

Zimbabwe's research and knowledge system: literature review and analysis

Dan Hodgkinson & Phillip Pasirayi

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About the Viewpoints series

INASP is continually exploring options for further work and new projects. As part of these exploratory measures, several in-depth country profiles have been commissioned to bring insight into research and knowledge systems in various countries. In this document, we look at Zimbabwe; the country's background, the research landscape, higher education system and extent of use of research in policy making. In the interests of openness and sharing, INASP makes these reports available online for use by peer organizations and other interested parties. Views are the authors' own.

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Summary

Zimbabwe's historically impressive higher education system and the country's wider research capacities suffered significantly over the decade-long period of political and economic crisis that characterized the post-2000 period. The sector stabilized after 2009 as the Government of National Unity improved macro-economic stability. However, following ZANU(PF)'s 2013 election victory, and its decision to harmonize all national research agendas into its overarching economic policy framework (known as ZimAsset), there has been slow progress on much-needed improvements.

This document reviews current literature on the condition of Zimbabwe's research and knowledge system and provides political-economic analysis on how this system operates.

1 Historical context

Historically, Zimbabwe has had one of Africa's strongest higher education systems, both in terms of research and education. Beginning with the founding of the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1954, the colonial government of Southern Rhodesia, in close liaison with the University of London, established one of Africa's most respected higher education institutions. This institution provided high-quality manpower training and a robust system of research facilities aligned to the colony's economic needs (the most prominent of which were agriculture, mining and education).¹

After Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, the new ZANU government dramatically increased educational opportunities for the black majority, investing heavily in the expansion of the institution, which was renamed the University of Zimbabwe, whilst maintaining its reputation for academic excellence and stringent entry requirements. The University of Zimbabwe was consistently ranked the best university in Africa throughout the 1980s and 1990s. With increasing demand for tertiary education institutions, in the early 1990s, the government approved the founding of the country's second university – the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) – located just outside Bulawayo. In 1998, the Nziramasanga Commission assessed all levels of education and recommended an increase in the number of higher education institutions in Zimbabwe to cater for ever-increasing student demand, after which their numbers swelled to 15 institutions.² However, the report's other recommendations, including more closely linking higher education needs to that of the labour market, were not fully addressed.³

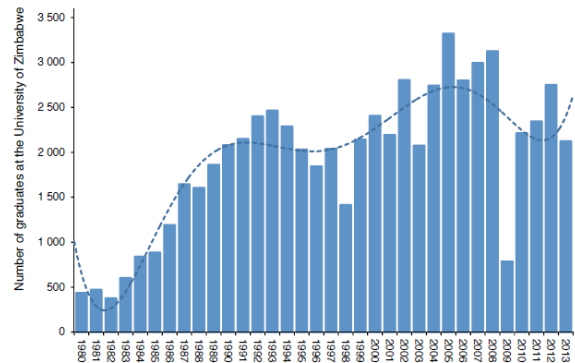


Figure 16: Total number of graduates from the University of Zimbabwe, 1980–2013. Source: UNESCO, based on data provided by the University of Zimbabwe

This expansion of the higher education system in Zimbabwe, however, occurred at a time of increasing economic and political pressures. High levels of inflation began in 1997 and reached crisis point in 2004 – and then led to hyper-inflation in 2007 and 2008. As Kariwo points out, these conditions dramatically affected the state's ability to finance its expansion of the higher education sector and dramatically affected the real wages of public sector employees, including higher education lecturers, researchers and administrators.⁴ Alois Mlambo's paper shows that these factors, coupled with increasing politicization of the university administrations, led to an exodus of academic and administrative staff to jobs at foreign institutions (largely in South Africa) or into other sectors (such as NGOs).⁵ The poor access to funding and reduced levels of expertise meant that newly-founded higher education institutions functioned at significantly reduced capacities. The nadir of higher education was reached in 2008, when several of the country's universities were forced to

¹ Gelfand, M., 'A Non-Racial Island of Learning: a history of the University College of Rhodesia from its inception to 1966', (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1978).

² Kariwo, M. T., 'Widening Access in Higher Education in Zimbabwe', in Higher Education Policy (2007), 20, pp. 45-59 (available here, but behind a pay wall: www.palgrave-journals.com/hep/journal/v20/n1/abs/8300142a.html). Graph from UNESCO GO-SPIN, 'Mapping Research and Innovation in the Republic of Zimbabwe', (2014), p. 45. (Available here: www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_profiles_research_and_innovation_in_zimbabwe/#.ViPJ28uz7ww).

