortable, I will endeavour to reduce any sense of intrusion to the norm and put them at ease. Another risk might be the impact upon participant's wellbeing. change (this box should expand as you type)	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to participants:</i> Consent and Understanding- I will ensure that procedures how I will obtain consent are in place before informing children and staff about the research project. I will discuss these procedures and the purpose of the research project with the participants before commencing the project. Further, I will explain to staff and children they have the right to withdraw and can leave the research, or express that they do not want any of their collected data to be utilised, at any time (BERA, 2018). I shall seek permission from the children to use their answers in my research. Prior to this I shall ask their parents to provide informed consent. Transfer of personal data- There will be no personal data included in the research project and participants will remain anonymous. I will comply with the legal requirements of storage and use of data. All data will be saved in a password protected online account and made confidential with all names removed. Emotional distress- I will monitor the children's wellbeing and stop any activity if they become uncomfortable or distressed. I will ensure that no child is treated differently. No incentives will be offered to pupils to reduce the impact of bias on the data and to ensure the pupils don't feel pressured. I will pose questions that do not make pupils feel discontented with their language learning and will word my questions in a way that does not risk changing their viewpoints in a negative way or showing my bias towards any particular answer. Hence the questions will not be leading and will open and allow pupils to answer honestly.				

3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	Not applicable <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: Accusation of conflict of interest- The risk to the researcher is that I could be accused of unprofessional practice or conduct. Also, as an insider carrying out the research I might be accused of conflict of interest or bias. This may risk my personal reputation. Another pressure could be that the research could uncover findings the school may disagree or agree with. Workload- Another risk could be use of time and added pressure to the workload. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator:</i> I will mitigate any personal risk by adhering to BERA guidelines and the Data Protection Act (1998) and also follow my plan for ethical conduct. I have read the University of Wales Trinity Saint David Guidelines on Research, Ethics, and Integrity Code of Professional Conduct and Practice (2017) and BERA (2018). I shall adhere to both guidelines. Accusation of conflict of interest- To limit the accusation of conflict of interest I shall endeavor to remain unbiased throughout the research project. The methods I use will contain unbiased questions. To limit the accusations of conflict of interest, I shall ensure that my role as researcher shall not precede my role as a teacher. I will ensure that the data collected from the research project impacts upon the school's improvement whether the findings are positive or negative. Workload- I would enable that I have a reasonable timescale in place. I would ensure that I let children undertake the research methods during assembly time, therefore, hopefully not impacting upon our teaching and learning time. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	

	Risk to the University: Adverse Publicity- One risk could be adverse publicity. I acknowledge that as a student of University of Wales Trinity Saint David, I need to uphold the good reputation of the establishment and cause no adverse publicity. I would do this by conducting myself and my research in a professional, appropriate, and ethical manner <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to the University:</i> There should be no risk to the University if I manage the risks to the participants and the researcher as detailed throughout this ethics form. I will always adhere to comply with ethical, legal and professional frameworks. Also, I shall always adhere to obligations and standards as required by the statutory and regulatory authorities, as well as with the university's Research Integrity and Ethics Code of Practice. There should be no risk to the University if I manage the risk to the participant and the researcher as detailed throughout this ethics form. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<i>How you will mitigate the risk to environment:</i> <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☒	☐	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.	Pending		

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
---	--

	De-briefing will take place prior to the commencement of the research. Before children complete the questionnaires, I shall explain the involvement process and the purpose of the research project. Children will be made aware that they do not have to complete the interviews or questionnaires. The questionnaires designed for the teachers will include an information sheet for them to read through and then date and sign. Before the interviews, a similar process shall be carried out, where the pupils have the purpose of the research and involvement process explained to them. After the data has been examined, the researcher will compile a report and feedback to staff at the school. This would be delivered during a staff meeting. If the senior leadership team deem necessary, the findings may also be shared with the school's challenge advisor and/or governing body. As the parents have given their consent to their children partaking in the research, they can also have feedback if and when requested. This feedback would be done face to face if required. The children themselves may also request feedback on the research. This feedback would be done face to face if required.
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	Participation consent (Children) I will converse with the children to inform them of the research I shall be undertaking, providing reason and rationale behind the research. The level of terminology I shall use when conversing with children shall be adapted to suit their knowledge and understanding. I will verbally ask children whether they wish to participate in the research. I will ask the children to provide a form of assent. Children will be provided with a laminated smiley face with a green side (which shows their willingness to participate in the research) or red (which shows that they are not willing to participate in the research). The children will display this laminated face at all times and can change sides whenever they wish. If they do not wish to complete the activity they can withdraw at any time. Children will have to provide verbal assent prior to beginning the data collection methods. Participation consent (Parents) Prior to this, I would have asked the participating children's parents to provide a form of informed consent. The parents will have been provided with and information sheet discussing the purpose of the research project and their child's potential role in the research. Parents will have to sign and date the information sheet. Children will also be informed they can approach me at any time to discuss their contribution to the research project and explain whether they wish to participate. When the children are being questioned by myself their wellbeing and best interests will be paramount. Furthermore, as teachers act in 'loco parentis' I shall check with the class teachers if they are willing to let the children participate in the research project. Participation consent (Teacher) For the class teachers, I shall ask them to sign a document informed consent if they agree to take part in the research. If they are not willing to sign the document, then I shall not use them in the research project. The consent form will include a box for the participant to tick if they agree with the statements, one of which is I have read and understand the information. The statements shall all be read to the participants also. The statements shall inform the teachers of the purpose of the research. Teachers will need to sign and date the form. The teachers will be informed that the information I obtain is confidential. Also, the teacher shall be informed that it is voluntary for them to participate and they can withdraw at any time.

