

EDUCATION

Developing people socially, intellectually and physically for productive participation in society

The MDC is unequivocally committed to establishing an education system in Zimbabwe that is imaginative, holistic and will assist in the creation of a culturally, socially, mentally, physically and economically prosperous and democratic society.

We will ensure that every Zimbabwean has access to a high-quality education that will enable them to optimize the use of their talents and make their way in a competitive world. Both society and the individual must benefit from public expenditure on education. Special emphasis will be given to the education of the girl-child in view of the discrimination exercised against girls in traditional society.

Education policy under an MDC government will be guided by social democratic values that emphasize an equitable distribution of resources, fairness and justice to all regardless of their race, political or religious affiliation, gender or place of origin. In addition, the following general principles will apply:

-  The provision of adequate financial, material and human resources to manage and administer the education system competently, transparently and accountably.
-  Ensuring that all educational institutions design and follow relevant curricula and methodologies, and offer education and training that is relevant to the needs of the country and its economic and social system. Particular emphasis will be given to mathematics, scientific and technical subjects.
-  Consultation with parents and encouraging their involvement in all aspects of school life.
-  Expanding vocational and technical education to a level that will adequately cater for the needs of a growing and competitive economy.
-  Fostering the continued development of the indigenous languages of the country and their use in society.
-  Ensuring gender equality throughout the education system.
-  Equipping all graduate pupils and students with survival skills for the modern world.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

The decline of the economy since 1998 has meant that funding for all aspects of State-controlled activity has reached very low levels. The education system in particular has been decimated by this turn of events and most of the progress made since independence wiped out. Today the State-controlled education system has

collapsed, with shortages of virtually everything that is required to sustain it. This collapse has affected all educational establishments, no matter what their origin. Only the private sector continues to provide a sound education to a small privileged minority.

To achieve the its objectives, the MDC commits itself to merging the existing Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, Ministry of Science and Technology Development and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education into a single ministry to be known as the Ministry of Education. A new Education Act will be presented to Parliament for its approval as soon as possible and will prescribe the role of the amalgamated ministry.

The Education Act will, *inter alia*, make provision for the following:

- ✎ Children's fundamental right to education with relevant support services and within a conducive environment.
- ✎ Financial resources, educational resources, and facilities for all levels of education and at all educational institutions.
- ✎ The establishment and mandating of Education Charters, Ordinances, Boards, Agencies, Councils and Commissions – such as the Teaching Professions Council, Examination Council, National Language Council, Teaching Service Commission – and other bodies deemed necessary for the provision of high-quality education.
- ✎ Conditions of service and a code of ethics for teachers and educational staff.
- ✎ A national language policy.
- ✎ Gender equity and equality in education.
- ✎ Children with special learning needs or difficulties, as well as for gifted children.
- ✎ The decentralization of educational management and administration.
- ✎ The administration of Examination Boards.
- ✎ Restructuring of curricula with deliberate bias towards Science, Mathematics, Information Technology, Technical subjects, Commercial and Management skills, Civic and Environment Education, HIV and AIDS Education, and Population Education.
- ✎ Staff development programmes for teachers.
- ✎ Adult education to be available at all schools and colleges.
- ✎ The classification and registration of educational institutions such as schools, colleges and cultural centres.
- ✎ Private schools and other private educational institutions.

In relation to primary and secondary schooling, the MDC government will:

