

# Teacher trainee eTwinning pilot evaluation final report

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## Introduction and background to the report

This report is based on the evaluation of the eTwinning Teacher Training Pilot project.

eTwinning is ‘the online community for schools in Europe’ and enables schools and colleges to find and work with partner institutions across Europe, utilising information and communications technology (ICT). At its heart is a secure online portal [www.etwinning.net](http://www.etwinning.net). All school levels, from nursery to sixth form and further education colleges, are eligible and partnerships and activities are applicable to all areas of the curriculum<sup>1</sup>.

In 2012, in response to interest in the UK and other countries involved in eTwinning, the UK National Support Service (UK NSS), in conjunction with a taskforce of other eTwinning member country NSS’s, ran a pilot project to test the feasibility of extending eTwinning to teacher training institutions, who are not currently able to register on the eTwinning portal which is for qualified teachers only. The pilot was undertaken with trainees in three UK teacher training institutions<sup>2</sup>. It was trialled and ran over different time periods and lengths at each of the different institutions through the academic year 2012-13, partly dependent on requirements and the success of projects. In all, 47 UK trainees were involved in eTwinning projects across the three training institutions<sup>3</sup>, with additional support and training provided by the National Support Services and eTwinning ambassadors, as well as course leaders and participating schools and teachers.

The aims of the pilot were to explore:

- **How eTwinning could support initial teacher training courses?**
- **What the benefits of eTwinning participation might be for trainee teachers?**
- **How best to involve teacher training institutions in eTwinning?**

The evaluation, on which this report is based, draws on both qualitative and quantitative data that were collected from various actors involved in the project via surveys, documented events and other activities throughout the pilot phase, and also post pilot interviews and analysis of documentation and resources. The findings relate to the successes, benefits, challenges and issues encountered and the report is intended to

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<sup>1</sup> Over 105,000 schools and colleges are registered on eTwinning across Europe with over 10,400 of these from the UK. The British Council is the eTwinning National Support Service (NSS) in the UK, and provides additional support and training to the UK schools sector. The eTwinning programme is funded by the EC under the current Lifelong Learning Programme, where it is part of Comenius, the funding stream for European school collaboration.

<sup>2</sup> The three UK institutions were: Leicester & Leicestershire SCITT (partnered with Leuven, Belgium), University of Derby (partnered with Østfold, Norway), and the University of Winchester (partnered with Leuven, Belgium). In Phase 1 (communicating with each other) in the Autumn, some brief communication happened. In Phase 2, both Leicester & Leicestershire SCITT and Winchester drew on experienced European partners to complete Phase 2 (class project) instead of the initial pairing. Derby did not go on to Phase 2, but has plans to do so this Autumn with experienced eTwinning partners.

<sup>3</sup> Of the 47 trainees, 13 were based at Leicester & Leicestershire SCITT; 18 at University of Derby; and 16 at Winchester University.

inform the UK NSS and EC about the viability of extending the eTwinning programme to teacher training institutions, and the steps needed to do so effectively.

## Executive summary

This summary highlights the key benefits, successes, challenges and issues arising, organised around the three main evaluation questions. It also presents key recommendations for development aimed at ensuring the success of the next phase of the eTwinning project.

### How can eTwinning support initial teacher training courses?

Overall, it was clear that a well designed eTwinning teacher trainee programme would be a welcome and valuable addition to teacher training institutions provision.

*“They have really benefitted from working on a tangible project, working in teams and in partnerships with qualified teachers and learning from their experience... action planning has to be the main one (skill) in that they got to see a project from start to finish... from the initial idea through to seeing it unfold in the classroom. Planning resources, timetabling, working with teachers and collaborating with international partners are all crucial skills. I don’t think they will fully appreciate this experience and what they’ve learnt until they do their next placement. I can certainly see the difference in the experience they’ve had compared to their peers”.* (Course leader).

As well as the benefits to trainees and pupils (outlined below), teacher training institutions stand to gain by offering provision and experiences for trainees that are meaningful, tangible and allow them to develop professional development skills associated with planning, leading and delivering a project with children in the classroom. In the current climate, there is increasing pressure on training providers to offer experiences to trainees that will support their development and employability. The opportunities to work on, and learn from experienced professionals in delivering a collaborative and internationally renowned project, would be beneficial for trainees and training institutions alike. It would also enable training institutions to work with partner and placement schools to offer teaching experiences that also contribute to the variety of classroom experiences, and helps address key learning and school priorities such as citizenship, international partnerships, PSHE, Modern Foreign Languages and cultural awareness. Clearly however, this is dependent on the lessons learnt during the pilot being resolved prior to the next phase.

*“It’s always a good experience if students can be involved in an active project where they gain much more hands on experience of delivering a project... often their experience is one of ghosting others... the chance to work on a project that can help them think about action planning, resource management and give them direct experience of leading such a project in the classroom is invaluable... there is more and more pressure on universities to deliver a student experience that gives them an advantage over others... this is the type of project that could do that...”* (Course leader).

## What might the benefits of eTwinning be for trainee teachers?

*“... we were responsible for working with others to try and lead a project and get it off the ground in a ‘real life’ classroom situation... invaluable in terms of confidence building and developing my skills... I’ve gained lots of experience...”* (Trainee).

As illustrated in the quote above, a number of actual and potential benefits for trainees were identified.

A number of participants felt the project had facilitated a range of meaningful professional development activities and opportunities for skills enhancement. The key benefits that were reported to have arisen from the project included:

- practical experience in the classroom;
- enhanced teaching and pedagogical skills;
- improved planning and organisational skills;
- increased confidence;
- collaboration and team working skills;
- learning from others;
- knowledge of other pedagogies and practices;
- ICT skills and confidence using IT tools for international development;
- international partnership and collaborations awareness and experience;
- greater cultural awareness.

Furthermore, a number of other transferable skills supporting professional development were also reported. It was felt that overall trainees involved in successful projects had gained valuable experience that would make them more ‘employable’.

Participants also highlighted a range of different aspects of the project they felt had worked well, and which contributed to trainees’ skills development. These covered areas such as:

- opportunities for collaboration and to work with others to plan projects and develop meaningful classroom activities;
- opportunities for cross organisational working;
- opportunities to work in a team and learn from others, especially professionals with more experience;
- opportunities to be engaged in a meaningful and tangible project in the classroom;
- professional and skills development opportunities;
- opportunities to see and try out new approaches and pedagogies;
- potential for enriched learning with engaging teaching activities;
- opportunities for working with international partners;
- trainees having a better and more meaningful learning experiences compared to their peers;
- having the ability to network and work with creative individuals.

### Benefits to pupils

There were also a number of reported benefits for children's learning and development arising from projects, including:

- greater motivation and engagement;
- enhanced, rich and meaningful learning experiences;
- enhanced cultural awareness and respect for others;
- ICT skills;

*"I've realised now how important the international links are... it was the children's reactions that were the most important, they loved finding out about other people, countries and cultures... even when we were only sharing things, they got very excited..."*  
(Trainee).

### **How best to involve teacher training institutions in eTwinning?**

#### Components of a successful project

From the evidence and perspectives of participants, the following clear components that contribute to successful projects involving trainees were identified. Projects are more likely to be successful when they:

- establish international partnerships and related roles, responsibilities and processes earlier;
- allow adequate time and opportunities for planning;
- have partnerships between schools and training institutions that are in place and agreed early;
- demonstrate flexible and open communication between universities, students and schools;
- have a back-up plan should partnerships break down;
- involve experienced teachers and experienced partner institutions;
- are supported by clear structures, processes and guidance, and target and tailor training and support at the point of need;
- are supported by senior management teams;
- match school and training institutions core priorities and curriculum and learning aims;
- identify areas for trainee skills and professional development clearly;
- have clearly identified and communicated benefits for learners, participants and institutions;
- support students to tackle challenges confidently and relate this back to their skills development;
- have an experienced eTwinning teacher/partner supporting students;
- have professional support matched to sector;
- have fewer but more focussed training and support activities;
- are a compulsory part of teacher training courses and accreditation;
- are active and creative;
- are less prescriptive and enable more ownership over content and approach for trainees and teachers.

- enable trainees to communicate and share resources;
- have supporting materials and resources that are user friendly and intuitive;
- enable all children's work to be showcased

Many of the points highlighted are contingent on overcoming the challenges and issues identified by participants, which are outlined below. Again, these findings were not consistent or coherent across locations or participant groupings.

## **Challenges and issues**

### International partnerships

The most significant issue in the pilot were difficulties in finding and working with European partners.

The original intention was that trainees would partner and collaborate with counterparts in other European teacher training institutions in order to develop their own collaborative projects. However, matching trainees in different countries was found to be a significant issue, with difficulties arising due to incompatible timetabling, poor communication, and differing levels of commitment and the fact that both partners were new to eTwinning project work. In one case this led to partnerships projects failing to materialise altogether (Derby). In the other two cases (Winchester and Leicester & Leicestershire SCITT)<sup>4</sup> this was also a source of initial frustration, however the decision was made to abandon this approach and instead to work with experienced eTwinning partners on the classroom project phase.

It is unsurprising therefore, that Derby trainees rated their experience of the pilot least favourably. Leicester students ranked their experience on average the highest, followed by Winchester. Whilst the data is based on a relatively small sample, and therefore caution should be taken before drawing any conclusion, factors such as the stage and confidence of students, and the amount and focus of training inputs over relatively short timescales, may have been contributory factors to this finding.

The failure to establish such partnerships was the main source of frustration and anxiety for trainees and other participants, and clearly had negative impacts on perceptions of the pilot. Despite this, many participants recognised the 'pilot' nature of the project and still felt the programme could be valuable for trainees, trainee institutions and schools in the future, if such problems were addressed. The three training institutions are currently considering or planning how they will incorporate it into their provision.