³ Debates about why the Commission's findings haven't been fully implemented have recently resurfaced in public debate about the standards of higher education in the country. See The Herald, 27 January 2015: www.herald.co.zw/nziramasanga-recommendations-way-to-go.

⁴ Kariwo, M. T., 'Widening Access in Higher Education in Zimbabwe'.

⁵ Mlambo, Alois, 'Postcolonial Higher Education in Zimbabwe: The University of Zimbabwe as a Case Study 1980-2004', Kleio, Vol. 37, Issue 1, 2005.

close, including the University of Zimbabwe, due to shortages of staff, water and food, which had resulted in student riots.⁶

The Government of National Unity (GNU), in power between 2009 and 2013, made some progress towards reversing this trend by providing a more stable macro-economic environment. This was achieved in part through a currency change from the Zimbabwean dollar to the US dollar and through instituting a policy framework that improved infrastructure and restored public-sector salaries. The former Finance Minister in the GNU, Tendai Biti, explained these macro-changes in a paper during his time in coalition government.⁷

Since the 2013 election, this progress has stalled as the ZANU(PF) government has discarded the GNU's national plan in order to harmonize higher education goals with their own economic framework, the 'Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation' (ZimAsset). The process of harmonization has been unclear, and the government has been criticized by institutions such as the African Development Bank for its "slow implementation of policies and strategies".⁸ The main reason for poor policy implementation has been pinpointed as political infighting amongst the ZANU(PF) leaders about succession to Robert Mugabe's leadership.⁹ Other reasons include the country's slowing economic growth (down to 3% in 2014), persistent issues with currency liquidity and significant drops in its industrial capacity – between 2011 and 2014, at least 4,610 companies closed down, resulting in a loss of 55,443 jobs.¹⁰

2 Zimbabwe's research and knowledge system today

2.1 Research and knowledge system landscape

UNESCO's GO-SPIN map of research and innovation in Zimbabwe provides a good overview of Zimbabwe's contemporary research- knowledge system, including the eight ministries that are involved in research or are thought to use research in their policy-making process.¹¹

2.1.1 Size of system

According to the government's headcount, there 2,739 researchers (2,511 in higher education institutions and 228 in government).¹² Gross expenditure on research and development is estimated to be around US \$76.3million, financed by the government sector (48%), higher education sector (46%), foreign sources (3%), private non-profit organizations (2%) and business enterprise sector (1%).¹³ Statistics on the number of students are hard to ascertain in Zimbabwe. According to the University of Zimbabwe's statistics, there were 2,752 graduates in 2012, compared with an average enrolment of around 10,000 students over the previous five years.¹⁴ Also, it is clear that the number

⁶ Apa News, 'More Zimbabwean universities remain closed as staff, water, and food shortages bite', (29.9.08, available here: www.zimbabwesituation.com/old/sep30_2008.html).

⁷ Biti, Tendai, 'Rebuilding Zimbabwe: Lessons from a Coalition Government', Centre for Global Development, (2014), p.19-21, available here: www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/Tendai-Biti-Zimbabwe-Sept-2015.pdf.

⁸ African Development Bank, *Zimbabwe Economic Outlook*, available here: www.afdb.org/en/countries/southern-africa/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-economic-outlook.

⁹ See Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., 'Zimbabwe Monthly Economic Diary', July 2015, (available here: www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_42421-1522-2-30.pdf?150903161143).

¹⁰ African Development Bank, *Zimbabwe Economic Outlook*.

¹¹ These Ministries are: the Ministry of Higher & Tertiary Education, Science, and Technology Development, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Ministry of Health and Child Care, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate, the Ministry of Energy and Power Development, the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development, and the Ministry of Agriculture. See UNESCO, GO-SPIN, p. 109.

¹² Republic of Zimbabwe, (2013), 'National Survey of Research and Development', cited in UNESCO GO-SPIN, pp.52-53.

¹³ Ibid, p.54.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp.45-48.

of postgraduate students is seriously low. In 2012, the country's top institution, the University of Zimbabwe, awarded only 18 PhDs, none of which were in science subjects.¹⁵

2.1.2 Government research and co-ordination structures

The co-ordinating body of Zimbabwe's government-funded research is the National Research Council of Zimbabwe (RCZ). The Council's vision is "to be the pivotal leader, guiding all research towards the sustainable development of Zimbabwe".¹⁶ In this capacity, it determines funding and co-ordinates national research across four policy areas: social sciences and humanities; sustainable environmental and resource management; promoting and maintaining good health; and the national security of Zimbabwe. It also claims a function to provide "an exceptional forum for interaction and discussion for the mutual benefit of government, academia and industrialists".¹⁷

