



PRIFYSGOL
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Ethical Issues in Teacher Led Research

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Ethical Dilemmas in Educational Research
BERA Symposium

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Aims of the session

- Identify and discuss ways of addressing ethical dilemmas when carrying out doctoral research in your own work place.
- Identify the benefits of close to practice teacher led research taking place in school settings.
- Doctoral research versus teacher continual professional development: same ethical dilemmas?
- Discuss potential ways of addressing ethical dilemmas in teacher led close to practice research.

Outline of session

- Doctoral research: being an insider researcher.
- Education in Wales: current context.
- Welsh Government reforms: expected outcomes and dilemmas.
- The National Mission: how to embrace change and protect the integrity of our professional environment.

Doctoral research- being an insider researcher

Perceptions of support for secondary school learners with dyslexia in France and in Wales: case study analyses

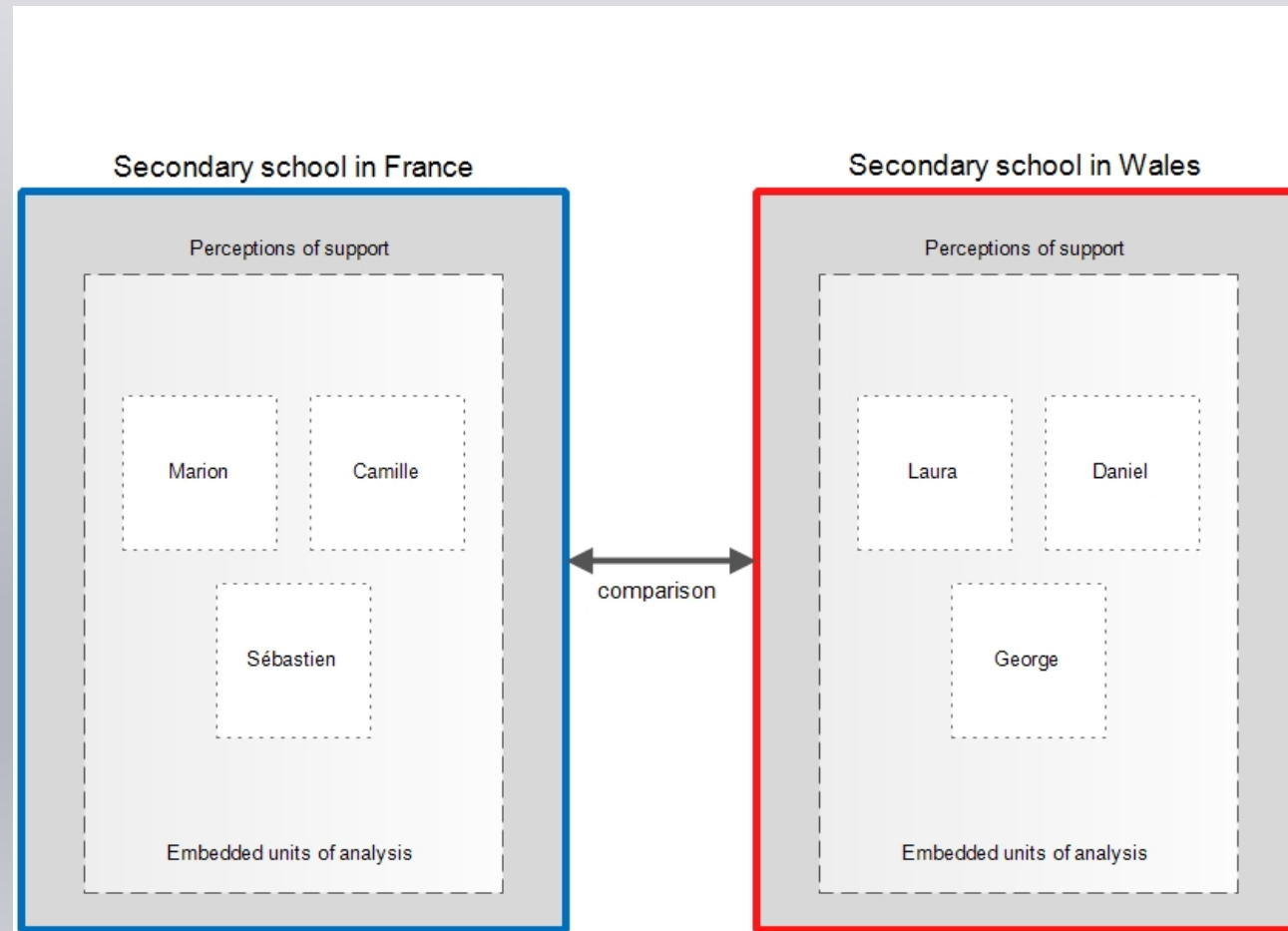
Aims of the study

1. Gain an insight into the schooling experience of children assessed as having dyslexic tendencies.
2. Investigate the impact of the support provided and see things from the point of view of six learners.
3. Give the reader a window on our cultural expectations.
4. Offer a new perspective on how to support learners with dyslexia.

