



## A STUDY OF THE EMPLOYABILITY OF UPPER BASIC SCHOOL LEAVERS IN GAMBIA, NIGERIA AND SENEGAL

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### **Abstract:**

This article is about the first part of a two-part Feasibility Study which originated in Bamako, in 2012, with initially four countries participating (Gambia, Guinée-Bissau, Nigeria, and Senegal). Later on, Guinée-Bissau withdrew from the group. Many young people in West and Central Africa leave school without having learned skills important in the work place. Arguably, such poor preparation for the world of work may be traceable in part, to how the Pre-Vocational (PV) school curriculum policy is implemented in Upper Basic Schools (UBS). The issuing Research Question then was: in what ways can the curriculum for UBS leavers be improved in order to enhance their employability during their last years at school? The general research objectives were to study the extent to which the current PV curriculum for UBS leavers was relevant to their employability and to introduce into the PV curriculum an innovative relevant Programme of Study. The present article refers to the first objective only and is essentially about a Baseline Survey of the employability of UBS leavers and of the deficiencies in the current PV school curriculum regarding their employability. Relevant research tools were developed and the main findings were that across the three countries, the teachers were aware of the concept of employability and of deficiencies in the PV curriculum regarding the employability level of the UBS leavers. Substantial proportions of UBS leavers in each country were not at an appropriate level of employability, with Senegal obtaining the highest average score for a Students' Competency TEST across the three countries (41% of the maximum possible total score). Also, the students' overall performance in the TEST masked some significant results for the individual TEST items. Appropriate actions were recommended for both the immediate future and the long term.

**Keywords:** employability, upper basic school leavers, Gambia, Nigeria, Senegal

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## 1. Introduction

This article is about the first part of a Two-Part Feasibility study which originated from the development of a research proposal at the ERNWACA workshop (in Bamako, in 2012) on the research theme of the *Quality of Basic Education (for the 3-19 year olds)*. The study was launched with four countries initially participating (namely, Gambia, Guinée-Bissau, Nigeria, and Senegal). The four ERNWACA National Co-ordinators made up the Group who collectively took charge of the research project but regrettably, later on, Guinée-Bissau withdrew from the group. Also, at the 2013 ERNWACA workshop in Lomé, it was decided, after much discussion, that as “Quality” is a multi-dimensional concept, it was better to narrow down the research proposal to a more manageable project and to focus on the *Employability of Upper Basic School (UBS) leavers* — as a research area which reflected the concern worldwide about the continuing mismatch between schools’ Curricular orientations and Labour Market needs. In the event, the Group decided that the research project would focus even further and it settled on the topic *Employability and the Pre-Vocational (PV) school curriculum* for UBS leavers. Later on still, a Project Team was set up and consisted then of Principal Researchers (one per country), two Resource Persons, and an Interpreter (English/French), in addition to the ERNWACA National Co-ordinators.

An ensuing project proposal was developed and it was attentive to the individual country backgrounds — in order to ensure that the recommendations that would result from the implementation of the proposal would be workable on the ground. Consequently, the researchers provided an overview of each country’s Human Capital Development, and economic and educational contexts.

### 1.1 Human Capital Development

It then transpired from the country reports that all three countries have long been addressing the broad notion of Human Capital development drawing on the theory that “a well-trained and skilled population guarantees employment and economic development” (ROG, 1996), and emphasizing this as one of the educational goals of their national governments. These goals are well articulated in Gambia through its Programme of Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) 2012 to 2015, in Nigeria initially through the 1979 “new Constitution”, and in Senegal through the 2013 “Senegal Emergent Plan” and subsequently through the “Programme for the Amelioration of the Quality of Education and Training, 2013-2025” (PAQUET) and the 2013/14 National Conference on Education and Training emphasis on “the necessary reform of curricula”. However, a close-up of the economic and educational contexts of the countries (which is described next) identified the specific “problem” which needed studying and which is described further on in this article.

### 1.2 The Economic Contexts

In economic terms, there are clearly striking differences between Gambia, a Least Developing Country with the agricultural sector and the tourism industry as “the main

drivers of economic growth” and Nigeria a “mixed economy emerging market” which “has reached middle income status” with its “abundant supply of natural resources”; thus the GDP (PPP) was 1,600\$ in 2014 in Gambia, as against 6,100\$ in Nigeria, and the real economic growth rates were about 5% in Gambia and about 6% in Nigeria. The contrast between Gambia and Senegal was not so stark with the GDP (PPP) in Senegal at 2,400\$; and the real growth rates were of the same magnitude.