-  Develop effective evaluation and testing to ensure that children undergoing primary-school education are prepared and evaluated for secondary-school education. A Grade 7 examination and qualification will be established to facilitate this.
-  Develop effective evaluation and testing to ensure that children undergoing secondary-school education are prepared for their subsequent careers.
-  Establish a Junior Secondary School system that will give all students coming out of the primary-school system at least two years of post-primary education. A public examination and qualification at the end of Form II (the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate) will be established.
-  Ensure that those students who complete Junior Secondary School progress either to further academic qualifications or towards qualifications in technical, commercial or vocational subjects.
-  Strengthen the capacity of the Ministry to supervise systems and procedures at all schools and to monitor the standards and quality of education.
-  Introduce a system of staff development to ensure that the professional competence of teachers is constantly renewed.
-  Ensure that girls are not hindered in their access to secondary education.
-  Ensure a broad-based education that includes academic, practical and technical subjects.
-  Improve the conditions that will encourage the pursuit of mathematics and scientific and technical subjects.
-  Ensure that modern information and communication technologies (ICTs), which will include high-speed Internet access, are available in all schools, particularly rural schools, and that computer and information skills courses are taught to all students.
-  Promote enquiry and active learning, and enhance discovery, creativity and problem-solving skills.
-  Ensure that learning resources for independent learning are available in school libraries staffed by suitably qualified personnel.
-  Make provision for individualized remedial education whenever possible.
-  Eliminate hot seating.
-  Ensure that the teaching of indigenous languages takes its rightful place in school.
-  Ensure that sex education is included in the official curriculum and that HIV and AIDS education, as well as counselling, is fully integrated into such programmes.
-  Strengthen the provision of sports, cultural and recreational activities at schools, and facilitate sporting and cultural-exchange programmes with other countries.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

It is the view of the MDC that all children would benefit from some form of early childhood education (ECE), i.e. before the age of six, and that this would also improve the effectiveness of the first two years of schooling at primary level. ECE is crucial for the development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The MDC will treat ECE as an integral component of the education system. To this end the MDC will aim to establish capacity for all children to attend ECE schools, initially for at least one year and ultimately for two years. It is estimated that 12,000 new ECE schools would have to be established and 42,000 teachers trained to achieve this objective in year one.

In catering for ECE, the MDC will:

-  Conduct a national audit of ECE schools.
-  Ensure that all ECE schools are registered with the ministry.
-  Encourage, and later enforce, attendance at an ECE school for at least one year prior to entry to the primary-school system.
-  Provide ECE in a child's mother tongue, with increasing use of the English medium where it is not the mother tongue.
-  Provide adequate grants to ECE schools to meet basic needs.
-  Foster the development of curricula to ensure equity and quality control.
-  Introduce notions of science and mathematics at ECE schools.
-  Provide adequate structures for monitoring all ECE schools.
-  Provide for infants with special learning needs.
-  Establish capacity to train ECE school teachers on the scale required.
-  Involve the community in the operations of the ECE schools.
-  Uphold the rights and responsibilities of the child.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

One of the key millennium goals set by the United Nations is the attainment of universal access to primary school education for a minimum of seven years for every child. The MDC believes this is attainable and desirable and will aim to make primary schooling ultimately compulsory and free for all Zimbabwean children starting in the year they turn six.

To achieve this target it will be necessary to ensure that there are up to 90,000 primary-school teachers available to teach in 6,000 primary schools. It is recognized that there are a large number of untrained teachers in the schools. The available pool of trained and experienced teachers will therefore be spread as widely as possible throughout the system so that they are able to mentor untrained teachers. At the same time, all teacher-education establishments will be required to establish in-service training programmes designed to train the untrained teachers in the system.

The existing system of administration through school boards elected by parents and teachers will be retained and strengthened. These boards will have responsibility for the administration of school funds and the raising of supplementary resources to help with school costs and development. Heads will be responsible for the overall administration of schools and school development, and will also be fully responsible for staff recruitment and in-service training, implementing curricula and teaching standards, monitored by the Ministry of Education inspectorate.

Funding provided by the State will be in the form of per capita grants for every pupil enrolled at the school at the beginning of each school term. The level of such grants will be established by negotiation with the National Association of Primary Schools, represented by individuals elected by meetings of heads and school board chairpersons. Fee-paying schools will not be eligible for these grants.

The Standards Control Unit of the ministry will be strengthened to enable it to determine the need for the rehabilitation of school infrastructure and new development. This will be carried out against a set of standards established by the ministry in consultation with the National Association of Primary Schools, and based on the need to establish and maintain a pupil–teacher ratio of 30 to 1.

