



Zimbabwe

Revised version, August 2006.

Principles and general objectives of education

Since independence (1980), education has been considered a top priority in the country's development plan and the government's budgetary allocations. Zimbabwe is a comparatively young country and one of the basic principles in its education system is to give to all citizens the opportunity for full and meaningful participation in all the affairs of society, with special attention to traditionally disadvantaged groups such as women, rural communities and the disabled. Access to education is a basic human right which must be accorded to every child.

Education is intended to promote national unity and socialism, and should contribute to national development—particularly, economic development—through the supply of trained and skilled personnel. Culturally, the aim is to revive neglected languages and cultural values and to develop a distinctive way of life with mutual recognition and enrichment of the diverse cultures.

The general objectives of the education system can be summarized as follows:

- to provide education for all at all levels, including non-formal education, eradication of illiteracy and appropriate care for the disabled;
- to transform and develop the curriculum to make it more relevant to the country's cultural, socio-economic and skilled manpower requirements, paying due attention to sciences and practical subjects and improving use of local resources in the development of the curriculum and its delivery;
- to improve the quality and standards of learning and teaching;
- to maintain the cost of education at a level the country can afford and to obtain optimum efficiency and benefits from investments in education.

Current educational priorities and concerns

In order to redress the inequitable and discriminatory practices of successive colonial governments, the post-independence government adopted the policy of education as a basic human right, and committed itself to universal and equal educational opportunity for all. During the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence, primary school education was made free, and gross admission rates shot up to well over 100%. At the end of the 1980s, however, the socialist ideology pursued by the country was set aside and new strategies were developed and articulated in the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP).

The ESAP, adopted towards the end of 1990, influenced the liberalization of the economy with the consequence that many people lost their jobs as local industrial



companies closed down because of high competition from outside. In addition, the government also removed some subsidies for basic food commodities with the result that prices increased beyond the ability of an average wage earner. The 1990-96 period also witnessed the introduction of cost-recovery policies with regard to education and health. The cumulative effects of these measures on the well-being of ordinary families have been devastating—particularly concerning education of children and care of the sick—withstanding the introduction of the Social Development Fund (SDF). The government therefore has to make the most of meager resources to meet the educational and training needs of a growing young population.

Following immediately the adoption of the ESAP, the 1992 drought—the most severe drought the country has faced in living memory—had a fundamental impact on educational programmes, albeit only for the short to medium-term. It devastated the national wealth and led to reduced agricultural production and the decline of agro-business activities, and led to lay-offs in these sectors, as well as reduced employment opportunities in other areas.

Under the ESAP, the government's policy shifted its emphasis from increasing access to schooling to the enhancement of the quality and relevance of the educational process. The education sector is slated for some reductions in its share of the State budget and is accordingly called upon to devise new strategies for maintaining the existing activities, to be highly selective about any new areas or items of expenditure and to recover a high proportion of costs from the beneficiaries. Therefore, the task has been how to reduce costs and still provide quality education and improve students learning achievements. It cannot be denied that the process of upgrading quality and relevance requires substantial increases in resource inputs to schools. The disquieting prospect under the new socio-economic environment is that not only will the quality and relevance ideals be more difficult to attain but the gains made so far are also under threat.

Faced with a deteriorating financial situation, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture has adopted the following priorities and innovative strategies and initiatives to enhance the management of the education system:

- adoption and implementation of new policy initiatives designed to shift both emphasis and resources from the quantitative expansion of the 1980s to qualitative development of the system and enhancement of its relevance;
- mobilizing more resources for the support of education, including the encouragement of local communities to give more support to education;
- adoption of measures to safeguard and consolidate the gains made since independence;
- adoption and implementation of strategies designed to enhance the productivity (effectiveness) of the system in its primary output, i.e. imparting knowledge and basic skills or increased output/achievement;
- increasing the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the system ensuring better utilization of the available resources—human, material and financial.



The Education Act of 1991, which became law in 1992, amended certain clauses of the Education Act of 1987. The amendments sought to bring the 1987 Act in line with the new socio-economic environment created by the adoption of the ESAP, and to regularize certain *de facto* practices in the education system.

In particular, the 1991 Act introduced fees at the primary school level which had been tuition-free since independence, a reversal of the principle of free and compulsory primary education enacted into law by the 1987 Act. The government put in place a set of safety nets to cushion low-income and poor families and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups against the negative effects of the ESAP. Thus, as part of the package, the government created the SDF, which includes a scholarship fund to be used to pay tuition and examination fees for those who can not afford them. The scholarship programme has also been expanded to assist students who are capable but poor, so that they also can attend the best schools in the country. Furthermore, it must be noted that generally no tuition fees are charged in rural primary schools.

The 1991 Act also recognized the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Programme as the official first level or phase of the formal education system, and adopted the concept of local community management, administration and financing of schools through new structures called school development committees (SDCs) in non-government schools or school development associations (SDAs) in government schools. By extension, this concept was applied to the ECEC Programme as centre development committees (CDCs).

The National Plan of Action (NPA) for 1994-96 set out four major objectives. These are:

- expansion of the ECEC Programme and provision of other community-based forms of education (e.g. adult literacy) which have lagged behind the expansion of the primary and secondary education system;
- provision of universal quality primary education by the year 2000;
- improvement of the quality and relevance of the education system as a whole;
- narrowing gender disparities in education, with particular reference to basic education.

While aggregate data on both primary and secondary schooling show success in educational provisions for children, the Ministry is well aware of gaps, bottlenecks and deficiencies in the spread and quality of educational provisions and in the system as a whole. The following are the main areas of concern:

- large commercial farming areas are very poorly provided with primary schools that meet the minimum requirements for registration; thus, many children are deprived of government financial inputs because the schools they attend are not registered;



- children living in high-density urban areas are under-provided with schools resulting in double class sessions and overcrowding in classrooms; some children are bussed daily to enable them to attend schools in low density areas;
- rural schools do not have adequate tutorial facilities and personnel accommodation, so they are usually staffed by untrained or poorly qualified teachers; rural schools are also under-provided with teaching/learning resources and thus offer low-quality education.
- inadequate funding has negative effects on educational services and donors support is not sufficient to meet the increasing demands.

As far as higher education is concerned, the greatest challenge is to maximize access to tertiary education and training despite limited financial resources. The social demand for education and training is constantly increasing to the extent that over 80% of school leavers fail to get placement within the tertiary education system.

