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Assessing the impact of virtual school visits in initial teacher education

Submission date
02/02/2024

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
13/02/2024

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
09/02/2024

Condition category
Other

[ ] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[ ] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Intensive Training and Practice (ITaP) is an element of teacher training that is required for initial teacher education in England. ITaP focuses on theory and evidence relating to one aspect of teaching with opportunities for practice and feedback. A pilot of ITaP was conducted by the National Institute of Teaching in 2022. The evaluation of the pilot indicated that hybrid delivery of key components could help scale ITaP to reach many trainees with consistency. However, there is limited evidence about how best to deliver remote and blended learning in the context of teacher education programmes. This trial will compare the effectiveness of two 'modes' of implementing exposure to expert practice as part of the ITaP programme: virtual school visits and in-person school visits. The trial's objectives are twofold: to estimate the relative effectiveness of virtual school visits compared to in-person visits in ITaP and to describe the experiences and perceived advantages or disadvantages of these two instructional modalities.

Who can participate?
Teacher trainees in England pursuing specialisms in secondary education and undertaking training with one of the following NIoT campuses: (i) North and West; and (ii) South, East and London.

What does the study involve?
The two modalities for delivering the school visit days constitute two distinct interventions: the in-person school visit and the virtual school visit. The two modalities are described below:

In-person school visit:
Regional secondary schools will be selected for their capacity to provide a good example of expert practice for trainees and will be accessible from the N&W and SE&L campuses. Trainees will visit in person to observe teachers' practice. Trainees will observe several teachers within the school across a range of subjects and year groups. Teachers will be selected for observation by the school leadership team, in collaboration with the NIoT regional teams, and are made aware of the purpose of the observation in advance. When they arrive, trainees will receive an introductory session, including a welcome from the school leadership team and an overview from the NIoT tutor to remind them of the aims of the day. Trainees will be placed in small groups to observe different teachers around the school, without the expert facilitator present.

Following a series of classroom observations, trainees will come together as a group for a session facilitated by the tutor, where they will be invited to discuss the lessons they observed and deconstruct teachers' use of the techniques in question.

Virtual visit:
Trainees will attend the regional NIoT campus in person to take part in a group exercise, involving a live-streamed, virtual school visit. Trainees will be on campus together with 1-2 expert facilitators. A team on-site in the school will film several teachers from a range of subjects and year groups. Teachers will be selected for observation by the school leadership team, in collaboration with the NIoT regional teams. At the start of the day, trainees will receive an introductory session, including a welcome from the school leadership team and an overview from the NIoT tutor to remind them of the aims of the day. In this large group, trainees then observe different teachers, as the on-site team moves around the school. The on-site team will be accompanied by a senior teacher within the school, who will reflect on what was identified following observations. Expert facilitators in the campuses with the trainees may interject and highlight aspects of practice. Following the classroom observations, the expert facilitators will lead a session where the trainees are invited to discuss the lessons they observed, and deconstruct teachers' use of the techniques in question.

Participants will be individually randomly allocated to two groups. Each group will undergo an equivalent intervention experience overall, although at different timepoints; one will participate in the virtual school visit for ITaP 3 (i.e. the third round of ITaP in their ITE year), while the other will take part in an in-person visit for ITaP 3. After the initial phase, the groups will cross over to experience the alternative mode of delivery in the subsequent phase. This means that individuals who had a virtual school visit in ITaP 3 will have an in-person visit for ITaP 4 (i.e. the fourth round of ITaP in their ITE year), and vice versa.
The researchers will assess outcomes related to trainees' grasp of the evidence base around the effective use of questioning and scaffolding techniques, their ability to apply knowledge, self-efficacy, and their perceptions of (i) ITaP and (ii) the school visit day.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participating trainees will be offered the opportunity to be named in the acknowledgements of the outputs associated with the research. They will also be invited to express interest in joining the Research Advisory Group and provide input on aspects related to dissemination and impact. In terms of risks, while attention and care will be taken by the research team to reduce the risk that participants may be identifiable, qualitative data carries the risk that some may be identifiable through the in-depth description being used. In addition, while the researchers will change the wording of staff titles to reduce the risk of re-identification (e.g. Head of ITE Faculty will be written as 'Senior ITE staff'), a small staff team includes risks to confidentiality for individual staff participants. These risks of re-identification will be made clear to staff member participants in the consent process, and they will be given the option to review any direct data or described scenarios from their transcripts used in the final report and to remove them if they feel uncomfortable.

