


16 Zimbabwe

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COUNTRY CONTEXT STATISTICS	
	<p>Population: 12.8 million (2011) GDP per capita: US\$573 (2010) Human development index: 0.376 Unemployment: 95% (2009 est.) Key economic sectors: agriculture, mining, tourism Principal exports: platinum, cotton, tobacco, gold, ferroalloys, textiles/clothing HIV and AIDS prevalence: 14.3% (2009 est.) Gross primary enrolment ratio: 101% (2006) Gross secondary enrolment ratio: 40% (2006) Gross tertiary enrolment ratio: 6% (2010)</p>
<small>Country context data were obtained from a variety of sources: CIA (2012), UNAIDS (2011), UNDP (2011), UNESCO (2011).</small>	

The Republic of Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. Like South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, Zimbabwe's post-colonial experience was different from most countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Zimbabwe gained independence from its British colonial masters in 1980 after a long period of resistance. Post-independent Zimbabwe enjoyed a growing economy in the decade that followed, becoming one of the strongest economies on the continent. This was before the current political and economic crisis, which struck the country at the turn of the millennium.

Zimbabwe has an estimated population of 12.8 million people, with a significant part of the population residing in Botswana, South Africa, the United Kingdom and several other countries due to socio-economic and political unrest (Makumbe 2009), natural crises (such as droughts) and poor social, macro-economic policies (including land reform policies and limited freedom of speech and democracy).

The Zimbabwean economy has witnessed a significant socio-economic downturn for the last decade or more. This has resulted in, amongst other things, the devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar and the transition to the US dollar as the local currency in Zimbabwe. More recently the country's economy has been recovering steadily. The formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU) has been considered by many as a sign of socio-political and economic improvement. Also important in this recovery has been the discovery of rough diamonds in the eastern parts of the country.

Although diverse, the economy of Zimbabwe is driven mainly by mining and agriculture. The discovery of diamonds in the eastern town of Chiyadzwa, about 100km from Mutare, the provincial capital of Manicaland, has been of great importance in the recovery of the economy. Agriculturally, the past years have seen an increase in output which can be attributed to the change in weather conditions and the significant success of the land reform programme over recent years, compared to when it was initially instituted.

Higher education landscape

The first democratic government of Zimbabwe inherited a racially biased education system that favoured the white minority at the expense of the black majority. At the time of independence the country had only one university. One of the major tasks of the Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government was to extend education (and specifically higher education) to previously disadvantaged groups (Kanyongo 2005). This led to the building of hundreds of primary and secondary school facilities across the country. According to Vision 2015, the target is to ‘guarantee Zimbabwe as a regional leader in the creative use of new and existing knowledge, skills, attitudes and resources through local mobilisation of provision and quality of higher and tertiary education’ (National Action Plan 2005).

During the first ten years of independence much attention was paid to financing primary and secondary education. This caused enormous pressure on the one university in the country, as a good number of secondary school graduates were unable to enrol for higher education due to limited capacity of the university to accommodate the increasing demand. This prompted the establishment of a second state-funded university in Bulawayo in 1991, the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) (Kariwo 2007). This is the second largest university after the University of Zimbabwe and, as is reflected in its name, NUST focuses mainly on ‘hard’ or natural sciences.

The drive to increase access to tertiary education has resulted in the establishment of more than seven publicly-funded universities in a period of less than two decades. The expansion of higher education in the country is ongoing because even more state universities are needed to respond to the needs of access and quality in the higher education sector. As indicated by the president during his 32nd Independence Day speech, it is expected that three more universities will be created in the near future.

The main governing body for higher education in Zimbabwe is the Ministry for Tertiary and Higher Education (MTHE), which has as its mission ‘to provide an effective system for the production of patriotic and competent high level manpower through the provision and accreditation of higher and tertiary education programmes and institutions for sustainability and global competitiveness’ (see www.zim.gov.zw/index.php/ministries/ministry-of-higher-and-tertiary-education).