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education is trying to expand distance education as one possible solution; through this modality, the Ministry plans to rectify some of the imbalances that limit access to education and training for certain groups in society. On the other hand, the informal sector is considered as a viable opportunity for assisting school leavers. To this end, the Ministry is placing increasing emphasis on entrepreneurial skills in the curriculum for tertiary institutions and is planning to set up new structures to support the informal sector, for example the “mobile education unit” which is designed to provide education and training in entrepreneurial skills at lower cost.

The successor to ESAP has been the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) 1996-2000, representing the second phase of the social and economic reforms initiated by the government in 1991. ZIMPREST aimed at extending and consolidating the results obtained during ESAP, building on them and using them as a springboard for the adoption and implementation of additional reforms.

The major objective of ZIMPREST was to bring about an adequate and sustainable rate of economic growth and social development. This is essential to reduce poverty and create the basis for better living conditions. It is also necessary to continue to invest in human resource development through both public sector programmes and private initiatives.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the problems and challenges that still have to be faced are ensuring the quality and provision of education, responding to the HIV & AIDS pandemic, raising the status of technical and vocational education, and absorbing unemployed graduates into the workforce. Educational programmes are aimed at:

- improving capacity utilization and reducing running costs in the education sector;



- rationalizing central government structures and developing a comprehensive strategy for decentralization of management responsibilities to educational institutions and local authorities;
- improving the relevance of curricula to economy and increasing the capacity of school leavers and graduates to secure gainful jobs;
- increasing access to information technology at the school level;
- increasing access to education for disadvantaged groups, especially women;
- examining the issues of burden sharing regarding the costs and benefits of different levels and forms of education;
- intensifying efforts to improve early childhood learning facilities;
- providing adult education programmes, so as to increase opportunities for lifelong education;
- addressing the issue of the quality of tertiary education and training;
- using the education system to encourage preventive behaviour concerning the HIV & AIDS pandemic;
- encouraging the establishment and strengthening of school and community-based education programmes which equip children, adolescents and adults, with special attention to girls and women, with a whole range of knowledge, living skills, and values required for success in life.

The Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (1999) came up with a new structure for the education system. Among other things, the new structure highlighted the need to institutionalize early childhood education and care. It recommended that the last year of pre-school (catering children aged 5 years) should be incorporated into the primary school cycle. This recommendation is being implemented to a limited extent due to financial constraints. In the more progressive communities, pre-schools have been established next to existing primary schools. Furthermore, to address the problem of shortage of teachers for pre-school education, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education has introduced a Diploma in Education in Early Childhood Development.

The quality of the education system in terms of relevance remains a big challenge. The effective introduction of technical vocational education has been hampered by shortages of equipment and teaching staff. As for the content of education, the system is grappling with the challenges of recruiting suitable material writers and timely production of materials.

In line with the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education's Corporate Plan for 2002-2004, a number of reforms were undertaken in recent years and more reforms are envisaged as part of efforts to widen opportunities for quality post



secondary education for all young people. A new student financing policy was introduced at the beginning of 2002 with the aim of broadening opportunities for tertiary education. This saw the introduction of 100% loan system which is open to all students in the tertiary system. All primary Teacher Training Colleges adopted the 2–5–2 model. This system is designed to give trainee teachers more time in the teaching field and emphasizes on the job training. Under this scheme, students spend two terms at college initially and two terms at college in the final year while the five terms in between are spent on teaching practice. This has greatly reduced the number of untrained teachers in the schools.

The Ministry in conjunction with the National Manpower Advisory Council (NAMACO) has established the Zimbabwe Occupational Standards Services (ZOSS), as part of the reform of technical and vocational education and training (TVET), to ensure better linking and matching of the training delivery and the employment systems through the development of occupational standards. The standards developed for each occupation and trade are being used in the development of relevant curricula and training programmes and in occupational competency assessment and certification. As part of the process of restructuring and upgrading TVET, all Technical Colleges were upgraded into Polytechnics in 2002. The process of rationalizing the structure of TVET and linking with degree programmes through a process of devolution is already underway. One polytechnic has been transformed into a degree-awarding institute of technology while two more such institutions are embarking on degree programmes. The main challenges facing the higher education sector are infrastructural development and the equipping of the growing number of tertiary institutions as well as the remuneration and motivation of lecturing staff.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Education Act No. 5/1987** as amended in 1991 (**Education Amendment Act, No. 26/1991**) sets out general principles and objectives on school education. The key measures that were enshrined in the Education Act, as amended in 1991, are: the abolition of all forms of racial discrimination in education; free and compulsory primary education; provision of State support for non-formal, adult education and literacy programmes; decentralizing the management and administration of the education system; and expanding teacher education so as to release more trained teachers into the school system.

Tertiary education and training is governed by the **Manpower Planning and Development Act** of 1984, as amended in 1994. The Act provides for the establishment, maintenance and operation of technical or vocational institutions, universities, teachers' colleges and vocational training schemes; it promotes the development of human resources; provides for the training of apprentices and the certification of skilled workers, and also provides for the imposition of levies to finance manpower development.

The National Council for Higher Education (**Act of 1990**) was established to cater for higher education. Some of its functions include: ensuring the maintenance of appropriate standards with regards to teaching, courses of instruction, examinations and academic qualifications in institutions of higher learning; receiving and considering applications for the establishment of private universities and university



colleges; and establishing common student admission procedures for institutions of higher learning.

The texts of other basic regulations concerning education in Zimbabwe are drawn from the above Acts.

Compulsory primary education for every child in the age group 6-12 remains a long-term objective, as the 1991 Education Act is silent on how this provision may be enforced.

Administration and management of the education system

Education in Zimbabwe is under the control of two ministries. The **Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture** is responsible for early childhood education and care (formerly under the Ministry of Community Affairs and Women's Development), primary and secondary education, while the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology (now the **Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education**), established in 1988, administers tertiary education and training. The **National Manpower Advisory Council** (NAMACO) and the **National Council for Higher Education** (established in 1990) provide co-ordination and advisory services in the field.

