

PRESS RELEASE

British Council to Host its Flagship New Directions Sub Saharan Africa Conference in Nairobi, Kenya

Tuesday 10 September 2024 – The British Council today announced it will for the first time host its flagship New Directions Conference to be held in Nairobi, Kenya on 24 – 26 September 2024. This is the first time the conference will be hosted in Africa. The conference is an opportunity to bring the professional language testing and learning community together to engage on challenges and trends affecting the education and assessment systems in Sub Saharan Africa and beyond.

The New Directions conference aims to showcase innovative language testing and policy work in the region and put Sub Saharan Africa scholars and practitioners on the international language learning and assessment map. The conference will explore the theme of ***Rethinking policy and practice for English in complex linguistic landscapes***. The areas of focus will include influencing assessment policy to serve multilingual communities; English and modern African identities; multilingualism and plurilingualism opportunities and challenges; and technology and language assessment and learning in Africa.

The conference will bring together over 200 participants from 18 countries and will run over two days with a packed agenda featuring high profile experts in the field of language and assessment who will cover a range of topics.

The conference will be officially opened by British Council's deputy CEO, Kate Ewart-Biggs and the Country Director Kenya, Tom Porter alongside the new Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Director, Lucy Pearson. Plenary speakers and panellists expected at the conference include Dr David Njengere, Kenya National Examinations Council; Prof. Leketi Makalela, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa; Prof. Barry O'Sullivan, British Council; and Dr. Harry Kuchah Kuchah, University of Birmingham; among others.

Keshav Sreedharan, Regional Director of Exams, British Council, said: *“This year’s New Directions, Sub Saharan Africa conference will explore questions around what English could look like and how it will be used. We will discuss what broader competencies are necessary in a rapidly changing and digitally enabled communication landscape, and how these can be developed and assessed in the future. We will also explore the potential changes of language education policy and reform in Kenya and the wider Sub-Saharan Africa region. Additionally, the conference, will provide a platform to share global perspectives about the future of English with partners, thought leaders, teachers and learners around the world.”*

Tom Porter, Country Director, British Council Kenya, said: *“The New Directions conference serves as a dynamic platform for fostering collaboration, driving innovation and developing sustainable solutions that empower educational institutions. By bringing together educators, policymakers and experts to exchange transformative ideas, we reinforce our shared commitment to creating a brighter future for education in the region. We have a longstanding partnership with the Ministry of Education and support efforts to enhance core skills assessment.”*

For more information on New Directions Sub Saharan Africa Conference please visit:
<https://www.britishcouncil.co.ke/programmes/new-directions-sub-saharan-africa-2024>

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About British Council:

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. We do this through our work in arts and culture, education and the English language. We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2022–23 we reached 650 million people. www.britishcouncil.org

Speakers and Panellists at New Directions Conference

Professor Leketi Makalela: Leketi Makalela is a full professor and founding Director of the Hub for Multilingual Education and Literacies at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. He is a Distinguished Visiting Professor at City University of New York. His research areas include translanguaging, multilingual education and literacies. He pioneered a globally acclaimed theoretical model: “ubuntu translanguaging” and its pedagogical equivalent, “ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy”.

Dr Alessia Cogo: Dr Alessia Cogo is Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics and Editor-in-Chief of ELT Journal. She researches English diversity, English as a Lingua Franca and translanguaging from a sociolinguistic perspective and in relation to teacher education and critical language pedagogy. She is the director of the Centre for Multilingualism with English and has been involved in EMI projects in Brazil and Thailand, exploring language practices from a social justice and decolonised perspective.

Dr Kadidja Koné: Kadidja holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and a Master's in TESOL and an alumna of Fulbright and African Futures Research Leadership Program at Michigan State University. She's an asst. professor of TESOL at Ecole Normale d'Enseignement Technique et Professionnel and University of Arts and Humanities, Mali. Her research includes 2nd language assessment, literacy development, and directed motivational currents. A guest co-editor of the journal Language Learning and Technology.