3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	I shall ensure that no individual data is made available. I will also inform participants that they are to remain anonymous and maintaining anonymity will be a priority and every practical precaution will be taken to disguise identity. All materials generated from any interview or questionnaire shall remain confidential. Paper based questionnaires will remain in a locked cupboard on the school premises. The questionnaires will be completed anonymously with participants reminded not to place their name on them. The participants within the interviews shall be identified only by pseudonyms such as 'Pupil A' and 'Teacher A'. Also, any examples of pupils work shall remain anonymous. If a teacher has marked the example of pupils' work, I shall blank out the name. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?		NO
1	"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.		☒
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?		NO
3	"Special category data" means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),		☒
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☒	☐
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☒	☐
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☐	☒
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☒	☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		

	The participants in my research shall remain anonymous. Participants will have their data stored securely by the researcher. Once the data has been utilised by the researcher then it will be destroyed so there is no trace remaining. This process will be in accordance to the Data Protection Act (1998). The researcher shall be adhering to the Data Protection Act (1998) throughout the research project. This research project and data gathered will also comply with the University Data Guidelines (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2017). The data will be stored and archived under a password protected University of Wales Trinity Saint David One Drive account. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	The principal researcher (Myself). <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	The principal researcher (Myself). <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	All students at University of Wales Trinity Saint David are provided with a One Drive account. This account system has very tight security measures in place. The One Drive account requires an email address and password private to their user, thus making the system highly protected. Data will be archived only on the One Drive account until the module has been passed and then destroyed.		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSd Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSd guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:	B.J.Petty	Date: 23.11.22

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/ Supervisor:	Gwilym ap Gruffudd	Date: 23.11.22
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS AND STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name. You will be informed of the outcome of your claim by email; therefore it is important that you check your University and personal email accounts regularly.

~~STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES~~ should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

This form is available electronically from the Academic Office web pages: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/appendices-and-forms/>

Appendix Two- Parental assent form



Friday, 17th March 2023

Title of research project: An exploration into developing independent learners within the primary school setting.

Name of researcher: Miss Bethan Petty

Dear Parent/Carer,

As well as being the Year Three class teacher at St. Roberts Catholic Primary School, I am currently a Masters in Education student at University of Wales Trinity Saint David. I am writing to explain to you that your child, as a member of the school council, has been invited to participate in a group interview in a research study into independent learning within the primary school setting. I wished to write to you and explain why the research is being completed and what it will involve. I would be grateful if you would please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with myself if you wish. Also, you can contact myself (1601574@student.uwtsd.ac.uk) or my research supervisor Gwilym Siôn ap Gruffudd (g.ap-gruffudd@uwtsd.ac.uk) if there is anything that is not clear to you or if you would like more information.

It is up to you to decide whether or not you want your child take part. Refusing to take part in this study or deciding to withdraw from this study is completely up to you and your child. Your child will have all the process and information explained to them prior to the commencement of the group interviews. If you/your child decide to withdraw after the interviews have taken place, you can do so by contacting the academic supervisor researcher Gwilym Siôn ap Gruffudd at the University at any time and all the information your child will have provided anonymously will be destroyed.

As I mentioned, I would like to explain the research to you, the children will be asked their opinions on what makes an independent learner and shall be encouraged to provide examples. They will also be asked what kind of things help them to be an independent

learner and what we as a school could do to encourage them to be independent learners. The research will add to teachers' understanding of how they can encourage independent learning within their classroom.

The children will not be alone in the interviews and will be interviewed alongside their fellow school council. The group interview will take place at the school on Monday 20th March and will be no longer than 10 minutes. If you assent and give permission for your child to be part of this study, all information that is collected will be kept strictly confidential under GDPR. No personal information will be shared and we do not perceive any risks from your child taking part in this research. Details will be kept at all times in locked filing cabinets or on password protected computers. The data from this study will be kept for ten years and then disposed of securely. Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it possible, and no child will be identifiable from the data collected.

