



# Gambia

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## Principles and general objectives of education

According to the “Revised Education Policy 1988–2003”, The Gambia's most precious resource is its people; a wealth that must be developed for the good of the individual and the nation alike. In recognition of the fact that investment in education is key to economic growth, and cognisance of the fact that by increasing the productivity of a people, education contributes to better income distribution and the reduction of poverty, in May 1996 the Government published *Vision 2020*, a statement of policies which aims: “to transform The Gambia into a financial centre, a tourist paradise, a trading, export-oriented, agricultural and manufacturing nation, thriving on free market policies and a vibrant private sector, sustained by a well-educated, trained, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population, and guaranteeing a well-balanced ecosystem and a decent standard of living for one and all, under a system of government based on the consent of the citizenry.”

Education is also regarded as an essential service to improving people’s well being and their capacity to better themselves and improve their environment. In recognition of this fact, The Gambia continues to strive to provide equal educational opportunities for all its citizens. Based on these guidelines and the economic development prospects of the country, the ten basic aims of education in The Gambia are:

- to promote a broad based education which will enable learners to develop their full potential and thereby contribute to life in their community and the nation at large;
- to provide opportunities for all to acquire literacy, vocational and life skills and to utilize these skills in order to earn a living and become economically self-reliant members of the community;
- to develop the physical and mental skills which will contribute to nation building economically, socially and culturally in a sustainable environment;
- to encourage creativity and a critical mind;
- to further an understanding and appreciation of the contribution which science and technology can make to development;
- to cultivate sound moral, religious and ethical values;
- to develop a healthy body and an appreciation of the value of a healthy mind;
- to create an awareness of the importance of peace, democracy and human rights and the responsibility of the individual in fostering these qualities;



- to foster an appreciation of and respect for the cultural heritage of the country; and
- to promote a sense of service, loyalty, integrity and dedication to the nation.

## Current educational priorities and concerns

Western education was introduced in The Gambia by missionaries in the nineteenth century, but because it was seen by the rural population (which is predominantly Muslim) as a tool for converting their children to Christianity, it was, to a very large extent, resisted (CSD, 1995). For the British colonial government, education was intended as a means of fostering language links between the colonial administration and its subjects. Consequently, only one school was established in the rural area to prepare the sons of chiefs mainly for leadership. For a very long time, educational facilities were concentrated in the urban area and as a result, the majority of children in the rural area did not have access to education. In fact, on attainment of independence in February 1965, the urban area formed approximately 13% of the total population, yet had 44% of the primary schools and 86% of the secondary schools. This was a trend that continued until the inception of the 1988–2003 policy, which aimed at increasing access to, and improving the quality and relevance of education.

The Gambia is a small West African State with a total land area of about 11,000 km<sup>2</sup>. With a population of 1.038 million (1993 census) growing at a rate of 4.2% per annum, it is estimated that by 2015 the population would reach 1.7 million. This, together with a population density of about 97 per km<sup>2</sup>, makes the country one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. Fertility rates recorded in the 1993 census and in the year 2000 have been persistently high at 6.4 and 6.0 children per woman, respectively. Infant mortality has dropped from 167 per thousand in 1993 to 75 in 1999, while life expectancy has increased to 53 years in 1999. Literacy rates are considerably low (37.1% for male and 25% for female). While Gross National Product (GNP) per capita stands at about US\$320 (2002), the incidence of poverty is still high leaving 29.7% of the population as extremely poor and 20% of households as extremely poor.

These unfavourable social and economic indicators, particularly the high population growth rate, puts a lot of strain on resources for the social sectors and make The Gambia a country that needs to put significant emphasis on education, if any meaningful gains should be made or improvements are to be achieved. Therefore, the following serves as Government's priorities in the education sector:

- improving access to, and the quality of, mainstream schooling and vocational skills training;
- paying increased attention to special needs education;
- increasing access to and equity in basic education;
- increasing participation, performance and retention rates for girls;



- improving the quality of teaching and learning;
- strengthening early childhood educational services;
- increasing access to adult and non-formal education;
- meeting appropriate learning and life skills for young people;
- improving access to higher education.

As part of the revision of the 1988–2003 Education Policy, which followed a wide range of grassroots consultations, and the Education Master Plan 1998–2006 was prepared, and a Public Expenditure Review for the education sector was carried out in 1996/97 and updated in 2001. The strategy and policies established then still constitute the driving force for education management. To achieve the Education for All (EFA) objectives, the following four key strategies are still being vigorously pursued: restructuring the school system to a 9–3–4 system (basic, secondary, tertiary), merging primary and lower secondary into a unified basic cycle, without a transitional examination; maximize resources for education; train education sector personnel; and improve management of the sector.

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The provision of education in The Gambia is guided by **The Laws of The Gambia 1963**, Chapter 46, and the **Education Act** passed by Act of Parliament in 1992. The Education Act, which has also repealed Cap 46, 47:04, and Cap 48:01 of the 1963 Act and saved all other sections of the Act, provides the basis for “the management and development of educational services in The Gambia, the registration of teachers and control of schools and to make provisions for matters connected therewith”.

The **Constitution of the Republic of the Gambia** was approved in a national referendum on 8 August 1996, and came into effect on 16 January 1997. The Constitution makes education a fundamental human right indicating that “All persons have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities [...]”, and that “basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all.” (Section 30). The Constitution also indicates an undertaking, by government, to make secondary education (including technical and vocational education) and higher education accessible to all.

Despite these provisions in the Constitution, however, basic education is only ‘non-fee paying, with households having to bear the educational expenses related to school lunches, uniforms and learning materials. Consequently, basic education is not yet made compulsory.

In April 2002, the **Local Government Reform Act** was passed. This Act prepares the way for the management of schools at the decentralized levels under a new dispensation. According to the Act, Part IV, Section 66, the sole authority, for the establishment of schools within local government areas, shall be the Council for the area. The educational services under the jurisdiction of the Councils include



establishment and management of Council schools and, monitoring the establishment and operations of all educational and training facilities to ensure compliance with national policy guidelines. Schools, as defined in this Act, are basic cycle schools (Grades 1–9), lower basic schools (Grades 1–6), upper basic schools (Grades 7–9), secondary schools (Grades 10–12), non-formal education schools, *Madrassas* and early childhood centres.

When the Act becomes fully operational with the passage of the Finance and Audit Bill, the Secretary of State for Education will transfer to local government authorities the responsibility of opening and managing all public schools, while the private schools will be monitored to ensure compliance to national policies. This will also lead to the transfer of all budgetary provisions for schools to the local government authorities within the jurisdiction of which the schools are located.

## Administration and management of the education system

Responsibility for the management and co-ordination of the education sector rests with the **Department of State for Education** (Revised Policy). This responsibility is being carried out through structures at both central and regional levels. At the central level, five Directorates, each with a specific function that responds to the Department's vision, has been created.