Brief historical overview of higher education

Higher education in Zimbabwe started with the establishment of the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Salisbury in 1957. This institution became the University of Zimbabwe after independence. Higher education in Zimbabwe has been governed by a number of policies which have informed the establishment and management of higher education institutions in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Documents and policies which have influenced the Zimbabwe higher education landscape include:

- the Manpower and Planning Act of 1984, which was amended ten years later, providing for the establishment, maintenance and operation of technical and vocational institutions, and universities promoting human capital development;
- the National Council of Higher Education Act of 1990, which was to ensure the maintenance of academic standards with regard to teaching, courses of instruction and others; and
- the Zimbabwean Council of Higher Education Act No. 1 of 2006, which established a council to register and accredit institutions of higher learning.

Higher education in Zimbabwe is provided through universities, technical colleges, teacher training institutions, vocational and skills training centres and polytechnics.

With the limited capacity of the contact universities to respond to the demand for higher education, it became imperative to develop a distance education system to cater for those who could not be admitted to contact universities or who could not relocate to areas in which universities are situated. Studies were commissioned to probe the feasibility of a distance education alternative. The recommendations from these studies provided the policy context for the establishment of distance education programmes at the University of Zimbabwe in the early 1990s. Some of the aims and objectives of establishing a distance education system at the university were to:

- develop an efficient, equitable, cost-effective and high quality alternative tertiary education delivery system;
- increase the capacity of the country to produce educational training materials and textbooks for university-level courses;
- increase tertiary educational opportunities for females;
- significantly increase access to educational opportunities at tertiary level in Zimbabwe; and
- develop an accessible, affordable delivery system of tertiary education that is responsive to the human resources development objectives of Zimbabwe as a developing nation.

Today Zimbabwe has a dedicated distance education, the Zimbabwe Open University, that has centres in all provinces and through which students can access information, course syllabuses and sit for their examinations.

After independence Zimbabwe's tertiary education system focused primarily on increasing access, without paying as much attention to issues of quality. At the start of the new millennium the ministry took a strategic decision not only to increase higher education access, but also to improve its quality (see below). The establishment of the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) can be regarded as a major milestone in monitoring the quality of higher education in the country.

National higher education policy context

There are a number of statutory bodies that monitor and regulate the provision of higher education in Zimbabwe. These bodies address various issues including quality assurance, identification of training and research needs, representation of lecturing staff and monitoring occupational standards. The most important statutory bodies responsible for higher education provision in Zimbabwe are:

- The Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE), which monitors and regulates the quality of qualifications being offered by private and public institutions of higher learning within the country;
- The National Manpower Advisory Council (NAMACO), which acts as an intermediary between industry and higher education and supervises the industrial committees that identify, determine and monitor training needs;
- The Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund (ZIMDEF), which is responsible for levy collection, and supplements voted funds for the procurement of training materials and consumables;
- The College Lecturers Association of Zimbabwe (COLAZ), which represents lecturers in collective bargaining;
- The National Economic Consultative Forum, which recommends economic priority programmes including human capital development; and
- The Zimbabwe Occupational Standards Service (ZOSS), which carries out job profiling and develops occupational standards upon which technical and vocational education and training (TVET) curricula are based, and which form the basis upon which examinations, test items and trade tests are developed.

The Ministry for Tertiary and Higher Education (TMTHE) is the custodian of post-secondary education in Zimbabwe. According to SARUA's previous profiling study (Kotecha 2008), the ministry sets out a number of goals for higher education in the context of the country's needs and priorities. These goals were part of a five-year strategic plan implemented between 2006 and 2010. The paragraphs to follow pay particular attention to each of the goals (Kotecha 2008).

- **Enhancing quality education and relevance of higher and tertiary education and training**
Contrary to the goal of the early 1980s of increasing access to education in order to reverse the racial disparities caused by the previous government, at the beginning of the new millennium the government of Zimbabwe took the bold step of shifting focus from increasing access to higher education to paying more attention to the quality of higher and

tertiary education being offered by institutions. The establishment of ZIMCHE in the early 2000s is a clear indication of how issues of quality assurance have become critical importance in the provision of tertiary education in the country.

Along with increasing the quality of education, the responsible ministry also saw fit to ensure that institutions of higher learning link the programmes that they offer to the economic and developmental needs of the country (for example, curricula with a specific focus on poverty eradication, improved health standards and contributions to the creation of wealth).

