

# Language for Resilience

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**Supporting schools and teachers  
teaching refugee children: an  
evaluation of the impact of best  
practice handbooks**

A study carried out for the British Council in Uganda  
By Rod Hicks | April 2022



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## Abbreviations

DIS	District Inspector of Schools
FGD	Focus group discussion
FL	Familiar language
HT	Head teacher
LL	Local language
LoI	Language of Instruction
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
P	Primary level
S	Secondary level
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WIU	Windle Trust Uganda

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# 1 Executive Summary

As an outcome of recent research into language use and challenges in schools impacted by refugees, two handbooks were developed offering advice to schools on how to handle challenges arising from the large numbers of refugee children entering the education system. The handbooks were based on best practices observed in some schools, with one targeting teachers and the second targeting school managers. In order to strengthen the impact of the handbooks, the British Council organised training sessions for teachers and managers (school leaders) with the aim of orienting them to the content of the handbooks and key principles underlining the Connecting Classrooms training, both aimed at improving methods related to how language is used in refugee education. In addition, a session was arranged for community leaders, to raise awareness of and inspire support for bilingual instruction. Thus, the training drew on key themes from Connecting Classrooms, a global education programme that originated in Uganda and was funded by the British Council and the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) (refer to 5.2 below) adapting the themes to address language use in the refugee setting.

This report was commissioned with the purpose of measuring the impact of the handbooks and the accompanying training on language use when teaching in schools. The research team selected teachers from 30 per cent of the schools, including those who had been trained by the British Council and an additional sample of teachers who had not been trained but were from the same schools and therefore assumed to have access to the handbook. Data was also collected from a small number of neighbouring schools that had not attended the training but should have received the handbook, to measure the impact of the handbook without training. In all, data was collected across 34 schools, 120 teachers and 459 learners at schools impacted by refugees in four

**Data was collected across 34 schools, 120 teachers and 459 learners at schools impacted by refugees in four settlements (Kyangwali, Imvepi, Rhino Camp and Nakivale) and Kampala.**

settlements (Kyangwali, Imvepi, Rhino Camp and Nakivale) and Kampala.

The data was collected by 12 enumerators, who were first trained in the research procedures. They then visited the schools, where they talked to the school administration, observed lessons, gave teachers a questionnaire, and held discussions with small groups of learners, giving priority to recent arrivals. Recent arrivals were prioritised because several questions within their discussions directly related to how learners were treated on arrival and the research aimed to record any changes in their treatment resulting from the training and handbooks. The research used the following data-collection tools:

- A lesson observation tool
- Questions to guide interviews with the school administration
- A questionnaire to be completed by the teachers who were observed
- Questions to guide discussions with groups of selected learners
- Questions to guide discussions with District Inspectors of Schools (DIS) and other relevant stakeholders involved in managing education at schools with refugee children

The data was collected over a period of a week and then analysed.

## Key findings

The findings showed a very significant impact on the practices and attitudes of the teachers and school managers who were both trained by the British Council and had read the handbooks. In particular, these teachers made more use of the refugees' familiar language in lessons than was recorded in similar research carried out in 2018 (79 per cent of lessons as against 35 per cent). In addition, 21 out of 30 schools that had attended the training set up extra classes for learners who needed them. These schools also made more use of written tests when deciding in which primary class a new child should be placed than was recorded in earlier studies. However, in spite of these improvements, there was still a problem of over-aged children, with the average refugee entrant being 3.4 years older than was appropriate for their primary grade and a number of learners from secondary schools in their countries of origin being placed in lower primary classes, most frequently P4.

However, the above-mentioned gains were only observable among teachers who had both attended the training and read the handbook. Unfortunately, with a few exceptions, the handbook had not been accessed by teachers who were not at the training, even though they were at a school that had received the handbook and training. In addition, the handbooks had not been distributed to any schools that were not at

the training. Thus, there was no spin-off from the training or the handbook to other teachers.

The findings also showed that teachers who had read the handbook and received training recognised the value of using a familiar language in addition to English, but had not understood some of the principles behind a bilingual approach. Thus, they were practising bilingualism, but not always in a principled way that would best support learning. In some cases, they were overusing the local language in a way that could be detrimental to the acquisition of both literacy and English.

The report concludes by recommending:

- Far wider distribution of the handbooks within the refugee settlement schools before the lessons learnt by the few at the training are lost
- Inclusion in future training of strategies to ensure that training gains will be passed on to others in the institutions concerned and, where practical, across institutions
- The need for training teachers on clear practices and principles of how to use a bilingual approach that supports learning, while also supporting literacy and English language development rather than obstructing it
- Rapid implementation of the recently developed and piloted *Bridging Course for Refugee Children*, developed with the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC)

## 2 Background to the study

Over the last five years, the British Council has been supporting the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to develop a proactive programme to address the myriad challenges arising from Uganda's progressive and much-admired policy on refugees. In particular, the British Council has advised on and supported a meaningful approach to addressing the language problems that arise as a result of accepting refugee children from a range of cultures and a variety of language backgrounds who wish to learn, and therefore be absorbed into the Uganda education system.

As a part of this support, during 2018, the British Council conducted research into the use of language in schools in the refugee camps in four settlements.<sup>1</sup> In 2020, they followed this up with a second research programme, which expanded into how teachers and the community in the settlements were using languages for education, targeting a further two settlements and refugee-impacted schools in Kampala.<sup>2</sup>

The overall findings of these studies across the six settlements and Kampala showed that the two major problems for refugee children were the lack of a language in which they could learn, and overcrowding, with average class sizes around a hundred children. These two problems were more acute in the settlements than in Kampala.

**“Language is a problem that is both immediately evident in classrooms and fundamental to learning success.”** Trudell et al., 2019<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the language problem, many refugee children end up in primary grades well below their age and academic abilities. Their primary grade placement is instead dictated by their English ability. The language problem was also exacerbated by the approach of many teachers to the use of

language or languages in the classroom, with over half, according to the 2018 study, insisting on using a purely monolingual approach, thus increasing the isolation experienced by many new arrivals.

