

GAMBIA

EDUCATION POLICY 2004 – 2015

Department of State for Education, 2004. Available at

http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Gambia/Gambia_Ed_Pol_2004-2015.pdf

Rationale of the policy

The policy synchronises Gambia's education goals with those formulated by the New Partnership for African Development, the Gambian Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Gambia's Vision 2020 and the Education for All (EFA) goals. It was also developed by the Department of Education in cooperation with many other stakeholders who came together in several forums to engage in policy dialogue. Representatives of children, adults, illiterates, literates, government departments, civil society and the private sector discussed aims and strategies. The policy is embedded with principles of non-discrimination, inclusion, ethical norms, a culture of peace, and respect for individual rights, cultural diversity and indigenous cultures.

Concept of lifelong learning

The policy affirms that there is no termination point to education. Lifelong learning is seen as a crucial engine for the development of self-reliant individuals. Parallel to the formal education system, there are a number of non-formal learning opportunities, including those focussing on the attainment of life skills. Life skills enable the individual to cope with issues related to health, gender, violence, peace building, tolerance and patriotism.

Main challenges:

- Wealthier people benefit more from government spending on education than the poor;
- Poorer people face enrolment barriers, e.g. private costs of education;
- Drop-out rates vary between regions;
- Cost efficiency is not yet satisfactory;
- Quality and relevance of curricula and learning materials are not satisfactory;
- There are fewer qualified and trained teachers, especially in rural areas;
- HIV/AIDS;
- Gender disparities.

Main targets and measures:

- Enhance equitable access to education by expanding the number of schools, enforcing gender equity initiatives (e.g., scholarships for girls and a more gender-sensitive curriculum), implementing strategies to expand the non-formal education sector, providing learning materials for special needs education, introducing life skills education (e.g., HIV/AIDS prevention, family life education, counselling);
- Improve quality of education by providing pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes, improving the curriculum, promoting appreciation of indigenous languages and knowledge, strengthening continuous assessment of student achievements, integrating ICT;
- Strengthen and diversify technical and vocational education and training programmes by assuring relevance and increasing private sector participation in financing;
- Ameliorate tertiary and higher education by providing high quality research and developing strategies to guarantee high quality instruction;

- Enhance capacity building by decentralising the educational sector, strengthening regional policy directorates, strengthening the monitoring and evaluation processes, and fine-tuning the staff performance appraisal system.
- ➔ The policy targets all the education sub-sectors and age groups. It also mentions other non-formal learning contexts, such as Madrassas (Islamic schools) and the family.

Particular feature of the policy

The policy integrates a wide range of societal interests, which are mirrored in the objectives of life skills education. Life skills are seen as a behavioural complement to formal skills and knowledge, which is essential to the self-fulfilment of each individual. Psychosocial issues such as HIV/AIDS prevention, gender responsiveness, peace building and tolerance, population and family life, guidance and counselling and patriotism are addressed. All these issues are closely interrelated with education, as personal problems may be reflected in learners' performance. That is why HIV/AIDS sensitisation is intensified and a strong focus is placed on gender perspectives. Xenophobia, religious intolerance and ethnicity shall be critically investigated, which is of particular importance to a diverse country like Gambia. Closely related to that is the promotion of patriotism, which shall guarantee the maintenance of a culture of peace and the preservation of Gambian identity.

References to other relevant documents:

- International Monetary Fund. 2007. [Gambia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper](#)

Stakeholders involved in the development of the policy:

- Government
- Other stakeholders exchanged their views in forums and conferences: children, adults, disadvantaged groups, civil society, private sector, etc.

Stakeholders responsible for implementation of the policy:

- Government
- [Gambia National Training Authority](#)
- Municipal Councils
- Quality Assurance Council

Further readings and web links:

- New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD):
<http://www.nepad.org/humancapitaldevelopment/education>
- Gambia's Vision 2020 (Executive Summary):
<http://www.newgambia.gm/vision2020/executive.htm>