- **Promoting science and technology in higher and tertiary education**
In line with the millennium development goals (MDGs), especially goals 1, 2 and 5, the ministry has embarked on a drive to promote the teaching of science and technology in higher and tertiary education. Such a drive is expected to trigger innovation in various industries (for example in manufacturing and health). The spin-offs from these industries should help to improve the livelihoods of people in Zimbabwe as envisaged by the MDGs.
- **Enhancing the resource base and management of higher and tertiary education by intensifying income-generating projects for institutions and involving the private sector**
While the government remains the main funder of higher education, this goal seeks to bring more stakeholders into the funding process. This will enable higher education institutions to generate their own income through consultancy projects and knowledge commercialisation, and encourage the private sector to partner with government or individual institutions in funding the provision of higher and tertiary education. This goal also aims to facilitate the contribution of higher education to poverty reduction, enhancing partnerships for development and promoting gender empowerment.
- **Strengthening life skills education, including education about HIV and AIDS**
By the turn of the 21st century Zimbabwe was one of the sub-Saharan countries ravaged by the high prevalence of HIV infections and related deaths. In a bid to reverse the impact of this epidemic the ministry placed high priority on ensuring that tertiary education plays a critical role in teaching and imparting life skills, especially relating to HIV and AIDS. This is in line with the MDGs and the national policy goal of combating HIV, AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and will be achieved through offering training in prevention, care and support.
- **Promoting regional and international co-operation by intensifying the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training and seeking the transformation of education in the region**
As a signatory to the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, the ministry fully subscribes to the mandate of this protocol. Hence the ministry seeks to put all necessary means in place for the promotion of an integrated region, a harmonised system of education, an education management information system (EMIS), a common quality assurance approach, and an effective open distance learning system in the region.
At the core of these goals is the issue of promoting sustainable economic development, reducing poverty and meeting the basic socio-economic needs of the people of Zimbabwe as reflected in the MDGs and the National Vision 2020. In order to monitor the progress of these goals, the ministry has put in place a number of mechanisms, including:
 - departmental and institutional performance agreements and individual work plans;
 - monthly, quarterly, and annual reports by departments and institutions; and
 - audit reports.

Size and shape of higher education

Higher education in Zimbabwe has expanded significantly in the last two decades. There has been an increase in the number of public and private higher education institutions and in the number of students enrolled in post-secondary institutions. There are nine public institutions, which account for about 77 per cent of all higher education enrolments, with private institutions accounting for about 23 per cent. The data from the ministry does not make reference to the existence of technical institutions.

The main private universities, Solusi University and Africa University, were the first two privately-owned universities in Zimbabwe. Most private higher education in Zimbabwe is funded by religious organisations. Solusi University is funded by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and Africa University is funded by the United Methodist Church. In recent years other religious organisations have joined the trend, for example the Catholic University which is associated with the Roman Catholic Church, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University which is affiliated to the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA), and the Reformed Church University which is linked to the Dutch Reformed Church.

At the public institutions listed in Table 1 below, it can be observed that the majority of students are male. The majority of enrolments are in business, management and law, followed by the humanities. Among the major fields of study agriculture has the lowest enrolment. Although the science, engineering and technology (SET) fields have a relatively high level of enrolment, more needs to be done if higher education is to produce the human capital needed to meet the demands of the knowledge economy.

Table 1: Distribution of enrolments in public universities by field of study and gender*

Major field of study	Total number of students	Female students	Male students
Agriculture	1 822	598	1 224
Business, management and law	17 597	8 220	9 377
Education	4 820	2 457	2 363
Health sciences	2 022	888	1 134
Humanities and social sciences	10 042	5 122	4 920
Science, engineering and technology	6 567	2 541	4 783
Other	749*	166	266

Sources: SARUA university questionnaires (2011)

* A total of 317 students enrolled at the University of Zimbabwe were included in the total number of students, but data broken down by gender was not available. This explains why the total for 'other' is larger than the sum of female and male students referred to in the table.

Table 2 shows that the majority of students in the higher education sector are contact students and only a small percentage are part-time students. Another important observation from the data is the relatively small number of foreign (international and SADC) students in the higher education system in Zimbabwe.