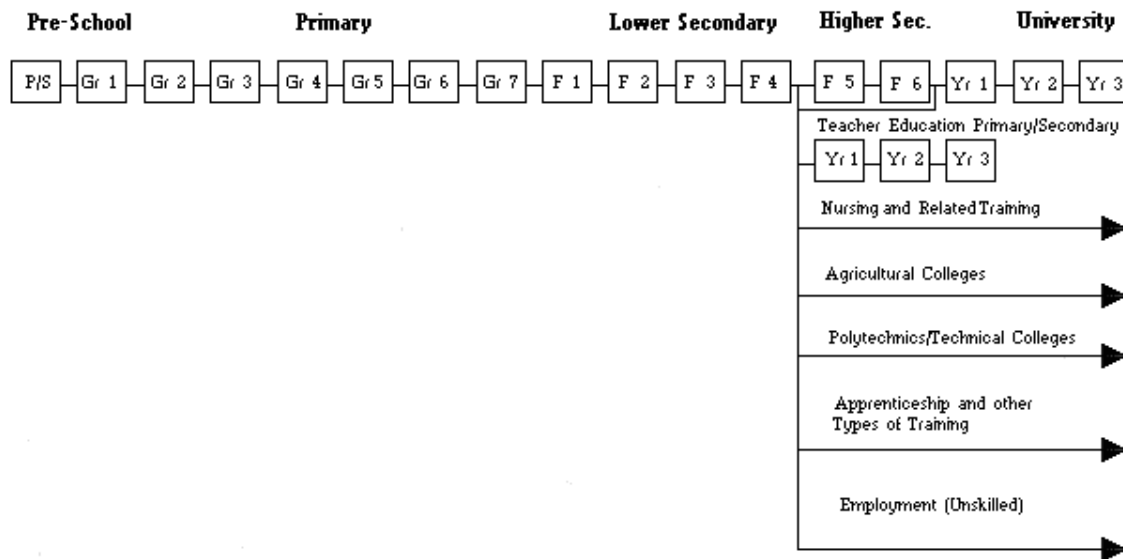
Major decisions are taken by the Head Office and, although there has been a movement towards decentralization, regional directors who are in charge of the nine **Regional Education Offices** have limited autonomous power. Regions are subdivided into **Education Districts**—with the exception of the Harare region, which is almost urban—headed by an Education Officer. As a result of the decentralization process, the promotion of certain grades of employees is done at the regional level, the recruitment of teachers is done by heads of schools, and school supervision has been facilitated.

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education has a different organization, structure and management system. There are no education regions as is the case with the Ministry of Education. Until recently the operations of the Ministry were highly centralized, with all crucial decisions being made at the Head Office in Harare. Decentralization has led to the creation of Advisory Councils in teachers' and technical colleges. Their functions are to advise and make recommendations as they relate to amenities, the development fund, the annual budget, fund raising activities, and the fostering of partnerships between the institutions and the community. Under the 2001-2003 Corporate Plan, it was envisaged that a legal instrument will be developed to transform the Advisory Councils into management boards in order to give the community more involvement in the management of institutions.

The **Zimbabwe School Examinations Council**, a parastatal body created in 1994, is responsible for setting up and processing of examinations up to the Ordinary Level.

Other ministries offer sector specific training, such as the ministries of Health and Child Welfare, Home Affairs and Agriculture, Lands and Rural Resettlement, Youth Development and Employment Creation.

Structure and organization of the education system



Pre-school education

Pre-school education (early childhood education and care centres) caters to children aged 3-5 and lasts three years. Pre-school education is the responsibility of local communities. Some centres give certificates of attendance during the last year of pre-school.

Primary education

Primary education lasts seven years and children usually enrol in primary school at the age of 6. The seven-year cycle is divided into infant grades (I and II) and junior grades (III-VII). At the end of the primary stage, successful pupils are awarded the Grade Seven Certificate.

Secondary education

Secondary education lasts six years and includes: a four-year Ordinary Level cycle where the official entry age is 13 years (there is unimpeded progress to the O-Level cycle, but some schools set selection criteria based on Grade VII examinations); a two-year Advanced Level cycle, which is a restricted cycle since progression is on merit or selection criteria.

Tertiary education is offered in vocational skills training centre, teacher-training colleges, polytechnics, technical colleges, and universities. Generally, colleges offer three-year courses. Universities offer both full-time and part-time diploma and degree programmes. Most of the full-time degree programmes last three years.

The school year is divided into three terms, each consisting of twelve to thirteen weeks (on average, 186 working days).



The financing of education

Since independence, the education budget has consistently been the largest single item of government expenditure. However, after the adoption of ESAP, government expenditure on education progressively declined.

The financing of education is a joint venture by government, cities, towns, rural district councils, churches, mines, commercial farms, etc. Local authorities contribute through the construction of primary and secondary school facilities. Parents contribute through fees, levies and in kind. At government schools, the school fees collected form part of the governmental revenue while at non-government schools the fees are collected and retained at the schools.

The government pays salary expenditures for all teachers at both government and non-government schools. For the non-salary expenditures, these are provided for in full at government schools while at non-government schools, a subsidy is provided in the form of annual per capita grants. About 94% of the total education expenditure is for salaries, wages and allowances for teachers and the administrative support staff, leaving only 7% for non-salary expenditures (figures refer to 1994/95). In addition to the provision made in the national budget and from donor financing, the education sector receives funds through School Development Associations (i.e. Parent-Teacher Associations in non-government schools) and Boards of Governors at Church and Trust schools.

Government tertiary institutions are funded by the State through budgetary allocations, donations from international donors and the Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund (ZIMDEF). The ZIMDEF was established specifically to fund the development of skilled manpower and is administered by the Ministry of Higher Education. Its funds come from levies, parliamentary allocations, sale of articles, enforcement of financial obligations, fees payable from exams funded by ZIMDEF as well as gifts and donations from any persons. These funds are used to support manpower development in many different ways.

A few non-government tertiary institutions receive grants from the government to assist them with tuition costs. Students at all government institutions receive loans and grants. This facility has not yet been extended to private vocational technical colleges and universities because of limited funds.

In 1994/95, public expenditure on pre-school, primary and secondary education amounted to 3,332 million Zimbabwe dollars (Z\$), while public expenditure on tertiary education and training, which includes teacher education and vocational education, amounted to Z\$696.2 million.

