

British Council
Partner Schools

Action Research for Schools 2025–26

Global stories of
school improvement

Action Research projects: A shared vision to enhance education worldwide

Educators across the world continue to play a pivotal role in equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need to thrive. In a rapidly changing global context, shaped by advances in artificial intelligence, evolving approaches to leadership, and the need for purposeful professional learning, our Partner Schools community remains committed to practical, evidence-based improvement.

As the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities, the British Council is uniquely positioned to support global education. Through British Council Partner Schools, we provide operational and educational support to a network of over 2,600 schools across 40 countries, collaborating with UK awarding bodies to deliver high-quality international qualifications worldwide.

Now in its second year, our Action Research programme attracted 245 applications from Partner Schools, reflecting strong demand for practitioner-led inquiry that tackles real classroom and whole-school challenges. Following a rigorous selection process, 12 researchers from eight countries, including Egypt, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, embarked on projects aligned to three priority themes that matter for learners, teachers and leaders:

- Using artificial intelligence to develop high-quality teaching, learning and assessment to promote school improvement.
- Developing leadership at all levels in schools.
- Developing effective continuous professional development programmes.

This cohort is supported by last year's researchers, who return as mentors, demonstrating our shared commitment to scaling innovation, building confidence and sustaining impact across contexts. As ever, both mentors and researchers were supported and guided by Sirin Soyoz and Kathleen O'Hare, Academic leads. Their guidance helps ensure that this year's projects move beyond good ideas to tested practices that others can adopt.

We invite you to read these accounts as both inspiration and a practical guide. Each study offers concrete actions you can adapt in your setting, whether you are beginning with small-scale classroom trials or leading system-wide improvement.

By educators, for educators, this programme turns insight into action, and action into lasting improvement.

Thomas Evans
Global Educational Support Services
British Council

'By educators, for educators, this programme turns insight into action, and action into lasting improvement.'



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Action Research for Schools

Leadership at all levels

Integrity: An ethical perspective of a leader for social improvement,
Sadia Fareed, Pakistan

**All the school's a stage: Improving attainment through drama
as pedagogy and reflective marking,**
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Integrity: An ethical perspective of a leader for social improvement

Sadia Fareed, Pakistan

Integrity: An ethical perspective of a leader for social improvement

School context

Our school is situated in the economic hub of Pakistan, Karachi, which is the biggest and largest city, with a vast range of educational institutes, from public to private organisations.

My school is **Bai Virbaiji Soparivala Parsi High School**, which was formed in 1859 by the Parsi community of the sub-continent (undivided India). Initially, it was built for the Parsi community, but after independence in 1947, upon the request of Quad-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, it opened its doors for non-Parsi as well.

Currently, it is one of the leading institutes of Karachi, providing both Cambridge International Education and local boards at the same time to more than 3,000 students (boys only). We produce some excellent results every year.

We have numerous societies, including Science, Social Spirit, Music, Chess and Scrabble, which enhance our students' inner ability and interest accordingly.

Since the school is a private organisation that believes in the development and growth of its employees, we upgrade our teaching and learning skills through different workshops and courses.

About the author



My name is **Sadia Fareed**. I hold an MPhil degree in Management Sciences and I'm a certified Cambridge teacher with vast experience of teaching since I've been in this noble field for the past 12 years.

I started my career teaching Social Studies and Statistics and currently I'm teaching global perspectives to secondary classes.

I always call myself a facilitator and an active listener, as teaching teenagers is not an easy task. I try my level best to understand them and accept them as who they are, since this age is quite sensitive. At this stage, they can be funny, rude and lethargic at the same time.

I believe learning is a continuous process that can never be stopped. Therefore, I applied for the Action Research course.

Key findings

- **To establish a robust and effective academic integrity policy, it is crucial to prioritise fairness, consistency, clear communication and student involvement.**
- **Actions are significantly influenced by beliefs and academic dishonesty. After implementing the policy, institutions often observe a reduced incidence of academic dishonesty, increased reporting by faculty and staff, and improved student understanding of what constitutes academic dishonesty.**
- **Institutions shift from a punitive to a preventative approach, focusing on educating students and providing resources to prevent academic dishonesty. This leads to increased faculty–student dialogue and the development of an academic integrity culture that values honesty and ethical behaviour.**



Following are my exploratory research questions based upon the theme of integrity with an aim to develop an honest and responsible sense among not only the students but teachers as well.

Research questions:

1. In what ways do students demonstrate the courage to acknowledge their mistakes?
2. How do teachers balance maintaining integrity with the pressures of meeting institutional expectations or goals?
3. How do my actions as a leader align with the values I advocate?

Action research rationale

The reason behind selecting integrity as my theme of research is a strong belief that I have regarding my field. I strongly believe that without a strong set of moral and ethical values, no job can be done and no aim can be achieved. In my field, it is equally important for both teachers and students to practise integrity, regardless of whether it is difficult to perform or is criticised by many. If it is right, then one must stand with it.

Students are our future leaders, and if teachers – their current leaders – practise integrity, this will boost students’ confidence and enable them to think creatively to combine their thinking ability with integrity.

I believe that maintaining a high level of integrity by the educational institutions will create a positive impact on the social structure.

Data collection tools

Methodology

To address my exploratory research questions, I have planned to use the following data collection tools.

Since my first question revolves around the students, to explore it more I will use a questionnaire with ten well-structured questions for a focus group of 15 students. The reflection report will be followed by that. A consent form will be signed by both parents and students for transparency.

Tool: questionnaire
Number of participants: 15 to 20 students

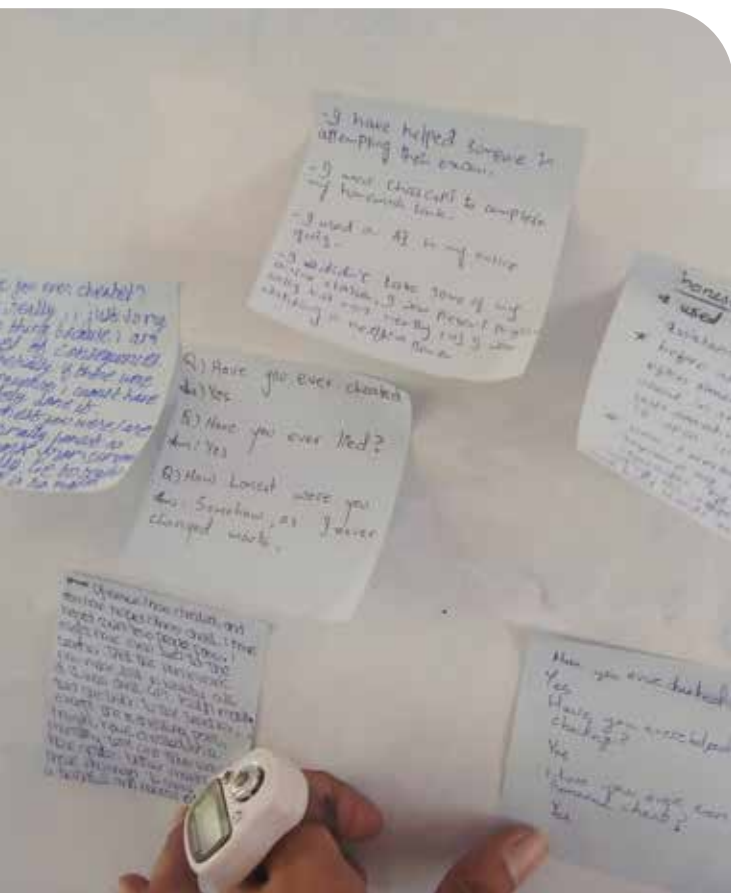
For the second question, I will use a semi-structured interview based upon personal observation of teachers, followed by a reflection report.

Tool: discussion/observation and reflection
Number of participants: six teachers

The third question enables me to gather insights into past experiences of integrity from the section heads during an interview. I am planning to structure the form to focus on specific scenarios and behaviours that demonstrate integrity in their professional life. They will shed light upon their roles as leaders for that interview with five to six well-structured questions.

Tool: interview/questionnaire
Number of participants: three section heads

This structure helps ensure that my audience understands both the technical and practical aspects of the data tools I am using in my research.



‘By emphasising academic honesty, we’re not only promoting integrity but also fostering a growth mindset, critical thinking and creativity in our students.’

Teacher Interviewee, Academic Honesty Policy Implementation Team



Data analysis for the exploration stage

The purpose of this data collection was to find out the importance of integrity among three different focus groups comprising:

A – Section heads (three)

In order to understand their roles and responsibilities in maintaining the organisation’s integrity, I conducted interviews with three department heads. The aim was to find out more about how each leader maintains moral standards, promotes accountability and manages integrity-related concerns inside their divisions. They acknowledged that sharing their challenging experiences in resolving conflicts and disciplinary matters without prejudice was their strength and that setting an example and actively upholding these values are essential for creating an integrity-based culture within the company.

B – Teachers (six)

Teachers participated in a six-question survey that is well-structured and includes both qualitative and quantitative inquiries. They all agreed that the management must strictly monitor and balance academic integrity, and that prompt action is necessary to not only resolve the problem but also set an example.

C – Students (30)

Students participated in three sessions, the first of which covered integrity to learn about their viewpoints.

Second, they were given a sticky note and asked to confess if they had ever engaged in academic dishonesty or malpractice at any level. The sticky notes were then posted on the board, and a gallery walk was undertaken. Following that, a seven-question Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, highly agree) survey was distributed.

Question E has the highest level of responses, which indicates students will not bear cheating in their classroom and will immediately report it, followed by question D, which shows they strongly believe in fair collaboration in teamwork.

Action Research

Action plan

My research plan was in two parts:

1. Designing and delivering a training programme for students to educate them about the importance of academic honesty.

- Clarification on academic dishonesty.
 - a. Different forms of dishonesty in academia, like cheating, plagiarism, duplicate submission, misrepresentation, fabrication, etc.
 - b. Importance of academic honesty.
- Consequences of academic dishonesty, like grade penalties, course failure.
- Academic probation, suspension and expulsion.
- Reporting incidents.
- Investigating process.
- Around two to three sessions of 30 minutes.
- Participation of 30 students.

2. Policy development

- Objective of policy.
- Mission and vision of the organisation (to identify goals and principles).
- Policy statement.
- Guidelines for students and teachers on addressing academic malpractice.
- Stakeholders’ involvement and approval.



Action plan evaluation tools

In order to evaluate the impact of my action plan more comprehensively, the focus will be the effectiveness, efficiency and reliability of the goals, along with their alignment with the organisation's goals. Different case studies will be taken into consideration, and thorough research into existing academic policies will be carried out.

To evaluate the impact and efficacy of action plans, a variety of approaches can be used such as:

- surveys
- tests
- metrics, and statistics to gauge results and monitor advancement
- focus groups, interviews, case studies and observations can be effectively used for collaboration
- frameworks and models for logic, such as the Kirkpatrick Model which enables the reaction, learning, behaviour and results of the training
- dashboards and infographics are examples of data visualisation technologies that make real-time data analysis easier by software platforms, such as survey software and data analytics tools
- systematic evaluation is ensured by evaluation templates and checklists, which are similar to evaluation plans and data collecting templates
- other resources, such as fishbone to analyse the causes, SWOT and root cause analysis for further evaluation.

The above tools can be used to thoroughly examine the efficacy of action plans.

'Academic honesty is not just about avoiding plagiarism, it's about taking ownership of our learning and producing work that truly represents our understanding and ideas.'

Student participant, focus group discussion



Action plan implementation

Academic honesty policy formulation was not an easy task despite its good intentions. Our school's prior academic honesty policy lacked the specifics and clarity needed to successfully foster an honest and ethical culture. Our ability to create an atmosphere that promotes academic performance and innovative work was hampered by a lack of clear rules for parents, instructors and students. As a result, we realised that a thorough and specific academic honesty policy that explains standards, processes and penalties was necessary. A strong framework for encouraging academic integrity, combating academic dishonesty and guaranteeing that every student has the chance to thrive in a setting that values truthfulness, equity and respect is the goal of this new policy.

Our school administration, teachers, students and parents were all enthusiastic about the policy and recognised its importance in promoting academic integrity. The administration and section heads provided unwavering support, allocating necessary resources and personnel to ensure the policy's successful implementation. Teachers were eager to integrate the policy into their teaching practices, and most importantly my students were receptive to the idea of maintaining academic honesty, and the way they showed their support and the ideas they shared were highly appreciated. They stayed connected throughout this journey with me.

Key findings

Following are the key findings of the immense support and commitment received from all the stakeholders, from students, parents and colleagues to heads and management.

The stakeholders of this policy were management, section heads, teachers, students and parents.

To establish a robust and effective academic integrity policy, it is crucial to prioritise fairness, consistency, clear communication and student involvement. Fairness ensures that all students are treated equally and without bias when addressing academic integrity violations, with consistent consequences and culturally sensitive considerations. Consistency is also key, with standardised procedures and clear guidelines for faculty and staff to report and address academic integrity violations. Clear communication is vital, with transparent policies, regular reminders and multiple communication channels to reach students and faculty. Finally, student involvement is essential, with student representation on academic integrity committees, soliciting student feedback and providing regular education and awareness programmes to promote a culture of integrity and academic excellence. By emphasising these factors, institutions can create a comprehensive and effective academic integrity policy that fosters a culture of integrity, trust and academic success.

Actions are significantly influenced by beliefs and academic dishonesty.

Since all the stakeholders were fully aware of this policy and were involved right from the beginning, and almost every step taken in this regard was clearly and concisely put forward, behaviour has not changed much. Teachers are now more vigilant since we all took an oath to fully implement the essence of this policy. The same goes for our students, who understand the policy and refrain from any acts that would violate the clauses of this policy. After implementing the policy, institutions often observe a reduced incidence of academic dishonesty, increased reporting by faculty and staff, and improved student understanding of what constitutes academic dishonesty. Furthermore, institutions shift from a punitive to a preventative approach, focusing on educating students and providing resources to prevent academic dishonesty. This leads to increased faculty–student dialogue and the development of an academic integrity culture that values honesty and ethical behaviour.

Future actions

The action research on academic honesty policy yielded several conclusions, including an improved understanding and awareness of academic honesty among students, teachers and parents, a reduction in plagiarism instances and an enhancement in critical-thinking and creativity skills. These conclusions have a significant impact on our setting, contributing to a positive school culture that promotes intellectual integrity and authenticity, and preparing students for higher education and the global workforce, where intellectual property and authenticity are paramount. The findings of this research also have implications for learning and the global context, emphasising the importance of academic honesty in preparing students for global citizenship and maintaining the integrity of knowledge and ideas in an increasingly interconnected world. To further enhance academic honesty and integrity, possible enhancements in the school development cycle include regular policy reviews, student ambassadors, parental engagement, technology integration and inter-school collaboration.

Conclusions

The action research on academic honesty policy yielded significant conclusions, notably an improved understanding of academic honesty among students, teachers and parents. The implementation of plagiarism detection tools and workshops on proper citation led to a 30 per cent decrease in plagiarism instances, while students demonstrated a notable improvement in submitting original work, fostering critical thinking and creativity. Moreover, the emphasis on academic honesty contributed to a positive school culture, encouraging students to take pride in their authentic work. This, in turn, prepares students for higher education and a global context where intellectual property and authenticity are increasingly important.

The impact of this research on the school setting and learning has been profound, promoting a culture of trust and honesty, and instilling values that will benefit students in their future academic and professional pursuits. To further enhance the academic honesty policy, regular policy reviews, student ambassadors, parental engagement, technology integration and inter-school collaboration are recommended. By implementing these measures, the school can continue to promote academic honesty, fostering a culture of integrity, creativity and critical thinking. Ultimately, this research highlights the importance of academic honesty in educational settings and its far-reaching implications for students' future success.

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All the school's a stage: Improving attainment through drama as pedagogy and reflective marking

Alexander Owens, Kuwait

All the school's a stage: Improving attainment through drama as pedagogy and reflective marking

School context

The International British School in Kuwait is experiencing rapid growth and boasts a diverse community of students and staff from around the world. Our student body primarily consists of Kuwaiti, Egyptian and Lebanese pupils, along with a total of 39 nationalities represented.

The school is dedicated to fostering academic excellence while providing a supportive and welcoming environment for its students. It has excellent facilities, such as a full-size swimming pool and a working theatre, and students are also encouraged to participate in a broad range of extracurricular activities. In the secondary department, the students follow both Cambridge and Edexcel courses.

As well as being part of British Schools in the Middle East (BSME), the school is currently in the process of attaining British Schools Overseas (BSO) accreditation as it develops.

About the author



Alex Owens is a Teacher of Drama and English at the International British School in Kuwait. He holds a BA in Performing Arts from the University of Salford, an MA in Literature and Creative Writing and a PGCE from the University of Sheffield. His

master's thesis explores representations and perspectives of time in modern literature.

He enjoys creating and directing theatre and also acts in dramatic performances in Kuwait. He is an avid supporter of the arts and regularly seeks to improve his teaching through drama-based approaches.

Key findings

- We observed a significant increase in student participation. This higher level of engagement could mean that students are feeling more confident in participating in activities such as these [drama activities]. Additionally, it highlights their improvements in written English and reading comprehension.
- Thirteen out of 20 students (65 per cent) mentioned that 'drama' was either a new skill they acquired this term or something they found enjoyable about school.
- From their responses, ten out of 20 students (50 per cent) demonstrated instances of self-reflection, either personally or academically. This aligns with our objectives of encouraging students to take greater responsibility for and feel a sense of ownership towards their education.



Exploratory action research questions

1. **Why do I think there is underperformance with students in my school?**
2. **What do my students think about their own academic performance?**
3. **When and how often does this under-performance manifest in students' work?**

Action research rationale

Following our initial baseline assessments in English, the data revealed that a number of students – particularly those for whom English is an additional language – face challenges in accessing the curriculum. This includes a significant portion of our student body, with Kuwaiti students representing approximately 44 per cent of the secondary department (72 out of 164). Factors such as varying levels of English proficiency and inconsistent attendance patterns may contribute to these challenges.

These findings reflect broader educational trends observed across Kuwait. A 2022 UNESCO national case study, spanning 64 pages, offers valuable insights into the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing educational outcomes, particularly among boys. This context helps us better understand the diverse learning needs within our school community.