Table 2: Student enrolment by categories

Student category	Number of students
Contact students	18 755
Distance students	11 604
Full-time students	28 878
Part-time students	2 789
National citizens	26 535
SADC country citizens	131
Other international students	3

Sources: SARUA university questionnaires (2008 and 2011)

Enrolment at the postgraduate level accounts for a very small proportion of the total enrolment in public universities in Zimbabwe. While there are more than 36 000 enrolments at undergraduate level, there are fewer than 4 000 students registered for masters degrees and fewer than 350 pursuing doctoral studies in Zimbabwean higher education institutions.

Staff profile

The higher education sector in Zimbabwe was not spared the socio-economic turmoil that engulfed the country and led to the mass exodus of professionals at the end of the 20th century. Experienced academics and researchers left Zimbabwean universities for neighbouring South Africa, Botswana and beyond due to low salaries and challenging working conditions. As a result, institutions started hiring underqualified personnel for lecturing posts. This can be seen by the data presented in the Zimbabwean data profile, where less than one-fifth of all academics have doctoral degrees (259) while academics with masters degrees (1 415) dominate the staff complement. This staff profile is bound to hamper and limit the institutional and national research output as these junior lecturers do not have adequate research skills. The Minister for Higher Education and Training has developed a turnaround policy to address this limitation by calling on all academic staff to be in possession of a doctoral qualification by 2015 (University World News 2012).

Table 3 shows the nationalities of staff members at Zimbabwean universities.

Table 3: Staffing at Zimbabwean public higher education institutions

Staffing categories	Nationality	Number of staff
Academic and research staff	National citizens	2 309
	SADC citizens	11
	Other international staff	12
Management and administrative staff	National citizens	2 201
	SADC citizens	0
	Other international staff	0

Sources: SARUA university questionnaires (2011)

One aspect from Table 3 that is important to note is the small number of staff members from other SADC countries, as well as from outside SADC. While there are a number of regional memorandums of understanding (MoUs) between Zimbabwean institutions and other higher education systems in the region, the relatively small number of foreign academics (and students) is likely to be closely related to the political and socio-economic unrest that has plagued the country in recent decades.

National higher education outputs and alignment with policy imperatives

Graduate patterns

Based on data collected from the participating universities, there is a relatively low graduation rate when compared to the enrolment figures. Table 4 provides an overview of graduation patterns by major fields of study.

Table 4: Qualifications awarded by major field of study

Major field of study	Number of qualifications awarded per level of study				
	Undergraduate	Postgraduate < Masters	Masters	Doctoral	Post-doctoral
Agriculture	571	5	47	0	0
Business, management and law	1 680	123	516	1	0
Education	277	20	72	1	0
Health sciences	219	0	32	5	0
Humanities and social sciences	1 378	27	108	4	0
SET	777	0	50	2	0
Other	309	0	1	0	0
Total	5 211	175	826	13	0

Sources: SARUA university questionnaires (2011)

From the table we see that only 5 211 undergraduate students graduated in the 2009/2010 academic year, which is less than one-fifth of all undergraduate enrolments. Consistent with enrolment patterns, more students graduate from business studies and law, followed by the humanities and social sciences. Health sciences recorded the lowest number of graduations at undergraduate level, but a significant number at doctoral level. Less than 10 per cent of all masters graduates move on to doctoral study. This could be attributed to a significant exodus of students to foreign universities as there is limited funding for masters and doctoral studies and few experienced academics are available to supervise research. Confirmation of this can be observed from the recent higher education management information system data from South Africa, which indicate that about 694 doctoral graduates from South African universities were Zimbabwean (HEMIS 2012).

Research output

Table 5 provides a broad summary of research output over a period of three years from 2008 to 2010. However, one has to take note of the fact that neither Great Zimbabwe University nor the University of Zimbabwe (which is the oldest and one of the better-resourced public institutions in the country) provided research output data. The data available points to some increase in research output from 2008 to 2010.

Table 5: Research output*

Category of research output	2008	2009	2010
Peer-reviewed journal articles	100	116	146
Peer-reviewed books	9	17	22
Peer-reviewed book chapters	12	45	50
Patents	1	0	1

Sources: SARUA university questionnaires (2011)

* Note that this table does not accurately reflect the research output of the public higher education sector in the country due to the fact that the University of Zimbabwe and the Great Zimbabwe University did not submit data on research output for this period.

According to some of the responses given by institutions, securing funding for research has been a major challenge that limited the growth of research.

