

# CONNECTING CLASSROOMS

**Broadening horizons, enriching  
teaching and learning**



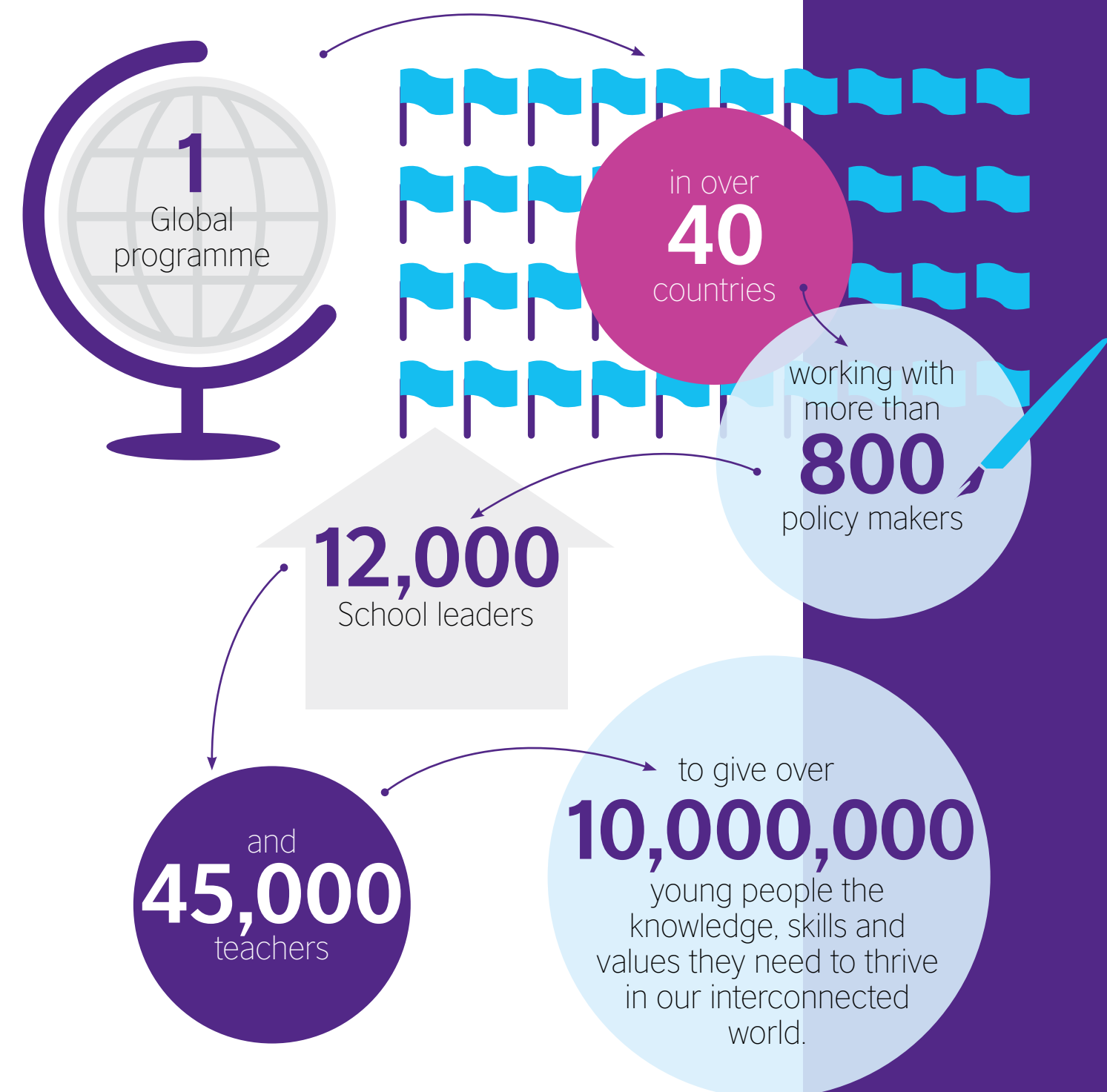
©Mat Wright



# CONTENTS

- 1 Connecting Classrooms at a glance
- 2 Welcome
- 4 About Connecting Classrooms
- 5 Core skills
- 6 Our impact
- 10 Sub-Saharan Africa
- 14 South Asia
- 18 Connecting Classrooms Worldwide
- 20 Middle East and North Africa
- 24 Inclusion
- 26 United Kingdom
- 30 East Asia
- 32 References

# CONNECTING CLASSROOMS AT A GLANCE



All figures are programme targets for June 2018.  
We are on track to meet or exceed all these targets.



“I am proud that, through Connecting Classrooms, we are giving millions of young people the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and values they will need to shape the future for themselves and generations to come.”

**Sir Ciarán Devane**  
Chief Executive,  
British Council

# WELCOME

One of my favourite examples of our work with Connecting Classrooms comes from a secondary school in Ethiopia. Daniel, the Maths teacher, wanted to improve participation in his classes. Many of his pupils felt Maths was a difficult subject, and lacked the confidence to get involved.



Daniel attended Connecting Classrooms training, where he gained a range of new teaching techniques to help his pupils develop their critical thinking skills. Back in the classroom, he began to introduce changes, such as asking more open questions and encouraging discussion of concepts. It's never easy to invite potential criticism, but he asked his students to comment openly on his teaching so he too could learn.

It was a great success. His pupils have gained confidence and their participation in lessons has increased. They are more able to problem-solve and they love to share ideas. Some pupils had missed lessons in the past; this stopped and many now consider Maths to be their favourite subject. They have even begun to organise their own Maths classes outside the school. Importantly their attainment in the subject has greatly improved, as their test results show.

These young people in Ethiopia are just a few of the millions of pupils in over 40 countries worldwide, including the UK, who are benefiting from the Connecting Classrooms programme. Through Connecting Classrooms, we are training thousands of teachers and school leaders to embed core skills and global themes in their curriculum, interwoven with their own deep subject knowledge. As a result, pupils all over the world are developing skills like creativity and critical thinking – the essential skills they will need for life and work in a global economy.

From Mozambique to Myanmar, from India to Iraq, today's young people are growing up in a fast-paced world. The rise of new technologies, digital communications and changing labour markets bring fresh opportunities but also present new problems to be resolved. Our young people must not only be globally competitive but also globally competent – able to understand intercultural issues and with the social, emotional and leadership skills to contribute to the world's challenges.

I am proud that, through Connecting Classrooms, we are giving millions of young people the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and values they will need to shape the future for themselves and generations to come.