While one of the aims of this research is to support students who may be experiencing difficulty, including many from our Kuwaiti cohort, the overarching goal is to enhance English attainment and academic achievement for all learners across the school.

Attainment in English has been chosen as the focus of this research because, aside from Arabic, French and Islamic lessons, all other subjects in our school are taught in English. We have observed that underperformance occurs across the curriculum due to many students struggling to access lesson content as second language learners. There is a noticeable disparity between levels of written and spoken English, as well as challenges with reading comprehension and group work tasks. It is therefore logical to assume that by enhancing students' comprehension of spoken and written English, we can improve attainment across the entire curriculum.

As a growing school, we are continually focusing on enhancing teaching and learning, enriching the curriculum and developing CPD (continuous professional development) programmes for staff.

My research aims to operate within these parameters as part of our ongoing commitment to the school and its students.

This research will explore the reasons behind students' underperformance in greater depth. Based on the findings, the programme seeks to do the following:

1. **Explore improvements for teaching and learning.**
2. **Create a CPD programme with the assistance of other staff members.**
3. **Create opportunities for curriculum enrichment.**

Data collection tools

Methodology

My data collection tools will be divided into one tool per question and are as follows:

-
1. **What factors may contribute to academic challenges among students with diverse linguistic backgrounds?**

This question will be explored through a detailed analysis of Key Stage 3 students' performance in English. The data includes baseline assessment results that evaluate students' reading comprehension, fiction and non-fiction writing. These results are graded and assessed against the requirements of the national curriculum for Key Stage 3.

-
2. **What do my students think about their own academic performance?**

In order to analyse this question in greater depth, I will create a short questionnaire for 25 students in Year 7. This way, I can gather and survey their thoughts and perspectives.

3. When and how often does this underperformance manifest in students' work?

Over the next few weeks, I aim to conduct short, recorded interviews with three staff members. Using this data collection method, I aim to explore and interpret the thoughts and attitudes of staff and leadership at our school.

In total, the data collection will include participation from 25 students and four teachers. Consent for the research will be secured using a letter and a form for participating parents (of students) and staff to sign.

Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from exploration

- While underperformance in English seems to improve as students progress through Key Stage 3, it's important to note that the number of our cohort decreases significantly between Year 7 and Year 9.
- Out of the 25 students invited to participate in the student questionnaire, 11 either did not return the form or had their parents decline participation. This limitation may bias the findings, as the data is insufficient to accurately represent students' perspectives. In the future, I recommend either increasing the sample size, allowing more time to collect forms, or both.
- In general, the students' surveyed reported positive experiences in school and also presented favourable opinions about their teachers. Students also stated their favourite subjects are ones that involve physical activity and team-based activities such as Drama and PE.
- Students also reported wanting to achieve high grades as a primary target for the academic year.
- Teachers surveyed reported that some students, particularly those from households where English is not the primary language, may require additional support and motivation during lessons. Language barriers, especially limited exposure to English outside of school, were identified as a contributing factor to these challenges. Staff also noted that differences in home language environments can affect how easily students engage with English-based tasks. These observations highlight the importance of developing inclusive strategies that support learners in a primarily English-speaking academic setting.
- Despite teachers' awareness of underperformance, many did not identify specific areas where it manifests, aside from summative assessments.

Action Research

Action plan

Curriculum enrichment

I plan to adapt parts of the curriculum to develop strategies that will support underperforming students. This will include creating drama activities to enhance their English speaking and writing skills. We will implement these activities in Science, English and French classes. The activities will cover a range of tasks, such as role playing 'real life' scenarios in English, writing in role and hot seating. Teachers will record these activities to assess students' initial responses and identify areas for improvement in planning and delivery. This process should take about one month. The short-term targets are to improve spoken and written English among the target group of Year 7 students.

Marking policy update

I will advocate for updating the school's marking policy to ensure students receive appropriate feedback on their use of English across the curriculum. To do this, I have written a new marking policy for English and will submit it to the Head of Secondary for review.

The goal of the new marking policy is to make it easier for staff to spot errors in English that manifest in students' work. To do this, the updated policy will address different ability levels, emphasising SPAG (spelling, punctuation and grammar) for lower abilities and focusing on content, vocabulary and ideas for middle and higher abilities. This will take around a month to action and implement. The short-term targets are to improve students' written ability in English across the whole school, but for the purposes of this research, I will focus on the target group of Year 7 students. This will be monitored throughout the academic year and reviewed after the students complete their term three assessments. I will also record progress through the use of student questionnaires that have been purposely structured to evaluate improvements in reading comprehension between term one and term two of the academic year.



Action plan evaluation tools

1. Recording of initial drama-based activities during lessons

Teachers will be creating short videos in order to assess the initial reception of the activities they have planned. At a later date, we will be using the videos to discuss how well the activities went and to address issues staff may have faced during the delivery. We will also use them to discuss the next steps in developing and delivering the activities. We will also be addressing how to follow up the activities with student reflection and consolidation of knowledge.

2. Student questionnaire on progress

Students will be given a short questionnaire to complete. This will focus on how they feel that they have progressed throughout the year. It will also question them on their experience of school and their attitudes towards education. This questionnaire can then be compared with the one they completed at the start of the research. The questionnaires have been purposely structured to identify any improvements in reading comprehension. For this questionnaire, I have included a more challenging level of vocabulary and sentence structure.

3. Short interviews with staff

These interviews will address the impact of the updated marking policy and capture staff's attitudes and feelings towards it. The interviews will also explore how they feel that the new drama activities have gone and what, if any, impact they have had on student attainment.

'My first time doing it [drama] and it's so fun.'

Written response to the questionnaire from a Year 7 student

Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

The action plan was implemented effectively. We have witnessed some improvement across Year 7 in terms of reading comprehension, speaking and writing. However, how much of this we can attribute to the effectiveness of the programme rather than the natural progression of our students is still unclear.

Staff have been active in learning new drama approaches to implement into their lessons. Many that contributed to the research have actively researched their own methods and implemented them into their

classrooms. From the recordings that staff took of the students taking part in the activities, it is clear that students seem to be enjoying the participation, while improving their spoken and written English.

An example of one of the activities

A role play of Julius Caesar where one student was encouraged to take on the role of 'conspirators', and the rest of the students, who were playing Brutus, Cassius and Anthony, had to figure out who that person was. Students then had to write a reflective diary while in role to talk about their experience.

By doing this, students are invited to consider character intention and subtext, two crucial factors in analysing Shakespeare.

A staff member then said 'this [the drama activity] also translated into their writing when they [the students] were asked to produce their own monologue from a character's perspective'.

However, staff also noted that one of the challenges that occurred when delivering these activities was 'getting students to participate'. This is an important statement for me to think about when designing the activities in future. Staff also commented that 'reflection tasks' after an activity and 'the frequency' that we conduct them would both improve the consolidation of the knowledge that students gain from participating.

Key findings

We observed a significant increase in student participation in our latest questionnaire. While only 14 students completed the first survey, this time we received responses from 20 students. This higher level of engagement could mean that students are feeling more confident in participating in activities such as these. Additionally, it highlights their improvements in written English and reading comprehension. I intentionally made the questions more challenging than the initial questionnaire by using more advanced vocabulary and sentence structures.

Another noteworthy point is that 13 out of 20 students (65 per cent) mentioned that 'drama' was either a new skill they acquired this term or something they found enjoyable about school. Eight out of 20 students (40 per cent) also reported that their confidence has improved. One student remarked 'My first time doing it [drama] and it's so fun', demonstrating that students seem to enjoy the additions to the curriculum.

From their responses, ten out of 20 students (50 per cent) demonstrated instances of self-reflection, either personally or academically. The emergence of self-reflection has also occurred during lessons, with one student sharing 'I sometimes feel like I am in the story'. This aligns with our objectives of encouraging students to take greater responsibility for and feel a sense of ownership towards their education.

Future actions

Conclusions of this Action Research and their impact on your setting and the learning that could be transmitted to others, particularly in a global context. Possible enhancements in the school development cycle.

- **Further investigate the reasons for retention issues with our Kuwaiti students between Year 7 and Year 9.**
- **Revisit the marking policy and find a way to engage and include parents by making it more accessible.**
- **Ensure that all students, regardless of ability, can access our marking policy.**
- **Review the effects of the updated policy at the end of the school year.**
- **Update the drama activities and ensure that ‘reluctant’ students are included.**
- **Deepen staff understanding of drama as pedagogy and its place within the curriculum.**

Conclusions

While we have made significant progress in developing various areas of the curriculum and updating our marking policy, staff have suggested several ways to further enhance both the effectiveness of the marking policy and the delivery of our curriculum enrichment activities.

From the perspective of the staff I interviewed and worked closely with, the most notable improvement has been in the confidence levels of students participating in drama and drama-based pedagogy this academic year. As second language learners, using imagination and ‘play’ to enhance their written and spoken English has also had an unexpected positive social effect.

Although the updated curriculum’s impact on written and spoken English in formal assessments remains unclear due to the small sample size and low frequency of activities, short-term improvements in students’ work have been evidenced by their responses to the questionnaire. This suggests that the research has positively influenced academic performance in students’ written English. Students who completed the questionnaire also seemed more reflective and critically aware in their responses when compared with their initial survey results.

The suggestion to make marking ‘more accessible for parents’ is intriguing, as it could contribute to our goal of improving academic attainment. Some staff have also expressed that the new policy has not changed how they identify issues with students’ work.

It is also too early to determine the overall effect of the new marking policy on grades and results. It is also difficult to judge the impact it has had on students’ written English because the policy is a recent development in the school. We anticipate being able to explore some of the effects in greater depth after the final exams in May. However, we believe that the overall effect will become more noticeable with time and frequent revision to the policy.

Moving forward, the school plans to assess the impact of the research based on our exam results in May. Following this evaluation, I aim to expand the programme into our primary department. Additionally, I intend to present the research findings in a talk to the entire school.

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Copilot AI was used to assist with spelling, grammar and clarity of text.

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Exploring distributed leadership among teachers

Kaushalya Illeperuma, Sri Lanka

Exploring distributed leadership among teachers at Leeds

School context

Leeds International School, Sri Lanka, established in 1999, offers a comprehensive English-medium instruction (EMI) education from Kindergarten to K-12, catering to students aged from two to 17. Leeds International School operates in the southern and western provinces, having 15 branches, and; includes four preschools, three primary schools, and nine secondary schools. The school's main focus is to provide equal educational opportunity for students who lack access to the commercial city, Colombo, along with providing a multicultural, multinational and multireligious environment. This diversity allows students to engage with various cultures and religions, enriching their educational experience. In addition to academics, the school emphasises students' participation in sports, clubs and leadership development activities from an early age. As the main branch celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2024, the school remains committed to fostering a well-rounded educational experience and nurturing leadership skills among its students.

About the author



Kaushalya Illeperuma is the Coordinating Principal at Leeds International School Network, Sri Lanka. She has accumulated over a decade of experience in the international school's education sector. She has always had a passion for conducting research in different fields with regard to the development of leadership and management. Thus, this research centres on distributed leadership among teachers. Mrs Illeperuma has exhibited her leadership qualities starting from her secondary education, where she held the responsibility as the head girl of one of the leading National Schools in Sri Lanka. She commenced her career as an education administrator in 2013, following the completion of her Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. She furthered her education with a Postgraduate Diploma and a Master's Degree in Labour Relations and Human Resources from the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Additionally, she has obtained professional qualifications in Human Resources Management from the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management, Sri Lanka.

Key findings

- **New teachers who initially struggled with classroom management became more confident through the support of their mentors.**
- **The mentor–mentee programme has also contributed significantly to teacher professional development, as it emphasises not only monitoring but also guiding, supporting and inspiring others.**
- **82 per cent of mentees reported improvements in teaching strategies.**
- **While the results are positive, continued support is essential to ensure consistent progress among all participants.**



Exploratory Action Research questions

1. What aspects of distributed leadership do I believe impact teachers' ability to grow and improve them professionally?
2. In what ways do teachers feel distributed leadership either helps or hinders their ability to effectively manage their classrooms or work with colleagues?
3. What do Administrators expect from the introduction of distributed leadership?

Action Research rationale

Leeds International School offers English-medium education to students in regions lacking access to the commercial cities. Its vision is to develop futuristic global learners with a solid foundation in religion and culture, while emphasising academic excellence and holistic personality development. Leeds International School, comprising branches in Sri Lanka's southern and western provinces, carefully selects its academic staff to ensure high-quality educational standards in the network.

However, due to the geographical dispersion of its branches, the quality and capacity of teaching staff vary regionally. This variability in teaching skills and practices presents a significant challenge in maintaining uniform academic standards across the network. As the school celebrates its 25th anniversary, addressing this issue has become increasingly critical.

Hence, to tackle this challenge, the school management has identified the existing concerns in the managerial level of each branch. Moving forward, Leeds International School management is strategically developing a programme to empower capable academic staff, under distributed leadership. This research aims to explore the effects of distributed leadership on teacher professional development. By gathering and evaluating teacher feedback and student feedback, the study will assess how distributed leadership impacts the consistency and quality of teachers.



Data collection tools

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to explore distributed leadership among teachers, focusing on its impact on professional development, classroom management, collaboration and administrators' expectations. A focus group discussion will be held with five teachers and two sectional heads from primary, secondary and upper sections to examine how distributed leadership influences teachers' professional growth.

Additionally, 30 teachers, with ten from each section, will complete questionnaires to assess their views on distributed leadership in classroom management and collaboration. A separate questionnaire will be distributed to 20 school leaders – board members, principals and deputy principals – to gather data on administrators' perspectives regarding the implementation and impact of distributed leadership within the school.

The study is subjected to certain limitations. The research encompasses a school system with 15 branches; only one branch is selected for the survey, potentially limiting the generalisability of the findings. Out of 72, 50 per cent of teachers are included in the survey in the selected branch, which may constrain the representativeness of data. A stratified sampling method will be used to ensure a balanced representation of each section. This might reduce bias while selecting the sample and also maintain some limitations in terms of sample diversity.

'I feel more confident and less anxious when my mentor visits my class. It's reassuring to know someone is there to guide me without judgement.'

Mentee Teacher, Branch School A

Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from exploration

From a reflective journal, it has been noted that many educators are not fully utilising subject communities to share knowledge, leading to struggles in classroom management and low morale. Limited collaboration creates internal conflict among parallel teachers. To address this, we need effective strategies such as structured professional learning communities, mentorship programmes, training and workshops, and the use of technology to increase participation in distributed leadership initiatives.

In a focus group interview, sectional heads expressed satisfaction with professional development opportunities and valued shared decision making, especially in event organisation. They emphasised the need for greater awareness of distributed leadership, highlighting the importance of autonomy, teamwork and decision making in enhancing collaboration and professional growth.

Teachers widely agree that distributed leadership has improved classroom management by providing new strategies, insights and peer support, though some expressed concerns about resources such as technology, mentorship programmes and professional learning communities. Teachers noted improvements in managing disruptions, clarifying roles and reducing classroom issues. Additionally, distributed leadership has fostered greater collaboration among staff, promoting teamwork, communication and professional relationships, leading to more innovative teaching practices and a supportive environment.

Administrators expect distributed leadership to enhance teacher autonomy, support professional growth and improve communication and collaboration, positively impacting classroom management and school performance.

Action Research

Action plan

- An exploratory study has highlighted a gap in collaboration and knowledge sharing among educators, which negatively impacts classroom management and professional growth.
- To address this issue, a mentorship programme will be implemented in the school system, aimed at pairing experienced teachers with newly recruited educators.
- The primary objective of this programme is to offer new teachers the necessary support and guidance for their career development, using a peer-learning approach that helps them gain insights into school culture, curriculum planning, classroom management and resource sharing.
- Mentorship pairings will be based on the subjects taught, with experienced teachers serving as mentors to newly appointed staff.
- To initiate the programme, a group awareness meeting will be held to introduce the mentors and mentees.
- The programme will primarily consist of one-to-one meetings, classroom observations and feedback sessions, with mentors observing and evaluating their mentees weekly to provide ongoing feedback.
- An evaluation format will be introduced to ensure systematic assessment of the mentees' progress.
- Additionally, a survey questionnaire will be distributed to gather feedback from the mentees.
- The programme will run for one month, and if the impact proves positive, it will be continued on a sustainable basis.
- Initially, ten subject-specific mentors and ten mentees will participate in the programme, ensuring focused and personalised support for each new teacher.



‘There’s a visible improvement in how my mentee handles the classroom. Our regular discussions have helped her become more reflective and open to new strategies.’

Mentor teacher, Branch School B

Action plan evaluation tools

1. The evaluation of mentees by mentors will be collected through an evaluation form.
2. The experiences and knowledge-sharing practices between mentors will be gathered using a focus group interview.
3. The experience of the mentees will be gathered using a questionnaire.
4. The focus group interviews will involve a selected group of five mentors and five mentees to provide in-depth insights into the programme's effectiveness.



Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

The mentor–mentee programme was implemented through a structured and phased approach to ensure clarity, support and smooth execution.

Selection of mentors

Experienced and senior teachers across all branches were carefully selected to serve as mentors based on their expertise, leadership skills and willingness to guide others.

Appointment of mentees

All newly recruited teachers were identified and officially appointed as mentees to receive support as they adapted to their new roles.

Mentor–mentee pairing

Each mentor was paired with a mentee through a personalised communication process, ensuring compatibility and fostering a sense of connection and trust from the outset.

Training sessions

Dedicated training sessions were conducted for both mentors and mentees. These sessions clarified expectations, outlined roles and responsibilities, and provided practical strategies for effective mentoring and learning.

Classroom observations

Mentors conducted regular visits to mentees' classrooms to observe teaching practices, offer feedback and provide hands-on support. These visits created opportunities for constructive dialogue and professional growth.

Key findings

A key observation is that many new teachers struggle with classroom management due to limited teaching techniques, practices and resources. However, mentees feel more at ease and confident when mentors visit their classes, creating a relaxed environment that helps reduce anxiety and enhances lesson delivery. This supportive atmosphere encourages mentees to seek advice and openly discuss challenges.

Mentor support is rated highly, with 80 per cent of mentees rating their mentor as excellent. A strong majority (86.67 per cent) consistently received relevant guidance. Significant improvements in teaching strategies were noted by 82.35 per cent of mentees, and 76.47 per cent found the programme very effective in adapting to their new role. Collaboration has also improved, with 82.35 per cent reporting enhanced idea-sharing and teamwork.