However, there were also a number of other issues and challenges that were identified by different participants. Some of these were interrelated with the issues arising with finding appropriate partners, whilst others were independent. It is also worth noting that there are few, if any, clear patterns in terms of the reporting of these issues across participants groups or location, with the exception of the responses from participants where projects failed to get off the ground.

Other challenges and issues raised by participants centred largely around:

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<sup>4</sup> Leicester & Leicestershire SCITT will subsequently be referred to as 'Leicester' in the remainder of this report

- lack of clarity over processes, responsibilities and roles;
- time constraints and competing commitments;
- poor lines of communication with European partners/trainees initially. Some respondents also felt communication between schools and training institutions, and ambassadors and trainees could have been improved ;
- challenges relating to the difficulties in understanding the project and involvement;
- issues with the online portal and website.

## Recommendations

Based on the reported findings, a number of key recommendations are offered to inform any further phase and wider roll out of the pilot.

### International-partnerships

It is essential to ensure enough time is available to develop appropriate partnerships, ideally in advance of projects, as this was seen to be the biggest source of anxiety and threat to successful projects. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of schools and training institutions using existing partners or contacts in another country. Using existing and experienced eTwinning teachers could also help projects and partnerships develop more effectively; trainees either pairing up with an experienced partner for a project, or shadowing a pre-existing project run by experienced partners. Furthermore, it is essential that partners genuinely want to be involved and are committed, and agree aims, roles and responsibilities from the outset. Partner institutions and individuals involved should also agree on the most effective forms of communication to use throughout to ensure effective collaboration and that partners have compatible timetables for partnerships to flourish. If future attempts are made to link trainees from different countries, they should be 'matched' more appropriately, for example, for age, level of training, sector focus and so forth.

### Initial planning, organisation and focus

Projects require a longer lead in time, allowing for more planning, coordination of timetables between collaborating trainees, trainee institutions and between schools and universities to ensure projects can be developed appropriately in relation to the timetabled curriculum and other priorities. A longer lead in time would also give more opportunities to build effective relationships at an earlier stage, especially between trainees and teachers, thereby reducing the likelihood of increased stress and anxiety. Processes need to be in place to ensure all stakeholders are 'signed up' and understand their roles and responsibilities clearly. Clear guidance for *all* participants on the processes, responsibilities and steps to be undertaken needs to be developed. This is something that could be led by the teacher training institutions themselves in conjunction with partner schools, with the support of the UK NSS. It is also vital to ensure headteachers and/or senior management 'buy in' to the project from the outset.

Trainees, schools and universities should be enabled to take ownership and shape projects rather than them being prescribed or Ambassador led. This could increase the likelihood of projects being successful and matched to curriculum and learning needs.

### Promoting and enhancing the benefits of eTwinning

The teacher trainee initiative needs to be clearer on the learning and teaching aims, goals and outcomes that were identified in the pilot, as well as the specific benefits for trainees, schools, universities and pupils. There also needs to be clearer and tailored information relating to learning and professional development skills and specific guidance on how to make teacher trainee projects successful for all participants and institutions, as these may be different from eTwinning projects run with qualified teachers. Supporting project kits that are provided could also be developed specifically for trainees, reflecting their particular aims and circumstances and related directly to learning benefits and skills development areas.

### Building on existing capacity

During the next phase of the project it should be considered how best to build on existing capacity, such as: utilising teachers and schools who are already involved in eTwinning; building on existing links or international partnerships schools may already have in place; giving teachers opportunities to carry out an eTwinning project themselves prior to working with trainees; using trainees who have experienced eTwinning as mentors; allowing trainees who have undertaken eTwinning to roll it out again and make improvements; utilising trainees to evaluate the programme; and using experienced Ambassadors with the correct sector experience and knowledge to undertake the work done in the pilot by NSS staff.

### Website/portal successful.

It is advisable to undertake 'user testing' exercises with trainees (and others) to highlight specific problems and develop a plan to address weaknesses, such as improving navigation and ensuring the portal is intuitive, as well as reviewing the communication tools. Participants also expressed a desire to have full access to the eTwinning site, network and resources, and for there to be additional and clear documentation outlining the teacher trainees' project process, timelines and workflow.

### 'Rolling out' eTwinning

It is also important for any participating institutions to integrate the programme as a core component, rather than as an additional or optional one, as this would increase its perceived importance and value, and limit the likelihood of it being seen as an additional workload for students.

If the teacher trainee pilot is to be rolled out to a larger scale programme for more teacher training institutions in the future, it would require a promotional campaign highlighting the benefits for different stakeholders, especially teacher training institutions and schools. There are also a number of existing networks and portals that could be utilised to promote the profile of eTwinning to teacher training institutions.

### Evaluation and Monitoring

It would be advisable to conduct further evaluation and monitoring if the programme is to continue. It should be designed utilising approaches that ensure emerging findings feed immediately back into programme actions and design. It is also worth considering using trainees as 'researchers' in some capacity, collecting data on the professional development processes. Furthermore, future research and evaluation should be

designed to focus in more depth on the particular skills, competencies and benefits highlighted in the pilot phase.

## Conclusion

The eTwinning teacher trainee pilot was successful in identifying the key issues that should inform a further stage of development. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that if the key challenges identified were overcome, it would prove to be a valuable addition to the teacher trainee provision for training institutions by offering opportunities for skills and professional development through managed, meaningful and tangible classroom based projects. Moreover, there is also sufficient evidence from successful projects that suggest there are many skills development benefits for both trainees and pupils. The pilot has also been successful in identifying the best ways forward for developing the activities and processes for the next phase of the teacher trainee project.

## Methodology

This evaluation is based on survey data, interviews with participants, documentation analysis and examination of resources.

### Survey data:

This evaluation draws on analysis of pre and post project survey data. In all, data was collected from:

- 44 Trainees (pre pilot)
- 31 Trainees (post pilot)
- 5 Teachers (2 headteachers; 3 classroom teachers)
- 3 course leaders/tutors
- 4 Ambassadors (2 Winchester; 1 Leicester; 1 Derby)

### Interviews:

The evaluation also draws on data generated through 14 interviews with different stakeholders, including trainees, Ambassadors, teachers, course leaders, and UK NSS staff.

### Resource and document analysis:

Documents and resources created as part of the project were also analysed and the online materials and portal were also examined to inform our understanding and recommendations.

### Data analysis

Initially data was organised around the three main focus questions of the evaluation, namely:

- How eTwinning could support initial teacher training courses?

- What are the benefits of participating in eTwinning for trainee teachers?
- How best to involve teacher training institutions in eTwinning?

Additionally, initial categories and were identified from the data, with ‘themes arising’, or sensitising concepts, developing as a result of the analysis of survey data, interview data and documentation. In the second phase of analysis, themes were expanded and refined as data arose and categorised under broad headings. Once the themes were ‘saturated’ and all data analysed, findings were reorganised under key headings pertinent to both the data and the stated requirements of the tender. In the report writing stage, verbatim quotes have been added to illustrate key points and a research narrative has been applied based on findings and our expertise in the field to inform the recommendations.

### **A note on the nature of the data and findings**

As with many similar projects, some caution has to be applied when reading the data. Whilst all efforts have been taken to avoid misrepresentation and skewing of data in this report, we must acknowledge a number of issues. Firstly, the survey data set was not large enough to perform meaningful quantitative statistical analysis or tests. Similarly, the relatively small number of respondents and the various variables, such as locations, experiences, roles, and so forth, mean that detailed analysis based on any particular variables would return findings of limited statistical significance. Therefore, the findings below are representative of analysis of the available survey data and qualitative exploration of themes through interviews. Whilst this provides a more detailed picture of issues and themes arising, there were notable differences in responses, largely related to the success of projects in particular areas and for individuals. When reading the findings, one must also consider the position of respondents and their involvement and investment into the project, which may have led to more favourable reporting in some cases, and also the possibility of under representation of those who were involved in unsuccessful projects.

## **Key findings**

### **1. Benefits of eTwinning participation for trainee teachers**

As the perceived degree of success of the projects varied, it is not surprising that responses surrounding the benefits of the eTwinning pilot were not consistent or comprehensive. However, many respondents acknowledged the project was a ‘pilot’, and therefore, challenges were expected.

The original intention was that trainees would partner and collaborate with counterparts in other European teacher training institutions in order to develop their own collaborative projects. However, matching trainees in different countries was found to be a significant issue, with difficulties arising due to incompatible timetabling, poor communication, and differing levels of commitment. In one case this led to partnerships

projects failing to materialise altogether (Derby). In the other two cases (Winchester and Leicester) this was also a source of frustration, however the decision was made to abandon this approach and instead to work with experienced eTwinning partners on the classroom project phase.

Interestingly however, many of those who were involved in less successful projects also considered the potential benefits that could arise once problems were addressed.

The following provides an overview of the key benefits of the eTwinning project for teacher trainees that were highlighted by the data.

### **Trainee skills development and employability**

Trainees (and other participants) highlighted a number of skills they felt they had developed during the course of the project.

From the post pilot survey data, a number of trainees (14) indicated that they felt the project had enhanced their prospects of obtaining future employment. Only four respondents disagreed (individuals whose project did not get off the ground) with this statement, whilst the remainder (13) stated they were as yet undecided.

The quotes below suggest why respondents considered the pilot to have enhanced their employability:

*“Working with others doing a real project is great experience and I think that will give me an advantage when it comes to getting a job... I can put it on my CV and show examples, and I'll also have that practical experience that will give me more confidence...”* (Trainee).

*“An experience like this is invaluable for students... It will certainly give them an advantage because a lot of schools are seeking to increase their international dimension and will be looking for young, enthusiastic people to help them do this.”* (Trainee).

Trainees (and other respondents) also highlighted a range of other skills they felt they had developed as a result of the pilot, which may have informed their perceptions regarding employability. The following outlines some of the key skills development areas highlighted by trainees (and also reaffirmed by other respondents).

