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

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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 07.06.24

DECLARATION

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

Signed (Lecturer)

Date 07.06.24

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Abstract

Throughout this research project, there was an exploration into developing independent learners within the primary school setting. Moreover, the overarching aim of this research project was to explore how children could be encouraged to develop into independent learners, specifically learners within Progression Step Two and Three. As a result of professional development and personal curiosity, this theme was decided upon as it is predominant within the education sector at present. Throughout this research project, I personally undertook the role of an action researcher. One of the aims of the research project was to gain a variety of opinions towards developing independent learners from both teaching staff and the learners themselves. The main research method utilised throughout the research project was semi-structured interviews. In order to gather data, I interviewed a cross-section of pupils to gain their insights into independent learning and gain an understanding of how both teachers can provide opportunities to encourage independent learning. As a result of utilising this main research instrument, I gained qualitative data which was then interpreted and analysed. Within the data analysis recurring themes and key words surrounding independent learning were identified.

Throughout the research project, the benefits, limitations and opportunities for independent learning was explored. Undertaking wider reading enabled me to form a basis for the research project and identify any gaps in the literature base. Empirical evidence gathered and wider literature highlighted that there is an absence of a common understanding based around what independent learning means and how it is effectively developed within the primary school setting. The primary research collected aided me to address the overarching aim of the research project and comprehend how primary schools could effectively encourage their children to develop into independent learners.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1- Overview

Gill and Halim (2007) believe that independent learning ensures that children become successful individuals, capable of directing their own personal and academic development. Throughout various secondary sources, many theorists and authors have discussed and explored the development of independent learners. However, Bayley and Featherstone (2011) argue that what defines an independent learner and the skills that accompanies the independent learner is unclear. Therefore, a research project that aims to remedy this issue and explore developing independent learners within the primary school setting seemed pertinent. Moreover, Meyer et al. (2008) highlight some issues that surround independent learning including its definition being uncertain, lack of discussion of how teachers best foster it, and unclear evidence of how it is implemented in practice. Upon wider reading, it became apparent that varying definitions and interpretations based upon independent learning have emerged over the years. Hence, it is necessary to clarify that throughout this research project, independent learning refers to learners who are able to manage their own learning process through active engagement and possessing ownership over their learning.

Cohen et al. (2018) believe that action research can be perceived as interpretive research, where interpretations are constructed based upon gathered data. Furthermore, action research is regarded as a post-positivist approach. Newby (2014) highlighted that action research is undertaken to develop professional practice. The overarching objective of this research project is to explore how learners within the primary school sector, specifically learners in Progression Step Two and Three, develop into independent learners. This research project shall adopt a deductive approach whereby hypotheses become deduced based upon existing literature and theory. This approach was discussed by Newby (2014), who recognised this approach is widely used in the field of action research. Hence, then a research strategy shall be designed to examine personal hypotheses. Cohen et al. (2018) highlight how a deductive approach aids researchers in utilising research methods to collect empirical primary research. Moreover, the primary research method within this research project shall be semi-structured interviews, which shall be undertaken with adult and children participants.

1.2- Rationale

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

encouraged through the teaching and learning process, how this is done effectively is less understood. This opinion derives from personal experience and wider reading. Hence, the predominant rationale of this research project is to gain a better understanding of the nature of independent learning, and raise awareness of how independent learning is developed within the primary school sector. Sagor (2005) proposed a four-stage action research model, which begins with clarifying vision and targets, next proposing a theory, then implementing action and collecting data, and commencing with data reflection. This research model shall be adopted throughout the research project as it provides a clear and concise approach.

Rauber (2007) suggested that within a society that is always changing, it is important that children are encouraged to develop into independent learners from young. Hereby, this suggestion could imply why independent learning is a predominant feature within school development plans at present. In their research, Meyer et al. (2008) support the suggestion that many schools identify the development of children's independent learning in their school development plans. Cohen et al. (2018) believe that action research permits researchers to examine their professional practice. Following a recent Estyn inspection, one recommendation was to ensure pupils are given opportunities to develop into independent learners. Hence, this target stimulated my professional curiosity. As a result of this professional curiosity, action research appeared the most appropriate method to conduct this research project. In support of this, Gilchrist (2018) suggests that action research is one of the most effective forms of continuous professional development. Newby (2014) highlighted that action research is a small scale project carried out by a sole researcher. Therefore, affirming that action research is the most suitable paradigm for this research project.

Both Meyer et al. (2008) and Paris and Paris (2001) suggest that in order to develop into independent learners, children should be equipped with a positive mindset and learn how to learn effectively, this process should be modelled by teachers. One aim of the research project is to gain understanding if teachers and learners both acknowledge their role within the independent learning process. In his research on learner autonomy, Little (1991) suggests that learner and teacher autonomy is interdependent, therefore teachers who aim to develop independent learners should reflect upon their personal practice. Moreover, Gleason (1967) suggests that independent learning means children being engaged productively with a task without hindrance. These quotes both

emphasise the importance of both teachers and learners roles within the independent learning process. This research project aims to gather practitioners' and pupils' opinions upon independent learning, and shall explore the benefits and limitations of, and opportunities for independent learning.

BERA (2018) suggest that educational research can extend understanding in various areas of educational activity. An aim of this research project is to identify what factors underpin the idea of independent learning, establishing whether there are recurring themes. Moreover, Kemmis & McTaggart (1998) suggested that action research is a self-reflective enquiry carried out by professionals within the education sector, aiming to improve practices or comprehend these practices better. Another aim is to discover any guidance, resources or strategies teachers utilise to support children develop into independent learners.

1.3- Aims and Objectives

Sagor (2005) implied that action research begins with clarifying vision and targets. Wider reading ensured that succinct aims and objectives were developed once the overarching theme was decided upon. Therefore, this research project adopted a deductive approach. To commence this research project, existing literature was examined in order to establish the skills, nature and theory of independent learning, in order to decide upon key themes to explore. Braun and Clarke (2006) explored the idea of latent themes, whereby the researcher analyses responses in order to identify fundamental ideas. As an action researcher, in the results and findings chapter, I shall examine the data collected in order to discover latent themes. Upon examining the wider reading it became apparent that there were emergent themes referred to within several journals and books. Empirical evidence would suggest that the emergent themes include children's self-regulation, autonomy and motivation.

Gershon (2014) believes that possessing the ability to work independently is one of the most important skills that a child can develop. An aim of the research project is to discover how primary schools can encourage their pupils to effectively develop into independent learners. Williams (2003) suggests that all children should have opportunities to be independent. Hereby, one aim is to examine what opportunities are provided in schools to encourage children to be independent. In his

research, Gershon (2014) exercises caution and suggests that to foster independent learning, teachers need to adjust their mindsets. Hereby, participant's perceptions shall be collected in order to better comprehend this suggestion. Both Gill and Halim (2007) and Meyer et al. (2008) suggest that while practitioners appreciate the importance of developing independent learners, the development is practically challenging given the nature of learners and demands of the curriculum. Throughout this research project, an objective is to explore whether these limitations are acknowledged by practitioners.

Newby (2014) suggested that educational researchers should gain an understanding of theories and ideas before adding to the body of knowledge. Current wider literature highlights the nature and theory of independent learning, however, there is inconsistency with essential themes that surrounds the idea of developing independent learners. Similarly, Meyer et al. (2008) highlight that wider literature provides an attempt at explaining what independent learning is, and what limitations may need to be overcome in order to receive the benefits. From observing wider literature, it appears there is more evidence in support of developing independent learners than against, however there is limited evidence of opportunities provided that encourage pupils to develop into independent learners. These identified gaps in the evidence base shall be addressed by investigating opportunities and strategies for developing independent learners within the research paradigm.

Meyer et al. (2008) highlight that wider literature seemingly focuses on observations of independent learning, rather than the views of teachers and pupils. Personal wider research would also support this suggestion. Hereby, the perceptions of teachers and pupils shall be integral to the successful outcome of the research project and potentially add to gaps within the literature base. Thus, the outcome of this research project may appear to highlight current practice within one educational setting, thus only benefitting a localised setting. However, the findings could render ideas that are applicable to other educational settings and thus provide insightful information.

1.4- Hypotheses

Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that hypotheses can drive the research. Within this research project the hypotheses shall drive the research, and the research strategy shall endeavour to prove or disprove personal hypotheses. One personal hypothesis is that children are provided with too much support which can hinder them developing into independent learners. To elaborate, professional experience

would suggest that practitioners sometimes intervene too soon and fail to provide children sufficient time to develop into independent learners. Another personal hypothesis, which derives as a result of wider reading, is that teachers and pupils do not share a common understanding of what independent learning entails. These hypotheses will be explored throughout the research project to potentially prove or disprove.

