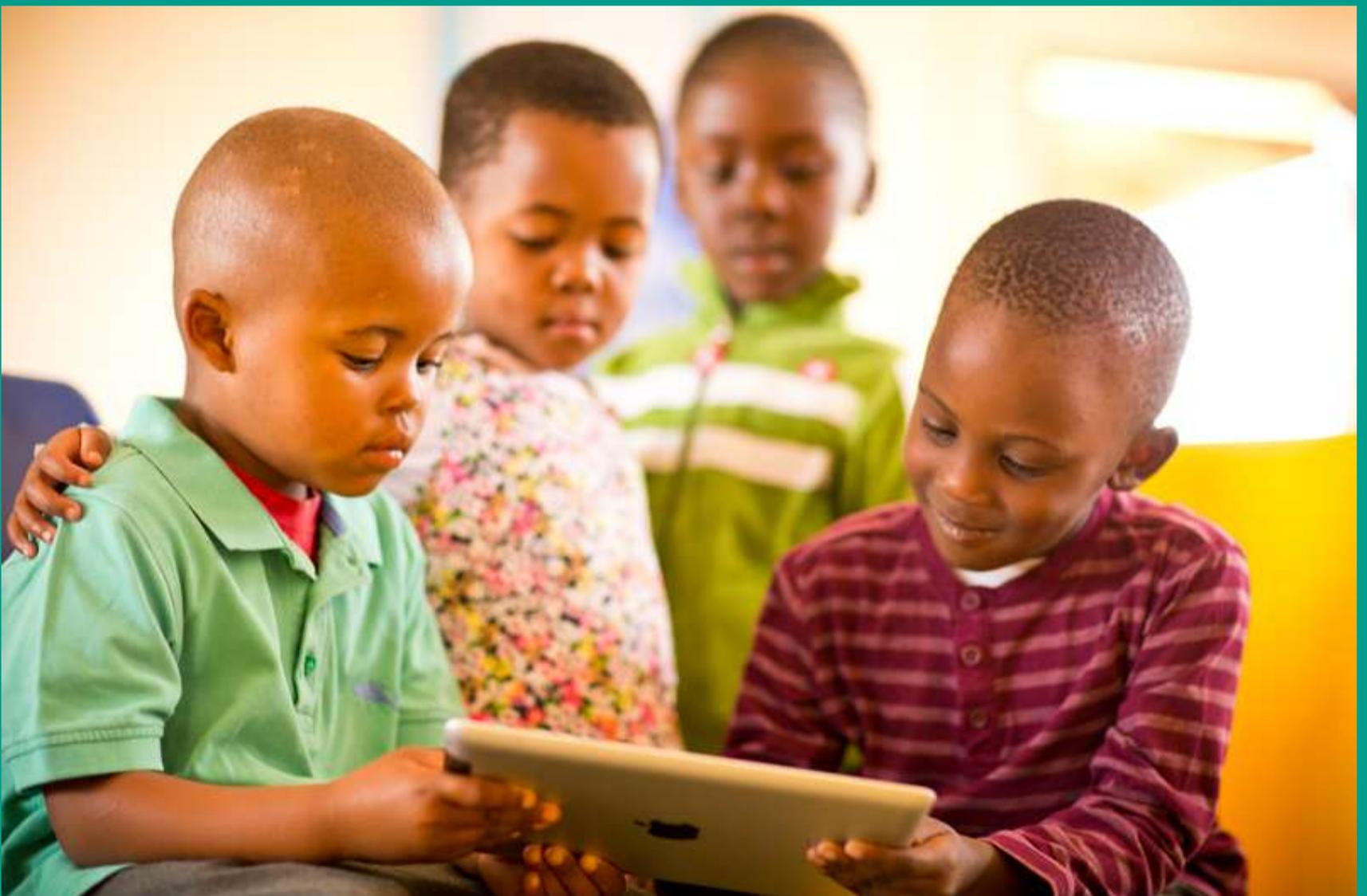


CONNECTING CLASSROOMS

SSA SCHOOLS UPDATE

March 2021



POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Nigeria

Following previous policy events, priorities of policy makers engaged and the rising need for the adoption of blended method of learning, it has become increasingly important for education practitioners to understand how to utilise technologies effectively and critically evaluate the digital content.