One practical outcome of the two pieces of research was the development of two handbooks:<sup>4</sup>

- *Handbook for teachers of refugees*
- *Handbook for school managers hosting refugees*

These handbooks are an outcome of the studies, and are largely based on the best practice of the teachers and head teachers observed and include ideas that they proposed. These were collected during the data gathering in 2018 and 2020. The handbooks were written in a very accessible style and it was hoped that teachers and school managers would have access to them and use them as a source of ideas and guidance when teaching and managing their refugee children, especially those who had recently arrived. The authorities could feel comfortable that the practices recommended were already being used effectively in some schools according to the teachers and schools using them.

To help promote these practices, the British Council decided to hold a training programme for teachers and managers that would explain the main principles and practices outlined in the handbooks, and train teachers in their use. The training combined the existing highly successful Connecting Classrooms training programmes, adapted to meet the needs of refugee education. In particular, the programme aimed to address the needs of refugees who had to learn everything in school using English as the Language of Instruction (LoI) even though many had previously used other languages. The training event was arranged for 191 teachers and 174 managers from 87 schools, all of which had significant numbers of refugees from the four settlements and Kampala. In addition, meetings were held with key stakeholders of the education sector in each settlement, to seek their opinions and put forward the value of using more familiar languages when teaching refugee children.

<sup>1</sup> Hicks R & Maina L (2018) *The impact of refugees on schools in Uganda*. British Council. Available at: [www.britishcouncil.org/language-for-resilience](http://www.britishcouncil.org/language-for-resilience)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Note that the data was collected in 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Trudell B, Nannyombi P & Teera L (2019) *A bridging programme for refugee children in Uganda: perspectives and recommendations*. SIL Africa.

<sup>4</sup> Hicks R & Maina L (2021) *A handbook for teachers of refugees*. British Council. Hicks R & Maina L (2021) *A handbook for school managers hosting refugees*. British Council. Available at: [www.britishcouncil.org/language-for-resilience](http://www.britishcouncil.org/language-for-resilience)

## 3 Aims of the study

The primary aim of this study is to measure the impact the handbooks are having on the practice of the teachers in their classes and on the management of schools impacted by refugees. Below are the key research questions agreed with the British Council and members of the MoES Task Team for language development within refugee settings, based on recommendations in the handbooks.

### 3.1 Key research questions

- A. Are the handbooks available and used by teachers and the administration in the schools?
- B. How frequently, and when, are supportive, but principled, bilingual approaches used in classroom teaching with refugee children?
- C. Is there provision for after-class support lessons – both remedial and English – in the schools?
- D. What school placement is practised with new refugee children on arrival?
- E. Have action plans been developed that address refugees' exclusion and language problems?

### 3.2 Related questions

To what extent is the best practice promoted by the training and handbooks:

- Only taking place in schools exposed to the training?
- Only used by teachers who were trained?
- Being transmitted to other teachers in the same school and to those in other schools who did not receive the training but did receive the handbooks?



## 4 Scope of study

### 4.1 Sampling procedures

It was recognised that this study would be smaller in scope than the previous two, and would concentrate on the impact of the handbooks, rather than any wider issues related to or covered by the accompanying training. However, while this remained the aim, there is inevitable overlap between the impact of the handbooks and the extent to which the training had achieved any change in teacher and management practices. Thus, the changes noted in this report are largely a result of the two combined. It was hoped that some distinctions could be made by including both schools that had attended the training and some that had not but had received the handbooks. In addition, it included teachers who had attended the training but also some from the same school who had not (refer to 3.2 above and Table 1 below).

Thus, the researchers hoped to look at the impact at three levels of exposure to the ideas and best practices described in the handbooks: (i) those only exposed to the handbooks, (ii) those exposed to the handbooks and to ideas from others within their schools, and (iii) those exposed to both the handbooks and the training. It should be emphasised that the first group was not intended as a control group. Rather, the purpose was to look at how ideas and good practice can filter through from someone trained in a practice to others less exposed, when the ideas are supported by written materials (i.e. the handbooks).

### 4.2 Constraints

**4.2.1** The handbooks had not been distributed as planned prior to the training, but were distributed during the training, resulting in the schools in the settlements that did not participate in the training not receiving any handbooks. This was due to a shortage of supply, and most teachers from schools that attended the training also complained of lack of access – it seems that many teachers who attended the

training kept their copies to themselves and did not share them with their colleagues.

**4.2.2** According to the original plan, there should have been a larger sample of schools that were not at the training so that more reliable comparisons could be made between those who had attended the training and those who had only read the handbooks. However, during the school selection this was not achieved. In particular, the consultant had requested that schools that had the handbooks but were not at the training be included in the research. However, as such schools could not be identified, no comparison could be made between schools with handbooks but no training, and those who both received the handbooks and attended the training. However, the distinction was maintained between teachers who were trained and those who only had potential access to the handbooks through their schools.

**4.2.3** The weekend before the data collection, a reflection on the training was organised in the settlements by the British Council through the WIU. While not a major concern, this meant that all the participants in the data collection had recently been reminded of the key issues in the handbooks, which may have resulted in more positive responses to certain issues than if there had been a longer interval between the training and the data collection. In particular, positive responses to questions such as: ‘Have you seen or read the handbook?’ and ‘Do you use more than one language when teaching?’ may have been reinforced during the training reflection.

**4.2.4** The interval between the distribution of the handbooks and the data collection was also very short, allowing only eight weeks of teaching during which participants could change their practices and internalise new ideas. This means that some results may be less positive than they will be after a few more months of implementation, especially as awareness of the issues cannot yet be expected to have impacted the wider school community.

**4.2.5** Since the enumerators were not teachers, most of the data collection did not require any technical knowledge or professional judgement. However, a few questions did require some judgement on their part, for example assessing the learners' English during the interviews and selecting which approach to bilingual use the teacher had adopted. These issues were addressed in the enumerator training, as was the case with the enumerators of in the 2018 and 2020 studies who had similar backgrounds.

**4.2.6** Transfers of teachers to other schools during the process resulted in inconsistencies that became apparent when triangulating the answers across those who had and had not

attended the training. However, this only applied in a few cases of those who responded and the inconsistencies have been allowed for. In one case, the head teacher had attended the training, but then been transferred to a school that was not included in the training. In another, the head teacher who was interviewed was not the school's representative at the training. There were also instances of teachers who had been transferred to a different school after the training.

**4.2.7** As often happens with such a study, time and costs were constraints. These dictated the number of schools that could be selected and the amount of time allowed for analysis and report writing.