I hope this letter clarifies any queries you may have.

Many thanks for taking the time to consider the information,

Miss Bethan Petty



Dydd Gwener, 17 Mawrth 2023

Teitl y prosiect ymchwil: Archwiliad i ddatblygu dysgwyr annibynnol yn yr ysgol gynradd.
Enw'r ymchwilydd: Miss Bethan Petty

Annwyl Riant/Gofalwr,

Yn ogystal â bod yn athrawes dosbarth Blwyddyn Tri yn Ysgol Gynradd Gatholig St. Roberts, rwyf ar hyn o bryd yn fyfyrwr Meistr mewn Addysg ym Mhrifysgol Cymru Y Drindod Dewi Sant. Ysgrifennaf atoch i egluro bod eich plentyn, fel aelod o'r cyngor ysgol, wedi'i wahodd i gymryd rhan mewn cyfweiliad grŵp mewn astudiaeth ymchwil i ddysgu annibynnol yn yr ysgol gynradd. Hoffwn ysgrifennu atoch ac egluro pam fod yr ymchwil yn cael ei gwblhau a beth fydd yn ei olygu. Cymerwch amser i ddarllen y wybodaeth ganlynl yn ofalus a thrafodwch hi gyda mi os dymunwch. Hefyd, gallwch gysylltu â mi fy hun (1601574@myfyriwr.uwtsd.ac.uk) neu fy ngoruchwyliwr ymchwil Gwilym Siôn ap Gruffudd (g.ap-gruffudd@uwtsd.ac.uk) os oes unrhyw beth nad yw'n glir i chi neu os hoffech chi gael mwy o wybodaeth.

Chi sydd i benderfynu a ydych am i'ch plentyn gymryd rhan ai peidio. Chi a'ch plentyn sy'n llwyr ddewis peidio â chymryd rhan yn yr astudiaeth hon neu benderfynu tynnu'n ôl o'r astudiaeth hon. Bydd eich plentyn yn cael esboniad o'r holl broses a gwybodaeth cyn dechrau'r cyfweiliadau grŵp. Os byddwch chi/eich plentyn yn penderfynu tynnu'n ôl ar ôl cynnal y cyfweiliadau, gallwch wneud hynny drwy gysylltu â'r goruchwyliwr academiaidd ymchwilydd Gwilym Siôn ap Gruffudd yn y Brifysgol ar unrhyw adeg a bydd yr holl wybodaeth y bydd eich plentyn wedi'i darparu'n ddienw yn cael ei dinistrio.

Fel y soniais, hoffwn egluro'r ymchwil i chi, gofynnir i'r plant am eu barn ar yr hyn sy'n gwneud dysgwr annibynnol a chânt eu hannog i roi enghreifftiau. Gofynnir iddynt hefyd pa fath o bethau sy'n eu helpu i fod yn ddysgwr annibynnol a beth allwn ni fel ysgol ei wneud i'w hannog i fod yn ddysgwyr annibynnol. Bydd yr ymchwil yn ychwanegu at ddealltwriaeth athrawon o sut y gallant annog dysgu annibynnol yn eu dosbarth.

Ni fydd y plant ar eu pen eu hunain yn y cyfweiliadau a byddant yn cael eu cyfweld ochr yn ochr â'u cyd-gyngor ysgol. Cynhelir y cyfweiliad grŵp yn yr ysgol ar ddydd Llun 20fed Mawrth ac ni fydd yn hwy na 10 munud. Os byddwch yn cydsynio ac yn rhoi caniatâd i'ch plentyn fod yn rhan o'r astudiaeth hon, bydd yr holl wybodaeth a gesglir yn cael ei chadw'n gwbl gyfrinachol o dan GDPR. Ni fydd unrhyw wybodaeth bersonol yn cael ei rhannu ac nid ydym yn canfod unrhyw risgiau o'ch plentyn yn cymryd rhan yn yr ymchwil hwn. Cedwir manylion bob amser mewn cypyrddau ffeilio dan glo neu ar gyfrifiaduron a ddiogelir gan gyfrinair. Bydd y data o'r astudiaeth hon yn cael ei gadw am ddeng mlynedd ac yna'n cael ei waredu'n ddiogel.

Gobeithiaf fod y llythyr hwn yn egluro unrhyw gwestiynau sydd gennych.
Diolch yn fawr am gymryd yr amser i ystyried y wybodaeth,
Miss Bethan Petty

Appendix Three- Teacher interview schedule



Interview Schedule - Teachers

I, Bethan Petty (1601574), am currently undertaking my Masters in Education at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. As part of my dissertation I am undertaking an exploration into developing independent learners within the primary school setting. One aim of the research project is to assess participants' perceptions of independent learning and the benefits, limitations and opportunities that coincide with it.