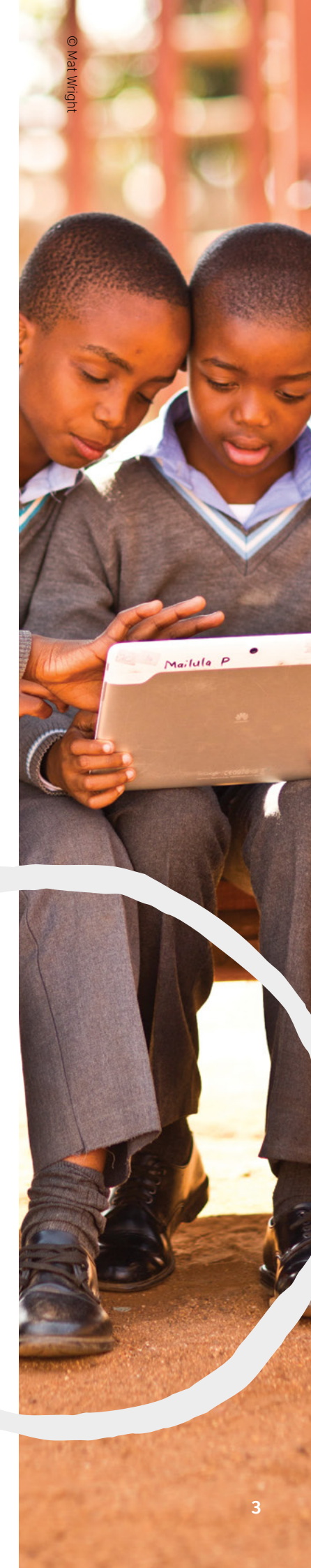
**Sir Ciarán Devane**  
Chief Executive, British Council



“The Department for International Development has been proud to support the Connecting Classrooms programme since 2012.

This unique education initiative encourages the next generation to become global ambassadors for the UK and to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to respond to the challenges of the 21st century. It teaches them about issues beyond their immediate surroundings and makes them global citizens through a network of classrooms and friendships around the world. It's a win for children in the UK and a win for children in the developing world.”

”  
**The Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt MP**  
Secretary of State for International Development



This material has been co-funded using UK aid from the UK government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.



“The Connecting Classrooms agenda of core skills is highly relevant to both policy makers and young people alike, and flexibility in the delivery model has allowed the programme to be tailored to different country contexts.”

Connecting Classrooms  
Year 2 Report

# ABOUT CONNECTING CLASSROOMS

Connecting Classrooms is a global education programme for schools. It aims to help young people worldwide develop the knowledge, skills and values they need for life and work in a global economy. Connecting Classrooms is delivered by the British Council in partnership with the Department for International Development (DFID).

## OUR ACTIVITIES

### Policy dialogue

We work with policy makers to extend their understanding of effective practice internationally and support their education policy development aspirations.

### Professional development

We provide professional development opportunities for teachers and school leaders. Our training supports educators to embed core skills and global citizenship into an inclusive curriculum. Developed by leading education experts, our training packages are available either face-to-face or online.

### School partnerships

We offer teachers the opportunity to develop face-to-face and virtual partnerships with teachers and schools in other countries. Partnerships allow teachers to learn from each other and to work together on embedding core skills in their

curriculum. Teachers can collaborate online and can access a range of classroom resources, including projects based on the Sustainable Development Goals. These resources help young people develop core skills and explore important global themes.

### International School Award

Our accreditation scheme for schools around the world who demonstrate outstanding practice in international learning.

Through these activities, Connecting Classrooms helps to enrich and improve teaching and learning in education systems worldwide.

# CORE SKILLS

To be fully prepared for life and work in a global economy, young people must develop the right skills. Building on internationally recognised frameworks, the British Council is championing the development of these six core skills alongside subject knowledge.



### Critical thinking and problem solving

– promoting self-directed thinking that produces new and innovative ideas and solves problems; reflecting critically on learning experiences and processes and making effective decisions.



### Collaboration and communication

– fostering effective communication (oral and written); actively listening to and engaging with others in diverse and multi-lingual environments and understanding verbal and non-verbal communication; developing the ability to work in diverse international teams, including learning from and contributing to others' learning, assuming shared responsibility, co-operating, leading, delegating and compromising to produce new and innovative ideas and solutions.



### Creativity and imagination

– promoting economic and social entrepreneurialism; imagining and pursuing novel ideas, judging value, developing innovation and curiosity.



### Citizenship

– developing active, globally aware citizens who have the skills, knowledge and motivation to address issues of human and environmental sustainability and work towards a fairer world in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue; developing an understanding of what it means to be a citizen of their own country and their own country's values.



### Digital literacy

– developing the skills to discover, acquire and communicate knowledge and information in a globalised economy; using technology to reinforce, extend and deepen learning through international collaboration.

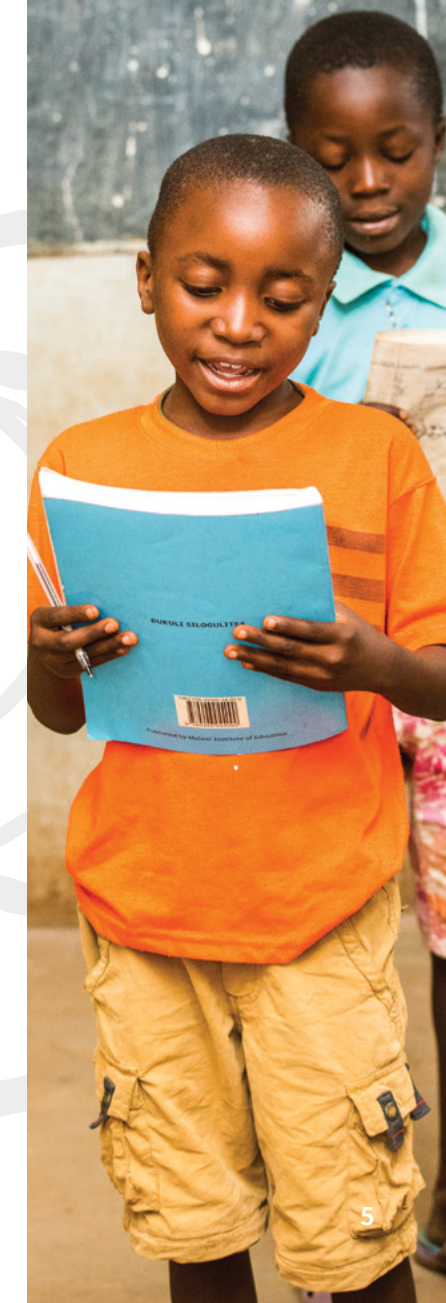


### Student leadership and personal development

– recognising the importance of honesty and empathy; recognising others' needs and safety; fostering perseverance, resilience and self-confidence; exploring leadership, self-regulation and responsibility, personal health and wellbeing, career and life skills; learning to learn and life-long learning.



© Peter Makwana



“It has been evident from successful policy maker engagement that the development of core skills in young people is of direct relevance to education systems and ministries around the world.”

