Exploring Inclusive Education Policy Implementation in Langa, Cape Town Through the Perspectives of Educators at Just Grace

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Exploring Inclusive Education Policy Implementation in Langa, Cape Town Through the Perspectives of Educators at Just Grace

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Abstract

This paper analyzes my observations of inclusive education policy implementation for learners with learning challenges and disabilities at Just Grace, a non-profit organization in Langa, Cape Town, and Pinelands North Primary School, a school notorious for its inclusive approach to education. I spoke to four educators at Just Grace, including the Head of Academics, the Youth Development Program Director, the Youth Activation Program Director, and a teaching student who volunteers as an after-school tutor. At Pinelands North Primary School, I spoke to the principal and the Learning Support Coordinator. My interviews provided me with qualitative research, which only solely represents the experiences of the educators with whom I spoke. My participants at Just Grace expressed their need for additional resources in order to support learners with learning challenges and/or disabilities. I found these resources put to use at Pinelands North, which enabled the successful implementation of inclusive education. In my analysis, I discuss the historical implications of these education disparities and what adjustments could be made to inclusive education policy that would benefit learners at Just Grace.
Acknowledgments

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Thank you to Leona, my supervisor at Just Grace, and the whole community at Just Grace for welcoming me with warm arms into their space. I learned so much about the community and Xhosa culture from having insightful conversations and spending quality time with all of the staff members every day. It was more fruitful than I could have ever expected.

Thank you to the community at Pinelands North Primary School for being so open to speaking with me and welcoming me into the school. I went in with zero expectations and came out feeling so grateful my research had guided me to such a great community of people.

Finally, thank you to all my participants who were honest and happy to speak with me and share their experiences.
## Contents

Abstract  
2  

Acknowledgments  
3  

Contents  
4  

The Organization  
1  

Introduction  
3  

Methodology  
8  

Ethical Reflexivity  
10  

Research Findings  
12  

Discussion/Analysis  
20  

Conclusion  
25  

Bibliography  
28  

Appendix/Appendices  
31
The Organization

Just Grace is a non-profit organization that was established in 2012 in Langa Township. Langa is one of the oldest townships in Cape Town, and it still suffers from Apartheid’s legacy in terms of violent crime, gang activity, unemployment, and drug and alcohol abuse (Teagle, 2023). The organization aims to inspire the youth, help the community achieve reduced poverty, improve education quality, create decent work opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and provide equal opportunities (Just Grace, 2023).

Their website, justgrace.co.za, describes their programs as three youth-focused programs: Youth Development, School Strengthening, and Youth Activation. The Youth Development program aims to support learners throughout high school and into higher education, training, or employment by offering assistance in gaining life skills, academic support, computer training, leadership, career guidance, and more. School Strengthening provides high school students who have dropped out or are at risk of doing so with intervention, counseling, and life skills training. The Youth Activation program intends to inspire passion in unemployed and disengaged youth by offering personal and professional development training, computer skills, and technical skills.

Just Grace is dedicated to their commitment to creating meaningful change in the Langa community, as they have demonstrated a significant impact.
through quantitative and qualitative research and independent reviews. Many students have reported positive changes in their well-being, good outcomes from counseling, and increased pass rates (Just Grace, 2023). I believe Just Grace is promoting positive change in Langa as it continues to inspire and leave a lasting impact on youth in the community.
Introduction

Statement of Intent

My research explores inclusive education in Langa, Cape Town, along with an internship at Just Grace. Inclusive education policy in South Africa’s context involves the equal integration and inclusion of all different learners regarding disabilities, learning challenges, background, ethnicity, or class into the existing system with extra support, diagnoses, and special programs (Department of Education, 2001). My research specifically examines the inclusion and integration of students with disabilities and learning challenges according to my participants in Langa. This is shown through the voices of program directors at Just Grace, an after-school non-profit organization specializing in assisting students struggling in school, and in juxtaposition to the operations at Pinelands North Primary School, a school recognized for excellence in its approach to inclusive learning (PNPS, 2022). My research intends to serve as a starting point for better understanding the unique challenges of implementing inclusive education at Just Grace and public high schools in Langa for students with learning challenges and disabilities that would benefit Just Grace.