Special facilities for gifted, disabled and mentally handicapped children will be established in all districts on a demand-led basis. Training for specialist teachers for these children will be established at colleges and universities.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

While primary education is regarded as essential in terms of preparing for secondary schooling, secondary education is designed to prepare students either for higher education or for work. After independence it was attempted to give every child an academic secondary school education up to O level. Not only was this an unrealistic goal, but only a minority (about 25 per cent) of all children coming out of the primary-school system are thought to be suited to this sort of academic education.

The MDC therefore proposes to establish a Junior Secondary School system that will give all students coming out of the primary-school system at least two years of post-primary education. Children will be selected for their suitability for the academic O-level system initially on the basis of their Grade 7 exit examination results. This selection process will be further refined during the two years at Junior Secondary School level, at the end of which all students will sit a public examination (the Junior Certificate) that will be supported by certification and school reports.

Students will then either remain at secondary school and have the opportunity to proceed to O-level and possibly A-level examinations, or will have the opportunity to attend a technical secondary-school system that will offer a wide variety of commercial and technical subjects that offer alternative qualifications in preparation for employment or for further training at colleges.

The system will be funded in the same way as the primary school system, with each student attracting a per capita grant that is paid to the institution with which they are registered each term. The National Association of Secondary Schools will negotiate the level of the grant with the Ministry of Education.

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HIGHER EDUCATION

Vocational and Technical Training

It is accepted that up to three quarters of all children in the school system will not be suited to a purely academic education. At the same time there is no reason to expect that such students will not be able ultimately to proceed to university or college for further education.

The MDC believes that the boundaries between vocational and technical education and other forms of training should become increasingly blurred. This will involve recognition of credit transfer systems and prior learning. The objective of these vocational and technical training programmes will be to prepare students for training and work in recognized fields. Graduates from this system could be absorbed

directly into the job market or find their way into work-related training programmes (apprenticeships) or institutions of higher learning (university or college).

To achieve this desired goal, an MDC government will:

-  Create pathways between vocational, technical and teacher-training establishments and universities with provision for credit transfer and articulated courses.
-  Foster the mounting of joint curriculum development courses and programmes.
-  Encourage alliances between academic, vocational and technical institutions.
-  Ensure an equitable distribution of training institutions throughout the country.
-  Introduce skills-training programmes in the private sector to complement those of institutions.
-  Equip such institutions with required facilities.
-  Undertake regular employment surveys to ascertain the effectiveness and relevance of training.
-  Ensure that all students are given guidance and career counselling.
-  Regard technical and vocational education and training as preparation for effective participation in the world of work.
-  Ensure that at least one third of all students enrolled for skills training are women.
-  Line up staff development programmes to upgrade performance.

Teacher Education

It will be essential to train adequate numbers of teachers annually. Initially the Ministry of Education will require emergency programmes to provide in-service training for teachers recruited to fill gaps in the shortest possible time.

All institutions of higher learning will be required to examine the possibility of issuing education diplomas and university degrees. These activities will be integrated with the specialist teacher education establishments that already exist.

In support of this an MDC government will:

-  Recognize teaching as a profession.
-  Ensure the provision of adequate training institutions to meet the demand for teaching skills at all levels.
-  Ensure equitable enrolment of women and minorities.
-  Ensure minimum entry qualifications and maintain the relevance of curricula for the training of teachers, including modern information technology.
-  Provide in-service courses for trained teachers to improve their competence.

- ✎ Provide adequate financial support to all training institutions so as to enable them to meet students' needs for catering and accommodation.
- ✎ Enhance the supervision of training institutions to ensure the output of high-quality teachers.
- ✎ Bond students who are State-sponsored to teach at State schools for a period equal to the time for which they received support.
- ✎ Engage teachers in intellectual debate on ways to improve the education system.

University Education

Universities provide the pinnacle of education in any society. They are centres of intellectual development and thought and also key training establishments and research centres. No society can function or develop without a sound network of university level institutions that are operating at First World standards.

Existing university establishments are now operating at very low levels, both in terms of the number of students accommodated and the quality of the output. Research and other key functions have virtually come to a halt. However, it is accepted that the number of universities that can be sustained by a small country such as Zimbabwe is limited.

