



DRAFT REPORT: Consultative Meeting on Transforming Education summit (TES) for the Pre-summit in Paris
21st July 2022



Introduction

The Gambia's participation in the pre-summit preparation meeting in Paris has been preceded by a consultative meeting involving a cross section of Education stakeholders including partners such as UNESCO – NATCOM, UNICEF, MRC-Holland Foundation, UNCDF, International Trade Centre (ITC), Government stakeholders, National Assembly Members, the Private Sector, Students, SMCs, and CSOs among others. The Deputy Permanent Secretary Programs, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) who also double as government focal person on transformative Education Agenda. He gave an overview of the importance of organizing this important National Consultation.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education then gave a brief but concrete insight of the importance of such consultations before attending an international event on behalf of the Country's Education Sector.

He gave an in-depth insight of the National Consultative Meeting by highlighting the educational crisis, the SDGs, the national envelope for education among other pertinent issues affecting the education service delivery in the country. He stated that there is always desired outcomes which countries and heads of states are ambitious about, specifically the type of outcomes needed for the development of nations, such as skills training to enable everyone be responsible with a job to do.

Furthermore, he reiterated that there is a clarion call to transform the education system and everyone must strive to change the system for the better. He mentioned that, a TVET policy has been developed and the delivery of TVET to be started as early as Grade 4.

The Local Education Group (LEG) Chairperson who is also the UNICEF Country Representative made some critical and credible remarks. He reiterated the importance the United Nations Secretary General attaches to the need to transform education as part of the SDGs, the negative impact of COVID19, and the huge adversity it has done, though as a lesson to the world, and a life-long learning process for all as part of the summit to help arouse a common agenda for education.



Figure 1: Hon. Minister for Basic & Secondary Education

In her opening statement, the honourable Minister for Basic and Secondary Education said that, the current shape and form of learning has witnessed a huge transformation as a result of global education emergencies that called for a rethink in the mode of education service delivery as well as education financing. She recognised the fact that, an inter-agency network of UN agencies and development agencies comprising UNESCO, UNICEF and World Bank emphasized the need for Global Partnership for Education Fund and promoting access to remote and digital learning and skills to embrace the new education trajectories as well as emerging trends of education. These she believes would require serious efforts as well as re-evaluation of existing education policies and strategies to align them with new and emerging trends of education.

This report is a culmination of insights from guest speakers and the independent opinions of participants during both the group discussions and the open plenary on how The Gambia intends to transform its education system. Participants were drawn from three broad categories of:

- I. Receivers comprising mainly students and parent,
- II. Providers comprising teachers and education managers and
- III. Users comprising mainly employers.

The groups were tasked to identify “what is working well, what is not working and the way forward to transform the education system. Feedbacks from the group discussions and open plenary summarize the perceptions in the following thematic areas or domains; Teachers and

Teacher welfare, Financing Education, Education Infrastructure including Teaching & Learning Materials, Education Quality, TVET and life-long learning, Inclusive Education, Curriculum matters, Distant Learning Education, Equity and equality in Education. This report reflects participants' perceptions relative to the thematic domains and the subsequent recommendations

Teachers and Teacher welfare:

While participants confirmed that teacher numbers are generally good due to rigorous and accelerated teacher training initiatives in the recent years, teacher issues are also affected by limited in service training for teachers and education managers, uneven deployment of trained teachers to rural areas, low teacher commitment, limited ICT skills in teachers, low content knowledge and poor teacher accommodation particularly in the rural areas. Groups recommend that teachers should be upskilled in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical skills to match the 21st century skills. In addition, there is the need to work on teacher accommodation, remuneration package, continuous training, deployment, retention and retirement benefits.

Financing Education:

The groups recognized that education is an expensive venture that requires high investment, felt that the budget allocation to education as share of the national budget is appreciated. However, there is the need to increase it to meet the regional standards (20% of the National Budget). Furthermore, they opined that there is Need for adequate public expenditure on education to enhance quality and access.

An emergency Fund for Education for effective management and delivery of educational service during emergencies such as Covid-19 needs to be created. Thus, Political leaders should see education as an accelerator for growth, democracy and good governance.

It is evident that there is low participation/investment of the private sector in education; therefore, there is need for increased investment in education from the private sector. Due to heavy reliance on Government budget for financing education, the meeting recommended for the introduction of innovative methods of financing education and increasing public expenditure on education to enhance quality, access and relevance.

Education Infrastructure including Teaching & Learning Materials:

The participants welcomed the numerous infrastructural developments in education in recent years. However, education is still characterized with very low ICT infrastructure especially poor connectivity and expensive internet services, inadequate teaching and learning materials in basic and Senior Secondary Schools, inadequate and lack of well-resourced facilities such as labs, halls, sporting facilities etc, overcrowded classrooms, poor school transport system (affecting punctuality of students and quality), inadequate furniture in schools and undue concentration of higher education and tertiary institutions in urban areas. In view of this, higher education institutions should be decentralized, school sports strengthened to explore and facilitate talents development in that area and ICT education from LBS to SSS levels introduced.