Doctoral research- being an insider researcher

Research design

The cross-cultural aspect of the study lends itself to a multiple case study design.



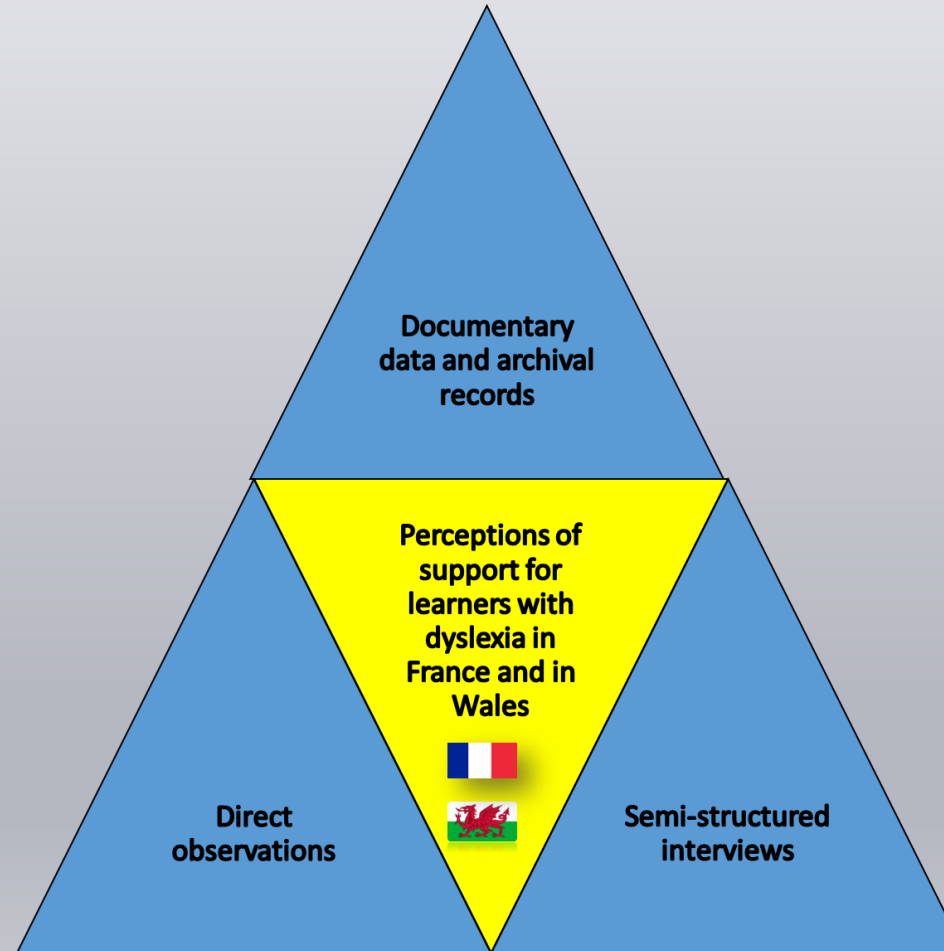
Doctoral research- being an insider researcher

Participants

- **Purposive sample**
- The study involved **23 participants**:
 - 6 learners (3 in Wales and 3 in France).
 - Parents of children involved in the case study (6).
 - 2 Head teachers.
 - 2 Additional Educational Needs coordinators or equivalent.
 - 5 teachers.
 - 1 therapist.
 - 1 specialist teacher.

Doctoral research- being an insider researcher

Methodology: data collection tools used



Convergence of evidence adapted from Yin (2009, p117)

Doctoral research- being an insider researcher



Ethical dilemma

The sets of British data were collected in my work place. Although there are some definite advantages to “researching your own organization while being a complete member” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p121), it also involved a need for “thoughtful examination of the ethical implications of the research on individuals” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p146).

Advantage: I was able to acquire an “understanding in use” rather than “a reconstructed understanding” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p121) of the systems in place.