Unemployment posed a challenge to all the three countries. In Gambia, the youth unemployment rate stood at 26% (PAGE, 2011), whilst in neighbouring Senegal, youth unemployment was estimated to be at 18.5% (SFS, 2013) and in Nigeria, at 21.5% (NURS, 2016). However, Governments had taken steps to alleviate the problem: for example, within the context of economic growth and of strengthening the human capital to enhance employment opportunities, in 2007 the government of The Gambia created the Gambia Priority Employment Programme (GAMJOBS) in response to the increasing unemployment and poverty (particularly among women and youth)

A key issue in this challenge was the labour market and one of the characteristics of the labour market in West Africa is, in broad terms, a very strong predominance of trade in the urban areas; and in rural areas, the predominance of agriculture and animal husbandry. Another characteristic is the sectorial duality (Formal/Informal) of the labour market with 96% of the employed population working in the Informal Sector in Gambia (PAGE, 2011) whilst in Senegal 97% of the growth in employment (between 1995 and 2004) was attributable to that sector.

### 1.3 The Education Contexts

Turning to the Education contexts, the Basic Education cycle is the same for Gambia and Nigeria with 6 years of Primary Education, 3 years of Junior Secondary Education, and 3 years of Senior Secondary education, except that the age of entry in Primary schools is 7 years in Gambia and 6 years in Nigeria. The cycle in Senegal is different with its 6-3-4 pattern, which is, with the period of Senior Secondary Education extended to 4 years.

In all three countries, a national curriculum for Basic Education is produced centrally. Seemingly, common to all the countries is a core curriculum which covers the National Language, Mathematics, Science, ICT, and Pre-Vocational studies.

Table 1 below summarises a few other characteristics of the Education System in each of the three countries. The data revealed the similarity between the countries in the level of Adult Literacy and of Youth Literacy among young men, and mark out the comparatively low level of literacy among young women, particularly in Nigeria and Senegal.

The table brings into relief a gender differential in Primary School Participation too (but in the reverse direction), with a higher proportion of girls than boys participating in Gambia and Senegal, though not in Nigeria, and thus raised questions about achieving the Development goal of *Education For All*.

Table 1 displays too the disparity in Secondary School Participation, with Nigeria outperforming Gambia and Senegal. The table reflects the observation often made

about developing countries, namely, that participation in school education decreases with increasing age (though not so markedly in Nigeria); and indeed, in both Gambia and Senegal, only a relatively small number of teenage boys and girls stayed on at school and they were in almost equal proportions. However, the issue for schools was about how to package the support to teenagers so that it is responsive to their needs. Hence, this project went on to concentrate on the curriculum for UBS leavers.

**Table 1:** Aspects of the country profiles for Education in Gambia, Nigeria and Senegal (2008- 2012)

		Gambia	Nigeria	Senegal
<b>Adult literacy rate</b> [% of persons aged 15 and over who can read & write]		51.1	51.1	49.7
<b>Youth literacy Rate (%)</b>	<b>Male (15-24 years)</b>	72.6	75.6	74.2
	<b>Female (15-24 years)</b>	63.6	58.	56.2
<b>Primary school participation net enrolment ratio (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	67.9	60.1	76.6
	<b>Female</b>	71.3	54.8	81.2
<b>Secondary school participation net enrolment ratio/ attendance (%)</b>	<b>Male</b>	34.1	54.2	34.9
	<b>Female</b>	34.2	54.3	32.3

[Source: UNICEF website, 2016]

In this connection, a point of interest was that the curriculum was geared towards the holistic development of the individual child and that there was evidence of curricular diversity, with 10 “subjects” (formerly 17 subjects) in the curriculum in Nigeria, and, in Gambia, a “synchronised syllabus” for the officially “recognised” Madrassas. That said, there was a question about whether sufficient attention was paid to developing teaching-learning practices which relate the official curriculum content to the local socio-economic context in a way that prepares UBS leavers adequately for employment.

#### 1.4 Statement of the Problem

After much discussion of the above contexts, the Project Team decided that the specific “problem” which needed studying was that, in all the three countries, many young people leave school without qualifications and without having learned skills important in the work place; and opportunities were rare for them to develop their *Life Skills* (such as teamwork) and to gain leadership skills (such as negotiation and communication skills) (Obanya, 1995; Kwapong, 1988). Actually, already many developing countries had moved to reforming the upper secondary school curriculum (UNESCO, 2015; Boikhutso *et al*, 2013), but arguably, the poor preparation for the world of work may be traceable, at least in part, to how the Pre-Vocational (PV) school curriculum policy is implemented in Upper Basic Schools (UBS); for, the mode and mechanism of curriculum delivery is of critical importance (Morris *et al*, 1999) and teaching and

learning processes matter for learning, and teaching strategies are “increasingly recognised as central in improving education quality” (UNESCO, 2015).

### 1.5 The Research Question

The issuing Research Question then was: in what ways can the curriculum for UBS leavers be improved in order to enhance their employability during their last years at school; and the general proposition was that an experimental, competence-based Programme of Study (for UBS leavers) which relates the official curriculum content in each country to local situations, events and actions through curriculum integration was likely to enhance significantly the employability of the UBS leavers.