## 5 Methodology

### 5.1 The sample

It was agreed that the sample size of those who had received the training and the handbooks should be from at least 30 per cent of the total schools trained, across the four settlements and Kampala. In addition, it was decided to include at least two additional schools from each settlement that had not attended the training but should have received the handbook, and at least one or two additional teachers at the target schools who had not attended the training. The exception was Kampala, where no additional schools were included because the research team was informed prior to data collection that no other schools in Kampala had received the handbooks, and in addition, refugee children are a much smaller percentage of learners in the Kampala schools not selected for training.

Purposive sampling was used throughout for selecting schools, teachers and learners, but with a random element. The purposive element was to ensure appropriate weighting when selecting schools and teachers who had been at the training and those who had not. Where there were more teachers than needed for the sample, the timetable was used to decide which teacher and which lesson was the most convenient to observe. The initial selection of learners focused on those who were new to the country and the school, i.e. who had arrived at the school in the previous three months and hadn't schooled elsewhere in Uganda. Where numbers exceeded those needed, enumerators selected in a random order. Where there were too few, other learners in the same class were selected to make the group number up to five.

The total sample is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Data numbers – schools and teachers at training and in sample**

Settlements	Kyangwali	Imvepi	Rhino	Nakivale	Kampala	Totals
Total of schools at training	9	13	23	31	9	85*
No. of schools at training in sample	4	4	9	10	3	30
Schools not at training in sample	1	0	1	2	0	4
Total of teachers at training	30	29	45	31	42	177
No. of teachers at training who were observed	11	10	11	21	13	66
No. of teachers at training who answered the questionnaire	9	10	13	22	13	67
No. of teachers not at training who were observed	11	7	18	14	4	54
No. of teachers not at training who answered questionnaire	8	5	15	14	4	46
No. of learners interviewed	85	71	110	125	68	459

**Total sample size:** Schools: 34; Teachers: 120 observed and 113 who answered questionnaire; Learners: 459

\*Two secondary schools were included in the training but are excluded from these numbers.

## 5.2 British Council training and the research outline

The initial outline for the training was discussed with the British Council's key trainers, the four settlements to be targeted were selected, and the schools and teachers to be trained were identified with support from Windle International Uganda (WIU). The training outline and structure was based on that already tried and proven in a large number of government schools in Uganda under the Connecting Classrooms programme. The core themes include:

**School Leadership:** School managers are equipped with knowledge and skills to lead good practices that enhance literacy acquisition for children in their schools and support parental engagement.

**Inclusive Education:** Teachers and school leaders are trained to cater for all learning needs of all the children in their schools. Information on children's protection is included to promote a safe learning environment for children.

**Core Skills:** Teachers and school leaders participate in a session that enables them to develop deep learning for children using the core skills of critical thinking, communication and collaboration, citizenship and student leadership, to support learners with a low level of understanding of English.

During the preparation for training, these themes were interrogated by the key trainers and the researcher to ensure that they related appropriately to the needs of recently arrived refugee children. To this end, they ensured the relevance of the training and the handbooks in meeting the need for better teaching and learning and use of language in a multilingual refugee setting. As a result, sessions were adapted or added that related to principled bilingual approaches in the classroom, both when teaching language and subject content, including practice in 'scaffolding' lessons using two or more languages. A session was included on activities and principles used for teaching literacy and numeracy using *Teaching at the Right Level*<sup>5</sup> as a remedial approach, adapted for refugee children in the handbooks. Managers also attended key training sessions on action

planning, to ensure that the managers (school leaders) and teachers identified key activities to address issues arising from language use and the low levels of English in refugee education.

A research proposal for measuring the impact of the handbooks and the training on schools impacted by refugee children was also put forward, and the main aims of the research, the sampling proposed, and the procedures and tools to be used, were shared with the Connecting Classrooms training team, British Council, WIU and the MoES Task Team.

The training started in December 2021, with a three-day training of trainers in Kampala, followed by four days of training administered by these trainers to teachers and managers in each settlement and in Kampala. It was agreed that early March would be an appropriate time to measure the impact of the handbooks as the schools would have been open for two months, allowing time for any impact on teacher behaviour to be apparent.

## 5.3 Enumerator training

In consultation with the consultant, WIU selected the enumerators who would collect the data and the schools that would participate in the research. The enumerators then gathered in Kyangwali settlement and the consultant conducted two days of training along with the trialling of the proposed tools in a nearby pilot school. Finally, the enumerators and consultant discussed the feedback from the pilot and adapted the tools to ensure clarity of the questions.

The training covered the following topics and activities:

1. The aims of the data collection, including orientating enumerators to the handbooks
2. An outline of core elements of research ethics that guide their behaviour and protocols
3. An outline of the procedures to be used at each school, the overall programme and logistics
4. Familiarising themselves with tools (see section 5.4) and practising their use through role-play scenarios
5. Piloting the tools in one school and then discussing and clarifying any questions or confusion that arose

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pratham.org/about/teaching-at-the-right-level/>

6. **Strengthening consistency across enumerators** by comparing answers to each research item and how they used the tools and interpreted the items in the tools, and through explanation and discussion when using the tools in the pilot. In addition, also to strengthen consistency, all enumerators visited their first school together so as to compare and discuss their findings. Where possible, the consultant or a representative accompanied them on this visit and held a subsequent debriefing.

Immediately after training, the ten enumerators, working in pairs, proceeded to their settlements and started to collect data. The two enumerators for Kampala were trained separately at the start of the following week but were able to collect the data within the same timeframe.

## 5.4 Tools used to collect data

Tools were designed to collect data that addressed the five key research questions outlined in section 3.1. These tools were shared with the British Council, their lead trainer and the chair of the MoES Task Team. The enumerators used four tools designed to triangulate the information being collected:

1. **Classroom observation record:** Enumerators observed teachers for at least half a lesson and recorded how they used language, how often they used a familiar language, and how they treated any newly arrived learners. There was one tool (Tool 1a) for observing regular lessons and a second tool (Tool 1b) for observing any extra support lessons. This included establishing whether such lessons were in place, and their frequency and approach. The results were correlated with whether teachers had read the handbook and had attended the British Council training.
2. **Learner discussion record:** The enumerators held short discussions with groups of five learners and recorded their answers to a series of questions covering similar ground, including which languages were used in their lesson, whether they had attended extra support lessons, and how they were treated when they first arrived. Also recorded were their primary grade, their age, and whether they attended school in their home country.