Doctoral research- being an insider researcher



Ethical dilemma

Potential disadvantage: my roles as a researcher and as the school's ALNCO became "blurred". Indeed, "role duality" (Unluer, 2012, p2) could have led to a loss of objectivity during the research process.

Another potential disadvantage was regarding the unequal power dynamics between the learners involved and myself (Alderson & Morrow, 2011).



Doctoral research- being an insider researcher



Ethical dilemma: how did I address it?

- I sought consent from the Head Teachers.
- I then had to obtain consent from the parents of the children who took part in the study. In order to do so I agreed that, in both schools, the Assistant ALNCO or ALNCO equivalent (France) approached the families on my behalf as information about learners who have been assessed with dyslexia should be kept confidential.
- They were also given a consent letter which gave information about the aims of the study, the participant recruitment, the research tools, data storage, publication, confidentiality, anonymity and the possibility of withdrawing from it.
- The Data Protection Act (1998) guidelines were followed: information gained from research is kept strictly confidential. Participants' names were removed from archival documentary data and pseudonyms were used to refer to participants throughout interview transcriptions and throughout the thesis. Recordings are password protected.

Doctoral research- being an insider researcher



Ethical dilemma: how did I address it?

- I had to make a point of explaining that my activity in respect of this study was completely separate from my employment (ALNCO) and that taking part in the study would have no effect on them as learners:

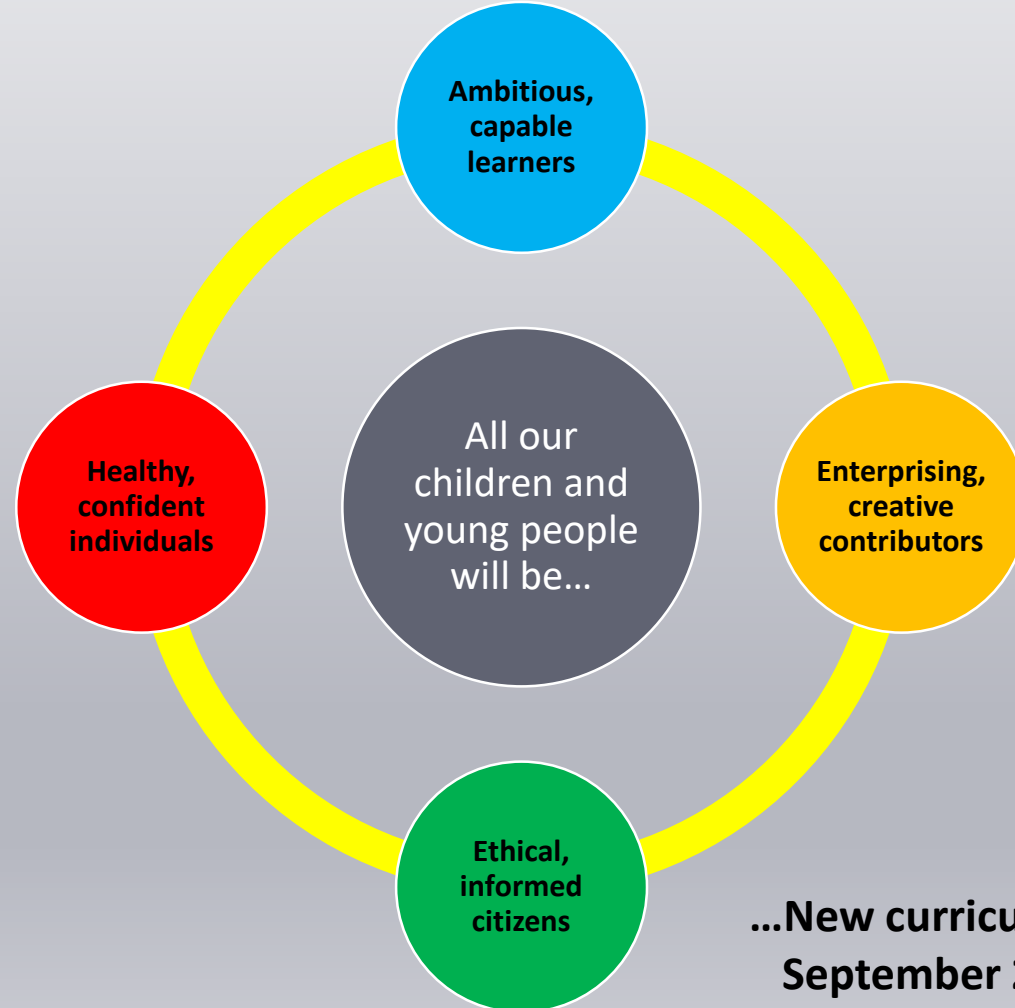
“The researcher’s self-understanding and social vision come into play, with issues of power central to the process” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p147).
- Participants were selected carefully: I avoided choosing learners I taught, as it was important they felt comfortable enough to be themselves and act naturally when data was collected.