### **Collaboration and teamwork**

The nature and design of projects required trainees to engage in a range of collaborative activity with other professionals (particularly in successful projects). This collaboration was felt to be tangible and valid in that trainees were working to deliver a ‘real’ and meaningful project with colleagues in schools, alongside University partners, teachers and other schools. It was felt that this added a qualitative dimension and ‘depth’ to the nature of collaboration and practical basis for skills development.

As one trainee highlighted:

*“... we were responsible for working with others to try and lead a project and get it off the ground in a ‘real life’ classroom situation... sometimes that was a bit scary as an inexperienced teacher but invaluable in terms of confidence building and developing my skills...I really feel I've gained lots of experience as a result”.*

Similarly, other trainees also highlighted the benefits of the collaborative experience, for example:

- “(It) helped me to work as part of a collaborative team”.
- “(It) highlighted the importance of team work”.
- “We got to work as part of a team and make something exciting happen in the classroom”.
- “I learnt a lot working alongside experienced teachers and now understand more about planning and pulling a project together”.

## Practical experience, learning from others and knowledge of other pedagogies

The last quote (above) highlights that a number of trainees not only worked collaboratively but valued the opportunity to work alongside, and learn from, experienced teachers and others, as is further highlighted below.

- “...as a trainee, it was good to see first-hand how a new project develops... and especially to have the chance to work with experienced teachers... that really helped me to understand what happens in the classroom and how to deal with certain things...!”
- “(It) enabled me to work closely and learn from with qualified teachers”.
- “(It) played a key role in my placement”.
- “(I was) Connected to creative people”.

Clearly, responses varied and are likely to have been mediated by the project’s success. However, generally it was felt that the opportunity to work alongside experienced teachers was a positive aspect of eTwinning. Similarly, trainees also highlighted that, in the projects that successfully incorporated international collaboration, much was also learnt about different teaching styles, approaches and systems.

Overall, when trainees were asked whether 'participating in eTwinning had increased their knowledge of different teaching methods in other countries, 16 respondents either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', 6 remained undecided, whilst 9 'disagreed', presumably reflecting the failure to develop international collaboration.

The positive aspects of working with experienced teachers in both UK and international partner schools is illustrated in the quote below:

*“As a trainee it gave me a source of help! I was able to see other teachers' projects so I could take activities and develop them to suit the children I was working with. It gave me confidence in my first placement because I knew they were quality activities I was giving the children... it was good to learn from more experienced teachers here and in Belgium, I got lots from that in terms of knowledge building...”* (Trainee).

## Teaching and pedagogical skills

Fifteen trainees in the post pilot evaluation survey reported that the pilot had had a positive impact on their teaching skills. Asked whether 'eTwinning has had a significant impact on their teaching methods', 10 trainees either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', 11 remained undecided, and 10 disagreed.

One respondent stated:

*"...there were some problems to start with and then it got a little scary and stressful at times but it was a brilliant experience and I learnt so much... things I can now introduce to my teaching in the future... without the project I don't think I would have gained the same level and range of experience so quickly".* (Trainee).

Other trainees also indicated the project had enhanced their teaching and pedagogical skills, for example:

- "Has helped me to consider other dynamic ways in which children can engage with the curriculum and utilise IT resources on a global basis."
- "(It was an) opportunity to try new approach."
- "Enabled me to see benefits of integrated curriculum for children."

Asked whether 'eTwinning helped set expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils', 17 either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', whilst 7 were undecided, and 7 disagreed. Again, this may reflect the different levels of success of the projects trainees were involved in but does suggest that even with the challenges faced, such a project could enhance trainees teaching skills and provide an engaging learning experience for learners.

This is supported by survey responses trainees provided when asked whether eTwinning supported them to 'contribute to the design and provision of an engaging curriculum within the relevant subject area(s)'. 20 students either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed', 6 were undecided, whilst 5 disagreed. This also suggests that even some of those who were not involved in successful projects saw the potential in eTwinning as a valuable learning experience for pupils.

## Planning and organisational skills

Of the students that were involved in successful projects, a significant number highlighted how the experience had helped with their planning and organisational skills in different ways. For example, one trainee stated:

*"Working on this project gave me some real tasks and I had to think carefully about planning the lessons, finding and making resources and developing action and lesson plans... It was a great experience..."* (Trainee).

Others also highlighted how the project had supported their planning and organisational skills, for example:

- “(I) benefited from being able to teach well planned lessons”.
- “I worked collaboratively to see what needed to be done step by step, and I had to think about everything from timing, to resources, to my lesson plan and how the activities would work in the classroom...”

Other participants in the evaluation also reflected on the planning and organisational skills development of trainees over the course of the project, for example:

- “The quality of planning and teaching students demonstrated on placements”.
- “It gave more of a focus on e-twinning to encourage advance planning for this in curriculum planning for next year”.
- “(There were) opportunities for problem solving to ensure aims were met”.

“I don’t think the trainees realised how much they’d gained from being involved in a project that required careful planning and organisation...” (Course leader).

## Confidence

Trainees involved in successful projects stated how their involvement had given them confidence and a better understanding of practice in the classroom.

- “...It gave me a lot of confidence because I know I’m capable now of undertaking a project in schools and I got to know what was required ...it’s really helped my confidence”.
- “(It) gave me confidence to share my opinions and views”.

Similarly, other respondents highlighted the positive impacts on trainee confidence as a result of involvement in the pilot.

*“Having that practical experience was invaluable. They found out about action planning, and what’s needed to bring a project to life...not just a project but one that was needed in the school to support their Ofsted and also to help children learn about other languages and cultures”.* (Ambassador).

- “Confidence grew in students, as did their engagement”. (Teacher)
- “Seeing trainees develop skills, professional confidence, greater maturity and personally develop over the course of the project”. (Course leader).

## Transferable skills and professional development

A significant number of trainee respondents in the post pilot survey felt the project had helped them develop ‘transferable skills’, which probably encompass many of those skills highlighted already above. However, a wide range of other benefits were highlighted by different respondents, indicating a far reaching set of potentially positive impacts that engagement with eTwinning may have for trainees. Numerous respondents highlighted the value of eTwinning as a meaningful and active professional development activity for trainees, noting how it gave them practical experience and related skills development opportunities, adding a richness and qualitative dimension to their experiences.

*“I think the project was really valuable for the trainees... but I don't think they fully realise this yet. They have really benefitted from working on a tangible project, working in teams and in partnerships with qualified teachers and learning from their experience... action planning has to be the main one (skill) in that they got to see a project from start to finish... from the initial idea through to seeing it unfold in the classroom. Planning resources, timetabling, working with teachers and collaborating with international partners are all crucial skills. I don't think they will fully appreciate this experience and what they've learnt until they do their next placement. I can certainly see the difference in the experience they've had compared to their peers”. (Course leader).*

In interviews, a number of skills and benefits for trainees were also highlighted by other respondents (Ambassadors, course leaders, UK NSS Staff, and teachers), including:

- improved communication and collaboration skills;
- improved partnership working;
- better action planning and delivery skills;
- improved knowledge of timetabling, project management and resource planning;
- better relationships across institutions nationally and across Europe;
- better understanding of processes involved in delivering effective projects
- greater reflection;
- tangible and practical experience of delivering meaningful projects in schools;
- stronger partnerships;
- international profile and partnerships;
- recognising the benefits of partnerships and the beneficial impacts for children;
- improved ICT skills.

### **ICT skills and confidence using IT tools for international collaboration**

In the survey, 16 trainees indicated they felt the project had helped them improve their ICT skills. One interviewee suggested that many of the tools and resources on the Twinspace portal had been valuable and that they had also utilised other software in developing her own resources for children. However, numerous other respondents felt that the portal was not intuitive or user friendly, and that other freely available tools, might be better suited to the project. Whilst many trainees felt the online space was not user friendly and could be more straightforward, others did feel that a number of the resources and mechanisms for storing and sharing work were useful.

A number of respondents also felt that overall their confidence in using ICT tools for International collaboration had improved as a result of the eTwinning pilot. 20 of the 30\* post pilot survey respondents felt their confidence had either 'improved a little' (13) or 'improved very much' (7) as a result. As well as the eTwinning site and resources, some respondents also highlighted a range of other ICT tools they had used for the first time on the project. These included: Photostory; Story Maker, Creaza Photo story; podcasting and embedding music files into Powerpoint. Some respondents felt that the various resources and approaches used had made them feel more confident about both developing international partnerships and also utilising new technologies in doing so.

## International partnerships and collaboration

Clearly, responses regarding the international dimension varied significantly between individuals and localities, depending on whether projects had been successful or included an international component. However, there was positive feedback from many trainees and other respondents, for example:

*“I’ve realised now how important the international links are... they’re important for the school and I think they liked the fact that I was coming in to do an international project with the children... but it was the children’s reactions that were the most important, they loved finding out about other people, countries and cultures... even when we were only sharing things, they got very excited...”* (Trainee).

- “Realised the impact joining up with other schools has on children’s learning.”
- “Another tool for communicating with schools around the world.”
- “Highlighted importance of international links and how easy it is to establish them.”

Similarly, it appears that, despite the challenges, eTwinning was generally viewed favourably and that the experience *may* have influenced the likelihood of connecting and working with schools in other countries. Whilst caution must be taken not to overstate the impact of the pilot project as the motivating factor, the majority of trainees responded favourably to questions associated with international collaboration. For example, when asked, ‘as a qualified teacher, how likely are you to link your class to another country?’, 20 students stated that they were ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ likely to do so. 11 remained undecided, and only 2 stated it was ‘not likely’.

Whilst it must be clear that there is much data highlighting the frustrations arising from failed international collaborations and problems with partnering, many of those involved in such projects could still see the value in international collaboration, and that in the longer term, they did not see the challenges around international collaboration as insurmountable.

