Intensive Training and Practice Pilot

Pilot Evaluation Report

24 April 2023

NATIONAL INSTITUTE of Teaching

What is this document for?

This document is for schools and initial teacher training (ITT) providers. It describes the National Institute of Teaching's pilot of intensive training and practice (ITAP). It provides context for the project and pulls out the key take-aways from the detailed evaluation report.

Why did we do this project?

Intensive training and practice ITAP will be a key element of all initial teacher training in England from 2024. The rationale and requirements for ITAP were set out in the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Provider Guidance on Stage 2. ITAP is intended to provide "an opportunity to intensify the focus on specific, pivotal areas" to "give trainees feedback on foundational aspects of the curriculum where close attention to and control of content, critical analysis, application and feedback are required." Since the core aim of ITAP is to "strengthen the link between evidence and classroom practice," the guidance recommends a blend of time in classrooms with elements delivered directly by providers, including approximations of practice which allow trainees to put theory into practice and receive feedback outside of a classroom environment. ITAP differs from other weeks of ITT primarily because of the "intense focus on specific pivotal areas." Providers are expected to deliver a minimum of 20 days of ITAP in a post-graduate course, across three to five foundational focus areas.

The NIoT will be delivering ITAP according to the new ITT requirements from this September 2023. We conducted this pilot to inform practice across the sector, as well as to help prepare our own ITT programme. We are sharing what we learned in the hope of being useful, by providing real-world examples of ITAP and offering considerations that could save ITT providers and schools time, money, and effort, and contribute to more effective ITAP designs. This short document, and the associated evaluation report, is intended as peer-to-peer learning between ITT providers, sharing experiences and considerations about how to best deliver the ITAP requirement.

To be useful, this project had to be done quickly. Providers will be now designing and shortly piloting approaches to be ready for September 2024. As a result, there are a few limitations to keep in mind. This pilot was delivered early in the ITAP-development process and in a short timescale, much shorter than the timeline available for other providers. This added a level of intensity and workload for the NIoT team and the other providers will most likely be lower in the future. The evaluation was similarly responsive to the need to be timely. The evaluators observed trainees over only a few weeks and did not estimate the causal impact of ITAP on practice (as would be done with a randomised-controlled trial), focusing instead on the acceptability, feasibility, and evidence of promise of the ITAP models that were implemented.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE of Teaching

What did we do?

Four models of ITAP were developed and implemented at the end of 2022. Two were part of the NIoT, with Harris Federation (HF) and the Star Teachers SCITT (STS). Two external providers also took part: Huddersfield Horizon (HH) and Liverpool Hope University (LHU). The number of recipients and geographic locations are shown in the Table below.

We, the NIoT, selected the topic for the pilot: questioning. We also developed a five-stage framework to support providers to design ITP models, drawn from research by Pam Grossman on teaching core practices to trainees. The framework is conceptual; it did not dictate the order in which aspects of ITAP were delivered. The aim of introducing a framework was to help providers design ITAP models that bridge pedagogical theory and teaching practice. It acted as a tool to guide discussions between partners in design workshops when developing the sessions. It also helped compare the different models of ITAP, by organising the activities chosen to address each of the five elements of the framework.

The five elements of the framework and the activities that the providers chose are shown in the Table.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE of Teaching