### 1.6 The General Research Objectives

The General Research Objectives were to study the extent to which the current PV curriculum for UBS leavers was relevant to their employability and to introduce into the PV curriculum an innovative relevant Programme of Study.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 The Research Design

As mentioned above, the present article is about the first part only and is essentially about the Baseline Survey of the employability of UBS leavers and of deficiencies in the current PV school curriculum regarding their employability.

The concern of the research design was for both discourse and empiricism. In each country, a sample of some 10 Upper Basic Schools, stratified by Socio-economic area (Rural/Urban), and Type of Schools (Public/Private) was selected, in consultation with the appropriate Education Authorities. Table 2 gives details of the samples of schools achieved after taking account of each country’s size and funding allocation for the study.

**Table 2:** The Number of Selected Schools in Each Country  
by Socio-Economic Area and Type of School

**Table 2A:** Number of schools in Gambia by Type and Region

Region	Number of Schools by Type			Total of schools
	Government	Grand-Aided	Private	
1	1	0	2	3 (Urban )
2	3	2	0	5 (suburban)
3	1	1	0	2 (rural)
4	2	0	0	2 (rural)
<b>Total of schools</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>

**Table 2B:** Number of Schools in Nigeria by Type and State

Type of School	South West [Oyo & Ogun States]	South East [Akwa Ibom]	Northern Nigeria [Fct & Nassarawa]	Total of Schools
Public	2	1	0	3
Private	2	1	1	4
Government [Model School]	0	1	1	2
<b>Total of schools</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>

Note: FCT – Federal Capital Territory

**Table 2C:** Number of Schools in Senegal by Type and Geographical Area

Type of School	Geographical Area		Total of schools
	Urban	Rural	
Private	2	0	2
Public	7	4	11
<b>Total of schools</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>

Part and parcel of the research design was to promote the necessary on-going personal contacts and exchanges among the researchers across the three countries. For this reason, Transnational Workshops were run during this part of the study at, respectively, Banjul, Lomé, Bissau and Dakar. The aim was to develop a common approach to implementing the project and to harmonise the key research tools.

At country level, Training Workshops were organised in order to fulfil the training needs (of appointed Assistant Researchers) that were of specific relevance to the project. Moreover, some 20 Guidance Notes contributed to clarifying the theoretical concepts that underpinned the study (such as the concept of Curriculum Integration).

## 2.2 The Data Collection Procedures

In each country, in addition to the necessary Documentary Study, a review of the relevant literature was undertaken (e.g. Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Bynner and Parsons, 2002; ILO, 2012; Nunn *et al*, 2008; Roegiers, 2010; Benett and Tuxworth, 1984; Wang, 2012; McQuaid *et al*, 2007). The literature search revealed very clearly that employability is multi-faceted but the workshop discussions narrowed the research about employability — down to gauging the teachers' views about the employability of UBS leavers, observing the teachers' treatment of the notion of employability in practice, and assessing the UBS leavers' level of employability.

An appropriate self-completion questionnaire was therefore developed and administered to the school teachers in the pilot scheme and/or individual, semi-structured interviews of the school teachers were conducted by the Principal Researchers and the appropriately trained Assistant Researchers. Using an Interview Guide, the researchers obtained the teachers' views on the objectives and suitability of the official, existing Pre-Vocational school curriculum — as did the Focus Group discussions with other stakeholders (civil society, school administrators and employers) in Gambia and in Nigeria, and a round table conference in Nigeria. The issues covered

during these interviews and discussions included the very concepts of Employability and of Competence (and their integration into the Pre-Vocational school curriculum), the availability and adequacy of resources for teaching-learning, and the teachers' expectations for the employability of UBS leavers. The interviews were thus on the supply side of employability skills and were supplemented by follow-up classroom observations using an appropriate Observation Grid, and by a Students' Competency TEST in order to determine their employability level towards the end of their school careers (see the Appendix). These research tools (the Interview Guide, the Observation Grid and the TEST) were developed by the Project Team during the transnational workshops. In each sampled school the TEST was administered to a whole class of students in the penultimate year at school (as in Gambia) or, as in Senegal, to a group of 15 students (also in the penultimate year) from a class selected at random at the school.

### **2.3 The Data Analysis Procedures**

The Qualitative Analyses of the data, at each selected school, entailed a Discourse Analysis of the Interview data, the Focus Group Interview data, the Classroom Observational data, and the Documentary data, together with a Content Analysis of the Teaching-Learning Materials in use, and their suitability in the school context.

