The Status and Impact of Rotational Teaching on Students’ Learning Achievements in the Gambian Lower Basic Schools

In the Gambian Lower Basic Schools (LBS), teachers used to teach all subjects to a given class. For example, a grade 3 teacher was expected to teach his/her pupils all subjects on the timetable. In September 2015, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education of the Gambia established that all LBS had to adopt Rotational Teaching for grades 4-6.

The Rotational Teaching model allows teachers to devote their time to their subject of instruction. That means they have ample time for lesson planning and delivery. Rotational Teaching provides time to teachers to sharpen their focus on their subjects of specialisation. This results to better teaching and eventually improved student learning achievement.

Aiming to assess the status and impact of Rotational Teaching on students’ learning achievements, the research posed and was guided by the following research questions:

- Is Rotational Teaching an appropriate or suitable pedagogic approach?
- Has Rotational Teaching boosted or improved performance in the LBS since the development of the policy?
- What are the constraints or the teething challenges hindering or preventing the implementation of the Rotational Teaching model in schools?
- What recommendations, supported by evidence, show that Rotational Teaching is a viable teaching model and should be institutionalized in all LBS in the Gambia?

Data collection

Data was collected from 30 schools from all six regions of the Gambia. A total of 300 students (150 boys and 150 girls) from grades 2-6 were selected to participate in the study and completed a performance test on the core subjects. 30 head-teachers and 150 teachers filled in questionnaires and were observed teaching using the model of Rotational Teaching.

The data collection process was as follows:

1. Head-teachers were informed about the aim of the study and process of data collection
2. Head-teachers answered a questionnaire
3. Lesson observation by the research team
4. Teachers answered a questionnaire after the lesson observation
5. Two students (one boy and one girl) from each class did a performance test on the core subjects
Findings

The figure on the left shows the teachers’ opinions on the effectiveness of Rotational and Non-Rotational Teaching. 81% of the teachers agreed that Rotational Teaching is more effective than Non-Rotational Teaching, the effectiveness of which only 15% of teachers supported.

The Figure on the right shows students’ opinions on how Rotational Teaching helps them to learn. 27% strongly agree with this and 29% agree. 37% of students do not know – these are the students who are either not affected by the policy or whose schools are not currently implementing this model. Only 2% of the students disagree with this statement.

Recommendations

The objectives of the research are to prove and to document evidences that Rotational Teaching is an effective teaching model and to provide ways of not only maintaining it but strengthening it in the school system. It is also meant to influence policy decisions towards providing the necessary training of teachers on subject specialization at the Gambia College School of Education. Such measures are contained in the recommendations made by the head teachers themselves. The training of school administrators in formulating school timetables that would provide the modus operandi of Rotational Teaching was also sighted by many head teachers as an important step in the implementation process of the model.

The following recommendations have been generated by the research:

- Rotational Teaching should be maintained in schools for better performance;
- Based on the evidence provided by the research, Rotational Teaching has proven to be a viable model for improving mastery of learning targets;
- Teachers should be trained on subject specialization; and
- Rotational Teaching should cover all grades in LBS.