

UCL Centre for
**Educational
Leadership**



(FAR): Making a difference in early years

2023 Bright Start International Conference

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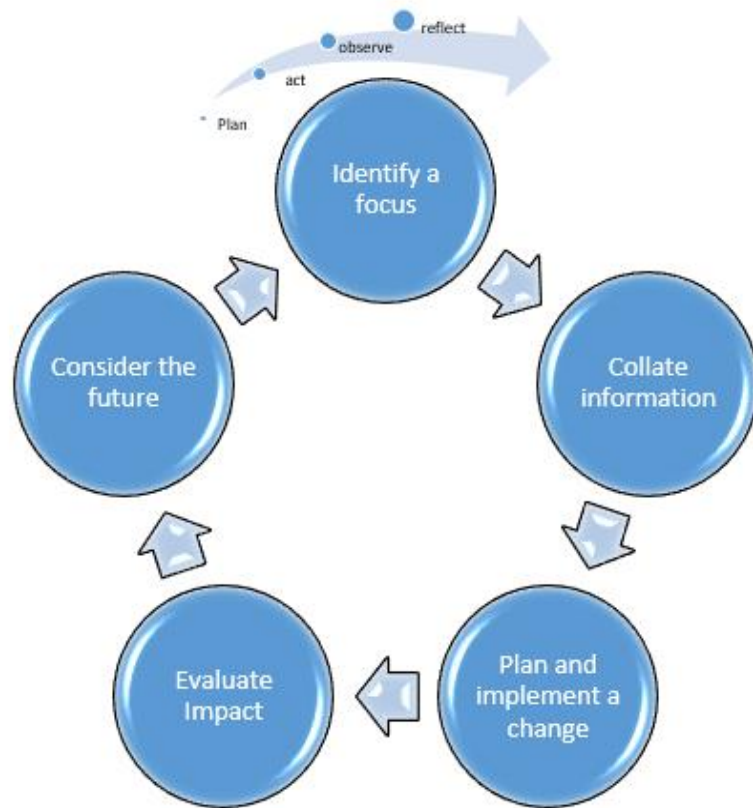
UCL, Institute of Education, Faculty of Education and Society

Introduction

Facilitated action research (FAR) empowers early years educators to make sustainable changes in their practice that benefit the children, families and themselves.