The Quantitative Analyses included the Item Analyses for the Students' Competency TEST data, as well as, the Analysis of the aggregated TEST Scores, for each selected school, and over all the selected schools at Country level, and the analysis of the Classroom Observations recorded on Likert type Scales. Descriptive Statistics summarised the TEST data (namely, Frequencies, Means and Standard Deviations, and Medians).

### **2.4 Project Management**

The project was accountable to the ERNWACA Regional Scientific Committee; and in each country, the project was under the aegis of its ERNWACA National Scientific Committee and of a Working Group (at **each** selected school) made up of school nominees, local Education Authority nominees, and representatives of Civil Society at large. The Working Group was responsible for agreeing with the school Senior Management Team a formal structure of accountability at all stages within the implementation of the project.

## **3. The results**

The results relate to the key issues at the heart of the study, namely:

- the Employability of Upper Basic School leavers;
- the Pre-Vocational school curriculum.

### **3.1 The Employability of the Upper Basic School leavers**

Across the three countries, the respondent teachers viewed the employability of UBS leavers as the potential ability to earn a living in gainful employment, or as self-

employed, having acquired the necessary know-how (and the associated educational qualifications) including basic competencies in Literacy, Numeracy, and Information Technology. They claimed to be aware of the concept of employability and of its implications for UBS leavers — and to understand how it could be “inculcated in the students.” However, as the research report from Nigeria stated pointedly, “a good number of them still need training to upgrade their practical skills — particularly in the employability skills lacking in the curriculum”.

### **3.2 The Pre-Vocational School curriculum**

The evidence with a bearing on the PV school curriculum was that there was a debate about the criteria to be used for deciding on the PV school Curriculum pattern and contents; and that beneath the debate there was the well-known, fundamental argument between gaining access to the prestigious ladder of academic qualifications (which gives entry to jobs of power and status) and “being tracked into pre-vocational courses” which are still regarded as an alternative “inferior route” (Benett and Tuxworth, 1984; Atkins, 1985). This argument notwithstanding, the study threw up some interesting findings on Curriculum Integration and on Deficiencies in the Curriculum as described below.

#### **3.2.1 Curriculum Integration**

Across Gambia and Senegal, the respondent teachers had a broad understanding of the concept of Curriculum Integration but the application of the concept varied in practice and the competencies required of UBS leavers were not adequately integrated in the current Pre-Vocational School curriculum content. In stark contrast, Nigeria has been implementing a new Pre-Vocational School curriculum and “one of the new things added” was a form of curriculum integration described as “the merging of subjects” — for example, Introductory Technology, Agricultural Science and Basic Science are now merged into one subject.

#### **3.2.2 Deficiencies in the Curriculum**

The teachers were aware that there were deficiencies in the PV school curriculum regarding the employability of the UBS leavers and that remedying these deficiencies would entail the development of the following:

- Teachers’ Competencies (regarding classroom teaching-learning in Upper Basic Schools)
- UBS leavers’ Competencies (regarding their employability)

#### **Teachers’ Competencies regarding Classroom teaching-learning** (see Table 3 below)

Table 3 shows the researchers’ observations of the teachers’ competencies regarding classroom teaching-learning. For the sampled teachers in Gambia (n=48) and those in Senegal (n=13), the lessons observed were judged “Satisfactory” or “Very Satisfactory”, as regards their “Pedagogical objectives”, “Pedagogical approach”, and “Pedagogical relationships” with students. However, in both countries, the classroom observations of teaching were skewed in the opposite direction (that is, teaching was

reported to be “Not Satisfactory”) as regards other aspects of teaching-learning, such as, Group Work, attention to Individual Differences, Teaching Aids and Materials, and Curriculum Integration based on cross-cutting themes (such as, Information Technology, Gender Equity, and good Governance). In spite of this similarity between the two countries, there was a rather marked difference between them in the level of students’ Active Participation during the teaching-learning process, and in the Opportunities given to students to ask questions in class — with Senegal outperforming Gambia on these two criteria of teaching-learning competence.

In Nigeria, the reported observations of teaching-learning were mostly concentrated around the scale categories “Not Satisfactory” and “Not at all Satisfactory” in the Observational Grid, except for the dimensions “Individual Work”, “Vertical teacher-student relationship” and “Teacher-student Communication”; and, in a few Private schools, for the dimensions “Physical environment”, “Students’ Motivation” and “Opportunities given to students to ask questions”.

**UBS leavers’ Competencies (regarding their Employability)** (see Table 4)

Table 4 below shows two sets of results for the TEST about the students’ Competencies as regards their employability:

- Table 4A about the students’ Achievement Level in the whole TEST taken as the measure of their Competency.
- Table 4B about the students’ Achievement Level and Achievement Rate in each TEST Item

The results are challenging and will be useful for monitoring the level of their employability over time.

