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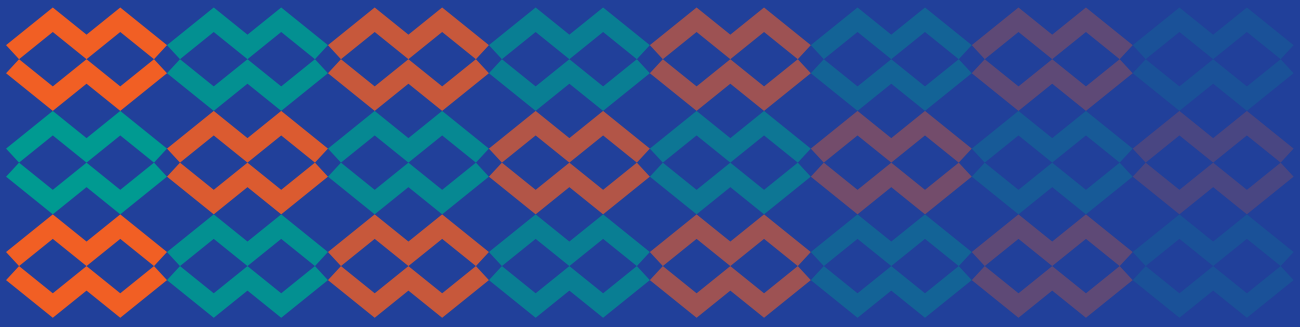
POLICY BRIEF

Future-Ready Classrooms

Strengthening teacher competencies for global citizenship, AI readiness and employability in Nigeria's foundational classrooms.



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Executive Summary

Nigeria's education system faces a dual challenge: building strong foundational literacy and numeracy, while preparing children for a digital, interconnected and changing economy.
National evidence indicates that only about one quarter of Nigerian children aged 7–14 demonstrate foundational reading or numeracy skills, while digital capability is also uneven, fewer than half of teachers have basic ICT skills, and 78% of Nigerian youth lack digital literacy skills.

This brief argues that Nigeria should strengthen teacher development through a proposed **Integrated Teacher Competency Framework (ITCF)** that embeds Global Citizenship Education, age-appropriate AI readiness and employability-related competencies within existing foundational instruction, changing what teachers do, not simply what they know.

THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT

The ITCF should change what teachers do in classrooms, not simply what teachers know.

27%
of children aged 7–14 have core reading skills (MICS 2021)

<50%
of teachers have basic ICT skills

78%
of Nigerian youth lack digital literacy skills

5
linked reforms recommended, phased from pilot to scale

SECTION 01

The Policy Context

Foundational learning remains the basis for later educational attainment, but the competencies required to use that foundation effectively are changing. Nigeria's learning crisis is substantial: UNICEF's 2024 Situation Analysis reports that only 27% of children aged 7–14 had core reading skills and 25% had foundational numeracy skills in the MICS 2021 assessment.

The same evidence shows large inequalities by residence and household wealth.

At the same time, Nigeria's education system is confronting a digital and skills transition. UNICEF reports that only 7% of Nigerian 15–24-year-olds had ICT skills in the 2023 education fact sheets, while more recent reporting indicates that fewer than half of teachers possess basic ICT skills. These figures do not mean that every classroom should become technology-intensive, they indicate that teachers need sufficient digital and pedagogical competence to help learners navigate technology critically and responsibly.

27%
core reading skills, ages 7–14

25%
foundational numeracy skills

7%
of youth 15–24 had ICT skills

Nigeria already has a policy foundation for teacher competency development. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria's Professional Standards for the Teaching Profession in Nigeria moved towards competency-based assessment, organising expectations around professional knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and conduct. The proposed ITCF should therefore be positioned as an **integrating layer** that connects existing professional standards with emerging competencies rather than as a competing teacher standard system.

THE POLICY OPPORTUNITY

Not to add another standalone programme but to make existing teacher standards, foundational learning priorities and emerging digital/civic competencies more coherent at the classroom level.

SECTION 02

Lessons from Lugbe & other local contexts

Local evidence illustrates why teacher development needs to be practical, continuous and connected to classroom realities. A case-study dissertation of public schools in Abuja sampled 62 teachers from L.E.A. Primary School and Lugbe Primary and Junior Secondary School in the Garki School District.

LUGBE CASE STUDY · OKAFOR, 2014

Training exists — but not regularly

80.6% of respondents reported their schools had organised teacher training at some point, but 46.8% reported their last training had occurred two to four years earlier, and a further 17.7% reported more than four years since their last training. In addition, 32.3% had not attended a professional training seminar in the previous 15 months.

80.6%

schools had held training at some point

46.8%

last trained 2–4 years earlier

96.8%

agreed training enhanced performance

The Lugbe evidence should be interpreted cautiously, it is a small, older, localised study and does not constitute representative evidence for the FCT or Nigeria as a whole. Its value is diagnostic: it demonstrates the difference between the existence of teacher training and the regularity of teacher professional learning. The policy challenge is not teacher resistance to professional development, but the consistency, relevance and continuity of provision.