3. **Questionnaire for teachers:** Teachers were asked if they had seen and read the teachers' handbook and what they thought of it. They were asked what extra lessons they had arranged, and what their practice and attitudes were to using local languages when teaching in English and when teaching English as a subject. Their answers were correlated with whether or not they had attended the British Council training, and the information was triangulated with classroom observations (Tool 1a) and what their learners said in discussion (Tool 2).

4. **Head teacher questionnaire:** The final tool used by the enumerators was for the head teacher and school leader interviews. This also triangulates information about whether they have seen and read the handbooks, their opinion of the handbooks, and what difference they had made – both to their placement of children in the school and to their school development plans.

5. **Tool for gathering opinions from those managing school education at district or settlement level:** This was not administered by the enumerators but by the settlement managers for reasons of protocol. Only one settlement complied, and the numbers involved were initially very small so very few responses were received.

## 5.5 Procedure at each school

The procedures to follow at each school were clearly outlined, discussed with the enumerators, and illustrated and practised during the piloting and the first day of data collection. On arrival at the selected school, the enumerators paid a courtesy visit to the head teacher or whoever was deputising for her or him on that day. They presented a letter of introduction from WIU and explained the purpose of their visit. In most cases, the head teachers were very aware of the purpose as they had attended the reflection meetings a few days earlier and thus the enumerators were expected and warmly received. This warmth was less apparent at the few schools that had not been included in the training and a slight resentment is evident in one or two of their responses. It should be emphasised that in all cases, before involving head teachers, teachers and learners, the

enumerators would ask permission to continue with the discussion or observation before doing so, as part of research protocol.

Once the introductions were complete, a programme was agreed as to when they could observe lessons and when they could interview the head teacher or a representative.

Each lesson observation was followed by a brief discussion with the teacher, after which the teacher was asked to complete the questionnaire. The enumerator then selected five learners from that class for the discussion, with priority given to new arrivals. The discussion started in English where possible, but used familiar languages and peer translations if necessary. The process normally took about three hours at each school – longer if there were many classes to observe.

## 5.6 Monitoring of data collection

The exercise was monitored by the consultant in Kampala and Kyangwali and a WIU education coordinator in the other settlements. They visited the enumerators at each school, met the head teachers for a brief discussion, checked on the progress of data collection, and at the end of each day checked that the tools had all been filled in and the forms were complete and comprehensible. At schools in Kampala and Kyangwali, the consultant also observed some lessons and completed Tool 1a.

### 5.6.1 Role of WIU

The role of WIU Kampala and their field staff was crucial to the success of the exercise, as they were responsible for selection of enumerators and schools, and for organising the training and logistics throughout, as well as monitoring the collection of data. They were also responsible for sending the data to the consultant before he left Kampala. All these duties were carried out with great efficiency.

### 5.6.2 Completeness of data collection

Once the data had been collected, the consultant proceeded to check and input the data. It was pleasing, and a credit to all concerned – both the WIU staff and enumerators – that data sets from the schools were so complete. In all, only nine teacher questionnaires were not complete, all from teachers who had not attended the training. As mentioned under constraints (refer to 4.3 above), there was a shortfall in the sampling of schools that had not attended training as there were only four in total (one in Kyangwali, one in Imvepi and two in Nakivale). However, as handbooks had not been circulated to schools that did not attend training, this lack was not significant to the conclusions. In contrast, the data includes a large number of teachers who came from schools that were represented at the training but had not themselves attended, so these comparisons could be made, resulting in significant findings.

## 6 Findings

The findings have been arranged around the five key questions specified in section 3.1 with each question formulated as a statement in the headings 6.1 to 6.5 below.

Each finding will draw on evidence from the data gathered using at least two of the tools, in some cases three. The questions will be addressed in the order in which they were asked so as to address the two most central questions first, from the viewpoint of the study of the handbooks' impact.

### 6.1 Availability of handbooks and their use by teachers and schools

Among the teachers who had been trained, only two out of the 67 who responded to the questionnaire said they had not read the handbook. The availability of the handbook for those trained was confirmed through the class observation tool – when the enumerator asked teachers if they had read the handbook only six responded that they had not. In addition, 56 of the trained teachers said the handbook was very useful, and 48 stated that it had resulted in a significant change in their teaching and described the change. There was a similar pattern among the school managers who attended the training, as 20 out of 30 said they had read at least one handbook and 19 said both handbooks were available in the school or office. This left ten schools that had been represented at the training for school leaders but whose teachers had not read the handbook. Of these ten, two said neither of the handbooks was available, with one school not responding. In addition, at least two head teachers had been transferred after attending training, and in at least one other case the head teacher had been represented at the training by a deputy and was thus not necessarily well informed. The four schools that had not been represented at the training had neither of the handbooks. When asked if the teachers were able to read the handbook,

17 schools said they were. However, this was not borne out by the teachers' answers. While teachers who had attended the training were happy with their access to the handbook, only ten teachers who had not attended the training had seen the handbook, and of these, only seven (13 per cent) had read it. This in spite of the teachers all being at a school that had been represented at the training. It is worth noting that, out of the seven who had read the handbook even though not at the training, four were from Kampala schools: two from Old Kampala PS, one from St Peters and one from Katwe.

The head teacher at Old Kampala stated that a short orientation about the training was held for other teachers and copies of the handbook made available in the teachers' library. According to St Peters' head teacher the handbook had been discussed in departmental meetings. When interviewed, the head teacher of Arieze School said he was not at the training, but his deputy had represented him. He also said he had not seen or read the handbook, but the school had adopted some ideas from it and one teacher had clearly followed the practices recommended.

Thus, while two Kampala schools can be seen as models of good practice because they had followed up the training with a meeting with the staff and then made the books available, it is sad to note that, with these exceptions, the ideas from the handbook and the training had not been passed on to other teachers in the same school, let alone to other schools. A large number of teachers and head teachers, in their comments, complained about a lack of copies of the handbook for teachers. It is apparent that, in most cases, only teachers and head teachers who attended the training had any access to the handbooks, and schools not at the training did not receive copies or even know about the existence of the handbooks. Thus, the best practice described in the handbooks and at the training is unlikely to spread further than those targeted by the training.

