



Reducing teacher workload may improve teacher well-being and has no negative effects on pupil progress

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PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

St. Bartholomew's Church First School have been working with the Department for Education on the reduction of workload due to concerns around the impact of planning time on teacher well-being, whilst measuring impact on academic levels of progress. Our purpose was to reduce the number of hours spent on planning. Reducing teacher workload is desirable as it may help to improve teacher retention and well-being (Department for Education (2018); Geiger and Pivovarova (2018)).

The aim of this research was to measure the effect of reducing planning time on teacher well-being.

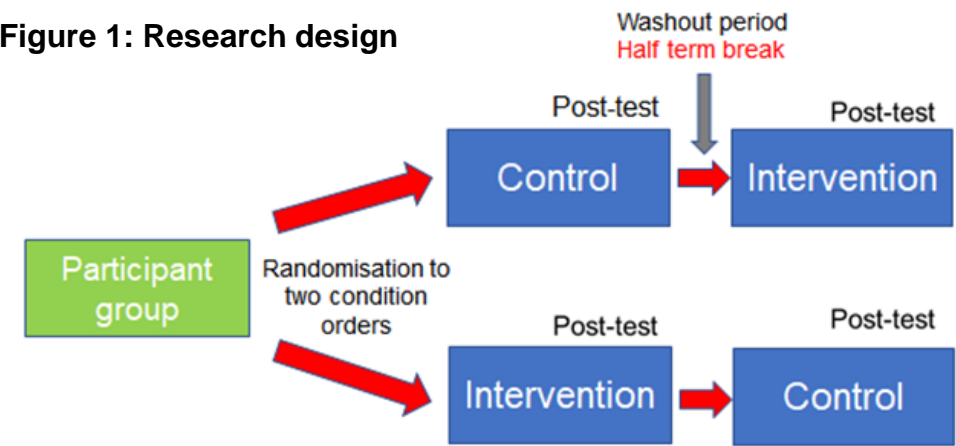
THE RESEARCH DESIGN

A post-test only within-participant design was used. To define the independent variable (planning), participants were randomly allocated to the order in which they experienced two counterbalanced conditions over one term:

Control condition (IV Level 1) – detailed written lesson plans (4-5 page)

Intervention (IV Level 2) – one sheet planning document

Figure 1: Research design



Dependent variables

The following measures were used:

- DV1 (teacher well-being) - Questions from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) (Working too hard, Optimism, Self-efficacy, Enthusiasm, Love of learning) (Goldberg et al., 2006) (pre- and post-test) [Working too hard (Simms, et al., 2011); Optimism; Enthusiasm; Love of Learning (Peterson & Seligman, 2004); Self-efficacy (Costa & McCrae, 1992)]
- DV2 (school teacher assessment data)

The design allowed for the testing of the following hypotheses:

H1 – Reducing time spent on lesson planning will improve teacher well-being

METHODS

Participants, sample size and randomisation

20 Year 3 pupils took part in the study (9 girls and 11 boys). Simple randomisation was used with two groups of equal size, each taken from parallel classes. Each class was taught by a sole teacher. Staff were instructed on delivery but were not made aware of the other methods used within the study. We were able to analyse data from 20 Year 3 pupils.

Procedures

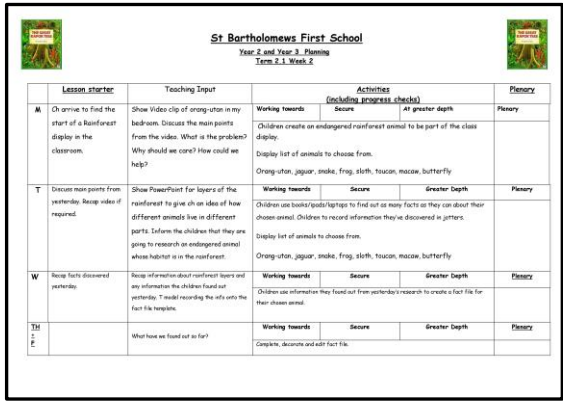
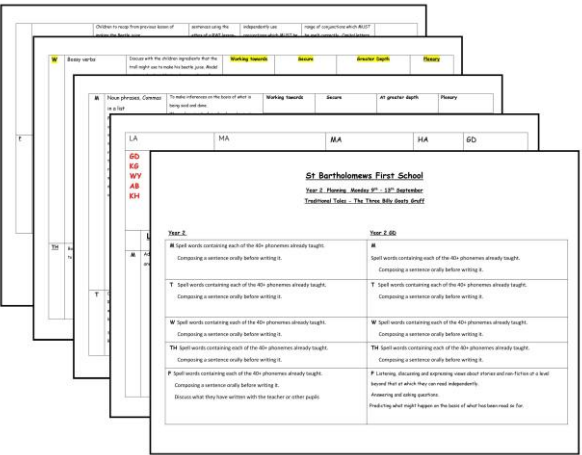
Control – Nothing was changed during this period. The teacher continued to use a pre-existing detailed planning template. Questions from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) was used at the end of this period.