Table: Summary of the four models

	Harris Federation (HF)	Huddersfield Horizon (HH)	Liverpool Hope University (LHU)	Star Teachers SCITT (STS)
Pilot recipients	25 primary and 115 secondary trainees	21 trainees in primary and secondary	30 primary (3-7) trainees	98 trainees and 29 apprentices in early years, primary and secondary
Geographic location of pilot	London	Huddersfield and surrounding areas	Liverpool	Virtual plus Northwest and Midlands
Provider activities mapped against the five-element framework				
Introduce	Lecture, assigned readings, expert modelling	Lecture, assigned readings, pre-loaded days	Lecture, seminar, assigned readings, simulation suites	Lecture, assigned readings, practice workshops
Analyse	Lesson observations, video deconstruction, expert modelling	Lesson observations, video deconstruction, lesson deconstruction with mentor, essay reflection	Lesson observations, lesson deconstruction with mentor, observing phonics	Lesson observations, lesson deconstruction
Prepare	Deliberate practice of layering and role playing, instructional rehearsal with mentor, digital approximation	Live approximation and lesson planning in small groups	Co-planning with mentor, instructional rehearsal with small group	Digital approximation, lesson planning, role play
Enact	Instructional coaching, co-planning with mentor, team teaching, lesson observation and feedback	Lesson planning, small group teaching, peer lesson observation and feedback	Lesson observation, small group teaching, subject-specific planning, trainee planning	Instructional coaching, team teaching, small group teaching, solo teaching, lesson observation
Assess	Digital approximation, lesson observation, quizzes, evidence bundles, mentor meeting, self-reflection	Lesson observation, group reflection, self-reflection	Lesson observation, quizzes, assessment, self-reflection and target setting	Portfolio, quizzes, assessment against weekly targets

NATIONAL INSTITUTE of Teaching

There were lots of broad similarities between the pilots, but also six distinct differences:

1. **Rhythm**: the extent to which activities and the rhythm of the week differed to typical weeks on the ITT course varied across the four models. For trainees of HF and STS the week followed largely the same pattern as usual, albeit with a focus on questioning. For trainees of HH and LHU, the pilot followed a different rhythm, with changes in activities and pace.
2. **Location**: all models involved delivery in a training location, in addition to school-based activities; in some cases, this was a completely new location for the ITAP, but in others it was used for other ITT.
3. **Use of "guest" educators**: in one case the model was entirely delivered by the regular educators involved in their wider ITT programme, while in others there were also external educators who the trainees did not usually work with.
4. **Use of digital approximations**: while all models incorporated approximations so that trainees could practice the principles they were learning outside of a classroom, two used live in-person approximations (e.g., educator-trainee and peer-to-peer deliberate practice), while two also included digital approximations.
5. **Delivery mode**: three of the models were delivered in-person, while one was partly delivered online.
6. **Subject/phase specificity**: the the LHU model was entirely phase and subject-specific, delivered to a primary (3-7) cohort focused on phonics and early reading. Other models introduced broader pedagogical approaches to questioning that could be applied in different phases and subjects and dedicated phase- and subject-specific activities.

In the case of each difference, there were reasons behind the decisions that the providers made. For the **rhythm**, this was dictated by resources available and trainee teaching commitments, as well as the interpretation of 'intensive'. The **location** was determined by feasibility, cohort size, and the degree to which trainees were to observe practice from particular teachers in specific settings. Use of **digital approximations** was determined by the offer of the platform, interest in education technology, and the cohort size. The choice of **delivery mode** was made based on the available resources and experience of hybrid delivery in usual ITT practice. The extent to which the training was **subject/phase specific** was determined by the cohort members and alignment with usual ITT practice.

We commissioned Oxford MeasurEd to conduct an independent evaluation of the pilot. They looked at all aspects of the design and delivery, and collected interview and questionnaire data from trainees and project teams to get a rich picture of their experiences.

What did we learn?

Evidence of promise

The evaluation found good reasons to be optimistic that the four models were able to achieve the aims of ITAP. All models were well designed, feasible and scalable provided potential barriers are addressed.

Trainees generally found the delivery enjoyable and relevant. There was some indicative evidence of positive change in knowledge, understanding and confidence over time. This was perceived to be linked to the singular focus on questioning throughout a coordinated set of activities. What also appeared to be important was the bringing together of theory with practice, including with multiple timely opportunities to practice with feedback.

Challenges, and solutions

There was not a lot of evidence on how best to deliver ITAP which the providers could draw on for their designs; future evaluation and learning about ITAP should address this issue.