Quality assurance

As noted above, quality assurance is now taking a prominent role in Zimbabwe's higher education discourse. The establishment of the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE), the body that regulates standards of teaching, examinations, academic qualifications and research in higher education, is a clear indication of the direction that the country is taking to ensure that the higher education system produces quality graduates who are capable of competing at an international level (Daily News 2012). In a move to raise the standards and quality of higher education in Zimbabwe, the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education recently outlined plans for every university lecturer to be in possession of a doctoral qualification by 2015 (University World News 2012).

Issues of quality have also been reflected in responses provided by individual institutions, which report to ZIMCHE on issues of quality assurance. There are also institutional mechanisms in place to ensure that students get quality education, including:

- peer evaluation;
- departmental platforms;
- external evaluation; and
- students' evaluation of staff members and their learning experience.

Recent developments and debates in higher education

Funding has been a major issue in higher education in Zimbabwe and there have been calls by the Ministry of Finance Secretary for the private sector (including banks) to intervene by providing loans and grants to qualifying students in order for them to access tertiary education (Zimbabwe Independent 2011).

Another major concern is the need to improve the quality of academics and researchers in Zimbabwean universities. There have been some negotiations with Zimbabwean scholars, researchers and professors in the diaspora to return to Zimbabwe and take up lecturing posts in order to reduce the pressure on the few academics currently in the universities, most of whom are overloaded with undergraduate teaching and basic research (SARUA 2010). This process is being conducted by the International Labour Organisation, SARUA and the board that represents Zimbabwe public university vice-chancellors.

Although there has been an increase in the number of public higher education institutions in recent years, there is still a growing and unsatisfied demand for higher education access. The government of Zimbabwe plans to expand higher education access to meet this increasing demand, and recently pledged to open a new university in Matabeleland South (The Herald 2011a), known as Gwanda State University. The new university will be housed at Joshua Mqabuko Polytechnic College, but over time it will establish its own facilities. In another interesting turn, the construction of Lupane State University has been moving faster than expected and there are possibilities that it will be completed by November/December 2012 (The Herald 2011b).

Regionalisation

According to the Acting Chief Executive Officer of ZIMCHE, the SADC Protocol on Education and Training is considered at the national planning level, and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy. In their questionnaire responses, a number of public universities indicated that they value regionalisation. This is reflected in the number of institutions that have signed memoranda of understanding with other institutions in the region, and also in the sending of students and staff to these universities. These MoUs focus on teacher education, special education and tourism and hospitality (to mention a few). Public institutions in Zimbabwe have also shown willingness to accept students from other countries within the region as a drive to promote regionalisation (Kotecha 2008).

In pursuit of higher education opportunities, Zimbabwean students from well-off families have flocked to South African universities. In addition, the Zimbabwean government, in partnership with a number of South African universities, has agreed to send Zimbabwean students to South Africa on a presidential scholarship. Thousands of students on this scholarship travel to South Africa each year to take up studies. The presidential scholarship is awarded to top achieving high school students. As part of the agreement, the students have an obligation to return to Zimbabwe and work for the public sector for at least the same period of time as the duration of their courses.

Conclusions

The post-independence government of Zimbabwe put in place important policies to transform the racially skewed higher education system. Much attention was paid to increasing access to formal education for the majority of the population who had been deprived of this right by the colonial regime. This transformation produced a higher education system that was initially successful. However, in the last decade the higher education system and its institutions have gone from one extreme to the other. From being a regional leader in education, Zimbabwe has suffered significant setbacks in its higher education system, which has been plagued by economic and academic shortcomings and has been entangled in the political wrangles that have dominated development discourse in the country.

These setbacks notwithstanding, there have been some positive developments. The increase in the number of public and private higher education institutions, and the growing focus on quality (including the establishment of ZIMCHE), is indicative of an improving higher education system.

Nevertheless, there is much to be done. Major challenges include insufficient funding, the need for a more conducive research environment, competitive salaries and working conditions, and institutional autonomy. These conditions could encourage the return of academics currently living outside the borders of Zimbabwe.

At the level of regional collaboration, it can be concluded that Zimbabwe has an open and accommodating policy towards collaboration within the SADC region and beyond. However, due to the socio-political state in which the country has operated in the last decade, these regionalisation policies are yet to be fully translated into action.