**Table 2: Accessibility and use of handbooks**

	School management		Teachers	
	Attended training	Did not attend training	Attended training	Did not attend training
Had read at least one handbook	20 out of 30	0 out of 4	65 out of 67 (97%)	7 out of 55 (13%)
Had impacted on their teaching	N/A	N/A	48 (73%)	4*
Had impacted on school planning	24 (80%)	1 (25%)	N/A	N/A

\*Two of these teachers were from Old Kampala, one from Katwe and one from St Peters.

## 6.2 Frequency of supportive, but principled, bilingual approaches

### 6.2.1 The frequency of bilingual approaches being used

The 2018 study based in Nakivale, Rhino and Bidhi Bidhi schools concluded that over 66 per cent of lessons were monolingual, and that very little attempt was being made by a majority of teachers to address the language issues of refugee children. The evidence collected in the 2020 survey suggests that considerable progress had been made by teachers in addressing the needs of their learners, progress that has now been strengthened by the recommendations in the handbooks and the British Council training. In 2020, approximately 66 per cent of teachers used at least two languages. From the data gathered in this 2022 study (illustrated in Table 3 below) we can see that 95 out of 120 (79 per cent) lessons observed used a familiar language in addition to English during their teaching. Of the 25 teachers who did not use another language, a majority – 16 (64 per cent) – were teachers who had neither attended the training nor read the handbook, as against nine (36 per cent) who had been trained and read the handbook. This clearly shows that the handbook and training combined have had a significant impact on the use of a bilingual approach. While acknowledging the very small size of the sample, these results show a z-value of 2.9167 and a p-value of 0.0035, which is clearly significant.

One concern is the number of lessons using, alongside English, a language unfamiliar to new refugee children. Of the above-mentioned 95 (79

**The evidence collected in the 2020 survey suggests that considerable progress had been made by teachers in addressing the needs of their learners.**

per cent) out of 120 lessons that used a local language, 13 used English and either Luganda or Runyankole – languages of the host community that recent arrivals would not be familiar with – suggesting that teachers in only 82 out of 120 (68 per cent) of the lessons were attempting to use languages that would help the refugee children. This is still a considerable improvement on 2018, when only 35 per cent of lessons used any local language, and an even greater improvement when one notes that three of the nine monolingual lessons taught by those who had been at the training were in P7, an appropriate time to be monolingual provided there are no newcomers learning English for the first time. Further evidence that confirms the frequency of bilingual lessons can be found from the learners' discussions in which 17 per cent said their teachers only used English. However, some 23 per cent of the learners said teachers used English for less than half the time they were teaching, which suggests overuse of the local or familiar language.



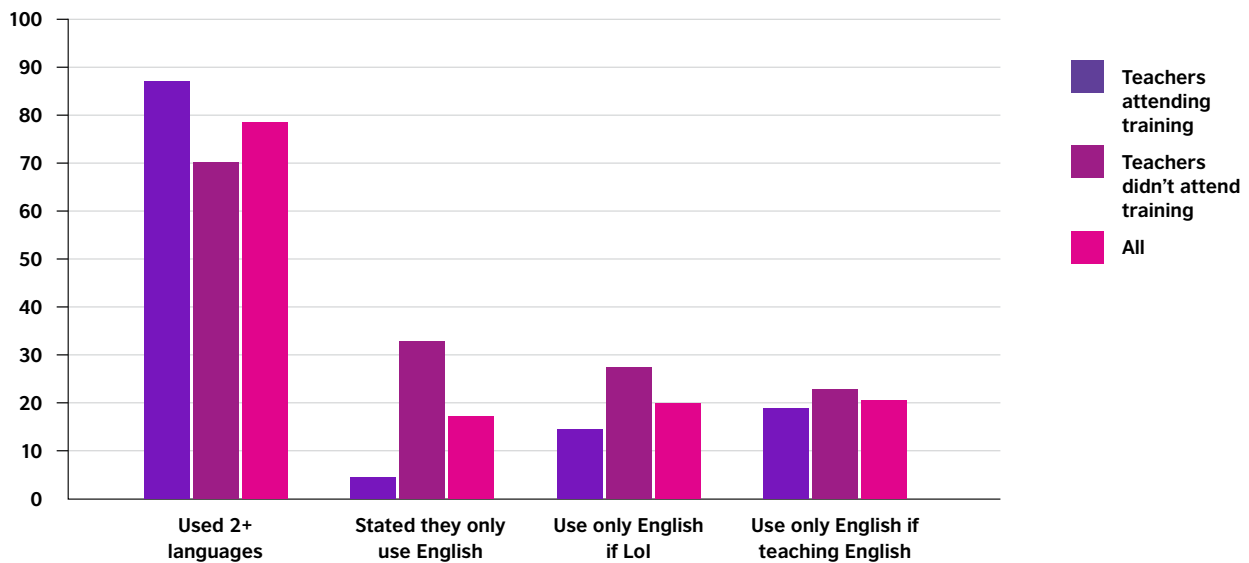
An additional source of information relates to the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding bilingual language practices and comes from the teacher questionnaires, which ask them about both their practices and beliefs. One question asks teachers if a teacher should use another familiar language (FL) when teaching, if English is the language of instruction (LoI). Out of the 113 respondents, 24 (21 per cent) said you should only use English, with seven unsure. Again, the split between those who had attended the training and read the handbook and those who had not, was significant: ten out of 67 (15 per cent) trained teachers, with one unsure, as against 14 out of 46 (30 per cent) untrained with six unsure. A two-sampled Z test shows the difference between those who were trained and read the handbooks compared with those who were not, to be highly significant ( $z=-4.5692$ ,  $P<0.00001$ ).

A related question asked whether they should ever use another language when teaching English as a subject. A majority of teachers felt in this situation you should not use a second language. Clearly, the old direct-method thinking still holds some sway and the communicative approach has yet to overcome this belief in some teachers' minds, even after 30 years. Out of the 113 answers, 43 (36 per cent) said the English lesson should be monolingual, again with more who had not attended the training 24 (52 per cent) holding this opinion.

When asked what they had actually been doing in class, the contrast is even clearer between those who had attended training and those who had not. Twenty-four (21 per cent) said they only use English when teaching. Of these, only three had been trained, whereas the remaining 18 had not attended the training.