Where is the study run from?
National Institute of Teaching (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
September 2023 to April 2024

Who is funding the study?
Department for Education (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Lydia Lymperis, l.lymperis@niot.org.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator

Contact name
Dr Ellen Turner

Contact details
National Institute of Teaching
Potovens Lane
Wakefield
United Kingdom
WF1 2PF
N/A
e.turner@niot.org.uk

Type(s)
Public, Scientific

Contact name
Dr Lydia Lymperis

Contact details
National Institute of Teaching
Potovens Lane
Wakefield
United Kingdom
WF1 2PF
N/A
l.lymperis@niot.org.uk

Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
v1

Study information

Scientific Title
Evaluating the relative impact of a virtual school visit as part of Intensive Training and Practice (ITaP) in initial teacher education: Study protocol for a mixed-methods randomised trial

Study objectives

The trial aims to test whether the virtual school visit can be considered as effective as the in-person school visit, with the null hypothesis being that there is a significant difference between the two approaches, and the virtual school visit is less effective than the in-person school visit.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 14/11/2023, National Institute of Teaching (Potovens Lane, Wakefield, WF1 2PF, United Kingdom; N/A; s.chong@niot.org.uk), ref: N/A

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Randomized control parallel crossover trial and mixed-methods process evaluation with interconnected objectives

Study type(s)
Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Intensive training and practice in Initial Teacher Education with two foci: Questioning and Scaffolding

Interventions
The study comprises two parallel strands: a randomized control trial and a mixed-methods process evaluation, with interconnected objectives.

Randomized control trial:
The trial will use a parallel crossover design. Participants will be individually randomly assigned to two parallel arms, or groups. Each group will undergo an equivalent intervention experience overall, although at different timepoints; one will participate in the virtual school visit for ITaP 3 (i.e. the third round of ITaP in their ITE year), while the other will take part in an in-person visit for ITaP 3.

After the initial phase, the groups will cross over to experience the alternative mode of delivery in the subsequent phase. This means that individuals who had a virtual school visit in ITaP 3 will have an in-person visit for ITaP 4 (i.e. the fourth round of ITaP in their ITE year), and vice versa.

Mixed-methods process evaluation:
The mixed-methods process evaluation will aim to build theory about how a school visit works to achieve the aims of ITaP and to understand mechanisms of impact for virtual and in-person delivery in achieving these aims.

An estimated 12 trainees will participate in individual semi-structured interviews. Trainees for the individual interviews will be sampled purposively with the support of regional NIoT ITE programme leads, aiming for a diverse representation, considering various characteristics such as age, gender, engagement levels in the ITE programme, fee-paying vs. salaried routes, and SEND status.

The two modalities for delivering the school visit days constitute the two distinct interventions: the in-person school visit, and the virtual school visit. The two modalities are described below:

In-person school visit:
Secondary schools will be selected for their capacity to provide a good example of expert practice for trainees and will be accessible from the N&W and SE&L campuses. Trainees will visit in person to observe teachers' practice. Trainees will observe several teachers within the school across a range of subjects and year groups. Teachers will be selected for observation by the school leadership team, in collaboration with the NIoT regional teams, and are made aware of the purpose of the observation in advance. When they arrive, trainees will receive an introductory session, including a welcome from the school leadership team and an overview from the NIoT tutor to remind them of the aims of the day. Trainees will be placed in small groups to observe different teachers around the school, without the expert facilitator present. Following a series of classroom observations, trainees will come together as a group for a session facilitated by the tutor, where they will be invited to discuss the lessons they observed and deconstruct teachers' use of the techniques in question.

