

# Zapatista Education

**Levels:** 6-8, 9-12

**Subjects:** Social science, education and learning.

**Objectives:** This lesson is based on the Schools for Chiapas video "Zapatista Education", and aims to examine and familiarize learners with a background to the Zapatista system of education, their approach to and way of organizing education, and the significance of their schools in the lives of their communities. It will address:

- a) The learning environment in Zapatista communities in Chiapas and in the learners' own environments.
- b) The background to and history of the Zapatista schooling system.
- c) How the schools are organized.
- d) The learning content of the schools.

Learners will develop critical thinking skills by reflecting on the following:

- a) The content of the video.
- b) Their preconceptions of Zapatista schools before and after watching the video.
- c) Comparing the situation of schools in Zapatista communities to schools in their own environments.

Learners will be able to answer the following questions:

- a) What types of problems did indigenous communities face regarding education before the Zapatistas?
- b) Why did the Zapatistas decide to start their own independent system of education?
- c) Why do they cover their faces?
- d) How are the schools organized?
- e) What do the learners study?
- f) What languages do they study in?
- g) What is the status of teachers?
- h) What are the demands of the Zapatistas?

**Materials:**

- Video: "[Zapatista Education](#)"
- Lesson plan: "[Ourselves and Others: How We Learn](#)"
- Article: "[Autonomous Education in the Zapatista Communities: Schools to Cure Ignorance](#)"
- Article: "[Educate in Resistance: The Autonomous Zapatista Schools](#)"
- Article: "[Why Autonomous Education?](#)"
- Photo gallery: [Mayan Schools of Dignity](#)

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## Introduction:

The video you are going to watch is a short introduction to the autonomous system of education of the Zapatista communities in Chiapas. There are some questions to discuss before and after watching the video, as well as some questions on specific information about what you hear and read while you are watching. After that, you can find out more about education and schools in Chiapas, and think about and compare the education system in the Zapatista communities and where you live.

## Before watching:

- Where is Chiapas?
- How do you imagine schools there? Where do you think children study? What subjects do you think they study?
- What are schools like where you live? Where do you study? What subjects do you study?
- What do you know about the Zapatista movement?

## While watching:

- How are the Mayan communities in Chiapas trying to make a new and better world?
- What have the Zapatistas been doing for the last thirty years?
- Why do they cover their faces?
- What did the Mexican government not give to the Mayan peoples and what effect did this have?
- According to the people interviewed in the video, why does the government not provide good education and teachers?
- Where did the first Zapatista schools appear?
- What do they call this new way of teaching and learning?
- Why did they decide to start their own schools?
- In which languages do the students learn to read and write in these schools?
- What are the teachers called in these schools?
- What is the relationship between families, teachers, and students in the schools?
- Are the teachers paid?
- Who decides what to do in the schools?
- What subjects do the students study and where do they study them?
- What do the Zapatistas demand?

**After watching:**

- What was your impression of the video?
- Did anything surprise you in the video?
- What do you think about the Zapatista way of education now?
- How does it compare with the system of education where you live?
- If you could change things in your school, what would you change?

**WebQuest:**

Find out more about the Zapatista education system here:

<http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/advances/schools/>