As the GO-SPIN report shows, there are several bodies across the government that produce research. The most high profile of these is the Scientific and Industrial Research and Development Centre (SIRDC, www.sirdc.ac.zw), which houses 11 specialized research institutes that work closely with their relevant government ministries. These are the Biotechnology Research Institute, the Building Technology Institute, the Electronics and Communications Institute, the Energy Technology Institute, the Environmental Sciences Institute, the Food and Biomedical Technology Institute, the Geo-Informatics and Remote Sensing Institute, the Informatics Institute, the Metallurgical Research Institute, the National Metrology Institute and the Production Engineering Institute.¹⁸ These Institutes are less academic than those within universities and produce research that has direct policy relevance or can enhance service delivery.

Outside of SIRDC, notable government in-house research also takes place in the long-standing and economically strategic bodies within the Ministry of Agriculture. Agriculture provides livelihoods to 80% of Zimbabwe's population, accounts for 23% of formal employment and contributes just under 20% to the country's GDP.¹⁹ The research bodies in this sector include the Tobacco Research Board (<http://kutsaga.co.zw/>), which provides tobacco-specific research and training to farmers to improve crop standards, and the Department of Research and Specialist Services (DRSS, <http://www.drss.gov.zw>), which provides a wide range of nationally relevant agricultural research on crops and livestock. As with SIRDC, the research produced by DRSS is largely focused on practical local issues facing small-scale and medium-scale farmers in Zimbabwe today.

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development plays another central role in the country's research and knowledge system. It is responsible for the administration of the higher education system and, more broadly, for the development of the country's science and technology capabilities. (This second prerogative lay within a separate Ministry of Science and Technology, which emerged out of a department in the President's office in 2005, but was absorbed into the Ministry of Higher Education after the election in 2013).²⁰ Working closely with the Ministry is the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE), whose current chairman is Professor Christopher Chetsanga. ZIMCHE is responsible for upholding standards within the country's higher education and tertiary education institutions, which it fulfils through a regular audit mechanism.

2.1.3 Higher education research structures

Currently, Zimbabwe's higher and tertiary education system consists of 10 state universities, five private universities, 13 technical colleges and 12 teacher's colleges. Research capabilities within the higher education sector are held within the university system, with the University of Zimbabwe's Medical Department being the standout institution in the production of world-class research (see below). Whilst there is some notable improvements in research at newer universities, specifically Midlands State University, Chinoyi University of Technology and Africa University, the two internationally recognized state institutions are the University of Zimbabwe and the National University

¹⁵ Ibid, p.48.

¹⁶ RCZ website, available here: www.rcz.ac.zw/index.php/en/about-rcz/mission-statement/vision

¹⁷ RCZ website.

¹⁸ UNESCO GO-SPIN, (2014), p.117-119

¹⁹ For more information see the ministry's website: www.moa.gov.zw.

²⁰ UNESCO GO-SPIN, (2014), p. 43-48.

of Science and Technology.²¹ The GO-SPIN report rightly highlights some long-standing relationships between university research institutes, the government and the private sector, including:

- The Institute of Mining Research (IMR) at the University of Zimbabwe – Academics from the Departments of Geology and Physics, and Mining Engineering and Metallurgy at the IMR, through government funding, provide research and consultancy for both the government (Ministry of Mines) and the private sector.²²
- University of Zimbabwe Kariba Research Station – This long-standing small project conducts small-scale research projects on the biological conditions of Lake Kariba, in the north of Zimbabwe, with support from UNESCO and private-sector fisheries.
- Surprisingly, though, the GO-SPIN report does not make reference to the University of Zimbabwe's clinical research centre, which is probably the country's most significant and successful research institute.
- The University of Zimbabwe Clinical Research Centre – Zimbabwe's highest profile and best-funded research area is its clinical research, which has withstood the difficult economic crisis, largely due to its broad international funding base and its partnership with the University of California, San Francisco. This collaboration began in 1994 to implement high-quality science, addressing HIV prevention and therapy. Clinical trials have been funded by US National Institutes of Health, and the Research Centre has also benefited from a wide range of international donors, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust and the World Health Organization, as well as funding from the Zimbabwean government.²³

State universities: The University of Zimbabwe, the National University of Science and Technology, Midlands State University, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe Open University, Bindura University of Science Education, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Lupane State University, Harare Institute of Technology, and Gwanda State University.

Private universities: Africa University, the Catholic University, Women's University in Africa, the Reformed Church University, and Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University.