The 1996/97 education budget (primary and secondary education) was distributed as follows: Administration: 3.50%; Audio-visual: 0.09%; Literature Bureau: 0.04%; Primary education: 63.62%; Secondary education: 32.74%. The budget allocated to primary education was distributed as follows: Salaries and wages: 94.65%; Subsistence and transport: 0.07%; School services: 2.32%; Furniture and equipment: 0.01%. The budget allocated to secondary education was distributed as



follows: Salaries and wages: 87.81%; Subsistence and transport: 0.14%; School services: 8.23%; Furniture and equipment: 0.65%

The educational process

The principal institutions involved in curriculum change are: the Curriculum Development Unit, the Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council, the two Ministries of Education, colleges and universities, industry and commerce and religious organizations. Eminent educationalists, educational researchers and teachers are key participants in the process of changing and adapting educational content.

The Curriculum Development Unit (recently transformed into the Division of Educational Services) translates government policies on primary and secondary education into measurable objectives, programmes and activities. This Division develops and revises syllabi; promotes creative teaching and interactive methodologies; organizes courses on curricular matters; tests and evaluates the curriculum; and conducts research into curricular issues. Decisions about curriculum issues are made in close consultation with the learners, parents, teachers, heads of schools, education officers in the regions, the Examinations Council, subject specialists, commerce and industry, teachers, teachers' colleges, and universities.

Other ministries, departments, and research institutes are also involved in developing the curriculum. For example, agriculture educationists consult with the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement before developing the syllabus; curriculum developers for geography liaise with the Surveyor General's Office and the Meteorological Office, and the Science team makes decisions with the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare. Decisions made at all levels are implemented through syllabus review and revision. They are disseminated to schools through circulars, teacher education guides and seminars.

The Standards Control Unit (SCU) is responsible for setting and maintaining standards in classroom practice and school administration. The Unit makes decisions over curriculum implementation, syllabus interpretation, assessment, in-service courses and curriculum evaluation.

New decisions on curriculum issues are evaluated through regular trial testing by curriculum developers through questionnaires, interviews and observations. Annual external assessment, in addition to the regular internal testing and evaluation programme, has been very useful. The Evaluation Section of the Planning Department within the Divisions of Planning, Research and Development of the Ministries, the University of Zimbabwe and external organizations have provided external evaluations.

Many factors have motivated curriculum reforms in Zimbabwe, including ideological factors, a search for relevance, international influence, research results, and commissions of inquiry. The strategy of implementation considered the following eight components: teacher training including in-service training; ECEC quality provision through the community; school management that enhances leadership; vocational education and training in schools, colleges and centres; gender



balance and equal opportunities; inclusive education-provision for people with special needs; capacity-building in Ministries of Education and Local Government.

The Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (1999) recommended an outcomes-based curriculum, which is broad-based in terms of subjects offered, and which focuses on learning areas, employment related skills and other essential skills to be developed across the curriculum.

Pre-primary education

The national curriculum for early childhood education and care (ECEC) focuses on the whole development of the child. The curriculum consists of six essential developmental components: physical; cognitive/intellectual; creative; social and moral; emotional development; and health.

The majority of ECEC centres operate a half-day (four to five hours) during week-days especially in rural areas. In urban areas most centres operate on a full-day basis to meet the needs of working parents, in particular single parents.

The children follow a daily schedule prepared according to the type of centre (half- or full-day) and according to their age. The daily schedule includes free play by children in seven play areas aimed at promoting the six core curriculum areas. The seven play areas are: outdoor playground area; block area; drama/house area; art and craft area; music and movement area; book area; and science/discovery area.

The language of instruction at ECEC centres—especially in rural areas—is the mother tongue or the language spoken by the local population or community (mainly Shona and Ndebele, but also Kalanga, Tonga, Venda and Shangaan). However, in urban areas two languages—English and the child’s mother tongue—are often used by teachers, in particular when children come from multicultural backgrounds. The teachers role is to help every child develop language skills through listening, asking open-ended questions which encourage verbal expression, talking to each child, reading books and telling stories. Radio and television programmes are also used by some urban centres. Music is also used to teach language and to encourage self-expression. However, there are no formal lessons planned by the teachers to teach language.

A general short report is provided on the child’s individual abilities and needs regarding the six developmental curriculum areas. This report is meant to give the parents an understanding of how their child is performing and what areas require their support and the centre’s input. Some centres give certificates of attendance during the last year.

The government stipulated an average teacher-pupil ratio of 1:20 for the pre-primary education level. However, because of a high demand for education and a general shortage of facilities, it is not generally adhered to.

Although the national access rate was projected to rise from 20% to about 48% by the year 2000, it only rose to 34.9% in 1998. Since 1994, a total of 3,730 teachers and supervisors were trained to enhance their teaching skills. Similarly, 9,120



community members were sensitized on their roles and responsibilities with regards to the ECEC programme. To further strengthen the programme, fifty-five ECEC district trainers were also trained to enhance their supervisory and managerial skills. These staff development activities have improved the quality of services offered in some centres. Community participation in the programme has increased and reference materials at the centres have improved.

In 2000/2001, the gross enrolment ratio at the pre-primary level was estimated at 36% (43% in 2003 according to provisional data made available by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics).

The construction of ECEC centres has remained problematic because financial resources are limited, especially in rural areas. Attendance is adversely affected, particularly during drought. Some rural communities do not have sufficient incomes and therefore find it impossible to pay ECEC teachers. Government allowances are very low. The payment of allowances is irregular and many teachers demoralized (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 1999).

Primary education

Primary education aims to equip learners with:

- language skills in either English and Shona or English and Ndebele, the three official languages in the country;
- appreciation for the national and social phenomena that surround them; and
- number, scientific and technological concepts.

By the end of primary school, learners are expected to have acquired skills and competencies in the following: language and communication; numeracy and literacy; science and technology; ethics and citizenship; and practical skills to provide a background for, and to stimulate an interest in, technical and vocational subjects.

At this level, the Ministry of Education encourages integrated learning so that experiences gained in one subject area are reinforced in other subjects. Grades I-III pupils are taught in their mother language (Ndebele, Shona, Tonga, etc.). From Grade IV onwards English, Shona or Ndebele are used as medium of instruction. These languages are also used up to sixth-form level (higher secondary), depending on the subject combinations offered in the different high schools.

