



Setting or Streaming

Background

The summary below presents the research evidence on setting or streaming in the Arab World context.

The Teaching & Learning Toolkit focuses on impact on outcomes for learners; it presents an estimate of the average impact of setting or streaming on learning progress, based on the synthesis of a large number of quantitative studies from around the world.

This page offers a summary and analysis of individual studies on setting or streaming in the Arab world. In contrast to the Toolkit it includes studies which do not estimate impact, but instead investigate the implementation of interventions and how they are perceived by school leaders, teachers and students using a range of research methods. This information is valuable for school leaders and teachers interested in finding out more about particular examples of setting or streaming interventions that have been delivered in the Arab world.



Summary of the research in the Arab World

Setting or streaming is an effective teaching approach to narrow the range of pupil attainment in a class by grouping students into classes based on attainment. Studies worldwide showed a small negative impact of this approach on students' progress particularly with low achievers when compared with students taught in mixed attainment classes. Global evidence also finds a very small positive impact when just examining high attaining pupils. Evidence from the Arab world seems to be consistent with international literature showing a very small but positive impact for higher attaining pupils.

Setting or streaming approach proved to have a positive impact on the attainment of high achieving students. Studies like Rizk, Attia and Al-Jundi (2017) showed that grouping gifted primary school students in Saudi Arabia based on IQ score developed their creative thinking in mathematics when they were taught using the metacognition strategies. Implementing this strategy for three successive weeks for the experimental group (n=20) enhanced their innovative thinking and knowledge processes skills. Similarly, training gifted and talented Jordanian students on the six hats model showed to be effective in developing their creative thinking skills and academic achievements in the Arabic language (Ziadat & Al Ziyadat, 2016). A sample of 59 gifted male and female students of the 7th grade in Jordan were divided randomly into experimental group (n=27) and control group (n=32). Results showed significant statistical differences ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) on student achievement test in favor of the experimental group. Training students on the six hats model allowed the gifted students to unleash their thoughts in order to think differently outside the box and to have different prospective at different cases from all aspects, which provided students with new comfortable strategic approaches outside the traditional framework of thinking. As such, students' academic scores improved, and their problem-solving and critical thinking skills were enhanced.

Furthermore, grouping ESL students based on their attainment improved their English oral performance and vocabulary. In their study, Owen, Razali, Samad and Noordin (2019) found out that implementing different communicative activities (i.e, information gap activities) in the classroom has enhanced first year secondary Libyan students' language performance and in particular, the speaking skill. It is



believed that the benefits of setting or streaming on the teaching and learning processes are consequences of the interaction and relationships among students in the same group. As such, EFLs' performance levels can increase significantly, and their language goals achieved whenever students perform tasks and activities in groups (with peers) rather than individually (Owen, Razali, Samad and Noordin, 2019).

As for low achievers, findings of a mixed-method study conducted by Al-Murtadha (2019) showed that using visualization and goal-setting activities had a moderate positive impact on enhancing students' motivation and self-regulated learning of ESL Yemeni high schoolers. Reading aloud and answering questions about the text were popular activities in which students volunteered to speak in English. Despite this moderate benefit, schools and teachers find it difficult to change their setting practices and therefore, implementation of modern strategies (such as setting or streaming) is uncommon in this context. Obstacles for integrating setting or streaming as a strategy to reduce the attainment gap in classrooms in the Arab world are also related to (1) the amount of material needing to be covered within the lesson times allocated, (2) the insufficient number of periods to fulfill the pedagogical aims and (3) the large class sizes (Albadi, Harkins & O'Toole, 2019).



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Summary paragraph:

Evidence of setting/streaming in the Arab world is scarce and inconclusive. There is some evidence that the strategy has a positive impact on students with high academic achievement. Studies in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lybia and Yemen reported that this intervention provides students with opportunities to actively participate in their learning and strengthen their understating of the topic by interacting with their peers in the same group. There is a risk that these gains are at the expense of low attaining pupils, and more research is needed to see whether the negative impacts on low and average attaining pupils are replicated in the region.

More research is needed in this area, including using larger sample of students and teachers from various course subjects and from different contexts in the Arab world. Additionally, more studies are needed to examine the allocation of students per groups and explore teacher's understandings of this strategy and their readiness to implement in the classroom. Exploring students' experiences would also prepare teachers for a successful implementation that would better target students' academic needs and support their learning.



References

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Search Terms

Ability grouping; gifted and talented, within class ability grouping.

Databases searched

Academic search complete

ERIC (EBSCO)

Education Source

Google scholar

ProQuest Central

ProQuest Dissertations

Web of Science