To assist in meeting this goal, the team is planning to commence delivery of Digital Literacy training for teachers and school leaders. As a prelude to that, the team delivered a two day Digital Literacy taster event for senior policy makers in the education sector introducing blended learning, access to education, roles of policy makers in ensuring the embedding of Digital Literacy and adoption of blended learning in their respective states, barriers to effective usage and preferred workable solutions to addressing these barriers.

The sessions were delivered for stakeholders in Lagos and Rivers states, Abuja and Kano state respectively on 25 – 26 March and 30 – 31 March 2021.

In attendance were:

- Nigeria Country Director, Lucy Pearson and Stephen Forbes, Director of Operations who delivered opening remarks in Lagos and Abuja respectively.
- Various Ministry officials including; State Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, heads of States and the FCT (Abuja) Universal Basic Education Boards, Secondary Education Boards, Heads of State Science and Technical Education Board, 3 senior representatives from the Federal Ministry of Education which are Director of Information Communication Technology (ICT), Director of Basic and Secondary Education and Director of Technology and Science Education.
- Others present were heads of states and the FCT Department of Quality Assurance and Directors from Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN).

The events provided stakeholders an opportunity to look at the issues regarding access to education, the importance of Digital Literacy and how it connects to all the other Core Skills.

At the end of the events, the policy makers developed 3 month action plans for embedding blended learning and Digital Literacy in the curriculum in their respective states. WhatsApp groups were created for each of the locations and facilitators assigned to provide further support to the stakeholders.



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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Sudan

Inclusive Education Event

On the 12th and 13th of March, the team held an Inclusive Education event in Khartoum focused on giving policy makers a brief about the Connecting Classrooms programme and a deeper understanding of the Inclusive Pedagogies course. The event targeted federal and states ministries of education in Sudan. During the event, the 50 attendees shared their thoughts, opinions and suggestions regarding what inclusion is and how they can implement it in their upcoming plans.

The Keynote speaker and presenter was Ms. Nehal Wanas, an Egyptian Consultant and specialist in Inclusive Education and one of the British Council team members in Cairo. She was supported by two Sudanese country trainers, Mr. Hatim Sami and Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim. Ms. Nehal highlighted a variety of issues impacting education in Sudan as well as addressing the inclusive barriers policy makers face while implementing their strategies.

During the two days, participants had the opportunity to choose various topics which included: What is Inclusion?; Barriers to inclusion; Unconscious bias; Key Gender Concepts; Medical and Social models.

Each day consisted of 3 sessions that lasted for 90 minutes each. At the beginning of each session, participants were presented with background information and discussion questions followed by a structured process of brainstorming where participants offered recommendations. The event is the first of a series that the team will be holding to engage the new policy makers.

Some of the quotes from the delegates include:

"The inclusion session was a real value add to me. I have really benefited from it."

Dr. Salah Altayib Badawi

Director of the Education and Special Education Department

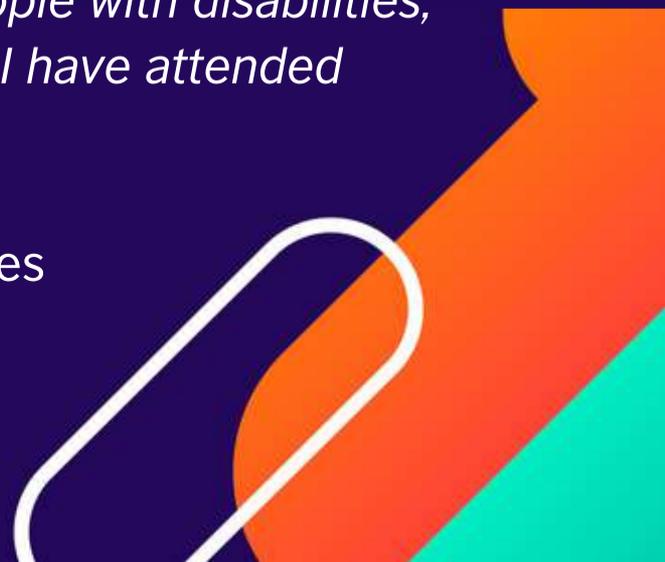
"This session speaks to me directly, as I'm one of the people with disabilities, it really touched the reality unlike other sessions/events I have attended most of them are just theories."