More recent Nigerian evidence points in the same direction. UNICEF's Learning Lab model, implemented in 12 schools across Borno, Kaduna and Lagos, moved away from cascade training towards school-based professional development involving instructional leadership teams, mentoring, collaborative inquiry and classroom problem-solving directly addressing the gap between attending training and applying new
practices.

Evidence from north-east Nigeria also shows the importance of connecting teacher development to concrete instructional practice. UNICEF's Teaching at the Right Level work in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe trained teachers to assess learners by learning level and regroup them accordingly. The implication for ITCF is that new competencies should be embedded through specific pedagogical routines rather than delivered as abstract concepts.

SECTION 03

Integrating GCED, AI readiness & employability

The case for integration is not that literacy and numeracy have become less important, the opposite is true: strong literacy and numeracy are prerequisites for critical reasoning, digital participation, further learning and employment. The policy problem is that future-ready competencies are often treated as **additional subjects or projects** rather than as ways of strengthening how foundational learning is taught.

Evidence from Nigeria supports a more integrated approach to digital and skills development. The Nigeria Learning Passport, for example, provides curriculum-aligned materials to learners, teachers and parents and has been used alongside foundational literacy and numeracy approaches. UNICEF reports that teachers using the platform described improvements in their knowledge and teaching skills.

THE ANALYTICAL IMPLICATION

Integration reduces the distance between competency policy and classroom action. These are not separate lessons — they are dimensions of stronger teaching and learning.

01 **GCED becomes meaningful**

When learners use literacy to examine perspectives, identity, rights or community problems.

02 **AI readiness becomes meaningful**

When learners and teachers practise source evaluation, privacy, bias awareness and responsible use of digital tools.

03 **Employability becomes meaningful**

When learners communicate, collaborate, solve problems and apply knowledge to authentic tasks.

The ITCF should therefore be understood as an instructional integration mechanism. It does not claim that one framework automatically produces learning gains. Rather, it establishes the conditions under which teachers can deliberately connect foundational learning with broader competencies, and under which those practices can be observed, supported and assessed.

SECTION 04

The Integrated Teacher Competency Framework

The proposed ITCF provides a coherent structure for translating foundational learning, GCED, AI readiness and employability into teacher practice. Its central proposition is that teacher competencies should be expressed as **observable classroom behaviours,** supported through aligned professional development, resources, leadership and assessment.

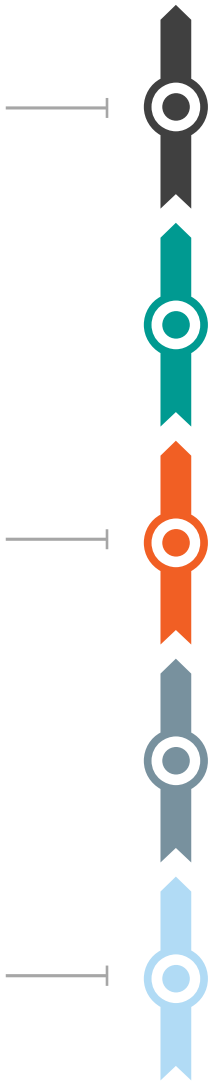
The framework is preferable to separate interventions for three reasons: it reduces implementation burden by giving teachers one coherent instructional model; it allows the same classroom activity to develop several complementary learner outcomes; and it creates a single professional-learning architecture through which teachers can receive guidance, practise, receive feedback and improve

Five components of teacher practice

0.1

Strengthening Foundational Pedagogy

Explicit, learner-centred and inclusive approaches that build reading, writing, numeracy, communication and socio-emotional development — made cognitively demanding and connected to authentic problems.



0.2

Embedding Global Citizenship Education Across Subjects

GCED embedded through age-appropriate discussion, texts, examples and problem-solving, e.g. a reading lesson on community cooperation asking learners to identify perspectives and propose a response.

0.3

Building Teacher AI Readiness

Human-centred and ethical use, AI foundations, critical evaluation, data privacy, bias and AI-assisted pedagogy aligned to UNESCO's 2024 AI Competency Framework for Teachers.

0.4

Connecting Learning with Employability Skills

Communication, teamwork, creativity, adaptability and problem-solving embedded into routine classroom tasks responding to persistent skills mismatches identified by the ILO.

0.5

Reflective Teaching & Competency-Based Assessment

Formative assessment that identifies not only whether learners know an answer, but how they reason, communicate, collaborate and apply knowledge.

SECTION 05

Current vs. proposed practice

The central distinction is between a fragmented model in which GCED, digital/AI skills and employability are added through separate initiatives, and an integrated model in which teachers develop these competencies through the same foundational learning cycle.

Dimension	Current / fragmented practice	Proposed ITCF practice
Policy design	Delivered through separate projects or curriculum additions.	One competency architecture connects priorities to foundational learning.
Teacher development	Topic-specific, with limited connection between interventions.	Organised around shared classroom competencies and observable practices.
Classroom practice	Literacy/numeracy dominate; broader competencies appear intermittently.	Taught through inquiry, ethical reasoning, collaboration and problem-solving.
AI readiness	Interpreted as learning to operate digital tools.	Critical evaluation, privacy, bias, human agency and age-appropriate use.
Employability	Introduced later or as a separate skills programme.	Transferable skills practised through everyday learning tasks.
Assessment	Emphasis on academic attainment and recall.	Formative assessment plus selected competency indicators.