Dr Mary Goretti Nakabugo: Mary Goretti is Executive Director of Uwezo Uganda. She is a board member and secretary of the [Regional Education Learning Initiative Africa \(RELI Africa\)](http://Regional Education Learning Initiative Africa (RELI Africa)) and co-principal investigator of its programme on Assessment & Action for Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE). She is on the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) Advisory Board. Research interests include assessment for learning, education and international development, teacher education, and curriculum development.

Dr Mwajuma Vuzo: Mwajuma Siana Vuzo is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. She has a PhD in Education and Master of Philosophy in International and Comparative Education both from the University of Oslo, Norway. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of Dar es Salaam. She has interest in the transformation of African education and contributing to sustainable education in language education.

Mr Kedir Urji: Kedir is an ICT Specialist at the Ministry of Education, working under the ICT and Digital Education Office. He has a bachelor's degree in computer science from Haramaya University and a master's degree from Ambo University. Mr Urji has recently completed a master class certificate on Foundations for Excellence in Teaching Online from Arizona State University.

Professor Abdelmajid Bouziane: Abdelmajid Bouziane is an Emeritus Professor of education at Hassan II University of Casablanca. He specialises in research on learning and teaching (foreign) languages. He has published on EFL in journals and books in Morocco and elsewhere. He is interested in EFL, ICT in education, teachers' associations, research methods, and quality in (higher) education. He served as the ELTeCS (English Language Teaching Contacts Scheme) editor for Africa and the Middle East from 2003 to 2019.

Professor Barry O'Sullivan: Barry is the British Council's Head of English Language Research. He has worked on test development and validation projects globally and advises ministries and institutions on assessment policy and practice. He is the founding president of the UK Association of Language Testing and Assessment, holds a visiting professorship at the University of Reading, UK, and is Advisory Professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China. He was awarded an OBE for his contribution to language testing.

Professor Lina Mukhopadhyay: Dr Lina is Professor, Department of Training and Development, School of English Language Education at The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India. She researches in multilingual education, second language acquisition, language assessment and teaching young language learners. At present, she is working on multiple projects in collaboration with the University of Cambridge on multilingual education, teacher training, and multilingual assessment in India.

Wanjiru Koinange: Writer of *The Havoc of Choice* and co-founder of Book Bunk, Kenya. Wanjiru holds a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and Literature from United States International University, Nairobi, and a Master in Creative Writing from the University of Cape Town. Wanjiru has contributed to journals like Chimurenga and Commonwealth Writers. Inspired by her 2015 article on the McMillan Memorial Library, she co-founded Book Bunk in 2017, a non-profit that has renovated key Nairobi libraries and is now digitising McMillan's collection.

Dr David Njengere: Dr Njengere, MBS, is the CEO of the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC). He holds a PhD in Education, a Master in English, a Bachelor's in English and Literature from Moi University and a Postgraduate Diploma in Curriculum Design from UNESCO and Open University of Tanzania. He has led the Council in strategic partnerships, policy development and a shift towards competency-based assessment. Under his leadership, KNEC has focused on restructuring and leveraging ICT for effective implementation. Dr Njengere has played a key role in piloting the TOEFL Junior test programme for assessing language skills among primary school learners in Kenya.

Dr Michael Tusiime: Michael Tusiime is Head of Department in Charge of Examination and Accreditation at the Rwanda Education Board and also the Coordinator of ICQN-TL and the Network of African Learning Assessments (NALA). Dr. Tusiime is a Fulbright Alumni and a faculty Member at the University of Rwanda College of Education. Michael specialises in learning assessment and curriculum development. His other research interests include teacher professionalisation, agency, language and identity. Before his current role, Michael was Head of the National Examination and Accreditation Agency. He is a principal investigator of the USAID-funded Language of Instruction Transition and other projects focusing on transformative education.