Overall, 83.33 per cent rated the programme as very effective in fostering professional growth, with all respondents acknowledging its value in promoting guidance and shared learning. Additionally, 83.33 per cent of mentors observed noticeable improvements in mentees' teaching behaviour. While the results are positive, continued support is essential to ensure consistent progress among all participants.



Conclusions

The mentor-mentee programme has proven to be a valuable initiative in supporting the professional development of newly recruited teachers. It plays a crucial role in improving classroom management and teaching techniques through ongoing classroom support. Mentees feel more at ease during mentor visits, which fosters open communication, encourages feedback and builds confidence. Most mentees rated their mentors highly and consistently received relevant guidance, reflecting strong support within the programme.

The initiative has significantly enhanced teaching strategies, improved collaboration and helped new teachers transition smoothly into their roles. It has also encouraged the sharing of ideas and resources, contributing to a more connected and supportive teaching community. Participation in the programme has positively influenced mentees' teaching behaviour, teamwork and overall professional growth. All mentees acknowledged its role in facilitating professional discussions and shared learning experiences.

While the majority showed noticeable or significant improvement, a few mentees reported only minimal progress or limited guidance. This highlights the need for continued engagement and more targeted mentoring to ensure consistency and effectiveness for all participants. Strengthening these areas will help maximise the programme's impact and ensure sustained benefits across the school.

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Future actions

Based on the conclusions drawn from this action research, several key steps will be taken to enhance the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee programme within the school setting and across the wider educational network.

- Standardise mentoring practices.
- Ensure regular and structured mentoring sessions.
- Strengthen resource support for mentees.
- Ongoing evaluations and feedback.
- Promote continuous dialogue and collaboration.
- Expand the programme network wide.

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Action Research for Schools

Developing effective professional development programmes

Impact of gender stereotyping on performance in English at Anderson School, Tendai Mendaza, Zimbabwe

The impact of OSS modules on teacher effectiveness, Ayotomi Fasuyi, Nigeria

Enhancing differentiated classroom instruction through targeted CPD initiatives, Bayan Rababa'h, Jordan

Overcoming Mathematics anxiety through CPD interventions and implementation, Innocent Katule, Nigeria

Examining the impact of social-emotional learning on academic achievement through CPD, Mustafa Atas, Egypt



British Council
Partner Schools

Impact of gender stereotyping on performance in English at Anderson School

Tendai Mendazza, Zimbabwe

Impact of gender stereotyping on performance in English at Anderson School

School context

I am privileged to be a teacher at **Anderson Adventist High School**, which is a co-educational boarding school in Gweru, Zimbabwe. The institution has an enrolment of 370, of which 20 are day scholars. The school is home to 180 boys and 190 girls. The school is a mission centre run by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and is one of the top schools in the country, where it is ranked in the top ten in terms of academics. The school was established in 1950 along the Harare road before it was moved to its current location in 1952. Anderson Adventist High School is an international school enrolling learners across the African continent, mainly the southern part, making it a melting pot of diverse cultures. We have had a few students from Europe and North America who have helped to shape the rich cultural heritage of the learning institution.

About the author



I am a Teacher and my subjects are English and Literature in English. I am a holder of the following qualifications: a Diploma in Education (English), a Bachelor's Degree in Education (English), a Master of Education (English) and a Diploma in Marketing Management. I have a passion for research and enjoy working with young people. I do motivational talks and training of prefects for local schools, and it brings me in touch with the realities of our education system. I have been teaching as a qualified teacher since 1997 and am sure that has given me a wealth of experience in education. My role as a boys' dean has given me the opportunity to understand the psyche of young people, particularly the male child, as I seek to help them navigate the rigours of adolescence. I am also a trained Shona (local language) teacher, though not teaching the subject. I also coach tennis, soccer, volleyball and table tennis, bringing me further contact with students outside the four walls of the class. I also supervise charity clubs like LEO and Toastmasters, which are community driven as they reach out to the needy around our school.

Key findings

- Teachers make covert and overt statements that gender English, and students are affected by statements that teachers and their peers make. Additionally, some classroom material helps to instil gender-stereotyping of English.
- Training helped teachers to be aware of gender-stereotyping actions and remarks; hence there were fewer reports of such incidence from students.
- Teachers began to use more inclusive methods of teaching, hence reducing the reported incidences of gender stereotyping by about 50 per cent.

Research questions

1. What is the teachers' understanding of gender stereotyping and its impact on learners' performance in English?
2. How do learners perceive gender stereotyping in the context of performance in English?
3. What behaviours do teachers exhibit which contribute to or mitigate against gender stereotyping in the teaching and learning scenario?

Action Research rationale

The main reason for the research is to establish if gender stereotyping is the cause behind girls outperforming boys in Anderson Adventist High School and, if so, to seek mitigating measures to stem the anomaly. The research will also seek to expose gender-stereotyping behaviour among staff and learners that may cause differences in performance along gender lines and proffer solutions towards gender balance in the school. It is the researcher's intent to identify training gaps for teachers so as to design in-service training that stems the tide of gender stereotyping of particular learning areas. The research came about after observation over a period of over 20 years that girls always outperform boys in English.

Data collection tools

Methodology

The researcher has been given permission to carry out the research and collect data from participants who have assented.

The following tools will be used:

1. examinations and tests to gauge performance
2. questionnaires
3. interviews
4. surveys.

Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from exploration

- Generally, girls are outperforming boys in English.
- Three out of three teachers in the department have observed a trend where girls outperform boys in the past five years.
- School culture promotes gendering of English.
- 90 per cent of the students believe gender has a telling effect on performance.
- 95 per cent of the students believe English is a girls' domain.
- 70 per cent of the students confirmed that teachers gender stereotype English.
- 80 per cent of the students believe peer pressure reinforces stereotypes.
- One teacher in the department is a countering stereotypical model.
- Stereotype threat reversal with 15 per cent of the boys outperforming girls.
- Three out of three teachers confirm that some activities in the class vary with gender. Boys outperform girls in science-related topics, while girls outdo the boys in Creative Writing.
- There is a bias in teacher expectation whereby teachers unconsciously expect girls to outperform boys, affecting their grading of performance of the two genders.
- Self-fulfilment prophecy occurs, where gender stereotypes are internalised and reinforced.



Action Research

Action plan

Goal: To elicit, address and minimise bias premised on gender in the teaching of English by promoting an inclusive teaching–learning scenario.

- **January 25–31:** Conduct an audit on gender bias at Anderson Adventist High School through anonymous surveys for teachers and students in English lessons.
- Observe classroom goings-on and materials used vis-à-vis gender stereotypes.
- **February 18:** Teacher awareness session on gender stereotyping in the teaching of English with the help of an expert on gender.
- **February 20:** Review materials used in teaching English with gender balance in mind.
- Identify and replace gender-biased sources of teaching and learning material.
- **February 2025:** Implementation and training by conducting training on equitable and inclusive lesson delivery.
- Student engagement activities on gender bias in texts used in the English classroom – debates and discussions.
- Modify teaching to ensure gender inclusivity by encouraging use of gender-neutral language and gender-mixed groups.
- **March 2025:** Evaluation and sustainability – gather qualitative feedback from focus groups and interviews.
- Put in place a reporting structure for students to complain about gender bias.

Expected outcomes

1. Improved teacher awareness on gendering of English.
2. More balanced and gender-neutral teaching.
3. An inclusive English atmosphere.

Action plan evaluation tools

How will you evaluate the impact of your action plan? What tools are you planning to use to evaluate this impact?

- Surveys and questionnaires
- Interviews and focus groups
- Case studies

Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

The implementation of the action plan was not without its challenges that had to be overcome.

- The timelines of activities had to be married to the school calendar and timetable, which kept changing due to unforeseeable occurrences. Thus the research had to make adjustments and concessions.
- Some colleagues were not as co-operative as the researcher would have liked, so the researcher had to constantly follow up on and persuade workmates who were not keen on being part of the research.
- The weight of responsibilities at the school meant that the researcher had little time on his hands. The researcher has a full teaching load; he is also the dean for boys and the soccer and tennis coach.
- Getting parents to sign consent forms had its challenges too, as the school is a boarding school. Hence, online platforms had to be used. Most parents have less time for social media, hence delays in signing consent forms.
- The worst challenge was the burglary that saw the researcher lose his laptop. This was quite a huge setback, as the researcher was left struggling to cope with the demands of the research.
- The internet services were poor at times and the service providers blamed the inconsistent power situation in the country.
- The research could have stalled had it not been for the kind support from school administration and supervisors.

Key findings

- Teachers make covert and overt statements that gender English.
- Students are affected by statements that teachers and their peers make.
- Some classroom material helps to instil gender stereotyping of English, for example comprehension passages that depict women or men playing traditionally appointed roles, or passages drawn from novels that depict the colonial and the pre-colonial period of Africa.
- Before the implementation of the action plan, teachers made a lot of gender-stereotyping remarks, like 'You boys, why are you being outdone by girls at Maths?' These statements were considered normal and harmless and a way of motivating boys to work harder in subjects like Maths. However, this discouraged girls in the particular subject teachers felt that boys should dominate. Thus, the gender stereotyping of subjects got entrenched.
- Training helped teachers to be aware of gender-stereotyping actions and remarks; hence there were fewer reports of such incidence from students.
- Teachers began to use more inclusive methods of teaching, hence reducing the reported incidences of gender stereotyping by about 50 per cent.

'Most of our teachers express surprise when a girl does better than boys in Maths. It then sinks into our heads that Maths is not our area as girls. Hence we get discouraged and focus on languages – English mainly.'



Conclusions

- Gender stereotyping does affect students' performance along gender lines. Hence there is a need to retrain teachers on the use of gender-neutral language and use of varied methods that ensure an inclusive learning atmosphere.
- Most incidents of gender stereotyping of English happen while the teacher is unaware. Hence there should be a deliberate plan to ensure that teachers are constantly alert to the effect of their language and actions that may harm students by creating gender circles around particular subjects. This can be achieved through a clear gender policy in the school.
- It affects learners' and teachers' perceptions. Thus, the teaching and learning scenario can be badly skewed towards a particular gender. The way students engage with language can affect their level of confidence and academic prowess. Gender stereotyping may see boys inclining towards subjects like Maths and Science, while girls have a propensity towards languages, leading to a performance gap in English along gender lines. Thus, areas of specialisation and, eventually, career choices, at the local level, are shaped by gender stereotyping.
- At the macro level, gender stereotyping perpetuates patriarchal societies where opportunities are dependent on one's gender. While the world is moving towards bridging the gender divide, gender stereotyping of English may help widen the gap between the two genders. Thus, it is imperative for educational institutions to retrain teachers and reconsider their curriculum to ensure that the cycle of gendering subjects is not perpetuated.
- If agenda 2030, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 5, is to be realised, the implementers (teachers) should be deliberately in-serviced on gender issues to bring about inclusive experiences for all learners despite their gender.

Future actions

There is a need to broaden the research from the local school level to the district or provincial or national level so that findings can benefit other schools and influence key decisions at the highest level in the education department. With Agenda 2030 in mind, the research can be used to gauge how far the nation has gone in eradicating gender disparity towards inclusive education as stipulated by Sustainable Development Goal 5.



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British Council
Partner Schools

The impact of OSS modules on teacher effectiveness

Ayotomi Fasuyi, Nigeria

The impact of OSS modules on teacher effectiveness

School context

Charles Dale Memorial International School, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, is a full-boarding, co-educational secondary school founded in September 2006. It is a multicultural community that admits students from various parts of Nigeria as well as internationally.

The school mission is to produce the total child – children that are physically, socially, spiritually, morally and academically sound, using state-of-the-art facilities. In order to achieve this, we deliver a blended curriculum that encompasses the Nigerian and the Cambridge secondary curricula. We are currently developing our STEAM programmes to have more robust dimensions as we raise lifelong learners that will proffer solutions to global challenges.

As a purpose-built educational institution on a 40-acre expanse of land, our facilities are world-class, accommodating special classrooms and spaces for practical learning. In addition to our academic offering, Charles Dale Memorial International School explores very rich extracurricular activities and sports.

About the author



Ayotomi Fasuyi is principal at Charles Dale Memorial International School, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. With over three decades of experience in education, Mrs Fasuyi's core interest is in classroom pedagogy and English language teaching (ELT).

She has worked as an English teacher at a number of secondary schools. She was appointed the Cambridge exams coordinator for one of the schools she worked in and that exposed her to the professional development opportunities provided by the British Council. For her, that was the changing point in her career. Seeing the need for continuous professional development of teachers in Nigeria, she went on to obtain a Diploma in Teacher Training from London Teacher Training College, London, UK. She went

on to become a British Council-certified teacher trainer for the Cambridge Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT).

She has a Bachelor's degree in English and a Master of Arts in Communication and Language Arts. She also possesses a postgraduate diploma in Education. She is committed to enhancing teacher quality, which she believes is crucial for revitalising Nigeria's education sector.

Key findings

- More teachers than expected (97 per cent of all teachers questioned) accessed and had taken a number of modules on the Online Support for Schools platform.
- However, the Action Research revealed that for CPD to be impactful, definite steps need to be taken to help teachers connect their learning with their practice. The follow-up physical workshop after the OSS module on 'Understanding lesson management' created a forum for teachers to share their thoughts, have their questions answered, collaborate and exchange ideas on their classroom behaviour management concerns.
- Teachers observed that most classrooms and learning spaces within our school environment have no visible rules on display. Little wonder then that classroom behaviour management has been a challenge for teachers. Sixty-two per cent of the teachers resolved to improve on how they give classroom instructions, while 40 per cent were going to come up with their class contracts and rules.

Action Research rationale

Continuous professional development (CPD) is key to teacher effectiveness. For many teachers in Nigeria, CPD mainly consists of a few days of whole-school workshops organised by the school management at the beginning of a new session or term. Many teachers do not take personal responsibility for their professional development. This might be due to a lack of awareness on their part or inability to access qualitative teacher training.

The British Council, through the Partner Schools programme, has developed several self-access workshops as part of the Online Support for Schools (OSS) platform. This research seeks to explore the extent of awareness of teachers about these self-access workshops and how well they engage with the platform. In addition, the research seeks to find out how teachers perceive the OSS as being relevant to their professional development. It will also explore how their learning from the OSS modules translate into better teacher effectiveness, with specific focus on classroom management.

It is hoped that as teachers continually engage with the OSS modules, their classroom skills will improve.

Exploratory Action Research questions

1. What are my perceptions about teachers' awareness of and engagement with the CPD modules on the OSS platform?
2. How do teachers perceive the OSS modules as being relevant to their classroom effectiveness?
3. How do teachers engage with the OSS modules in their day-to-day activities?

Data collection tools

Methodology

To determine my perception about teachers' awareness of and engagement with the CPD modules on the OSS platform, I will be using my **reflection journals** after face-to-face engagement with the teachers in my school.

For my second Exploratory Action Research question about how teachers perceive the relevance of the OSS platform to their effectiveness, I will be having a **focus group discussion session** with six heads of department in my school. They have already given their consent to be respondents.

My final question seeks to explore how teachers

engage with the OSS modules on a day-to-day basis. To collect data for this, I intend to administer a simple **questionnaire** to about 30 teachers in the school who have also given their consent.

These are the data collection tools for my exploratory action research questions.



Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from exploration

The findings from the data analysis revealed that contrary to the researcher's opinion, the teachers at Charles Dale Memorial International School, Port Harcourt, are well aware of the OSS, and many of them had taken a number of training modules on the platform. Nearly all (97 per cent) of the teachers had taken at least two modules on the OSS, of which 24.2 per cent had taken more than ten modules. All (100 per cent) of the teachers admitted that the OSS modules they had taken improved their knowledge about classroom practices in various aspects such as:

- classroom management and positive class control
- learners' evaluation and assessment
- 21st-century lesson delivery
- collaborative learning
- student-centred teaching
- motivation techniques for students' engagement
- behaviour management
- coping/dealing with SEN

The findings also revealed that teachers encountered a number of challenges in accessing the OSS modules. Four out of five teachers (81.8 per cent) complained of lack of time due to their workload, while 51.5 per cent complained of poor internet connection.

From the discussion with the six heads of departments, it was unanimously agreed that newly employed teachers especially need to be supported to implement their learning from the modules in their classrooms. This is the thrust of this Action Research being further validated by this exploratory research.

Action Research

Action plan

My action plan aims at facilitating CPD workshops for all the teachers in my school. Fifty teachers took the OSS module 'Understanding lesson management 1' with a view to improving classroom management skills after the exploratory stage of this research.

The workshop will focus on three major classroom management strategies:

1. giving instructions
2. establishing procedures and routines
3. establishing classroom rules.

Using the British Council OSS resource 'Managing the lesson' booklet, workshop participants will have practical sessions on what makes 'good and not so good' instructions in the classroom. They will also examine their classroom procedures and come up with manageable routines for their students. These will be role played using classroom scenarios. Lastly, teachers will collaborate in group activities to produce samples of posters depicting five to six classroom rules.

Participants will complete a feedback questionnaire to be used in follow-up sessions to ensure sustainable practices within the school. Classroom observations will be carried out by heads of departments to provide support for teachers as needed.

Action plan evaluation tools

My action plan evaluation tools are as follows:

1. Post-workshop questionnaire to be completed by teachers after the in-school workshop on 'Understanding lesson management'.
2. Lesson observation data – With the collaboration of heads of departments, classroom observations will be carried out to determine how teachers are able to directly connect their learning from the workshop with their classroom practice.
3. Focus group discussion with heads of departments to review the lessons observed and draw up an action plan for further training.

Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

A total of 52 teachers attended the Action Research workshop on Friday 31 January 2025 at Charles Dale Memorial International School. The workshop was facilitated by the researcher, Mrs Ayotomi Fasuyi. Before the workshop, 49 teachers had taken the OSS module 'Understanding lesson management 1'. Copies of the British Council OSS resource 'Managing the lesson' were made available for all participants.

The workshop focused mainly on three classroom management strategies:

- giving explicit instructions to learners
- establishing classroom routines and procedures
- establishing classroom rules.

The facilitator projected some examples of instructions, and teachers had to critique them. It was interesting to hear teachers commenting that they did not quite realise how important classroom instructions were. Various scenarios in the classroom were presented, and teachers were asked to role play the instructions for each scenario. Teachers gave feedback to one another regarding the effectiveness of their instructions.