The interview will last for 15-20 minutes.

I, the researcher, would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to engage with the study.

CONSENT EVALUATION:

I consent to participate in the research project carried out by Bethan Petty (1601574) as part of a Masters In Education at University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

I recognise that I can withdraw from participating at any time. I also understand that although the data from this study may be published, my identity will be kept confidential.

(Signature) (Date)

Name	
Organisation	

Question one (Context):**Cwestiwn un (Cyd-destun):**

1.1. What do you define as an independent learner? *Beth ydych chi'n ei ddiffinio fel dysgwr annibynnol?*

1.2. What do you think are the benefits of having independent learners within your class? *Beth ydych chi'n meddwl yw manteision cael dysgwyr annibynnol yn eich dosbarth?*

1.3. Are there any limitations of having independent learners within your class? *A oes unrhyw gyfyngiadau o gael dysgwyr annibynnol yn eich dosbarth?*

Question two (Opportunities):
Cwestiwn dau (Cyfleoedd):

2.1. In which ways does your classroom encourage your learners to be independent learners? *Ym mha ffyrdd mae eich ystafell ddosbarth yn annog plant i fod yn ddysgwyr annibynnol?*

2.2 How can you provide your learners with opportunities to be independent learners? *Sut gallwch chi roi cyfleoedd i'ch dysgwyr fod yn ddysgwyr annibynnol?*

2.3 How can our school provide our learners with opportunities to be independent learners? *Sut gall ein hysgol ddarparu cyfleoedd i'n dysgwyr fod yn ddysgwyr annibynnol?*

Question Three : New Curriculum

Cwestiwn Tri : Cwricwlwm Newydd

3.1. The new Welsh curriculum encourages children to be independent learners- from your observations and experiences what evidence are there in practice and what are the challenges and opportunities? *Mae'r cwricwlwm Cymraeg newydd yn annog plant i fod yn ddysgwyr annibynnol – o'ch arsylwadau a'ch profiadau pa dystiolaeth sydd ar gael yn ymarferol a beth yw'r heriau a'r cyfleoedd?*

Question Four: Please outline any other comments you would like to make in relation to the research project.

Cwestiwn Pedwar: Amlinellwch unrhyw sylwadau eraill yr hoffech eu gwneud mewn perthynas â'r prosiect ymchwil.

Many thanks for taking the time to be interviewed.

Diolch yn fawr am gymryd yr amser i gael eich cyfnewid.

Appendix Four- Pupil interview schedule

Name	
Organisation	

Question one (Context):

1.1. What does being an 'independent learner' mean to you? *Beth mae bod yn 'ddysgwr annibynnol' yn ei olygu i chi?*

1.2. Can you give me some examples of how you are an independent learner?
(Prompts: problem solving, worked something out for themselves) *A allwch roi rhai enghreifftiau imi o sut yr ydych yn ddysgwr annibynnol? (Anogaethau: datrys problemau, gweithio rhywbeth allan drostynt eu hunain)*

1.3. What is your opinion on being an independent learner? Is it a good or bad thing? *Beth yw eich barn am fod yn ddysgwr annibynnol? A yw'n beth da neu ddrwg?*

1.4 What helps you to be an independent learner? *Beth sy'n eich helpu i fod yn ddysgwr annibynnol?*

Question 2 (New Welsh Curriculum):

2.1. Do you think the new curriculum helps you to become an independent learner? (Prompts: perhaps think of the four purposes that are displayed in classrooms) *Ydych chi'n meddwl bod y cwricwlwm newydd yn eich helpu i ddod yn ddysgwr annibynnol? (Anogwyr: efallai meddyliwch am y pedwar diben sy'n cael eu harddangos mewn ystafelloedd dosbarth)*

2.2 In your opinion, which one of the four purposes links to independent learning the most? *Yn eich barn chi, pa un o'r pedwar diben sy'n cysylltu fwyaf â dysgu annibynnol?*

Question 3: Teaching and Learning Opportunities

3.1. How do your teachers allow you to be an independent learner? Can you think of three examples of how your teachers help you to be an independent learner?

Sut mae eich athrawon yn caniatáu ichi fod yn ddysgwr annibynnol? Allwch chi feddwl am dair enghraifft o sut mae eich athrawon yn eich helpu i fod yn ddysgwr annibynnol?

3.2 What does our school do to help you be an independent learner? *Beth mae ein hysgol yn ei wneud i'ch helpu chi i fod yn ddysgwr annibynnol?*

Question 4: Please outline any other comments you would like to make in relation to the research project.