Winter (1996) discussed reflective critique, a principle of action research, whereby researchers become aware of perceptual biases. Moreover, BERA (2018) suggested that hypotheses can encourage bias. This suggestion shall be managed by carefully phrasing questions and ensuring that participants are not led to provide answers that benefit the outcome of this research project. Cohen et al. (2018) suggested that to act ethically, researchers should ensure that bias or hypotheses do not interfere with their research project. In this research project, empirical evidence shall be triangulated with wider literature and thus proving or disproving the hypotheses, awhile mediating this ethical issue.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1- Overview-

In their research upon independent learning, Meyer et al. (2008) suggest that wider literature highlights a broad range of terminology to describe independent learners. In agreement, upon personal observation of 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. This posed an issue for this research project, as it can cause confusion over the definition of what independent learning actually means. Therefore, caution was exercised with careful selection of secondary sources to discuss within the research project. While a mixture of terminology has been utilised in wider reading, for context, within this research project these learners are referred to as independent learners. Throughout this chapter, there shall be an exploration into how developing independent learners has been valued in prior curriculums. This will then be contrasted with the priority of developing independent learners within the Curriculum for Wales (Donaldson, 2015). This literature review focuses upon United Kingdom curricula, more specifically, Welsh curriculum as opposed to global curricula.

2.2- Historical review

Both Williams (2003) and Gleason (1967) highlight that attitude towards developing independent learners has been argued by many scholars and theorists, and discussed in various government reports. In support of this, Whitebread (2000) suggests both government and educational institutions have declared their commitment to developing independent learners within the education sector. Additionally, Osborn et al. (2000) suggest that some government initiatives encourage approaches to teaching and learning that engage and motivate pupils to support their active participation as independent learners. In contrast, Whitebread (2000) implied that some recent educational policies, which include trialled government initiatives, are conflicted in their direct impact upon the development of children's independent learning. Hence, it is evident that wider reading highlights some key policies and initiatives based upon developing independent learners, although what is unclear is how impactful the policies and initiatives are.

Montessori (1966) developed the concept of auto-education, whereby children become independent and do not require adult guidance to self-construct knowledge. Moreover, these children were encouraged to become independent learners by choosing their own resources and learning methods. Similarly, Bruner (1961) suggested that the purpose of education was to facilitate a child's thinking skills which can then be applied in a broad range of situations. Thus highlighting that education can encourage and develop pupils' thought processes and transferable skills, helping them develop into independent learners. Moreover, Meyer et al. (2008) identified that independent learning can be divided into metacognitive, cognitive, and affective skills. Hence, highlighting the suggestion that thinking skills are interlinked with independent learning. More recently, the Rumbold Report (DES, 1990) highlighted how independent learning should be promoted, and children encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. However, this contradicts with the ideas of Alexander et al. (1992) who argued against some principals of child-centred education, such as allowing learners to think for themselves. To elaborate, Alexander et al. (1992) suggested that a balance was needed between providing more independent learning opportunities to children capable of working alone, awhile avoiding neglecting children who require support. This opinion appears to contradict many other theorists' opinions.

Bolhuis and Voeten (2001) believe that developing independent learners requires a new role for teachers, one that opposes traditional transmission of knowledge, and focuses on children becoming actively involved in the teaching and learning process. This appears to be an interactionist approach whereby learners are encouraged to take a leading role within their own learning. However, Nunan (1994) argued that redefining teacher roles could potentially create a barrier towards developing independent learners, preventing children's ability to take responsibility for planning and evaluating their own learning. One implication would be teachers needing to mediate a power balance between their role as a leader, awhile permitting their learners to undertake a role which aids facilitating the teaching and learning process. Wider reading would imply that prior curriculums have held a constructivist approach whereby teachers transmit knowledge to their pupils. Thus, contributing historical factors are potentially an inadequate base for examining independent learning within the primary school sector at present. Moreover, Gleason (1967) support this suggestion and believe that historical factors cause uncertainty about the intended definitions and suggested activities associated with the idea of independent learning. Hence, this suggestion may hinder the validity and

reliability of the historical evidence on this research project. Despite these suggestions, examining historical curricula has provided valuable insights into past perceptions of independent learning.

2.3- Independent Learning in the Curriculum for Wales

More recently, wider literature would imply there is a growing interest in independent learning within the education sector. Donaldson (2015) believes that effective teaching and learning encourages children to possess increasing responsibility for their own learning, and children should be entrusted with a responsibility for their progress and direction of their learning. Hence, the Four Purposes of the current Welsh curriculum (Donaldson, 2015) underpin the essence of developing independent learners. To expand, learners shall be ambitious and capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives, and healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society (Donaldson, 2015). Moreover, Estyn (2020) highlighted that when developing independent learners, some schools prioritise the Four Purposes at the core of their activities. In order to gather empirical evidence, Estyn case studies were examined and it was discovered that some schools incorporate the Four Purposes into each lesson. Estyn case studies provided first-hand evidence of how developing independent learners is encouraged within the primary school sector. However, some Estyn case studies were limited as they failed to elaborate upon the direct impact on children's ability to develop into independent learners.

Donaldson (2015) highlighted that one principle of the new Welsh curriculum is to excite and inspire children to want to learn independently. Personal experience would suggest that most educators wish to inspire their pupils to develop into independent learners. As Pointon and Kershner (2001) suggest, all teachers' pedagogical approach will be diverse. Thus, differing pedagogical approaches may place different degrees of priority upon developing independent learners and each school context is different. Consequently, this may contribute to an ineffective development of independent learners. As a result, Hill (1991) suggested that until different ideas are resolved, there could be limited progress with independent learning. Thus highlighting the importance of a shared understanding of what independent learning is.

Williams (2003) highlighted practical difficulties of developing independent learners, including curriculum constraints and ensuring curriculum coverage. However, Bullock and Muschamp (2006) suggest that the development of independent learners is possible even in present conditions and is

actually already a growing practice in primary schools. Their research project aimed to explore how children learn effectively within the primary school setting, and appeared the most similar research project. Upon wider reading, there is evidence to suggest that how independent learning is developed, may vary in each school setting. Estyn (2020) highlighted an example of how a school in Wales have encouraged their pupils to develop into independent learners, whereby learners are encouraged to set goals for themselves, create success criteria and assess their own progress. This case study became a focus for the research project, whereby participants would be questioned how they are encouraged to develop into independent learners.

2.4-Defining independent learning

In a secondary source based upon independent learning, Williams (2003) suggested that independent learning could be defined as being able to learn by oneself. Wider reading would imply that this a shared view amongst researchers and theorists. However, this interpretation would lead to the assumption that independent learning means working alone. In contrast, both Meyer et al. (2008) and Mars (2015) believe that working in isolation fails to encourage independent learning. 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 an educational psychology concept developed by Vygotsky (1978). Personal experience would suggest that some children require encouragement or support from an adult in order to to develop into an effective independent learner.

Wood (2002) suggests that within socio-constructivist theories, independent learning is integral in the process of learning, through social interaction with peers, learners can develop higher mental functions including reasoning and deeper thinking. Working with more capable peers could aid children in developing into an independent learner. However, both Williams (2003) and Meyer et al. (2008) suggest that some children may misunderstand the notion of independent learning and abuse the freedoms that are associated with it, hence hindering their ability to become effective independent learners. Moreover, Williams (2003) suggested independent learners need to recognise that social and physical boundaries should be observed. Gershon (2014) suggested that being able to work independently is one of the most vital skills that a child can develop. This suggestion is in agreement with Williams (2003) who suggested that children should be prepared for the World

whereby adults cannot provide constant support and guidance, and thus failing to prepare them would be doing them an injustice.

Whitebread (2000) startlingly suggests that teachers are in a position where they could either encourage a child's independence or risk extinguishing it forever. Thus highlighting how teachers have the power to either encourage children to develop into independent learners or risk undervaluing its importance in their personal development. Personal experience would suggest that children who are encouraged to be independent are more confident in doing so. Moreover, Benson and Voller (1997) suggest that all children have an internal capacity to develop into independent learners, which is sometimes suppressed by institutional education. Hence, it is important that teachers do not suppress the principals of independent learning and rather encourage it.

Mars (2015) suggests that becoming an independent learner is a developmental process, with various interlinked changes occurring over periods of time. This idea supports Candy's (1991) perception that independent learning is both a goal and a process. This suggested posed an implication for this research project as a process is difficult to monitor through qualitative data. Thus, teachers could provide support and help for children throughout their journey towards developing into independent learners. Mars (2015) supports this idea whereby teachers are integral to the development of independent learners. This quote highlights that becoming an independent learning may take time for children to develop, and could be regarded as a journey.

Donaldson (2015) implied that suitable contexts whereby learners can demonstrate the ability to apply learning independently is an important part of support and scaffolding. Thus suggesting that teachers should endeavour to provide supportive opportunities for children to be independent. Moreover, Hattie (2012) highlighted the need for teachers to provide children with opportunities for independent learning and the ability to transfer and utilise them in other contexts. In agreement, 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. Without children being provided with independent skills and the ability to revisit those skills, they could fail to develop into independent learners. Moreover, Meyer et al. (2008) suggested that independent learning is fostered by providing opportunities that encourage learners' motivation, curiosity, and self-belief. Thus implying that dispositions such as motivation and self-belief are important factors

in developing independent learners. However, Gorman (1998) believes that independent learning is not just giving children more freedom, rather it requires teachers to consider learning stages and outcomes and providing children with ownership over their own learning.