Literature Review

In the post-Apartheid period, new education policies deracialized education but did not solve inequality across education systems in South Africa, as the education system is still damaged by the effects of the 1953 Bantu Education Act (Connelly, 2023). The Bantu Education Act made government spending on black education a tenth of what it was for white education by the 1970s (Amnesty International, 2020). As a result, black schools had inferior facilities, teachers, and textbooks and significantly higher teacher-pupil ratios compared to white schools creating overcrowded classrooms and lower pass rates among students (Amnesty International, 2020). The effects of these policies Connelly
are still apparent even post-Apartheid. Most mainly black schools do not
provide an adequate background in Mathematics or Science as only around 50%
and 42% of teachers teaching these subjects respectfully had studied them
beyond secondary school levels in 2002 (Van der Berg, 2002). Additionally,
literacy scores were 55% of white students’ scores, and their numeracy scores
were 46% of white students’ levels in 1995 (Van der Berg, 2002).

Although basic education is a fundamental human right according to
Section 29(a) of the South African Constitution, there is still much work to be
done to improve the learning conditions of black students across the country
(The Constitutional Assembly, 1996). Children with disabilities are particularly
struck by the education disparities. Up to 70% of children of school-going age
with disabilities are out of school (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). These students
disappear in the current system despite the written inclusive education policy in
policy involves the mainstreaming and inclusion of all students despite their
learning challenges, disabilities, home environments, ethnicity, and health
(Department of Education, 2001). The policy implementation, however, is
lacking, and there are conditions in which implementation can be successful so
all students are able to reach their full potential.

Education White Paper 6 was developed out of the need for changes to be
made to the provision of education and training to be responsive to the diverse
range of learning needs (Department of Education, 2001). Inclusive education
and training include acknowledging that all youth can learn and need support,
accepting and respecting that all learners have different learning needs that are
equally valued, enabling education structures and learning methods to meet
learners’ needs, acknowledging that learning also occurs informally in the home
and community, and empowering learners and maximizing their participation
(Department of Education, 2001). White Paper 6 identifies classroom educators
as the primary resource for achieving the goal of implementing inclusive
education and training policy. It outlines that educators must improve their skills and knowledge and develop new ones (Department of Education, 2001). Priorities for training educators include multi-level classroom instruction, orientation to new roles in special schools/resource centers, and training in a new role focusing on multi-level instruction, cooperative learning, problem-solving, and development of learners’ strengths (Department of Education, 2001).

Given the importance of teacher education and training for inclusive education policy implementation, I want to speak to educators about their perspectives and experiences in working with students with learning challenges and disabilities. Though inclusive education is a large umbrella term for numerous factors that may influence a student’s experience in school, I will examine disabilities and learning challenges specifically given the research on how many of these types of students are overlooked and not given the education they have a right to. Working with Just Grace, a program that has experience supporting students who need extra help, will allow me to understand what might work best or not well for students dealing with disabilities and learning challenges (Just Grace, 2023). Additionally, speaking with educators at Pinelands North Primary School, a school renowned for its inclusive approach to education, will allow me to identify what resources and methodologies work in practice to best support these types of learners (PNPS, 2022).

Objectives

The goal of this practicum was to explore how inclusive of students with learning challenges and disabilities the high school public education system in Langa is through the organization of Just Grace in juxtaposition with the operations at Pinelands North Primary School. Using perspectives from literature and my research participants, I make tentative suggestions of what either works well or needs to be improved for students who need extra support,
how they can be improved, and what resources or training teachers need to achieve improvement.

1. I identify critical barriers that students with disabilities or learning challenges in Just Grace face when accessing their right to education.
2. I identify what opportunities are available to teachers for training and support to enhance teaching skills for students with special needs.
3. I identify what innovative teaching methods are effective for learners with learning challenges and/or disabilities and identify how these methods differ between Just Grace and Pinelands North Primary School.
4. I determine the available support for students with special education needs in Langa at Just Grace and at Pinelands North Primary School and if Just Grace has the resources to achieve a more inclusive approach to teaching.

Structure of Paper

The ISP consists of five sections. The first outlines the methodologies used in my research. My approaches to interviews, human subject ethics, and analysis of my findings are summarized there. The second section includes my personal reflections on ethical reflexivity while conducting this research. I reflect upon my positionality and expose my biases in that section. The third section summarizes my raw findings without analysis. It is organized by common themes and patterns revealed by my findings and includes pieces of interview transcripts. The fourth section is a discussion and analysis of my findings in connection with literature. Finally, the fifth section concludes the paper and summarizes my findings and analyses.