Intervention – The teacher used a single-sheet planning document. Teaching styles and methods were unchanged. Questions from the IPIP were used at the end of this period.

Materials (and apparatus)

Teachers were supplied with two controlled lesson plan templates, one for each stage of the research. Teachers were also given IPIP questionnaires for each post-test phase to record their well-being levels.

Attainment data was taken from whole-school teacher assessment data on SIMS.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

All areas of well-being were improved after the intervention phase, most notably in Scale A (Working Too Hard). When measuring pupil attainment, there was a small positive non-significant effect associated with the intervention phases; therefore we have concluded that changing planning did no harm to pupil progress in relation to pupil writing attainment. More research will need to be undertaken in order to discover if the same effect would be found in reducing planning in other academic subjects.

RESULTS

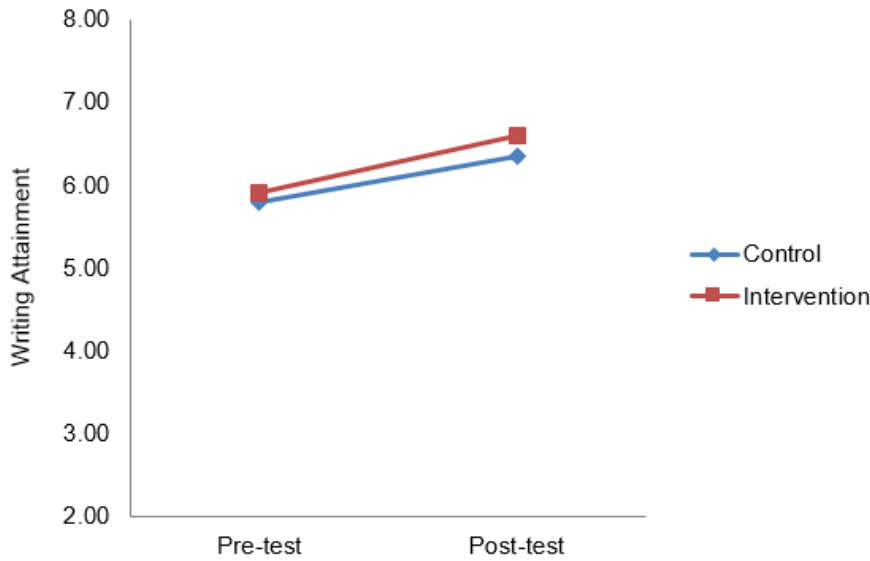
The graph below shows the IPIP scores at the end of the control condition phases compared to the intervention periods.

Figure 2: International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) scores



Gain scores were first calculated from pre- and post-test results (Figure 3). A two-tailed Wilcoxon signed-ranks test indicated that the intervention had a non-significant ($p = 0.523$) positive effect compared to the control condition ($r = 0.127$, CI (95%) = 0.027 – 0.227) [$d = 0.255$]

Figure 3: Pupil writing attainment



LIMITATIONS

The study involved a relatively small sample size of 20 pupils; therefore the results should be interpreted with caution. It is also important to acknowledge a wide range of other variables can also have an impact on teachers' well-being. In addition, changing planning is unlikely to have as great an effect on attainment as making changes in other areas, such as pedagogy; therefore, any causal relationship should not be directly inferred.

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