The political head of the Department of State for Education is the Secretary of State for Education in whom ultimate powers over education in The Gambia are vested. The Permanent Secretary is the Chief Executive (Accounting Officer) and adviser to the Secretary of State for Education and oversees the management of all directorates, units and regional offices of the Department. The Deputy Permanent Secretary assists in the administrative and financial management functions of the Department and acts for the Permanent Secretary as and when necessary.

The following Directorates are each headed by a Director who advises the Permanent Secretary on technical and professional matters pertinent to their areas of responsibility: Planning, Budgeting, Policy Analysis and Research; Information Technology and Human Resource Development; Basic Education (Grades 1–9), also in charge of adult and non-formal education; Science and Technology, in charge of secondary (Grades 10–12), tertiary, and technical and vocational education; Standards and Quality Assurance.

Under the Department of State for Education, in a second administrative tier, are six **Regional Offices** responsible for education in the regions. There are six educational regions in The Gambia each headed by a **Principal Education Officer**. These Education Officers are answerable to the Permanent Secretary. Currently, they are being upgraded to **Regional Directorates** to be headed by Regional Directors who will be part of a local government authority as part of the local government reforms.

Notwithstanding the government's role as the main provider of educational services, the NGOs, private organizations and Missions supplement governments' efforts in different ways. While NGOs provide financial assistance to needy students, and books and learning materials to students in remote parts of the country, private



organizations and Missions open and run schools to cater for students in the urban area. With the government's assistance in the form of grants, Missions also operate schools in the rural areas.

## Structure and organization of the education system

During the first half of the 1988–2003 education policy implementation, the structure of the education system consisted of six years of primary, three years of junior secondary, and three years of senior secondary education. However, in 1996, following the revision of the policy, government committed itself to providing nine years of uninterrupted basic education to all. Hence all interventions were geared towards the provision of basic education.

### Pre-school education

Pre-school education (early childhood education) caters to children aged 3–6 and is mainly delivered by the private sector whilst the government provides policy guidelines on early childhood development and contributes, through assistance from development partners, to the training of early childhood teachers. Its provision is mainly an urban phenomenon. During the 1998/99 school year, about 72% of children enrolled in early childhood centres lived in the two most urban centres (i.e. Regions I and 2).

### Primary education

Children enter primary school at the age of 7. Primary education lasted six years, at the end of which pupils sat a selective entrance examination called the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE) in order to proceed to the second level. Before the PSLCE was phased out completely in the 2002, figures from the Department of State for Education indicate that about 80% of the children from Grade VI transit to Grade VII. The remaining 20% drop out or enrol in skill centres or vocational institutions, the majority of which are privately owned and found mainly in the urban area. The new basic education programme lasts nine years divided into two cycles: lower basic (Grades I–VI) and upper basic (Grades VII–IX).

### Secondary education

Senior secondary education (Grades X–XII) is for students between the ages of 16 and 18 years. Secondary schools offer a variety of subjects (science, arts, commerce, vocational and technical). Given the diverse number of subjects available at this level, schools are tracked to offer at most three groups of subjects. At the end of Grade XII, students sit the West African Secondary School-leaving Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) conducted by the sub-regional examinations body for West Africa, i.e. the West African Examinations Council.

Tertiary education includes the University of The Gambia and four post-secondary institutions: the Gambia College (GC), the Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI), the Management Development Institute (MDI) and the Gambia Telecommunication and Multimedia Institute (GTMI).



The GC offers three-year teacher-training programmes, as well as training courses in agriculture, livestock, public health, nursing and midwifery. The GTTI offers two-year craft, technician and business training programmes leading to certificates or diplomas in business studies, computer studies, engineering and construction. The MDI provides courses for part-time students only. The University of the Gambia offers courses in four different fields, although the majority of students enrol in the faculty of humanities and social science. Bachelor's degree programmes lasts four years in the case of humanities and social science, economics and management science, and nursing and public health (six years in the case of medicine and surgery).

The Department of State for Education circulates a school calendar annually spelling out the duration of each of the three terms in the academic year and national statutory holidays within each term. All levels and types of schools generally adhere to these schedules. Schools operate an average of thirteen weeks per term, beginning daily at 8:30 a.m. up to 14:00 p.m. from Monday to Thursday, and 12:00 on Fridays. Following the restructuring and expansion of the Education Policy 1988–2003, double shift and afternoon shift systems have been introduced to cater for the increased demand for places. In schools where a double or afternoon shift is operated, the morning session/shift ends at 13:30 p.m. to allow the second shift to begin at 14:00 p.m. until 18:30 p.m.

Schools may lose instructional hours during the first and last weeks of each term due to 'settling down' and end-of-term activities, respectively. Examinations may also consume part of what could have been otherwise instructional time, and schools may conduct two to three examinations annually. These examinations usually take two weeks. The incidence of such loss is more pronounced in public schools, and it is estimated that public schools operate an average of about 674 hours per year. Typically, in an academic year consisting of thirty-nine weeks, about six weeks are lost on average. This is accounted for by one week at the beginning and end of each of the term. Hence, in a typical school year the number of working weeks does not exceed thirty-three five-day weeks.

## **The financing of education**

Though the provision of "basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all" (as enshrined in the Constitution), the demand for education far exceeds its supply and hence the fulfillment of the right for every citizen to education cannot entirely be met by the Government for various reasons. It should be noted that Section 211 of the Constitution, which deals with 'Application of the Directive Principles of State Policy', specifies that these principles shall not confer legal rights or be enforceable in any court and that they are subject to the limits of the economic capacity and development of The Gambia Government. The inability of the Government to provide access to all implies not only that compulsory education cannot be enforced, but also the need to build partnerships with stakeholders to bridge the gap. The basic rationale for private participation in the delivery of educational services is largely to relieve increasing pressure on the public education system and to provide options to individuals in a free market economy.



The Government is entirely responsible for the financing of public schools and provides a grant to assisted schools, commonly referred to as ‘grant-aided schools’ from general public revenue, while the private schools are solely financed from collection of fees and other funds that they receive or raise through their own efforts or means. Government spending on education covers salaries, infrastructure, teaching-learning materials and other operational expenses in public and grant-aided schools. In these school types, fees are charged, where applicable, at government-regulated rates. The legislation provides for private schools to charge fees to offset operational costs at levels they deem appropriate.

In support of government efforts and in fulfillment of their social responsibilities and mandates or missions, local government authorities, NGOs, the private sector and development partners/donors provide significant financial aid (in cash or kind) to all types of schools—government, assisted and private schools. Data on government funding in education is contained in the annual government’s recurrent and development expenditure estimates. However, data on the levels of financing by other sources is scanty at best or non-existent, as the Education Public Expenditure Review captures only funds channeled through the government. This excludes funds directly flowing to schools, including government and assisted schools, particularly from NGOs and the private sector.