2.1.4 NGOs and international donors

Largely unmentioned in the GO-SPIN report are private research organizations. In the areas of food, land and agrarian reforms, the government sometimes commissions research by trusted institutions outside the higher education system that have long-standing relationships with various government departments/ministries. For instance, the government relies on the Ruzivo Trust and the African Institute for Land and Agrarian Studies (AIAS) to inform its policy on land and agrarian reforms.

There are also important research functions housed within NGOs that fall outside of the government-orientated national agenda and that are funded with the support of international donors. This research is mainly used as advocacy tools to lobby the government. There is very little collaboration between government institutions and these NGOs when it comes to conducting research. This is due to a relationship of mistrust and animosity, which is particularly poignant when research is conducted into areas that the government considers to be politically sensitive, such as good governance and human rights. It is common practice for the government to attack critical local NGOs funded by international donors in the press and accuse them of supporting a regime change agenda.²⁴

The list below shows key local Zimbabwean NGOs that are carrying out research in specific areas.

²¹ By internationally recognized, the authors have taken the entry requirements of a Zimbabwean graduate to a UK university. For example, see: www.anglia.ac.uk/international/information-by-country/zimbabwe.

²² Institute of Mining Research, 'Research and Consultancy Services in the Mining Industry in Zimbabwe – A Coordinated Approach Through the Mineral Resources Centre', (2000), available here: opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/5031/Fernandez%20%26%20Dirks%20MR%20Report%20no.%20171.pdf?sequence=1. See also: www.chamberofminesofzimbabwe.com/article.php?id=79&p=e.

²³ For more information, visit their website: www.uz-ucsf.co.zw/about/collaborating-institutions.

²⁴ There are countless examples of this. For example: www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/civil-society-and-the-failure-of-the-regime-change-agenda.

Research Field	Organization(s)	Website
Land and Agrarian Reform, Agriculture and Sustainable Livelihoods	Ruzivo Trust ²⁵ African Institute for Land and Agrarian Studies ²⁶	www.ruzivo.co.zw www.aiastrust.org
Human Rights	Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights Centre for Applied Legal Research ²⁷ Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum Zimbabwe Peace Project	www.zlhr.org.zw www.ca-lr.org www.hrforumzim.org www.zimpeaceproject.com
Democracy and Governance	Crisis Coalition Zimbabwe Institute Zimbabwe Democracy Institute Mass Public Opinion Institute SAPES	www.crisiszimbabwe.org www.zimbabweinstitute.net www.zdi.org.zw www.mpoi.net www.sapes.org.zw
Elections	Zimbabwe Elections Support Network Election Resource Centre	www.zesn.org.zw www.erczim.org
Local Governance	Centre for Community Development in Zimbabwe Combined Harare Residents Association	www.ccdz.org.zw www.chra.co.zw
Children's Rights	Justice for Children Trust	www.justiceforchildrentrust.org.zw
Women's Rights	Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe Women in Leadership Development	www.wcoz.org www.womenforleadership.org

²⁵ Ruzivo has carried out research on land and agrarian reforms in Zimbabwe which can be accessed on: www.ruzivo.co.zw.

²⁶ See: www.aiastrust.org/index.php/publications/role-of-social-movements-and-civil-society-organisations-in-rural-transformations.html.

²⁷ The Centre for Applied Legal Research (CARL) has conducted research in collaboration with government in areas such as human rights, legislative drafting, rule of law, access to information, etc.

Agriculture, Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods	Community Technology Development Trust ²⁸	www.ctdt.co.zw
Media	Media Monitoring Project in Zimbabwe Media Institute for Southern Africa-Zimbabwe	www.mmpz.org www.misa.org

The list below shows the major international donors in Zimbabwe and their areas of interest.

Donor	Interests	Website /Address
United Nations Children's Fund	Water and Sanitation Children's Rights Primary and Secondary Education	www.unicef.org/zimbabwe
Action Aid Zimbabwe	Governance Agriculture and Sustainable Livelihoods Human Rights Women's Rights Water and Sanitation	www.actionaid.org.uk/Zimbabwe
UN Women	Women's Rights Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Governance	www.zw.one.un.org
DFID/UKAID	Public Health Governance Human Rights Agriculture and Sustainable Livelihoods /Food Security Women's Rights Water and Sanitation	https://www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/dfid-zimbabwe/office/dfid-zimbabwe
USAID	Public Health Governance Human Rights Agriculture and Sustainable Livelihoods /Food Security	www.usaid.gov/zimbabwe

²⁸ The Community Technology Development Trust (CTDO)'s research interests are in the areas of agriculture, biodiversity and the environment, in which it has also collaborated extensively with the government.