+ support from my University Ethics Committee



Education in Wales: current context

- Curriculum Reform Journey: Successful Futures (Donaldson, 2015)



...New curriculum to be fully implemented by
September 2022.

Education in Wales: current context

- **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Bill (to be implemented gradually from September 2020??)**

The New ALN & Education Tribunal Bill sets out three overarching objectives for the proposed new system:

- A unified legislative framework to support children and young people aged **0-25 with ALN in schools and further education** (as opposed to the current system for SEN which goes up to age 16).
- **An integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring with early, timely and effective interventions** (including duties on health boards and local authorities to collaborate with each other to meet a child or young person's ALN through an **Individual Development Plan**).
- **A fair and transparent system for providing information and advice**, and for resolving concerns and appeals (including requiring local authorities to make arrangements for avoiding and resolving disagreements, revising a system described by previous reviews as 'complex, bewildering and adversarial').

Education in Wales: current context

- New professional standards for teaching and leadership (implemented in September 2018):

The five professional standards for teaching and leadership

Working as one...
to secure effective pedagogy
with overarching values and
dispositions



Welsh Government reforms: expected outcomes

Teacher led research as a strategic priority

- Research-informed practice gives teachers the ability to contribute to whole-school improvement for the benefit of our learners.
- Undertaking/facilitating research in their classrooms gives teachers the opportunity to find out more about how students experience learning. This can impact positively on their pedagogical understanding and improve their practice.
- Research engagement can open a dialogue between school leaders, teachers, support staff, students, parents and governors. It can improve understanding of the needs and concerns of all groups and help to create a 'learning community'.

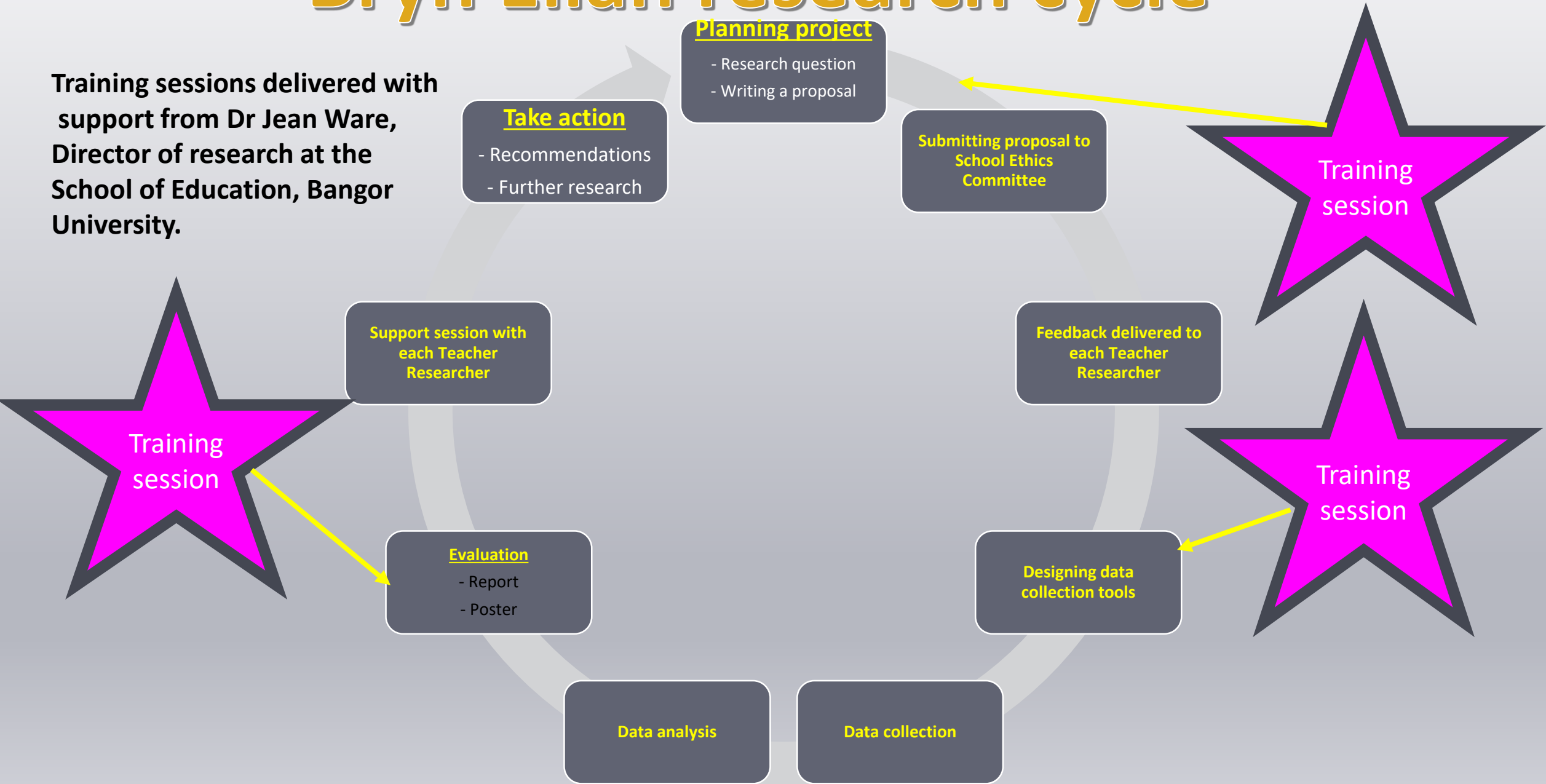
Welsh Government reforms: expected outcomes