**Table 3:** The Researchers’ Observations of the Teachers’ Competencies Regarding Classroom Teaching-Learning

Sections of the Observation Grid	The Assessment Criteria	Assessments		
		Gambia	Nigeria	Senegal
1. Pedagogical Objectives	The Conformity of the targeted objectives with the current programme (regarding competencies for employability)	X	•	X
	The Pertinence of the objectives for the achievement of the targeted employability competencies	X	•	X
	The Alignment of the lesson objectives with current life issues and events	X	•	X
2. The Pedagogical Approach	Active learning	•	•	X
	Transmissive	X	NA	X
	Groupwork	•	•	•
	Individual work	X	X	X
	Addressed individual differences among students	•	•	•
	Led towards the autonomy of learners	•	•	•
3. The Teaching Aids	Pertinent with respect to the highlighted objectives	•	•	•
	The Adaptation of the mobilised resources (teaching aids and materials) for teaching-learning	•	•	•

and Materials	The mobilised resources (teaching aids and materials)	●	●	●
4. Pedagogical Relationship	The vertical pedagogical relationship (between teacher and students)	X	X	X
	The horizontal pedagogical relationship (between students and students)	●	●	●
	The circular pedagogical relationship	●	●	●
	The teacher's communication with the students	X	X	X
5. The Level of Students' participation	The active participation of students during the learning process	●	●	X
	The opportunities given to students to ask questions	●	● *	X
6. The Learning or working Environment.	The physical environment (i.e. ventilation, lightings, security, infrastructure and equipment) was conducive to learning	X	● *	X
	Students' Motivation	X	● *	●
7. The Integration of cross-cutting themes	During the sessions, the linkages between the lesson contents and the cross- cutting themes that had been taken into consideration [ICT, the World of work, Equity (gender, physical disability), Good governance]	●	●	●

[Key: X means that teaching-learning was Very Satisfactory or Satisfactory regarding this criterion;  
● means that teaching-learning was Not Satisfactory or Not at All Satisfactory regarding this criterion;  
\* means except in a few Private Schools; NA = Not Available]

**Table 4:** The Students' Achievement Level in the Competency TEST

**Table 4A:** The Students' Achievement Level in the WHOLE TEST by Country

	Gambia	Nigeria	Senegal
<b>Achievement Level for the Samples of Students</b> (see * above)	25 % (*)	31% (*)	41% (*)
<b>Number of Students Sampled per Country</b>	413	432	193

[Note:

- (a) the Achievement Level in a TEST is the Average TEST score (for all the students who take the TEST) expressed as a percentage of the Maximum Possible total mark in the TEST(\*)
- (b) In this study, two aspects of the Achievement level in the TEST were available for the Sample of students in each country:
  - (i) the Achievement Level for the Sample in the whole TEST (i.e over the 13 Items) (see Table 4A below)
  - (ii) the Achievement Level for the Sample in each Test Item (see Table 4B below)]

The results provide a comparative perspective between and within the three countries but only tentatively because the results mask differences in school conditions across the countries. Nonetheless, there is evidence from the available tabulated data, that substantial proportions of UBS leavers in the three countries were not at an appropriate level of employability — with the scoring, on average, of about 41% (*of the maximum possible total marks for the TEST*) in Senegal, 31% in Nigeria, and 25% in Gambia.

Variations of the TEST scores by socio-economic area were also in evidence within all the countries. An example of this socio-economic differential was

demonstrated very clearly in Senegal with a statistically significant difference of some 13% (of the total marks for the TEST) in favour of the Urban students.

The TEST data in Senegal pointed also to a statistically significant difference of some 7% (of the total marks) between the different Types of schools in favour of the Private School students. However, there was no significant Gender differential in the TEST scores.

*(The Results of the Item Analysis for the TEST (see Table 4B))*

Actually, the poor overall performance of the UBS leavers in the whole TEST masked also the inter-country results which the Item Analysis revealed about:

- the Achievement “Level” of the students’ in each TEST item (that is, the average score for the item as a proportion of the maximum possible total score for the item)
- the Achievement Rate “pass rate” (that is, the proportion of correct students’ answers for each item).