The following subjects are offered in the primary school: English language, Shona, Ndebele, reading, handwriting, mathematics, environmental science, social studies, art, religious and moral education, music, physical education, home economics and co-curricular activities (homework in Grades III-VII). Handwriting should be taught for ten minutes at the start of every language lesson. The table below shows the average number of hours per week allocated to each subject:

Primary education: weekly lesson timetable

Subject	Grades I and II	Grades III-VII
Shona or Ndebele language	4.5	6.0
English language	4.5	6.0
Mathematics	2.5	3.0
Environmental science	2.0	2.5
Social studies	1.5	2.5
Religious and moral education	1.0	2.5
Home economics	1.0	2.0
Art	1.0	1.0
Music	1.0	1.0
Physical education	1.0	1.0
Co-curricular activities (homework in Grades III-VII)	2.5	5.0
HIV & AIDS education	–	0.5
Total hours per week	22.5	33.0

Source: Ministry of Education, 2001.

Note: The timetable above refers to the number of weekly hours to be spent on each subject. Class periods usually last 30 minutes.

There is a policy of automatic promotion from one grade to the next up to Form IV (O-level), although the worst cases of under-achievers may be permitted to repeat the year, especially in secondary schools. At the end of the seven-year primary cycle, pupils sit a common national examination in English, mathematics, Shona or Ndebele, and a general paper which covers all subjects. Successful pupils are awarded the Grade Seven Certificate. The average primary school drop-out rate during the 1991-95 period was 2.9% and 3% for boys and girls, respectively. In 1995, the average transition rate from Grade VII to Form I (junior secondary school) was 67%.

According to official regulations, the average pupil-teacher ratio should be 1:40. In 1996, the pupil-teacher ratio was 39:1 (the pupil-trained teacher ratio was 51:1). According to provisional data made available by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2003 the gross enrolment ratio (GER) was estimated at 96% (NER: 82%). There were 2,361,588 pupils enrolled at the primary level and the total number of teachers was 61,251, for an average teacher/pupil ratio of 1:39.

Secondary education

As mentioned, the secondary stage is divided into two cycles. The first four years culminate in the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary-level (GCE O-level)



examination. The second two-year cycle prepares students for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) or the GCE Advanced-level (A-level) examination, qualifications required to gain access to university education. The University of Cambridge is the awarding authority for the HSC examination. As far as the vocational courses are concerned, the Ministry of Higher Education examines the national foundation courses (including computer science, metalwork, engineering, technical graphics, typing—Pitman courses—, ornamental horticulture, etc.) at the O-level. Since independence, the State has committed itself to the provision of accessible secondary education to all students who desire and can afford it—secondary education has never been tuition-free.

The major thrust of the secondary school curriculum for the past several years has been an orientation towards science and technology, particularly insofar as it relates to the local circumstances and needs. It is also more in tune with the world of work through the introduction of the concept of Education with Production. In addition to the liberal arts, new subject areas, especially in the vocational and technical areas continue to be introduced. Thus, in addition to the four subject skill areas at the primary school level, technical and vocational subjects become the fifth skills development area at the secondary school level. Students are required to study a minimum of two practical subjects during the first two years of secondary education. Depending on their performance, they will be streamed into an academic- or vocational/technical-oriented curriculum in the next two years. It is important to mention that curriculum guidelines make it compulsory for both male and female students to study mathematics, science, technical and vocational subjects on an equal basis and without any discrimination whatsoever.

The current curriculum in secondary schools is basically urban-based and it needs to be reviewed to better respond to the socio-economic needs of the country. Up to the Form IV (O-level), mathematics, science, English and national languages are core subjects. In addition to these, schools are free to choose from a range of electives depending on local circumstances and according to the following groups of subjects: languages (African and modern languages); humanities (geography, history, religious and moral education, Bible, development studies, etc.); sciences (chemistry, physics, biology, computer studies, etc.); technical and vocational subjects (metalwork, woodwork, food and nutrition, agriculture, arts and crafts, etc.); commercial subjects (business studies, principles of accounting, economics, commerce, etc.). The Ministry of Education recommends a timetable of at least forty weekly periods (each one lasting forty minutes) in each form up to the O-level.

Secondary education: weekly time allocation

Subject	Number of hours per week	
	ZJC	O-level
Core subjects:		
English language	7	6
Shona or Ndebele language	4	4
Science	6	6
Mathematics	6	6
<u>Groups of electives:</u>		
Humanities	4	4
Technical/Vocational	6	8
Business/Commercial	6	6
HIV/AIDS education	1	1
Guidance and counselling	1	1

Source: Ministry of Education, 2001.

It is expected that every secondary school will offer at least two subjects among technical, vocational and commercial subjects. Mathematics and science subjects will be overhauled and strengthened with a view to establishing a solid technological base. Every school that is electrified should eventually offer computer studies to children from an early age. History will be re-introduced with specific attention to its relevance to Zimbabwe. Civics education will also be introduced

Apart from the above-mentioned national public examinations, there are internal examinations administered by the school. These may be term tests or mid-year examinations. During the 1991-95 period, the average drop-out rate at the secondary level was 7% and 11% for boys and girls, respectively. The drop-out rate is highest at the O-level: 92% of boy drop-outs and 94% for girl drop-outs occur at this level. On average, the transition rate from Form IV to the A-level (sixth-form level or high school) is 9% and 6.5% for boys and girls respectively. Of these, about 92% and 90% of the boys and girls, respectively, proceed to post-secondary education (data refer to 1995).

According to official regulations, the teacher/student ratio should be 1:33 for Forms I and II; 1:30 for Forms III and IV; and 1:20 for Forms V and VI. However, it is generally not attained. According to provisional data made available by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2003 the GER for all secondary programmes was estimated at 36% (55% at the lower and 27% at the upper secondary level). There were 758,229 students enrolled at the secondary level (all programmes) and the total number of teachers (all programmes) was 33,964, for an average teacher/student ratio of 1:22.

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

The education system in Zimbabwe has been and is still academically oriented and examination-driven. The main goal in learning achievement is to pass the end-of-cycle examinations. However, it has been found over the past twenty years that only about 30% of any given cohorts manage to pass the academic examinations at the GCE O-level and reach the tertiary level. It has also been noted that this type of assessment is not the best means to measure learning achievement. The need to broaden the assessment goals spectrum has been hotly debated in Zimbabwe (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 1999).

Higher education

The Ministry of Higher Education and Technology (now the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education), established in January 1988, is in charge of teacher training, technical and vocational education, and universities. There has been a tremendous expansion in the provision of tertiary education and training since 1980.