The comparison does not imply that every existing intervention should be discontinued, specialist programmes may still be necessary. The policy objective is to create a common instructional spine so that separate initiatives reinforce, rather than compete with, one another.

The mechanism of change

National standards & framework → teacher preparation & professional learning → classroom planning and modelling → learner practice through integrated tasks → formative assessment and feedback → teacher reflection and adaptation → **stronger learner competencies.**

ITCF input	Teacher practice	Learner experience	Indicative outcome
Competency-aligned professional learning	Plans lessons around a clear objective	Engages with a meaningful task	Greater relevance & engagement
Classroom exemplars/ resources	Models reading, reasoning, collaboration	Practises the target competency	Improved application of knowledge
Formative assessment	Checks understanding & competency	Receives feedback and revises work	Improved learning & metacognition
Coaching/reflection	Reviews evidence and adapts instruction	Receives more responsive instruction	More consistent classroom practice

SECTION 06

Strategic recommendations

Implementation should be phased and coordinated rather than introduced as another standalone programme. Organised across five linked reforms connecting policy, teacher education, classroom practice and monitoring, requiring no new legislation to act on.

1. **Align ITCF with national teacher standards.** Map the five ITCF domains against TRCN professional standards; define observable classroom indicators. 0–6 months · TRCN, FME, NERDC.

2. **Embed ITCF in pre-service and in-service teacher education.** Revise modules, practicum tasks and CPD content; train teacher educators. 6–18 months · NCCE, universities, Colleges of Education.

3. **Develop practical classroom resources.** Produce exemplar lessons showing how literacy/numeracy can incorporate GCED, AI readiness and transferable skills. 3–12 months · NERDC, state/FCT boards

4. **Establish school-based professional learning and coaching.** Create teacher learning communities; schedule lesson study and peer observation. 6–24 months · State/FCT education authorities, school leaders.

5. **Align assessment and monitoring.** Add selected competency indicators to formative assessment and programme monitoring. 12–24 months · FME, NERDC, UBEC/state boards.

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

- Start with a small number of representative schools, including an urban/peri-urban community such as Lugbe, before wider scale-up.
- Use baseline classroom observations and teacher competency self-assessments before training.
- Build low-tech delivery options so implementation does not depend on continuous internet access.
- Review implementation after 6 and 12 months and revise before statewide expansion.

SECTION 07

Expected outcomes & implementation risks

The ITCF should be evaluated at three levels: **teacher outcomes** (confidence and demonstrated competence across the five domains), **classroom outcomes** (more frequent inquiry, contextualised tasks and formative feedback), and **learner outcomes** (stronger literacy and numeracy alongside transferable competencies).

3
levels of evaluation: teacher, classroom, learner

6 & 12
month review checkpoints before scale-up

0
new legislation required to act on recommendations

These outcomes should be treated as hypotheses to test rather than guaranteed effects. Monitoring should distinguish between whether the framework was implemented as intended and whether learner outcomes changed.

Implementation risks and mitigation

Risk	Why it matters	Mitigation
Framework overload	Teachers may experience ITCF as another set of requirements.	Keep it small; a limited set of observable practices integrated into existing lessons.
Technology access gaps	Unequal connectivity can widen rather than close digital gaps.	Use offline/low-tech alternatives; don't make AI tool use a prerequisite for AI readiness.
Weak teacher preparation	Teachers may understand terminology without changing practice.	Use modelling, rehearsal, classroom observation and coaching.
Fragmented governance	Multiple agencies may create parallel training demands.	Assign one coordinating body; map ITCF against existing standards.
Assessment distortion	Teachers may teach to competency indicators without improving learning.	Maintain literacy/numeracy as core measures; use competency indicators selectively.
Evidence limitations	Existing Nigeria/Lugbe evidence does not establish ITCF's causal effect.	Use phased pilots, baseline/endline measurement and implementation research.

SECTION 08

Conclusion

Nigeria does not need to choose between foundational learning and preparation for a changing world. The policy challenge is to strengthen the teaching of foundational literacy and numeracy while making classroom learning more relevant to citizenship, digital transformation and future work.

What the ITCF changes

It translates broad policy priorities into teacher competencies and observable classroom practices. Its advantage over separate interventions is coherence: teachers can use the same instructional activities to strengthen academic foundations, critical thinking, collaboration, ethical reasoning, digital judgement and problem-solving.

What the evidence shows

The evidence from Nigeria; national learning data, school-based professional development initiatives and the local Lugbe case, suggests the critical issue is not simply whether teachers receive training, but whether professional learning is relevant, sustained and connected to classroom practice.

The policy priority should be to align standards, teacher education, resources, coaching and assessment around **one coherent competency framework,** test the model locally, learn from implementation, and scale what works.

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SECTION 09

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