Government financing is based on policy priorities albeit predicated on the economic environment. Like in many developing countries, over the years the economy has suffered a series of adverse shocks, some undue fiscal policy expansion, increased structural weakness and a weakened private sector confidence. In spite of these difficulties, the Government has remained committed to the education sector. Total government expenditure on education during the late 1990s and early twenty-first century reflects an increased public allocation to education.

At the dawn of independence, the fee for primary education was 2.50 Gambia Dalasi (GMD) per annum (Education Policy 1961–1965). Free tuition but non-compulsory primary education was introduced in the country through the 1976–86 Education Policy. Within the framework of the 1988–2003 Policy, textbooks are provided free through a recycling scheme. The Government provides for teaching-learning materials and other inputs. However, parents bear costs such as uniforms, exercise books, school lunches, and private tuition/coaching amongst others. Schools, in consultation with Parent Teachers Associations, may also levy a ‘school fund’ for development projects.

Household expenditure on education shows the extent to which the burden of paying for education weighs on the poor. Household expenditure can serve as proxy for income levels and hence used to measure poverty levels. A person (or household) is considered poor if the persons (or the household’s) income cannot acquire the basket of goods, services and rights. Despite years of intervention, poverty is on the increase in the country; extreme poverty having risen from 15% in 1992 to 51% in 1998, with urban poverty increasing from 9% to 22% compared to 41% and 61% rural poverty, respectively, over the same period. With this level of poverty, it is not surprising that 90.6% of lower basic schools are government-owned (6.7% Missions and 2.7% private).



Direct public financial support and/or subsidies are only given to government and grant-aided schools. Private schools, however, may receive land allocation from the government and tax exemption for imported educational materials. While public schools rely on government finance, private schools levy fees as a main source of revenue. The grant-aided schools receive a subsidy based on a rationalized categorization system to ensure equity. The system categorizes schools into various curricula/subject combination paths (science, arts, technical and commerce) and allocates resources based on enrolment bands of schools. The Government also subsidizes other tertiary-level institutions namely the Gambia College (the only teacher-training college), the Gambia Technical Training Institute, the Management Development Institute, and the Hotel Training School. It also provides grants/open scholarships to individual students at the upper basic, secondary and tertiary levels based on merit.

Public finances are provided largely for equity reasons but benefits accrue to only those who have access to public services, and therefore targeting of subsidies to maximize impact is critical. The poor households subsequently have more school-aged children, but proportionately lesser enrolment figures. The most pronounced deterrent to educating the poor is the cost burden. A qualitative research conducted by the Central Statistics Department reports that: "Poverty in the households causes some children to repeat classes or drop out of school. Poor parents are unable to pay book rental fees leaving the child without books; they are unable to pay for exercise books and pencils, and provide the child with candles for studying in the night." (CSD, 1995, p. 46).

The 1998 Household Survey reports that the poorest household quintile spends 7.77% of household expenditure for school-related costs at the primary level compared to 1.70% for the richest households. The richest quintile, with 70% of children in school, could afford to spend much more on items such as school uniform and transport and private tuition/coaching. The ability of households to spend on books and learning materials and make other educational expenditures that have a direct bearing on student performance/achievement levels depends on their income levels. Government subsidies on education must therefore be targeted to create opportunities for poor households in un-reached areas and equally offset their expenditure on education.

Total expenditures on education have steadily increased over the years reflecting government's continued commitment to attaining basic education for all. Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP increased from 3.1% in 1980 to 4.8% by 1999; while current spending per student as a percentage of per capita GDP at the primary level dropped from 18.4% in 1980 to 13.5% in 1995 (largely attributable to the rapid gains in access at this level as the gross enrolment rate rose from 52.7% to 77.1% over the same period). Education's share of total Government expenditure (excluding debt service) rose from 24% in 1998 to 25% in 2001. As a proportion of overall recurrent spending it varied between 14% and nearly 17%. Compared with GDP, recurrent education spending rose steadily, from 3.2% in 1998 to 4.1% in 2001. Expenditure on vocational and technical education has remained constant in real terms, at about 3% of the recurrent budget. This represents a sharp fall since the 7% in 1990, largely explained by the absence of a comprehensive policy on vocational education and technical training for the sector.





### Recurrent expenditure on education (in millions of GMD)

	1991/92	1994/95	1998
Total recurrent expenditure	476.3	618.3	862.1
Education	80.4	115.3	147.0
of which primary	29.7	46.1	87.5
Education as % of recurrent expenditure	16.9%	18.6%	17.1%
Primary as % of education expenditure	36.9%	40.0%	59.5%

The development/capital budget is largely financed through loans and grants from development partners. However, most capital expenditures are co-financed between government (Government Counterpart Funds) and donor agencies. Traditional development partners in education include the IDA, UNICEF, European Union (EU), the Department for International Development (DFID), the African Development Bank (ADB), UNESCO, and OPEC. The IDA has been the lead development partner in the education sector; its first credit of US\$5.5 million closed on 30 June 1983, the second of US\$14.6 million ended in 1997 and the third amounts to US\$20 million (still active). Alongside the IDA, the EU and the ADB have co-financed these interventions.

Teaching-learning materials are an essential ingredient for quality education. There has been an increase in current spending on teaching materials from 3.9% of budgetary allocation to education in 1985 to 5.7% in 1995, peaking at 6.5% in 1990. The then Directorate of Services, now subsumed within the Projects Co-ordination Unit of the Department, is responsible for the procurement and distribution of school books and other teaching-learning materials through the Major and Minor Tender Boards.

The Major and Minor Tender boards of the Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs regulate public procurement of goods and services. From January 2003, The Gambia Public Procurement Authority has been created to be responsible for the co-ordination of public procurement, using the procurement committees established by each Department of State. The creation of this authority is to ensure efficiency with minimal wastage and transparency.

The distribution of books to schools is coordinated at the regional level by the Regional Education Offices. The introduction of the textbook recycling scheme at the lower basic level and the rental scheme at the upper basic level is aimed at reducing the cost burden of education on households and improve learning outcomes and achievement. The Revised Education Policy 1988–2003 targets a one-to-one pupil book ratio at the lower basic level.



## The educational process

### Pre-primary education

The Department of State for Education (DOSE) is involved in early childhood care and development (ECCD) only at the level of co-ordination of donor/resource mobilization and support; and provision of training for caregivers. It has responsibility of ensuring that all ECCD establishments operate according to prescribed standards. The role of the Government in ECCD is one of co-ordination and supervision of the provision of ECCD on a private basis. This role includes, among other things: (i) developing operational policy guidelines for the opening, management and supervision of ECCD services in consultation with the providers, NGOs and local authorities; (ii) monitoring the quality of education provided; and (iii) assisting in mobilizing community, national and international support for ECCD.