	Women's Rights Water and Sanitation	
OXFAM GB	Public Health Agriculture and Sustainable Livelihoods /Food Security Women's Rights Water and Sanitation	www.oxfam.org.uk/Zimbabwe
HIVOS	Governance Culture/Arts Human Rights Women's Rights Peace-building	www.hivos.org/country/zw
Open Societies Initiative, Southern Africa (OSISA)	Governance Culture/Arts Human Rights Women's Rights Peace-building	www.osisa.org
The European Union	Public Health Agriculture and Sustainable Livelihoods /Food Security Women's Rights Water and Sanitation Governance Human Rights	www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/zimbabwe

2.1.5 Private-sector research

Private-sector research and development data is highly difficult to access from a provisional literature review. The Confederation of Zimbabwean Industries conducts a publicly available Annual Manufacturing Sector Survey and provides the private sector with business-relevant information.²⁹ In agriculture, several industry associations – the Commercial Oilseeds Producers Association (COPA), the Commercial Grain Producers' Association (CGPA), the Zimbabwe Cereals Producers' Association (ZCPA) and the Cattle Producers' Association (CPA) – manage the Agricultural Trust Fund (ART), which researches horticulture for practical use and dissemination.³⁰

2.2 National vision

Prior to 2013, the aims of RCZ and its policy instruments were aligned to the GNU's Medium Term Plan 2011-2015, including the Implementation Plan for the Second Science, Technology and

²⁹ To find out more about the Manufacturing Sector Survey visit: www.czi.co.zw.

³⁰ To find out more about ART, see: www.artfarm.co.zw/aboutus.html.

Innovation Policy of Zimbabwe. This Implementation Plan had been designed in co-ordination with UNESCO and focused on industrialization, import substitution, food production, health delivery, environmentally-sound development, energy resources and sustained employment creation.³¹ It also included a series of policies to incentivize scientific research, including providing workshops on patenting and the promotion of research in Zimbabwe through the Research and Intellectual Expo (RIE), a forum of peer-reviewed papers to showcase the country's research outputs, which was free to attend.

The government has signalled that the entire research agenda will be revised and re-orientated towards the new overarching government framework, ZimAsset. ZimAsset stresses both the importance of results-based management approaches and emphasizes that scientific research and development is a key success factor for its successful implementation.³² Many commentators have been critical of the scheme and its slow pace of implementation, including the African Development Bank.³³ It is still unclear what implications it has for the research landscape in Zimbabwe. At a Science and Technology Symposium organized by RCZ in June this year, entitled 'Research for Empowerment and Socio-Economic Transformation', vice-chancellors, policymakers and industrialists discussed the aligning of scientific research with the country's economic vision, ZimAsset. Details of the outcome of this meeting are yet to be made public. At this meeting, the Deputy Minister of Science and Technology, Godfrey Gandawa, said that US\$1.5million would be made available for scientific research.³⁴

2.3 Performance of the knowledge and research systems today

The UNESCO GO-SPIN report measures the performance of Zimbabwe's current research system by using data on number of researchers, publications, patents and trademarks as its indicators. This data suggests that whilst research output slowed down during the 10 years following 2000, it is currently picking up and returning to similar pre-2000 levels.³⁵ However, the GO-SPIN report does not capture ZIMCHE's renewed focus on research in higher education as a possible explanation for this increase in publications. Indeed, the promotion structure across all state universities must now account for academics' publication records. Institutions have thus begun putting much greater emphasis on their research records, including collating and publishing this data.³⁶

However, the increase in publications hides the long-term damage inflicted through infrastructural decline and the loss of highly trained research staff and their subsequent replacement by less qualified and academically able practitioners. A baseline survey by UNESCO in 2010 showed that the state of higher education had declined significantly in terms of

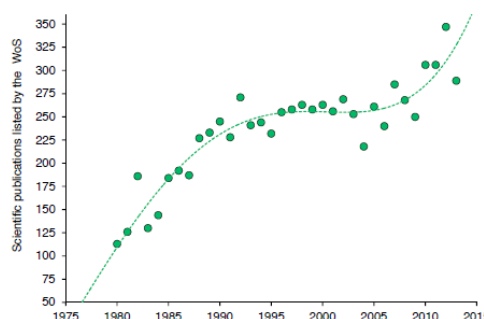


Figure 23: Evolution in the number scientific publications listed by Web of Science for Zimbabwe, 1980–2013. The dotted line indicates the best-fitting curve. Source: UNESCO, based on data provided by Web of Science

³¹ UNESCO GO-SPIN, (2014), p.91.