The last session had teachers working in groups to create posters of five to six classroom rules. It was a shocking revelation to all participants that there were no visible rules in most of our classrooms, laboratories, workshops and studios. Class teachers agreed to spend their next week tutor time to establish classroom contracts with their students. These would be made into posters for their class display boards.

The workshop was followed by two weeks of lesson observations by heads of departments. The focus of the observation was to follow up on how teachers give instructions and how they maintain control of their classrooms.

'I got my first training as a teacher through the OSS modules. Coming from an Engineering background, I took several modules on OSS. By the time I went for my Diploma in Education, I was already familiar with a lot of educational concepts.'

Mr Israel Salifu, HOD ICT, speaking on the benefits of the OSS



‘The lessons I observed after the workshop are much better than they used to be. These are the same teachers that used to give us a lot of concern.’

Mr Uchechukwu Madu, HOD Science.
Statement made at the focus group discussion with heads of departments after the Action Research workshop

Key findings

The action research at Charles Dale Memorial International School has been a most enlightening experience not only for the researcher but for almost all of the teachers in the school. At the exploratory stage, it was revealed that 97 per cent of the teachers had accessed and taken a number of modules on the OSS, contrary to the researcher’s initial opinion.

The Action Research also revealed that for CPD to be impactful, definite steps need to be taken to help teachers connect their learning with their practice. The follow-up physical workshop after the OSS module on ‘Understanding lesson management’ created a forum for teachers to share their thoughts, have their questions answered, collaborate and exchange ideas on their classroom behaviour management concerns. Three-quarters of the teachers (75.5 per cent) rated the overall quality of the module as ‘Excellent’, while 22.4 per cent rated it ‘Good’. These were the only two ratings.

In relation to the aspect of the module which they found most valuable, ‘Giving instructions’ rated highest with 75.5 per cent, ‘Dealing with disruptive learners’ came next with 69.4 per cent while ‘Creating a positive learning environment’ had a 55.1 per cent rating. Participants found the aspect on ‘Differentiating tasks for learners’ least valuable with a 24.5 per cent rating. This might not be unconnected with the fact that our learners are in streamed classes.

During the workshop, the session on ‘Establishing classroom rules’ revealed that most classrooms and learning spaces within our school environment have no visible rules on display. Little wonder then that classroom behaviour management has been a challenge for teachers. Almost two-thirds of the teachers (62 per cent) resolved to improve on how they give classroom instructions, while 40 per cent were going to come up with their class contracts and rules.

Conclusions

All the teachers at Charles Dale Memorial International School that were involved in the action research found the British Council OSS modules relevant, easy to access and rich in content. In order to further enhance its value, it would be necessary for school leaders to establish a structure whereby teachers can connect their learning from the OSS modules to their classroom practice. It is obviously not enough to have teachers complete the modules and present their certificates as evidence. The discussion with heads of departments during this Action Research suggested a possibility that teachers were taking the OSS modules mainly to submit the certificates to the school management, without the learning translating into improved teaching practices.

Going forward at Charles Dale Memorial International School, teachers will take modules recommended by their heads of departments during school holidays. Teachers feel overloaded with school work during term time and do not think it is the best time to engage with the OSS modules.

In addition, there will be physical workshops to review the OSS modules. The workshops may be departmental or collective and they will be facilitated by teachers to further empower them. Depending on the focus of the workshop, heads of departments will follow up with focused lesson observations to ensure teachers are implementing what they have learned.

In conclusion, we will embark on a drive in the school to put up visible instructions and signages in our classrooms and around the school premises. Establishing classroom contracts with the students will definitely produce better behaviour. Well-managed classrooms lead to improved academic achievement. This is the desire of every good teacher and school.

Future actions

Engaging in Action Research is an eye-opener to the unlimited opportunities within the school system. It was quite interesting how a simple hypothesis led to several revelations that had been unnoticed all this while.

Conclusions

The British Council Online Support for Schools (OSS) is a versatile, engaging and dynamic platform suitable for teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) at all levels of growth. The variety of modules available on the OSS provides adequate learning opportunities for teachers. However, school leaders need to be intentional about their deployment of the OSS to meet teachers' varying needs. From the results of this Action Research, CPD at Charles Dale Memorial International School will be deliberate and better structured to have a more holistic impact.

Future actions

At Charles Dale Memorial International School, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, these are the steps we intend to take to improve our teaching effectiveness.

- Create departmental/general training schedules using OSS modules based on an assessment of teachers' needs. Heads of departments will work with school heads to determine the OSS modules that teachers need to take individually or collectively.
- Organise termly teacher-led physical workshops, after individual studies on the OSS, to further entrench professional development. When structured this way, teachers will have at least two in-school workshops to attend every term.
- Schedule focused lesson observations and feedback sessions on specific aspects of teaching for improvement.
- Encourage school leaders to provide more support for teachers with regard to students' behaviour management.
- Implement further Action Research on other aspects of school improvement.

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To all the wonderful students who continue to bring out the best in us as teachers, thank you for being you!



British Council
Partner Schools

Enhancing differentiated classroom instruction through targeted CPD initiatives

Bayan Rababa'h, Jordan

Enhancing differentiated classroom instruction through targeted CPD initiatives

School context

Universal Civilizations Academy (UCA) is located in Amman, Jordan. Universal Civilizations Academy offers both national and international curricula that emphasise academic excellence, character development and global citizenship. The school fosters a nurturing and inclusive environment, encouraging students to reach their full potential. Universal Civilizations Academy is accredited by international bodies like Oxford AQA, Cognia, Cambridge International Examinations and Pearson Edexcel, and integrates advanced programmes such as Engineering and Robotics, preparing students for a global future.

About the author



Bayan Rababa'h is a dedicated educator from Amman, Jordan, with a deep passion for teaching and a commitment to shaping the future of education. With over 21 years of experience, she has grown from starting as an English language teacher in 2002 to becoming a respected leader in the field. Bayan holds a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Jordan and has taken on various roles throughout her career, including Head of the English Department, and now she serves as the Principal of the International Programmes at Universal Civilizations Academy. In this role, she oversees the learning journey of students from Grade 1 to Grade 11 IGCSE, ensuring they receive a well-rounded education. Bayan is also a part-time lecturer at the University of Jordan and a certified Cambridge Programme Leader, offering professional development training in both English and Arabic.

Key findings

- It became evident that differentiated instruction requires not only teaching strategies but also a shift in mindset and classroom management practices.
- These findings suggest that while CPD workshops have had a positive impact, ongoing support is essential. Moving forward, the key focus should be on offering more tailored support for teachers who are still adjusting to these practices, and providing them with tools to manage time and student diversity more effectively.



Exploratory Action Research questions

1. Why do I perceive differentiated instruction as challenging to implement in primary classrooms?
2. What are primary teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of CPD in improving their differentiated instruction practices?
3. How do teachers use differentiation in their classrooms?

Action Research rationale

This Action Research focuses on enhancing differentiated instruction in primary classrooms through targeted continuous professional development (CPD) initiatives. Differentiated instruction, which involves tailoring teaching strategies to meet diverse student needs, is recognised as crucial for effective learning. However, it remains a significant challenge for many teachers, particularly in primary education. Managing varied learning styles, abilities and interests in one classroom often leaves teachers feeling overwhelmed, leading to inconsistent implementation and varied student outcomes.

At Universal Civilizations Academy, I have noticed that primary teachers have concerns about the practical challenges of applying differentiated instruction, even after participating in different CPD initiatives. This suggests a gap between the CPD content and the everyday classroom practices, raising important questions about how CPD can be more effectively designed and delivered to meet these challenges.

This research seeks to understand how CPD initiatives influence student behaviour and engagement in classrooms where differentiated instruction is applied. Effective CPD has the potential to transform teaching practices, leading to more inclusive and responsive learning environments. By investigating these issues, the research aims to provide actionable insights that will help refine the CPD initiatives, ultimately contributing to school improvement by enhancing both teaching practices and student learning experiences and outcomes.



Data collection tools

Methodology

To explore my research questions, I will use three data collection tools. First, I will conduct classroom observations with five primary teachers to identify the practical challenges they face when implementing differentiated instruction. My reflections will be documented in a reflective journal, which will provide real-time evidence for research question 1. Second, to address research question 2, I will distribute a questionnaire to primary teachers that will include a combination of Likert-scale and open-ended questions to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on their perceptions of the effectiveness of CPD in improving their differentiation practices. Finally, I will conduct focus group discussions with eight to ten teachers to explore how they use differentiation in their classrooms, which will provide detailed insights for research question 3. All participants will give informed consent, and confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained to ensure ethical research practices throughout the study.

Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from exploration

Based on my own observations as a principal, teachers are working hard to implement differentiated instruction in their classrooms, but the outcomes of their teaching practices vary. According to the questionnaire responses and the focus group discussions, teachers with 6–15 years of experience, mostly teaching Grades 1 to 6, found CPD programmes on differentiated instruction very helpful. Strategies like project-based learning, group activities and flexible grouping have effectively met the diverse needs of students. However, challenges such as managing time, planning for larger classes and creating customised materials still exist. Despite these issues, it is noticed that differentiated instruction has improved student engagement and learning outcomes. Teachers noticed that students are more involved when lessons are planned and personalised to their individual needs and learning styles. The focus group highlighted the importance of CPD workshops on practical teaching strategies and formative assessment, but also revealed the need for ongoing support, teamwork and resources like ready-made lesson plans. Approximately 65 per cent of teachers believe that more training on time management and access to instructional mentors would help them overcome the challenges of differentiation.



‘My understanding of differentiated instruction has deepened, showing me more effective ways to tailor lessons to diverse student needs. I now feel more confident in applying flexible strategies to enhance learning for all.’

Teacher participant, focus group, post-workshop phase

Action Research

Action plan

My action plan will focus on **targeted CPD workshops** that will engage about ten school teachers in four weekly sessions, each lasting three hours.

The workshops will aim to address key challenges by enhancing time management, planning for large classes and applying effective differentiation techniques.

Each session will focus on practical strategies, including managing classroom practices, creating lesson plans for diverse groups and implementing differentiated instruction. Teachers will participate in hands-on activities, peer discussions and collaborative reflections. The workshops will also include feedback strategies and follow-up support to ensure long-term application.

Action plan evaluation tools

A combination of tools will be used to evaluate the impact of the action plan.

1. **Pre- and post-workshop surveys** will assess changes in teachers' confidence and understanding of strategies for time management, planning for large classes and differentiation techniques. These surveys will include Likert-scale questions to measure growth, and open-ended items to capture detailed feedback.
2. **Classroom observations** will provide insights into how effectively teachers apply the learned strategies. Using a structured checklist, observations will focus on indicators such as improved lesson planning, effective classroom management and the application of differentiation methods.
3. **Focus group discussions** will be conducted with participating teachers to explore their perceptions of the workshops' effectiveness and their impact on teaching practices.

Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

The implementation of the action plan went smoothly in most areas, but several challenges emerged. One of the major obstacles was ensuring that all participants had consistent access to the necessary resources and materials. Despite detailed preparations, some teachers faced difficulties in accessing the online materials due to technical issues, which slightly delayed the progress for a few. Another challenge was managing the varying levels of engagement across participants. While some teachers embraced the strategies immediately, others were hesitant to integrate them into their teaching practices. To address this, additional support was provided through one-to-one coaching sessions, but this added extra time to the overall implementation process. Additionally, scheduling and time constraints posed difficulties in ensuring that teachers could attend all the training sessions and follow-up activities without disruption to their regular teaching commitments. However, the willingness of teachers to participate and adjust their practices was a positive aspect of the implementation. Despite these challenges, the overall response was favourable, with many teachers expressing interest in continuing their professional development in differentiated instruction. The key takeaway is the importance of ongoing support and flexibility to overcome logistical and individual barriers in professional development programmes.

Key findings

The key findings from the implementation of the action plan reflect both progress and areas for improvement. On a positive note, teachers demonstrated a clear understanding of differentiated instruction strategies, with a noticeable increase in the use of differentiation in their lesson plans and classroom activities. Ninety-three per cent of teachers reported feeling more confident in addressing the diverse needs of their students, which suggests the effectiveness of the CPD programme in enhancing their skills. However, there were areas that required further attention. Fifty-three per cent of teachers struggled to consistently apply differentiation techniques across all subjects and grade levels, indicating that more subject-specific training might be needed. Additionally, while most teachers were receptive to feedback and coaching, a few still found the transition to differentiated instruction challenging, particularly in larger classes, where time management became a key issue. It became evident that differentiated instruction requires not only teaching strategies but also a shift in mindset and classroom management practices. These findings suggest that while CPD workshops have had a positive impact, ongoing support is essential. Moving forward, the key focus should be on offering more tailored support for teachers who are still adjusting to these practices and providing them with tools to manage time and student diversity more effectively.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this action research highlight the significant impact that targeted professional development in differentiated instruction can have on both teachers' teaching practices and students' learning experiences. Teachers who participated in the CPD workshops reported increased confidence in applying differentiation strategies, resulting in a more inclusive and student-centered classroom environment. The research also revealed that while most teachers embraced these practices, continued support and follow-up were essential to ensuring consistent and effective application, especially for teachers managing larger or more diverse classrooms. Notably, primary teachers tended to rely more on addressing students' learning styles rather than focusing on the academic level of their students. This tendency reflects a practical approach, as teachers often feel more equipped to adjust based on individual learning preferences rather than tackling the more complex issue of varying academic capabilities.



The impact on the school setting has been positive, with teachers becoming more adept at meeting the individual needs of students, thereby improving overall student engagement and learning outcomes. The success of this initiative could be extended to other schools, particularly in a global context, where diverse student populations and varied teaching styles make differentiated instruction a valuable tool. Sharing the outcomes and strategies from this research could inspire other educational institutions to adopt similar CPD programmes, fostering a global movement towards more inclusive teaching practices.

Looking ahead, the school development cycle could be enhanced by incorporating ongoing, personalised coaching for teachers, expanding CPD opportunities to cover other aspects of pedagogy and building a culture of peer mentoring to encourage collaboration. Future actions could include integrating differentiation techniques into the school's regular curriculum reviews and ensuring that new teachers are provided with differentiated training from the outset. These initiatives would further embed the practices into the school's overall development strategy, ensuring sustained improvement in teaching and learning.



Future actions

The conclusions from this Action Research emphasise the significant impact of targeted professional development in enhancing teachers' differentiated instruction practices. The workshops fostered a deeper understanding of differentiation, empowering teachers to address diverse student needs more effectively. However, the research also highlighted the ongoing need for continuous support, such as regular follow-up sessions and peer collaboration, to ensure these strategies are consistently applied in classrooms.

The impact on the school has been positive, with teachers reporting increased confidence and effectiveness in catering to varied learning styles. This shift contributes to a more inclusive and engaging learning environment. From a global perspective, the findings can benefit educational systems facing similar challenges with diverse classrooms, offering insights into how CPD can drive meaningful change.

Future enhancements in the school development cycle could involve integrating differentiated instruction more deeply into the curriculum, establishing collaborative teaching models and introducing structured peer mentoring programmes. These changes would ensure sustained improvement and foster a culture of continual professional growth. By scaling these practices, the school could serve as a model for other institutions, both locally and globally, demonstrating how targeted professional development can transform teaching practices and enhance student outcomes.

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'I have implemented the differentiation instruction in my classes and I have noticed that all my students were engaged. I have tried differentiated content and assessment to support all the students and learners to achieve the goals.'

Teacher participant, questionnaire, post-workshop phase

British Council
Partner Schools

Overcoming Mathematics anxiety through CPD interventions and implementation

Innocent Katule, Nigeria

Overcoming Mathematics anxiety through CPD interventions and implementation

School context

Deeper Life High School is a unity school with 23 campuses in 21 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The school is coordinated centrally by the education secretary through the school principals of each campus. As a Cambridge International School, it runs a hybrid curriculum, a mixture of British and Nigerian curricula.

About the author



Innocent Katule is a Mathematics educator, zonal officer (ICT and media), and Assistant Coordinator of CPD at Deeper Life High School (DLHS), Opete Campus, Delta State, Nigeria. He holds an MSc in Industrial Mathematics, a PGDE and an International Diploma in Education from the University of Buckingham.

Key findings

- The CPD programmes positively influenced teachers' practices, with increased confidence and competence in addressing Maths phobia and integrating active learning strategies.
- Teachers reported enhanced skills in differentiated instruction and using technology to engage students. This led to improved classroom environments and a more supportive atmosphere for students struggling with Mathematics.
- However, challenges remain. Time constraints hinder the consistent implementation of new strategies. Varying levels of technological proficiency among teachers require ongoing support. There is a need for continued emphasis on addressing the emotional and psychological aspects of Maths anxiety. Sustained effort is needed to ensure long-term impact and embed these practices within the school culture.

Action Research rationale

My topic is overcoming Mathematics anxiety through continuous professional development (CPD) interventions and implementation, using Deeper Life High School as a case study. As a unity school, having teachers from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds would require CPD to help teachers, who can be posted to any campus, to be able to seamlessly demystify Mathematics phobia among their students and get optimal results.

Exploratory Action Research questions

1. What is my perception of the relationship between CPD for teachers and students' experiences with Mathematics?
2. What are students' perceptions related to their experiences with Mathematics?
3. What do teachers do when students show hesitation or struggle with Mathematics?

Data collection tools

Methodology

1. What is my perception of the relationship between CPD for teachers and students' experiences with Mathematics?

Focus group: This will involve about 30 teachers in Deeper Life High School in the south-south of Nigeria, about six campuses. This will be done via Zoom, which will be recorded and conducted under the supervision of the school's National Mathematics Coordinator.

2. What are students' perceptions related to their experiences with Mathematics?

Survey/questionnaire: To explore students' views on Mathematics anxiety, we shall design 10–15 questions for about 180 students (30 from each of the six campuses).

3. What do teachers do when students show hesitation or struggle with Mathematics?

Interview: Twelve teachers (two from six of the campuses) will be interviewed individually; in this, we shall explore what the teachers would do after workshops we shall organise for them on Maths phobia.

Consent: As a full-boarding school, we already have consent from parents to carry out this research, as it is part of what was agreed upon by parents during admission and teachers during employment. Notwithstanding, consent forms would be designed and sent to parents specifically for this research work.



Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from the exploration

- Approximately 77.3 per cent of students have adequate Maths resources available at school.
- About 59.8 per cent find the curriculum relevant and feel supported by their teachers.
- Their peers positively influence 59.8 per cent and have received extra help.
- However, around 17 per cent of students experience Maths anxiety, which may be under-reported due to shyness or discomfort in admitting it. Addressing these issues through supportive teaching practices, differentiated instruction and additional support can enhance students' learning experiences and outcomes in Mathematics.
- Based on the data, approximately 27.5 per cent of the students reported having negative experiences with Mathematics. These experiences include failing tests, being teased or other incidents that have negatively influenced their current attitudes towards the subject. Addressing these negative experiences through supportive teaching practices and creating a positive learning environment can help improve students' attitudes and performance in Mathematics.

'As the training has equipped the educators and made them ready for work, the School Principal should support them with more hands. Maths educators are supposed not to be overloaded. Thank you.'

Mathematics educator's feedback

Data analysis and designing an action plan

Action plan

Action plan for CPD sessions based on the recommendation.

Objectives

1. Recognise and address Mathematics phobia

- Equip teachers with the ability to identify signs, triggers and causes of Maths phobia in students.
- Help teachers understand the psychological and social impacts of Maths anxiety on learners.

2. Develop and implement confidence-building strategies

- Enable teachers to use growth mindset techniques and stress-reduction strategies to help students build a positive attitude toward Mathematics.

3. Integrate technology to make Mathematics engaging

- Familiarise teachers with technology-based tools (e.g. Kahoot, GeoGebra) to simplify complex concepts and reduce anxiety among students.

4. Promote collaborative learning

- Encourage peer-learning strategies to foster supportive classroom environments and reduce the fear of failure in students.

5. Adopt differentiated instruction

- Train teachers to design and implement customised teaching strategies that cater to the diverse needs of learners, addressing individual anxiety triggers effectively.

6. Design low-stakes assessments

- Equip teachers with techniques to create assessments that minimise pressure and encourage positive student performance in Mathematics.

7. Establish continual reflection and evaluation

- Develop teachers' capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies and make continual improvements to their teaching approaches.

Participants

Number of teachers: 100–150 teachers (regional grouping if required)

Duration and schedule

Total duration: one month

Number of sessions: four sessions (one per week)

Sessions length: three hours each

Session details and content

Session 1:

Understanding Mathematics phobia

Focus:

- Identify signs, causes and impacts of Maths anxiety.
- Discuss teacher experiences and analyse real-life case studies.

Activities:

- Collaborative discussion to share experiences.
- Analyse case studies to identify common anxiety triggers.

Session 2:

Building student confidence in Mathematics

Focus:

- Growth mindset and stress management techniques for students.
- Positive reinforcement strategies to boost student morale.

Activities:

- Role play scenarios for confidence-building techniques.
- Practise pre-assessment relaxation and engagement methods.

Session 3:

Technology and collaborative learning strategies

Focus:

- Use of gamified learning platforms (e.g. Kahoot, GeoGebra) to simplify Maths concepts.
- Collaborative learning strategies to reduce fear and promote peer support.

Activities:

- Hands-on session to create a Maths lesson with an app.
- Role-play activity for managing inclusive group dynamics.

Session 4:

Differentiated instruction and evaluation

Focus:

- Tailoring teaching strategies to diverse learner needs.
- Designing low-stakes assessments to minimise Maths anxiety.

Activities:

- Develop differentiated lesson plans for a Maths challenge.
- Redesign a Maths assessment for anxiety reduction.

Expected outcomes

- Teachers will acquire practical tools to identify and address Maths phobia effectively.
- Increased confidence among teachers in using technology and collaborative learning strategies.
- Enhanced understanding of how to create a supportive and differentiated learning environment.

Evaluation of pilot programme

1. Conduct pre- and post-programme surveys for teachers to gauge confidence and preparedness.
2. Collect feedback on the usefulness and applicability of the CPD sessions.
3. Observe the impact of new strategies in pilot classrooms for future scaling.

Action plan evaluation tools

Evaluation methods

- 1. Pre- and post-programme surveys**
Conduct surveys before and after the CPD sessions to measure changes in teachers' confidence, preparedness and attitudes towards addressing Maths anxiety. These surveys will include both quantitative and qualitative questions to capture a comprehensive view of the impact.
- 2. Feedback forms**
Collect detailed feedback from participants after each session to assess the usefulness and applicability of the content. This will help identify areas of improvement and highlight successful strategies.
- 3. Classroom observations**
Observe pilot classrooms where teachers implement the new strategies. This will provide real-time insights into how the strategies are being applied and their effectiveness in reducing Maths anxiety and improving student engagement.
- 4. Student performance data**
Analyse student performance data before and after the implementation of the action plan. This will help determine if there are measurable improvements in student outcomes, such as test scores and class participation.
- 5. Focus groups**
Conduct focus group discussions with a subset of teachers and students to gather in-depth feedback on the impact of the strategies. This qualitative data will provide a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of both teachers and students.

Tools

- 1. Survey platforms**
Online tools like Google Forms or SurveyMonkey for pre- and post-programme surveys.
- 2. Observation checklists**
Standardised checklists for classroom observations.
- 3. Data analysis software**
Tools like Excel or SPSS for analysing student performance data.
- 4. Recording devices**
These are used to capture focus group discussions.

Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

The CPD sessions were generally well received by participating teachers, who showed enthusiasm for applying the newly learned strategies in their classrooms. Teachers particularly valued the focus on practical tools and collaborative learning techniques.

Challenges during implementation included time constraints for teachers balancing CPD with their regular duties and the varying levels of technological proficiency among teachers, which required differentiated support for integrating digital tools.

A key surprise was the extent to which teachers shared personal experiences with Maths anxiety, highlighting the importance of addressing the emotional aspects of Mathematics education. The strong collaborative spirit among teachers and their eagerness to implement peer-learning strategies were also positive surprises. Overall, the CPD initiative demonstrated a positive impact and revealed important considerations for future implementation and scaling.



Key findings

The CPD programmes positively influenced teachers' practices, with increased confidence and competence in addressing Maths phobia and integrating active learning strategies. Teachers reported enhanced skills in differentiated instruction and using technology to engage students. This led to improved classroom environments and a more supportive atmosphere for students struggling with Mathematics.

However, challenges remain. Time constraints hinder the consistent implementation of new strategies. Varying levels of technological proficiency among teachers require ongoing support. There's a need for continued emphasis on addressing the emotional and psychological aspects of Maths anxiety. Sustained effort is needed to ensure long-term impact and embed these practices within the school culture.

Conclusions

This Action Research demonstrates the positive impact of targeted CPD interventions on addressing Maths anxiety and improving Mathematics education within Deeper Life High School. The findings highlight the importance of equipping teachers with strategies to identify and support students experiencing Maths phobia, fostering a more positive and engaging learning environment.

The learning from this study can be valuable in a global context, particularly for schools seeking to enhance Mathematics outcomes and create inclusive classrooms. The emphasis on practical strategies, technology integration and collaborative learning can be adapted to diverse educational settings.

Improvements to the school development cycle include embedding ongoing CPD focused on pedagogical innovation and student well-being. Future actions could involve:

- establishing peer mentoring programmes for teachers
- implementing student-led initiatives to promote a positive Maths culture
- developing resources for parents to support their children's Maths learning at home.

These steps can contribute to a cycle of continual improvement in Mathematics education.

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Future actions

This Action Research has demonstrated that targeted CPD focused on addressing Maths anxiety can positively impact the learning environment and teaching practices within Deeper Life High School. The study highlights the importance of empowering teachers with strategies to support students' emotional and academic needs in Mathematics. Key learnings include the value of practical, actionable CPD content, the importance of addressing diverse teacher skill levels (particularly in technology) and the power of collaborative learning approaches.

The impact of this research extends beyond the immediate setting. The findings offer valuable insights for other schools, both nationally and globally, seeking to improve Mathematics education and promote inclusive learning environments. The emphasis and importance of teacher training, practical application and addressing students' anxiety can be adapted to various contexts.

Possible enhancements to the school development cycle include:

- **embedding regular cycles of Action Research to address specific school needs and challenges**
- **establishing a robust system for ongoing professional development, with a focus on teacher-led initiatives and peer support**
- **integrating student feedback mechanisms to ensure that educational practices are responsive to their needs and experiences.**

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British Council
Partner Schools

Examining the impact of social-emotional learning on academic achievement through CPD

Mustafa Atas, Egypt

Examining the impact of social-emotional learning on academic achievement through CPD

School context

Salahaldin International School Alexandria (SIS) is an international school in Alexandria, Egypt, that opened its doors in September 2014. The majority of students are Egyptian nationals, but the school also has students from other countries, with a total of 550 students and 85 teachers. Salahaldin International School Alexandria offers students a world-class education, with a focus on technology, innovation and individual growth.

Salahaldin International School Alexandria offers a comprehensive and broad K-12 British curriculum, and students have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of national and international competitions. The school offers its students British and international educational traditions, as well as the benefits of access to the rich culture and heritage of Egypt. Salahaldin International School Alexandria offers a mix of curricular and co-curricular activities, with a wide variety of programmes and facilities that meet the needs and interest of its students.

Salahaldin International School Alexandria also has a variety of other facilities to support students' learning and development, such as smart technologies, well-equipped science labs, two auditoriums where the students can showcase their potential in different platforms, 3D-experience room, robotics room and

music rooms. At Salahaldin International School Alexandria we believe that individual growth is the goal. We accept students' differences and provide students with the support they need to reach their full potential. We are committed to providing our students with a well-rounded education that will prepare them for success in college and beyond.

About the author



Mustafa Atas is an experienced English language teacher and academic coordinator with over 21 years of diverse experience in international school curricula across various educational levels. He has held several leadership positions in Albania and Egypt, including Head of the English Department, K-6 Assistant Principal, K-12 Deputy Director, Middle School Assistant Principal and K-12 Academic Coordinator, and he currently serves as K-12 Academic Vice Principal.

His expertise encompasses curriculum development, data-driven decision making, and the implementation of impactful school-wide initiatives aimed at enhancing student achievement. Throughout his career, Mustafa has been dedicated to empowering learners and creating an engaging, technology-enhanced educational environment that enables students to reach their full potential.

Key findings

The integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) has led to several positive outcomes:

- **increased student engagement:** a 25 per cent increase in participation in classroom activities
- **improved emotional expression:** about 70 per cent of students feel more comfortable expressing their emotions
- **supportive environment:** a 30 per cent reduction in classroom conflicts has fostered a nurturing atmosphere.

However, challenges remain:

- **inconsistent implementation:** 40 per cent of teachers feel unprepared to apply SEL strategies effectively
- **professional development needs:** while 85 per cent attended workshops, 60 per cent desire ongoing support rather than one-time training
- **student feedback:** 55 per cent of students seek more relevant SEL activities.

Action Research rationale

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is an essential aspect of school improvement and innovation in my school setting for several reasons. As an academic leader, I recognise the need to prioritise SEL as a key component of our school's improvement and innovation efforts.

1. First and foremost, research has consistently shown that SEL has a direct and significant impact on students' academic achievements (What the Research Says, ASCD, 2018). By helping students develop skills like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making, SEL programmes allow them to better regulate their emotions, build stronger peer relationships and engage more effectively in the learning process. This, in turn, leads to improved grades, test scores and overall academic performance.
2. Furthermore, in the diverse, multicultural context of our international school, SEL is particularly important for supporting students' holistic development and fostering an inclusive, supportive learning environment. SEL helps students from various backgrounds learn to understand, empathise and collaborate with their peers, which is essential for their social-emotional well-being and academic success.
3. By investing in comprehensive SEL programming, we can empower our students to become self-motivated, resilient learners who are equipped to navigate the challenges of the 21st century. This strategic focus on SEL will undoubtedly contribute to enhanced academic outcomes and the overall growth and development of our students.

Exploratory Action Research questions

1. **What are my own perceptions and beliefs about the importance of SEL in our school's improvement and innovation efforts?**
2. **How do students feel SEL programmes and initiatives are impacting their learning experiences and social-emotional well-being?**
3. **What patterns or trends have I noticed in how students are demonstrating social-emotional competencies in the classroom and broader school community?**

Data collection tools

Methodology

The methodology incorporated a mixed-method approach, including focus group discussions, surveys with a focus group of students and a survey of teachers. Consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the purpose of the study and their rights.

1. **Focus group discussions:** In addition to the individual interviews, I will organise two focus group discussions, each with five students, to further explore their collective perceptions and experiences with SEL.
2. **Student surveys:** I will develop and administer a survey to a larger sample of 36 students across different grade levels. The survey will include a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.
3. **Teacher surveys:** Recognising the crucial role that teachers play in implementing and supporting SEL initiatives, I will conduct surveys with 11 teachers who currently work with the target group students.



'The SEL activities helped us understand our feelings better and made us more connected as a class. It helped me make a plan for my exams, and improve my grades.'

Year 6 student Salwa Osama's feedback

Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from exploration

SEL impact on academic improvement: Key findings

Data analysis indicates a positive correlation between SEL skills and academic performance. Students with higher SEL competencies tend to achieve better grades and demonstrate increased engagement in class. Teachers implementing SEL programmes reported a significant decrease in behavioural issues, creating a more conducive learning environment. This reduction in disruptions allows for more instructional time, benefiting both teachers and students.

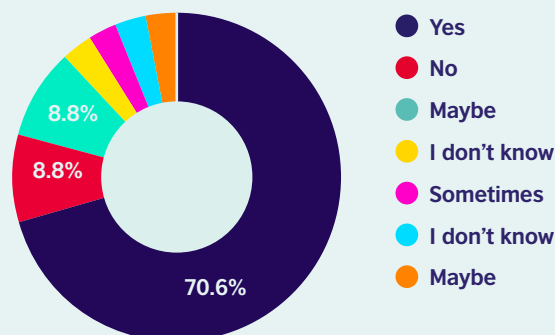
Additionally, students participating in SEL initiatives showed enhanced motivation and a stronger connection to peers and teachers, which positively impacted their academic efforts. Over 70 per cent of students report that SEL significantly enhances their academic performance. Improved peer relationships were also noted, with students exhibiting better collaboration skills, leading to successful group-work experiences.

However, challenges remain in SEL implementation. Issues such as inconsistent teacher training, limited time for educators to integrate SEL practices and insufficient parental support have been identified. Teachers face significant barriers, with 54.5 per cent citing lack of parent support, and 45.5 per cent struggling with time constraints and insufficient training. Addressing these barriers is essential for maximising the effectiveness of SEL programmes.

Exploratory action research question 2

Do you think SEL programmes can help you improve your academic performances at your school?

34 responses

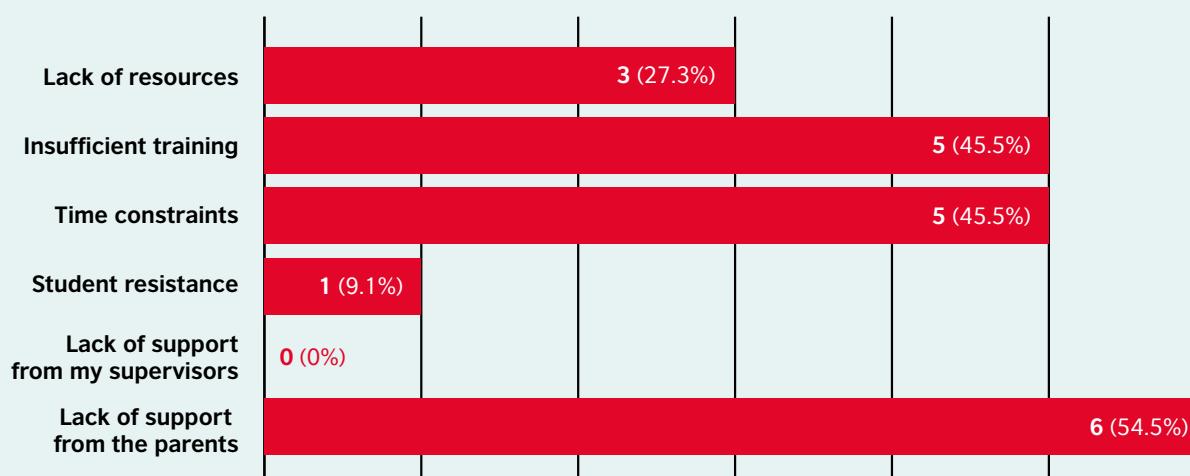


Overall, the exploration stage underscores the significant impact of SEL on academic outcomes. Integrating SEL into educational practices fosters individual student growth and enhances the overall learning environment. Future efforts will focus on refining and expanding SEL initiatives to ensure all students benefit from these vital programmes.

Exploratory action research question 3

What challenges do you encounter when implementing SEL in your classroom? (Select all that apply)

11 responses



Action Research

Action plan

The research outlines two action plans: one for integrating SEL into the curriculum and another for providing professional development for teachers. These plans aim to create a supportive environment that encourages both academic and emotional growth.

- **Integrate SEL into the curriculum:** Incorporate SEL activities, such as emotion regulation exercises and group discussions, alongside academic lessons.
- **Professional development:** Offer regular workshops for teachers on SEL strategies, including classroom management, emotional support and conflict resolution.



Action plan evaluation tools

- **Tool 1: Conduct classroom observations** to see how SEL activities are being implemented, and provide feedback and support.

Timeline: Throughout weeks 15–17 (22 December – 11 January)

- **Tool 2: Student feedback survey/discussions**
Use surveys or informal discussions to gather student feedback on the SEL activities and their impact on learning.

Timeline: Week 18–19 (12–25 January)



Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

The integration of SEL into the curriculum was met with enthusiasm from both students and teachers. Incorporating activities like emotion regulation exercises and group discussions alongside academic lessons sparked increased engagement. However, we faced challenges in ensuring consistency across different classrooms, as some teachers were more comfortable with SEL strategies than others.

Professional development workshops were well attended, yet some teachers expressed a need for ongoing support rather than one-time sessions. This realisation prompted us to establish a mentorship programme for teachers to share best practices.

Classroom observations revealed that while many teachers implemented SEL activities effectively, a few struggled with classroom management during these sessions. The student feedback surveys indicated that most students felt more connected and better able to express their emotions, but some noted that not all activities resonated with them.