Connecting Classrooms  
Year 2 Annual Report

76% of teachers confirm their professional teaching practice has been enhanced by the core skills professional development opportunities.

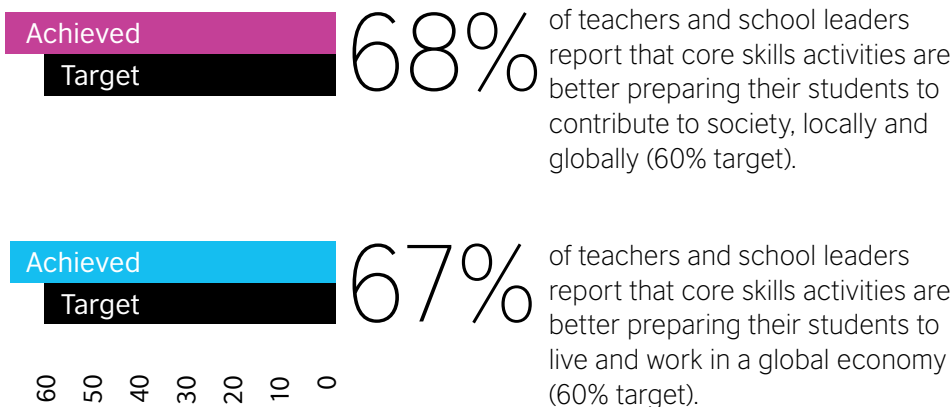
# OUR IMPACT

Since we began the current Connecting Classrooms programme in 2015, we have reached over 750 policy makers, 13,000 school leaders, 30,000 teachers, and over five million learners in more than 40 countries worldwide, including the UK.

“Success factors for the programme include its high degree of relevance and flexibility, the efforts to align Connecting Classrooms with national education systems, the range of core skills modules offered and the quality of the training.”

Connecting Classrooms  
Year 2 Annual Report

We have collected a wealth of evidence from surveys, case studies, focus groups and reports. This shows we have delivered positive results across the vast majority of our targets and indicators. Teachers and school leaders report that their pupils have enhanced core skills and most feel they are teaching core skills effectively. There are positive indicators of teacher and leader professional development, online school collaboration, enhanced understanding among policy makers and policy alignment and influence.

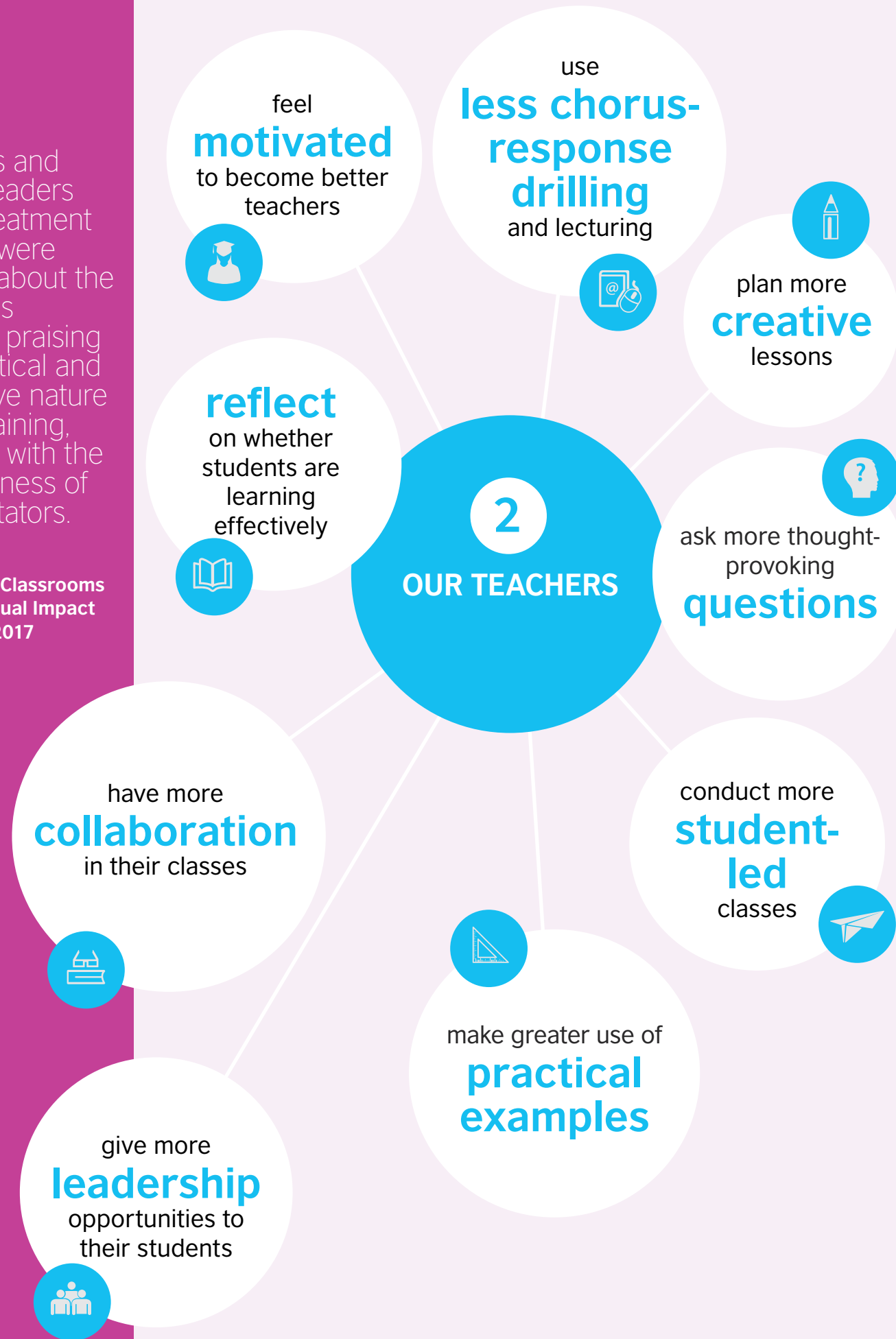


“It has developed the students’ interest in learning. The whole school community got to know about it. All of them wanted to be a part of it.”

School leader,  
Sri Lanka

Teachers and school leaders within treatment schools were positive about the core skills courses, praising the practical and interactive nature of the training, together with the effectiveness of the facilitators.

Connecting Classrooms  
Counterfactual Impact  
Evaluation 2017



All statistics and information on impact come from the reports listed on page 32. All data and evidence has been validated and analysed by an independent evaluator, Ecorys UK Ltd.



“The modules... have resulted in a change of attitude in schools. Both teachers and leaders have learned that when faced with a teaching or management problem they need to find appropriate ways to tackle it.”

