‘No More Marking’ (comparative judgement) improves pupil progress and reduces teacher workload, results from a non-randomised controlled-trial

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PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Other local schools had suggested that No More Marking was a useful method for reducing teacher workload, improving attainment and improving accuracy of assessment data. Research has shown the process to be as reliable as double marking, but much quicker.

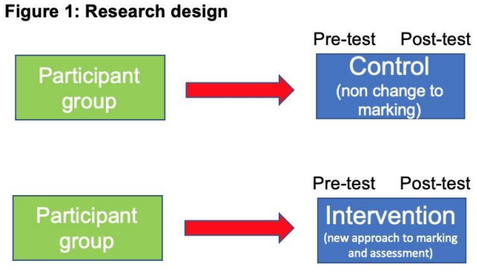
Since the removal of levels to assess writing, we have been focusing on accuracy of data and wanted to test No more marking in our specific context. This research took place as part of the Department for Education reducing workload project and made use of the gov.uk toolkit.

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

A pre- and post-test non-randomised between-participant design was used. The independent variable (comparative marking) was defined by creating two conditions:

- IV Level 1 (Control) – Normal marking practice (checklist grading)
- IV Level 2 (Intervention) – ‘No More Marking’ (comparative judgement)

Figure 1: Research design



Dependent variables

DV1 – Teacher writing assessment
DV2 – Teacher marking time

Hypotheses

H1 – the use of comparative marking will improve pupil writing progress
H2 – comparative marking will reduce teacher workload

LIMITATIONS

Randomisation was not possible therefore a degree of bias may have been introduced into the study. In addition the small sample size and between participant analysis mean that the results should be interpreted with caution.

METHODS

Participants and sample size

Two classes of children in Y3 took part. This gave a sample size of 48, (22 in the control group and 26 in the intervention group). 3 teachers took part in the control group and 4 teachers in the intervention group.

Procedures

All pupils were taught using the normal teaching methods for writing.

Control –The writing assessments were marked by using grade descriptors to assess the writing in line with the current school Assessment and Marking Policy, making a detailed comparison to award a grade for the piece of writing.

Intervention –The teachers in this group used a different approach to marking and assessment. They met together as a group to assess the work using a comparative process. They looked at a range of pieces of writing and decided which one was ‘best’ compared to another one. The results were ranked against nationally benchmarked data. The children were awarded a scaled score for writing.

Materials (and apparatus)

- School based written assessment procedures and guidance
- Time recordings of the marking sessions
- No More Marking online software
- A consistent agreed stimulus was used for writing across both classes

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The use of No More Marking has had a moderately large, significant effect on pupils’ attainment and progress. We also believe that, where it was used, the assessment is more accurate and takes less time.

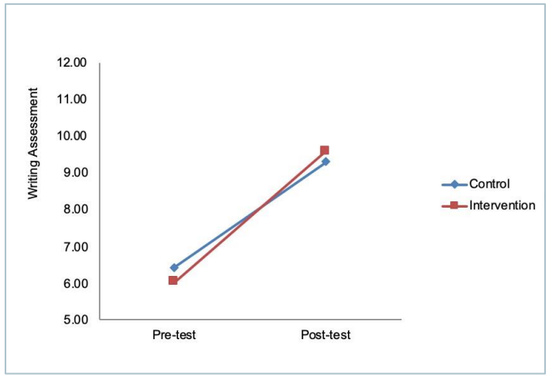
Data from teachers showed the project clearly reduced their workload.

Moving forward, the trust has implemented No More Marking in all 6 schools within the trust.

RESULTS

Gain scores were first calculated from pre- and post-test results (Graph 1). A one-tailed Wilcoxon signed-ranks test indicated that the intervention had a significant ($p = 0.020$) positive effect compared to the control condition ($r = 0.356$, CI (95%) = -0.222 - 0.934) [$d = 0.758$].

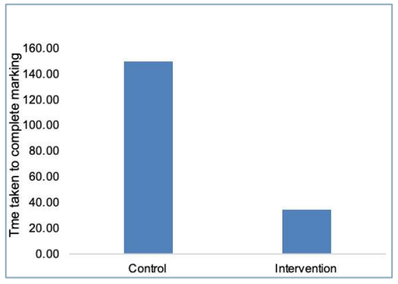
Graph 1. Comparative data showing improvement in attainment



Control and interventions teachers measured the time taken to complete the marking. The intervention teachers saved 115 minutes marking time compared to the control teachers.

For completeness and in order to assess the effect on attainment controlling for pre-test scores, a one-tailed ANCOVA with pre-test scores as the covariate was conducted. This confirmed the large positive effect ($np2 = 0.768$, $p < 0.0005$).

Graph 2. Showing the amount of time spent marking



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