**Suwaibatou Ba**

**Abstract**

Suwaibatou Bah will talk about The Swallow as model school in The Gambia. The specific **objective** of The Swallow’s program is **to improve the quality of education in The Gambia, through an emancipatory approach***.* The Swallow therefore wants to:

* advocate emancipating education in The Gambia;
* show a model school, execute research and develop learning and teaching methods;
* support nursery and primary schools towards a more emancipating approach;
* establish links between South and North to strengthen the dissemination of emancipating education.

As the learner is at the heart of the learning process, so the school is at the centre of the education system. Reforms to improve quality should give appropriate weight to enabling schools to improve their own performance. Schools, however, cannot effect meaningful change without sufficient capacity and considerable ongoing support. With its program, The Swallow is in line with the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), which established an agenda for achieving good education quality by the United Nations: the EFA Dakar goals. The main focus of The Swallow’s program is on EFA goal 6: “Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and life skills”.

Because we think education should benefit people and answer their needs, our pedagogical model starts from these basic needs. These basic needs have been described by Abraham Maslow as follows: physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs, cognitive needs, esthetical needs and self-actualization needs. From an emancipating point of view, we need to develop a society which focuses on the needs of people (and not on the profit of multinationals, e.g.). Emancipating education is focused on the general wellbeing of children and youth: both at present, during their schooling, and in the future, when adults. If the educational sector wants to contribute towards the emancipation of society, teaching cognitive knowledge only will not be enough. We translate this into “life skills”: achieving those skills makes youth capable of taking care of themselves and others.

**Suwaibatou Bah will explain the various parts of The Swallow’s pedagogical programs according to these basic needs, and specifically focus on the empowerment of girls within these programs.**

The Swallow wants to be a meeting place and a source of inspiration for the renewal of education in The Gambia, through a nursery and primary school, health education, youth work and research about a different pedagogical approach. All those activities are not yet fully developed. Will they ever be? The Swallow is continually experimenting with new ideas. However, the results and the interested reactions of parents, external educational workers as well as the Gambian Ministry of Education call for a next step: the dissemination of its positive experiences. In an evaluation report, the Ministry gave a total score of 92.99% to the school, mentioning that: “(this) *school should be used as a model centre for other schools to visit”*.

In addition to the daily educational work of The Swallow, an international and more scientific program called **Afrodidact** not only provides more possibilities to execute the program of The Swallow, as described here, but gives also a broader dimension through exchanges with other countries and educational centres. Afrodidact aims to show and promote the ‘best practice’ example of The Swallow to other schools and educational organisations. Its specific aim is to **promote a practical framework for basic schools in developing countries, for improvement of quality education***.* Recently, Afrodidact organised an audit trip with a group of Belgian educational experts. It reports and results will soon be available!