Pintrich (2000) introduced a theoretical model of self-regulated learning, the model places emphasis upon the significance of learners planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning. Zimmerman (2002) extended Pintrich's (2000) model by emphasising the importance of motivation within self-regulation, and self-reflection. Within Pintrich's (2000) model there are four phases, divided into cognitive, motivational, behavioural and contextual. These theoretical models were explored and aided to shape the research strategy, and enabled decisions upon key themes or areas to research more succinctly. In support of these theoretical models, Meyer et al. (2008) suggest that there is considerable evidence for increased academic attainment and achievement when children plan their own learning. Upon examining wider literature it is evident that principals including motivation and self-regulation are viewed micro-processes that are linked with independent learning.

As aforementioned, upon examining wider literature it is evident that varying terms attempt to define what independent learning is. In agreement with this, Meyer et al. (2008) suggested that in wider literature, many theorists describe similar themes, including children demonstrating an understanding of their learning, becoming motivated to take responsibility, and working with teachers to design teaching and learning processes. Biggs and Tang (2007), Candy (1991), Percy and Salter (1976) and Holec (1981) all suggest that autonomy and motivation are essential components to independent learning, as children who are motivated to learn are more able to take ownership of, and self-reflect upon their learning. In support of this, Williams (2003) suggested that motivated children have a good ability to work independently.

2.5- Benefits, Opportunities and Limitations of Independent Learning

Williams (2003) believes that independent learning should have reciprocal benefits for both learners and teachers. However, one challenge of independent learning is that teachers' and learners' perceptions may not correlate with the conceptualisation of independent learning, which from wider reading, evidently has many different interpretations. Gleason (1967) suggested that there are many

words associated with independent learning, yet they fail to enlighten what the concept entails. In order to mediate this challenge there needs to be a clear and common understanding and this research project should address this. Moreover, in support of this, Gershon (2014) highlights the need for a common understanding as this enables a shared definition of what independent learning is.

Delve (2021) queried whether the mindset of adults hinders children's independent learning. This suggestion that mindsets need to be adjusted involves an adjustment to teachers' roles and may create a barrier towards independent learning. However, both MacBeath (1993) and Wood and Millichamp (2000) believe this could be overcome through supporting teachers, ensuring that there is a clear comprehension that independent learning does not undermine their role. Another suggestion that both Nunan (1994) and Wood and Millichamp (2000) agree upon is that some teachers do not perceive all pupils to be capable of becoming effective independent learners, thus posing an issue to the successful implementation of developing independent learners. Therefore, teachers need to be made more aware of the importance of independent learning and how it impacts upon their role as teachers, and the learners within their class.

Drew (2018) stated that some children may attempt to develop into independent learners, but feel accountable for their decisions and therefore cautious to make the wrong decision. Factors such as intrinsic motivation and self-belief may result in some children feeling under-confident in developing into independent learners. Personal experience would agree with this suggestion. Gershon (2014) suggested that fear of failure could be described as an obstacle to developing independent learners. Moreover, Dweck (2006) developed the concept of growth mindset, which from personal experience is encouraged in most primary school settings. Thus, motivation which coincides with growth mindset, is a major factor in independent learning. Estyn (2018) highlighted a case study whereby one school aimed to further develop pupils' independence skills and thereby linked their activities to the concept of growth mindset. In support of this, Zimmerman's (2002) theoretical model highlights the significance of self-motivation.

Rogers (1969) suggested when a learner discovers their own learning resources, decides their own actions, and set goals, significant independent learning is maximised. Moreover, Estyn (2019) highlighted another case study whereby pupils were provided with opportunities to create success criteria and set targets, and thus these pupils were equipped to become independent learners. This is insightful for teachers as when pupils have a significant role within the direction of their own learning, they develop into independent learners. Moreover, both Pintrich (2000) and Zimmerman (2002) highlight the importance of taking ownership of learning and target setting within their theoretical models. Also, Percy et al. (1980) highlighted that learners' independence can develop from various factors including teachers, peers, and methods. The limitation of this suggestion was that there appeared a lack of elaboration on which particular methods were being referred to. However, independent learning can represent a challenge to conventional academic structures and can involve both children and teachers taking measured risks. Many theorists including Boud (1988) and Brook, Hunt and Hughes (1994) have explored these issues and how best to mediate the issues. This suggestions contradicts certain principals of education and can create issues for both teachers and learners.

Williams (2003) argues that children should be able to function in an appropriate way in the world, detached from their parents. Moreover, Mars (2015) support this idea and suggested that parents and teachers strive for children to develop into independent adults capable of working and living independently. In her work, Williams (2003) described this as an autonomy-dependency axis. Hereby, highlighting the important role that the primary school settings have when developing learners who are independent both within and outside the school context. Fisher (1995) suggested that due to class sizes, teachers may greatly benefit from independent learners. This suggestion alludes that independent learners can alleviate teachers' pressures which include large class sizes. Another pressure that could hinder developing independent learners is curriculum demands. Gershon (2014) highlighted that it is possible to teach in a manner that permits independent learning without impacting upon curriculum demands. In contradiction to this suggestion, Meyer at al. (2008) suggested that one major challenge is teachers' perception that the curriculum delivery requires whole-class teaching strategies, which could restrict the opportunities for developing independent learners as it is practitioner directed rather than encouraging children's responsibility for their own learning. In agreement, 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.

Merry (1998) highlighted that children process information and constructively build upon their prior knowledge, thus enabling them to become independent learners. In addition, Williams (2003) highlighted that independent learners draw upon prior knowledge in order to develop their learning further. Similarly, in their research upon independent learners, Bullock and Muschamp (2006) discussed the importance of applying prior knowledge. Both Graves (1993) and Magin et al. (1993) support this suggestion, and in their work have both explored various approaches towards fostering independent learners. Moreover, teachers need to be made aware of independent learning approaches, however there appears to be gaps in wider literature regarding specific independent learning approaches. Therefore, as Meyer et al. (2008) suggested, if these limitations were addressed, guidance could be generated for schools based upon how to successfully develop independent learners in their own context. Upon wider reading it became apparent that despite much discussion on what independent learning was, there lacked evidence of good practice backed up by theory specifically.

2.6- Chapter conclusion

Newby (2014) suggested that researchers need to observe their research field in order to understand where to begin. This chapter identified principals that contribute to independent learning, therefore shaping the research project and providing focus. The historical review and the independent learning within the current curriculum formed the aims and objectives of this research project, as the differing perspectives highlighted aspects to investigate further. Wider reading highlighted independent learning has readily been discussed by various theorists, and priority placed upon developing skills associated with independent learning. However, it is evident there is a conflicting idea of what independent learning actually means. Within the primary research method, I endeavour to discover whether this is the case amongst participants.

Mars (2015) suggested that long-term aim of education, even after leaving primary education, is for children to make correct choices and take accountability for their actions. Moreover, within prior curriculums there was apparent focus placed upon developing independent learners. However, within the present Welsh curriculum, combined with an ever-changing society, there is more of a

priority placed upon the development of independent learners. This could potentially pose a professional issue for teachers, however, it is important that opportunities to develop independent learners are effectively planned and provided. Williamson (1995) suggested that teachers need to be supported with guidance and a whole-school approach may aid coherence combined with a shared, common understanding.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1-Overview

Gonzales et al. (2008) suggest that qualitative research provides understanding of participants' attitudes and intentions. The main purpose of this research project is to explore how children are encouraged to develop into independent learners. The main method utilised to gather empirical evidence was semi-structured interviews, which provided qualitative data that was interpreted, and analysed within the results and findings chapter. Through utilising the research method to gather primary data, empirical evidence shall be combined with wider reading to gain a better understanding of the research field. The questions posed within the research method mainly derived from the aims and objectives of the research project, and wider reading discovered in the literature review. In their work, Cohen et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of choosing suitable methods to gather qualitative data which helps researchers achieve the aims of their research project, providing descriptive answers and giving insights into the research area.

Throughout this chapter there shall be a discussion of alternative research methods. Onwegbuzie and Daniel (2003) highlight that a limitation of qualitative data is that action researchers fail to assess whether the data and participants are trustworthy. Hereby, this shall be rectified by ensuring participants are encouraged to answer as honestly as possible. BERA (2018) suggest that researchers should communicate the extent to which their data collection, and the conclusions from their findings are reliable, valid and generalisable. The validity and reliability of the answers from the research project shall be explored within this chapter. In order to adhere with ethical guidance, primary research was not undertaken until the ethics form was approved (Appendix One).

3.2- Adhering to Guidelines

BERA (2018) state that researchers should ensure that participants comprehend the process in which they are participating, including an explanation on why their participation is important, and how their responses will be utilised. An outline of the purpose of the research project and an explanation of the research procedure, was shared with the participants prior to commencement. Participants acknowledged that they possessed the right to withdraw from the research process at any time, adhering to BERA guidelines (2018). Prior to commencing the data collection, participants verbally acknowledged the purpose of the research project and that they understood the withdrawal procedure.

