Visible Classroom (re-grant)

This page covers the first (efficacy) trial of Visible Classroom. To read about the pilot, which tested its potential for a full trial, click here.

Visible Classroom aims to encourage teachers to reflect on their teaching and develop their classroom practice. Every term, primary school teachers will record their normal lesson practice, and upload audio files to a website. After every upload, Ai Media, a captioning company, will provide a verbatim transcript of the teacher’s talk. Alongside the word-for-word transcript will be simple analytics (e.g. speed of instruction, quantity of teacher vs student talk) a few hours after the lesson.

After several hours of lessons have been uploaded, teachers will receive a more detailed report, written by experts at the University of Melbourne. This will identify areas for improvement in their teaching, based on their self-selected teaching goals and the evidence from their transcripts. Teachers will be expected to discuss the feedback with a mentor – another teacher at their school.

Year 5 and 6 teachers will be offered the service. Teachers and their mentors will receive initial training in both how to use the technology, and the pedagogies which the analysis will be looking for (e.g. appropriate use of questioning). The Schools, Students and Teachers network (SSAT) will be responsible for recruiting schools and supporting their use of the service.

Why are we funding it?

The EEF previously funded a pilot of Visible Classroom, which involves turning teacher talk into a text format that can be reviewed by the teacher and analysed externally. In the initial pilot, this was done in real-time by captioners listening into the lesson online and generating an instant verbatim transcript of what they say, which pupils could review throughout the lesson. The pilot found that teachers were positive about the potential of the intervention, but the live transcripts were not used effectively. Therefore we are now focusing on a simpler model whereby only the teacher receives the transcript, after the lesson has finished. The pilot also found that while teachers liked the feedback, there was variation in how they used it to progress. In this model, we are expecting teachers to formally review their feedback with their mentors. We did not collect pupil attainment data in the previous pilot; this study will demonstrate whether Visible Classroom makes a difference to learning outcomes.

The wider evidence suggests that teachers are one of the most critical influences on a student’s educational attainment, and we have some understanding about the aspects of teaching that are associated with improved student outcomes (e.g. assessing where pupils’ learning is and responding to this; asking “deep” questions; encouraging collaborative learning).

We do not have much evidence about how the use of feedback can improve teacher practice; however, the wider feedback literature suggests that it has to be timely, specific and trustworthy in order to make a difference.

How are we evaluating it?

The Visible Classroom is being evaluated by the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), as an efficacy trial. Efficacy trials aim to test whether an intervention can work under ideal conditions (e.g. when being delivered by the intervention’s original developer).
140 primary schools will be recruited by SSAT, and all Year 5 and 6 teachers will be expected to record 2 hours of their teaching as a baseline sample of their practice. BIT will then randomise the schools into intervention and control groups. Teachers in the intervention schools will then attend a training day in September 2016, with their mentors, before setting themselves a teaching goal and beginning to use the software. They will be expected to record 15 hours of lessons throughout the year, with at-least termly reflection sessions with their mentor. Pupils outcomes will be assessed through Key Stage 2 results collected at the end of Year 6 (i.e. Summer 2017 for the Year 6 pupils, and 2018 for the Year 5 pupils).

When will the evaluation report be due?

The evaluation report will be published in Summer 2019.