Education Quality

Teacher issues was highlighted as a key contributing factor in the drive towards achieving access and quality of education. While tremendous increase in teacher numbers was acknowledged, low level of content knowledge of teachers and their inability to apply ICT skills in teaching were noted. Skill gaps for labour across a wide range of graduates from the system was also observed; in other words, a mismatch in the labour skills requirement. The system produces more social work biased graduates than practical industrial work skills. Accreditable and intensive Continuous Professional Development for teachers and education managers and prioritizing STEAM, TVET and ICT in the transformation agenda should be established.

TVET and life-long learning:

The weak state of TVET in the system is regarded as “Lack of interest in TVET education” despite strong policy articulation. The gross lack of soft skills in the job market (communication, CV writing skills, where to search for a job) was mentioned. However, a sound policy and strategy on TVET were applauded. Dissatisfaction about the mismatch between the labour market and the products of the education and training institutions was expressed.

Therefore, the following were recommended: redesigning education to impact positively on the lives of Gambians, paradigm shift on TVET education in order to enhance learning skills for sustainable development, promotion of lifelong learning, strengthening career guidance and counselling in schools, intensify training for specialized teachers in TVET

and Digital Learning, formalization of apprenticeship of TVET and in a nutshell, focus on Innovation, Creativity and sustainability.

Inclusive Education:

The system was commended for its approach to inclusive education but some major gaps were identified. These include; inadequate alternative learning programs for persons with disabilities (PWDs) (structures, learning materials etc) and inadequate special needs teachers across the country. It was suggested that the system should place emphasis on inclusive education for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

Curriculum matters:

The recently concluded international conference on curriculum hosted by The Gambia was hailed. It was described as timely and more importantly, the desire to drift towards a more formative curriculum. This is believed, will culminate in the right skilling of products for the labour market with potentials to impact positively on many economic indicators.

However, curriculum gaps were also identified which include the teaching of reading in the lower grades, learning approach more on theory than practical and the assessment system more of summative than formative. In broader terms, inadequacies in lifelong learning across levels and labour market skills mismatch. As a result, curriculum transformation should be accelerated.

Distant Learning Education:

The meeting recognized the fragility of the education system especially in the advent of emergencies such as the COVID 19 pandemic. The system was hailed for its mitigating initiatives during the lockdown; such as distance learning education. More resilience in the system in times of emergencies and crisis to enhance learning opportunities for all is required to further strengthen distance learning program and make it more comprehensive in terms of both content and structural. Distance learning education is a strong agent for the transformation of education system.

Equity and Equality in Education:

Crosscutting issues in the education system were outlined. Teacher factor as mentioned before plays an important role in access and quality education. The unfair distribution of teachers between rural and urban settings is

adversely affecting learning opportunities for children in rural parts of the country. These are critical issues to be considered.

Given the above, a diagnostic performance and perception of the quality/standard, education sector service deliverables in terms of current Education Policy, Strategy implementation in paving the way towards transforming education.

Recommendations

- I. Institutions should be decentralized
- II. Introduce ICT in all levels of education
- III. Redesigning of Education to positively impact the lives of Gambians
- IV. Strengthening career guidance
- V. Scrutiny of the unfair distribution of teachers between rural and urban areas
- VI. Accreditable and continuous professional development for teachers and education managers
- VII. formalization of apprenticeship of TVET
- VIII. Prioritizing STEAM, TVET and ICT in the transformation agenda
- IX. Encourage private sector participation and partnership in education
- X. Increased education resources and infrastructures

I. Annex

Time	session	Moderator	speaker
9:00am-9:30	Registration	Secretariat	
9:30-10am	Opening ceremony Group Picture	DPS Jobe	PS MoBSE PS MoHERST LEG Member H.E VP
10:30-11am	B/fast		All
11:am-11:10	Overview of the Education Sector and Setting the Scene		Mariama Chow and Alpha Bah
11:10-11:15	Introduction and methodology to FGD based on interest Groups		NATCOM and UNICEF
11:15-12:30	FGD based on interest Groups		Bakary Ceesay
12:30-13:45 -	Group reporting		Group rapporteurs
13:45-14:45	Lunch Break		All
14:45-15:30	Open Plenary	Alpha Bah	All
15:30-16:00	Closing		

II. Annex

List of Participants

Students

- University of the Gambia Student Union
- Management Development Institute
- Gambia Technical Training Institute
- MAJaC
- Upper and Senior Secondary Schools

Politicians

- National Assembly Members for education select committees

Institutions

- Ministry of Youth and Sport
- Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education
- Gambia National Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM)
- United Nation International Children Emergency Fund (Unicef)
- Education For All Network (EFANet)
- Ministry of Higher Education Research Science Technology (MoHERST)
- World Food Programme
- National Women Council
- National Association of School Management Committee
- The Media
- FAO
- TANGO
- MRC Holland Foundation
- EU Delegate
- GTU
- GIS
- GOVI
- AGA
- GFD
- UNCDF
- Ministry of Gender Children & Social Welfare
- ALBASH

Taskforce Committee Members

- Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education
- Gambia National Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM)
- United Nation International Children Emergency Fund (Unicef)
- Education For All Network (EFANet)
- Ministry of Higher Education Research Science Technology (MoHERST)
- Child Fund
- World Food Programme
- Gambia Teacher's Union (GTU)
- Conference of Principals
- National Youth Council

III. Annex

Photo Gallery