*“Communication is a huge part of eTwinning, I encountered problems with getting hold of my partners at times and was given new partners to overcome this. The trainees were on placement at a different time to us in Belgium so it was difficult to make the project work alongside each other. Being the first pilot we were on our own in the sense of we had no other English trainees to talk to”.* (Teacher).

*“Despite all the setbacks we managed to partner with another school and the benefits were worth the hassle in the end as the children got so much out of it and I gained some great insights into how things could be done in other ways...”* (Trainee).

*“I’d definitely be involved in an eTwinning project again. Now I know the problems, I think I could plan so that I didn’t end up in the same situation again... I’m quite excited at the thought of it...”* (Trainee).

## **Cultural awareness**

Twenty trainees surveyed indicated that they felt the project had raised their own cultural awareness.

Trainees, and others, highlighted the various benefits of cross cultural partnerships and learning both for themselves and learners. There were many accounts of children’s awareness (see also below) of different cultures and countries being heightened due to the project focus.

*“The international dimensions was great...we had some problems to start with finding a partner... but once we had it was a real learning experience because I found out more about approaches in different countries and also saw the children’s curiosity toward learning about other countries and cultures and the excitement they had about hearing from other people in different countries...”* (Trainee).

*“It also broadened my knowledge! I learnt just as much about culture as the children did! I also learnt new ways of teaching the children taking from the “Belgium way” of teaching after speaking to my fellow trainees”.* (Trainee).

*“I gained friends from overseas and built a link with teachers I could use again”.* (Trainee).

4 students surveyed also felt their experience of working with overseas partners had contributed to the development of language skills.

## **Conclusion: trainee benefits**

Clearly, trainees (and others) highlighted a range of actual, and also potential, skills and experiences that supported their professional development. Many of those involved in unsuccessful, or less successful, projects could also see potential benefits.

Clearly, trainees responses to closed survey questions regarding skills development do not present the whole picture. As can be seen elsewhere, data from interviews with trainees and other stakeholders also indicated a range of additional skills, competencies and benefits that arose as a result of the projects. Moreover, feedback from course tutors, teachers and Ambassadors suggests that the trainees themselves may not yet be fully aware of the range of skills they have developed as a result of their involvement in the project and may only realise this later, when they have their next placement, or go in to work in schools.

In some respects, the benefits and skills highlighted (above) by trainees in interviews and in responses to the post pilot survey, demonstrated a greater breadth of skills and benefits than the expectations highlighted in the pre-pilot survey. Obviously, having the opportunity to reflect on a tangible experience is bound to elicit more detailed and

nuanced responses. However, this is nonetheless an interesting finding in that it highlights the extent of different areas of skills development and benefits that could be made more explicit when promoting the value of eTwinning experiences to other trainees, schools and training providers. Furthermore, as highlighted in the next section, a range of benefits for children involved in projects were also identified.

## 2. Benefits for children's learning

Ultimately, it is likely that any educator or trainees willingness to participate in a project will be heavily influenced by real and perceived benefits for learners. As might be expected, responses relating to benefits for learners tended to reflect the degree of success of individual projects. This was highlighted in their responses to survey questions. Nine trainees rated the experience for their pupils as either 'good'/'very good' or 'excellent'. On the other hand however, 15 considered the experience for their children to be 'below average' or 'poor', with the remainder rating it as 'average'. Overall Leicester trainees ranked their pupils experience the most favourably, followed by Winchester trainees, with Derby students, perhaps unsurprisingly, ranking their pupils experience the lowest.

The fact that this was a pilot was acknowledged, and many students who ranked the experience as 'average' or 'poor' for their children, could also see the value and potential of being involved in a well planned and effectively delivered eTwinning project in the future.

Nonetheless, a number of participants did highlight a range of perceived benefits to children's learning, categorised under the following broad headings.

### Motivation and engagement

Trainees, particularly in successful projects, indicated that they felt it was motivating and engaging for pupils.

*"The pupils were really excited about it. I think they learnt so much about so many different things and they were genuinely excited about learning about other schools and countries. I think this was a good project for them in that it allowed everyone to be involved and it was much more fun and creative than it might sometimes be in the classroom... there was a bit of a sense that we were learning about new things together".*  
(Trainee).

- "Pupils were excited and motivated."
- "Children enjoyed it and were 'on task'."

It was also suggested that not only was the international dimension exciting and a valuable learning experience for pupils but also that the 'real' and tangible outcomes and experiences served to increase children's sense of excitement and willingness to engage in learning.

## Enhanced and rich learning experiences

Similarly, some trainees also felt the project offered an opportunity for enhanced and enriched learning experiences, with children developing a range of related learning skills.

*“There were so many different skill sets the children were using and it sometimes felt that we weren’t actually learning ...they really seemed to enjoy it and get so much out of it... I’d really like to try it again and smooth out all the glitches and really consider from the outset what the children were learning, what skills they were using and the overall benefit such a project might have in comparison to other modes of learning”. (Trainee).*

- “(They) enjoyed showing and sharing work they had done.”
- “Children’s learning (was) enhanced because (of) a new area of learning was introduced through the media theme.”
- “Good and rich learning experience for children.”
- “Used and developed creativity skills.”
- “Developed speaking and listening skills.”
- “Improved communication skills.”
- “Pupils knowledge of ‘mini-beasts’ improved and they used scientific vocabulary to label the features.”
- “Lessons on 60’s media went very well and children learnt a lot but a result of a well planned lesson.”

## Cultural awareness and respect for others

Many trainees (and teachers) involved in successful projects felt children’s cultural awareness and broader development had been enhanced as a result of the projects focus.

*“...I think the children got lots out of it because they seemed to be genuinely interested in other countries and what went on, how things were different.. .It was good because we could get them working across all sorts of curriculum areas, geography, languages, literacy, as well as on things related to PHSE and moral issues. I really think it helped open up their eyes... It helped me as well because I learned so much from the project but also seeing how things are done elsewhere.” (Trainee).*

- “(They) experienced different learning styles and approaches in different countries.”
- “(It) supported PSHE and cultural understanding.”
- “Children showed an Interest in other countries and cultures and developed geographical awareness.”
- “Children developed greater respect for others.”
- “Children enjoyed making links with another school from Europe.”
- “Children took greater care taken over work because they knew it would be seen by other children.”

*“The benefits for the children were huge, for some children who haven’t ventured outside of their town. They were introduced to different cultures. They were able to identify*

*similarities and differences between themselves and their partner school. Showing them there is a huge world outside of their town gave me great satisfaction as they wanted to learn more and it gave their work a purpose, they were going to show their peers ... something they loved!"* (Trainee).

Caution must be applied when considering such findings as they did come from a relatively small group of trainees. However, other respondents also felt that the project offered meaningful opportunities for children to learn about other countries, cultures on a collaborative project that; *"raises their awareness of the world beyond their immediate environment"*. It was felt that the international, cultural and moral dimensions to the project are also valuable areas that many schools are keen to explore further.

## **ICT skills**

Trainees involved with successful projects also reported that children's ICT skills had developed over the course of the project.

- *"The children were using ICT, although I don't think they always realised that... they just used the tools to get the task done, which they were all excited about and were 'on task' throughout."*
- *"Children learned ICT skills in developing materials for the project."*
- *"I think the children realised how easy it could be to work with people from other countries and share their work... they found that really motivating..."*

Whilst it must be stated that evidence supporting the development of pupils ICT skills was relatively limited, the data does suggest there are many potential benefits. Using technology in the process of creating resources potentially places learners as active in the learning process, creating tangible resources that can, and in some cases were, shared with other pupils and schools. In turn, such practice can have a positive effect on children's engagement and motivation as well as modelling how technology can be used for international collaboration and knowledge sharing.

## **Conclusion: benefits for children**

The data from trainees regarding benefits for pupil learning was not comprehensive nor consistent, for obvious reasons. Clearly, with such a relatively small number, and given the short length of engagement, the longer term impacts on skills development, or in comparison to other learning activities, must not be overstated. However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that from the perspective of trainees involved in successful projects, that pupils gained much from the experience.

Others respondents (Ambassadors, course leaders and teachers) also highlighted a range of perceived benefits for children's learning, for example:

*"From what I saw and heard from trainees and teachers, the children got lots from the project... they enjoyed making the pictures and resources, they liked to find out about other countries and work with others... that seemed to help them understand more about the world outside, so they were pretty enthusiastic from what I can gather... there are lots of other skills areas the project covers, whether these are specific to eTwinning, I don't*

*know, but the partnership with other schools seemed to be exciting for them".* (Course leader).

- “(There was) engagement from target groups of children who were really motivated by the links made – positive benefits for students as a result of children’s enthusiasm.”
- “It was an enrichment activity for children, it was something different.”

It is difficult to conclude from any evaluation the true extent and degree of impact on children’s skills development due to the number of variables that occur in particular educational contexts and learning processes. However, the subjective perceptions of those trainees (and others) involved in successful projects does suggest that children have much to gain from their involvement in such projects, especially those linked to wider aspects of learning, skills development and growth. This should make such projects appealing and well received in the future, if the challenges highlighted in the pilot can be overcome.

### **3. Perceptions of the experience**

This section highlights additional perceptions of the eTwinning pilot experience of a range of respondents. Whilst these indicate some of the benefits and drawbacks, they also provide a set of broader perceptions to further contextualise findings and the potential value of the programme in the future.

11 of the 31 trainees surveyed rated their experience of the eTwinning pilot as ‘good/very good’ or ‘excellent’. 12 respondents ranked it as average, whilst 8 ‘poor’ or ‘below average’. Given the challenges faced in the pilot project, this might actually be perceived as a promising finding.

Overall Leicester students ranked their experience on average highest, followed by Winchester, with Derby students, perhaps unsurprisingly given the challenges faced, rating their experience more negatively.