Apart of the DOSE, the only government department that has a direct involvement in terms of funding and supervision of the ECCD centres has been the Department of Community Development, whose support is concentrated in the rural areas.

ECCD in the country is based on the premise that all children share common needs and as such can benefit from a comprehensive development approach that meets those needs. Thus the holistic and integrated approach to ECCD is now emerging as a means of solidifying efforts to secure a bright future for children. The holistic approach views the developmental needs of the whole child across four domains: physical, social emotional, and cognitive. The expansion of ECCD on a more equitable basis is a national priority.

The number of ECCD centres had increased from 125 in 1996/97 to 265 by 1999/2000. Of the 265 ECCD centres, 54.3% are located in the urban areas. Of these, 54% were privately-owned, only 4% were community-owned and the rest (42%), were owned by religious organizations. With an average cost of maintaining a child in these centres ranging from GMD400 (US\$16, based on an exchange rate of US\$1 = GMD25) to GMD1,500 (US\$60) for every three months, it is not surprising that only the privileged elite families that live in the urban areas can afford such services for their children. The burden becomes more prohibitive given a per capita income of US\$320 for an average family size of eleven with up to seven children per household.

The primary focus of these centres is to provide pre-school education. They aim at meeting the developmental needs of children by stimulating them physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and intellectually. Equally important also are the development of the self-esteem and positive feelings towards learning through interactions and appropriate activities as well as the development of language, literacy and numeracy skills.

Some major goals of the ECCD programme include:

- Development of children's social skills through group work, communication and problem solving.



- Development of children's cognitive skills through meaningful activities—play, exploration, experimenting, building blocks, singing, listening and sharing cross-cultural experiences.
- Promotion of children's physical development.
- Language and numeracy skills development.
- Enhancing children's overall development in terms of providing the necessary care, safety, adequate nutrition, safe water, hygiene, and healthy and supportive environment.

There is no unified or standardized curriculum for nursery schools, but they all generally follow similar pedagogic activities. The activities could broadly be categorized under the following: arithmetic, language arts (speaking, written communication reading, writing), science, social studies, art, music, health and safety, and physical education.

Various ECCD centres establish their own contact hours, which take cognizance of the different age groups under their care. The daily activities generally begin between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. and end by mid-day or 13:00 p.m. except for day-care centres, which operate longer hours. Centres follow the government working days and operate from Monday to Friday. Lessons for 3-year-olds generally last 30 minutes but would normally allow for the slow ones to continue unfinished exercises under the supervision of assistant teachers or helpers. For 4-year-olds, lessons could last up to 40 minutes, while the 5–6-year-olds have a one-hour period. The activities are generally child-centred and allow for interactions between learners and their teachers and amongst learners.

Class sizes vary depending on total enrolment and the available space/classrooms. The sizes range from five to ten children per group up to twenty-five in others. Pupil-teacher ratios would vary, but the trend is generally 10:1.

Enrolment data on ECCD is very sketchy and not detailed where it is available. The first comprehensive data on ECD collected by the DOSE were in 1998/99 as part of the EFA 2000 Country Assessment. The gross enrolment rate in 1998 was 17.7% (18% for female and 17.5% for male) with an average enrolment of 113 children per centre.

Children are normally given tests to assess learning achievement using predetermined targets. Achieving these targets allows for the child to proceed to the next stage. Children may stay a few more months at some level before allowing them to progress to the next stage. However, at the age of 7 children transit to the next level of the education system. In order to enhance the efficiency of teaching-learning processes at this level and to improve of teachers performance, the DOSE, through The Gambia College organizes training courses for the facilitators for these centres. The training content covers a wide range of issues related to ECCD including basic care, nutrition, safety, hygiene, leisure and the use of appropriate playthings.



## Primary and lower secondary education (basic education)

During the first half of the 1988–2003 policy implementation, the structure of the education system was six years of primary (lower basic), three years of junior secondary (upper basic), and three years of senior secondary education. Children enter primary school at the age of 7 and proceed to the upper basic at the age of 13.

However, in 1996, following the revision of the policy, the Government committed itself to providing nine years of uninterrupted basic education to all. Hence all interventions were geared towards the provision of basic education. In view of this and the emphasis put on such a structure, the Revised Education Policy states that: “The broad objectives of basic education for the remainder of the policy period up to the year 2003 are, among other things, to increase the gross enrolment ratio in basic education to 85% of 7–15-year-olds, and by taking into account enrolment in *Madrasahs*, improve the quality of education by providing trained teachers, teaching learning materials and, improving learning outcomes, to name a few.”

During the 1990s, a review of instructional materials suggested that the curriculum was over-extended, taking little cognizance of student learning and hardly enforced problem solving on the integrated approach to learning using the thematic strategy. It promoted rather rigid pedagogical approach and teacher centeredness ignoring individual differences and teaching styles. These problems, together with gender stereotyping and cultural bias in the materials led to the review of the curriculum.

The components of the existing curriculum have been integrated to provide a reduced number of courses for the first six-year cycle using a thematic approach to teaching. The second cycle (Grades VII–IX) provides a logical continuation of the work undertaken in Grades I–VI. English, mathematics, science, and social and environmental studies are the core subjects of the nine-year basic education programme.

Schools start at between 8:20 and 8:30 daily from Mondays to Fridays and end between 13:45 and 14:00 from Monday to Thursday, but close at about 11:45 to 12:05 on Fridays. The average number of lessons per week by subject and grade is shown in the tables below. The duration of each lesson varies from school to school. However, the standard time for all categories of schools, is either thirty-five or forty minutes. As a result of this variation, some schools spend five lessons per week in some subjects such as mathematics and English, and reduce the others in order to fit the amount of instructional time available per week.

**First cycle of basic education (lower basic): typical weekly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	4	4
English	4	4	4	4	4	4
Social & environmental studies	4	4	4	4	4	4
Science	4	4	4	4	4	4
Agriculture	2	2	2	2	2	2
Islamic religious knowledge	2	2	2	2	2	2
Art/Crafts	2	2	2	2	2	2
Population/Family life education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Singing	2	2	2	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>

Note: Each teaching period lasts 35–40 minutes.

**Second cycle of basic education (upper basic): typical weekly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	VII	VIII	IX
Mathematics	4	4	4
English	4	4	4
Social & environmental studies	4	4	4
Science	4	4	4
Agriculture	2	2	2
Islamic religious knowledge	2	2	2
Woodwork, metalwork (boys); cookery, needlework (girls)	3	3	3
Home economics	3	3	3
Technical drawing	3	3	3
Art/Crafts	2	2	2
Population/Family life education	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>

Note: Each teaching period lasts 35–40 minutes. A few private schools also offer French (three weekly periods).