**Table 3: Teachers' practices and attitudes towards bilingual language use**

	Source Tool	Teachers attended training (66/67)	Teachers did not attend training (55/46)	Overall results 120/113	2018 & 2020 study
Observed using more than one language	1A LO	58 (88%)	36 (65%)	95 (79%)	33%
(Practice) Stated they only used one language	3 TQ	3 (4.5%)	18 (39%)	24 (21%)	N/A
(Attitude) You should only use English if LoI is English	3 TQ	10 (15%) with 1 unsure	14 (30%) with 6 unsure	24 (21%)	30%
You should only use English if you are teaching English	3 TQ	19 (28%)	24 (52%)	43 (36%)	55%
		Their school at training (409)	Their school not at training (51)	Total 460	
Learners say their teacher only used one language	2 LD	69 (17%)	10 (20%)	79 (17%)	60%
Learners say their teacher used an FL for over half the lesson	2 LD	85 (21%)	22 (43%)	107 (23%)	N/A



**Figure 1: Bilingual practice and attitudes among teachers**

### 6.2.2 Code-switching, translanguaging and scaffolding

The classroom observation tool also asked the observers to record whether a language other than English was used, for how much of the lesson and in what way. Thus, in any bilingual lessons, the observer was asked to distinguish between translanguaging, code-switching and providing a scaffolding for the lesson in the familiar language.

During the training, code-switching was defined as the occasional switch to the more familiar language to clarify the meaning of a word or concept and then return to the main Lol. However, translanguaging is a more systematic use of both languages in order to create the meaning and enhance communication and is more an ongoing process of enhancing meaning. During training it became clear that this difference between code-switching and translanguaging was far too nuanced for those involved in the observations. Thus, although the difference is still on the observation tool, in analysis, the two have been combined to avoid inconsistencies.

After further training and discussions, it was hoped that both the teachers and the observers would be able to understand the concept of providing a scaffold for a lesson using a familiar language to support English as the Lol as this is a pedagogic rather than theoretical construct.

The handbook section on scaffolding provides clear guidelines as to when a second language should be used in order to avoid its overuse. Typically, it involves a clear introduction in the familiar language, followed by using it to highlight key points and difficult concepts or instructions, but with the majority of the lesson remaining in English and the teacher avoiding any return to the familiar language at the end of the lesson. This is what is referred to as 'principled bilingualism' in the second key question (section 3.1), i.e. a clear rationale for how each language is used. This approach is in contrast to a common practice observed where the teacher merely translates everything at the end of a lesson. Scaffolding is a key idea in the handbook and was highlighted in the British Council training and in the training of enumerators. Thus, the term is used both in the observation sheet and in the teacher questionnaire. It is also a term used with considerable approval by the head teachers in discussions about the handbooks and in discussions with and comments from the teachers. However, it became clear that as a concept, although most teachers have learnt that it is a 'good idea', very few teachers have understood it in practice. Out of 120 teachers who answered the questionnaire, 83 stated that they scaffold their lessons. The observers, however, only classified 27 out of 113 lessons as such, and even these, according to the

enumerators' description, are clearly not scaffolded, but rather are simply translating the lesson or using the familiar language. In one answer, a teacher claimed to scaffold his lessons even though he also said he only used English. Some lessons observed were recorded as using scaffolding even though, from the observer's description, it was apparent that the teacher was using the local language for most of the lesson. In other cases, the lesson started in English and then reverted to a familiar language when learners found it difficult to understand, rather than the reverse.

Thus, while plenty of good translanguaging and appropriate code-switching are described, there are no cases where the observer's description or the teacher's comments suggest scaffolding. While the data provides plenty of evidence on how teachers are using two or more languages effectively, there is little to suggest they 'scaffold' lessons with a familiar language, or make 'principled' use of the familiar language. In fact, all the evidence suggests that the teachers had not understood the concept. This point will be taken up again in the conclusions and recommendations.

### 6.2.3 The issues of language of instruction and language of literacy

During the enumerator training, it was agreed that the best way of deciding what the teacher was using as a language of instruction, was to see which language was being used for reading and for writing on the chalkboard. As a result, every lesson observed was classified as using English as the language of instruction. When the consultant asked the schools he visited about this, they confirmed that this was their policy, even in lower primary, because of the mix of languages in the classroom. However, an alarming number of lessons, though nominally English medium and with everything written in English, were predominantly in another language, especially in lower primary. The data shows that 21 lessons in P1–3 were, more than 50 per cent of the time, in a language other than English, with nine of those lessons using another language for over 80 per cent of the lesson. However, in all cases English was used when reading or writing. This suggests a very worrying pattern, which used to be observed in classes prior to the shift in lower primary, of using a

local language as the medium of instruction in P1–3. If children predominantly hear a familiar language in class, but then only see a language they do not understand when asked to read or write, it will be very difficult for them to ever develop any phonic knowledge in any language, and they are being denied all the advantages of skills transfer and reinforcement from the spoken to the written word. This issue will again be addressed in the conclusions.

## 6.3 Provision of after-class support lessons, both remedial and English

This was a reasonably straightforward issue to research. Both the teachers and the learners were asked if there were any support lessons, such as those described in the handbook, in their schools. If the answer was positive, the observers asked the head teachers when they took place and if they could observe some. They then observed any that took place during their visit and, if they took place at other times, recorded any evidence, such as timetables.

The evidence suggests that an encouraging number of schools (19 out of 34) are putting extra lessons in place and this was confirmed by all three sources. However, in some cases they may not actually be the type of lesson described in the handbook, for example, a few of the subject support lessons in upper classes may have been more about tuition for the exams than support in a familiar language. The actual number of lessons observed were few (nine), but this is not surprising as the extra lessons tended to take place outside of school hours – some before school started, others on a Saturday. Lessons varied in length from 20 minutes to two hours. By far the most common extra lesson was English, with a third of the learners (154) saying they had been provided with some extra English. This included responses from the 34 per cent of the learners who were recent arrivals, which is a positive sign and may well have been encouraged by the training and handbooks. Very few of these lessons (40 or 29 per cent) were paid for, in contrast to the 2020 findings in which extra lessons were few, took place mainly in Kampala, and almost 90 per cent were paid for as extra tuition.