Whilst it is more straightforward to ascertain why Derby students were more negative about their experience, the picture is less clear as to why Leicester students ranked their experience more positively than Winchester. Whilst the data is based on a relatively small sample and therefore caution should be taken before drawing any conclusion, factors such as the stage and confidence of students, and the amount and focus of training inputs over relatively short timescales, were raised as possible contributory factors to this finding, suggesting fewer and more targeted and focussed inputs may be a better model going forward.

One trainee suggested:

*“...whilst it was good to have so much input, sometimes we just needed more time to actually get on with things and spend what small amount of time we had making the project work...”* (Trainee).

Likewise, a teacher also highlighted:

*“... there were problems with project ... we needed input... and then let the trainees and teachers get on with things... it stressed them out because they had limited time...”.*  
(Teacher).

However, a number of other factors could have influenced the trainees evaluation of their experience. For example, Winchester students were first years, and so may not have had as much experience and may have been more anxious about teaching than their Leicester counterparts who were PGCE students. Leicester students all worked in the same Twinspace, meaning that trainees had similar opportunities, could share resources if required, and may have had a greater sense of common purpose. On the other hand, different Twinspace were used by different groups amongst the Winchester trainees. Some groups found active partners, whilst others did not, which may have led to a sense on inequity.

Other factors that may have contributed to differences in perceptions might include how trainees felt about the level of prescription versus the degree to which they could shape their own projects and the degree to which support matched their sector needs. Further factors such as school and teacher involvement and the level of structure of the project, may also have influenced perceptions, however, there is insufficient evidence to say whether they were direct contributory factors. This complexity is highlighted below and demonstrates the diversity of approaches taken in different locations, which makes it difficult to conclude what the key factors influencing perceptions of the success of pilot projects.

When asked, “in what ways did your placement school participate?”, survey responses were as follows:

- 14 = My mentor teacher expressed an interest (8 Leicester, 4 Derby, 2 Winchester)
- 6 = My mentor teacher became actively involved (2 Leicester, 4 Winchester)
- 5 = 5+ other teachers became actively involved (Winchester)
- 4 = 1-5 other teachers expressed an interest (2 Winchester, 2 Leicester)
- 3 = 5+ other teachers expressed an interest (Winchester)
- 3 = 1 other teacher became actively involved (2 Leicester, 1 Winchester)
- 3 = 2-5 other teachers became actively involved (Winchester)
- 1 = Parental Involvement (Leicester)

There were also 11 ‘other’ responses, covering the following: we were unable to; all teachers participated - whole school project; trainee teachers produced a display; another student on placement; allowed to run project; headteacher (Leicester); none of the above (Derby).

Of the 5 teachers surveyed, 2 ranked their own experience of the eTwinning pilot as ‘good/very good’, one as ‘average’, and 2 as below average. However, those rating it as good, stated that they expected challenges in a pilot project, and that they could often be worked through, or at least could be in the future. It was also acknowledged that it was a learning experience for both teachers and students.

Two of the five teacher respondents felt their students experience had been 'good', whilst 2 felt it was 'below average', and 1 felt it had been poor. One of the main reasons for this appears to be the amount of time that students had spent trying to link with partners to make the project work, and in some cases, projects not getting off the ground.

Ambassadors also felt that the experience had been stressful and challenging at times, for both students and the Ambassadors themselves, which may have been reflected in their ratings of the project in the survey. However, overall they felt that it had been extremely positive and rewarding and that students had embraced the programme with enthusiasm and gained much from their experience as a result. Furthermore, they felt that the lessons learned for the pilot would support the development of a much more effective 'next round' of the programme.

*"There's so much in it for the trainees, the teachers and the schools. The International link is something most schools have a requirement to address and the eTwinning project does this. Not only that but the children in schools get to collaborate with others overseas, learn about their culture and gain geographical understanding... a greater sense of global citizenship and empathy and tolerance... there are some great resources and examples of the rewarding work that can be undertaken in many different ways but the main point... especially for the trainees... is that it's a real project they can get their teeth into and learn how to lead and plan activities in a collaborative way... that sort of experience is invaluable...".* (Ambassador).

In a series of questions, trainees were asked further questions regarding their perceptions of the impacts on their professional practice and learning.

Given the pilot nature of the project and the many teething problems and challenges faced, what appeared to be a very mixed set of statements in response to the above question, and similar questions in interviews, might be viewed with some optimism.

- "Fantastic project allowing cross curricular links."
- "E-twinning was an amazing resource to use with the Year 2 class I was placed with. It enabled us to link to geography, literacy, ICT, PSHE and other subjects."
- "The eTwinning project was enjoyable for both myself and the children and was an interactive and fun way of learning."
- "The whole class loved this project and loved the idea of other children seeing their work."
- "More creative approaches."
- "Children enjoyed linking with other class."
- "Another tool for creativity and engagement."
- "Willingness to engage in collaborations in the future."
- "Promotes experiential learning."
- "Without E-twinning I wouldn't have thought about using other schools/countries to excite and motivate children with their learning."
- "Aiming to incorporate it into NQT year."
- "eTwinning has given me alternative and engaging ways of teaching different subjects and topics."

- “Children inspired and motivated.”
- “Increased knowledge of teaching methods in other countries.”
- “Planning with the teachers had a significant impact on teaching and future lessons.”

**Other stakeholders** also felt trainees had gained from the project and that there was also scope for developing their experiences further, for example:

- “Students enjoyed the sessions and were enthusiastic about the project.”
- “Students could see the benefits even though there were issues with partnerships.”
- “It will certainly be a catalyst.”
- “As a University, we hope to develop it further with these students acting as 'ambassadors' for e-Twinning on their next school experience.”

One respondent felt the programme offered great potential for working with local schools and would support staff development, especially in international education. They felt this could be shared and promoted across the region and ‘exported’ to other teacher training establishments. Other respondents also felt that there would be significant interest amongst other teacher training institutions, although they felt it may be best to roll out and run a smaller scale project before rolling out on a much wider scale as this would help iron out any final glitches.

*“If the problems were sorted out... then teacher training institutions, I’m sure, would jump at the chance. It’s always a good experience if students can be involved in an active project where they gain much more hands on experience of delivering a project... often their experience is one of ghosting others... the chance to work on a project that can help them think about action planning, resource management and give them direct experience of leading such a project in the classroom is invaluable... there is more and more pressure on Universities to deliver a student experience that gives them an advantage over others... this is the type of project that could do that...”* (Course leader).

It also appears that students saw a range of opportunities and practical resources and activities the eTwinning project might offer them in their future classroom practice. When asked, ‘as a qualified teacher, how likely are you to use eTwinning with your classes?’, 9 students stated this was either ‘extremely likely’ (4) or ‘very likely’ (5), 18 stated it would be ‘likely’, and only 4 responded saying it was ‘not likely’.

The range of purposes trainees felt they would use eTwinning for included:

- Project Ideas (23)
- Starting a Project (18)
- Finding a Partner (14)
- Professional Development Opportunities (9)
- Networking (8)
- None of the Above (1)

The findings above may suggest which elements of the eTwinning pilot experience and resources they felt had the most potential. Interestingly however, despite the challenges faced in finding partners, over half of the respondents suggested eTwinning would be a good way to network or develop such partnerships.

### **Profile and awareness of international collaboration and eTwinning**

The findings from the evaluation suggest that trainees had relatively limited knowledge of other international linking and partnership programmes. In the survey, students were asked about their awareness of International School Linking Programmes. Interestingly, 16 respondents stated they were unaware of any, suggesting that eTwinning could contribute significantly to awareness and understanding in this field. Other international programmes that students were aware of included: The International Schools Award (9), Schools Online (5), and Comenius (4). As data elsewhere suggests, trainees felt there was much to be gained from developing international partnerships and links. Over the course of the eTwinning projects, trainees collectively reported having collaborated with 6 different countries, namely: Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, France, and Scotland.

When students were asked whether they thought ‘their placement school would continue eTwinning as a result of your Teacher Training placement’, 5 stated ‘they were already doing it’ (4 Winchester, 1 Leicester), 3 stated ‘yes, as a direct result of me introducing it to them’ (Winchester), 10 felt ‘maybe, they are interested’ (4 Winchester, 6 Leicester), whilst another 13 responded ‘no’. These are clearly a very mixed set of findings. In qualifying their answers, trainee responses included:

#### Leicester

- “The tutor enjoyed the project and could also see the potential learning benefits.”
- “Introduce further eTwinning collaboration for future classes taught and disaggregate to others.”
  
- “I don't think they will continue with it.”
- “No-one showed any real interest.”
- “They didn't learn how to do it themselves/show real interest, apart from final result.”
- “I was left to do the project independently.”
- “Didn't feel they had the time to continue once I'd left.”

#### Derby

- “I feel I was not equipped with enough guidance or information to pass onto my placement school.”
- “It did not happen in the school as communication broke down.”

#### Winchester

- “They are continuing with ‘It's a Bugs Life’ project and will start another project next year as they found it interesting.”
- “Headteacher and other staff did express an interest in the project.”

- “They will continue to use it as they had used it a little bit before. After the pilot study they could see the benefits in it so will use it a lot more in the future.”
- “Believe they plan to carry on with the eTwinning to engage pupils.”
- “Believe the head mistress at the school wants to continue - it was a success.”
- “They think it’s a fabulous concept but the website makes it very difficult to communicate effectively.”
- “The end of their project is directly linked.”
- “As the project/ e-Twinning was unsuccessful - teachers lost confidence in it - agreed that a lot of time and effort had been wasted.”
- “Unsure.”
- “It is not something they are going to continue.”