Minister of Education and Human Development, Mozambique

18,443 teachers trained

7,410 school leaders trained

82% of school leaders are committed to developing core skills in their school

# Sub-Saharan Africa

## Case study: Kenya

The Kenyan government is reforming the curriculum, supported by the British Council.

### BACKGROUND:

The Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development (KICD) is leading a major revision of the Kenyan curriculum. We want to embed core skills, competencies and values alongside knowledge and mastery. The British Council is advising and supporting this work.

### WHY WE WANTED TO IMPROVE CORE SKILLS:

We wanted to embed core skills into the new curriculum to:

- enable Kenya to achieve the goals of our key policy, Vision 2030
- equip pupils with skills to contribute to national and international labour markets
- help to address issues like radicalisation, terrorism and substance abuse.

### WHAT WE DID:

Our focus on core skills began in 2015, when a British Council team introduced the Connecting Classrooms programme at the Ministry of Education.

In 2016, the British Council and the Curriculum Reform Technical Committee (CRTC) discussed Kenya's education roadmap and how to embed skills, competencies and values in the curriculum.

The outcome was a draft curriculum framework identifying seven competencies that form the backbone of Kenya's new curriculum. Five of these are core skills (Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Imagination, Citizenship, Digital Literacy, and Communication and Collaboration).

We held further meetings to:

- align the framework to reflect the desired skills and competencies
- discuss embedding core skills and competencies across subject areas
- examine competency-based assessment structures.

### WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR:

We have made important progress on the first major reform of the Kenyan curriculum for 34 years.

With the British Council's support, we have designed a competency-based curriculum where core skills are embedded across all subjects and assessment.

Our curriculum developers have grown in knowledge, skills and confidence.

“The meetings enabled us to have an open mind as we think of what values, knowledge, attitudes and attributes we need to embed in the curriculum to develop our future learners.”

Deputy Director Basic Education, KICD

### WHAT WE PLAN TO DO IN THE FUTURE:

We will develop a longer-term plan for curriculum reform with the British Council, including support for curriculum design and teacher development.

We will hold workshops to help Connecting Classrooms trainers understand our vision. This will align them with the new curriculum as they facilitate core skills workshops.

Through the British Council we hope to engage other private and international stakeholders to support the reform process.

84% of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa confirm their teaching practice has been enhanced by core skills training





“Some of the most encouraging evidence came from the lower set who suddenly enjoyed independent reading, [and] grappled with difficult concepts very effectively because they were building up to them and reflecting on their learning experience.”

Teacher, South Africa

## Case study: Zambia

Headteacher Namezi Mirriam is leading school improvement through embedding core skills in the curriculum.

### BACKGROUND:

Matero Girls' Secondary School in Zambia has 2,700 pupils and 64 staff.

### WHY WE WANTED TO IMPROVE

#### CORE SKILLS:

Results at the school have been poor recently. I was appointed to tackle this dip and improve perceptions.

I attended the Leading Core Skills training because I wanted to:

- explore new approaches to improving results
- develop deep learning activities to improve pupils' performance
- manage change effectively
- improve communication, collaboration and teamwork among staff and pupils.

### WHAT WE DID:

I focused on leading the development of core skills across the curriculum, in particular Critical Thinking and Problem Solving.

I held a senior management team meeting to clarify our vision and develop the school's strategic plan. We shared the plan with staff, emphasising that this would become part of the institution's culture, not a one-off project.

I agreed challenging targets with departmental heads for monitoring their staff.

We began to monitor and evaluate extra-curricular activities, such as games and school maintenance. I gave teachers with leadership potential responsibilities for major projects. Pupils also became involved and now play an active part in improving the learning environment.

### WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR:

Our pupils have made significant progress and results are improving. They are more engaged in class, have better attendance and improved behaviour. They are more involved in extra-curricular activities, and are proud to take care of our school.

Our teachers are now more open to new ideas and appreciate the school's vision. They are taking greater responsibility for leading classroom learning and developing pupils' core skills. They are collaborating better and taking greater leadership of extra-curricular activities.

As a leader, I learned valuable skills in communicating and overcoming opposition. I have gained insight into people's fear of change and how to help them accept new approaches.

Our school now works with the British Council and the Ministry of General Education to share best practice.

Pupils' participation in extra-curricular activities has raised the school's profile and reputation.

### WHAT WE PLAN TO DO IN THE FUTURE:

We will develop an action plan for future progress. We will set up a WhatsApp group for stakeholders and engage them in new projects. We also plan to train new staff members in core skills.

## Key achievements

### NIGERIA

We supported Jake Epelle, CEO of The Albino Foundation, and Chair of the Inclusive Education Group for the Nigerian Ministry of Education, in developing an inclusive education policy. Nigeria is the second country in Sub-Saharan Africa to set out a strategic plan to ensure all children can access education.

### ZAMBIA

Following successful Connecting Classrooms training, Lusaka Province committed to significantly expand the programme through funding training for every school in the province: a total of 957 schools and 2,000 teachers and headteachers. A Provincial Education Officer said: "I am fully aware of the benefits of the Connecting Classrooms programme in improving the education experience of many young Zambians as well as the skills of teachers and head teachers... it is indeed wonderful to be part of these key areas of development that directly impact on society and on the future of Zambia and Zambia's young people."

### MALAWI

We are supporting the development and implementation of the government's new National Strategy on Inclusive Education, through providing Inclusive Pedagogies training and facilitating dialogue between international policy makers.

### SUDAN

The Ministry of Education endorsed Connecting Classrooms as directly relevant to its education strategy. The State Ministries worked with us to provide teacher training across eight states, including Darfur and Kordofan regions. Darfur has been devastated by war in recent years which has negatively affected all sectors, especially education. There is a significant need for improved services and the British Council was able to offer training for hundreds of teachers in South Darfur.

As a result of the successful core skills training, Zain Telecommunications, a leading telecoms company in Sudan, entered into a public-private partnership matching British Council and DFID funds to create greater impact across Sudan. Connecting Classrooms is now delivered in 25 cities reaching 14 out of 18 states.

### UGANDA

The British Council, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) has launched an initiative called the Teachers' Forum, enabling teachers and other stakeholders to share thoughts on key education issues. The latest was entitled Digital Literacy: The Effective Use of ICT in Enhancing the Quality of Education.





“We really need core skills in [our] education system and the British Council is the only organisation delivering training on core skills.”

Deputy Minister for General Education, Afghanistan

10,416 teachers trained

4,510 school leaders

78% of policy makers have a better understanding of best practice in core skills through international collaboration

# South Asia

## Case study: Pakistan

The provincial government of Punjab is working in partnership with the British Council to help thousands of teachers benefit from core skills training.

### BACKGROUND:

The Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (formerly known as the Directorate of Staff Development) offers training for 30,000 public school teachers across the Punjab in Pakistan. We seek to further the National Education Policy, providing leadership and strategic planning and equipping teachers with modern and innovative teaching techniques.