UNICEF (1989) highlighted that children who are capable of forming their own opinions should be provided opportunities to share these views freely. Newby (2014) suggested that children may assent to participating in research, however, may not fully understand the nature of their responses. Therefore, children should be facilitated to provide assent. Researchers working with children need to ensure that children are made to feel at ease and understand the research process (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2022). During the interviews with the pupil participants, the purpose of the research project was explained at an age-appropriate level. This included an explanation of how their responses would be utilised, the procedure of the interview, and the interviews did not commence until the children had assented to their participation verbally. Alas, my position as class teacher and researcher may accuse a power imbalance, utilising my status of a teacher to decide whether children should partake in personal research to benefit an academic qualification. Prior to the pupil interviews, parental assent was obtained, each participant was provided with a letter explaining the research project (Appendix Two).

George (2023) suggested that action research can pose a risk of bias and the researcher holds a degree of power when drawing conclusions. Researchers should endeavour to carry out their research with honesty, trust and respect (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2022; BERA, 2018). Having worked with most of the participants within the research project, could accuse me of bias or conflict of interest due to familiarisation with the participants. Hence, Cohen et al. (2018) suggest this would hinder the validity and reliability of the data collected. Both Newby (2014) and Tyson (2017) recognise researcher positionality as a limitation of action research. Both as class teacher and action 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) and Thomas (2017) all recognise this issue and suggest that this issue needs to be overcome in order to assure the validity of the results. In order to avoid bias, I assured participants' their answers did not have to be what they perceive as the right answers or certainly the answers that the researcher would want to hear, and would certainly not be used against them. In order to act ethically, researchers should adhere to the Data Protection Act (legislation.gov.uk, 2018) and adhere to anonymity procedures. Participants in this research project were informed that the information gathered, would remain anonymous. Prior to commencing the interviews, participants were informed pseudonyms should be utilised, enabling them to be unidentifiable within the data gathered.

3.3- Selecting research participants

Elliott (1991) suggested that action research is collaborative, whereby the methods empower participants directly effected by the outcomes of the research. Therefore, effective collaboration through the research method was vital to the successful outcome of this research project. Hek & Moule (2006) and Newby (2014) both discuss sampling to select a section of the population to participate within the research project. The sample group involved within the pupil interviews included two members of each class within Progression Step Two and Three. Moreover, Cohen et al. (2018) highlight convenience sampling which involves choosing a sample of the population from those who the researcher has access to. Logistical issues such as distributing the research methods with the whole of Progression Step Two and Three were considered, however, it would have been impractical to interview a large number of participants. The pupil participants in the research project represented a cross-section of pupils, with an even gender split and represented were a mixture of children from different pupil groups. Due to a cross-section of children being represented, different views were solicited, thus providing sufficient data to analyse. Within the pupil interview group, some members of our school council were present. To enhance the principles of action research, the school council were encouraged to feedback to their respective classes upon the research project's findings on developing independent learners. A natural progression to this research project is to gain more perspectives from the children's perspective. Delve (2021) suggested that if results highlight that children do not understand what independent learning means, deliver an assembly on it, thus making a purposeful and meaning understanding. As an action researcher, I have since shared the findings of the research project with colleagues and have shared with pupils during an assembly

Cohen et al. (2018) highlight that time and accessibility are two factors that prevent researchers gaining information from the whole population. One of the practical issues of interviews is that they are time-consuming, therefore it is important to implement a time-frame. The time-frame ensures the interviews did not 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, questions were phrased succinctly to collect the data required, awhile minimising an exhausting list of questions. Although Newby (2014) suggested open-ended questions benefit action research, this could potentially mean participants may deviate from the question. To mediate this, the questions

were carefully worded. The teachers invited to participate in the research methods worked within Progression Step Two and Three, the participants included members of the senior leadership team. Moreover, there was a mixture of experience including teachers who have taught previous curriculums, and recently qualified teachers. This greatly benefited with opinions on independent learning within the current Curriculum for Wales (Donaldson, 2015).

In his theoretical model, Piaget (1971) discussed the concrete operational stage, where the focus is logical thought. Commensurate with age, children within Progression Step Two and Three would be in the concrete operational stage. Hereby, these children may have a greater understanding of what independent learning means. In contradiction, Meyer et al. (2008) suggested that Piaget's stages are based upon children assembling their own cognitive abilities through self-motivated actions, thereby, cannot be directly taught to execute tasks beyond their level of cognitive ability. This suggestion could be incorrect, corresponding with pupils' stage not age principle that many educators perceive. However, Malone and Smith (1996) suggest that intellectual abilities develop more as pupils get older. During Progression Step Two and Three, learners will go through numerous changes within social, intellectual and emotional development, and thus are in a suitable position to provide insightful responses to aid this research project. Both Watts and Ebbutt (1987) and Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that group interviews can be time saving and collate a wide range of responses quickly. In order to have reasonable number within the groups, the pupils were divided into two groups, despite this, participants were interviewed individually ensuring everyone's opinions were shared.

3.4- Selecting research methods

Cohen et al. (2018) highlight that qualitative data provides researchers with responses from participants that are open to interpretation. After consideration, I concluded utilising individual teacher interviews and pupil group interviews that would provide qualitative data to analyse. Moreover, Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that group interviewing is often preferred when interviewing children as it encourages interaction. In agreement, Greig and Taylor (1999) suggest that group interview makes children participants feel more at ease. Ultimately, after examining other research methods, I concluded that interviews would provide an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions and motivations surrounding independent learning. Also, McCombes (2022) identified that interviews can provide valuable responses and insights. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983)

believe that interviews can be perceived as naturalistic enquiry which is interlinked with the concept of action research. Therefore, harmonising with the action research approach of this research project.

Initially, two main research methods were decided upon to gather data, which were questionnaires and interviews. However, Grigg (2015) highlighted that interviews provide an opportunity to clarify viewpoints whereas questionnaires do not. Hence, ultimately interviews were decided upon as the sole principal research method. Cohen et al. (2018) state that questionnaires provide helpful data however they do not provide critical information that interviews provide. To elaborate, questionnaires may provide quicker answers which can be easier to analyse, however, it can be difficult to validate truthfulness and reliability. During wider reading, it became evident that questionnaires had been utilised in previous research projects exploring developing independent learners. Whitebread (2000) also supports this suggestion that in many studies questionnaires have been the primary research method. Thus, utilising interviews could generate some insightful data. However, upon examining wider literature I discovered that some schools utilise independent learning surveys (Delve, 2021). These surveys were child-friendly and utilised by schools to gain children's perceptions on how often they are provided with opportunities to develop into independent learners. These surveys were considered as part of this research project however logistical issues prevented them from being disseminated, but have been considered for future research and a natural progression to this research project.

Observations were also considered, as this research method is popular amongst action researchers. Blenkin and Kelly (1992) suggested that observation can be a useful tool for determining if children are capable of being independent and monitoring their progress. As an action researcher, I considered providing tasks for pupil groups and observing how absorbed they become with the activity. Observations also link into Zimmerman (2002) and Pintrich's (2000) theoretical models whereby observers may witness potential motivational attitudes and approaches to independent learning. One limitation is that observations could lead to subjectivity and bias. Whereby researchers would strive to observe occurrences that would aid their research. In agreement with this, Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that subjective observation bias may result in the observer noting what they may perceive having occurred rather than the phenomena itself.

Another considered research method was focus groups, particularly with the pupil participants. However, after deliberation, it was decided that small group interviews should be undertaken. Cohen et al. (2018) and Smithson (2000) in their research both share the opinions 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. In order to mediate this issue arising during the pupil group interviews, I explained that with each question, each participant in turn will have their views listened to and respected. Williams (2003) highlighted that independent learners are respected and valued for their views. Thus, I endeavoured to ensure the participants within this research project felt their views were valued and respected.

3.5- Designing the research methods

Kvale (1996) suggested that interviews can be open to researcher's interpretation, and therefore hinder the validity of results due to misunderstanding on either the researchers' or participant's behalf. When designing the research methods, unconscious bias was a concern. Being mindful of this, questions were worded carefully as not to let hypotheses deter participants. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2018) highlight this limitation and suggest exercising caution. During interviews in this research project, some views were clarified with the participant in order to clarify answers, prior to analysing them within the results and findings chapter. Silverman (1993) suggested that interviews should be structured to an extent as this will enable a degree of control over the reliability of the data findings. The semi-structured approach aided more reliable and honest answers.

The interviews were semi-structured, an attempt was made not to deviate from the main questions within the interview schedule. However on one occasion an additional question was posed to clarify a position based upon a particular response. When designing the research method, I ensured the research methods were participant friendly, while ensuring their purpose to elicit views from the participants based upon independent learning. BERA (2018) highlight that researchers should recognise the impact that their research has upon the workloads of their participants. In order to obtain answers to aid the research project, but being cautious that 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.

Both Cohen et al. (2018) and McCormick and James (1988) perceive interviewing with child participants as complicated, they elaborate upon issues such as posing questions at the correct level. On the other hand, Newby (2014) argues that 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 younger participants. Whereas, surveys or questionnaires could be interpreted differently to what is intended and thus could provide incorrect data. Henceforth, interviews were decided upon as the most suitable method for this research project and the action research approach.

