

## Primary and Secondary Education (Part 1)

### English translation:

Mary: Can you talk about the structure of the schools first, like do you have a public school like here, in high school, or is it different from the US?

CM: Yes, so I think Zimbabwe uses the British system, so we have primary school, which is, umm... It begins with, um, the crèche level, which will be nursery school or kindergarten here. So usually around four or five you go to crèche for two years, and then you go for your first grade umm when you are around six or seven. So you do first grade until seventh grade, that is primary school. And then from there you go on to secondary school which is form one, two, three and four. So form one to four is the secondary education. And high school is form five and six, but we usually call it "A" Level, so Advanced level, and form one to four which is secondary education is Ordinary level. And umm for grade one to seven, in your seventh year you write national exams which are the final grade seven exams, and those are the exams that will determine whether you can go on to secondary education. So they are nationwide exams. Every school, every student writes the same kind of exams and they are marked at the national level and then your results are then sent. And then when you go to form one to four, you write Ordinary level exams and you write in your fourth year of secondary education and they are also nationwide exams. You all write at the same time, you all write the same exam across the country. And those results will determine whether you go for 'A' Level which is Advanced Level. And usually for secondary education that's where we have different subjects. So we have History, Agriculture, Math, English, Shona, um, General Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics. I think five or seven is the average number of subjects that every student can take. But then when you go to Advanced Level you have to specialize. For Advanced Level you have either Arts or Commercials or Sciences. And the arts are History, Shona, Geography, and Divinity, which is Religious Education. And for Commercials you can do Management of Business, Economics or Math and also Geography counts for Commercials. And for Sciences you can do Math, Physics, and Chemistry. So you do three subjects only for Advanced level. So it's really two years of specializing in what you are interested in.

And then some students when they get to 'O' Level, if you do not do well, you cannot continue to 'A' Level. You can get entry level jobs but I think these days it's better to do 'A' Level, then you have more chances to go to college. But you can go on to do a teaching, um... You can be a teacher or a nurse with your Ordinary Levels. So you go to a teaching school or nursing school. And when you do Advanced levels, which is equivalent to grade 12 in the US, then you can go on to college. And you can specialize in anything that you are interested in. And usually, I think with our system you begin to specialize at an early age. So by the time you get to Advanced level then you know you are interested in Sciences, you are interested in Physics. Then when you go on to college then you pursue medicine, umm, which is like the popular degree. You can do medicine

and if you do the arts, usually you do Law or a Bachelor in Arts. And if you do  
Commercials, then you can be an Accountant or you can pursue a degree in Accountancy.  
So that is the Education system and it's the same across the country, it's the same for  
everyone. So basically we have seven years of primary education and six years of high  
school.

Mary: Is crèche, like, is that a French word?

CM: It's... I do not know. I think it's English

Mary: Can you spell it?

CM: C-R-E-C-H-E

Mary: Oh it's French. I think it means "cradle."

CM: Exactly (laughs).

**About CultureTalk:** CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use every day. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

© 2013 Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and Five Colleges, Incorporated