### WHAT WE WANTED TO ACHIEVE:

We wanted to train teachers in core skills to improve pupils' ability to:

- contribute as responsible global citizens
- communicate and collaborate with people around the world
- handle difficult situations by using critical thinking and problem solving.

“I was satisfied with what I was doing as a teacher, but through this core skills offer I've realised there is another world out there I have yet to discover.”

Teacher, Pakistan

### WHAT WE DID:

Our involvement with Connecting Classrooms began when a teacher training course co-ordinator visited the UK as part of a British Council study tour. On her return, she introduced Connecting Classrooms as mandatory training for teachers and headteachers. This achieved immediate results, with schools gaining the International School Award for the first time. Building on this, we offered core skills training to 1,700 teachers and a new, activity-based approach to learning emerged.

Inspired by the initial success, we extended our core skills training. In particular:

- core skills and leadership training are now mandatory for headteachers receiving promotion link training
- we offer a five-day, in-depth training programme for teachers
- core skills are implemented through activities in the International School Award.

Increasingly, teachers take an activity-based approach to learning and embed core skills in the teaching and learning process.

Mapping the core skills against the curriculum is now underway.

### WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR:

Pupils are much more engaged with the core skills, project-based approach to learning. Behaviour and attendance have improved.

Pupils have grown in confidence and developed new citizenship and leadership skills.

Pupils have started to collaborate with their global peers. Their communication and digital skills have improved and they think more critically.

There has been a shift in teachers' methodology. Teachers now focus on developing pupils' core skills through activities, rather than just teaching content.

### WHAT WE PLAN TO DO IN THE FUTURE:

We plan to extend the core skills training offer to thousands more schools next year.

83% of teachers in South Asia include core skills in their teaching every week

“I have learned new skills that have helped me improve my teachers' approach in the classroom. I actively monitor and evaluate classroom activities and pupils' learning, which enables me to help teachers develop... As a result, they are developing greater autonomy as leaders of learning.”

School leader, Nepal



© Ashvin Jayalath





“It has improved my teaching skills. I am getting the opportunities to share good practice and learn from my partner school.”

Teacher, Bangladesh

## Case study: Sri Lanka

Students are using smartphones and computers to get to grips with English grammar through Digital Literacy techniques.

### WHY WE WANTED TO IMPROVE CORE SKILLS:

J. R. Jayawardhana National College in Kuliyaipitya, Sri Lanka, is a rural secondary school with 800 pupils. Most pupils have limited career ambitions. I wanted to raise aspirations, increase pupils' desire to learn, improve their English and make them more employable.

### WHAT WE DID:

I focused on one area of English grammar, the passive voice for the present simple tense. My students found this particularly challenging. I aimed to use digital literacy techniques to improve pupils' knowledge of the construction and help them write sentences.

My objectives were to:

- motivate and engage learners
- increase the range of learning strategies by using digital tools and methods
- reinforce learning through interactive elements.

Working in groups, pupils used a range of activities, such as:

- writing sentences about daily activities and presenting them to the class
- using Microsoft Word to put active voice sentences into the passive voice
- using smartphones to text sentences in the target language
- listening to the TV or radio news in English, finding present simple passive sentences, and presenting them like a news reader.

### WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR:

Despite some challenges, pupils improved their digital literacy skills and their knowledge and use of the target language.

The pupils engaged in the activities enthusiastically, which raised their motivation and interest and changed their perception of the subject from 'difficult' to 'easy'. One particular student, who had previously not wanted to study English, was the first person to arrive in class for the project work. Now he loves my subject.

We tested pupils before and after the project. The results were impressive – no student got more than 50 marks in the pre-test, whereas they all got more than 50 in the post-test.

“We learn English happily with the use of mobile, television, computer and radio now. We want to continue using them. We enjoyed the lessons.”

Student, Sri Lanka

### WHAT WE PLAN TO DO IN THE FUTURE:

This project will continue for some months and I will continue to use digital literacy in my classes.

Other teachers are interested in these methods, so the work will be spread throughout the school.

## Key achievements

### BANGLADESH

We signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) under the Ministry of Education in 2017. This emerging partnership is already bringing solid results on the ground. The Ministry has offered support through in-kind contribution which will allow us to further expand our capacity development of teachers and leaders.

### NEPAL

In November, Nepal hosted the South Asia Regional Schools Conference. Entitled 'Delivering Quality Assurance for Schools' it was attended by Ministers and senior officials from several ministries of education.

### PAKISTAN

A national exercise for core skills curriculum mapping has been initiated with representation from all provincial curriculum boards. The focus has been on Science, Maths, Social Studies, English, and Urdu from grade 1 to 8. All provinces' subject specialists and the Ministry of Education have taken a keen interest in the activity and provided full support in developing documents for policy makers and practitioners.

We have signed Memorandums of Understanding with the provincial governments of Gilgit-Baltistan and Punjab to support them with training for teachers and school leaders through Connecting Classrooms. Our training has been selected by the Punjab school education department for all 52,000 headteachers in the province and we are also offering training to hundreds of teachers, with plans for expansion.

### SRI LANKA

The British Council has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education. The Ministry's 'TRANSFORM' initiative aims to improve leadership skills, mentoring, and qualification frameworks for teaching and teacher education across the national education system. This programme plans to train 16,000 principals across the country.





31,481  
teachers trained

# CONNECTING CLASSROOMS WORLDWIDE

13,431  
leaders trained

Through this project, we are encouraging the students to see refugees not as numbers in need of aid but rather as the people that they are. We are providing our children with tools to take action and not just 'admire' a problem.

UK-Lebanon Partnership  
teacher, UK

The core skills training has made my classes more interactive and interesting for the pupils. Most importantly core skills have made my pupils self-directed thinkers – they also answer open ended questions with so much confidence without the fear of failing or been looked down upon.

Teacher, Nigeria

78%  
of school leaders  
are committed to  
developing core  
skills in their  
school in the  
future

It has helped me become enthusiastic about teaching again. It has been successful in helping the pupils talk and think and reason about issues as well as becoming more aware of world issues and broadening their horizons.

UK-Lebanon Partnership  
teacher, UK

750  
policy makers  
engaged

We need to encourage and support creative teaching and learning, especially of 21st century skills such as decision making, problem solving, self-awareness and empathy, while also covering all relevant areas of our subject matter.

Executive Director of the Curriculum  
Development Centre, Nepal

From the activities in the classrooms, students have a deeper understanding of the lessons and it helps them in their exams.

Teacher, Myanmar

I have changed from 'chalk and talk teacher' into a teacher who believes that I should give students the chance to participate, talk more and express their ideas. I'm sure now that the more they participate the more they understand, and the more they ask and question the more they want to know.

