

The establishment of the University College of Rhodesia (now the University of Zimbabwe) in 1957 heralded the birth of the disciplines of History of Education and Comparative Education in Zimbabwe. Prior to that there were no institutions of higher learning in the former Rhodesia. The earliest schools in Zimbabwe were founded towards the end of the nineteenth century by missionaries, with the purpose of establishing Christianity among the indigenous population (Atkinson 1988:743). For the European, Asian and coloured population the thrust of the education system was the desire among the white and near-white parents to provide their children with educational opportunities comparable to those available in the United Kingdom and to move away from the influences of South African institutions that did not, according to them, offer much by way of innovation and critical thinking. Comparative studies and studies in History of Education at the university college were thus meant to give the much needed grounding in what the nation was looking for in Education. The University of Zimbabwe has carried on with that tradition, although it has included in its courses comparisons with parts of the world other than the United Kingdom. So far, six other state universities have since come on board. They all started off as university colleges of the University of Zimbabwe, therefore (except for the few which are technical based) the programmes they offer are not much different from those offered by the University of Zimbabwe.