³² The Government of Zimbabwe, *The Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation* (2013), available here: www.dpcorp.co.zw/assets/zim-asset.pdf.

³³ For criticism of the policy, see: blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/tag/zim-asset and www.afdb.org/en/countries/southern-africa/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-economic-outlook.

³⁴ *The Herald*, 19th June 2015. (Available here: www.herald.co.zw/govt-earmarks-15m-for-scientific-research).

³⁵ UNESCO GO-SPIN, (2014), graph from p. 67.

³⁶ Garwe, E. C., 'Obstacles to Research and Publications in Zimbabwean Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study of the Research and Intellectual Expo', in *International Research in Education*, Macrothink Institute, (Vol. 3, No.1, 2015), p. 122. For examples of recent publications, see the UZ's first Handbook of Research publications, available here: www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB4QFjAAahUKEwiNzNG9r87IAhVM7BQKHdbWBsU&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.uz.ac.zw%2Findex.php%2F2015-08-14-12-11-39%3Fdownload%3D179%3Ahandbook-of-research-publications&usq=AFQjCNHs2Yvii1p1mYackiZf0TjyWUN1IQ&cad=rja.

quantity, quality and contribution to national development.³⁷ For example, among all public sector researchers in Zimbabwe, only 17.5% hold a PhD or equivalent degree.³⁸

The reasons for this decline include brain drain, poorly resourced libraries, limited access to the internet, inadequate research equipment, unavailability of transport, limited publication outlets (and difficulty in submissions) and lack of external research funding.³⁹ Not mentioned in research literature is the extent that politicization has contributed to these conditions. The administration of the higher education system is relatively decentralized, with institutional authority residing with the Vice-Chancellor of the respective institutions. Most universities and research institutions have not been heavily politicized in the same way as many other public institutions with one notable exception: the University of Zimbabwe. Under the Vice-Chancellorship of Professor Levi Nyagura (from 2002 to the present day), the University of Zimbabwe has come under press scrutiny due to a series of corruption allegations, improper management and politicization in favour of ZANU(PF) – the most obvious case being the granting of the First Lady, Grace Mugabe, a doctorate degree under very dubious circumstances.⁴⁰

The effect of these structural constraints on academics was illustrated in a recent report, which found that “the major challenge faced by the academics in conducting research was the pressure to publish in an environment characterized by high teaching loads and inadequate resources”.⁴¹ The report also found that science-related disciplines tended to produce better quality research publications than those in education, the arts, humanities and social sciences.⁴² Aside from structural constraints, the report also confirmed the lasting damage of human capital loss on the sector, citing the poor standard of articles submitted to the Research and International Expo conference. The conference organizers found that the majority of articles submitted included plagiarism, poor stating of research topics and failure to identify research gaps. Moreover, most were highly opinionated, empirically weak and deficient in adequate description of methodologies.⁴³

In addition, access to ICT facilities for students and academics on university campuses remains poor. For instance, the Midlands State University (MSU) has only four computer labs with approximately 40 desktop computers each for a student population close to 25,000.⁴⁴ Furthermore, a continual challenge faced by researchers in higher education is the lack of senior guidance on the development of their publications. In a study on Zimbabwean lecturers’ research output, 98% of respondents said that the lack of research mentors negatively affected their output, as well as issues such as a high burden of teaching and marking commitments.⁴⁵

As with many other areas of the labour market, research in higher education and government is still dominated by men. Of the total research and development personnel in the public sector, 28.2% are women, representing 25.3% of researchers, 32.6% of technicians and 40.2% of support staff.⁴⁶ Whilst there is an active women’s lobby in Zimbabwe, it seems that there is little momentum to address this

³⁷ UNESCO, ‘Country Document: Zimbabwe’, p. 7-8, available (here: unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002270/227055E.pdf).

³⁸ Republic of Zimbabwe, (2013), ‘National Survey of Research and Development’, cited in UNESCO GO-SPIN, p.53.

³⁹ Garwe, E. C., ‘Obstacles to Research and Publications in Zimbabwean Higher Education Institutions’, p. 122.

⁴⁰ See Mlambo, Alois, ‘Postcolonial Higher Education in Zimbabwe’, and the many press statements regarding Grace Mugabe’s doctorate, for example: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-29451239.

⁴¹ Garwe, E. C., ‘Obstacles to Research and Publications in Zimbabwean Higher Education Institutions’.