**Table 4B:** The Achievement Level of the Sampled Students by TEST ITEM (Exercise) and Country

Domain of Content	Test item	The TEST Items (Exercises) Contents (Abridged) <i>(Students' ability .....)</i>	Gambia	Nigeria
<b>Communication (Written)</b>	1	To write a Job application letter:	41%	54%
	2	(a) in the National Language	26%	11%
	(Oral)	(b) in a Second Language		
	10	To express themselves orally in their local/ native language in an interview for a Job	48%	32%
<b>Citizenship</b>	3	To identify the factors in the Development Areas of their Cities that are contributing: (a) to improved living conditions (b) to Economic Development	25% 27%	50% *
	4	To apply their Knowledge of scientific principles in the areas of: (a) Health Science (b) Chemical Sciences (c) Animal Husbandry	14% 35% 21%	* 34% 48%
<b>Group Leadership</b>	5	To identify good leadership for a Local Investment Group with regard to: • the management measures to take as leader	48%	72%
	7	• the attitudes to have as leader	45%	67%
<b>Mathematics</b>	8	To apply their Knowledge of Mathematics to a specific practical problem: • in a wholesale Trading setting	14%	21%
	9	• in a Farming setting	1.4%	0.5%
<b>Information Technology</b>	11	To send one SMS to three persons simultaneously	24%	31%
	12	To send an e-mail for a Job Application to three persons simultaneously	6%	5.4%
	13	To use the MS <sup>TM</sup> Excel Software Application for basic Arithmetical calculations.	1.6%	3%

[Key: \* For Citizenship and for Science, Nigeria reported only partially the respective Achievement Levels; \*\* The results for Senegal were not available]

Achievement Level (from the TEST Items)

Taking the results about the “Level” of the students’ performance, the Nigerian students were at a very good level (of around 70%) in their ability to identify good attitudes in Group leaders and the good measures to take as president of a local Economic Investment Group with regard to co-ordinating its activities. They attained a lower level (around 50%) in their ability:

1. to view the Development areas locally as an indication of improvement in living conditions,
2. to apply their scientific knowledge and understanding to improving productivity in animal husbandry, and
3. to write letters for job applications in the official National Language (English).

In striking contrast (from the available data) the highest level that the Gambian students attained was 48% and this was for both Oral Self-expression (in their local native language during individual interviews for jobs) and for Identifying Good Leadership. Their performance in all the other items was poor at a level less than 30%, apart from their performance with regard to their ability to write in the National Language (English) at a level of 41% and their ability to apply their scientific knowledge and understanding to solving problems in “Chemical Sciences” at a level of 35%.

Notable too was that the disaggregation of the total TEST scores to individual item scores pointed to similarities in Achievement Levels between Gambia and Nigeria, with students in both countries performing very poorly in the use of the MST<sup>TM</sup>EXCEL software application for basic Arithmetic calculations (at a level of about 2% in Gambia and 3% in Nigeria), and also in sending SMS and e-mails for job applications.

#### **Achievement Rate** (*from the TEST Items*)

Only Gambia reported the Achievement Rates for the individual TEST items, and the highest reported proportion of correct answers in the country was for the ability to apply scientific knowledge and understanding to solving problems in Chemical Sciences — with an Achievement Rate of 32% .

## **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The Baseline Survey results in this first part of the study have provided a very useful backdrop for the intended subsequent work.

The findings paint a rather similar composite picture across the countries. It is one of schools delivering programmes of study which have whole-class didactic teaching (and thus mostly passive learning) as the dominant teaching-learning approach, and can lead to surface learning rather than to deep learning; and these programmes are offered in classroom environments that are physically adequate but lacking in appropriate teaching-learning materials and relevant practical activities. Arguably, although quality whole-class teaching is important, it should be complemented with small group teaching — indeed with personalised learning, taking into account individual students’ employability needs and parents’ aspirations.

There is compelling evidence of deficiencies in the employability skills of UBS leavers and hence of poor preparation for their future, whether for employment or for

further learning or for other positive outcomes, such as their involvement in local community projects — a point probably not lost on employers and parents when questioned. And the survey results have provided insights which can assist in improving current teaching-learning practice, even though the challenge posed by the difficulty of obtaining “outcome measures” of Employability for UBS leavers remains. In conclusion, there was now an imperative for Action, and the Project Team’s recommendation was that the Agenda for action was the implementation of the second part of the Feasibility study in each of the selected schools in the immediate future, and the development of a curriculum policy for a national entitlement to enhanced employability (for UBS leavers) in the long-term.

#### **4.1 Limitations of the study**

The results of the Baseline Survey are indicative in spite of its limitations. These arise mainly from the narrowing down of the research to “input measures” of employability (Hillage and Pollard, 1998) and “perception measures” (leaving out “outcome measures”), and from the well-known design weaknesses associated with Quasi-experimental Pretest – Posttest research, such as the limited generalizability of its results.

Nonetheless, the project can claim validity given its use of methodological Triangulation. Indeed, it can claim other categories of validity, namely, *Ecological /Face validity* (because the research tools were “home grown”, that is, grounded in the realities of the local situations), *Content validity* (because relevant curriculum issues were covered), and *Internal validity* (because the research was under control, as far as possible, through the random sampling of schools and students, respectively).