Rehab Mustafa

Director of the National Centre for people with Disabilities



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"I wish we had more than two days for this content. I will do my best to implement what I have learned here in my environment."

Mohamed Mahjoub

Deputy Director of the National Teacher Training Centre

"I believe we were lacking this culture of inclusion, it's amazing how such information can open ones eyes to so many wrongdoings as well as other possibilities for the near future."

Alkhateeb Altaeyb

Adviser at the National Curriculum Centre

"I'm quite curious on what else we were missing out on and how different our country would have turned out if anyone had grasped this knowledge. One thing I know for sure is that I'm not the same person that I used to be before joining this session."

Taha Mohamed Noor

Adviser at the National Curriculum Centre



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COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

Uganda

Core Skills Taster Event

The team enacted the Teacher Policy in 2019 which made mandatory requirements for continuous teacher Professional Development and revisions in pre-service training. The Ministry is in the process of operationalizing the policy by developing an implementation framework and teacher training curriculum.

The British Council was approached by the Ministry of Education through the department of Teacher Education and Training, to contribute to this process by building an appreciation of core skills in teacher training institutions and providing support in the development of the teacher education curriculum.



A representative from the Ministry of Education Addressing Participants

Working in partnership with the Teacher and Instructor Education and Training (TIET) department of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the team organised a one-day Taster Event for 51 Heads of Teacher Training Institutions to be enlightened on the 21st century skills, what they looked like and how they would be taught.

The session, which was held on 23 March 2021 was designed as a blended model, with one of the regional Master Trainers, Dr. Gioko facilitating virtually from Mombasa supported by a Ugandan trainer, Alfred Okello. It was held as a pre-event to the third Teacher Education Symposium under the theme “A digitally competent teaching force for the 21st Century” that brought together educators from across the country.

The session was important in shifting mindsets and building an appreciation of core skills evidenced by reflections from the participants at the end of the session:

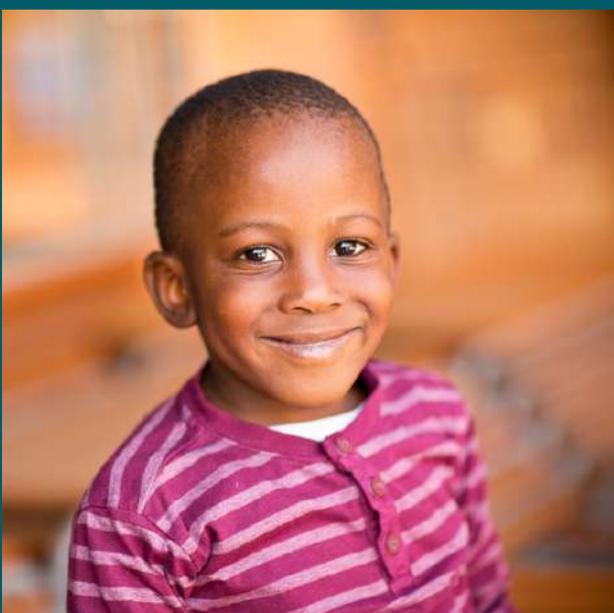
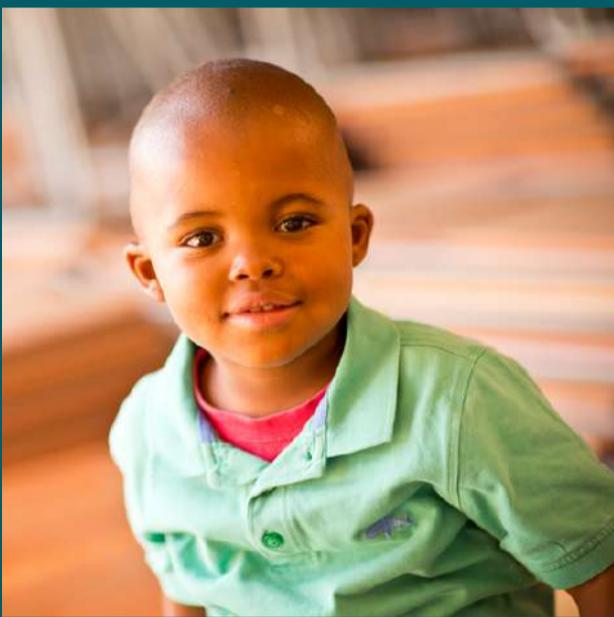
“I used to think that tests and examinations were very important but now I think that we need to pay attention to developing skills and talents in learners.”