⁴² Garwe, E. C., ‘Obstacles to Research and Publications in Zimbabwean Higher Education Institutions’.

⁴³ Garwe, E. C., ‘Obstacles to Research and Publications in Zimbabwean Higher Education Institutions’ p. 129.

⁴⁴ Author interview with the current Student’s Representative Council President of Midlands State University, 16 October 2015.

⁴⁵ Chinamasa, Emmanuel, ‘Factors influencing lecturer research output in new universities in Zimbabwe’, in the Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 24, No. 2, July 2012, p. 162. (Available online here: opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/6197/Chinamasa,%20E.%20%282nd.%20essay%29%20%20ZJER%20%20vol.24.no.2..pdf?sequence=1).

⁴⁶ Republic of Zimbabwe,(2013), ‘National Survey of Research and Development’, cited in UNESCO GO-SPIN, (2014), pp.52-53.

imbalance. Within universities it is not uncommon for female students to face pressure from lecturers to provide sexual favours for better results.⁴⁷

The current Minister of Higher Education, Jonathon Moyo, has confronted some of these concerns this year. In August, he gave a frank assessment of the condition of the higher education system in Zimbabwe:

*"[The] higher and tertiary education sector is a neglected sector, it's a forgotten sector in our country and that is not in the national interest... We need to start paying attention to the requirement of higher education or institutions, tertiary education and science and technology. If we don't do that then we risk losing the foundation that is the best on the continent."*⁴⁸

Moyo also suggested that he would like to see all lecturers at university level as PhD holders.⁴⁹ Given his prestige in the ruling party, this could suggest that there is hope for addressing the material issues that the sector faces. However, given the factional politics at the top of ZANU(PF),⁵⁰ it seems unlikely that he will positively address the issues of politicization at the University of Zimbabwe or, given the extent of the structural and material constraints on higher education institutions, significantly address these in the short term.

3 How are research and knowledge used?

3.1 National Government

The GO-SPIN report provides little insight into the ways in which the knowledge system is utilized in decision and policy making processes. Historically, Zimbabwe has had a very professional civil service, which has been partially politicized through political pressure and recruitment based on party patronage over the last 15 years.⁵¹ The effects of these shifts make it difficult to ascertain how decision making in government ministries occurs today.

This change is important in a context where, across government, different ministries are in the process of aligning their agendas with ZimAsset. Mike Bimha, the Minister of Industry and Commerce, said that they were dropping the Industrial Development Policy (2012-2016) in favour of the country's new economic blueprint.⁵² It is unclear as to the extent to which the re-prioritization of state strategies according to ZimAsset are based on evidence. Whilst one cannot generalize across government departments, it is salient that at a Ministry of Industry and Commerce workshop, public officials stated that policies tended to set unrealistic targets that were not anchored in sound evidence or realities on the ground.⁵³ Three key problems that prevent policymakers using research were highlighted at the workshop: capacity problems, lack of awareness and political reasons.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ The Female Students Network and SayWhat are two organisations that have highlighted this particular issue: femalestudentsnetwork.blogspot.co.uk, and www.saywhat.org.zw.

⁴⁸ Bulawayo Bureau, 24 August 2015. (Available here: www.zimbabwetoday.org/topics/service-delivery/education/2015/08/24/higher-education-critical-to-zim-asset).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ There has been a lot of coverage of the factional succession fights within ZANU(PF). For example, www.theindependent.co.zw/2015/05/22/mujuru-purge-fails-to-end-zanu-pfs-power-struggle.

⁵¹ See Verheul, S., "Rebels" and "Good Boys": Patronage, Intimidation and Resistance in Zimbabwe's Attorney General's Office after 2000', in the Journal of Southern African Studies (39:4 pp.765-782), available here: www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03057070.2013.858544; and Alexander, J. 'Militarisation and State Institutions: 'Professionals' and 'Soldiers' inside the Zimbabwean Prison Service', in the Journal of Southern African Studies (39:4, pp.807-828), available here: www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03057070.2013.858536.

⁵² The Sunday News (Sunday 12 October 2014, available here: www.sundaynews.co.zw/zim-asset-supersedes-previous-economic-blueprints).

⁵³ INASP, 'Needs Assessment: Evidence-Informed Policy Making Course in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce', available here: www.inasp.info/en/publications/details/146.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

There does seem to be a demand from policymakers and legislators for greater access to research in the conduct of their work. This is illustrated by the use made of information on current levels of inflation and levels of productivity in industry (provided by the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries) by Zimbabwean MPs in parliament.⁵⁵

Moreover, anecdotally, there is a lot of evidence that the government and UN agencies, such as UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF, rely heavily on freelance academics and freelance research consultants to conduct research to inform their various programmes and policy interventions.