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#### **Acronyms**

NURS	Nigerian Unemployment Rate Source
PAGE	Programme of Accelerated Growth and Employment
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
SFS	Senegal Fact Sheets

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## Appendix: The Students' Competency Test

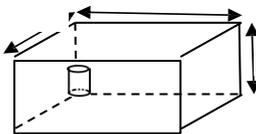
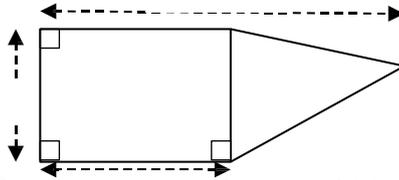
### Part 1: Written test

Items	Coding (do not write here)						
<p><b>Exercise 1 (5mins)</b></p> <p>Write a job application letter of ten lines in English. To do so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce yourself (2 lines),</li> <li>- State your capabilities (6 lines),</li> <li>- State your request (2 lines)</li> </ul> <p><b>Write your answers using the following lines :</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>						
<p><b>Exercise 2 (10mins)</b></p> <p>Write a job application letter of ten lines in French/English (as the second language you learn)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduce yourself (2 lines),</li> <li>- State your capabilities (6 lines),</li> <li>- State your request (2 lines)</li> </ul> <p><b>Write your answers using the following lines :</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>						
<p><b>Exercise 3 (5mins)</b></p> <p>In your city, the following Developmental areas exist:              land for farming purposes, dams, waste and water sanitary network, areas for leisure activities, places for cults, livestock, green spaces, hydraulic infrastructures.</p> <p>From the list above, fill the table according to which one is contributing to the economic development or improving the living conditions :</p>	<div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>						
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Improvement of the living condition</td> <td style="width: 40%;">Economic Development</td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>.....</td> <td>.....</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	Improvement of the living condition	Economic Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	.....	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<div style="margin-bottom: 10px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>
Improvement of the living condition	Economic Development	<input type="checkbox"/>					
.....	.....	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Alpha Dia, Burama Jammeh, Dayo Odukoya, Yves Benett, Cheikhou Touré  
A STUDY OF THE EMPLOYABILITY OF UPPER BASIC SCHOOL LEAVERS  
IN GAMBIA, NIGERIA AND SENEGAL

<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>		
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<b>Items</b>	<b>Coding (do not write here)</b>															
<p><b>Exercise 4 (5mins)</b></p> <p>During the cold season, a young couple lock themselves in a room with an incense burner. The charcoal was not completely burnt, the two were later found dead. The disaster was attributed to a gas.</p> <p>1. What is the cause of death of the couple? Choose the correct answer</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Heart Attack  <input type="checkbox"/> Asphyxia (suffocation)  <input type="checkbox"/> Cardiovascular accident  <input type="checkbox"/> Burns caused by the gases </p> <p>2. Which gas is responsible for the accident? Choose the correct answer</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Carbon Dioxide  <input type="checkbox"/> Oxygen  <input type="checkbox"/> Nitrogen  <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrogen </p>	<div style="margin-top: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div> <div style="margin-top: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>															
<p><b>Exercise 5 (5mins)</b></p> <p>You are elected as the president of a local Economic Investment Group which is meeting to discuss the modalities of its management. Identify the good measure (s) to be taken for a good co-ordination of the activities.</p> <p>Tick <b>True</b> or <b>False</b> in front of each statement, according to your judgement (Good or Bad) :</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 80%;"></th> <th style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">True</th> <th style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">False</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I individually take all decisions</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>I involve all members in the decision process.</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>I share the tasks</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>I give responsibilities to my friends</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black;"></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		True	False	I individually take all decisions			I involve all members in the decision process.			I share the tasks			I give responsibilities to my friends			<div style="margin-top: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>
	True	False														
I individually take all decisions																
I involve all members in the decision process.																
I share the tasks																
I give responsibilities to my friends																
<p><b>Exercise 6 (5mins)</b></p> <p>A breeder has a variety of sheep, goats, and cows. He decides to improve their productivity (meat, milk).</p> <p>Help the breeder find the correct formula whilst ticking the correct answer(s)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Leave them to graze and browse only in nature.  <input type="checkbox"/> Feed them with selected mineral foods  <input type="checkbox"/> Keep them in the stable and feed them with selected organic foods.  <input type="checkbox"/> Keep them in the stable and feed them with selected mineral foods. </p>	<div style="margin-top: 100px;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>															