“I used to think that when I tell my teachers to practice effective learner participation, they would know how to do it, but now I think it is important for me to give them more guidance.”

“I used to think that giving information to learners was important but now I think that it is important for us to integrate skills so that learners gain hands on knowledge.”

“I used to think that I had to be at the front of the class for the learners to learn, now I have learnt that I need to be a guide on the side.”

The follow-on plan is to conduct a session with TIET leadership on 21st century learning, as well as further online support sessions for Heads of teacher training institutions as a foundation for inclusion of core skills in the teacher training curriculum.



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PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Building Back Greener-Global Conversation

The partnership between Economist Foundation and Connecting Classrooms has, for the second year running, initiated the Global Conversation among young people in the UK and the rest of the world via online portal, <https://burnetnewsclub.com/> with a view to developing critical thinking skills, news literacy and awareness of key topics adversely affecting the world today.

The first cohort of the global conversation in 2020 was centered around the extreme weather conditions amidst the pandemic. This year's theme: *Building Back Greener looks into the environmental impact of COVID-19 and how lessons learnt help build a better and more sustainable greener world.* This will last for six weeks with support of teachers and parents from schools and homes respectively.

Over 500 learners from nearly 70 schools from Sub Saharan Africa will join this year's global conversation. The learners will build knowledge around the effects of the pandemic around the world, actions various nations have taken and the results of their actions on the peoples' health, economies, politics and the environment. High quality classrooms resources will be available to enrich the conversations.

Knowledge gathered by the learners will enable them to evaluate actions, impacts, make moral decisions and report or run campaigns with a view of influencing policy and lifestyles leading up to <https://www.britishcouncil.org/programmes/cop-26> later this year. Reports such as The Canals in Venice, Italy turned clear for the first time in 60 years; the people in Nairobi said less air pollution meant they could see the snowy peak of Mt. Kenya for the first time in a long time; In South Africa's Krugar National Park, lions began sleeping on roads because there was less traffic.

British Council's extensive global network will match overseas schools with their UK counterparts and end up with real audiences with whom they can sense check and discern fake news from factual news. These relationships are envisaged to end in funded partnerships in June 2021 and contribute towards the CCGL targets.



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This year's global conversation will be a very interesting one to follow and will seek to answer the following:

- Was the COVID-19 pandemic a blessing in disguise to push governments to evoke some stringent measures that have never been seen before?
- Would more stringent climate actions devastate economies further?
- Was the COVID-19 pandemic a convenient prelude for the Cop26?
- Would Governments be better prepared to make more informed decisions and take practical actions to save the planet.

This is certainly not a conversation that you would want to miss. The official launch for the global conversation will be on 19 April whereas live online sessions will run on 11 May 2021 for all the students to attend. There will be a fairly restricted promotional campaign on Twitter (@Schools_British).

However, should the SSA participating countries wish to do something locally, they will use @Econ_Foundation



PEOPLE SPOTLIGHT



Catherine Mary Fry

**Validated Trainer,
South Africa.**

I started working as a trainer with the British Council in 2015 following acceptance to the first validation programme. What followed was a whirlwind of four days training, meeting the South African delegates and finding out more about what I was letting myself in for. My experiences ranged from driving through the dark to Thohoyandou in the Limpopo Province to working in the North West Province rolling out the Core Skills programme. Working with the South African trainers in person thereafter remotely at the onset of the COVID -19 Pandemic has enabled me to develop skills I never knew I had.

Working as a trainer for the British Council has always meant a great deal to me as I love the work we do. I have learnt so much about people, different ways of doing things and the fact that the problems we face in our schools are so similar. Being part of the Instructional Leadership Expert Trainer network group has been a huge learning opportunity; not only about Instructional Leadership but being able to watch and learn from Global colleagues and the Regional Master Trainers. I have been constantly amazed by the depth of expertise, kindness, sharing and encouragement. I have been close to tears listening to some of the experiences my colleagues have had in Sudan, uplifted by the sincerity and experience of the trainers, and encouraged to develop as a facilitator and as a person.