**Table 4: Support lessons across 34 schools**

	Extra lessons are arranged	Extra English	Literacy in an FL	Numeracy	Subjects with FL
Lessons were observed	9 observations	4	0	1	4
Schools confirmed they took place	22 schools had evidence	19	11	13	12
Learners' answers support (459)	Answers were by subject area	154 (34%)	44 (10%)	85 (18%)	36 (8)
Teachers' answers support (120)	82 teachers said they arranged them, including 23 not at training	66 (55%)	39	39	52

## 6.4 School placement practice with new refugee children

It was more difficult to assess the extent to which the handbooks and training were influencing how schools decided in which primary grade new arrivals should be placed. Half the schools had fewer than 100 new arrivals since schools opened in January, and there is no reliable way of further confirming that they have practised what they say. In addition, the children were often unable to remember, or may not know, how their placement was decided. However, in interviews with head teachers, a majority of those who had attended the training (21 out of 30) said they had adopted ideas from the handbook. In particular, they mentioned the importance of written exams and of involving parents in the decision-making – both ideas highlighted in the handbook. A number of head teachers also emphasised the value of accelerated promotion and agreed that this was an excellent policy that they would now adopt.

The learners, a third of whom were new, were also asked in their discussions how their placement was decided. A total of 371 of the 459 children answered. Many (127 or 28 per cent) either could not remember or did not know. However, of the remaining answers, an interview combined with a written test was the most common response (63 or 19 per cent of those responding) and 60 (18 per cent) said their parents were involved. The use of written tests seems to have increased since 2020 – only ten per cent use written tests in 2020 compared

with 19 per cent in 2022. However, parental involvement remains low at 18 per cent according to learners in 2022 compared with the 22 per cent of learners in 2020 who said parents were involved. Thus, although schools said they were involving parents, this is not supported by the learners' responses.

Placement still results in significant numbers of over-aged learners, with all the resulting dangers of learners failing to complete their education. Based on the principle that children start in P1 at the latest by the age of 7 and do not repeat classes, the refugee children interviewed were on average 3.4 years over-age and 123 (27 per cent) were 5 or more years older than they should be for their primary grade level. It also emerged from the conversations that 23 recently arrived learners had been at secondary schools in their country of origin and had all been placed in primary grades; while five were placed in P7 which is justifiable, the eight who had been in S1, three in S2 and two in S3 were all placed in P4 which is a huge demotion.

Responses from head teachers, and the increased use of written tests, suggest that the handbooks have made some difference to placement in individual schools, and may have reduced the reliance on using interviews in English as the only criteria for placement. However, the problem of refugee learners losing many years of education as a result of language, and lack of parental involvement in placement decisions, continues. This can only be addressed when a bridging course is available for all

## **A bridging course is a key strategy for avoiding over-aged placements as it concentrates on developing English to a level where new arrivals can learn in English.**

arriving refugee children who need it. A bridging course is a key strategy for avoiding over-aged placements as it concentrates on developing English to a level where new arrivals can learn in English. The use of a bridging course is recommended in the handbooks but the one developed with the NCDC has yet to be implemented by partners.

In fact, 46 learners (ten per cent) said they had attended a bridging course prior to their placement. Initially this was a surprise. Such a course has been used successfully in Kyaka II, and according to the head teacher at Katwe, a very successful course previously existed in Kampala but is no longer available. There are no other bridging courses on record in other settlements. However, the course for refugee children developed with the NCDC was trialled in October and November 2021 in Imvepi, where 20 of the above-mentioned 46 learners came from; the remaining 26 all came from Nakivale. It would be interesting to see if a similar course has been established there, though no information confirming this has been received.

## **6.5 Action plans to address refugees' exclusion and language problems**

It is too early to judge whether the handbooks and the training will have an impact on school development plans. For the impact to be felt, firstly the changes must be in the plans, and secondly the plans must be seen to have been effectively implemented. It is possible to make some assessment of the first based on interviews with head teachers and school managers, but not of the second. When asked about action plans, 31 out of 36 schools said they had made a recent action plan, including four that had not attended the training. Twenty-five stated that they had included ideas from the handbooks and the training. All of them had attended the training, although one as a head teacher of a different school to the one he is now heading. All 25 also made comments describing what they had included. The key ideas mentioned included starting extra remedial and support lessons, developing a school language policy, helping teachers to learn a refugee language, and enhancing the use of bilingual approaches, especially to help new arrivals. Two head teachers put forward ideas as if from the handbook that were not actually in it, as they suggested feeding programmes and support supervision. There was sadly not enough evidence of them committing to improving English and communication as a key development strategy, even though this had been emphasised in the training and the handbooks.

# 7 Conclusions and recommendations

## 7.1 Overall conclusion

Teachers and school managers who have received both the handbooks and the British Council training have clearly changed their behaviour when teaching refugees to a significant extent. This is especially true in areas of bilingual practices when teaching and providing supportive additional classes, especially for English, where needed. As a result, learners in their classes should, over time, benefit from improvements in learning outcomes, which will be measurable towards the end of the academic year. However, there is concern that the teachers lack any understanding of how a principled use of a second language should be practised in lessons, and this could have negative effects on learning outcomes in both literacy and language.

In addition, there is no evidence of the positive changes having any impact beyond those who attended training and received the handbooks. Thus, there has been highly successful behavioural change in individual teachers, but institutional or systemic change – even within the school – has not happened. What is required is a much wider distribution of handbooks and a training strategy that can have a far greater impact on systems and institutions rather than just individuals.

The remainder of this chapter will summarise the findings against the original five questions (section 3.1) and then put forward recommendations to strengthen and widen the positive impacts.

## 7.2 Are the handbooks available and in use by teachers and the administration in the schools?

### Conclusion

**The handbooks are available and in use by those teachers and administrators who attended the training.** But, with the exception of

two schools, they are not available nor have they had impact on those who did not attend the training, which limits their effectiveness. Only seven (13 per cent) teachers not at the training had read the handbook. This means that the best practice of the recently trained teachers – who were only a small minority of the teachers at their schools – may be swamped, while traditional practices, including monolingual approaches, will continue to be practised by most teachers.

The handbook is very effective in changing teacher behaviour in the classroom for those who have read it and attended the British Council training, compared with those who did not attend the training or read the handbook. However, we do not have sufficient data on those who read the handbook but did not attend the training to ascertain what impact the handbook would have had on its own.

### Recommendations arising from the above conclusion

**Recommendation 1:** *Make the handbooks more widely available in schools impacted by refugee children, especially the teachers' handbook.*

**Recommendation 2:** *Develop training strategies that ensure that key elements of any training are shared with all relevant staff in the institution so that training has an institutional and eventually a systemic impact.*

Examples of such practice were found at Old Kampala PS where the head teacher shared the training with her staff in a short meeting and placed copies of the handbook in the library, and at St Peters where the handbooks were shared through departmental discussions. Planning for such practice to happen should be factored into any training programme. The availability of written back-up that supports the key training ideas, such as a handbook or handouts, is essential, as it increases the authority of those ideas.