FAR Structure

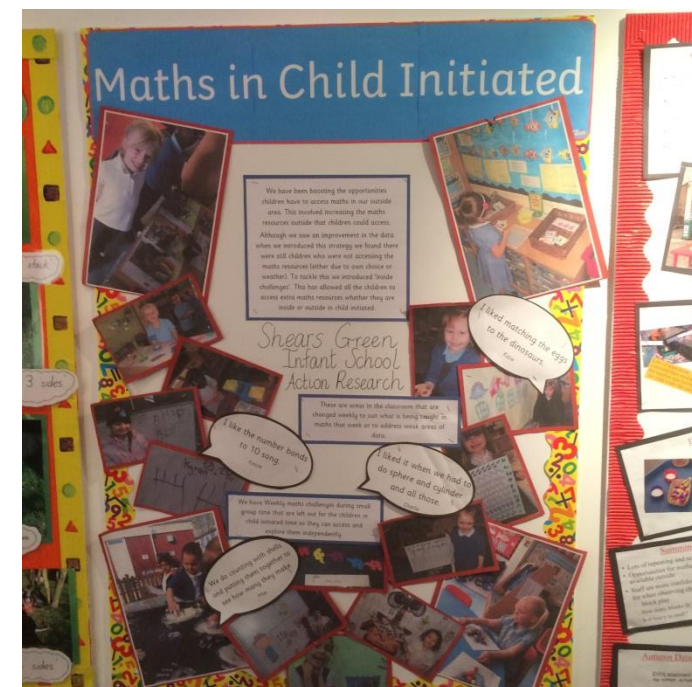
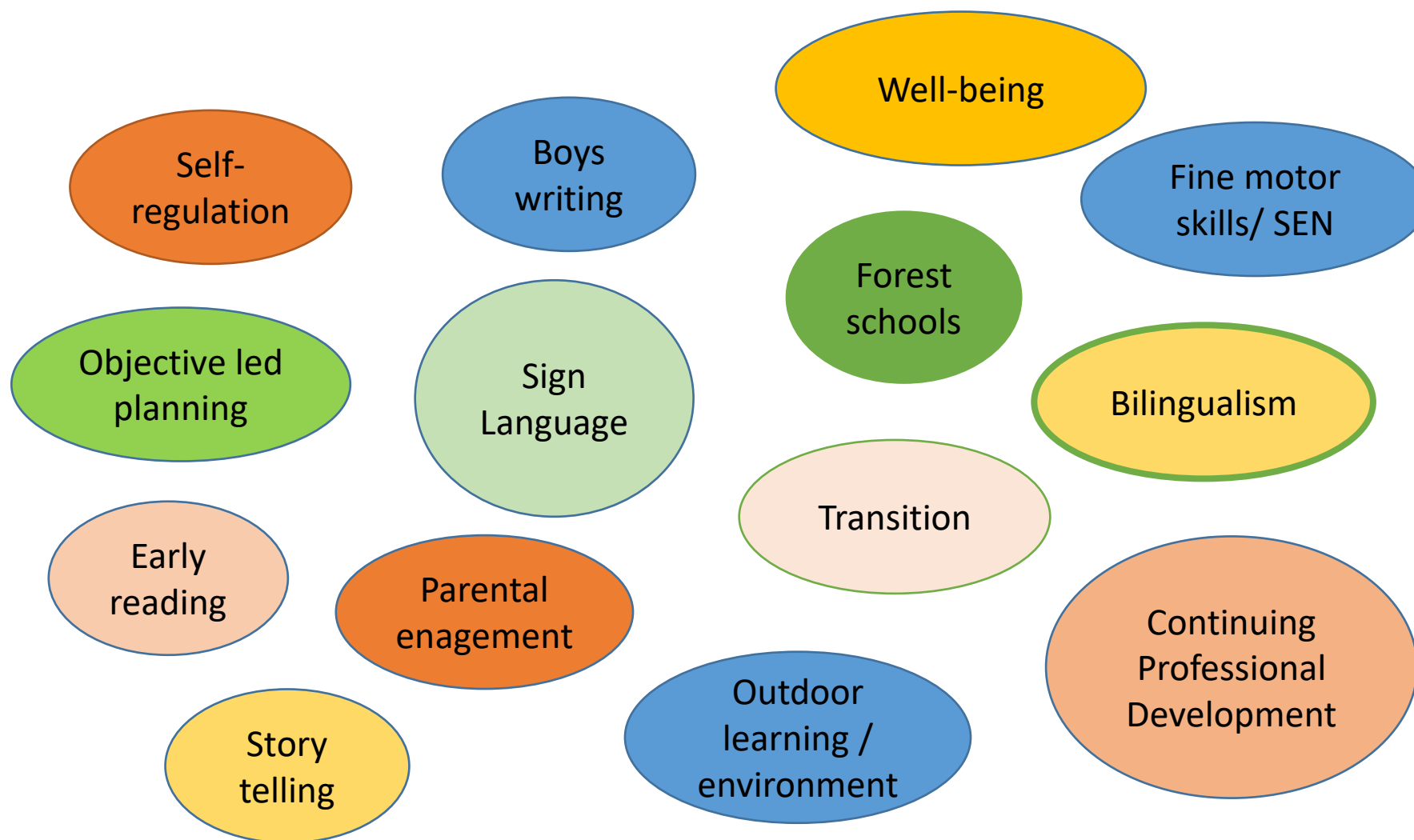
FAR Cycle



Impact Evaluation


1. product- what the project has created (e.g: resource/ environment/ policy)
2. process- what practices have changed (e.g: systems and practices)
3. outcomes for children, families and EY professionals

FAR Projects



- Data:
- Interviews
- Film
- Presentations
- Displays
- Evaluations

FAR Case Study: Project Focus



Bilingualism and the
critical role of parents in
keeping their home
language alive.

Rationale

‘UNESCO has been leading the way and advocating for multilingual education based on the mother tongue from the earliest years of schooling. Research shows that education in the mother tongue is a key factor for inclusion and quality learning, and it also improves learning outcomes and academic performance.’
(UNESCO, 2022)

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/why-mother-language-based-education-essential>

‘Researchers have found that speaking multiple languages at home provides a great benefit to young children. Speaking in your home language to your children from the time they’re born helps build their young minds and prepare them for success in school and beyond. Developing the child’s home language provides the foundation for reading and writing, preparing children to be biliterate (Department of Education,)

<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/early-learning/talk-read-sing/language-en.pdf>

Social and cultural influences on language acquisition

‘Children will learn English from a strong foundation in their home language.....It is important to encourage families to use their home language for linguistics as well as cultural reasons.’