Limitations

Given my research only took place at a non-profit organization and a primary school, there are many limitations within my research. I am careful not...
to make generalizations to Langa when speaking about the perspectives from Just Grace. My research only represents the experiences of my six participants from Just Grace and Pinelands North Primary School.
Methodology

I used an interview-based methodology for my research. I interviewed four people working within Just Grace; two program directors, the after-school academic coordinator, and an after-school tutor. Additionally, I interviewed the principal and the learning support coordinator at Pinelands North Primary School. My conversations at Just Grace led to my engagement with Pinelands North Primary School, given Pinelands’ notorious excellence in inclusive education implementation (PNPS, 2022). The interviews were recorded using a smartphone and analyzed using transcriptions of the conversations. The recordings are password-protected and will be destroyed upon submission of this paper. Each participant signed a consent form that outlined details of the purpose of the study, study procedures, potential benefits to participants, confidentiality, and rights to participation and withdrawal. I gave each participant a pseudonym to protect their identities.

Interviews are a qualitative research methodology that allows me to gauge the opinions and knowledge of people who are actively working within education-based communities about inclusive education (Kvale, 1996). This is an exploratory project, and by highlighting individuals’ stories, experiences, and knowledge, I am able to allow participants to drive and direct my research in the directions that enable me to explore inclusive education from as many perspectives and interpretations as possible.

Each participant was asked a series of open-ended questions that encouraged them to share their candid opinions and knowledge of inclusive education in the context of their work experiences. Questions included inquiries about their positions at their respective organizations, their understandings of learning challenges, disabilities, and inclusive education, their training and education, their experiences working with learners with challenges, successful teaching methods, and goals for the future regarding inclusion.
I asked follow-up questions to participants’ responses on the spot and as needed, so each interview varied based on the individuals’ work experience and thoughts.

In my internship at Just Grace, I worked with students by tutoring them in the after-school Youth Development Program. I refrain from writing about and reporting on my experiences working with these students in my research. My experiences tutoring and working with these learners will likely influence how I interpret and analyze interviews with teachers and directors. This bias is inherent but removed from my results and analyses as much as possible.

I analyzed my data by first identifying important themes as illustrated by my participants. I use these themes and patterns to establish the framework of my research findings and discussion. I also extract from other literature relating to this field to help establish my conclusions.
Ethical Reflexivity

My whiteness in South Africa inherently holds power in the systemic racial hierarchy defined by colonization, exploitation, and capitalism. As I entered spaces like Just Grace and Langa High School that were not made for people like me, I exposed my biases and positionality as a white American when conducting research. Kapoor describes this as re-presenting people’s experiences and explains that it is important to unlearn privilege as much as possible (Kapoor, 2004). Of course, because my privilege is embedded in my identity, I cannot escape othering. But I suspended my perceptions of what was right, wrong, better, superior, and inferior to develop ethical relationships with the people and organizations I worked with.

There is an innate us vs. them power dynamic when a white person enters a predominantly black space made for disadvantaged black youth. Kapoor writes:

Our encounters with, and representations of, our ‘subjects’ are therefore coded or framed in terms of an us/them dichotomy in which ‘we’ aid/develop/civilize/empower ‘them’ (Kapoor, 2006, p. 629).

In my analysis, I am careful not to speak for the participants in my research and instead allow their voices to drive my research in the direction that would be most beneficial. With that, I allowed myself to be surprised and to change directions when necessary so that I was not bound to the confines of my preconceived notions or assumptions. I am also aware of the impact my research has on the Langa community and Just Grace. Macro change as a response to my findings is unrealistic. This is a micro exploration of inclusive education in Langa that could serve as a small-scale starting point for positive change around inclusive education for learners with learning challenges and disabilities in a public high school in Langa.

Connelly
That being said, however, I am an undergraduate student conducting small-scale research in an unfamiliar environment from which there is much to learn. My experience has taught me that I must not assume I hold more power because of my identity. The people within Just Grace and Pinelands North Primary High School have high-level degrees, more experience, and specialize in skills that I do not have. I learned more from them in terms of their work and dedication to inclusive education, community empowerment, and youth and how they operate within their unique contexts than they could from myself or my research. I am a young student with privilege in my educational background but also with so much learning potential from the people in the NPO and education environments.

The participants in my research were and are protected. All identifiable information obtained in connection with this study is confidential. The anonymity of every participant is protected using pseudonyms. The researcher is the only person with access to identifiable data, and all data will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Informed and signed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the interview process.