In the upper basic schools, there are subjects that run concurrently. For example, woodwork, metalwork, cookery and needlework run concurrently in some schools, so that while the boys are engaged in either woodwork or metalwork, the girls would be doing cookery or needlework. In some schools, however, the timetable caters for students who want to do both woodwork and metalwork. In this case, they are timetabled at different times. Music is not taught as a subject, but in primary schools singing and the memorization of poems is an integral part of the timetable in the lower classes. However, their use becomes less frequent in the upper classes.



In 2001/02, the gross enrolment rate (GER) at the lower basic level was estimated at 75% (90%, if *Madrassas* are included)—73% for girls and 77% for boys. At the upper basic level, the GER was 47% during the same year (40% for girls and 54% for boys). The transition rate from the first cycle to the next three-year cycle was 91% in 2001/02. It is estimated to reach 100% in 2003/04 when the selection entrance examinations (PSLCE) at the end of the first six years is phased out. During the same year, the average class size for the lower basic was 42, but was as high as 50 in Region I. At the upper basic level, the average class size was 41. Repetition and drop-out rates were estimated at 7% and 4%, respectively, in the 2000/01 academic year.

As at the end of the 2000/01 academic year, the PSLCE have been phased out in Regions III to VI. Thus the repetition rates, which were higher at the end of the lower basic cycle, have significantly reduced in all the Regions. In fact in Region IV, which recorded the highest repetition rate of 20% in 1996/97, the rate has reduced to 2% in the year 2000/01. At the national level too, the rate has dropped from 15% to 4% during this period. In 1996/97 a dropout rate of 28% was recorded at the end of Grade VI, which reflected the constraints in the number of places available at the upper basic level which existed before the phasing out of the PSLCE. In 2000/01 however, a promotion rate of 82% and a repetition rate of 4% were recorded implying that only 14% dropped out. With the phasing out of the PSLCE, national examinations of a selection nature will now be restricted to the Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examinations (GABECE) at the end of Grade IX. Curriculum developers develop the teaching syllabuses and the West African Examinations Council office prepares the examination syllabi derived from the teaching syllabi. Internal assessments are school based for purposes of promotion from one grade to the next.

## Secondary education

Senior secondary education caters to students aged 16–18. At this level, in accordance with current practice, new schools are being established as public schools and later converted to grant-aided schools and out-sourced to boards of governors. In addition, computer literacy has been introduced in schools to help familiarize students and teachers alike with basic word processing, spreadsheet operations and procedures to access the Internet and facilitate communication with other students and teachers around the world.

Secondary schools in The Gambia offer a variety of subjects. These subjects are categorized in groups of science, arts, commerce, vocational and technical subjects. Given the diverse number of subjects available at this level, schools are tracked to offer at most three groups of subjects. This implies that a school may opt for the track of science, arts and commerce, in which case students attending that particular school will have the opportunity of studying only the science, arts and commerce related subjects. Irrespective of the track a school belongs to, the following are considered as compulsory subjects: mathematics; English language; one science subject (science, chemistry, physics, biology); one of either literature in English, geography or history; agricultural science or vocational or technical subjects.

The following subjects are offered by a school within the science, commerce and arts track: mathematics, English, science, physics, chemistry, biology, agricultural science, financial accounting, cost accounting, economics, commerce, business

management, statistics, information technology (this is being offered by most senior secondary schools), literature in English, geography, history, Islamic religious knowledge, French, government structure, and physical education. The table below shows the subjects offered to a student (commerce track) attending a school in the science, commerce and arts track.

#### Senior secondary education (commerce track): typical weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	X	XI	XII
Mathematics	5	5	5
English	5	5	5
Science	4	4	4
Financial accounting	4	4	4
Cost accounting	4	4	4
Agricultural science	4	4	4
Geography	4	4	4
Economics	4	4	4
Information technology	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	–
<b>Total weekly periods</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>

Note: Each teaching period lasts 35–40 minutes.

Secondary schools, like the basic education schools, start at about 8:30 a.m. daily and close between 13:45 and 14:00 from Monday to Thursday, depending on whether the school has a single or a double shift. Those engaged in double shift close at 13:45 and the next session starts at 14:00 and runs up to 18:45. On Fridays, schools close at 12:00. Students spend three years at this level, and at the end of Grade XII they sit the West African Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) conducted by the sub-regional examinations body for West Africa—the West African Examinations Council.

Between 1996/97 and 2001/02, enrolments at the senior secondary level increased from 11,981 to 17,181. In 2001/02, there were thirty-seven senior secondary schools, four of which funded directly through the government budget, and fifteen through the grant-in-aid while the rest were private schools. The GER increased from 15% in 1996 to about 21% in 2001/02 (14% for girls and 22% for boys). The transition rate from basic education to senior secondary education is estimated at 59%. The average number of students per class in the secondary schools in 2001/02 is 58, and the student-teacher ratio is 28:1. Repetition and drop-out rates at this level are very low.

#### Assessing learning achievement nationwide

During the first half of the 1988–2003 policy period, there were no targets set for learning achievements and outcomes. The only available measure of achievement was the success rate of individual schools and candidates at selective entrance examinations at the end of grades 6 and 9. Recently, benchmarks have been drawn to clearly define learning outcomes at the lower basic for quality assessment while the annual National Assessment Test (NAT) using a sample size of 25% of pupils in



grades 3 and 5 is now institutionalized to inform the system on pupils' performance at the lower basic level.

Based on the benchmarks, a study on Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) was conducted in 2000, with the aim of assessing children's learning achievement and the conditions that may influence learning.

The MLA investigated the learning achievements in four core subjects: mathematics, general science, English language, and social and environmental studies. It was administered to grade 4 pupils in lower basic schools with the aim of establishing pupils' mastery levels based on benchmarks designed from the curriculum.

The methodology included using stratified and random sampling procedures that selected a sample of 2,394 pupils from 64 schools (of which two were private), 86 grade 4 teachers (of whom two were from private schools), and 2,401 parents. Learning achievement targets for grade 4 in the core subject areas were designed and the same test instrument administered to all schools. Questionnaires were administered to all the school head teachers, the class teachers, the parents of pupils in the survey and the pupils themselves. The schools' locations were stratified according to rural, rural-urban and urban, and the school type (private, Mission and government schools).

The findings of the study were alarming. The overwhelming majority of pupils did not achieve mastery level of 70%. Private schools performed better than the Mission and government schools. The mean scores in English were 81.1% for private, 46.3% for Mission, and 36.7% for government schools, whereas for mathematics, the corresponding mean scores were 72.3%, 44.3% and 38.9%, respectively. Similar trends were established in social and environmental studies and science. Urban pupils also outperformed the rural pupils in all the achievement tests. Boys also outperformed girls in almost all the tests.

## Higher education

Tertiary education includes the University of The Gambia, and four post-secondary institutions: The Gambia College (GC), The Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI), the Management Development Institute (MDI), and The Gambia Telecommunication and Multimedia Institute (GTMI).