Overall, the implementation of the action plan showed promising results, but highlighted the need for continual training and adaptation to meet diverse classroom needs.

Key findings

The integration of SEL has led to several positive outcomes:

- **increased student engagement:** a 25 per cent increase in participation in classroom activities
- **improved emotional expression:** about 70 per cent of students feel more comfortable expressing their emotions
- **supportive environment:** a 30 per cent reduction in classroom conflicts has fostered a nurturing atmosphere.

However, challenges remain:

- **inconsistent implementation:** 40 per cent of teachers feel unprepared to apply SEL strategies effectively.
- **professional development needs:** while 85 per cent attended workshops, 60 per cent desire ongoing support rather than one-time training.
- **student feedback:** 55 per cent of students seek more relevant SEL activities.

'I feel more comfortable sharing my ideas now; it's like we're all in this together. I don't feel the exam stress anymore, yet I need more activities from my teachers during the SEL time.'

Year Five student Yasmine Samir's feedback



Conclusions

To enhance SEL integration, we propose implementing a structured mentorship programme to provide continuous support for the 45.5 per cent of teachers who feel unprepared. Additionally, we recommend regular curriculum evaluations that focus on tailoring initiatives based on student input, particularly from the 55 per cent of students who desire more relatable content. By addressing these crucial areas, we can develop a more effective SEL framework that not only improves learning outcomes but also supports the emotional well-being of all students.

These findings underscore the critical role of SEL in enhancing not only academic performance but also students' emotional well-being.

Impact on our setting

The integration of SEL has created an inclusive atmosphere where students feel valued and understood, fostering collaboration and enriching the learning experience.

Possible enhancements in the school development cycle

Future actions to enhance SEL may include:

1. **ongoing professional development**
Establishing continual training for educators to boost confidence in implementing SEL strategies.
2. **student-centred curriculum design**
Incorporating feedback, especially from the 55 per cent of students seeking more relevant activities.
3. **mentorship programmes**
Developing structured mentorship for teachers to provide ongoing support.
4. **community engagement**
Involving parents and the community in SEL initiatives to extend benefits beyond the classroom.

By implementing these enhancements, we can strengthen our SEL framework, leading to improved educational outcomes and a positive impact on students' lives.

Future actions

Future actions on the impact of SEL on academic performance:

- 1. Integrated SEL assessments: Develop assessments that measure both SEL competencies and academic outcomes. This will help establish a clear link between SEL practices and improvements in academic performance.**
- 2. Longitudinal studies: Conduct longitudinal studies to track the impact of SEL on students' academic achievements over time. This data can provide insights into the long-term benefits of SEL initiatives. (ex. Internal Cambridge Progression Tests).**
- 3. Parental involvement: Engage parents in SEL education by providing resources and workshops that highlight the connection between emotional well-being and academic success. This can create a supportive home environment conducive to learning.**
- 4. Feedback loops: Establish mechanisms for regular feedback from students and teachers on the effectiveness of SEL programmes in relation to academic performance. This input can guide continual improvement.**

By implementing these actions, we can further enhance the positive impact of SEL on academic performance, creating a more holistic educational environment.

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Action Research for Schools

Technology and AI in teaching, learning and assessment

**The effect of social media on the learning environment –
can AI provide part of the solution?** Hala Tewfik, Egypt

**Designing adaptive lessons with GenAI to meet diverse learning
preferences,** Sara Ahmer, Pakistan

**Exploring the impact of screencasting on blended learner-centred
education for selected secondary school students at Escola
Horizonte Verde,** Silvanos Mapako, Mozambique

**Using mindfulness-based interventions to reduce stress
and anxiety among students,**
Chinedu Vincent Okoro, Nigeria



British Council
Partner Schools

The effect of social media on the learning environment – can AI provide part of the solution?

Hala Tewfik, Egypt

The effect of social media on the learning environment – can AI provide part of the solution?

School context

Maadi Narmer School (MNS) is a 28-year-old school and is one of three sister schools in Cairo, Egypt. With its 2,200 students, it caters to both national and international education. Having a well-defined vision, the school puts much emphasis on building its students' characters and enhancing their skills rather than just focusing on education. Setting goals and clear objectives while applying the school vision in every detail is a top priority at Maadi Narmer School; thus, it offers continuous professional development to its teachers to ensure effective methodology. Despite the fierce competition among the international schools in Egypt, Maadi Narmer School stands out and, until this day, it continues to be a beacon of knowledge. Today, Maadi Narmer School boasts more than 75 scholarships in different universities worldwide and more than 25 outstanding learners in IGCSEs as well as Advanced levels from different examination boards.

About the author



My name is **Hala Tewfik**, and I have been dedicated to the field of education for over 30 years. I earned my degree in Mass Communication from the American University in Cairo, with emphasis on writing for the mass media. Throughout my studies,

I discovered a deep passion for writing, which led me to graduate at the top of my class and receive the prestigious Mostafa Amin Award in Journalism.

Though I initially pursued journalism, I soon realised that my true calling lay in education. I began teaching English, starting from elementary to high school, and quickly recognised that teaching was where my heart truly belonged. This realisation inspired me to further my expertise, earning a Diploma in Educational Leadership. Today, I am honoured to serve as the High School Principal at one of Egypt's most reputable schools, where I continue to nurture my passion for education and leadership.

Key findings

Raising awareness around the benefits and risks of the use of social media at school had a positive effect.

- **Following our questionnaire, the majority of students expressed intentions to limit their screen time, avoid mindless scrolling, monitor the quality of their social media feed and manipulate the algorithms. Most highlighted the importance of becoming more assertive when dealing with cyberbullying.**
- **Almost all teachers feel confident implementing different strategies to guide students on how to avoid the negative impacts of social media, ensure effective online communication, face cyberbullying and implement conflict-resolution techniques.**
- **All research school leadership respondents agreed on the importance of communicating the digital policy clearly to students, teachers and parents and on revisiting it quarterly to keep it up to date with the latest advances in technology.**

Exploratory Action Research questions

1. In what ways do I believe social media affects the learning environment at Maadi Narmer School?
2. How do students perceive the effect of social media on their learning environment?
3. What are the perceptions of teachers and school stakeholders on the effect of social media on the students and teachers at Maadi Narmer School?

Action Research rationale

Since it is almost impossible to eliminate social media from anyone's day, it may be more effective to educate students and teachers about its hazards and how to use it responsibly. Social media, when harnessed properly, can become a powerful educational resource and an opportunity for growth. However, is it enough for teachers and stakeholders to learn how to use social media responsibly to create a more productive and engaging learning environment?

Traditional methods, even smartboards, may no longer capture students' attention in an age of digital immersion. By integrating artificial intelligence (AI) tools in daily lessons, one can create lessons as appealing as social media, making education more dynamic and relatable.

AI tools can further enhance the learning environment by personalising lessons, offering interactive content and helping teachers manage classroom tasks more efficiently. Thus, awareness sessions on the potential hazards and benefits of social media, along with effective use of AI educational tools, may create balance and bridge the gap between the students' lifestyles and the classroom current practices.

Additionally, crafting a clear digital policy for the school is essential. This will ensure clear guidelines for all the school community to follow regarding digital media.



Data collection tools

Methodology

A. Data collection tool for question 1: Reflective journal

For the first exploratory question, I can write my own reflections on the impact of social media on the learning environment based on my experience as the High School Principal. I can also seek confirmation through surfing the internet for research in this area.

B. Data collection tool for question 2: Student questionnaire

For the second question, I will devise a questionnaire and use it with a group of 22 students who represent all Grades 8, 9, 10 classes in the school. I will definitely secure the students' and parents' written consent before proceeding with the research. Through the answers to the questionnaire, I will hopefully be able to analyse how those students see the effect of social media on their learning environment.

C. Data collection tool for question 3: Focus group discussion

As for the third question, I will create a focus group that consists of two Grade 9 teachers (English and Maths teachers) as well as four of the school stakeholders who have had experiences with the research group of students. This will include Key Stage 1, 2, 3 Principal, Key Stage 2 Headmistress, Key Stage 3 Headmistress, the Educational Consultant and myself, Key Stage 4 Principal. I will mainly be working with this group to analyse the findings and come to a conclusion that can be applied to the whole school.

'I will try to de-influence myself by changing the type of content I watch, tricking the algorithm, so the feed may be something more useful. I will improve my social media literacy and be more of an active user rather than passive user scrolling mindlessly.'

Student

Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from the exploration

The students' questionnaire showed that most students spend over four hours daily on social media to stay updated on trends and fill their free time. While 45 per cent struggle to concentrate on schoolwork without access to the app, an almost equal percentage claim they never do.

Interestingly, 100 per cent of respondents do not feel irritated when they can't access social media during school hours. Despite exposure to dangerous trends, 90 per cent have not attempted any, while 50 per cent believe social media does influence their language. Still, 90 per cent find teachers who create funny reels to be cool.

Half of students (50 per cent) feel their screen time is adequate and do not plan to do anything about it. A remarkable 90 per cent have learned something relevant to schoolwork through social media, and 80 per cent view it as an effective learning tool.

However, focus group discussions revealed significant negative impacts on behaviour, including addiction, misinformation and reduced attention spans. They acknowledged some positive aspects, like engaging in learning and micro-learning, but noted that behaviour remains a concern.

Action Research

Action plan

Action plan topic

By using AI and social media responsibly, schools can create an engaging learning environment that aligns with the digital world students experience, promoting both innovation and ethical standards in education.

Action plan

A. Creating a school digital policy

Objectives

1. Setting clear expectations for staff and students by creating guidelines for both teachers and students on acceptable use of technology, including the use of devices, internet access and educational software.
2. Ensuring privacy and security of private information to protect sensitive data about students and teachers in compliance with school laws and regulations.
3. Managing the right time and place to use digital media.

B. Delivering awareness sessions on healthy use of social media for students and staff while encouraging innovation through healthy use of AI in lessons to bridge the gap.

Objectives

1. Exploring the cognitive, emotional and social effects of social media while uncovering strategies to harness its potential for personal growth and well-being.
2. Understanding the world of cyber-relationships: promoting ethical behaviour online, fostering conflict resolution and navigating the challenges of cyber-bullying and mirroring all this inside the classroom.
3. Encouraging teacher innovation with the aim of enhancing educational outcomes. Foster an environment where AI/digital media are used to innovate teaching practices and support creative projects (online educational platforms, fast-paced classroom, changing mode of teaching, etc.).

Duration and format

- Five workshops for teachers and two for students, each tackling one of the aforementioned objectives in section B.
- Professional trainers specialised in Psychology and Technology.
- Attendees will include six stakeholders, 17 effective staff members, 25 students.
- Expected time frame: two days for students; five days for teachers spread over three weeks.

Action plan evaluation tools

I will use three evaluation tools:

1. student's questionnaire (before and after the training sessions)
2. teacher's questionnaire (before and after the training sessions)
3. reflective session with the focus group.

Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

The research was mainly divided into three parts.

Part 1: We worked on creating a well-devised digital policy that governs the use of social media and other devices as we move forward. This covered all that is acceptable or unacceptable in the school context, including teachers, students, staff and parents in their relationship with the school on social media or while using any digital material.

Part 2: We sought the professional help of a psychologist/trainer to help students, teachers and stakeholders understand how social media affects the learning environment cognitively, emotionally and socially while tackling important issues that affect students – namely effective online communication and cyberbullying.

Part 3: Having understood how social media impacted the students' reception and reaction to the old and traditional teaching methods led us to question what was next. Therefore, we decided that we need to modernise our teaching methods and techniques to suit this new generation; hence, incorporating AI tools in lesson preparation, delivery and activities, making it part of our daily practice, all while keeping its ethical and responsible use in mind.



Research questions for the action plan

1. How do I think the students will benefit from the social media awareness workshops?
2. How will the teachers benefit themselves and their students and how will they create a more engaging learning environment after having attended the workshops?
3. How will the stakeholders ensure some positive change in the learning environment after the implementation of the action plan?

Answers to research questions

Students benefited by:

- limiting their daily social media usage
- monitoring the effects of social media on memory and focus
- applying techniques for responsible engagement, such as managing algorithms to ensure the diversity of beneficial content
- becoming an active rather than a passive user to prevent social isolation
- taking control of cyber-relationships by setting healthy boundaries and utilising strategies to address online conflicts
- maintaining a balanced approach to their digital interaction.

Teachers will benefit the learning environment by:

- gaining a deeper understanding of the psychology behind social media and cyber-relationships, enabling them to effectively support students with using social media responsibly and advising on cyberbullying or online conflict-resolution techniques
- integrating digital and AI tools into lesson plans, bridging the gap between students' digital lifestyles and the traditional classroom environment, ensuring lessons are more engaging to all students.

Stakeholders will ensure an improvement in the learning environment by:

- clearly communicating the digital policy to the whole school community
- scheduling sessions for teachers and students' representatives to relay the gained information to other fellow teachers and students through focused presentations
- checking that digital/AI tools are being integrated in lessons through regular class visits.

Key findings

Students questionnaire findings

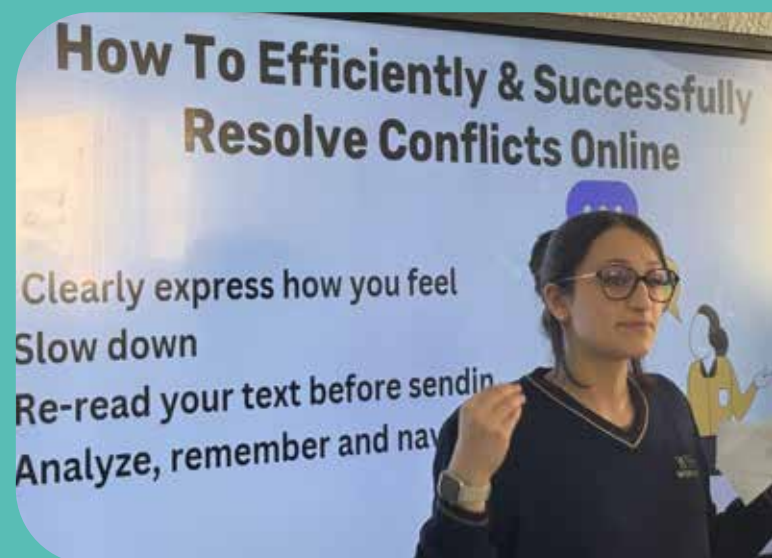
- 100 per cent of participants understand the cognitive, emotional and social effects of social media and how they affect their memory and focus in school.
- 94 per cent of students gained knowledge on using social media for personal growth, while 6 per cent remained neutral.
- 94 per cent deepened their understanding of the psychology behind cyberbullying and its effects on victims. However, only 54 per cent grasped strategies for resolving conflicts online.
- The majority of attendees expressed intentions to limit their screen time, avoid mindless scrolling, monitor the quality of their social media feed and manipulate the algorithms. Most highlighted the importance of becoming more assertive when dealing with cyberbullying.

Teachers' questionnaire findings

- 94 per cent understood the social, emotional and cognitive effects of social media on their students.
- 87 per cent gained knowledge on using social media for their and their students' personal growth and well-being.
- 100 per cent gained knowledge about effective online communication skills.
- 80 per cent deepened their understanding of the psychology behind cyberbullying, including its impact on victims.
- Almost all attendees feel confident implementing different strategies to guide students on how to avoid the negative impacts of social media, ensure effective online communication, face cyberbullying and implement conflict-resolution techniques.
- 90 per cent of the attendees will integrate AI tools in their lessons, with some focusing on differentiated activities.
- 100 per cent agree that the AI training will help them create more engaging lessons.

Focus group findings

- 100 per cent of the focus group members agreed on the importance of communicating the digital policy clearly to students, teachers and parents and on revisiting it quarterly to keep it up to date with the latest advances in technology.
- 100 per cent confirmed scheduling sessions for students and teachers to receive the gained information in several focused presentations.
- 83 per cent believe that incorporating AI tools in every lesson must be mandatory, while the remaining 17 per cent believe it should be just an available option for the teacher.
- 50 per cent believe that the gained information must be incorporated in the syllabus distribution to be spread professionally to younger grade levels in their character-building lessons. The remaining 50 per cent believed that that might not be practical, but were willing to try.



Conclusions

- The school needed to create and regularly revisit a well-devised digital policy that governs the use of digital media in relation to the school community.
- The students and the teachers are now familiar with professional and scientifically supported techniques to handle the effect of the ever-growing digital media and cyber-relationships.
- Teachers have started to keep up with digital advancements and incorporate AI tools inside the classrooms to bridge the gap between the teachers' and students' lifestyles that affected the learning environment.

Current action

- Create a well-devised digital policy that ensures the responsible use of digital media while respecting ethical concerns and everyone's privacy.
- Relay the acquired information to all middle- and high-school students and teachers through scheduled presentations.
- Work more on conflict-resolution strategies since 50 per cent of the students found them difficult to understand according to the questionnaire findings.
- Launch a cyberbullying awareness campaign and establish a safe reporting system for online concerns.
- Integrate digital media and AI tools in lesson preparation to bridge the gap between students' lifestyle and the traditional teaching methods.



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Future actions

- **Communicate the digital policy to the school community, including students, teachers, staff and parents.**
- **Continually follow up the social media awareness campaign as well as AI integration in lesson plans.**
- **Engage in more Action Researches to find solutions to arising challenges, following the steps learned through the Action Research experience.**

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ChatGPT was used to summarise texts; Google Forms to analyse data in the form of pie charts.

British Council
Partner Schools

Designing adaptive lessons with GenAI to meet diverse learning preferences

Sara Ahmer, Pakistan

Designing adaptive lessons with GenAI to meet diverse learning preferences

School context

Aitchison College is one of the leading educational institutions in Pakistan, known for its rich history and tradition of academic excellence. Established in 1886, the school is located in Lahore and has educated generations of leaders for the country and is also a member of the G30 schools. It offers a broad curriculum that includes Cambridge IGCSE and A Level, with a strong emphasis on developing well-rounded individuals. The school provides an environment that nurtures academic achievement, sportsmanship and leadership qualities among its students. With extensive facilities like riding and a diverse student body from all over the country, Aitchison College is dedicated to maintaining high standards of education by gaining admissions in top universities of the world every year. The school's commitment to holistic education is evident through its focus on extracurricular activities and sports.