Items	Coding (do not write here)												
<p><b>Exercise 7 (5mins)</b>                      You are elected as the president of a Local Economic Investment Group. Choose from the following list, four good attitudes to have in order to well-manage the group. Circle the correct number corresponding to the chosen attitude.</p>													
<p><b>N° My Attitude is to .....</b></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 5%; text-align: center;">1</td> <td>Share information with my partners</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td>Be surrounded only by my relatives</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td>Listen carefully to others before taking any decisions</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4</td> <td>Look for consensus in all conflicts</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">5</td> <td>Put my interest first before the rest.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">6</td> <td>Sack a relative if he/she is a possible barrier to the good performance of the enterprise</td> </tr> </table>	1	Share information with my partners	2	Be surrounded only by my relatives	3	Listen carefully to others before taking any decisions	4	Look for consensus in all conflicts	5	Put my interest first before the rest.	6	Sack a relative if he/she is a possible barrier to the good performance of the enterprise	
1	Share information with my partners												
2	Be surrounded only by my relatives												
3	Listen carefully to others before taking any decisions												
4	Look for consensus in all conflicts												
5	Put my interest first before the rest.												
6	Sack a relative if he/she is a possible barrier to the good performance of the enterprise												
<p><b>Exercise 8 (10mins)</b>                      You have to go to the wholesale trader to buy tomato cans for your shop. The cans have cylindrical shape with a base of dimension 12 cm and a height of 13cm.                      You have a cuboid box with the following measurements in centimeters shown in the figure below. The tomato cans are arranged into the box as shown in the diagram.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 20px;"> <p>84</p> <p>60</p> <p>26</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <p>Among these answers, circle the one which corresponds to the maximum number of cans which can be placed exactly into the box.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-top: 10px;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">60</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">65</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">70</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">75</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: center;">80</td> </tr> </table>	60	65	70	75	80	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>							
60	65	70	75	80									
<p><b>Exercise 9 (10mins)</b>                      This diagram represents your uncle's farm using a scale of 1 : 4000</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 20px;"> <p>4.5 cm</p> <p>1.75 cm</p> <p>2.5 cm</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div> <p>The farm should be fertilized with manure at the rate of 0.25 kg per square meters. Since the fertilizer is sold in bags of 25kg, find the number of bags needed.</p> <p>Answer the question using the line below :</p> <p>.....</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>												

**Part II: Skills and Interviews**

ITEMS	Implementation	Duration	Coding
<b>Exercise 10</b> Try to convince the person you are discussing with to get a job. To do so, - you need to introduce yourself, - then talk about your capabilities and competencies and - finally state your request.	<b>Interview with the student :</b> Each student will express him/herself in three different languages : - maternal language (or the most spoken language in the community) - English - French	Overall duration of the interview 10 mins (3 mins per language)	<input type="checkbox"/>   <input type="checkbox"/>   <input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Interview with the student :</b> Each student will express him/herself orally in <u>three different languages</u> : - maternal language (or the most spoken language in the community) - English - French	Overall duration of the interview 10 mins (3 mins per language)	<input type="checkbox"/>   <input type="checkbox"/>   <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Exercise 11</b> Send simultaneously this text through SMS to the three numbers listed below : Text to send: <i>«My name is ...,            Am a student at ..... »</i>	<b>Practical Exercise :</b> The student sends a SMS to a group of three persons (All the students follow the instructions according to the availability of telephones). <b>Materials</b> - List all students with mobile phones (with units of credit) - three phone numbers.	5 mins per student	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Exercise 12</b> Send simultaneously an email for a job application to the following address (es). Text to send: <i>My name is .....,            I am a student of .....(school) in Grade .....,            I had training in IT (MS™ Word, Excel, PowerPoint). I am looking for an internship during the holidays in your enterprise in order to boost my knowledge in IT</i>	<b>Practical Exercise :</b> The student completes the passage and then simultaneously sends it as an email for a job application to a group of three persons (the number of students depends on the number of computers available. Students will perform the task at the same time.) <b>Materials :</b> 3 email addresses, XXX computers connected to the internet	10 mins per student	<input type="checkbox"/>

Items	Implementation	Duration	Coding
<b>Exercise 13</b> This is an invoice for a building construction.	<b>Practical Exercise :</b> The student completes the		

Evaluate the total amount of money using Excel.				Excel Table already inserted into the computer by the teacher  <b>Materials:</b> Computers, Excel table filled in with all the inputs of the exercise (The student has only to do the calculation of the total amount of money for each item and the grand total). <i>{Are the Unit Prices realistic? Will the "total Cost per Item" column be wide enough to hold a nine digit number? Will the rods really be measured in INCHES?}</i>	10 mins	
Items	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Cost Per Item			
Bags Of Cement	1455	3600	.....			
Rolls Of Wires	214	1250	.....			
Buckets Of Paint	120	1650	.....			
10 Inches Iron Rods	145	1100	.....			
8 Inches Iron Rods	147	800	.....			
Rolls Of Electrical Wiring Cables	25	14700	.....			
Loads Of Sand	33	36 000	.....			
<b>Total Amount Of Money Needed</b>			.....			

Total Time to Administer the Test: 2hrs

- Written Test : 1 hour
- Practical Test and Interviews: 1 hour

(15 minutes to read the instructions and 45 minutes for the students to answer the questions)

[Note: For Exercise 10, Gambia included a sub-item which asked the student to “try to convince a group of employers (as against a single person) with the aim of getting a job”]

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