The Gambia College offers three-year programmes for the pre-service and in-training of basic education teachers, as well as training courses in agriculture, livestock, public health, nursing and midwifery. The majority of students are enrolled in the School of Education. The College has recently been made responsible for delivering in-service teacher training throughout the country through the regional training officers, and for curriculum and related matters.

The GTTI is funded partly through the DOSE budget and partly through fees. It provides two-year craft, technician and business training programmes leading to certificates or diplomas in business studies, computer studies, engineering and





construction. Enrolments amount to about 1,000 students. Some of these qualifications are awarded or validated by British institutions such as the City and Guilds of London Institute, Pitman's Qualifications and the Royal Society of Arts Examining Board. However, as a result of the high cost involved, the examinations run by these external examining bodies are now being localized. The Banjul Skills Centre, with a capacity of 200 students, was originally designed to provide elementary vocational skills, but is now an annexe of the GTTI, offering pre-vocational and pre-technical/commercial courses to Grade IX graduates, some of whom enter the GTTI regular programmes. In addition to these publicly-funded institutions, there are some forty-four private training institutions, mainly serving the commercial sector, with an enrolment capacity of about 1,000 students.

The MDI offers courses for part-time students only. These courses are mainly in management and accounting. It attracts students mainly from Government's departments, parastatal organizations and NGOs, although there are private students as well. The MDI, in collaboration with the Personnel Management Office (PMO), also run management programmes for middle- and top-level managers in the Civil Service. It is financed through the budget of the Office of the President and through user fees.

The GTMI is primarily the training wing for the Gambia Telecommunications Company (GAMTEL). Its programme includes science and technology-related areas. It also admits fee-paying private students; it is not financed through the Government budget.

The University of the Gambia provides courses to some 409 students (189 in year 2 and 220 year 1) in four faculties, the majority of whom in the faculty of humanities and social science. Most of the students enrolled at the University benefit from a government's scholarship and, in an attempt to increase the number of teachers at the senior secondary level, the majority of those awarded scholarships are teachers. University fees range from US\$560 to US\$720 per year, depending on the subject of study. For scholarship holders, who constitute over 95% of the student enrolment, fees are paid by the government. Scholarship holders who are not on study leave with pay also receive US\$192 a year as stipend.

The DOSE has ministerial purview over the GC and the GTTI. The MDI is under the Office of the President, while GTMI is run by GAMTEL. The management and administration of these institutions rest with boards of governors whose prime functions include, *inter alia*, policy advice, staff development, financial management and appointments. For the University of The Gambia, there is a governing council on which the DOSE is represented by the Permanent Secretary.

### Tertiary education enrolment by area of study, 1997-2001

Year	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01
<b>The Gambia College</b>				
Education			735	873
Agriculture & Livestock			140	114
Nursing			110	78
Public Health			69	78
<b>Total</b>			1,054	1,143
<b>GTTI</b>				
Commerce	312	298	308	
Computer studies	158	159	199	
Building	236	184	132	
Engineering	257	333	241	
Further education	26	72	45	
Legal Studies	50	50	43	
Banjul Skills Centre		107	107	
<b>Total</b>	1,039	1,203	1,075	
<b>University of The Gambia</b>				
Faculty of humanities and social science			99	82
Faculty of science & agriculture			41	50
Faculty of medicine & allied Science			24	29
Faculty of economics & management science			25	59

Apart from internal arrangements at the level of the institutions, there is no formal centralized mechanism for evaluating the performance of tertiary education institutions. The GTTI has a quality assurance system in place.

### Special education

Only three centres catering for the needs of the deaf, blind and children with learning difficulties are in operation and all are located in Region 1. An assessment and evaluation of existing educational services in The Gambia for the physically challenged was conducted in 1998 through the National Disability Survey. The survey aimed at identifying the nature of disability among children, youths and adults taking into account, in particular, age, gender, geographic distribution and special



educational needs. The results of the survey show that 25.7% of disabled children in the mainstream schools are partially sighted and children with significant speaking problems account for 12.5%. It also revealed that children with significant mobility problems constitute 8.9%, those with hard of hearing 9.7% and significant manipulation and fits problems 3.7% each.

The current focus of the special education programme in The Gambia is on mainstreaming children with mild disabilities on the one hand, and establishing at least one multi-purpose resource centre in each of the educational regions for the children with severe disabilities to adequately provide services for the physically challenged.

## Private education

The Education Act of 1992 provides for: ‘government school (owned, maintained by and under complete control of the government); ‘assisted school (any school, other than a government school, to or in respect of which a grant is made from the general revenue of the country); and ‘private school (a school other than a government or assisted school). Authorisation to establish private schools is provided for in the Education Act. The authority to approve the establishment of new schools is vested in the Minister (Secretary of State) and he/she has power to withhold consent for such establishment, and also the power to close schools within the provisions of the Act.

The Government operates liberalized economic policies within a free market environment. The implication for the education sub-sector is to provide the enabling environment for private participation in the delivery of educational services. The rationale for this is largely to relieve increasing pressure on the public education system in addition to providing options to individuals. Legislation governing private schools operation require them to comply with pedagogical requirements including the teaching of the national curriculum, and permitting collection of fees (at market rates) to meet operating cost. All private schools follow the national curriculum and its students are examined based on the examination syllabus prescribed by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). The examination at the end of Grade IX (The Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examination—GABECE) is a national exam, while the one at the end of Grade XII (West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination—WASSCE) is internationally accredited. All government, grant-aided and private schools follow the WAEC syllabus for the examination. Private schools follow this syllabus, but can present their students as candidates for other external examination like the London General Certificate Examination (GCE).

### Number of schools and enrolment by school type, 2001/02

School Type	Lower basic		Upper basic		Senior secondary	
	No. of schools	Enrolment	No. of schools	Enrolment	No. of schools	Enrolment
Government	336	140,741	73	34,473	5	3,670
Mission	25	17,164	11	6,105	15	8,298
Private	10	6,091	30	5,395	17	5,213
<b>Total</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>163,996</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>45,973</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>17,181</b>

The expansion in the education system in the country has largely followed the policy dictates over the years. The last colonial policy, the Education Policy 1961-65 introduced a 6 years entry age for primary education, followed by junior and senior secondary education. There were only mission and public schools at the time. The Sleight Report, i.e. 'The Development Programme in Education for The Gambia, 1965-75', formed the policy framework for the Education Policy 1965-76, and particularly targeted universal primary education. The 1976-88 Education Policy changed secondary schools from junior and senior secondary schools to secondary technical and high schools, respectively. The 1988-2003 Education Policy restructured the education system into a 6-3-3-4 system: six years of primary, three years of lower secondary or middle school, three years of upper or senior secondary, and four years of post-secondary education. When the policy was revised in 1996, the system was further restructured: nine years of basic education, followed by three years of secondary and four years of post-secondary education.