At the beginning of the 1990s it was realized that very few school-leavers were accessing tertiary education. Competition was so high that institutions introduced stringent entry requirements that left out the bulk of qualifying candidates. Thus, the Ministry responsible for tertiary education and training embarked on a drive to increase access. The number of universities increased from one in 1990 to the present eight full-fledged universities and three university colleges. Enrolment increased from just over 9,000 in 1989 to 33,000 in 2000.

There are several vocational skills training centres (29), six technical colleges and two polytechnics that are state run. Public technical colleges did not increase in number, but enrolment in these institutions increased by about 114% between 1989 and 1999. Access to tertiary education and training was also increased through the establishment of vocational skills training centres around the country whose main target groups are drop-outs, retrenched and other school-leavers. In addition, there are over 350 privately-owned institutions, most of which offer commercial-based programmes.

The number of teacher-training colleges increased from eight in 1980 to fifteen in 1995, while total enrolment rose from around 2,800 to more than 16,000 students. Of the fifteen colleges, five are secondary and ten are primary school teacher training colleges. In 1997, the total enrolment in primary school teacher training colleges was 13,017 students; in secondary school teacher training colleges it was 5,463. Most of the teacher-training colleges are government-owned.

Although there are affirmative action policies with respect to gender, the disabled and other disadvantaged groups, these do not seem to yield intended outcomes. Whereas the male-female ratio in teachers colleges was fairly balanced (see Table 5), at all other institutions of higher learning it was heavily skewed in favour of males. In the mid-1990s the male population accounted for about 70% while females accounted for about 30% of the student population. By the year 2000 the overall



female enrolment in public tertiary institutions, including the three private universities, had risen to almost 40% of total enrolment.

Technical education is taught at various registered institutions. These offer a wide range of technical subjects that lead to National Certificate (NC), National Diploma (ND), and Higher National Diploma (HND). The function of the technical colleges is to develop manpower for all sectors of the economy through institutional training. Three of the colleges also run courses for apprentices. The level of awards range from national certificates to higher national diplomas. The entry requirements are five O-level credits.

Vocational skills training centres concentrate mainly on offering trade-specific courses through which experienced persons employed in a recognized trade have their level of competency upgraded or tested on an approved classification system. The apprenticeship programme is a combination of on-the-job training carried out under supervision of skilled workers with related supplementary classroom instruction. The entry requirements are five O-level credits.

Teacher-training colleges admit students basically with five O-level credits, including the English language. Some colleges admit students with A-level passes.

The University of Zimbabwe offers both full-time and part-time courses in agriculture, arts, commerce, education, engineering, law, medicine, science, social studies and veterinary science. The entry requirements are two A-level passes. Most of the full-time degree programmes last three years. The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) opened in March 1991 to offer degree programmes in applied sciences, industrial technology and commerce. The entry requirements are the same as the University of Zimbabwe. The Africa University is privately-owned (United Methodist Church) and started operating in March 1992. It is offering, among other disciplines, theology, administration and education degree programmes. The entry requirements are also two A-level passes.

All public tertiary institutions are fully funded by the government. Universities are autonomous, elaborate their own curriculum, and administer their own examinations. The Ministry of Higher Education and Technology provides general guidelines in accordance with the national plans. The curriculum of vocational and technical education is developed by the Curriculum Unit of the Ministry. This unit also produces some of the teaching materials used by the institutions. Commercially produced reading and learning materials that meet the Ministry's guidelines can also be used. The Examination Unit has full responsibility for examinations in vocational and technical establishments. The curriculum of teacher education is regulated by the University of Zimbabwe. Examinations in teacher training colleges are the responsibility of the University.

The current curriculum for tertiary institutions and the examination system are under review. The main thrust with regards to curriculum is to place emphasis on science and technology, engineering and computing sciences as well as finance studies.



Universities use continuous assessment, semester examinations, practicals and industrial attachment, research projects, and dissertations or theses. A system of external examining is used at the end of degree or diploma courses.

In terms of access, total enrolment in universities, technical and teachers' colleges grew by 6 % between 2001 and 2003 as shown in the table below:

Evolution of enrolments at the tertiary level, 2001-2003

Enrolments/ Year	2001	2002	2003
Technical Colleges	21 002	17 046	16 241
Teachers Colleges	17 449	21 900	18 893
Universities	34 753	35 606	43347
Total	73 204	74 552	78 481

Source: National Report 2004.

In addition, there are more than 400 private vocational training institutions with an estimated total annual enrolment of 15,000. These institutions are providing short- and long-term courses in hospitality, applied arts, business studies, information technology, horticulture as well as hair dressing and cosmetology. They play a vital role in widening access to tertiary education and training to young school-leavers who fail to gain entry into the mainstream system.

In terms of quality enhancement, the establishment of the Zimbabwe Occupational Standards Services (ZOSS), as a standards development and standards setting body, has improved the coordination of tertiary education leading to better quality and relevance of training programs. ZOSS operations involve networking with education and training providers (private and public), industry, employer and employee organizations, professional bodies, the Public Service Commission and other regional and international standards setting bodies. This has resulted in the establishment of effective structural linkages between the framework of occupational standards and the rest of the sub-systems in education and training.

Special education

The Education Act (1987) states that every child shall have the right to a school education. It is the intention of the Ministry that children with special educational needs should participate as fully as possible in the educational process. The following table shows the provisions available to disabled children in 1995/96:



Area of disability	Special schools	Resource units	Individual integrated	Multiple-handicapped
Hearing impairment	3	63	21	-
Mental handicap	15	44	46	-
Physical handicap	3	-	-	-
Visual impairment	3	47	140	4
Total	24	154	207	4

There are no resource units for the physically handicapped but some are easily integrated into the mainstream. There are no resource units for children who are multiple-handicapped. These are found in special schools for the hearing impaired, mentally handicapped and visually impaired.

Appropriate teaching techniques and modifications of the materials are used to meet the special needs of children. Cognizance is given to the children's different paces in learning. However, what is taught remains the same as that in the regular school system as these children are to compete in the classroom with their non-handicapped peers.