Clearly, responses are very mixed and likely to be both context and ‘success’ dependent. The statements above suggest that there is still work to be done in ensuring that placement schools are aware of eTwinning and that ‘buy in’ from participating schools, headteachers and staff is assured. It was felt that school staff needed to be confident that such projects are worth the associated investments in time and energy, and that all efforts are taken to ensure future projects are successful. As well as overcoming the challenges that were faced in the pilot, it was also felt that the potential benefits need to be clearly outlined to participating schools. As one interviewee suggested:

*“Schools are busy places and there are competing demands on time... there’s a need to continually reflect on what school priorities are and what activities will have the biggest impact... when there’s a project or activity that is brought into the school and it takes up more time, effort and energy... we have to make decisions about what is best for the school as a whole... sometimes projects can seem more hassle than they’re worth”.*  
(Teacher).

Such sentiments were echoed in other survey responses by teachers. Three out of the five respondents in the survey stated they would take part in a similar project next year. However, the other two stated they would not. Of those who would not be keen to be involved further, one respondent felt that they had not really gained any benefits from the project and would only get involved if the problems were ironed out. The other highlighted problems linking to partner institutions and stated that this was now less of a priority for their school. Those who stated they would be keen to be involved again qualified their answers by implying that they were now more experienced and they expected many of the challenges to be ironed out, for example:

- “We now know what to expect and how to plan projects with our students.”
- “The process can only get better and if students become more confident, then this will impact on the learning in the classes they are in.”
- “Students will enter the teaching profession as qualified teachers with a fantastic tool to support teaching and learning in many schools and hopefully recruit other teachers on the way.”

Despite challenges encountered, all three course leaders stated they would consider including eTwinning on their course again, qualifying their responses with the following:

- “(It’s an) opportunity to work at a great depth with Year 1 students.”
- “It’s worth another try.”
- “Plans are already developing for 2013-2014.”
- “Once the ‘hiccups’ were overcome it was a very valuable experience and was a real enrichment activity.”

*“I could see the students showing real professional growth and I don’t think they have realised how much they have gained. This will only become obvious to them during their second school experience”. (Course leader).*

This appears to reaffirm that training institutions and staff see great potential in eTwinning for their students.

Ambassadors involved in successful projects felt that the profile of eTwinning had increased amongst placement schools. They also felt it was more likely that teacher trainees would consider linking their class with another country and consider using eTwinning once they are qualified teachers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Ambassador where the project had not got off the ground felt there had been little change in this respect.

### **Conclusion: Perceptions of the eTwinning pilot**

Looking at the findings in context of the challenges faced and mixed levels of success, it is clear that many participants and stakeholders felt the eTwinning pilot had a lot to offer as a teaching, learning and professional development experience, and in providing opportunities to develop international partnerships and links. Whilst there were numerous negative responses regarding the experience, there were also clear indications that many participants were still willing to engage in such an activity again, if the process could be ironed out and rationalised. There is some suggestion that the processes, roles and responsibilities need to be clarified and that training and Ambassador support needs to be more focussed and streamlined. This could help reduce the stresses and frustrations that arise for both trainees and teachers who have limited time, and could also demonstrate to potential school partners that eTwinning is not overly time consuming. This is also dependent on the process for developing effective partnerships being improved as this appears to be pivotal to both the success of projects and the perceptions of the overall ‘burden’ of the project. Relatedly, in helping to promote the eTwinning project in a manner that might be more appealing to busy schools and teachers, there appears to be a need for more focussed outlines of what is expected and what the benefits are, as these are likely to ensure greater ‘buy in’ amongst those involved.

## 4. What worked well?

In addition to the benefits outlined earlier, this section highlights the aspects of the programme participants felt worked well.

Trainees highlighted a number of aspects of the eTwinning pilot that they thought worked well. These included:

- “Opportunity to plan and work with others.”
- “Opportunity to be involved in meetings, planning activities and project meetings.”
- “Greater contact time with placement mentor and more detailed planning.”
- “Opportunity to work as part of a team.”
- “Working with experienced overseas eTwinners.”
  
- “Opportunity to use experience in practice in the future.”
- “Opportunities to see how e-Twinning might be used in the classroom.”
- “Opportunity to try meaningful project.”
- “Opportunity to work with a class on a whole-class project.”
- “Opportunity to fit topic into the general lessons.”
- “Freedom within the project to try out ideas.”
- “Good opportunity for professional development and benefitted from training.”
  
- “Opportunity to develop knowledge and confidence.”
- “Receiving training on eTwinning portal.”
- “Guidance and enthusiasm from Ambassadors and course leader.”
- “Delivery of training session at SCITT.”
  
- “Motivation of children.”
- “Opportunity for children to see work from other schools.”
- “Creativity opportunities for children.”
- “Children working with and sharing work with other schools.”
- “Opportunity to meet other trainee teachers from a different culture and undertake a joint project.”
- “Opportunities for teaching about different countries and cultures.”
- “Working with different countries and teachers.”

Generally, these resonate with findings relating to benefits, broadly covering areas such as: planning; organisation; team-working; collaboration; partnerships development; professional development; pedagogical development; enrichment; greater confidence; pupil motivation and engagement; and greater understanding of different cultures and practices.

Additionally, other respondents (teachers, course leaders and Ambassadors) also highlighted further aspects of the project that felt had worked well:

- “Students were motivated.”
  - “Students had meaningful projects to work on and had a sense of ‘ownership’”.
  - “Trainees being involved in a ‘serious’ and meaningful project linked to class work” expectations and strategic priorities for schools involved.”
  - “Being able to plan projects and support trainees during the experience.”
- 
- “Time to work and plan with students before placement.”
  - “Trainees learning transferable skills relating to project and lesson planning”.
- 
- “Students had first-hand experience of how eTwinning can be used as a tool to motivate learners who are disengaged from some areas of the curriculum”.
  - “Seeing teacher trainees involved integrating their projects into the curriculum and in line with curriculum objectives”.
  - “Children experienced an enriched learning journey that would impact on their social, emotional and academic development, which continued after the students left”.
  - “Students spent more time in school than their peers. They showed a greater understanding of the teacher role”.
- 
- “Students had opportunities to share ideas and strengthen partnerships with schools in other countries”.
  - “Strengthening of relationships between school and University”.
  - “Strengthening of relationships and greater collaboration between trainees and teachers”.
  - “Trainee teachers making quick and positive relationships with their class teachers/mentors”.
  - “It provided an opportunity for each student to spend time with their Teacher Tutor to plan a unit of work”.
  - “Support from the headteacher and UK NSS staff was good”.
  - “There was good commitment from the University Programme Leadership Team
  - “There was good support from the School Leadership team”.
  - “The support from the teacher’s facilitation for additional funds and support from eTwinning Team”.
- 
- “Students developed confidence, skills and understanding of teaching and learning in comparison to previous year 1 students”.
  - “Trainees developing skills exceeding ‘the norm’”.
  - “Teachers developing collaboration, team working and partnership skills”.

Again, we see similar areas being highlighted, such as: planning and organisational skills and opportunities; greater motivation; confidence; professional development; more meaningful activity; and effects on pupil engagement. Additionally, there is greater emphasis on the different partnerships and relationships established between various participants and greater reflection on the qualitative aspects of the experience for trainees. It was suggested that eTwinning trainees had a richer, more intense and practical engagement in schools in comparison to their peers. Whilst this was clearly not

the case across all projects, there is certainly a strong indication that giving the opportunity to trainees to be actively involved in and lead a tangible and meaningful project is an extremely valuable experience supporting their professional development.

There were also a number of diverse personal and professional benefits highlighted for the other participants involved in the project. For example, Ambassadors suggested that teachers may have also benefitted professionally from their involvement:

- “Staff are now competent eTwinners”.
- “Level of international work in school increased and embedded, something which is assessed by OFSTED”.
- “Greater awareness of European project opportunities”.
- “School and staff have effective working relationship with the University and the BC eTwinning team”.
- “Greater knowledge of Web 2.0 tools”.

Whilst the focus of the project, and the design of the evaluation, was largely on the benefits for trainees, there was also plenty of data to suggest that many of the other participants had also benefitted from their involvement in the project.

*“It might not seem like it just now but I think everyone got a lot out of it... sure, some more than others but I did personally, I know the students will think this later down the line, some of the teachers opened their eyes to different European projects and partnerships... the schools stood to gain from it, the University can see the potential ... and the UK NSS staff will have learnt the pro’s and con’s... that’s what a pilot is about...”* (Ambassador).

Whilst the section above generally highlights the beneficial aspects of the project, the next section focusses specifically on the various challenges encountered.

## 5. Challenges

A number of challenges were reported by participants. However, these findings were not consistently reported across locations or by different participant groups. Moreover, these should not be viewed in isolation from one another, as it was clear that these challenges were often interrelated and interdependent.

### Difficulties finding international partners and establishing effective relationships

The single biggest issue raised by participants in all cases was the difficulties encountered whilst trying to find reliable partners. This was felt to be pivotal to both the success and smooth running of the different projects.

The original intention was that trainees would partner and collaborate with counterparts in other European teacher training institutions in order to develop their own collaborative projects. However, matching trainees in different countries was found to be a significant issue, with difficulties arising due to incompatible timetabling, poor communication, and differing levels of commitment. In one case this led to partnerships

projects failing to materialise altogether (Derby). In the other two cases (Winchester and Leicester & Leicestershire SCITT) this was also a source of frustration, however the decision was made to abandon this approach and instead to work with experienced eTwinning partners on the classroom project phase.

As the perceived degree of success of the projects varied, it is not surprising that responses surrounding the benefits of the eTwinning pilot were not consistent or comprehensive. However, many respondents acknowledged the project was a 'pilot', and therefore, challenges were expected.

- “Not all of the international schools were as committed therefore it worries me about how to find a good partnership”.
- “As we did not have any response from Norway, I feel that the experience felt like more work”.
- “Although efforts were made through training to us we were unable to develop the project with Norway. Resulting in what felt like a waste of time”.
- “Problems with finding, communicating and collaborating with European partners”.