3.6- Questioning strategies

This research project is respondent-focused and therefore open-ended questions are preferable as closed-ended questions can lead to bias, as highlighted by both Wright and Powell (2006) and Cohen et al. (2018). When designing the research methods, questioning strategies were considered carefully in order to achieve the aims and objectives of this research project. Moreover, most of the questions utilised were open-ended. Gershon (2014) suggested that open-ended questions encourage participants to be more independent as the responses do not require a single or definite answer. In agreement, Newby (2014) highlighted that open-ended question responses highlight how people can subscribe to different views, which is an aim of this research project. Both Caldwell (1997) and Gershon (2014) suggest that open-ended questions can aid pupils to become more independent as it promotes the idea of independent thinking and promotes discussion. Thus harmonising the purpose of this research project in developing independent learners. However, Silverman (1993) suggested that during interviews participants need to understand the question in the same manner, therefore open-ended questions should be explained to ensure validity.

Meyer et al. (2008) and Newby (2014) both agree that open-ended questions possess no response ideals imposed upon participants and permit them to respond in their own words, and their responses are valuable and provide a sense of the personal views and opinions. However, Newby (2014) highlighted exercising caution when phrasing questions to not confuse the participant or using wording that would lead participants, thus resulting in biased responses. Cohen et al. (2018) discussed there is a risk of researchers asking leading questions, aiming to elicit participant responses that benefit their research. In order to mediate this issue, careful consideration was undertaken whereby the questions within the research methods did not lead the participants into providing answers that would benefit the outcome of this research project. Wragg and Brown

(2001) discussed the idea of conceptual questions, which aid researchers to obtain ideas, definitions and reasoning in the area being researched. Some questions encouraged participants to consider the purpose of independent learning and associated concepts that defines it.

Both Patton (1980) and Spradley (1979) explored experience questions, a technique which requires participants to elicit and divulge experiences. In order to achieve an understanding of how the participants believe the Curriculum for Wales (Donaldson, 2015) aids itself in developing independent learners, questions were posed that required participants to describe their experience of independent learning and whether they believe it is interlinked with the Curriculum for Wales. In order to gain understanding of opportunities for independent learning, questions were posed whereby participants had to explain situations where they had been an independent learner.

Oppenheim (1992) highlighted that wording is a significant factor particularly in regards to attitudinal questions. One aim of this research project is to gain an understanding of pupil and teacher participants' attitudes towards independent learning. Thus, their responses would benefit a common understanding of what independent learning is and whether the participants perceive independent learning to be beneficial or not. Therefore, a methodical approach when wording questions ensured that the participants were not directed into giving particular responses. Cohen et al. (2018) highlighted that participant voice is integral within interviews. Upon conclusion of the interviews, participants were encouraged to add any comments in order to elicit their own views which they believe may not have been covered 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

Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that action research is an efficient approach for researchers as it is participatory. Interviews were selected as the primary research method, as these would aid achieve the aims and objectives of this research project, whereby I aimed to gain perspectives on developing independent learners within the primary school setting. Other research methods did not suit the research paradigm, but much consideration was placed upon the most effective research method. Qualitative data gathered would then provide valuable answers to interpret and analyse. In future research, more consideration could be undertaken into quantitative data and how this would aid

research into exploring independent learning. In order to adhere to researcher principles including University of Wales Trinity Saint David (2022) and BERA (2018) guidelines, when undertaking the research methods I endeavoured to be honest and trustworthy. Aware of bias and utilising responses to benefit my research, it was ensured that the questioning strategies did not lead participants.

Chapter Four: Results and Findings

4.1-Overview

The penultimate stage of Sagor's (2005) action research model is implementing action and analysing data. Newby (2014) implied that qualitative analysis involves researchers obtaining different opinions and interpreting them. Hence, qualitative research is regarded as an important paradigm for action researchers aiming to uncover opinions and perceptions on various fields. Thus, suiting the overarching aim of this research project which is an exploration into developing independent learners within the primary school setting. Moreover, in agreement with this suggestion, Cohen et al. (2018) argued that qualitative research provides a voice to participants and can reveal corresponding attitudes and actions. This idea of providing participant voice, coincides with the principles of action research and the notions of independent learning. However, Newby (2014) suggested that responses uncovered through qualitative research methods could be perceived as subjective, hereby being influenced by the researcher's feelings towards particular research areas. This issue was robustly mediated through carefully worded questions. Mars (2015) implied that becoming an independent learner is a developmental process. To prove or disprove this suggestion, this research project could have benefited from a longitudinal study. However, as this research project utilised a deductive approach, a short time frame was implemented and action research is usually small-scale. Despite the short time frame, responses provided during the research project highlighted interesting perspectives on independent learning that informed the results and findings chapter.

Davies and Hughes (2014) suggest that interpretive phenomenological analysis is used if the researcher is seeking connections between gathered data and interpreting meaning. Within qualitative data, interpretive phenomenological analysis is insightful and aids action research. Moreover, Cohen et al. (2018) describe triangulation as the utilisation of several methods of data collection. Hereby, utilising pupil and teacher interviews, similarities and differences were identified, then compared to wider literature. Additionally, as the research project was small scale, triangulation of data offered a valuable insight into the overarching question of the research project. Newby (2014) suggested that a limitation of action research is lack of rigour. This limitation was mediated by triangulation of results compared with wider reading.

4.2- Context of the research project

McKernan (1991) stated that action research is taken in situ and is participatory. The research project was undertaken at a small primary school in South Wales and included ten children and three teachers participating in the primary research method. Newby (2014) highlighted that children's perspectives differ to adults' but are equally valid. The primary research method of face to face interviews enabled the researcher to clarify any questions the participants possessed regarding the research project. The interviews were not audio recorded and the responses were transcribed utilising note taking, the answers were clarified with the participant, and then transcribed onto a document on a password protected computer, adhering to BERA guidelines (2018). Transcription allowed myself, the researcher, to detail important comments as a verbatim record of the interview. Cohen et al. (2018) describe this form of transcription as beneficial. However, when transcribing, I was unable to observe participants' body language and emotions. Chen et al. (2018) regard being unable to monitor participants' emotions as a disadvantage. In future research, I would utilise a recording device in order to monitor participants' body language and emotions simultaneously as this may signify their honest feelings towards independent learning, awhile monitoring the participant's personal well-being. Nevertheless, the instant writing down of the responses allowed opportunities to clarify viewpoints and ensure that the data was interpreted 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

Both Alderson (cited Christensen and James, 2004) and Docherty and Sandelowski (1999) suggest that children are regarded as a primary source of knowledge concerning their own views, opinions and experiences. Gershon (2014) suggested it is important to discuss with children what it means to be an independent learner. The initial question to commence was "what does being an independent learner mean to you?". The aim of this question was to highlight a potential shared understanding of independent learning. Surprisingly, a majority of pupil participants perceived independent learning as working alone. Pupil C suggested it meant "being able to work things out for yourself". In contradiction, Pupil A responded that being an independent learner involves "having a little bit of help from either your friends or a teacher". This response was insightful as it highlighted that more children need to recognise independent learning does not necessarily mean working alone. One recommendation is that teachers discuss with their class what it means to be an independent learner.

Gershon (2014) suggested that whereby practitioners may have a better idea about what independent learning entails, pupils are likely to be less certain. This statement only partly supports empirical evidence, as majority of pupil participants possessed an understanding of the principals of independent learning. Although, if more pupils participated in the research project, this opinion could be contradicted. Only a few pupil participants viewed independent learning as interactionist. This suggestion agrees with findings by Williams (2003) who claimed most people regard independent learning as working alone. Moreover, Pupil E suggested that effective independent learning comes from "working with a friend". Whereas Pupil C suggested that independent learning can "mean asking a friend or a teacher for help". Patel (2022) highlighted that independent learning meaning children working alone is a misconception. This misconception needs to be addressed if progress with developing independent learners is to be made. The differing responses from pupil participants supported a personal hypothesis of an absence of a clear understanding of what independent learning means. To mediate this recommendation, combined with findings from this research project, as an action researcher I shall create a clear definition of what independent learning is and share this with colleagues and pupils.

Pupil I suggested that being independent is being able to do things "automatically and being able to get on with tasks". Black et al. (2006) suggest that trust is a significant factor when developing independent learners, and empowers pupils to become active participants in their own learning. Hence, children need to be provided with a degree of trust in order to develop into effective independent learners. During the pupil interviews, some pupils mentioned their teachers provide them with responsibility to decide upon strategies or resources to utilise during lessons. Furthermore, Pupil D stated in the classroom it is important for children to "know where things like numeracy equipment and dictionaries are" to help them be independent learners. In support of this, Wenden (1998) suggested that independent learners can adopt an active approach to learning and know which strategies to deploy. Hereby, by pupil participants recognising which strategies and approaches need to be utilised, they are beginning to develop into effective independent learners. Gershon (2014) suggested that minimising teacher talk can encourage pupils to think for themselves. On the contrary, Pupil E suggested that sometimes their teacher "explains the task to the class before giving us a chance to work out what the answer may be or letting us think of what

the task involves". This suggestion may imply that some teachers fail to provide children adequate time to think independently thus hindering their ability to develop into independent learners.