Teacher, Yemen

83%  
of trained teachers  
include core skills  
in their teaching  
every week

4,847  
schools  
collaborating  
online

75%  
of policy and  
decision makers report  
that the programme's  
activities fully support  
their needs and  
priorities

“As a leader, I have gained skills and confidence as a result of leading this major change in teaching and learning. Empowering others to take leadership of learning – both teachers and pupils – has been a valuable and rewarding experience.”

”  
Leader, Lebanon

2,792  
teachers trained

1,244  
leaders trained

77%  
of teachers confirm their teaching practice has been enhanced by core skills training

# Middle East and North Africa

## Case study: Occupied Palestinian Territories

Girls in Bethlehem are getting better results, after teachers introduced Critical Thinking and Problem Solving to the curriculum

### BACKGROUND:

Al-Awda Basic Girls' School in Bethlehem, Occupied Palestinian Territories, has 850 pupils, and reflects the diversity of the Palestinian community. There are 35–40 girls in each class.

### WHY WE WANTED TO IMPROVE CORE SKILLS:

We felt our pupils focused on memorising information to pass exams, at the expense of their skills. They often think in traditional ways and do not practise Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (CTPS).

### WHAT WE DID:

Following the CTPS training, we put several techniques into practice, conducting sessions to develop pupils' skills.

Miss Maysaa used the 'solving non-routine problems' strategy in a Physics lesson on buoyancy. She asked the girls to predict what would happen if two oranges were placed in a bowl of water after peeling only one of them. They performed the experiment, explained their results and presented their findings to the class.

Miss Najwa used the consideration of different perspectives in a Science lesson on frost. They examined different views of frost – one example was a video of frost ruining a farmer's land. She used the open and closed questioning technique to explore the topic and the 'think-pair-share' strategy where pupils worked together to answer questions and explain these answers to the class.

Miss Najwa used the 'assessing evidence' strategy in another science lesson by presenting a video explaining the concept of cloud seeding. She split the girls into groups and gave them examples of relevant research. She asked them to examine both the facts and the opinions in the research, and state whether they agreed or disagreed. The pupils presented their work to the class.

### WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR:

Our pupils asked more questions and became more actively involved in their learning. They are better motivated and enjoy their classes more because there is a greater element of fun in their learning.

Actively experimenting and assessing evidence fostered deeper learning and exam results noticeably improved.

Our improved learning outcomes led to better inclusion of potentially marginalised learners and our girls in wider society, with better skills and greater employability.

### WHAT WE PLAN TO DO IN THE FUTURE:

We will continue using CTPS techniques in our classes and train more teachers how to use them.

79%  
of teachers in MENA are committed to using core skills in their teaching

“This project has influenced my family in many ways... my daughter loves going to school now.”

”  
Parent, Jordan





“I think the greatest success... is the using of technology as a tool to reinforce, extend and deepen learning through international collaboration. Enabling the students to discover, master and communicate knowledge and information in a globalised economy.”

Teacher, Iraq

# Case study: Lebanon

An innovative Citizenship project is getting Lebanese and Syrian students talking about immigration.

## BACKGROUND:

DMeet Public School in Shouf, Lebanon is facing the challenge of integrating and meeting the needs of Syrian refugees alongside Lebanese pupils.

## WHY WE WANTED TO IMPROVE CORE SKILLS:

We wanted to improve the relationships between Lebanese and Syrian students. We wanted to develop all pupils’

- understanding of the importance of Citizenship, encouraging them to reassess their values and take action
- awareness of cultural diversity, immigration and refugees.

## WHAT WE DID:

Following the Connecting Classrooms Citizenship training, we designed a project for grade eight pupils called *Is immigration a blessing or a curse?*

Activities were delivered over five lessons and included:

- an introduction to immigration, the difference between immigrants and refugees, and global events affecting refugees
- displaying classroom signs in Italian, encouraging pupils to imagine how it feels to live somewhere you can’t understand the language
- interviewing a Venezuelan student living in Lebanon, refugees from outside school, and both Lebanese and Syrian students
- investigating the relationship between immigration and citizenship, and the rights and responsibilities of immigrants and refugees.

In a powerful speaking activity, pupils discussed whether they might one day emigrate and why. Both Lebanese and Syrian pupils expressed a desire to emigrate. However, the refugees also made clear they were eager to return and make Syria a better place. Similarly, Lebanese pupils agreed ‘there is no need to emigrate if we can make our country a better place’.

## WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR:

Pupils were highly motivated by the active approach to learning and enjoyed sharing experiences and views.

Pupils now have a better understanding of cultural diversity, immigration and the importance of Citizenship.

Lebanese pupils are kinder to the Syrian students and show them more respect. Syrian pupils understand the need to show respect and responsibility towards their host country.

Pupils developed a range of communication skills and their spoken English skills improved.

Challenging issues – including religious and cultural differences – have been aired and resolved.

## WHAT WE PLAN TO DO IN THE FUTURE:

We will continue to focus on developing pupils’ Citizenship skills to improve relationships within school and prepare them for future life.

# Key achievements

## EGYPT

The Professional Academy for Teachers (PAT) has agreed to validate certificates for all teachers that complete core skills courses, and will include this as part of individual teachers’ promotion files. PAT is also keen to access online materials.

## JORDAN

Our partnership with the United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNWRA) has a focus on student leadership. Labelled Educators for the Future, work is based on Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Imagination, Digital Literacy and Citizenship.

Core Skills for All was our inclusion conference in Amman. Participants from the UK and partner schools in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Occupied Palestinian Territories joined representatives from local schools, NGOs, policy makers and the media. The event aimed to increase understanding of issues around inclusion and share ways to develop inclusive practices.

## YEMEN

The Ministry of Education supports our focus on core skills and believes our programme activities will achieve a significant impact in schools. We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry. As a result, we will build the capacity of 12,000 teachers across Yemen through Connecting Classrooms and other initiatives.

## PALESTINE

We signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in March 2016 to support and endorse implementation of Connecting Classrooms. The Ministry has also endorsed Schools Online to all schools and teachers in the West Bank. We agreed to collaborate on the following priority areas: Communication and Collaboration, Digital Literacy, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, and Creativity and Imagination.

## MOROCCO

Connecting Classrooms fits with the National Education Strategy, and the British Council therefore signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education. The first two years of the programme focused on Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, and Creativity and Imagination.

## TUNISIA

Connecting Classrooms covers elements from at least six of the Ministry of Education reform objectives, such as Special Educational Needs and Development of School Life. Connecting Classrooms launched in September 2016 at the Ministry of Education and we signed a Memorandum of Understanding to mark two years of partnership between the two organisations.



© Roudy Latouf



“This conference has had a very significant and positive impact on my own thinking... it will definitely help me in crystallising a position for including everybody in the education sector in Jigawa state.”