An MDC government will therefore:

- ✎ Review the status of all recently established universities with a view to upgrading their capacity to operate at university or college level.
- ✎ Undertake a full audit of the universities' facilities, and require universities to develop plans to restore their facilities to a standard that will enable them to function effectively.
- ✎ Immediately review the composition and structure of all university councils to ensure that they have complete independence from the State and perform as professional bodies that are able to give direction and advice to the university's administration.
- ✎ Review the procedures required for the appointment of chancellors and vice-chancellors.
- ✎ Work with the universities and colleges with a view to increasing the number of graduates required in specific fields to meet the shortage of high-level skills in the labour market.
- ✎ Revise the funding systems for all institutions of higher learning in order to provide a system of government-funded student grants that will enable such institutions to conduct their activities on a financially sound basis.
- ✎ Ensure adequate provision of accommodation, both on and off campus, and catering services for all students studying at institutions of higher learning.

-  Encourage the growth and development of private-sector colleges and universities to complement the State-funded and State-operated institutions.
-  Foster, in consultation with the universities, the concept of distance education as well as the establishment of specialized schools and institutes within university operations.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The MDC recognizes the important role played by private institutions in the provision of education at all levels, e.g. churches, trusts, mines, farms, etc. The MDC government will encourage and foster stronger partnerships with those players in the provision of education, ensuring that all such schools are registered and meet the standards required by the Ministry of Education.

ADULT EDUCATION AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

The MDC government will ensure that a department within the Ministry of Education has responsibility for adult literacy and numeracy, and that all adults who wish to obtain the requisite skills can access a suitable programme at a nearby educational establishment. In support of this it will:

-  Establish basic literacy districts to deal with community-based literacy.
-  Emphasize functional literacy linked to community projects.
-  Revive radio and television broadcasts on adult literacy.
-  Encourage the development of study groups.

FINANCING EDUCATION

The MDC envisages an education system that is made up of thousands of independent institutions that manage their own affairs. In most cases, each will have its own board, elected from the local community and the staff of the institution itself, which will govern and manage the institution. These representative bodies will determine their own internal priorities, and will recruit staff and set local working conditions.

Teachers within the system will therefore not be civil servants but will be employed by the institution for whom they work – even if the core funding comes from government and the origins of the institution is in the State itself.

A good education system is the very foundation of a successful society and competitive economy. It is also the key to equal opportunity and equity in society, and therefore the MDC will ensure that women and other disadvantaged groups, including the children of the absolute poor, do not lose out on educational opportunities.

The MDC recognizes that this will not be a cheap exercise and will require the undertakings given in support of the UN millennium goals by developed countries,

as well as commitments made by many others to help Zimbabwe recover after its transition back to democracy, to be made good.

The MDC's own undertaking will be to spend at least twenty per cent of the national budget on education. These funds, combined with contributions from funding agencies and the private sector, will be used to ensure that teachers are properly remunerated for their services as professionals, that deserving students are able to obtain adequate grants and loans, and that schools can access the required resources.

In the majority of cases the system of funding will be in the form of student grants that will be paid monthly to schools and colleges by the Ministry of Education, based on the enrolment of students at the start of each term. National associations of institutions at each level will negotiate these grants in the system – ECE, primary schools, and so on.

In addition to these grants, institutions will be allowed to apply to the ministry for grants to improve their infrastructure. The Standards Control Unit of the ministry will visit applicant schools to determine the extent of work required for the purpose of raising the standard of the institution to the level required by the ministry. They will review the applications and recommend approved applications for funding.

All institutions receiving funding in any form from the state will be required to produce annual audited accounts for scrutiny and review, without approval of which the institution will not be eligible for further funding from the State.

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL SECURITY

All those engaged in the education system will be required to belong either to a national body representing them as institutions or to a professional body representing them as individuals. Each level in the system will be required to form a National Employment Council (NEC) and the associations representing employers and employees, respectively, will constitute this.

The NEC will be responsible for the negotiation of working conditions of staff, for the establishment of a pension and social security fund, and for the resolution of all disputes between employers and employees.