About the author



Sara Ahmer is an art educator, designer and researcher with over 20 years of experience in education. As Head of the Art and Design Department at Aitchison College, Lahore, she has reshaped art education by integrating digital technology into the classroom. Under her leadership, the Art Department has seen significant growth, with her students achieving high academic success, including worldwide distinctions. Sara is known for providing students with multifaceted learning platforms that encourage creativity and for fostering practical, hands-on learning through initiatives like the widely renowned Art & Performing Arts Festival. As the driving force behind the pioneering Art Discourse, she has successfully created a platform for national and international students to voice their perspectives. Showcasing her artistic prowess by designing sets and curating art exhibitions, Sara is passionate about staying up to date with new trends in Art and Design, ensuring her students are well prepared for their creative journeys in the evolving world of art.

Key findings

- While AI improves differentiation and multimodal engagement, teachers remain the primary decision makers in determining the best strategies for their students.
- Moving forward, AI should serve as a complementary tool, promoting student-centred learning and critical thinking rather than replacing traditional pedagogical methods.
- The data reflects strong teacher interest in AI integration, but 63 per cent report only moderate AI proficiency, indicating a training gap. To ensure effective AI adoption, teachers request hands-on training, AI lesson examples and mentoring.
- The findings highlight AI's potential to enhance lesson adaptability and engagement, particularly in catering to diverse learning styles. However, practical implementation challenges remain, with teachers citing over-reliance on AI (67 per cent). While 85 per cent found AI useful for differentiated activities, 50 per cent felt tools needed refinement for subject-specific content. Ethical concerns, including AI hallucinations (40 per cent), underscore the need for human oversight.

Exploratory Action Research questions

1. **Why do I think it is important to develop diverse/individualised lesson plans for varied learners?**
2. **How do students and teachers perceive the role of AI in enhancing their learning experiences?**
3. **What are teachers' initial experiences with AI in education?**

Action Research rationale

As a teacher I have witnessed first-hand the challenges that educators face in addressing the diverse learning needs of their students. In my 21 years of teaching, I have seen the struggle to balance the demands of the curriculum with the need to provide individualised support for students with varying learning styles and disabilities. The potential of Generative AI (GenAI) to provide personalised learning experiences is immense, and I believe it can bridge the gap between the ideal of tailored education and the practical constraints of the classroom. By focusing on this area, I aim to develop and share practical strategies that can help educators effectively use AI to enhance their teaching and support all students.

All students have different approaches and perspectives to learning. The diversity of student learning styles presents a challenge to the current teaching methods, where one-size-fits-all approaches often fail to meet the unique needs. Learning styles can be such as visual, auditory, reading, kinaesthetic and more, all of which exist in every classroom. Teachers I have encountered throughout my career have always been open to the opportunity to cater to different styles by having curated lesson planning. However, they struggle to implement personalised instruction due to time constraints or lack of resources. The introduction of Generative AI presents the opportunity to tackle these shortcomings in an efficient manner.

My research will focus on integrating Generative AI with existing lesson plans with the aim of creating more adaptive learning environments that accommodate diverse learning styles and needs. These lesson plans will then be implemented into the classroom with the aim of enhancing learning outcomes. This will be done through an iterative process that involves continuous assessment and refinement in an aim to meet desired outcomes. Research like this is timely and essential for promoting equity and inclusivity in education, and using new technologies to help ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed is imperative.

Data collection

Q1: Why do I think it is important to develop diverse/individualised lesson plans for VARK learners?

1a. Teacher shadowing: Participants: five teachers

I will observe their lesson preparation and process only to better understand diverse learning. I will be able to find the educators' approach to lesson planning, use of different tools, their thinking, struggles and their solutions to problems, to cater to diverse lesson plans. This will serve as useful qualitative data for future comparison when AI is introduced.

1b. My own reflections via an interview: Participant: myself + colleague

I will reflect on my own teaching methods and challenges through an interview/brainstorming session, studying my content and instructional techniques. Understanding the importance of identifying individual student characteristics will help highlight the value of diverse lesson plans.

Q2: How do students and teachers perceive the role of AI in enhancing their learning experiences?

2a. Creating a questionnaire for students: Participants: 29 (Grade 9–12)

For quantitative data, students will be given a questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions on the current methodology of teaching and their expectation for the introduction of AI in lesson planning.

2b. Creating a questionnaire for teachers: Participants: 14 (13 teachers)

Closed and open-ended questions to assess current methods and expectations for Generative AI for students. Quantitative and qualitative data on teachers' perceptions of AI's role in education.

Q3: What are teachers' initial experiences with AI in education?

3a. Reflections with colleagues using a focus group: Participants: (eight teachers)

A discussion will be held with the educators to analyse their observations and experiences, and an understanding of the advantages and challenges of each approach. This qualitative data collection is a good comparison for research.

Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from exploration

Initially teacher shadowing revealed a significant gap in understanding of varied learning styles among educators. Surprisingly, 75 per cent of teachers lack formal training in this area, often confusing it with general differentiation strategies. While 40 per cent feel somewhat confident in adapting lessons, large class sizes and time constraints make personalisation a daunting task.

Teachers often resort to improvisation, with 60 per cent relying on on-the-spot adjustments instead of well-planned differentiation. Outdated resources are another hurdle, with 70 per cent of current materials falling short of modern needs. Unsurprisingly, 75 per cent of educators find balancing time and resources an ongoing challenge.

AI is emerging as a potential game-changer. All surveyed teachers recognised its value in addressing diverse learning needs, and 85 per cent are eager to use it for streamlining lesson planning. However, half of them feel that current AI tools lack subject-specific depth and are not always user-friendly.

Students are optimistic about AI's ability to enhance learning experiences, with 65 per cent excited about interactive lessons. Yet, concerns linger – 40 per cent worry about AI's fairness in grading and reduced teacher involvement.

Both teachers and students stress that AI should complement, not replace, human connection in the classroom. Leveraging technology for professional training, updated resources and ethical safeguards are vital to make this integration meaningful and impactful.



Action Research

Action plan

A comprehensive four-week professional development programme with a customised cohort for educators in collaboration with LUMSx: **AI in the classroom: strategies and tools for educators.**

Participants: 25 teachers from K-12 various subjects.

Duration: 10 Jan–6 Feb – four weeks (three live sessions, three or four hours per session, four to five videos, three to five articles per module).

Programme

Week 1: Varied learners training and demystifying Generative AI

- Understanding various learning styles and their relevance to lesson personalisation
- Introduction to Generative AI and its potential in education
- Hands-on activity: Exploring AI tools for generating learning materials

Week 2: Using Generative AI and prompt engineering to empower educators

- Practical applications of AI in lesson planning for varied learners
- Developing skills in prompt engineering for personalised content creation
- Collaborative activity: Creating sample AI-generated lesson plans

Week 3: Ethics in AI

- Addressing concerns about AI's impact on teacher–student relationships
- Data privacy, ethical considerations and responsible AI usage
- Developing guidelines to ensure AI complements human teaching
- Case studies: Ethical dilemmas in AI usage and teacher discussions

Week 4: The future of Generative AI in education

- Innovations in AI and their potential applications in education
- Integrating AI seamlessly with traditional teaching methods
- Final project: Designing an AI-supported lesson plan for diverse learners

This programme balances foundational knowledge, practical skills and ethical considerations, equipping teachers to confidently use Generative AI to support varied learners. Along with this, collaborative reflection sessions enhance peer learning and engagement. Weekly discussions can focus on sharing insights, challenges and applications, while a midpoint feedback loop allows participants to review progress and refine their work. Mentorship panels with experts can provide additional guidance, and a post-course online community can sustain collaboration by sharing lesson plans and updates.

Action plan evaluation tools

The impact of the action plan will be evaluated by assessing teachers' understanding of diverse learning styles and Generative AI, their ability to create customised lesson plans using AI tools, and their confidence and ethical awareness in applying AI in classrooms. It will also track the integration of AI-supported strategies in lesson generation and determine changes in student engagement and learning outcomes.

1. How do I perceive the impact of AI-supported lesson plans on fostering inclusivity and adaptability in diverse classrooms?

- **Reflective journal**
Purpose: Capture personal insights and challenges while designing and implementing AI-supported lesson plans.

Before implementation:

2a. What are the expectations and concerns of teachers regarding generative AI as a tool for adaptive lesson planning?

- **Teacher questionnaire (25 teachers)**
Purpose: Assess teachers' baseline understanding of AI tools and their expectations. Gather insights into teachers' initial expectations and concerns about using AI for lesson planning.

Format: Combination of Likert scale and open-ended questions.

During implementation:

2b. How do teachers evaluate the effectiveness of AI-supported lesson plans in addressing diverse learning preferences?

- **Session feedback forms (25 teachers)**
Purpose: Evaluate teachers' experiences during each session of the professional development programme.

Format: Gather immediate feedback after each workshop session using Google Forms, incorporating short forms with rating scales and open-ended questions.

3. How did teachers apply the training to designing adaptive lessons, and what challenges or successes emerged during implementation?

- **Lesson plan analysis (pre- and post-implementation) (25 teachers)**

Purpose: Analyse existing lesson plans (pre-AI) across subjects for varied learners to establish a baseline and compare with AI-enhanced plans later made during training. Assess how teachers applied training to their classroom practices and the effectiveness of AI-enhanced lesson plans.

Metrics: Alignment with learner needs, effective AI usage and curriculum integration.

Evaluation tool after the cohort workshop

- **Focus group discussions (eight to ten teachers)**

Purpose: Collect qualitative insights into teachers' application of AI-supported lesson plans. Facilitate discussions to explore participants' experiences, successes and challenges post-programme, as well as gather feedback on AI applications and learning needs.

Metrics: Practical AI application, understanding of concepts and personal reflections.

Format: Semi-structured discussions led by a facilitator.



Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

The implementation of my action plan began with a collaboration with LUMSx, a prestigious university in our country. They designed a four-week training cohort to equip teachers across multiple subjects and grade levels (K-12) with AI-integrated teaching strategies. This programme included educators from both our institution and underprivileged schools.

Coordinating teachers from five different schools, each with their ongoing commitments, posed a challenge. However, the effort proved worthwhile as 100 per cent of the participants successfully completed the course, which incorporated videos, articles, live sessions and quizzes.

A surprising revelation was that many educators initially believed they had a solid grasp of AI tools. However, as the course progressed, they discovered new techniques, particularly in prompt engineering, and learned how to leverage AI tools tailored to their subjects and grade levels, many of which were free. This realisation assured them that budget constraints would not hinder the development of individualised lesson plans.

The biggest challenge was ensuring educators could effectively practise prompt engineering to generate the desired outcomes for different learning needs. The LUMSx trainers played a crucial role in guiding teachers through this process while considering cultural and ethical factors relevant to classrooms at Aitchison College.

Another challenge was bringing all teachers together to compare their pre-cohort lesson plans with those developed post-training. Educators shared insights, showcased AI-integrated lessons, and presented their experiences in using various tools to personalise instruction.

While all teachers gained valuable insights, implementing AI-generated lessons came with challenges. Despite this, it was encouraging to hear success stories. For instance, a biology teacher analysed students' previous test results and used AI tools to customise instruction. After applying these strategies, students – particularly lower achievers – demonstrated significant improvement in their test scores.

Key findings

AI significantly enhances lesson planning for personalised teaching by offering structure, creativity and time-saving benefits. However, its implementation comes with challenges, such as the overwhelming number of AI-generated options and concerns over confidentiality. While AI improves differentiation and multimodal engagement, teachers remain the primary decision makers in determining the best strategies for their students. The structured professional training at LUMSx has been instrumental in equipping educators with AI knowledge. Moving forward, AI should serve as a complementary tool, promoting student-centred learning and critical thinking rather than replacing traditional pedagogical methods. Over-reliance could limit creativity and individualised instruction.

The data reflects strong teacher interest in AI integration, with 88 per cent expecting improved lesson planning and 85 per cent recognising AI's potential for diverse learning needs. However, 63 per cent report only moderate AI proficiency, indicating a training gap.

Challenges include 29 per cent citing time constraints as a major barrier to adapting lessons. Despite 75 per cent seeing AI as valuable for differentiation, inconsistent technology use (71 per cent) suggests room for improvement. To ensure effective AI adoption, teachers request hands-on training, AI lesson examples and mentoring.

Teachers responded positively to AI-driven lesson planning, valuing its clarity with 91 per cent and relevance with 82 per cent. AI resources were seen as useful with 87 per cent, supporting differentiation and engagement. While practical application remains an area for growth, these findings highlight AI's potential to enhance teaching, reinforcing the need for structured training and integration.

The findings highlight AI's potential to enhance lesson adaptability and engagement, particularly in catering to diverse learning styles. However, practical implementation challenges remain, with teachers citing over-reliance on AI (67 per cent) and unrealistic time allocations (43 per cent). While 85 per cent found AI useful for differentiated activities, 50 per cent felt tools needed refinement for subject-specific content. Ethical concerns, including AI hallucinations (40 per cent), underscore the need for human oversight. Despite 92 per cent acknowledging AI's benefits, only 63 per cent felt confident using it independently, emphasising the need for structured training in prompt engineering and lesson customisation to maximise AI's effectiveness in classrooms.

Conclusions

AI has proven to be a game-changer in lesson planning, helping teachers save time, enhance differentiation and engage students in more dynamic, multimodal learning experiences. The research highlights AI's transformative role in being adaptive and student-centred. Teachers leveraged AI to design lessons that not only impart concepts but also encourage critical thinking and enquiry. Activities were structured to prompt student reflection, fostering deeper understanding rather than passive learning.

Additionally, AI supports assessment for learning (AfL) by enabling teachers to track student progress, identify learning gaps and provide immediate feedback, ensuring lessons are continuously refined to meet student needs.

AI also plays a key role in ongoing assessment, helping teachers track student progress, identify learning gaps and adjust instruction accordingly. By providing timely feedback, AI enables a more responsive and personalised learning experience, aligning with the principles of AfL.

While 92 per cent of teachers recognise AI's benefits, targeted, subject-specific training is essential to boost confidence and ensure the effective integration of AI. By using AI as a collaborative tool, educators can cultivate curiosity, creativity and personalised learning, ensuring that lessons inspire students to think, question and engage meaningfully with content.



Future actions

This action research will shape a more inclusive, AI-driven approach to lesson planning at Aitchison, ensuring diverse learning preferences are met. AI-powered adaptive strategies will enable teachers to personalise instruction while maintaining pedagogical integrity. Insights are being shared through mentorship programmes, resource hubs and professional networks, fostering collaboration to facilitate continuous resource-sharing and peer support.

Cultural diversity is another key consideration while teaching at Aitchison College, with lessons tailored to reflect students' backgrounds for better engagement. Teachers are refining their AI skills through prompt engineering, integrating AI tools into diverse classrooms. These strategies will inform the school's development cycle, embedding AI-enhanced methodologies into curriculum planning, teacher training and policymaking.

Ultimately, this scalable model will contribute to global education systems, offering innovative, student-centred learning solutions that support sustainable and inclusive teaching practices worldwide.

'Educators are often overworked and many school systems are severely under-resourced.'

You Jeen Ha, Sue Hendrickson, Adam Nagy, Elisabeth Sylvan, Tom Zick – Exploring the impacts of generative AI on the future of teaching and learning

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British Council
Partner Schools

**Exploring the impact of
screencasting on blended
learner-centred education
for selected secondary
school students at Escola
Horizonte Verde**

Silvanos Mapako, Mozambique

Exploring the impact of screencasting on blended learner-centred education for selected secondary school students at Escola Horizonte Verde

School context

Escola Horizonte Verde in Tete, Mozambique, is a beacon of educational innovation, offering a Cambridge pathway that harmonises with the Mozambican National Curriculum to foster a bilingual and academically excellent environment. The school's commitment to technology enhances a learner-centred approach, allowing students to delve into digital tools for collaborative and creative learning. Life skills are paramount, with a focus on digital literacy, critical thinking and effective communication. A holistic vision encompasses physical well-being and emotional intelligence, while celebrating diversity and multilingualism. Extracurricular activities and community service initiatives further enrich the students' experience, ensuring they are well prepared to excel in a rapidly evolving global landscape. Escola Horizonte Verde is dedicated to nurturing well-rounded individuals poised for future success.

About the author



Silvanos Mapako, based in Mozambique, holds a Diploma in Education, a Bachelor of Education in English Language and Literature, a Master of Science in Business Management, and a Master of Education in Advanced Teaching and Learning. Currently, he serves as the School Academic and Welfare Director at an International Cambridge Curriculum school. His responsibilities include teaching and learning, child protection, safety and a special focus on professional development. Silvanos aims to enhance educational practices by integrating technology for a learner-centred approach.

Key findings

- The implementation of screencasting tools has had a positive impact on both students and teachers, with 89 per cent of students reporting that these tools enhance their engagement and understanding of complex topics by providing clear, structured and interactive content.
- The flexibility of pausing, rewinding and replaying screencasts allows students to learn at their own pace and aids in effective exam preparation. Despite initial apprehension from 28 per cent of students about the technical aspects, the majority find screencasting tools beneficial for various study contexts.
- Teachers have also responded positively, with 92 per cent appreciating the action plan, boosting teacher confidence, and benefiting from collaborative learning and ongoing support. However, it is essential to address the technical apprehensions of some students and continue providing support to both students and teachers to ensure the seamless integration of screencasting tools into the learning process.

Exploratory Action Research questions

1. How is screencasting being utilised in the classrooms?
2. What do my colleagues perceive as the challenges and opportunities of integrating screencasting into their blended teaching practices?
3. How do students engage with screencasting during blended learning activities?

Action Research rationale

Escola Horizonte Verde, situated in a remote area, faces challenges due to limited qualified staff. To address this, internal development becomes essential. By embracing digital technologies, existing staff can enhance teaching practices, compensating for the scarcity of external expertise. Additionally, the availability of varied electronic materials supports blended learning, allowing teachers to create personalised experiences for diverse student needs. Furthermore, students ask for potential expert support, even remotely. Lastly, the shift towards online homework and projects necessitates digital literacy for both students and teachers, enhancing productivity. In summary, integrating digital tools promotes learner-centred education, empowers staff and prepares students for a dynamic future.

Data collection tools

Methodology

For the first question, I can perform classroom observations to see first-hand how screencasting is being utilised and its impact on student engagement.