Policy maker, Nigeria

## FOCUS ON... INCLUSION

We are championing core skills for all. We believe that all young people deserve to participate, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic background, health or medical condition. Through our Inclusive Pedagogies training course for teachers and our work with policy makers, we are helping our partners around the world to create more inclusive classrooms.

### OUR WORK

Our **Global Inclusion Conference** in Dubai saw policy makers and practitioners from 25 countries come together to exchange effective practice on inclusive education in schools.

Our publication, **Unlocking a World of Potential – Core Skills for All** aims to help educators make informed decisions on providing for all pupils, using theoretical models to stimulate fresh perspectives. It contains articles on inclusive education in the UK and countries around the world.

Our series of **Core Skills for All** inclusion conferences, in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa, brought practitioners and policy makers together with experts in the field. Delegates discussed areas such as access and engagement, gender equality and planning inclusive settings, and worked on plans to take the agenda forward in their own countries.

Teachers describe how our **Inclusive Pedagogies** course has helped them to overcome the challenges of providing inclusive and child-centred

education to all their students. Many participants started by thinking of an individual student who would benefit from more inclusive classroom practice; what they commonly found is that the changes not only benefited the individual pupil but the rest of their class as well.

In **Malawi**, we are supporting the government's National Strategy on Inclusive Education, through Inclusive Pedagogies training and dialogue between international policy makers.

Our **SEN Policy Toolkit** supports our staff through outlining our position on inclusion and providing information on access and engagement, theoretical models and relevant teaching resources. Our Gender toolkit is designed to facilitate discussion around gender inequality. Incorporating global evidence, it enables our staff to support educators with implementing inclusive strategies.

## Case study: Malawi

Introducing new inclusive pedagogies has helped students with SEN to participate in mainstream classes and is changing attitudes too.

### BACKGROUND:

Chitedze is a large primary school in the rural outskirts of Lilongwe. The ratio of teachers to children is about 1:100. Martha Chagoma Mohango runs the SEN resource room, where she supports learners part-time with academic and life skills.

### WHY WE WANTED TO IMPROVE INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES:

After attending Connecting Classrooms Inclusive Pedagogies training, Martha decided to focus on four students with a variety of difficulties affecting their reading and writing: communication, fine motor skills, visual and cognitive. She wanted to show the other teachers that these students have the capability to make progress.

### WHAT WE DID:

Martha looked at the four learners' individual needs and made a plan for each. Through consulting with their parents, she discovered a history of early development problems, including cerebral malaria and premature birth. The parents' persistence in sending their children to school gave a clear message about the importance of education for all.

Martha shared her plans with the other teachers, so they could understand what to do differently to support the learners in class. Strategies included modifying print, using gestures for communication and helping students physically with letter formation. Seating plans ensured learners were near the teacher and could see, hear, or lip-read. Martha taught basic life skills in her Resource Room to increase the children's confidence.

Martha made sure the learners spent most of their time in mainstream classes, and supported the teachers to use the strategies she had planned. She arranged for the school's leadership team to run a series of assemblies about difference and inclusion.

### WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR:

Two of the students are now able to read and write to the extent where they can engage in the same classroom activities as their peers. The other two students are making good progress.

The mainstream teachers changed their opinions of the students and, with support from Martha, felt more able to teach these learners within their large classes.

The students showed increased confidence both at home and at school, and began to interact more with their peers. They demonstrated improved emotional wellbeing and increased participation in classes.

Fellow students changed their attitudes and went out of their way to include them.

In future, the school plans to continue Martha's work.

© Peter Makwana





“As a school we have been on a journey from special measures to good, and the core skills have been fundamental in that journey.”

Teacher, UK

1,625  
teachers trained

92  
leaders trained

73%  
of teachers confirm their teaching practice has been enhanced by core skills training

## United Kingdom

## England

The British Council is working closely with several national subject associations to embed core skills pedagogy within subject disciplines.

We are supporting the new National Curriculum and the reform of examinations, which emphasise subject knowledge and mastery. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (CTPS) in Maths is available through a partnership with the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics. Aimed mainly at secondary teachers, the course includes guidance and support for teachers as they adjust to the new Key Stage 4 requirements.

The Geographical Association (GA) has worked closely with the Association for Citizenship Teaching and the Historical Association to

provide courses for teachers of their subjects and humanities teachers in general. The GA is also collaborating with SSAT (The Schools, Students and Teachers network) to enhance CPD opportunities for existing groups of professionals, whether in multi-academy trusts, or other informal learning networks.

These bespoke courses have been popular and well received, and demonstrate how core skills can support good teaching in any area.

## Scotland

Connecting Classrooms is helping schools to meet students' entitlement to Learning for Sustainability.

The British Council commissioned the University of Edinburgh to develop a bespoke course using the core skills to support Learning for Sustainability. A significant theme in the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence and General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS) Professional Standards, Learning for Sustainability includes areas such as global citizenship and sustainable development.

### PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

In 2016, the GTCS accredited Connecting Classrooms as a programme leading to Professional Recognition. This offers participants an additional opportunity to have their development formally recognised. Over 30 teachers have submitted portfolios for Professional Recognition so far, and there are a further 49 participants working towards recognition in the 2017/2018 academic year.

The Scottish College of Educational Leadership (SCEL) has also endorsed Connecting Classrooms, praising the programme's coherent approach and good links to national priorities and international drivers.

### EXPANDING OUR IMPACT

Since 2015, we have trained over 300 teachers in Scotland and demand continues to be high. Our geographical reach is expanding, with courses in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Aberdeen and Inverness, attended by teachers from 31 of 32 local authorities.

Our new online course offers an accessible and flexible training route for all teachers, but particularly those based in more rural communities. Over 30 teachers have taken part in the pilot and further courses are planned.

### FUTURE COMMITMENT

In November 2017, Ministers launched Vision 2030+, the concluding report of the Learning for Sustainability National Implementation Group. This reaffirmed the Scottish Government's commitment to Learning for Sustainability, and the relevance of Connecting Classrooms to this key priority.

“The best CPD course I have attended in the past seven years of teaching.”

School leader, UK



“The most important thing I have learned is that critical thinking and problem solving is not standalone; I am now linking it with all subject areas to help the children think more skilfully about what they are learning.”

Teacher, UK

## Northern Ireland

Our core skills courses are tailored to support the curriculum at all Key Stages.

Over 100 teachers from across the country have completed face-to-face training since 2015. Connecting Classrooms supports effective practice in:

- Personal Development and Mutual Understanding
- Learning for Life and Work
- Cross-curricular skills: Communication and Using ICT
- Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.

We held two sessions for undergraduates at St Mary's College, looking to inspire the next generation of teachers. At Stranmillis University College, we ran a 'special input' day for around 80 students, focusing on integrating core skills and an international dimension into the curriculum. We have also been able to host in-service professional learning courses on the Stranmillis campus.