I have had challenges of hearing since I was 17 years old following a severe case of chicken pox which damaged my hearing then and further damage after a series of viral infections in my early 30s.

To be honest I don't remember what it is like to hear properly, so I carry on as usual until someone points out to me that I have got the wrong end of the stick or I am carrying on a conversation long gone! Overall, my co-facilitators have been incredibly supportive about my poor hearing. It has been a combination of me being brave enough to say I can't do this and asking for help, and colleagues only being too willing to step in to take notes, explain questions I have misheard and making light of mistakes I have made. I've learnt to be more proactive and to inform my co-facilitators what I need from them to be able to do the job I need to do.

One of my highlights with the British Council was a trip to Nairobi where I had the opportunity to meet colleagues across Sub Saharan Africa. I learnt so much and met so many people from diverse cultures. Moreover, I participated in a British Council Inclusion Conference in Johannesburg several years ago and saw a completely different view of inclusion and how it is integral to our South Africa Bill of Rights.

It made me think about the difference between equality and equity and how children who have learning disabilities are seen to be different – sent off to therapists or special schools. It made me question so much of my own practice. I think being hard of hearing has made me more aware of people who experience a disability.

I have had several opportunities while working with the British Council to help people with disabilities. One of these was assisting a district official, who had poor eyesight.

Working virtually has been tricky as I am not always able to hear my co-facilitator, but we have made use of WhatsApp to communicate. I try to make other people on the team more aware of sight and hearing disabilities and suggest that we only use videos with subtitles, ensure that everyone can see the screen and check that the venues are accessible to everyone.

The Connecting Classrooms programme has given me the opportunity to work with teachers throughout South Africa. It made me realise that I have skills and knowledge to share as well as lots to learn. I have grown as a person, I have learnt to plan and relax more, I have tried hard to include more games and fun activities in my delivery approach. I have also learnt not to take myself too seriously and to be open to doing things differently to the way I would do them.



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In case you Missed it

Re-Imagining Education within the COVID context

Experiences from Sub- Saharan Africa

An informative and insightful discussion was held on 18 March 2021 as a closed meeting held virtually on education during the COVID-19 era. The event brought together policy makers from around the Sub- Saharan region who shared experiences, challenges, and solutions as well as what has been working in their respective contexts. The discussion drew on different experiences and journeys offering counterparts and experts the opportunity to learn from their education success stories.

The platform also provided an opportunity for key education assessment/curriculum departments to exchange information on coping strategies adopted during the pandemic as well as an opportunity to re-imagine education in the future – post pandemic strategies.

If you missed it, please find the recording here: <https://tinyurl.com/29ype7a5>



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Education Resilience Insight Research

Next Steps

After receiving key findings from the Education Resilience Insight Research, conducted in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe, we are moving into the phase of articulating and meaningfully communicating these findings to the following key audiences; Internal (Regional Senior Management, Portfolio Leads, Country Directors, Global Connecting Classrooms Leads, Country Managers). External audiences (classroom leads, School leaders, FCDO, MoE) and other Educational Stakeholders.

We were off to a great start by sharing key findings with both the Regional and Connecting Classrooms leadership. The response has been that the findings were relevant to our current education landscape, aligned to current programme design and highlight areas that we could further strengthen on to solidify our schools work and possibly expand our business. The areas are:

- Enhancing the 21st skills agenda through professional learning for educators with a focus on digital literacy.
- Assessment support moving into continuous assessment.
- Professional learning for school leaders for adaptive leadership to address issues of collaboration and motivation of teachers.
- Mainstreaming inclusivity in teaching and learning with a key focus on girls' education.

The findings will continue to be shared with other internal audiences.

Externally, it is an opportune moment of the beginning of the financial year and this being the last year of Connecting Classrooms 4 to use the findings of the research to strengthen discussions with policy makers.

Look out for the next update for details of our communications strategy!

www.britishcouncil.org/connectingclassrooms