- Teachers' professional development: creating a culture of continuous self-assessment and reflection.
- Teachers "take responsibility for innovation" (Furlong 2015, p6).
- Learners' empowerment: active involvement in learning and pedagogical enquiry.
- Teachers are willing to work collaboratively with other teachers and other professionals both day to day and in the development of their practice.

We are ready to welcome tomorrow's teachers by establishing strong links between initial teacher education and continuing professional development of teachers in schools.

Bryn Elian research cycle

Training sessions delivered with support from Dr Jean Ware, Director of research at the School of Education, Bangor University.





RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

“My favourite thing about the school is that the teachers have faith in us and have lots of ideas to make the school a great place.”

Our core purpose

We are a school of high aspirations for all; our motto is in evidence in all we do around the school every day:

‘Achievement for All.’

Why is research in education important to us?

It gives teachers the opportunity to find out more about how students experience learning.

This can impact positively on their pedagogical understanding and improve their practice.

What are the expected outcomes?

Teachers’ professional development: creating a culture of continuous self-assessment and reflection.

Teachers “take responsibility for innovation” (Furlong 2015, p6).

What about our learners?

Learners’ empowerment: active involvement in learning and pedagogical enquiry.

Welsh Government reforms: dilemma

- **Ethical considerations:**

Teacher led inquiries/research projects are now a requirement under teachers' new professional standards.

Should teacher researchers follow BERA Ethical Guidelines in relation to obtaining informed consent from learners/parents/guardians?

Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018)

“The intended audience for these guidelines is anyone undertaking educational research-be they people whose job description includes research, or others who, for a variety of reasons (including studying for a qualification or with the intention of improving practice), conduct research within the field. This includes both independent researchers and those based in educational institutions of any kind (including but not limited to early years settings, schools, colleges and universities)” (BERA,2018, p1).

Welsh Government reforms: dilemma

Ethical Guidelines for Educational research (BERA, 2018)

“It is normally expected that **participants’ voluntary informed consent to be involved in a study will be obtained at the start of the study**, and that researchers will remain sensitive and open to the possibility that participants may wish, for any reason and at any time, to withdraw their consent” (BERA, 2018, p9).

“It is accepted that, sometimes, gaining consent from all concerned in public spaces (face-to-face or virtual, past or present) will not be feasible; however **attempts to make contact should be documented**” (BERA, 2018, p12).

“In circumstances in which some members of a group (such as students in a class or their parents/guardians) have not given consent to participate, researchers should decide whether this was an active refusal of consent, **in which case they would need to respect this and find a practical solution**” (BERA, 2018, p12).

The National Mission: how to embrace change and protect the integrity of our professional environment?

Questions to consider

- Is there always a need for informed consent? Should the introduction / trialling of new pedagogical approaches be considered part of teachers' normal professional role?
- Informed consent versus opt out consent? What about the General Data Protection Regulations/ Data Protection Bill?
- Should teacher researchers gain consent to use information to which they have access in their professional capacity for research purposes? Even if the findings/data will only be shared with colleagues working in the same school?
- Do learners have a real choice to participate or not, or do they feel they must take part due to the imbalance of power between them and the teacher-researchers?