

## Chapter 8

# The State of Inclusive Education in Secondary Schools in Zimbabwe Decades After Independence and the Salamanga Declaration

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter explores the state of inclusive education in the secondary schools in Zimbabwe decades after independence and the Salamanca Declaration. The thrust of the chapter is very important at a time when inclusive education is increasingly being viewed as a critical element of basic education and a step towards social justice. The chapter shows that inclusive education has remained an illusion at a time when the inclusive framework is expected to have fully developed and to be bearing fruit. This paradox is explained in terms of the historical, cultural, and economic context prevailing in the country. This Zimbabwean context focuses public education on political and economic goals only, disregarding equity and social justice objectives. It is therefore recommended that the purpose of education be redefined to fully embrace the needs of 'all' and the social justice logics, bearing in mind the context of the local environment.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the authors explore the state of inclusive education in Zimbabwean secondary schools, more than 42 years after independence and 28 years after the ratification of the Salamanca Statement

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## ***The State of Inclusive Education in Secondary Schools in Zimbabwe***

and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education is sometimes referred to as the Salamanca Declaration, the Salamanca Statement or simply as the Salamanca (Magnusson, 2019). The Salamanca Statement and the advent of independence in 1980 mark key milestones in the history of Zimbabwe's public education system in general and the inclusive education agenda in particular. The aim of the chapter is to explore the extent to which the country has embraced the inclusive framework and to establish whether the brand of inclusive education embraced in the country is culturally affirming. In addition, the chapter also recommends the measures that may be taken to make inclusive education practices, both in Zimbabwe and beyond, more responsive to the needs of the local people. Given the time-lapse from the attainment of independence in 1980 and the ratification of the Salamanca Declaration in 1994 to date and the focus of these milestones on the inclusive agenda, it is reasonable to expect that by now the inclusive education framework should have been fully developed to bear fruits in the education system in Zimbabwe, including in secondary schools. The inclusive education framework was defined by Musengi and Chireshe (2013) as the only means to humanise the classroom and by Polat (2011) as a step towards social justice. Astuti and Sudrajat (2020, p. 178) also viewed inclusive education as one way through which countries may achieve social justice in education. At this stage into the history of an independent Zimbabwe, it has become plausible to begin interrogating some of the social policies and practices adopted at independence as a form of social impact assessment (Vanclay, 2020). The aim here is to establish how culturally affirming (responsive) (Williams et al., 2021) these policies and practices are and to inform future policies and practices. With regard to the inclusive framework, the situation on the ground seems to show persistent misalignment between formulations and realisation (Haug, 2017; Muresherwa & Jita, 2021; Musengi & Chireshe, 2013) of inclusive education in the country. This situation persists regardless of the promises (Musengi & Chireshe, 2013 and the timespan since independence in 1980 and ratification of the Salamanca Statement in 1994 to date.

The present chapter is informed by the complexity theory of inclusive education (Schuelka & Engsig, 2020; Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022) and uses Tomasevski's (2004) four-fold model as a conceptual framework to explore and explain the state of inclusive education in Zimbabwe, with special reference to the situation in the secondary schools. Tomasevski's (2004) model focuses on four elements: i) availability, ii) accessibility, iii) acceptability, and iv) adaptability, in this case of inclusive education thought and practice in the secondary schools of Zimbabwe. In combination, these four elements speak to the issues of access, equity, quality and relevance of education (Anlimachie, 2015) and therefore comprise key performance indicators for inclusive education interventions that may be used for social impact assessment. The issues at stake in this chapter are "considered relevant at a time when inclusive education and secondary school education are increasingly being viewed as components of the basic education framework internationally" (Muresherwa & Jita, 2021, p. 1743). This chapter is also relevant at a time when the role of the traditional family system as an agent of primary socialisation (Hunter-Jones, 2014) is slowly but surely disintegrating and the public education system is expected to fill the gap being left behind (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013). This is a time when inclusive education has also firmly entrenched itself as a key element within the general field of public education and educational research (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022). In particular, inclusive education is increasingly being viewed as the only fair and socially just way of grouping learners for instruction (Mafa, 2012; Musengi & Chireshe, 2013). Therefore, Polat (2011) and Astuti and Sudrajat (2020) saw the adoption of inclusive practices by schools and/or education systems as a step towards social justice. The term *social justice* "refers to the principles of equality and equity in all aspects of life for all members of a community" (Farid, 2022,

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