3.2 Local Government

Increasing efforts are being made by international donors to develop the capacities and capabilities of local government administrations to deliver public services based upon sound, up-to-date data. Since 2013, UNDP have been running a capacity-building programme that seeks to support the implementation of an integrated, results-based management programme, in order for them to more effectively plan and manage public service delivery.⁵⁶

Such interventions are sorely required as the historically professional local administrations have been convulsed by political upheaval since the late 1990s. Rural administrations, unlike their urban counterparts, were increasingly undermined through the imposition of the government's fast-track land reform policy that began after 1997, which also broke down the distinction between counsellors who make policy and officials that professionally advise.⁵⁷ After 2002, the popularity of the opposition party (The Movement for Democratic Change [MDC]) meant that urban governance also became "the object of intense political struggle", in which, according to Professor JoAnne McGregor, the ruling party – ZANU(PF) – promoted a strategy of:

*"recentralising powers over local authorities while at the same time developing a system of patronage through and beyond local state institutions, creating 'parallel' party hierarchies and using party-aligned militia to control key urban spaces and access to resources".*⁵⁸

The effects of this period of politicization has meant that policy making processes, and staff composition of local government bureaucracies, have to account, at least partially, to the logic of new forms of patronage, or face the risk of ostracization, dismissal or reprisals. This development has also made local bureaucracies vulnerable to the elite power struggles that have occurred at the top of ZANU(PF) since late 2014.

3.3 Civil society

The extent to which research by NGOs or donors is used to shape public policy is not clear. NGOs such as the Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI), Zimbabwe Democracy Institute, Zimbabwe Institute, Crisis Coalition, Zimbabwe Election Support Centre, Research and Advocacy Unit, Zimbabwe Peace Project and Election Resource Centre, have also conducted a lot of research in the areas of elections, democracy and governance. This research has largely been used to lobby government for policy and institutional reforms in light of the new Constitution.

Whilst a lot of research has been carried out in areas such as agriculture, it is difficult for NGOs to conduct research at the local level, particularly on topics related to human rights and governance. This is largely due to a highly politicized and securitized context, whereby the work of NGOs – particularly in the rural areas – is closely monitored by ZANU(PF) and various agencies aligned to it,

⁵⁵ INASP, 'Needs Assessment: Evidence-Informed Policy Making Course in the Parliament of Zimbabwe', available here: www.inasp.info/en/publications/details/153.

⁵⁶ UNDP, 'Capacity Building for Local Government and Service Delivery', see: www.zw.undp.org/content/zimbabwe/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/capacity-building-for-local-government-and-service-delivery/.

⁵⁷ The Zimbabwe Institute, 'Local Government: Policy Review', (June, 2005, available free online here: www.zimbabweinstitute.net/File_Uploads/docs/Local_Government_Paper.pdf).

⁵⁸ JoAnn McGregor, 'Surveillance and the City: Patronage, Power-Sharing and the Politics of Urban Control in Zimbabwe' in the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (Vol, 39, Issue 4, 2013). (Available free to access here: sro.sussex.ac.uk/52809/1/Patronage6for_sro.pdf).

such as state security agents and war veterans. NGOs are branded as “agents of regime change” in ZANU(PF)’s exclusive nationalist discourses. They are required to register and sign Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with partisan District and Provincial Administrators before they can carry out any activities, including research at the local level.

3.4 Private sector

Whilst there is limited collaboration between the private sector and tertiary institutions in regard to research, manufacturing companies say that the curricular offered by these institutions are moderately relevant for companies.⁵⁹

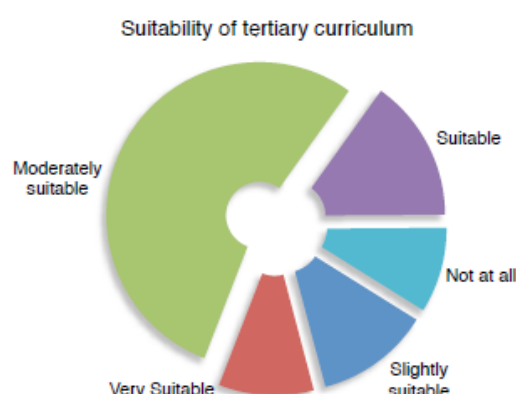


Figure 12: Results of the poll on the suitability of the tertiary curriculum. Source: CZI (2013) *Manufacturing Sector Survey*

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