Sharon Bond, Early Years Alliance

<https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/eal-why-home-language-matters>

‘Both of children’s languages need to be developed within and without educational settings’ (Murphy and Evangelou, 2016: 12)

‘Dynamic, physical, social, cultural, natural and historic systems are at the centre of which language is acquired and a system of learning created’ (Mann, 2013)

Mann (2008) Vygotsky and Second Language Learning in C Chapelle. Ed. In The Encyclopaedia of Applied Linguistics: Blackwell

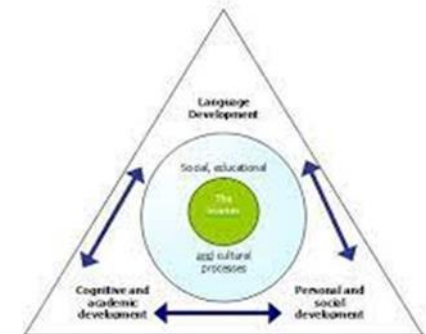


Fig 1 Adapted from Virginia P Collier 1994

Gravelle, M. (2009)
[NALDIC](#)

Challenges in promoting home language (L1)

'In the zeal to learn English, some educators, parents and policy makers seem to have lost sight of the importance of supporting their first language.'

'We often find that many minority language learners end up with only limited knowledge at best of their home language.'

'Parents believe that it is important for their children to learn English as a high status language which will lead to economic success.'

(Murphy and Evangelou, 2016: 12)

FAR Case Study: Keeping Home Language Alive!



Research question:

How will our bilingualism campaign influence parent/carer beliefs in keeping their home language alive?

Aims of Campaign:

- To encourage families to keep their home language alive
- To share information and facts with families of under 5s (and also professionals) regarding bilingualism
- To clear any misconceptions around bilingualism and language development
- To increase parental knowledge and confidence in supporting their child to speak in their home language

How was the campaign run and promoted?

The campaign was run over a period of 9 weeks.

Each week, a **Top Tip**, an **Activity Idea** and a **'Did You Know' fact** related to bilingualism was shared with parents of under 5s and a wide range of professionals working with these families (e.g. health visitors, family engagement workers, family support workers, Bright Start practitioners, and library staff).

The campaign was promoted during stay & play sessions at chosen Children's Centres across the three bright start localities.

The campaign was also promoted during Chatterpillars sessions, at multiagency team meetings, at libraries, and through weekly emails.

Key messages were shared with parents and professionals through display boards and posters at different Children's Centres.



Evaluating Impact

What did you like about our Campaign?

“It was interesting to learn about bilingualism that I am keen for my child to learn another language. I enjoyed the songs and rhymes in different languages and the consistent messages from practitioners.”

Can you remember one thing we spoke about? (e.g. top tip, activity idea, fact)

“I can talk to them (my child) in Arabic even if he responds back in *English*”

“Talking in my language is good for language development and the brain”

“I remember the top tips shared during carpet time and practitioners giving examples of how to introduce language to children through activities.”

What ideas might you try with your child as a result of the campaign?

“Use my home language when sharing books with my child; Use my home language to talk about what is happening in different settings such as at the supermarket and park.”

In terms of quantitative data, post campaign there was a mild increase in parental knowledge around bilingualism which was measured through a series of 3 true/false questions answered by 21 parents/carer's. However there was slight decline in parents perceptions/ratings of their own confidence around bilingualism. It has been difficult to assess the significance of the qualitative results as different/separate groups of parents completed the pre and post campaign questionnaires and the COVID 19 pandemic had impacted on methods used to gather data.

Next Steps:

