



# World Data on Education Données mondiales de l'éducation Datos Mundiales de Educación

VII Ed. 2010/11





# Zimbabwe

*Revised version, August 2010.*

## 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.

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Education Act No. 5/1987** as amended in 1991 (**Education Amendment Act, No. 26/1991**) and 2004 sets out general regulatory principles of 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 **Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education Act No. 1** of 2006 established the Council to register and accredit institutions of higher education; to repeal the National Council for Higher Education Act; and to provide for matters connected therewith.



Compulsory primary education for every child in the age group 6-12 remains a long-term objective. The (amended) Education Act of 2004 stipulates that every child shall have the right to education. Article 5 states that it is the objective in Zimbabwe that primary education for every child of school-going age shall be compulsory and to this end it shall be the duty of the parents of any such child to ensure that such child attends primary school.

## Administration and management of the education system

Education in Zimbabwe is under the control of two ministries. The **Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts 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. Within the Ministry, 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.

The **Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education** (formerly the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology), established in 1988, administers tertiary education and training. The **National Manpower Advisory Council (NAMACO)** provides advisory services in the field.

The mission of the **Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education**, established in 2006, is to promote and coordinate education provided by institutions of higher education and to act as a regulator in the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examinations, academic qualifications and research in institutions of higher education. The main functions of the Council are to: a) advise the Minister on all higher education matters; b) develop and recommend policy on higher education including the establishment of public institutions and advise the Minister accordingly; c) accredit institutions of higher education; d) design and recommend an institutional quality assurance system for higher education, that is, a system whereby the courses, programmes and degrees offered by institutions are evaluated on a regular and objective basis, and to recommend to the Minister institutional quality assurance standards.

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 **Provincial Education Offices** have limited autonomous power. Provinces 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.

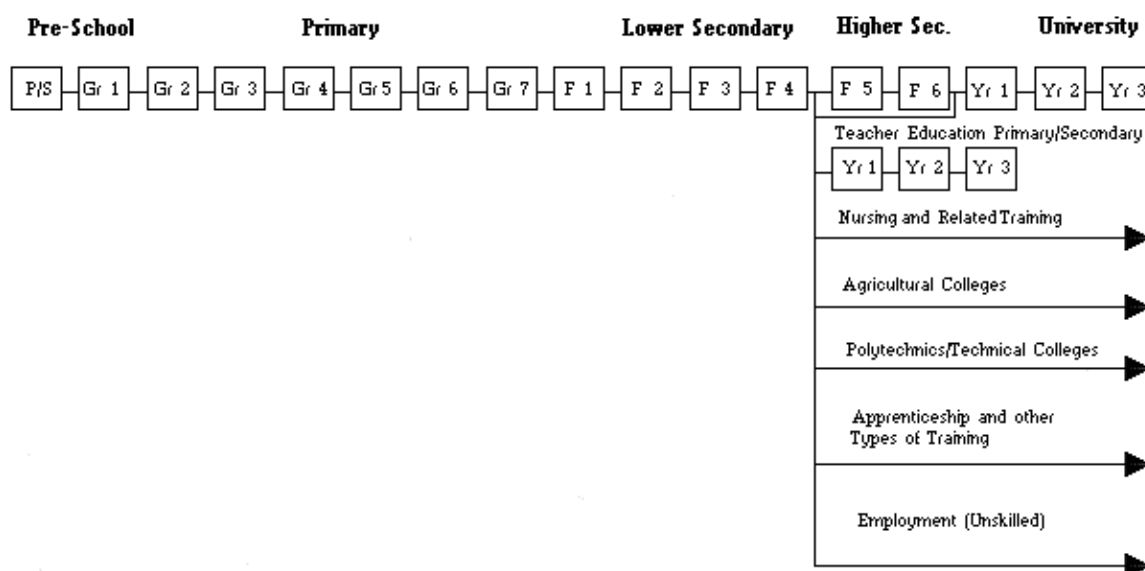
The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education has a different organization, structure and management system. There are no education regions as is the case with the Ministry of Education. Until recently the operations of the Ministry were highly centralized, with all crucial decisions being made at the 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 development) 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 (1 and 2) and junior grades (3 to 7). 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 7 examinations); and a two-year Advanced-Level cycle, which is a restricted cycle since progression is on merit or selection criteria.

## Higher education

Post-secondary and higher education are offered in vocational skills training centre, teacher-training colleges, polytechnics, technical colleges, and universities. Technical and vocational education and training institutions offer a variety of programmes leading to a certificate or a diploma. Colleges offer courses normally lasting three years. Universities offer both full-time and part-time diploma and degree programmes. Full-time undergraduate (bachelor's) degree programmes last three to four years, five years in the case of mining engineering, medicine, and dental surgery). Postgraduate honours programmes normally take one year to complete. Master's degree programmes last one to two years. Doctoral degrees take a minimum of two to three years.

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

## 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 2003, the gross enrolment ratio at the pre-primary level was estimated at 43% according to provisional data made available by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

The construction of 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 teachers. Government allowances are very low. (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 1999).

According to Education Management Information System (EMIS, 2004), ECEC, the proportion of grade ones who have pre-school background has increased from 55% in 2002 to 57% in 2004. The recent policy on the provision of early childhood education at all primary schools is further improving access to pre-school education. (UNICEF 2007). In 2007, an estimated 77.4% of primary schools had early childhood education classes. (Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, 2008).





## 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 areas: 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 1-3 pupils are taught in their mother language (Ndebele, Shona, Tonga, etc.). From grade 4 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 3-7). 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
<b>Total hours per week</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>33.0</b>

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 4 (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 7 to Form 1 (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 was estimated at 96% (net enrolment ratio: 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.

According to national data, in 2004 there were 4,779 primary schools and the net enrolment ratio was estimated at 97%. The primary school completion rate was 68%, and the pass rate was 39% in 2003. The primary school pupil-teacher ratio was estimated at 38:1 in 2004. (UNICEF, 2007).



## Secondary education

As mentioned, the secondary stage is divided into two cycles. The first four years culminate in the Zimbabwe General Certificate of Education, Ordinary-level (ZGCE O-level) examination. The second two-year cycle prepares students for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) or the 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 4 (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 has been re-introduced with specific attention to its relevance to Zimbabwe. Civics education was also 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 4 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 1 and 2; 1:30 for Forms 3 and 4; and 1:20 for Forms 5 and 6. However, it is generally not attained. According to provisional data made available by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2003 the gross enrolment ratio 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.



In 2004, there were 1,567 secondary schools and the net enrolment ratio was estimated at 50%. The pass rate at O-level was 23% in 2003 and the transition rate from Form 4 to 5 was 16%. (UNICEF, 2007).

## 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).

## 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.

Training programmes at the university level normally 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.

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 40 weekly hours at full-day ECEC centres; 25 to 33 hours at the primary school level; and 18 to 24 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 1 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.

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.

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.

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## Web resources

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Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education: <http://www.mhet.ac.zw/> [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

Ministry of Health and Child Welfare: <http://www.mohcw.gov.zw/> [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

University of Zimbabwe: <http://www.uz.ac.zw/> [In English. Last checked: August 2010.]

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