**Recommendation 3:** *Either distribute the handbooks to all schools impacted by refugee*

children combined with training, using this training as its pilot or, if funding is unavailable for this, develop a training brief for schools and offices involving an orientation of one or two hours, to accompany a reissue of the teachers' handbook.

This can be delivered through WIU, Street Child, or any other organisation managing education in specific settlements.

### 7.3 How frequently, and when, are supportive, but principled, bilingual approaches used in classroom teaching with refugee children?

#### Conclusion 1

**There is a major move towards a supportive bilingual approach by those who have read the handbooks and attended the training.**

This shift was seen both in practice, with 79 per cent of lessons using at least two languages, as well as in attitudes, with a big reduction in numbers when compared to 2018 and 2020, who consider one should only use English when teaching a subject or even when teaching English. These shifts are significantly greater in those who read the handbooks and attended the training, and a major shift in the use of language when compared with findings from the 2018 study, where only a third of the 96 lessons observed used any language other than English (see Table 3 and Table 5).

#### Conclusion 2

**However, there is evidence that a 'principled' use of a bilingual approach was not understood.**

1. Many teachers claimed to 'scaffold' a lesson and head teachers commented on the value of the strategy, but there were no examples of this in practice. As a result, many lessons (23 per cent) overused the familiar language, using it for more than half the lesson, and in effect making it the oral Lol.
2. Too many lessons are using one language when speaking and another language when writing. This will hinder the development of phonic skills in lower primary and the transfer of oral to reading skills across all age groups.

#### Recommendation arising from the above findings

**Recommendation 4:** *Develop and deliver a training module on how to use a principled bilingual approach, so that teachers understand both the benefits and the dangers of the approach.*

Such training should be practical, with micro-teaching and demonstrations of 'model' bilingual lessons in both upper and lower primary classes using scaffolding and other strategies. If the handbooks are reissued and accompanied by training, combine this recommendation with Recommendation 3 above.

### 7.4 What school placement is practised with refugee children on arrival?

#### Conclusion

**Schools have moved towards written tests but not towards greater parental involvement** compared to the practice described in the 2018 and 2020 studies, where most children were placed in a primary grade after only an interview in English. However, there are still a large number of over-aged children with an average over-age of 3.4 years and 23 secondary school learners who were demoted to a primary grade, in some cases to P4.

#### Recommendation arising from the above findings

**Recommendation 5:** *Introduce the Bridging Course in all settlements that receive refugee children so that the English of those who need it can be developed to a level at which they can use English for study purposes.*

### 7.5 Have action plans been developed that address refugees' exclusion and language?

#### Conclusion

**A total 24 out of 34 schools, all of whose head teachers attended the training and have read the handbooks,** included language-related actions in their plans, including extra classes and teachers learning refugee languages. As yet, it is too early to know how

well the plans will be implemented and what impact they will have, but clearly the handbooks and the training have had an impact.

#### **Recommendation arising from the above findings**

**Recommendations 6:** Encourage DIS and WIU to follow up on these plans at regular intervals to ensure implementation of the ideas.

### **7.6 Summary of recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:** Make the handbooks more widely available in schools impacted by refugee children, especially the teachers' handbook.

**Recommendation 2:** Develop training strategies that ensure that key elements of any training are shared with all relevant staff in the institution and across institutions.

**Recommendation 3:** Either reissue the handbooks and combine with training, using this training as its pilot, or, if funding is unavailable, develop a training brief for schools and offices involving an orientation of one or two hours, to accompany a reissue of the teachers' handbook.

**Recommendation 4:** Develop and deliver a training module on how to use a principled bilingual approach, so that teachers understand both the benefits and the dangers of the approach.

**Recommendation 5:** Introduce the Bridging Course in all settlements that receive refugee children so that the English of those who need it can be developed to a level at which they can use it for study purposes.

**Recommendations 6:** Encourage DIS and WIU to follow up on the school plans at regular intervals to ensure implementation of the ideas.



# Appendix: Comparison of findings in 2018, 2020 and 2022

Note that, although the second research report is dated 2021 for reference purposes, the data was collected in 2020.

**Table 5: Comparison of findings in 2018, 2020 and 2022**

Key findings	2018	2020	2022
Sample size	30 schools 198 teachers 671 learners	24 schools 615 learners 120 teachers	34 schools 285 teachers 459 learners
% of lessons observed that used at least two languages	33%	63%	79% (88% of those trained)
% of lessons observed using a local language as the Lol	15%	1.5%	0
Teachers who approved of using two languages	N/A	76%	79% (95.5% of those trained)
Teachers who said you should only use English when teaching English	N/A	45%	36% (28% of trained)
Learners who said that only one language was used in their lessons	38%	N/A	17%
Placement procedures and parental involvement	26% involved parents but in FGD 88% of parents complained of lack of involvement in placement		
Received free English tuition according to learners	N/A	20%	34%
Learners support each other in class	N/A	36%	34%
Over-age children	18% over-aged by 3 yrs	60% 3+years over-age	Average of 3.4 years over-age

**To what extent are these comparisons valid?**

The three pieces of research did not set out to provide data across time and this is not a cohort study, therefore the trends that appear should be seen as indicators rather than hard evidence. However, the methods of data collection and the actual sampling of settlements and schools does allow for some valid comparisons because:

1. The tools used were very similar and designed in the same way
2. The enumerators were of a similar background and their training was also similar
3. All the four settlements and Kampala used in 2022 had also been used either in the 2020 or the 2018 research
4. The lead researcher/consultant remained the same across the three studies

**Key trends that can be discerned**

1. Clearly increasing use of a bilingual approach over time in classes at all levels
2. Teachers increasingly accepting of the value of using a familiar language with learners
3. A reduction in the use of a local or familiar language as the Language of Instruction in lower primary in recognition of the mix of languages
4. Increasing use of extra classes, especially extra English
5. Children always support each other in class whether the teacher encourages this or not
6. Sadly, no apparent improvements in avoiding so many over-age children – if anything, the problem is now worse than in the 2018 sample