In 1995, enrolment in special education was as follows:

Special education (1995)

Area of disability	Enrolment		
	Females	Males	Total
Hearing impairment			
Schools	440	491	931
Resource units	248	194	442
Individually integrated	61	66	127
Multiple-handicapped	10	22	32
Mental handicap			
Schools	467	747	1,214
Resource units	155	295	450
Individually integrated	125	145	270
Multiple-handicapped	11	19	30
Physical handicap			
Schools	212	132	344
Individually integrated	397	483	880
Visual impairment			
Schools	176	291	467
Resource units	223	392	615
Individually integrated	102	137	239
Multiple-handicapped	25	31	56
Total	2,652	3,445	6,097

Private education

As mentioned, the government pays salary expenditures for all teachers at both government and non-government schools. The non-salary expenditures are provided for in full at government schools, while at non-government schools a subsidy is provided in the form of annual per capita grants. Non-government schools are generally referred to as private registered schools. Most of the schools are privately-owned, the majority of them by district councils.

All teachers of registered schools (government and non-government) are paid by the State unless the individual teacher elects otherwise. However, there are a very few teachers, mainly teaching in Trust Schools, who have elected to stay out of the civil service. All schools follow the same curriculum.



Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

At the pre-primary level, few national textbooks and manuals have been developed. Some textbooks prepared in other countries are used for obtaining basic information that can be applied to the local situation. Teachers, parents and the local communities provide basic play equipment. Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also assist communities—especially the rural centres—with basic indoor and outdoor play equipment for the ECEC Centres.

At the primary and secondary school levels, the major limitation for the provision of quality education in rural areas is the shortage of textbooks, supplementary reading and reference books. In 1992, the average student-book ratio was found to be 5:1 in rural schools and 2:1 in urban schools. In rural schools, library collections are practically non-existent. In commercial farming areas, learning materials are almost unavailable. Donors and international organizations have made funds available to purchase books for the disadvantaged schools, mostly in rural areas, but a lot still needs to be done to overcome the shortage of instruction materials, including computers and audio-visual equipment in rural and urban schools.

The Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture is responsible for the development of all school syllabi, the preparation of reading materials including those in minority languages, and for testing and evaluating the relevance of syllabi. It is also the responsibility of CDU to approve and recommend textbooks for use in schools. The Audio-visual Services (AVS) department is responsible for producing supportive teaching materials from the syllabus, reporting and distributing learning aids, broadcasting lessons on the radio, controlling a film library for use in schools and distributing tapes on educational materials.

Some of the school textbooks, particularly at the A-level, are not available locally and have to be imported. At lower levels, textbooks are published locally by the book industry.

Adult and non-formal education

Adult and distance education consists of a number of programmes aiming at increasing access and facilitating the provision of affordable basic education to youths and adults outside the formal school system using non-formal education strategies.

The Adult and Distance Education Section of the Ministry of Education is among other things responsible for the establishment, management and supervision of study groups. The main objectives of the study group system are to facilitate the acquisition by the out-of-school population of formal academic qualifications at the secondary education level at affordable cost, and to develop a lifelong learning culture among both young and adult students. Students rely mainly on correspondence education materials although they receive help from mentors.

Independent and correspondence colleges try to facilitate the provision of face-to-face teaching at the secondary school level to learners outside the formal



education system and to prepare learning materials and to provide tuition to distance learners, respectively. Correspondence colleges cater to over 20,000 students in the country, while the independent colleges cater to about 11,000 students.

The Zimbabwe Institute for Distance Education, created in 1989 in order to strengthen distance education programmes, faced severe financial constraints and is now discontinued.

The Part-time and Continuing Education Classes Programme aims at providing affordable and accessible continuing primary and secondary education. The clientele are mainly school drop-outs and students who want to prepare for public examinations at Grade VII, Junior Certificate, and GCE O- and A-levels. Learners meet at mutually agreed times with their teachers where they receive face-to-face tuition for a limited period. The programme is subsidized by the government and the remuneration for teachers is attractive. To ensure quality of instruction, part-time and continuing education centres are supervised by Regional Education Officers and all personnel attend regular workshops organized by the Adult and Distance Education Section.

The Correspondence School was founded in 1930 and is probably the only government-run correspondence school in Africa offering correspondence education at the primary school level. Originally the school was designed to cater to the needs of European children living in outlying areas such as farms, mines, religious mission stations, police and army posts, national parks, construction sites, etc. The school now caters to all children to reflect the new political order and offers tuition by distance education to some 200 pupils in Grades I-IV. Plans are afoot to expand the enrolment.

The Vacation School Courses Programme was initially targeted at practicing teachers who wish to improve their academic qualifications. The programme which is run at well-established schools during school vacations has been so successful that formal school students and school leavers wishing to supplement their O- and A-level subjects have also taken advantage of this facility by fully participating in the programme. In 1995, three courses were implemented in Mashonaland Central, seven in Mashonaland East, nine in Manicaland and two in Matabeleland South.

Government funding for literacy activities is insufficient. Tutors have been teaching on a voluntary basis for a long time and printing costs for literacy materials have skyrocketed. In light of the economic problems aggravated by the ESAP, the literacy programme may be negatively affected unless donors' funding is boosted during the International Literacy Decade.

According to the 1992 Census, the average national literacy rate is 80.4%—73.5% rural and 92.8% urban. However, there are gender disparities regarding literacy rates, as shown in the table below:

Literacy rates (1992)

	Male	Female	Average
Rural	80.83%	67.40%	73.52%
Urban	94.28%	91.24%	92.84%
National	86.06%	75.12%	80.38%

Source: Central Statistics Office, 1992.

Teaching staff

Pre-service teacher training is the responsibility of teacher-training colleges and the universities. Teacher-training colleges admit students basically with five O-level credits—including English language—both for primary and secondary school teachers. Increasingly a number of students possess A-level qualifications.

Teacher-training colleges offer three-year courses except secondary teacher-training colleges, where two-year programmes are available to those students with two A-level credits. Two of the government primary school teacher training colleges offer four-year in-service training for teachers with five O-level credits. The students are deployed to teach in various schools throughout the country and attend lectures during the school holidays.

Secondary school teacher training colleges fall into two categories: academic and technical. Academic colleges require a student to major in up to two main subjects. Technical colleges require a student to take one technical and one academic subject. All students are also required to take the subject theory of education. Primary school teacher training colleges require each student to study all the subjects offered in the primary school curriculum, including theory of education and one main subject.

Pre-service training of pre-school teachers is carried out by three private institutions which train about 80% of all teachers. The Ministry of Education endorses the certificates for the three institutions. Two of the three colleges offer a two-year certificate and the third college offers a three-year certificate. The University of Zimbabwe is involved at degree level for the certification of pre-school trainers and infant teachers. The two-year B.Ed. course in early childhood education and care (ECEC) started in 1995.

