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# Neoliberalism and inclusive education in post-apartheid South African schools: a critical review of the World Bank's neoliberal education agenda

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**ABSTRACT**

Countries globally have adopted the inclusive education agenda to redress the exclusion of learners in schools. The features of inclusive education, namely, equal access, participation and opportunities for all, ought to remain at the centre in building successful education systems under this agenda. Nevertheless, in asserting its own agenda for education, the World Bank has recast the realisation of inclusive education in schools through its neoliberal stance and public policies. Looking at the countries of the Global East, the revelation is that the World Bank's neoliberal education agenda presents vast unevenness to the global village, inequalities in society and little hope for learners to receive an inclusive education in schools. In post-apartheid South Africa, the World Bank's neoliberal education agenda that characterises its educational projects and inclusive policy reveals a disengagement between inclusive education tenets and neoliberal practices. Therefore, as it stands, the social problems that emanate are unevenness in the global village and societal structural inequalities that leave many people lacking the skills to secure employment or to be globally competitive. The research problem in this study is the exclusion of learners in schools. Learners are not affirmed their right to education as a social good that redresses the inequities of the past by increasing their access to and participation and opportunities in schools. In addressing this ongoing struggle occasioned by the World Bank's neoliberal education agenda, this research report critiques the status quo, highlighting the exclusionary conditions and the need for transformation that would ignite a social change in the distribution of education to be provisioned in post-apartheid South African schools. The contributing argument I make maintains that the World Bank's neoliberal education agenda exacerbates these problems of unevenness, inequalities and exclusion. Therefore, as the World Bank's education agenda is not compatible to the values of inclusive education that rely on fulfilling educational and socio-economic rights, its agenda should be re-evaluated. As an extreme alternative, in ensuring the future carries values that represent equality, their presence ought to be diminished in the context of South Africa.

**KEYWORDS**: Neoliberalism; World Bank; neoliberal education agenda; inclusive education; exclusion; schools; South Africa