As was clear from interviews with various stakeholders, challenges were expected. However, responses clearly highlighted that more time, planning, and emphasis on defining of roles and responsibilities between partners from different countries is essential. A number of respondents also felt that because of the different timetables, emphases, requirements and commitments of partners in different countries, it may be too ambitious to try and match trainees in different countries. The responses below highlight just some of the related challenges encountered by different participants.

- “Different timetabling, roles, roles and lack of commitment of European partners”.
- “Pupils had little involvement due to other school commitments and time restraints”.
- “Experience suffered because of lack of contact with partner schools”.
- “It was pointless for them without getting a response from partners”.
- “Time constraints”.
- “Difficulties for trainees finding time to juggle teaching and other commitments with e-twinning”.

*“The partnering (of) trainees was ambitious but led to many difficulties because they were doing things at different times... they were on different courses... and the institutions had different priorities... it doesn't make for the best basis for establishing partnerships... (I wondered) is there a need for trainees to be matched ... I think the partnerships between schools is the key and if you only have one group of trainees they can still explore the cultural exchange dimension in the classroom and that seems to be the biggest benefit”.*(Course leader).

The failure to establish such partnerships was the main source of frustration and anxiety for trainees and other participants, and clearly had negative impacts on perceptions of the pilot. Despite this, many participants recognised the 'pilot' nature of the project and still felt the programme could be valuable for trainees, trainee institutions and schools in the future, if such problems were addressed, and the three training institutions are currently considering or planning how they will incorporate it into their provision.

A number of other respondents also felt that finding pairing trainees from different countries could prove too ambitious. Instead they felt the emphasis should be on matching partner schools, and that it may be beneficial to focus on developing projects where at least one partner was experienced with eTwinning, or where there were already existing international partnerships.

### **Lack of clarity over process, responsibilities and roles**

There is significant data to suggest that there needed to be clearer guidance and identification of roles, responsibilities and processes associated with projects. It was highlighted that there was sometimes confusion over who had responsibility for different aspects of the project, and also the level of commitment expected. This was further compounded by the practical aspects of delivering the project over a limited time period.

- *"I sometimes wasn't clear what we were supposed to be doing, especially when our partners stopped replying". (Trainee).*
- *"Project was confusing at times for them [the trainees]". (Course leader).*
- *"As I didn't get out of it what was intended, I do not feel like I can say that I am confident... It did not happen so I cannot improve my confidence. However I now know there are things available". (Trainee).*

*"We seemed to be constantly responding to challenges. In a way, it was to be expected but it's difficult to keep convincing busy schools and teachers that it will be worth it. There needs to be a much clearer set of processes and acceptance of responsibilities, without that there will continue to be potential weak points... if steps are made to address this... and for more lead in time, then it could be great..." (Teacher).*

It may be that in the future the teacher training institutions take the lead for developing such guidance in conjunction with school, however, it was suggested that over the course of a short pilot and with problems encountered in matching trainees, there was insufficient time to develop and clarify roles and responsibilities clearly.

Other trainees also suggested some aspects of the pilot and projects project were not well organised or planned, and that this made the project stressful and ultimately more time consuming, which in turn may have undermined perceptions of the potential benefits of eTwinning for teacher trainers.

- *"I did not use the project in school. The process we went through before going into school left me confused".*
- *"(There was) a lack of understanding of how University timetables run".*

- “Too much time spent looking at and repeating training with the eTwinning portal and overcoming challenges”.
- “Too many meetings that covered the same ground and conveyed same messages”.
- “Children’s work not being chosen or used in activities upsetting for pupils”.
- “Difficult to fit ‘fairytale’ theme into current learning topic”
- “Lack of organisation”.

It is clear that there is a need for better planning, organisation and clarity of roles and responsibilities in future projects. This may be something that should be led by training institutions and developed and agreed with schools, with initial support from the UK NSS following the evaluation.

### Time constraints and competing commitments

As well as the time constraints and pressures arising from aspects of the project such as finding partners and identifying roles, activities and so forth, a number of respondents highlighted there were other time constraints that impinged on the project. For example, some trainees felt it was difficult at times to fit the project in alongside their other study and training commitments. For example:

*“It’s difficult because of the situation you were in – placed in someone else’s class – teaching individual lessons, so it was hard to fit in. It depends on the placement and the schools, whether the placement tutor is onboard. When it’s optional it is valued less by schools, their pupils and aim are of far more importance, you have to make sure you can show them it’s worth the hassle, which means more time and effort. I felt the project was ambitious and hard to fit in... we only had nine months to cover an overwhelming amount, especially with international dimensions. A longer amount of time and more supporting materials to get engagement and connection... and a list of things to do and when...”*  
(Trainee).

- “It was difficult to complete this with other professional expectations on placement with little guidance”. (Trainee).
- “It was stressful at times because we were having to work out what we were doing... I know a lot of people suffered because the initial partnerships didn’t work, which took up more time...” (Trainee).

Such views have to be considered from the perspective of trainees who may be anxious about delivering projects in schools for the first time and whose first experience included initial problems forming partnerships with European peers. This may have led to increased anxiety over how to redress the situation and the perceived issues felt this may have caused teachers and schools. This also may have meant that students felt there was less time to undertake a project in the school alongside their other teacher training commitments.

Course leaders also highlighted similar pressures, although respondents thought this could be alleviated to some extent with better planning and project design in the future.

Teachers also highlighted that time was a significant factor, potentially impinging on the projects but, perhaps as importantly, there were also limitations on the amount of time they could spend supporting the projects alongside a plethora of competing demands. This was particularly true when significant challenges and obstacles were faced, which potentially could undermine their willingness to be involved in the future.

## Communication

As well as problems regarding communication with international partners, some respondents also highlighted that communication was not always effective between the various UK project partners (schools, teachers, trainees and Universities), yet this was thought to be a key component for a successful project.

*“Sometimes the communication between different people broke down and different people would have different ideas about what was going to happen next... that wasn't a good experience for anyone, especially the students”.*(Course leader).

*“Within the scope of the pilot, it sometimes felt we were fire fighting...constantly dealing with issues that arose... but that's the nature of a pilot and we've learned much as a result and next time we will be far better placed to plan and organise and make sure all the pieces are in place before the project starts..”* (Teacher).

The interdependent nature of many of the problems faced must be recognised, however, each key area has room for improvements and developments. This appears to also be true in relation to the resources and tools supporting the project.

## Portal and website

A number of respondents raised issues they had faced regarding the online space and resources. It was felt that it would have been better to have full access to the eTwinning portal, resources and network, however there were obvious issues with this being available to trainees.

A number of trainees (and others) felt the Twinspace was not user friendly or intuitive. Whilst many felt that once they understood how to use it the resources and tools were useful, others felt that it still required some redesign. Some respondents felt that there were other web tools that provided similar functions more effectively, however, there was some acknowledgement regarding the need to keep everything in one space. One of the main areas that was felt to be in need of attention was the 'instant communication tool'. Some trainees had felt that using other web 2.0 tools for communication was more effective, as communications to and from partners were often missed and it required regular checking to ensure that communications did not 'go cold'. One respondent felt the 'closed' nature of the portal was not conducive to more instant communications and the development of effective relationships. On the other hand, other respondents felt that it was better to use a 'closed' environment, and did not feel comfortable using 'public' communication tools and spaces.

- “Portal not user friendly – needs redesigning with opportunities for instant communications”.
- “Difficulties in navigating the website”.

*“For example, when selecting images for the final presentation, you have to click on each school separately to view all images from Part 1 of the story. It would be very useful if there was an option to view all photos from Part 1 or Part 2 etc. from across all schools at the same time” (Trainee).*

*“You have to constantly check the portal to see if partners have been in touch... that’s not always something people have time or remember to do but there are other tools out there that are almost second nature to young trainees, which may be better for day to day relationship building...” (Course leader).*

### **Perceived ease of use and involvement**

It was not only the problems with the online space that proved to be challenging and difficult for trainees. There was also some apprehension amongst trainees (and others) about how the project would work in practice, and especially how challenges, such as linking with partners, might be overcome. Overall, students had different perspectives on how easy it was to use eTwinning. Of 31 survey respondents, 17 felt it was either ‘simple’ or ‘very simple’ to use, but 14 also reported it as being ‘not simple’ or ‘difficult’, suggesting there is still work to be done to make the programme and resources more ‘user friendly’ for trainees. However, such findings must also be considered in relation to both trainees experiences and use of other tools, and their level of ICT skills.

### **Conclusion: Challenges**

It is unsurprising that numerous challenges were faced in the pilot phase. Whilst this may have been frustrating and disappointing for some trainees (and others) involved, they do highlight areas for development. In many cases, challenges were overcome but in others they were insurmountable within the lifetime of the project. However, many participants remained generally positive and felt that many of these could be addressed and that the eTwinning programme could be an extremely valuable experience for all stakeholders in the future.

## **6. Recommendations: Areas for Improvement**

The following is a set of recommendations that build on the findings and data from participants in order to inform the next stage of development.

### **Website/portal**

Before rolling out the next phase, it is advisable to:

- Improve navigation, ensure the portal is intuitive in nature and user friendly
- Enable full access to eTwinning portal for trainees (if feasible)

- Ensure trainees regularly update and check website for new materials and 'communications' and that communication tools are appropriate to need, especially in the process of establishing partnerships
- Ensure process and workflow charts are added to and are visible on Twinspace

It would also be advisable to hold 'user testing' exercises with trainees (and others) to highlight specific problems and to develop a plan to address weaknesses.

### **Initial planning and organisation**

A number of participants felt that there were time pressures in the pilot project that needed to be addressed. Projects require a longer lead in time, allowing for more planning at an earlier stage. Processes need to be in place to ensure all stakeholders are 'signed up' and understand their roles and responsibilities clearly.