Cohen et al. (2018) explored the idea of process questions which involve participants explain a process. Within the interviews, pupils were encouraged to identify opportunities whereby they had been independent learners. Pupil C believed when they were "working a task out without much help from the teacher" they were being an independent learner. Whereas Pupil B suggested that it was when they had "thought of an answer and checked if it is right, maybe by using a book, buddy or brain to help". These responses failed to correlate with Bullock and Muschamp's (2006) research, whereby most participants could not describe many specific examples of when they were developing independent learning skills. Both Pupils A and D agreed that they are independent learners during topic work. In agreement with this suggestion, Webb and Vulliamy (1996) perceive topic work as an aid to developing independent learners as it involves enquiry. This also contrasts with research carried out by Bullock and Muschamp (2006) whereby their pupil participants were unable to recognise the opportunities they were provided to develop into independent learners.

Pintrich (2000) discussed behavioural affects within his theoretical model, and how this impacts upon independent learning. Pupil participants were questioned whether they perceived independent learning as a "good or a bad thing" in order to elicit responses on the benefits and limitations of developing into independent learners. Nearly all pupils responded that they believed being an independent learner was a good thing. Although, Pupil C suggested that "sometimes independent learning can be a little bit scary", especially when they are having to "work things out by ourselves". Thus highlighting that some children may not possess the resilience and motivation which aids them develop into independent learners. Pupil F added that being an independent learner can "set you up for adult life and things like college, work or university". Moreover, Pupil H suggested it is important to "develop independent learning skills now as it may be harder to develop them later in adult life". As a researcher, this highlighted pupils recognise the benefits of developing into an independent learner, such as preparing them for later life.

The next objective was to explore perceptions on developing independent learners within the Curriculum for Wales (Donaldson, 2015). When posed with the question "which one of the four purposes links to independent learning the most?", most pupil participants responded with "healthy and confident individuals" and "ambitious and capable learners". Moreover, Pupil A suggested it

was healthy and confident individuals that linked to independent learning the most as “you need to be confident when you are trying your hardest to be independent”. In contrast, Pupil C 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”. In support of this suggestion, Duffy (1998) highlighted that children’s intrinsic motivation flourishes in classrooms where the environment inspires them, and both creativity and imagination are valued. Furthermore, Pupil J suggested that they believe it is ambitious and capable learners that links best to independent learning, as “you have to believe that you are capable and won’t just ask a teacher for help and will give tasks a go before asking for help”. In contrast, Pupil E suggested that “all of them link to independent learners”. This response was slightly ambiguous but could possibly suggest that this participant views each of the Four Purposes as being interlinked with independent learning.

In his theoretical model, Zimmerman (2002) highlighted that self-reflection is an important factor of independent learning. Pupil B suggested that sometimes they are “made to reflect upon their work and correct any mistakes to make them right”. However, Gershon (2014) highlights that in order to encourage children to take be independent, teachers should help their learners recognise failure as an opportunity to learn. Therefore, correcting mistakes would not aid children to develop into independent learners. Similarly, Delve (2021) argued that teachers should let children make mistakes. Therefore one recommendation from this action research project is to ensure that practitioners create a learning environment where pupils feel safe to make mistakes. Moreover, Pupil A explained that their class teacher “tells us to put our thumbs up or down to show how well we understand our work”. Also, Pupil D suggested sometimes their teacher tells them to “write down what we have learnt in the lesson”. Thus highlighting that the pupil participants recognise that assessment for learning contributes towards developing independent learners and empowers children to identify their personal progress. Moreover, Meyer et al. (2008) highlighted that formative assessment could increase pupils’ feelings of motivation and achievement. Pupil G mentioned that their teacher gives them “some time to reflect upon our work” and this is “done quickly at the start of a new lesson”. In support of this, Gershon (2014) highlights the important role that self-reflection has upon developing independent learners. Hence, responses to this question highlighted that pupils perceive reflecting upon personal progress as an important part of developing into an independent learner.

Bucknall (2012) highlighted that when children become active participants in their own learning, it results in increased independence. Pupil B suggested that when they can make choices in their learning and “help to decide upon things such as creating success criteria to know what we are doing, and using self-assessment, we are being really independent”. In his work, Galton (1989) explored the significance of providing children with an increased role in decision-making in the classroom, and giving responsibility and ownership over their own learning. Similar to research carried out by McCallum et al. (2000) and Bullock and Muschamp (2006), many pupil participants in this research project would have preferred less dependency and more ownership over their learning. Pupil C responded that there are “posters around the class that help us remember how to be an independent learner”. Williams (2003) highlighted a case study where classrooms prompts in the learning environment reminded children how to develop into effective independent learners. As a result of these findings, supported by wider research, posters have been created to be disseminated across the school in order to aid pupils develop into independent learners.

Pupils B, C and H agreed that their class teachers encourage them to “think for themselves”. Moreover, Pupil A suggested that sometimes their class teacher encourages them to decide how to present their learning, but “not all the time”. In contrast with this, Williams (2003) believes that a pedagogical approach which encourages contributions from pupils recognises the importance of independent learning. Pupils D and J discussed the idea of pupil voice in their responses, they suggested that sometimes they are “allowed to share pupil voice based upon their topic work”, thus directing their learning. Empirical evidence would suggest pupils have an increased self-worth when they believe their views have been valued, thus aiding them to develop into independent learners.

4.4- Teacher interviews

In order to establish teachers’ opinions on developing independent learners, the question “What do you think are the benefits of having independent learners within your class?” commenced the interview. Most teacher participants believed that the benefits of independent learning outweighed the limitations. Nevertheless, the teacher participants also expressed their concerns surrounding independent learning, including pupils abusing the freedoms associated with independent learning. Teachers B and C both discussed children having increased self-worth and responsibility as a result of independent learning. Moreover, Teacher A mentioned they would “worry that the standard of

work would not be sufficient if pupils were allowed to always be independent”. In contrast, Williams (2003) exemplified a case study whereby both pupils and teachers possessed high expectations for effort and presentation, which resulted into pupils developing into effective independent learners. Teacher C articulated that independent learning means “children working alone and with a peer appropriately”, and the necessary conditions for fostering independent learning include “good motivation, self-belief and children not just relying upon the teacher as the provider of knowledge”.

In their research, Risemberg and Zimmerman (1992) discovered that more-able pupils spontaneously utilise independent learning strategies more often. In agreement with this suggestion, Teacher C highlighted that more-able pupils may “find it easier” to be independent learners. Whereas in contrast, Teacher A suggested that their more-able pupils “lacked the resilience necessary” for independent learning, and claimed the lack of resilience could have “potentially stemmed from home learning whereby pupils became reliant upon adult support”. In her work, Williams (2003) recognised the attitudes and influences that prevail from the home environment and how they can directly impact upon the development of independent learners.

Sammons et al. (1995) suggested that an approach whereby pupils have an active role and shared responsibility over their learning, boosts self-esteem. Therefore aiding children to develop into effective independent learners. Moreover, Teacher B believed their pupils personally “lack resilience due to factors including low motivation or self-esteem”, and thus need to “seek reassurance from teachers”. Teacher B then elaborated this was due to parents providing “too much support at home”. Personal experience would reinforce this suggestion as some children are reliant on adult support and would prefer reassurance over exactly what is expected from them. Similarly, Gershon (2014) suggested that fear of failure could hinder pupils’ ability to develop into independent learners. Teacher C suggested that some of their pupils “are scared to fail”. Hence, this fear of failure could contribute towards pupils’ reluctance to develop into effective independent learners. However, Williams (2003) suggested it is important that teachers appreciate the range of attitudes that children possess and create an environment in which they can develop into independent learners. In order to mediate this suggestion, it is important that teachers reassure pupils that making mistakes is part of the learning process.

Williams (2003) suggested that benefits of independent learning include children being more socially adept and working to better standards. Within the pupil interviews, a majority of pupils perceived being an independent learner as a good thing, and identified generalisable results. In contrast to this, Teacher B suggested that sometimes independent learning “does not always result in a positive outcome as independence needs encouraging and a shift in mindsets mainly from the children”. Moreover, Teacher C suggested that “some pupils are incapable of being truly independent” and highlighted a “lack of resilience and motivation within some pupils that creates a barrier to independent learning”. These suggestions allude and draw parallels to wider reading, whereby practitioners need to encompass a positive mindset in order to encourage children to develop into independent learners. Both Williams (2003) and Estyn (2018) highlight that motivation and resilience are regarded as two major factors of independent learning.

Gershon (2014) suggested that independent learning requires adequate resources and minimising teacher talk. In contrast, Christodoulou (2014) argued that teacher instruction is necessary for children to develop into independent learners. Additionally, Teacher A suggested they encourage independent learning by “providing the children with their tasks, equipped with some resources and bare minimum instructions, and then ask the children what they think the task may involve”. Thus encouraging the children to think of what the task entails, developing their independent learning skills. Teacher C highlighted that they believe that both open-ended questions and “playing dumb” by omitting some knowledge can aid independent learning. Gershon (2014) suggests this approach encourages pupils to actively draw upon existing knowledge and discover answers independently. Personal experience would highlight that this approach can encourage children to consider their work in depth, thus developing into independent learners. However, this approach could result in pupils gaining misconceptions and must be exercised with caution. The responses collated in this research project have helped address a gap in the literature base, whereby an exploration of strategies to aid developing independent learners appeared limited.