Providers and participants raised challenges relating to planning, delivery, and participation to which solutions were found during the pilot. Three challenges to feasibility, however, may require greater focus in the future: potential overburdening of schools and mentors, added pressure on trainees, and ensuring trainees are given sufficient support to understand how the training content can be tailored to their teaching contexts. Careful planning, communication, and the allocated resources for ITAP from DfE should mitigate these risks.

There was indication of barriers to scaling the models such as upfront investments in design, maintaining quality, and tight budgets and timelines. The use of digital solutions aligned with school-based activities, and sharing of learning and resources, could facilitate successful scaling.

The were some concerns raised by providers and trainees about the fast pace of the models and about whether all trainees benefited equally from the ITAP approach. These concerns may be mitigated with consideration at the design and delivery stages of the cognitive load of trainees and providing signposting to pastoral support.

Some design decisions may result in trade-offs between effectiveness and feasibility for scaling. For example, there were benefits from taking trainees away from their usual placement schools to contrast with “business as usual” but that may be more challenging to implement with large cohorts or multiple times a year. Again, judicious use of digital elements could support here as would the funding provided by DfE for ITAP.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE of Teaching

What do we think this means for the design and delivery of ITAP?

Like all research, this pilot has limitations, such as the small scale, rapid timeline, and lack of a control group. As such, the findings should be interpreted as indicative of the potential for promise and the challenges that providers could consider when preparing to design, pilot, and deliver ITAP.

Rather than offer further recommendations, we think it is more useful and appropriate to the evidence we have on ITAP so far to offer a programme design checklist. This checklist is what we are factoring into our planning and hope it is of value to the sector. It derives from the experiences of ITAP and from the report. These are:

1. Voices in the room	Design and delivery benefits from having the right voices in the room: a mentor, designer, tutor, and colleagues with the academic or theoretical insight on the focus topic.
2. Using a framework	A framework, such as the five-element framework we used in the pilot, helps us decide what to do and how to create a tightly co-ordinated set of activities serving training on the chosen focus area. This can lead to more strategic planning for schools and providers.
3. Choice of topics	We need to be precise about what we focus on in the unit; if not, then the link between theory and practice could be diluted or lost. For example, “strategies to identify pupil misconceptions within questioning” within the broader theme of “questioning”.
4. Choice of method	Plan for how the theory, modelling, approximations of practice, and precise feedback come together to generate successful practice.
5. Timing	Think about how ITAP works with the rest of the trainee year, and for schools. For example, a focus on establishing “routines” will be more appropriate at the start of the year.
6. Communication	Communicate clearly with the staff teams, schools, mentors, and experts, covering the ‘why’ as well as ‘what’ and ‘how’. Failure to do so may dilute impact through lack of precision and alignment to the theme.
7. Support trainees	Prepare trainees for a different depth or ‘altitude’ of learning; acknowledging that there might be implications and supporting them to get the most out of it.
8. Digital scalability	Appropriate use of digital to enhance scale, without losing engagement or the precision of interrogation that is possible with the cohort and tutor.
9. Monitoring	Recording effects on practice, and over different timelines, and adding to the evidence base on ITAP.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE of Teaching

Want to know more?

To learn more about the NIoT pilot of ITAP there is a report that was written by the independent evaluators. This report is intended for a general audience, but it contains detail that will be particularly suited to ITT providers who want to read about how the delivery took place and what people thought of different elements. The evaluators have also provided their own considerations that they recommend providers, those supporting providers, and future evaluations of ITAP review in order to get the most out of the policy.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE of Teaching

What next?

Piloting models of ITAP has been valuable to the NIoT, and we hope it will be useful for the ITT sector. ITAP will be part of the ITT that the NIoT delivers from 2023. As we share what we have found in this pilot through discussion with other providers, teachers, leaders, policymakers and researchers, we will be considering next steps to generate additional useful evidence. We may, for example, build on the foundation that this pilot has set to conduct a larger-scale study to investigate ITAP delivery in new contexts and with different focus areas. Please keep in touch by registering your interest in NIoT news at niot.org.uk/form/eoi or email us with suggestions at research@niot.org.uk.