There is also a need for greater clarity over roles and responsibilities for all participants, with clear guidance on the processes and steps to be undertaken. Developing action plans, workflow and process charts for participants and outlining key stages, roles, milestones and also interdependencies, would be useful additions in supporting the process from conception to classroom activities. There is a need to ensure teachers understand their role and commitment to projects, as well as understanding the benefits and what has been gained by previous trainees, children and schools.

It is essential to ensure headteachers and/or senior management 'buy in' to the project, as this was felt to be critical to success. However, 'buy in' does not necessarily mean they will be directly involved, but there needs to be at least some 'light touch' mechanism for monitoring developments that senior management have to 'sign off'.

Providing early opportunities for all participants to meet and plan collaboratively was also felt to be critical to success, and giving schools, Universities and others more time to ensure it is effectively designed to be a meaningful and valued project. Trainees need to be involved from the outset and have the opportunity to work with others in planning projects. Trainee needs and requirements should be assessed from the outset to ensure more targeted and tailored support. Similarly, projects need to be designed to account for trainees other responsibilities, and also to fit in with school requirements. Clearly, it will be better to plan projects earlier to allow for greater flexibility and avoid 'bottlenecks'.

Participants highlighted a number of areas where time and the conditions for establishing more effective working relationships were required, and these need careful consideration before rolling out the next phase.

### **Teacher-trainee**

- More time is needed for trainees to form effective relationships and work with teachers to learn from their experience
- It would be beneficial to have more interaction between schools, teachers and different trainees

- It was suggested that trainees need to be given opportunities to attend a full day workshop on promoting global citizenship in the classroom, prior to the introduction to eTwinning, possibly with teacher mentors.

### **University-school**

- Ensure schools, Universities and staff are willing to be involved and can provide adequate support
- Ensure teacher tutors and mentors are positive toward eTwinning and be clear of their role and responsibilities
- It is essential that Universities and schools receive support from the eTwinning Team Programme Leadership Team, or other individuals, who are given responsibility to support projects

Clearer lines and mechanisms for communications between all partners should be established and agreed at the outset.

### **International-partnerships**

The biggest challenge for many was establishing effective international partnerships. The following recommendations were put forward by participants.

- Ensure enough time is available to develop appropriate partnerships and eTwinning requests in advance and establish partnerships early
- More time and opportunities are needed to develop effective partnerships and collaboration with international partners, ideally beginning to plan projects with all partners earlier in the school year
- Offer the possibility of creating direct relationships with partners in another country or use existing school/individual partners and contacts. This would make it easier and more comfortable to collaborate
- Ensure partners genuinely want to be involved and are committed
- Ensure 'buy in' from the outset, formally agree aims, roles, responsibilities, and coordinate timetables
- Ensure partner schools/institutions are similar and have agreed aims and outcomes
- Find compatible timescales so institutions can work collaboratively on the different aspects of projects
- Find better forms of communication with partners, especially instant communication tools

It was suggested that using experienced eTwinning teachers could provide one answer. It was felt that where the school is already involved in eTwinning, then there would already be a partnership school for trainees to work with.

It was also felt that, if in the future attempts are made to link trainees from different countries, that they should be 'matched' more appropriately, for example for age, level of training, as well as ensuring timetables and workloads can be aligned.

## **Promoting and enhancing the benefits of eTwinning**

If the teacher trainee initiative is to be rolled out to another phase with more institutions, there has to be greater clarity on the specific learning, teaching and professional development goals for trainees and the benefits for pupils. It was felt that children could be engaged with the projects earlier, with trainees and teachers developing a clear and shared understanding of the learning aims and outcomes and how these will support children's learning from the outset.

Clear materials that highlight the areas of skills development for both trainees and learners, and indicate how schools will benefit from the eTwinning project, would be valuable resources. These should be linked to other learning and development areas for schools, such as global citizenship, PSHE, moral education, and so forth, and serve as promotional materials to engage more schools and training institutions.

## **Building on existing capacity**

It would seem sensible to consider utilising teachers and schools who are already involved in eTwinning as a basis for partnerships with training institutions and students. Using teachers who are experienced eTwinners could prove to be an excellent resource and source of support for the trainees.

Given the challenges faced in developing new partnerships in some cases, it may be useful to consider using, or building on, existing links or partnerships schools may already have in place with international partners.

It would also be worthwhile considering giving teaching staff the opportunities to carry out an eTwinning project themselves before working with the trainees. This would also increase the likelihood of a reliable partner being available for students and was felt to be one possible strand in the next stage of roll out.

Many respondents felt it would also be worth investigating whether student mentors could be used for the next, or subsequent, group(s) of trainees. Those students who have already gone through the experience may be better placed to inform and support new trainees. It may also be worth considering if more opportunities could be offered to those trainees involved to roll it out again in their second year of study, implement what went well and make improvements. This may require a further level of accreditation but could support the ongoing development of the programme, its profile and increase the related resources and materials available. Furthermore, it was felt that there should be greater encouragement for students to become self motivated and continue to take ownership and make plans for utilising eTwinning in the future.

It is worthwhile considering how trainees could also be involved in researching and evaluating the programme in the future. For example, it would be feasible for individuals, or small groups of trainees, to be involved in collecting data and analysing the benefits to professional development and learning. This could happen in a number of different ways, for example, trainees not involved directly in eTwinning work researching their peers projects, trainees keeping logs and conducting Action research projects, or an external researcher working with trainees to develop an iterative approach to data

collection and analysis. Taking such approaches would provide feedback about the effectiveness of projects and, if designed correctly, highlight emerging issues and problems.

It would be beneficial to utilise experienced Ambassadors to take on workload undertaken by the UK NSS during the pilot, thereby increasing the sustainability and viability of the project in the longer term. However, it was clear that Ambassadors need to have the correct sector experience and knowledge to ensure training is more succinct and targeted and that projects are successful.

### Focus of the programme

Whilst the overall focus of the programme and related projects were viewed favourably it was felt schools and Universities should be enabled to take ownership and have the ability to shape projects, rather than being prescribed or Ambassador led. It was felt that this would increase the likelihood of projects being successful and matched to curriculum and learning needs and thereby reducing the likelihood of them being perceived as 'impositions'. Similarly, Ambassadors need to ensure that during training and development of project trainees have a greater input in shaping the specific processes and foci. It was also felt that teachers, trainees and schools should be enabled to plan in ways they feel are more suited to curriculum timetabling and across more subjects and at different stages and phases.

Projects should be designed to ensure that **all** pupils work is showcased and celebrated, with 'local' versions of children's work created to avoid pupils being disappointed if their work is 'not selected', or the project fails.

### 'Rolling out' eTwinning

In advance of further stages of development, there is a need for an active and promotional campaign targeted at key initial teacher training organisations. Clearly, given the new financial imperatives, there is more emphasis on training providers offering more tangible and beneficial experiences to their students. Supporting promotional materials should seek to clearly highlight the benefits for different stakeholders and the key policy and learning areas the project addresses. There are a number of existing national and local networks and portals, such as the Teacher Training Support Networks, and the Initial Teacher Education Network, that could be used to promote and raise the profile of eTwinning and the benefits it can have for trainees and schools.

Attempts should also be made to ensure eTwinning is integrated into the teacher training institution programmes as core, rather than as additional or optional component, This would 'add weight' to eTwinning activity and raise the profile of programme as a whole, as well as increasing the likelihood of students choosing to undertake eTwinning.

### Evaluation and Monitoring

It would be advisable to continue further evaluation and monitoring of the programme. We would suggest that future research should be designed prior to commencement of

the next phase and utilise methodologies and approaches that ensure emerging findings feed immediately back in to address any issues and inform the programme design. There is also the potential for designing an approach that involves trainees in some capacity as researchers of professional development processes. This could involve teacher trainees involved in eTwinning, or non-participant student researchers investigating the impacts of the programme.

It would also be valuable to design research that focusses specifically on the skills and competencies identified in the pilot. This would enable a more detailed examination of the degree and extent of learning and teaching benefits beyond the post project reflections of participants. This could also provide a further layer of reflection and analysis of professional development experiences for trainees and other participants.

## 7. Conclusion

The eTwinning teacher trainee pilot was successful in identifying the key issues that should inform a further stage of development. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that if the key challenges identified were overcome, it would prove to be a valuable addition to the teacher trainee provision for training institutions by offering opportunities for skills and professional development through managed, meaningful and tangible classroom based projects. Moreover, there is also sufficient evidence from successful projects that suggest there are many skills development benefits for both trainees and pupils. The pilot has also been successful in identifying the best ways forward for developing the activities and processes for the next phase of the teacher trainee project.

From the evidence available, there are some clear components that contribute to effective eTwinning projects involving trainees. Projects are more likely to be successful when: they allow adequate time for planning; are supported by clear structures, processes and guidance; offer concise and targeted training at the point of need; and are supported by senior management teams. Success is also dependent on: partnerships that are in place and agreed early; when professional support is matched to sector; and when projects are, and are perceived to be, a compulsory part of training courses and accreditation. There is also likely to be a greater degree of 'ownership' and buy in if: the benefits for learners, participants and institutions are visible; when projects are active and creative; when there is greater flexibility and less prescription in defining the precise nature of projects; and when supporting materials and resources are user friendly and intuitive.

However, a number of issues will need to be addressed before the next iteration in order to make it a success. However, none of these challenges appear insurmountable. Much has been already gained and learnt from the pilot in that it has identified numerous areas for improvement, as well as areas of success that will provide a solid basis for future developments.

## Acknowledgements

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## Background to the Report

This report was written by Dr Tim Rudd (Livelab & University of Brighton) and Baldev Singh (Imagine Education) and seeks to highlight the benefits, impacts, issues and challenges arising from the eTwinning teacher trainee pilot project. The findings and recommendations are derived from analysis of survey data, interviews and a review of resources, with additional input based on our experience in the field. The evaluation was commissioned by the British Council as the UK NSS.