Generally, training programmes at the university level consists of a three-year degree course followed by a one-year certificate in education programme. Universities also offer B.Ed. and M.Ed. programmes.

Most of the ECEC teachers completed primary school education and a few went through two and four years of secondary education. The majority of the teachers are untrained and in-service training programmes are currently implemented by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with several NGOs. Few teachers hold a two- to three-year ECEC Teacher Certificate. The professionally trained ECEC teachers are mainly employed in urban areas. In 1993, the percentage of untrained teachers at the



primary and secondary levels was 32.1% and 21.1%, respectively. In 1996, the percentage was 23.6% and 11.2%, respectively.

The working and employment conditions of teaching staff are periodically reviewed to keep them in line with other professions and with the general economic climate. The regulations and conditions of service fall under the purview of the Public Service Commission.

There are two major salary scales for teachers. The salary scale for non-graduate qualified teachers with a minimum of five subjects at O-level and a teaching qualification ranges from a minimum of Z\$47,704 to a maximum of Z\$88,740 per year. Steps advancements are periodically granted based on satisfactory performance. The salary scale for graduate qualified teachers ranges from a minimum of Z\$57,324 to a maximum of Z\$104,388 per year. Advancement is based on satisfactory performance.

As far as benefits and allowances are concerned, teachers are entitled to tax-free housing and transport allowances. On obtaining a relevant higher qualification, a teacher is rewarded by getting some “notches” up in his/her salary for three months. There is a paid maternity leave at three quarters of one’s salary. A teacher can also apply for a car loan and a housing loan guarantee from the government.

Opportunities for promotion are at four levels. Within the school system, a teacher can be promoted to the posts of teacher-in-charge, deputy head and head. At the regional level, a teacher can be promoted to the posts of district education officer, education officer and officer in the School Psychological Services. At the Head Office level, positions range from education officer to permanent secretary. There is also the possibility to be promoted as lecturer in sister ministries.

The teachers workload at the different levels of education—expressed as average number of hours per week devoted to classroom teaching and other educational activities—ranges as follows: eight daily hours or forty weekly hours at full-day ECEC centres; twenty-five to thirty-three hours at the primary school level; and eighteen to twenty-four hours at the secondary school level. A teaching school principal has a teaching load of about eight weekly periods (about five hours), a deputy head teacher has a teaching load of about sixteen weekly periods (about ten hours). Grade I school principals are non-teaching staff.

In-service training and self-improvement courses are not compulsory, but both the untrained and trained teachers show a keen interest in them. The Ministry has put in place a number of in-service training and staff improvement facilities for teachers. These include the Better Schools Programme for teacher clusters, the Guest Teacher Exchange Programme and the Associate Teacher Programme (ATP).

While the cluster programmes respond to the immediate needs of teachers and head teachers, more formal, developmental and systematic programmes are offered through resource centres in the form of short courses that provide opportunities to consolidate and further develop the competencies attained through cluster activities. In this regard, the Ministry of Education has encouraged the University of Zimbabwe to offer a Bachelor of Education degree programme in Administration, Supervision



and Policy Planning through Distance Education. Currently over 3,000 teachers and headteachers are enrolled in this programme.

In an effort to upgrade teachers' skills and competencies, the Ministry has put in place the ATP. Staff development courses, either school-based or school-focused, have been prepared and are being run by schools themselves or the inspectorate in various subject areas. The ATP has made an important impact in giving untrained teachers survival skills in classrooms. From time to time in-service courses and staff development workshops are mounted for district and regional senior staff, who can also sometimes benefit from overseas courses.

Professional support for teachers at the school level is mainly offered through in-service training facilitated by school heads, heads of departments, teachers-in-charge and fellow teachers. At the regional level, workshops are organized by district education officers and education officers. In addition, these officers provide professional support in a collegiate way to teachers in schools.

Educational research and information

Both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education have sections which specialize in research and evaluation not only to ensure that policy decisions are based on accurate information, but also that all programmes adopted are implemented as planned and produce the desired results. On the other hand, schools are encouraged to carry out local research to ensure that their programmes are adapted to their specific circumstances.

The University of Zimbabwe has played an important role in promoting educational research, especially through the Human Resources Research Centre (HRRC). Research findings are generally disseminated through the *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*, a quarterly review.

In addition to the HRRC there are other educational research bodies, such as the Zimbabwe Educational Research Association (ZERA) and the Planning and Statistics Department at the Directorate of Education and Development (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture). Likewise, the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology has several researchers and statisticians in its Directorate of Manpower Planning and Development. Both Directorates advise the Heads of Ministries on policy options and their implications. HRRC and ZERA compile a catalogue of educational research carried out by specialists and researchers working in the universities.



References

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Ministry of Higher Education. *Development of education 1986-1988. National report of Zimbabwe*. International Conference on Education, 41st session, Geneva, 1988.

Ministry of Education and Culture; Ministry of Higher Education. *Development of education 1988-1990. National report of Zimbabwe*. International Conference on Education, 42nd session, Geneva, 1990.

Ministry of Education and Culture; Ministry of Higher Education. *Development of education 1990-1992. National report of Zimbabwe*. International Conference on Education, 43rd session, Geneva, 1992.

Ministry of Education and Culture; Ministry of Higher Education. *The development of education 1992-1994. National report of Zimbabwe*. International Conference on Education, 44th session, Geneva, 1994.

Ministry of Education; Ministry of Higher Education. *National report of Zimbabwe*. International Conference on Education, 45th session, Geneva, 1996.

Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture. *Education For All 2000 Assessment: country report of Zimbabwe*. (Under the co-ordination of G.J.T. Makawati). Harare, 1999.

Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture; Ministry of Higher Education and Technology. *The developments in education: the education system at the end of the twentieth century. National report of the Republic of Zimbabwe*. International Conference on Education, 46th session, Geneva, 2001.

Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture; Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education. *The development of education. National report of Zimbabwe*. International Conference on Education, 47th session, Geneva, 2004.

Web resources

Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education: <http://www.mhet.ac.zw/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Ministry of Youth Development and Employment Creation: <http://www.mydgec.gov.zw/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Zimbabwe Occupational Standards Services: <http://zoss.org/index.cfm> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>