Summarise findings and share them with professionals

Summarise findings and share them with parents via an online newsletter

Continue to promote key messages through an email bulletin

Ensure that materials are accessible online

Theoretical Framework

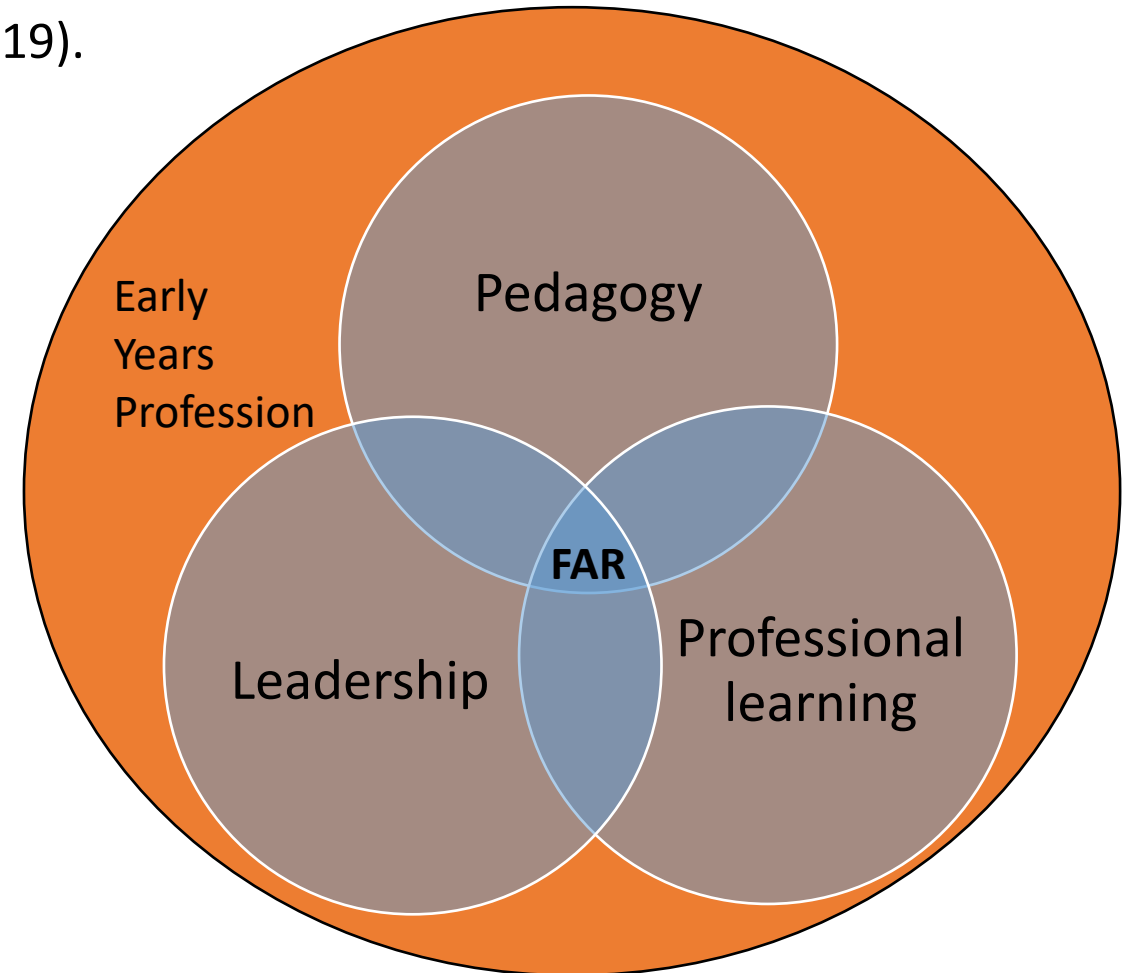
Pedagogical leadership: Palaologou, and Male (2019).

Professional learning: Rogers et al. (2020)

Leadership: Murray and McDowall-Clarke (2013)

Early Years Profession: Nutbrown (2021)

FAR: Facilitated Action Research - Ince and Kitto, (2020)



Learning and value

- “It has had a great impact to actually be more reflective on our practice and exchange ideas with the team. We have been more co-operative and ultimately effective.”
- “using existing literature to inform subjects and how to use it appropriately.”
- “When you do something like that, it makes you think how you can just change and make changes, self- reflection on how you can improve, where do you go from here....how fun it was.”

Implications for Early Years workforce

“Worthwhile to be engaged with to raise standards and provide a better future for our children”

- Professional learning community: “Talking to other practitioners about shared issues was a good jumping off point for what we could do better.”
- “If we hadn’t had the opportunity and asking questions, we wouldn’t have found out who we are and where we can go from here”
- Ince, A. and Kitto, E. (2020) A practical guide to action research and teacher enquiry: Making a difference in the early years
London: Routledge

References

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- Murray, J., and McDowall Clark, R. (2013) Reframing leadership as a participative pedagogy: the working theories of early years professionals, *Early Years*, 33:3, 289-301, DOI: [10.1080/09575146.2013.781135](https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2013.781135)
- Nutbrown, C., 2021. Early childhood educators' qualifications: a framework for change. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 29(3), pp.236-249.
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- Rogers, S., Brown, C., Poblete, X., (2020) A systematic review of the evidence base for professional learning in early years education (The PLEYE Review) *BERA Review of Education* [Volume8, Issue1](#) Feb 2020 PP156-188