For the second question, I can organise a focus group discussion with four main subjects' teachers to identify the challenges and opportunities they perceive in integrating screencasting into their blended teaching practices. This method will encourage interaction and the sharing of diverse perspectives.

For the third question, I can administer student surveys to eight students to understand their engagement with screencasting during blended learning activities.

Both teachers and students, including their guardians, have given their consent.

Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from exploration

Screencasting technology is used in 80 per cent of classrooms at Escola Horizonte Verde for delivering audio-visual lessons, making education more efficient and accessible. It helps 75 per cent of educators connect with students after hours and during vacations, and supports 70 per cent of educational activities such as homework distribution and remedial instruction. This technology aids in 85 per cent of exam review sessions and is used by 90 per cent of teachers to present multimedia content, improving students' understanding of complex topics.

However, 73 per cent of faculty members cite the lack of essential ICT tools, and 64 per cent point to insufficient internet connectivity as significant challenges. Additionally, 55 per cent note that lack of parental involvement hinders student motivation and assignment completion. Despite these issues, 100 per cent of educators acknowledge screencasting's potential benefits, with 82 per cent agreeing it improves familiarity with modern technologies and 73 per cent believing it enhances students' knowledge and skills. The need for advanced ICT infrastructure is highlighted by 64 per cent, and 55 per cent emphasise the importance of professional development. Approximately 100 per cent of students show engagement in lessons and extracurricular activities, though more than 50 per cent struggle with consistent attention. There is no observed student collaboration via screencasting, but 70–80 per cent of students demonstrate consistent coursework engagement.



Action Research

Action plan

Planned action: Professional development for educators to enhance the use of screencasting.

1. Objectives of the training programme

- Equip educators with the technical skills required to use screencasting tools effectively.
- Develop instructional strategies to integrate screencasts into the curriculum.
- Foster a collaborative learning environment through peer mentoring and sharing best practices.
- Address educators' concerns and provide ongoing support from a subject matter expert.

2. Duration and structure of the sessions

Introductory workshop: one day. Introduce screencasting tools and their potential applications in teaching, including demonstrations and initial hands-on practice.

Hands-on training: two days. Focus on developing technical skills through individual and group activities.

Instructional strategies workshop: one day. Dedicated to developing and sharing instructional strategies, including designing lesson plans and activities that incorporate screencasts.

Peer mentoring sessions: weekly meetings over one month. Regular meetings for teachers to share experiences, challenges and best practices, fostering a supportive learning community.

Follow-up and support: ongoing for one month. Bi-weekly online meetings with a subject matter expert to provide ongoing support and address any technical or instructional challenges.

3. Number of teachers involved

Total: 12 educators

4. Tools and platforms to be used

Screencasting software: Free apps such as A-Z (best for mobile screencasts).

Videoconferencing tools: Microsoft Teams for hosting online meetings and follow-up support sessions, and Zoom as an alternative platform for Videoconferencing and virtual workshops.

Collaboration platforms: Google Classroom for sharing resources, assignments and collaborative work; Microsoft OneNote for note-taking, collaboration and sharing best practices.

Face-to-face workshops: On-site training sessions at Escola Horizonte Verde, providing hands-on experience and direct support.

Online meetings: Microsoft Teams for follow-up and support sessions, ensuring continuous access to expert guidance.

Action plan evaluation tools

To evaluate the professional development action plan, the following methods will be used:

1. **Pre- and post-training surveys:** Online surveys (e.g. Google Forms) will measure changes in teachers' knowledge and confidence. Surveys will be distributed before and after training.
2. **Teacher feedback:** Qualitative feedback on training sessions will be gathered using forms (online or paper) at session endings and follow-up meetings.
3. **Observation and evaluation:** Classroom observations and peer evaluations will assess the practical application of screencasting tools and strategies.
4. **Student feedback:** Student surveys and focus groups will evaluate the impact of screencasting on engagement, learning and performance.
5. **Performance metrics:** Data analysis of grades, assignment submissions and test scores will assess screencasting's effectiveness.
6. **Continuous improvement:** Regular review meetings and feedback will drive updates to the training programme.

These methods enable Escola Horizonte Verde to measure the programme's impact and refine screencasting practices through data-driven insights.

'Screencasting tools have significantly enhanced my learning experience by providing visual and auditory aids that cater to different learning styles and for the demonstration of complex concepts in a step-by-step manner, making it easier to understand and retain information.'

Student participant,
Escola Horizonte Verde

Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

This Action Research journey presented both rewarding experiences and notable challenges. Hosting workshops faced logistical difficulties due to the unstable political situation, which sometimes impacted participant attendance and engagement.

A delightful surprise was the immense support from parents and teachers across the entire school, even those outside the scope of the research. Their enthusiasm and encouragement bolstered the initiative, making it a collaborative effort that transcended the initial project boundaries.

Possible challenges also included ensuring consistent internet access for all participants, as connectivity issues occasionally hindered the smooth implementation of screencasting tools. Additionally, some students and teachers faced initial apprehension about using new technology, requiring extra time and effort to build their confidence.

However, these obstacles underscored the resilience and adaptability of our school community. The collective effort and positive feedback have been instrumental in driving the project's success and will serve as a valuable lesson for future initiatives. Encouraging peer mentoring and regularly assessing and addressing any emerging challenges will ensure the sustainable integration of innovative tools and methods in our educational practices.

Key findings

The implementation of screencasting tools has had a positive impact on both students and teachers, as 89 per cent of students report that these tools enhance their engagement and understanding of complex topics by providing clear, structured and interactive content. The flexibility of pausing, rewinding and replaying screencasts allows students to learn at their own pace and aids in effective exam preparation. Despite the initial apprehension from 28 per cent of students about the technical aspects, the majority find screencasting tools beneficial for various study contexts.

Teachers have also responded positively, with 92 per cent appreciating the action plan. The technical training has boosted the confidence of 83 per cent of teachers, and 75 per cent have successfully integrated screencasts into their curriculum. Collaborative learning and ongoing support from experts have been particularly beneficial for 67 per cent and 83 per cent of teachers respectively.

However, to achieve the main goal of the Action Research, it is essential to address the technical apprehensions of some students and continue providing support to both students and teachers to ensure the seamless integration of screencasting tools into the learning process.

Conclusions

The implementation of screencasting tools at Escola Horizonte Verde has yielded significant positive outcomes. These tools cater to diverse learning styles and simplify complex concepts, enhancing students' understanding, retention and exam preparation. Students appreciate the flexibility and interactive nature of screencasts, which allows them to learn at their own pace. Positive feedback from teachers indicates increased confidence and effective integration into the curriculum, highlighting the success of the action plan. Collaborative learning environments and continuous support from subject matter experts have also proved beneficial.

Impact on Escola Horizonte Verde

The successful adoption of screencasting tools has created a more dynamic and interactive learning environment at Escola Horizonte Verde. This improvement can serve as a model for other educational institutions worldwide, demonstrating the value of integrating technology into the classroom to enhance the overall learning experience.

Global learning and enhancements

The findings from this action research can be shared globally, promoting the use of screencasting tools to support diverse learning needs and improve student engagement. Schools around the world can benefit from the insights gained at Escola Horizonte Verde, adopting similar strategies to enhance their educational practices.

'The technical training provided through the action plan has greatly increased my confidence and competence in using screencasting tools, allowing me to integrate them effectively into my curriculum and create more engaging and accessible lessons for my students.'

Teacher participant,
Escola Horizonte Verde

Future actions

To build on this success, it is essential to continue providing technical training and support for educators. Developing more instructional strategies to integrate screencasts effectively, encouraging peer mentoring and sharing best practices will further enhance the learning experience. Additionally, monitoring and addressing any ongoing concerns or technical challenges, and exploring new ways to make screencasting tools even more engaging and accessible, will ensure continuous improvement in the school development cycle.

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British Council
Partner Schools

Using mindfulness- based interventions to reduce stress and anxiety among students

Chinedu Vincent Okoro, Nigeria

Using mindfulness-based interventions to reduce stress and anxiety among students

School context

Olumawu School is a 32-year-old, award-winning, private, co-educational day and boarding school located in the heart of Abuja, Nigeria, in the City Center area, at 92 Ademola Adetokunbo Crescent, Wuse 2. The school offers a nursery (preschool), primary, secondary and university foundation and A level programmes and is staffed by highly trained educators who are experts in their fields of study. Our Nigerian curriculum, as well as the English national curriculum, prepares students for success in both national and international examinations.

About the author



Chinedu Vincent Okoro is a Rotarian, educator, poet, dramatist and advocate for social change and mental health from Nigeria. He holds a Master of Education in Advanced Teaching from the University of the People in Pasadena,

California, USA. With over a decade in the teaching profession, Chinedu has found fulfilment in nurturing young minds and empowering students of all abilities to reach their potential. Currently, he is the Head of the Arts and Humanities Department and talent development coach at Olumawu School, Abuja, Nigeria.

Chinedu's literary works have appeared in national and international magazines, anthologies, and literary platforms, including *Makana m bu nwata nwanyi* (Best New African Poets 2019 Anthology), *Oh My Africa* (an anthology celebrating Africa's beauty) and *The Grand Patron* (2018 SYNW Chinua Achebe Essay/Poetry Anthology). He is also the author of the play *The Stinging Hut*.

Key findings

- The workshops on Time management and Stress and anxiety reduction were observed as effective in reducing stress, improving organisation and enhancing time-management skills. An impressive 94.4 per cent of students reported feeling less stressed, more organised and better at prioritising tasks after the sessions. Additionally, 88.9 per cent found the workshop beneficial for handling academic stress.
- The school's support played a crucial role in the workshops' success, with all respondents acknowledging its contribution to creating a conducive learning environment.
- To maximise the workshops' long-term impact, sustained follow-up and continuous monitoring should be implemented.

Exploratory Action Research questions

1. What do I perceive as the effects of stress on students' academic performance?
2. What do my students perceive as the main reasons for their stress?
3. In what ways do students display behaviours associated with stress and anxiety?

'Mindfulness is a way of befriending ourselves and our experience.'

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Action Research rationale

This Action Research reflects both my professional insights and personal experiences. I believe it is crucial for driving improvement and innovation at Olumawu School, directly impacting students' academic success and well-being. As an educator who has personally benefited from mindfulness-based interventions, I recognise the urgent need to address rising student stress levels that negatively affect academic performance.

Research by Awadalla et al. (2020), as cited by Stevens Maree (n.d.), highlights that anxiety and depression significantly impair academic outcomes. Similarly, Brits (2021) highlights the high prevalence of mental-health disorders among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa. A 2024 World Health Organization (WHO) report further reveals that one in seven 10- to 19-year-olds worldwide experience a mental disorder, contributing to 15 per cent of the global disease burden in this age group.

Given these findings, I strongly believe mindfulness-based interventions offer a promising solution to students' mental-health challenges. This research is not merely about individual student outcomes but about fostering a culture of well-being and enhancing the overall academic environment at Olumawu School.

Data collection tools

Methodology

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative (teacher's reflective journal entry and focus group) and quantitative (questionnaires) methods. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the research questions, engaging both students and teachers for a multiperspective view.

The data collection tools included:

- **teacher's reflective journal entry:** This method gathered qualitative data through the teacher's personal reflections, offering insights into how stress affected students' academic performance based on classroom observations and interactions. These reflections helped in understanding the impact of stress on learning outcomes.
- **questionnaires:** A quantitative tool used to gather data from 20 students regarding the causes of stress. Google Forms facilitated the analysis of trends and patterns in student perceptions.
- **focus group:** Involving four to five teachers to explore in-depth qualitative observations on stress-related behaviours, this method fostered a collaborative environment for discussion.

All participants provided their informed consent, ensuring that ethical considerations were upheld throughout the research process.





Data analysis for the exploration stage

Key findings from the exploration

- Students' academic engagement and work quality are negatively impacted by stress and anxiety. Supportive teaching techniques and mindfulness-based interventions are proven to be effective strategies for raising students' resilience and focus, which in turn improves their academic performance.
- Academic pressure, school routines, time management and family expectations are key stressors for students. Importantly, 90 per cent of students reported that their regular school routines stress them out, and 100 per cent identified the pressure to perform well academically as a key source of such stress. While 85 per cent appreciated that they have poor time-management skills, 70 per cent blame daily routines, and 60 per cent believe expectations from the family are part of the reason for such stress. As many as 35 per cent of the students reported that interaction with others can raise their level of stress. In addition, 70 per cent of the students feel that teachers are aware of their stress, and 85 per cent feel it is very difficult to share stress with the teachers and counsellors. This shows a large gap in communication.
- All teacher respondents (100 per cent) observed behavioural changes, such as withdrawal and restlessness, in stressed students. To manage such kinds of stress, teachers use different approaches. Helping students manage stress emanating from workload, 50 per cent of the teachers use prioritising tasks or extension of time, while the other 50 per cent promote mindfulness and relaxation techniques to promote calmness and focus among students. Similarly, 50 per cent of the teachers emphasise coordination with teachers or counsellors for a holistic approach in students.

Action Research

Action plan

- The workshop must consist of two main modules: Time management and Stress and anxiety reduction. It must run in a face-to-face format and accommodate participants aged 11 to 17 years.
- Students should understand time as a resource. They should identify common time-wasters. They should learn techniques to prioritise tasks using SMART goals. Participants must learn how to create and maintain schedules. They should practise methods for balancing academic and personal responsibilities. Students must be introduced to planners, calendars and productivity apps. They should explore digital and physical tools for time management.
- The workshop should highlight symptoms, sources and the importance of open communication regarding stress and anxiety. Students must learn and practise mindfulness exercises. They should be guided through breathing techniques, progressive muscle relaxation, gratitude journaling, yoga and positive affirmations. The workshop must emphasise the role of sleep, nutrition and hydration in managing stress. It should introduce students to stress-reducing apps designed for teenagers.

Action plan evaluation tools

In evaluating the effectiveness of my action plan, I considered multiple approaches that included both qualitative and quantitative methods of research to ensure a well-rounded assessment. The evaluation was, therefore, based on immediate outcomes, behavioural changes and the long-term effects of the strategies implemented.

- 1. Teacher reflective journal writing:** This helped gather qualitative data through the teacher's personal reflections, offering insights into the impact of the action plans on students' academic performance based on classroom observations and interactions.
- 2. Pre- and post-questionnaire:** The questionnaire took the form of pre- and post-assessments administered to a sample of 18 students to measure their expectations, knowledge and skills acquired before and after the workshop. These helped in isolating the exact areas of growth attributable to the intervention, thus providing a clear metric for evaluating its effectiveness. For example, the understanding of stress-management techniques or mindfulness practices was measured through structured questionnaires.
- 3. Focus group discussion:** This involved a focus group discussion technique comprising four to five teachers.

Data analysis and conclusions

Action plan implementation

The one-week action plan on time management and stress reduction was a huge success at my school. The entire programme was well structured, and the facilitators delivered their topics effectively. Each presenter offered unique insights, making the sessions interactive and highly informative. Students actively participated, engaging in discussions, activities and personal reflections. By the end of the workshop, many students testified to what they had learned and expressed confidence in applying time-management strategies to reduce stress.

What touched me most was the profound impact on students' mental and emotional well-being. As I observed them in counselling sessions with mental-health professionals, I felt deeply moved. Many had been carrying emotional burdens for too long, feeling overwhelmed and unsure of how to cope. This workshop provided a safe space for them to open up.

The experts were both informative and empathetic, offering a judgement-free environment. Many students shared that it was the first time someone truly listened to them. Beyond practical tools, they gained emotional support. Seeing students I have taught for years finally receive the care they deserved was incredibly moving. The workshop has left a lasting impact, and I feel privileged to have been part of it.

Key findings

The findings highlight the workshop's effectiveness in reducing stress, improving organisation and enhancing time-management skills. An impressive 94.4 per cent of students reported feeling less stressed, more organised and better at prioritising tasks after the sessions. Additionally, 88.9 per cent found the workshop beneficial for handling academic stress and implementing better time-management strategies, while 55.6 per cent strongly agreed that they felt more confident in managing their time. The school's support played a crucial role in the workshop's success, with all respondents acknowledging its contribution to creating a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, 75 per cent of participants observed immediate positive behavioural changes in students.

Despite these successes, certain areas require further attention. Only 33.3 per cent of students strongly agreed that their ability to meet deadlines had significantly improved, indicating a need for additional support in this area. Moreover, 22.2 per cent felt that the workshop did not adequately help them balance school and personal life, suggesting the need for more tailored strategies. Additionally, 50 per cent of respondents emphasised the importance of individualised counselling in managing stress and anxiety, highlighting that while general interventions were helpful, personalised support remains crucial. To maximise the workshop's long-term impact, sustained follow-up and continuous monitoring should be implemented.

'Develop daily leadership practices that focus on serving your learners and fostering open, effective communication. Embrace mindfulness and self-awareness as tools to manage stress and anxiety, build resilience, and enhance focus in the classroom.'

Rotimi Jiboku, Principal, Olumawu School, Abuja

Conclusions

The Action Research on time management and stress reduction has had a meaningful impact on students' lives. While the time frame was too brief to assess long-term effects, initial observations and feedback suggest that the workshop fostered essential skills for managing academic pressure. The student-centred approach encouraged engagement, interaction and self-reflection, resulting in increased confidence and improved organisational abilities. Notably, 94.4 per cent of students reported a reduction in stress levels and enhanced prioritisation skills. The counselling sessions offered invaluable emotional support, allowing students to share personal struggles in a non-judgemental environment.

Beyond my school, this study highlights the importance of integrating mental health and stress management into educational institutions globally. These interventions should be embedded within curricula to help students maintain well-being while achieving academic success. A balanced approach to education – one that prioritises both time management and emotional resilience – can be adapted across diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

To ensure the sustainability of these efforts, further initiatives were implemented.

- A compendium of workshop materials was published and distributed to students, teachers and counsellors at no cost.
- Mindfulness practice boards with QR codes linking to short mindfulness exercises and practices were installed in strategic locations within the school community.
- Training sessions for teachers to enhance their ability to support students' stress management were organised.
- A time-management and stress-reduction workshop for delegates comprising students, teachers and counsellors from 12 neighbouring schools in the FCT, Abuja, was hosted..

Additional workshops, surveys and counselling programmes will also be conducted at least once every academic session.

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And finally, I salute the assistance of AI in helping me correct some of my grammar and in creating graphical representations of some of my data analysis and key findings.