The number of schools and indeed enrolment has increased over the period. Even though education statistics have been collected, analyzed and published annually, the breakdown by type (public, mission or private) started only in recent years. Private participation in education became pronounced during the current Education Policy, especially after its revision. However, the concentration is at the upper levels of the system, i.e. middle and senior secondary. At the primary level, 3% of schools are privately-owned, compared to 26% and 46% at the middle and senior secondary levels, respectively, in the 2001/02 school year. Private sector participation in education is driven by a variety of factors: excess demand, peoples preferences for educational content and method (i.e. quality), or the nature and size of public educational spending. Recent reforms in education has increased access, but one of the emerging issues is the quality of the service delivery and hence peoples preferences for alternatives to the public system.

A parallel private education system in The Gambia is the *Madrassa* or Islamic school, which follows a curriculum using Arabic as a medium of instruction and emphasizes Islamic education. The *Madrassas* are privately-owned and operated, and have traditionally attracted substantial financial assistance from foreign religious organizations. *Madrassa* students pay fees. The fear of government interference in their religious teaching has kept public funding out of the *Madrassa* system until recently (in the Revised Education Policy 1988-2003), when agreement was reached



to introduce the teaching of English and the synchronizing of their syllabi, among other things. *Madrassas* represent about 11% of total enrolment at the primary level.

## **Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure**

At every level of the education system the teacher is the main resource in the teaching and learning process. As in most developing countries, textbooks also form a critical learning tool in all schools. Before the advent of the 1988–2003 Education Policy, textbooks were absent in most classrooms. Consequently, the policy advocated for the provision of a student-textbook ratio of 2 to 1, through a Textbook Rental Scheme. On the basis of this, textbooks were provided in schools in this ratio. This has been revised in 1998, following the revision of the Policy, to a 1 to 1 ratio and a free textbook scheme for grades 1–6 while the rental scheme is maintained at the upper basic level.

Under the rental scheme, because of the difficulty some parents faced in paying for the cost of renting the textbooks, access to the textbooks was limited, although sufficient numbers were available. However, with the free textbook scheme at the lower basic, access to the textbooks is no longer an issue.

Other instructional materials such as chalk, vanguard and blackboards are also provided by the government to all public schools. This notwithstanding, schools also use the funds collected from school fund levies to purchase additional teaching and learning materials.

The DOSE maintains a budget line for teaching and learning materials and another one for textbooks, in addition to the special account created for the recycling of the textbook scheme. Both budget lines for learning materials account for about 2% of recurrent expenditure, but a significant amount of funding is provided under the development budget. This is a strategic decision to free some resources from the recurrent budget to finance other quality inputs.

Information Technology is being gradually introduced in the curriculum. At the senior secondary level, all grant-aided and public schools have been provided with a computer laboratory and 25 computers, under the Computer Literacy component of the Third Education Sector Programme. This allows for both computer literacy and the use of the Internet as a teaching tool in some of the schools.

The existence of science laboratories is very limited at the lower and upper basic levels. Senior secondary schools, however, maintain ones although some science materials are in short supply in some schools.

## **Adult and non-formal education**

The Government's policy on adult and non-formal education targets out-of-school youth, school drop-outs, girls and young women, and adults and young women requiring new skills.



Figures used in this analysis are obtained from the EFA 2000 Report considering the age group 15–24. As shown in the table below referring to the period 1991–98, for both the males and the total, the literacy rates have fluctuated at the beginning and took a downward trend afterwards. For the females, the rate declined from 35.7% in 1991 to 34.4% in the following year, when it took a slow upward trend reaching 37.1% in 1998. The low literacy rates could be attributed to the high population growth rate with outstrips the provision of adult and non-formal education services. Another contributing factor is the diminishing interest of males to enrol in literacy classes.

### **Trends in literacy rates of the 15–24 age group by gender, 1991 to 1998**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
<b>Total</b>	48.0	48.5	50.2	48.2	48.0	47.9	47.7	47.5
<b>Male</b>	60.9	63.5	65.0	61.8	60.9	60.1	59.2	58.4
<b>Female</b>	35.7	34.4	36.1	35.3	35.7	36.2	36.6	37.1

Adult and non-formal education for the age group 15–39 years, is another form of educational service in The Gambia within the context of the expanded vision of basic education. Until 1997, this service was mainly delivered by the government and a few NGOs providing literacy classes linked to skills acquisition. However, the mode of delivery has now changed, with the government contracting the delivery out to NGOs and community-based organizations.

## **Teaching staff**

The only teacher-training institute since the colonial era (started in Georgetown and then transferred to Yundum and named Yundum College, and currently called The Gambia College) has been training teachers for the primary level (Primary Teacher's Certificate programme) until mid-1980s, when it introduced the Higher Teacher's Certificate programme.

The teaching force consists of unqualified teachers (UQ), qualified teachers with a primary teacher's certificate (PTC) or a higher teacher's certificate (HTC), and graduate teachers. The current and past education policies made no pronouncement on minimum academic qualification for teaching at the primary level. In practice, however, graduates from secondary schools have been engaged as UQ. Like all institutes of higher learning, the teacher-training college sets out minimum qualification levels (four GCE O-Level passes) and sets out examinations for entry into the PTC programme. In terms of level and professional or academic qualifications, UQ and PTC teachers generally teach at the primary level, while the HTC and graduate teachers are found in the middle and senior secondary schools. Exceptions would mainly be in technical subjects for which qualified personnel are in acute shortage.

Against the background that the rate of expansion far exceeds the output from the Gambia College, the school system still engages teachers who have not had a



formal professional training. From the table below, it can be observed that the proportion of UQ at the primary level shows no significant changes from 1996/97 to 2001/02. This can be explained in the context of the expansion at the primary level, which shows an overall pupil-teacher ratio of 35:1 (in 2001/02), with a ratio of 39 for public schools, 49 in private, and 38 in mission schools. Data on the qualification of teachers is unfortunately not disaggregated by school type. How much of the unqualified teachers (in 1996/97) are from private schools cannot precisely be established from the annual education statistics; however, the proportion will be much less in private schools than in public and mission schools both of which engage teachers using public funds.

### Qualification of primary school teachers by gender, 1996/97 and 2001/02

	1996/1997			2001/02
	Male	Female	Total	Total
Qualified	1,717	774	2,491	2,393
Unqualified	1,412	488	1,900	1,804
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3,129</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>4,391</b>	<b>4,197</b>

### Teachers by level and school type (1996/97)

Level	Government		Mission		Private		Total	
	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total
Primary	1,073	3,780	171	571	19	40	1,263	4,391
Middle	112	433	25	104	34	367	171	904
Senior	32	312	30	178	14	102	76	592
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1,217</b>	<b>4,525</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>1,510</b>	<b>5,887</b>

The School of Education, Gambia College, provides pre-service teacher training and has been increasing its annual output over the years to cope with the increasing demand for qualified teachers as a result of the expansion at the primary level. From an output of 43 PTC graduates in 1988/89, it increased to 100 in 1991/92 and 120 in 1995/96. Following the revision of the Education Policy 1988-2003, enrolment and output were increased to over 200 annually (by October 2001, 846 students were enrolled, 374 in the first, 241 in the second and 231 in the final year of the PTC programme).