Virtual visit:
Trainees will attend the NIoT campus in person to take part in a group exercise, involving a live-streamed, virtual school visit. Trainees will be on campus together with 1-2 expert facilitators. A team on-site in the school will film several teachers from a range of subjects and year groups. Teachers will selected for observation by the school leadership team, in collaboration with the NIoT regional teams. At the start of the day, trainees will receive an introductory session, including a welcome from the school leadership team and an overview from the NIoT tutor to remind them of the aims of the day. In this large group, trainees then observe different teachers, as the on-site team moves around the school. The on-site team will be accompanied by a senior teacher within the school, who will reflect on what was identified following observations. Expert facilitators in the campuses with the trainees may interject and highlight aspects of practice. Following the classroom observations, the expert facilitators will lead a session where the trainees are invited to discuss the lessons they observed, and deconstruct teachers' use of the techniques in question.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
1. Grasp of evidence base is measured using two quizzes generated by the study team: one for questioning and one for scaffolding (attached – 'Primary Outcome 1'). Assessment will take place at baseline and endline for ITaP 3, and again at baseline and endline for ITaP 4
2. Ability to prepare and apply knowledge is assessed using responses to a total of six (3 for ITaP 3 and 3 for ITaP 4) digital approximations available on the Proxima platform. Assessment will take place at baseline and endline for ITaP 3, and again at baseline and endline for ITaP 4
3. Self-efficacy is measured using a self-report scale adapted from Bandura's (2006) Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale. Assessment will take place at baseline and endline for ITaP 3, and again at baseline and endline for ITaP 4

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Ability to prepare and apply knowledge is assessed using trainees' lesson plans at baseline and endline for ITaP 3, and again at baseline and endline for ITaP 4
2. Trainee perceptions are measured using 5-point Likert scales to rate:
2.1. How useful trainees found the school visits

2.2. How useful they found ITaP as a whole as part of their training
Assessment will take place at endline for both ITaP 3 and ITaP 4

Completion date
01/04/2024

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Randomized control trial:
1. Participants undergoing initial teacher training at the National Institute of Teaching during the year 2023/24, pursuing a secondary specialism
2. Participants registered with and undertaking training either at the (i) North and West or (ii) South, East and London campus of the NIoT.

Mixed-methods process evaluation:
1. Trainees and NIoT staff participating in and delivering the ITaP programme across the North and West (N&W) and East, South, and London (SE&L) NIoT campuses

Eligibility criteria for trainees participating in individual interviews:
1. Participation in the NIoT ITE programme at either N&W and SE&L campuses
2. Participation in the school visit days for both ITaP 3 & ITaP 4

Eligibility criteria for trainees participating in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):
1. Participation in the NIoT ITE programme at either N&W and SE&L campuses
2. Participation in the school visit days for both ITaP 3 & ITaP 4
3. Attendance at the campus day when the FGDs will be held

Eligibility criteria for NIoT staff participating in individual interviews:
1. Role in designing, delivering or facilitating the ITaP school visit day

Participant type(s)
Employee, Learner/student

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
179

Key exclusion criteria

Trainees pursuing specialisms in primary education

Date of first enrolment
23/11/2023

Date of final enrolment
23/11/2023

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
NIoT North and West campus
Shadsworth Rd
Blackburn
United Kingdom
BB1 2HT

Study participating centre
NIoT South, East and London campus
170 Lennard Rd
Beckenham
United Kingdom
BR3 1QP

Sponsor information

Organisation
Department for Education

ROR
https://ror.org/0320bge18

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
Department for Education, UK Government

Alternative Name(s)
Department for Education (DfE), Department for Education, educationgovuk, DfE

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study will be stored in a publicly available repository (Harvard Dataverse).

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Participant information sheet	version 1	14/11/2023	09/02/2024	No	Yes