Teacher A suggested that one limitation of independent learning is that children could “create misconceptions or errors”, and believes that 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, Teacher A added that “if this is the case whereby pupils are creating frequent errors or misconceptions, the teacher will need to intervene to address the issues”. In support of this response, Williams (2003) suggested when working independently there poses a risk

of learners not fully understanding the task and must be monitored carefully. Moreover, Teacher B suggested that some practitioners may be “tempted to intervene too early, rather than giving pupils autonomy to solve answers independently”. This suggestion supports a personal hypothesis, whereby some practitioners fail to provide enough time to children for them to think independently. In support of these suggestions, Pascal and Bertram (1997) suggest that one of the most difficult things is not over-supporting pupils. This suggestion highlights that practitioners should not intervene and rather encourage learners to be less reliant on adult support, thus developing into independent learners.

Throughout this research project, I aimed to gain a better understanding of whether teacher participants believe the Welsh curriculum (Donaldson, 2015) aids in developing independent learners. All teacher participants agreed that they believe the new curriculum does place focus upon developing independent learners. However, Teacher C suggested that as a Progression Step Three teacher, possibly the pupils have “not had the full effects of the curriculum and therefore are not as independent, whereas Progression Step One children are more exposed to the new curriculum and will be better prepared in years to come”. In support of this suggestion, Estyn (2018) highlighted that in good practice, pupils who develop independent learning skills well in Progression Step One will then apply them purposefully as they progress throughout the school. Similarly, Teacher B suggested that it is important that children are “encouraged to be independent learners in Progression Step One, as they will become more adept to working independently”. Moreover, in support of this suggestion, Delve (2021) suggested that in her observations, in some schools, children are more independent in younger classes as opposed to older classes. However, in contrast to this suggestion, a case study explored by Williams (2003) acknowledged that children’s independence grows as they move through school. In summation, several factors such as motivation, maturity and confidence can contribute equally within children's process of developing into independent learners.

Teacher A highlighted how the 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”. Fisher (1996) highlighted that children should be encouraged to be curious, creative and independent through resources and well-selected materials. Teacher A highlighted that children could utilise strategies

that encourage independent learning such as “using a book, using their brain or using a friend’s knowledge”. This response correlates with some pupil participant responses, where resources or working with a partner were suggested as an aid to developing independent learners.

Moreover, Teacher B highlighted that one benefit of independent learning is that it permits practitioners to take a “step back”. In support of this suggestion, Williams (2003) suggested that well equipped independent learners can alleviate pressures on teachers, thus implying that they are less reliant on teacher support. Similarly, Teacher C highlighted how 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, Teacher A highlighted that one limitation of independent learning is that it can lead to “confusion in children’s knowledge”, as sometimes “learners’ cognitive abilities are not developed fully enough to take in the information, and this can lead to misconceptions that become embedded in their long term memory”. However, in contrast to this, Teacher C suggested that independent learning enables learning to be “more meaningful and it remains in the children’s longer term memory” as it “engages their interest and motivation”. One recommendation from this research project would be for practitioners to ensure a balance between independent learning and teacher-led learning to ensure progress and opportunities are provided for children to develop into independent learners.

Zimmerman (2002) and Pintrich (2000) highlighted the importance of self-reflection within their theoretical models. In their response, Teacher A suggested that self-assessment allows children to “become more independent learners and possess ownership over their own learning”. Moreover, Brown and Harris (2013), Nicol and McFarlane-Dick (2006), and Williams (2003) all agree that self-assessment contributes to independent learning and enhances the clarity of the learning outcomes, monitors the learning processes, and encourages reflection. In agreement with this, Gershon (2014) suggested that self-assessment encourages children to reflect on their learning independently. Moreover, Teacher C suggested that independent learning permits them to create an “engaging and appropriate curriculum” and learners “think for themselves and have the capacity to set things like goals and success criteria, along with being able to choose what they learn about and reflect on it”. However, Teacher B highlighted that pupils need to be encouraged to self-reflect, and “fail to do so automatically”, and with curriculum constraints there is “little time” to reflect. Related to this response, some pupil participants suggested they are not provided with enough time to self-

reflect. Further research could be undertaken to understand the impact of self-reflection in developing independent learners.

Latent themes appeared from teacher participants' answers including good resources, self-differentiation and building mutual trust. Merry (1998) suggested that trust encourages self-esteem and motivation. Moreover, Williams (2003) recognised that for children to become independent learners acknowledgment is needed of children's potential for responsibility and children need to be trusted and permitted to be independent learners. This research project has highlighted that empowering children to be independent learners may require some resilience, and equipping learners with effective strategies and resources can aid their development into independent learners.

Harvey and Chickie-Wolfe (2007) suggested some learners instinctively understand how to work independently, but some need to be encouraged to develop strategies to develop into independent learners. Similarly, Teacher B suggested that some learners "find it easier to be independent than others, but all learners may demonstrate some form of independent learning but potentially in their own way". When asked to elaborate upon this, Teacher B suggested that children have "strengths and weaknesses in particular areas, and this might be the case within independent learning". Furthermore, Teacher A suggested they were "unsure whether all pupils were capable of becoming independent learners". In their research, both Wood and Millichamp (2000) and Nunan (1994) have considered this suggestion and debated whether all pupils are fully capable of developing into independent learners. Despite this suggestion, Williams (2003) suggested that all pupils should be provided with opportunities to develop into independent learners. Further research or interviewing more participants could have benefited the strength of responses.

Forman and Cazden (1985) explored co-operative group work, a pedagogical strategy that aids independent learning, whereby children are involved in tasks that encourage them to explain their own understanding, evaluate personal performance and reflect upon their progress. As aforementioned, in contrast to pupil participants' responses, most teachers participants mentioned the significant role of peer interaction which aids children to develop into independent learners. Teacher C 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). In agreement with this suggestion, Gershon (2014) advised that

encouraging learners to seek advice from peers can contribute to them developing into independent learners. In support of this, Estyn (2018) highlight how good practice in some schools involved pupils talking and working collaboratively.

Both Fitzpatrick (2007) and Bahar and Hansell (2000) suggested that word-association questions can reveal information about the development of particular areas such as independent learning, and aids researchers gain participants' perceptions through divulging associated words. Teacher A highlighted how "well-organised classrooms" aid pupils to become independent learners. Williams (2003) agrees with this statement, implying that when pupils are aware that resources are readily-available this helps them to become independent learners. Moreover, Teacher C suggested that pupils "knowing their classroom well and being aware of where resources are located" can aid them to develop into independent learners. In agreement with this suggestion, Nutbrown (1999) highlighted that when child knowing resources are constant, they assume responsibility without the constant hindrance of adults.

Teacher B discussed the importance of "working walls and utilising independent challenge cards". Thus highlighting particular strategies that practitioners could deploy in order to aid the development of independent learners. Gershon (2014) highlighted how displays could aid independent learning. Thus highlighting that the classroom climate is an essential factor in developing independent learners. Meyer et al. (2008) implied that the relationship and collaboration between teachers and children is an essential component of independent learning, however, it is not solely sufficient. Moreover, the importance of a 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 including Bates and Wilson (2002), Alexander et al. (1992), Williams (2003) and Gorman (1998). However, this idea has often been discussed without the theorists identifying or recognising what the vital parts of an enabling and supportive environment entail as highlighted by Malone and Smith (1996), Sharp et al. (2002) and Paris and Paris (2001). Therefore further research could be undertaken to better understand this suggestion.

4.5- Interpreting and analysing qualitative data

Newby (2014) highlighted that when interpreting data, researchers may witness emerging patterns. It became apparent that participants had varying opinions on what defines an independent learner. Thus proving a personal hypothesis which implied there are varying definitions and a need for a shared definition to create a common understanding is essential. On the contrary, within this research project more participants could have been interviewed to better disprove or prove this hypothesis. Latent themes that emerged within the teacher interviews was a recurrence of the mention of positive role-modelling, motivation and encouragement of self-reflection.

Teacher B suggested that metacognition impacts upon a child's ability to work independently. This correlated with the pedagogical principle of reciprocal teaching explored by Palinscar and Brown (1984), which requires teachers modelling the teaching of a particular activity, and then children are encouraged to teach the task to a peer. In support of this, Alexander (2000), Galton et al., (1999) and Gipps et al. (1999) all suggest that metacognition can prevent a child from becoming an inactive learner entirely reliant on whole-class teaching. Moreover, Sielger (2002) suggested that self-explanation, an instructional practice that encourages children to provide an explanation may encourage children to develop into independent learners. Teacher A suggested they encourage their pupils to explain tasks “back to them in order to check for misconceptions”. Similarly, Pupil B explained that sometimes their teacher provides them “with a particular task and we have to work it out for ourselves”. One personal hypothesis which was only partly proved was that children are provided with too much support and not given enough opportunity to develop into independent learners. Hence, some pupil participants failed to mention too much adult support in the class. Whereas teacher participants implied some children are reliant on adult support, particularly from support staff. A natural progression to this research could be to undertake research methods with support staff to gain opinions on their role within encouraging the development of independent learners.