The continued professional development of teachers, both trained and untrained, keeps teachers not only abreast with teaching techniques but serves as a moral boost. In-service education and training (INSET) started as a teacher-training project called Regional Support for the Education and Training of Teachers (RESETT). This project, which started in 1993 and ended in 1997, was funded by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) now Development Fund for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom. The initiative was



integrated into the mainstream of the Department of State for Education and became part of Curriculum Research, Evaluation, Development and In-service Training (CREDIT) Directorate. In March 1999, the DOSE as part of the sector's transformation transferred the CREDIT to The Gambia College, and is now operating at the Brikama Campus as a wing in the School of Education. The INSET was also relocated to the Brikama Campus and it has regional officers within each of the six regional education offices.

The lecture halls of the college are used for INSET training activities and there is a Teacher Resource Centre in each education region. Some schools have established libraries and resource centres that are also used for in-service training. The Teacher Resource Centres are equipped with television and video set. The resident Regional Training Officer in the region co-ordinates regional and cluster-based training activities for teachers. To facilitate their mobility and effective co-ordination and supervision, these officers are supplied with motorbikes. Reference materials on teacher professional development are available both at the INSET headquarters at the College and at the regional resource centres.

To draw up programmes for teachers, a needs assessment is occasionally conducted following which courses are outlined and training programmes designed. In each programme, certain courses may be identified as compulsory and others optional. All teachers are expected to participate in professional development/training once every term. The regularity/frequency of the training conducted by INSET largely depends on the availability of funds to bring together teachers in clusters.

The teaching cadre is regulated through a Scheme of Service which aims to promote professionalism in teaching and to ensure that the required educational standards are attained and maintained in schools. The Scheme has the following additional objectives:

- To attract people with the necessary educational background, experience and integrity to join the cadre as a professional discipline, by providing clearly defined career prospects.
- To provide effective administration and support to ensure that appropriate instruction is given by teachers at all levels of the education system.
- To assist in the professional development of all members of the teaching force.
- To create a common and integrated cadre whereby a right balance is struck, and flexibility and internal consistency established, between all of the components in the cadre, and to co-ordinate better the activities of the cadre.

The previous separate hierarchy of Arabic/Islamic teachers with other staff in the profession has been abolished. Arabic/Islamic teachers are now integrated into the system at the appropriate levels consistent with their qualifications, experience and the organizational needs of the schools. They are regarded as specialist teachers, and an integral part of the education system and thus have been integrated with generalist





teachers so that they may make a career path alongside their colleagues on the basis of the terms and conditions described in the Scheme of Service.

The Teachers Cadre is treated as a single service, that is, under normal circumstances; vacancies will be filled by promoting the best qualified teachers from the grade below, after review of the whole potential field. Recruitment and promotion were dealt with the Director of Education and currently by the Directorate of Information Technology and Human Resource following administrative restructuring in the revised policy, subject to the approval of the Public Service Commission. Staffs are answerable to the immediate supervisors in whichever division or section they work, for day-to-day administrative matters.

Training for staff is provided based on relevance and availability of funding. The first priority continues to be that training should be done in recognized institutes, but where essential training is not available locally, officers are released for overseas studies. Officers offered such training will usually pledge to return to work for the Government in their appropriate areas of competence for at least a period equivalent to their length of study, or they will refund to Government the cost of their study. This is largely to avoid brain-drain.

Like all civil servants, teachers are remunerated using the Government Integrated Pay Scale (IPS). Individual remuneration is based on qualifications and status/responsibility. The pay structure in the lower and upper basic schools is shown in table below:

#### Salary scale for teachers by level and status

Lower Basic			Upper Basic		
Class	Title	Grade	Category	Title	Grade
Class A	Headmaster	8	Category I	Headmaster	8
	Deputy H/M	7 upper		Deputy H/M	7
	Senior Master	7 lower		Qualified Teacher	6
	Qualified Teacher	6		Unqualified Tr.	1
	Unqualified	1			
Class B	Headmaster	9	Category II	Headmaster	9
	Deputy H/M	8		Deputy H/M	8
	Senior Master	7		Senior Master	7
	Qualified Teacher	6		Qualified Teacher	6
	Unqualified	1		Unqualified Tr.	1
Class C	Headmaster	10	Category III	Headmaster	10/12
	Deputy H/M	9		Deputy H/M	9
	Senior Master	8		Senior Master	8
	Qualified Teacher	6		Graduate Teacher	8
	Unqualified	1		Qualified Tr. (HTC)	7
					Qualified Teacher
			Unqualified Tr.	1	

In addition to the salary scales prescribed in the IPS, teachers received additional allowances based on their individual postings and status to cover zonal, car,



residential and or transport allowances. Teachers involved in double shift teaching also receive allowances.

## Educational research and information

Until recently, educational research has been limited to the work of students undergoing training, either locally or abroad. This has created a situation whereby the findings of academic research were hardly factored in the policy-making process. In addition, it resulted in the lack of a centralized or formal structure of keeping research information to enhance access to it.

Apart from the research conducted by students in academia, the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA), The Gambia Chapter, is one of the key institutions engaged in educational research. The Central Statistics Department also conducts educational research occasionally. United Nations agencies based in The Gambia are engaged in educational research through the hiring of consultants.

In recognition of this, the Department of State for Education has created a Directorate whose mandate includes research, among other things. The Planning, Policy Analysis, Research and Budgeting Directorate develops an educational research agenda which captures educational issues requiring further investigations in order to inform policy. This is done in fulfillment of its mandate to co-ordinate the educational research needs of the Department. It conducts research on any issue for which the necessary expertise exists within the Directorate or works in collaboration with other relevant consultants. In other instances, the research activity is contracted out to consultant.

The benefits accrued from the creation of this Directorate, in terms of informing policies, have amply demonstrated the need for access to relevant information for informed decision-making. This is being further pursued by setting up an Educational Management Information System (EMIS) which members of staff of the Department are using. This also allows for access to information from the Internet, to which all networked computers in the Department have access.

What remains a challenge in educational research and information is the accessibility of information as and when needed. It has been recognized that there is a lot of information available, but because of the fact that data are in different places and in different forms, accessing needed information at the right time is a real challenge.

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## **Web resources**

Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education: <http://www.edugambia.gm/>  
[In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

*For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>*