## Wales

We are supporting the ongoing education reforms through our core skills courses in Critical Thinking and Problem Solving and Digital Literacy.

Available in both English and Welsh, the courses support teachers to embed the 'Wider Skills' and digital competence across the curriculum. This addresses two of the recommendations from the 2015 report *Successful Futures*, an independent review of curriculum and assessment for Wales.

In 2015, the incumbent education minister, Huw Lewis said: "I am also delighted to be able to announce that we are working closely with the British Council in developing new professional learning experiences and international opportunities to support teachers in Wales. From next academic year,

practitioner focused programmes will be available to a number of schools across Wales to support the teaching and learning of digital competence and wider skills across the curriculum."

The Connecting Classrooms team was invited to contribute to the groups researching digital competence, 'Wider Skills' and the international dimension to develop the new curriculum. These invitations demonstrate confidence in Connecting Classrooms and present real opportunities to support the national reform agenda.

## Case study: England-Jordan partnership

Pupils in England and Jordan are developing critical thinking skills through sharing perspectives on world hunger.

### SCHOOL BACKGROUNDS:

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is in London, UK. Its 240 pupils come from a range of backgrounds and speak over 30 languages.

Marka Prep Girls' School Number 2 is in Heteen Camp, Jordan. Its 1100 pupils come from refugee families from Iraq, Palestine and Syria.

### WHY WE WANTED TO DO THE PROJECT:

Using the British Council's Zero Hunger project template, our schools decided to collaborate on the question: *Is it realistic to wipe out hunger from our planet by 2030?*

Both schools wanted students to become:

- confident learners
- effective communicators
- active participants in sharing their learning globally.

### WHAT WE DID:

We used images on the theme of Zero Hunger to stimulate higher order questions. We also used different techniques to develop critical thinking, including lollipop sticks to establish a 'no hands up' culture, 'pose, pause, pounce and bounce' for questioning and 'silent debate' to understand different perspectives on world hunger.

UK pupils visited a food bank, while pupils in Jordan gave food to poorer members of the community.

Both schools exchanged parental questions about hunger and the students researched the answers.

Children exchanged learning with their international partners on a weekly basis. They shared questions and photographs, made scrap books, and presented their ideas through music, drama, and art. They also communicated via a facetime conference and through a variety of digital forms.

### WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED SO FAR:

In both schools, children are more able to ask higher order questions. They have a better understanding of world hunger which includes different cultural perspectives.

Involving parents deepened the children's engagement and understanding of world hunger, in both schools.

The partnership helped pupils grow in confidence, communicate effectively and share learning internationally.

“One of the best curriculum initiatives I have ever been part of.”

Assistant Headteacher,  
St. Joseph's

### WHAT WE PLAN TO DO IN FUTURE:

The students wanted to find out more about their partners. They have chosen the theme of Identity and Belonging for their next project.

“The Zero Hunger project not only raised our awareness of global hunger, but deepened the students' thinking and understanding of the issue through the critical thinking strategies we shared with our partner.”

Teacher, Jordan



“  
I was able to gain  
more confidence  
in teaching  
”

Teacher, Philippines

856  
teachers trained

175  
school leaders  
trained

69%  
of teachers agree  
that their students  
respond well to  
core skills  
teaching

## East Asia

### Case study: Myanmar

A teacher gets some unexpected results from introducing core skills techniques to her classroom.

#### BACKGROUND:

Daw Khin Khine Nwe is a teacher at No. 3 State High School in Meiktila, Myanmar. As in all government schools in Myanmar, for many years learning has been largely restricted to memorising national textbooks. Core skills have not been part of the curriculum. Connecting Classrooms offered Daw Khin Khine Nwe the first opportunity of her career to learn about core skills and how to integrate them into her classroom.

#### WHY WE WANTED TO IMPROVE

##### CORE SKILLS:

Daw Khin Khine Nwe wanted to improve her students' critical thinking skills through applying new teaching approaches. Before the training, her main focus was covering the set texts

within a strictly allocated time. She rarely used other activities, and, like other teachers at her school, delivered her teaching through lectures with just a few simple questions from the textbook.

#### WHAT WE DID:

Daw Khin Khine Nwe tried out the new methods, such as open-ended questions and group discussions, with some unexpected results. In a lesson on mosquitoes, she used the technique of whole-class brainstorming with the question: "Are there any people who like mosquitoes? Why or why not?"

Instead of giving the most obvious answers, her students surprised her.

Some responded that the people who produce mosquito coils and mosquito repellent liked mosquitoes. She had not expected her students to demonstrate this ability to see things from other perspectives, answer with their own ideas and apply higher order thinking skills in connection with their daily experiences, particularly where these were not covered in the textbook. She noticed that the students seemed more interested in the lesson than before.

Daw Khin Khine Nwe observed that half of her students could not contribute successfully to the discussion. She identified the reason: a lot of background noise due to the large class size and the quick responses of a small group of high-performing students who shouted out their answers before the others had a chance. So for her next lesson, "What

happens to you when you are bitten by a mosquito?" she divided the class into mixed ability groups. As a result, she found that all the students could participate actively, think critically and give answers from different perspectives, even within the allocated time.

#### WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED:

Students are getting highly involved in discussions and are openly expressing their own ideas.

Teachers have a greater understanding of the benefits of group discussions, questioning skills, different activities, and using resources.

Both teachers and students are more confident and relationships between them are better.

#### WHAT WE PLAN TO DO IN FUTURE:

Daw Khin Khine Nwe says: "In the years to come I can continue to improve the quality of learning in my classroom by supporting my students to gain the core skills they need for their future."

### Key achievements

#### MYANMAR

Connecting Classrooms focuses on training in core skills and connecting schools in Myanmar with each other. There is a long history of tension between the three education systems, with one particular area of conflict being the use of ethnic nationality languages in schools. Our teacher training programmes bring together state, ethnic and monastic teachers – the British Council is the first organisation to be allowed to bring them together for collective training.

This is an education priority for the Myanmar government following so many years of military dictatorship, and the core skills are very much in line with the National Education Sector Reform Plan (NESP).

©Mat Wright

©Mat Wright





# REFERENCES

All data and evidence in this publication has been validated and analysed by an independent evaluator, Ecorys UK Ltd. Information has been taken from the following reports:

Ecorys UK and University of Glasgow (2017)

*Connecting Classrooms Counterfactual Impact Evaluation*

Ecorys UK (2017) *Connecting Classrooms Year 2 Annual Report*

Ecorys UK (2016) *Connecting Classrooms Year 1 Annual Report*







I would urge all teachers to explore the possibility of your school being involved in Connecting Classrooms, and being involved in what is a truly inspiring global project.



**Teacher, UK**



© British Council

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.

Front cover photography credits: © Mat Wright

Contact: [schools@britishcouncil.org](mailto:schools@britishcouncil.org)

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)