The DfES (2006) suggest that independent learners are active and curious. Pupil D highlighted that independent learning can help them develop a “sense of curiosity and a want to know more”. Some of the pupils suggested that being independent learners means being curious and taking risks. Similar to this suggestion, the Welsh Assembly Government (2010) suggest that learners need to be made to feel safe to be creative and take risks in their learning. Teacher A suggested that a benefit of independent learning is that children can “develop a sense of curiosity when they are not restricted

by the teacher's interests, direct their learning in their and working 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 and classroom environment that enthuses and engages pupils in order to develop their ability to develop into independent learners. Moreover, Williams (2003) suggested that when a school supports a child's curiosity they gain confidence in areas interlinked with independent learning including self-regulation and motivation.

4.6- Conclusion

Sagor (2005) highlights the importance of reflecting upon gathered data and planning informed actions. The utilised primary research method provided a better understanding of how children can be encouraged to develop into independent learners within the primary school setting. Although common themes emerged during the data collection, there were varying opinions on what independent learning means highlighting a need for a shared understanding. To elaborate, schools could benefit from sharing a common understanding, which could be achieved through sharing good practice more regularly and carrying out action research and acting upon the findings. This common understanding would require a clear and consistent definition of what independent learning means and what strategies best support its development.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1-Overview

In conclusion, when provided with relevant strategies and resources, children are encouraged to effectively develop into independent learners. However, as Elliott and Norris (2012) stated, what may be suitable for one learner, may not be suitable for another. Hereby, one recommendation as a result of this research project, is that it is important to discuss with children what they feel may help them to develop into independent learners. Cook and Finlayson (1999) believe that children are capable of being independent when the expectations are realistic and understood. Thus highlighting that teachers need to share clear expectations with their pupils in order for them to develop into independent learners. This research project has enabled me to conclude that developing independent learners is a positive disposition which aims to empower children to take an increased responsibility for their own learning and further develop their academic and personal potential.

Koper and Tattersall (2004) highlight that independent learning benefits children and provides positive foundations for them to develop into life-long learners. Williams (2003) also agrees with this statement and highlights that motivation is a driving force for independent learning and encourages a stimulation of lifelong learning. Hence, living in a society where lifelong learners are desired, developing independent learners within the primary school setting needs to be prioritised. Findings as result of this research project suggest that practitioners should provide an environment whereby children are motivated to work with an increased independence and are encouraged to become increasingly independent.

5.2- Conclusion

Meyer et al. (2008) state that despite varying terms being utilised for independent learning, the concept in its various descriptions has several common factors that are important to the learner. As a result of the responses collected and analysed during this research project, I conclude these factors include motivation, self-belief and self-reflection. Similarly, in their work, Meyer et al. (2008) believe that independent learning is reliant upon factors, including resilience, self-motivation and self-belief. Moreover, there are numerous benefits which support the development of independent learners, including positive attitudes to learning, increased self-worth and ownership over learning. As Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that action research is an ongoing process, I endeavour to ensure that

my pupils are provided with regular opportunities to develop into independent learners. When provided with an encouraging and supportive learning environment, relevant resources and equipped with appropriate strategies, children can effectively develop into independent learners. The final part of Sagor's (2005) model is data reflection. The findings of this research project highlight that independent learning occurs when a learner possesses a significant role in directing their learning, and are permitted to take ownership over their work, reflecting upon their personal progress.

Moreover, Gleason (1967) highlights how resources and learning materials need to be carefully organised to maximise efficiency of developing independent learners. Empirical evidence suggests that pupils need to be provided with freedom in which to develop into independent learners, nevertheless, they should be made aware of how to appropriately behave when working independently. One significant challenge is establishing a balance between too much freedom and too much structure. To remedy this challenge, reflection upon professional practice would need to be considered. The limitations of developing independent learners include curriculum pressures which may limit teachers' ability to provide necessary opportunities for developing independent learners. In support of this suggestion, Moyles (1992) discussed the issue that teachers have between ensuring curriculum delivery while balancing an approach that acknowledges children's right to develop into an independent learner. Similarly, in their research, Bullock and Muschamp (2006) recognised the impact that prescribed testing and curriculum pressure has on developing independent learners. Moreover, careful consideration and reflection upon professional practice could enable teachers to provide opportunities for independent learning while ensuring effective and consistent curriculum delivery.

To address the overarching aim of this research project, action research has been undertaken based upon an exploration into the development of independent learners within the primary school setting. Schön (1991) discussed the idea of reflecting on action. Through reflecting upon collected data, a better understanding has been gained of how to encourage children to develop independent learners within the classroom setting. Providing children with ownership over their learning can encourage learners to possess a positive mindset towards independent learning and thus ensure their development into independent learners. Both Taber (2013) and McNiff (2013) perceive action research as practitioner based research that can be a powerful tool for improvement on a local level. The findings of the research project could be perceived as localised, however are generalisable and

applicable for other primary schools, as the findings highlight some insightful responses regarding the development of independent learners. Whitebread (2000) suggested that on a national level it could be beneficial to possess a shared understanding on principals that interlink with developing independent learners, thus resulting in consistency across schools.

5.3- Informing Future Practice

McNiff (2002) concluded that action research is an effective form of professional self-reflection. Moreover, Newby (2014) highlighted that educational research is undertaken to improve professional practice. This research project has provided an opportunity to reflect upon professional practice and has shaped personal perceptions on developing independent learners. The findings of this research project may not only benefit professional practice but when shared with colleagues could help encourage an improvement of developing independent learners across the school. To conclude, with children living in an ever-changing society and in order to prepare for the future, equipping them to develop into independent learners is vital.

Schön (1991) suggested that action research permits practitioners to submit their practice to conscious reflection. Upon conclusion of this research project, I subjected my professional practice to conscious reflection and have begun utilising strategies discussed within this research project that encourage children to develop into independent learners. Prior to undertaking the research project, within wider literature it was evident there was much discussion about the theory and nature of independent learning. Hereby, I aimed to obtain a better understanding of a more practical approach to developing independent learners. During the research project, I became more aware of supportive strategies that aid developing independent learners. The evidence from this research project has been shared and disseminated with colleagues, as part of the action research process. Furthermore, Newby (2014) stated that researchers undertake action research to make judgement and inform policy. A natural progression following this research project is to make adjustments at policy level and incorporate findings from this research project and incorporate this into a curriculum policy. A recommendation for other primary school settings could be to gain pupils' and practitioners' opinions on independent learning, and this will contribute to a shared and consistent understanding.

Williams (2003) believes that independent learning is a continuum, whereby schools and teachers possess a vital role within that continuum. In support of this suggestion, any encouragement of

developing independent learners needs support from a consistent definition, with corresponding terms and concepts. Both Meyer et al. (2008) and Gershon (2014) agree that a clear definition would aid a better understanding of developing independent learners. Within this research project, it was evident that opinions varied on what independent learning means. However the generalisability of the results is subject to certain limitations, for instance, the sample size was limited. Thus further research involving more participants could strengthen the reliability of the results. Moreover, Estyn (2020) suggest that sharing good practice with pupils and teachers from local primary schools has strengthened pupils' independence. Thus implying that in sharing good practice with cluster colleagues, consistency in developing independent learners might be ensured. Going forward, both as a practitioner and action researcher, I aim to observe and evaluate more practice of independent learning in order to enhance future professional practice and strengthen my understanding of this research field.

McKernan (1991) suggested that action research provides results which can be utilised and shared on different levels. As a result of this action research project, I now possess a greater understanding of what independent learning means. Foremost, a personal aim is to share a clear and consistent understanding of what independent learning is with my pupils, in order for them to feel empowered to develop into independent learners. Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that action research can improve leading school improvement. In conclusion, it is evident that teachers need to equip their children with the appropriate resources and foster a positive mindset towards learning independently in order for their children to develop into effective independent learners.

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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	☐
					Date
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	EWC 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 <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> 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 <u>Existing Research</u> 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>
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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?	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 style="vertical-align: top;"> 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 <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i> </td><td style="vertical-align: top;"> <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 <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	<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.
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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?
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	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 an 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 ganlynnol 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 academaidd 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 cyfweld.

Appendix Four- Pupil interview schedule

Name	
Organisation	

Question one (Context):
1.1. What does being an 'independent learner' mean to you? <i>Beth mae bod yn 'ddysgwr annibynnol' yn ei olygu i chi?</i>
1.2. Can you give me some examples of how you are an independent learner? (Prompts: problem solving, worked something out for themselves) <i>A allwch roi rhai enghreifftiau imi o sut yr ydych yn ddysgwr annibynnol? (Anogaethau: datrys problemau, gweithio rhywbeth allan drostynt eu hunain)</i>
1.3. What is your opinion on being an independent learner? Is it a good or bad thing? <i>Beth yw eich barn am fod yn ddysgwr annibynnol? A yw'n beth da neu ddrwg?</i>
1.4 What helps you to be an independent learner? <i>Beth sy'n eich helpu i fod yn ddysgwr annibynnol?</i>

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.