Compensation

In each interview, I gave the participants my undivided attention and time and listened to them carefully and respectfully while validating their stories and experiences. At Just Grace, I offered my skills and services during my internship. At Pinelands North Primary School, I treated each participant to a café gift card.
Research Findings

Six participants took part in a thirty to forty five minute interview. Four participants, Participants A, B, C, and D, were from Just Grace, and two, Participants E and F, were from Pinelands North Primary School. Among the interviewees at Just Grace were the Head of Academics, an after-school tutor, the Youth Development Program Director, and the Youth Activation Program Director. Among those questioned at Pinelands North Primary School were the Learning Support Coordinator and the school principal. The findings below outline the themes and patterns found through the analysis of the interview transcripts.

Understandings of Inclusive Education, Learning Challenges, and Disabilities in Just Grace and Pinelands

Each participant answered questions about their understanding of inclusive education, learning challenges, and disabilities. All six participants demonstrated that they have an in-depth understanding of the concepts of inclusive education, learning challenges, and disabilities. Participant C, the program director for the Youth Development Program, demonstrated a strong understanding of inclusive education in his own words: Inclusive education basically means that we cater to all different difficulties where if a learner has a certain mental illness, we as teachers are able to provide quality education even though that learner has certain difficulties whether it’s mental or physical. The other participants from Just Grace had similar responses demonstrating that they understood how broad the topic was. For example, Participant B, an after-school tutor at Just Grace and teaching student at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, stated: So inclusive education is a very broad topic because it should consider cultures, backgrounds, class barriers, impairments, disabilities, there is a lot. At Pinelands North Primary School, understandings of inclusive education were similarly in depth. Participant E, the Learning Support Coordinator’s understanding came from her own experience of working in inclusive education: I suppose learning about others, so respecting and understanding that people are different, come from different backgrounds, different environments, and different needs. And it’s just about being respectful and understanding and figuring out how to support them.

In regards to general understandings of learning challenges and disabilities in Langa, they were somewhat more limited than they were regarding inclusive education and in comparison to those at Pinelands North Primary School. Participant C responded: My understanding is quite limited, but I

Connelly
know that there are challenges. I cannot pinpoint those challenges because I’m not a professional, but I know that there are challenges that learners are facing, whether it’s physical, mental, or otherwise, that impact them and their academic performance.

Participant D, the Youth Activation Program Director, answered similarly: I think learning challenges are that some people learn in different ways, people are impeded in certain ways, like if someone has dyslexia, they might find it hard to read things or maybe have writing limitations. Disabilities could be physical and mental. At Pinelands North, the principal, Participant F, who started making her school a distinct inclusive one when she became principal in 1995, responded: Most schools would say that it is someone that is stupid because they cannot learn like a traditional neurotypical person. Some learning challenges are seen, and others are not seen, and those [unseen] are the hardest for schools to accept. Participant E stated: Each child has special needs, but their own unique special needs and those might vary. So if you see a child is coming with their own special needs, you’re going to make it work regardless of who they are or what they need in the class.

Participants demonstrated in-depth understandings of inclusive education, learning challenges, and disabilities in Langa and Pinelands North Primary School. Even when participants were not as confident in their responses, they answered based on their own experiences, which proved to be fruitful and complex.

Challenges Faced by Learning with Learning Challenges

There are clear disparities between the positions learners with challenges find themselves in in Just Grace and Pinelands. Educators at Just Grace articulated that they do have learners with these issues who come in seeking help and stressed that they often leave or are eventually turned away and referred to other schools because they are not capable of accommodating them successfully. Participant C stated: The ones that find it very difficult to cope, they have mental or learning difficulties. We find that those ones we really cannot help them. The things that we can do is try to refer them to other organizational centers that might be able to help them with their particular learning difficulty. Participant A told a similar story: Yes, we had learners with learning challenges come through to our program. But you find out along the way they will leave because it is hard to accommodate them. Sometimes a social worker will assist them, and they will go to special schools. All four participants from Just Grace expressed that learners with challenges and/or disabilities cannot thrive at Just Grace because they are not able to accommodate their learning needs.

Connelly
Additionally, Participant A articulated a general issue occurring in public high schools in Langa: The learner with learning difficulties will say they fully understand and will just progress with age to the next class. We don’t have any other option but to pass students anyways. We have this learner who is over age, what do we have to do, we have to just say go home and do nothing. Our parents don’t have the money to send their kids to private schools where they get support. Learners with challenges are often passed into the next grade even if they receive failing marks because educators don’t want them to give up. Furthermore, learning challenges bring up the concern of behavioral issues within the classroom. Participant C explained: We find that learners with learning difficulties would be the ones that would have behavioral issues in class and that also disturbs the learning and teaching. If behavioral issues cannot be resolved because the learning challenges cannot be catered to, then that is also interrupting the learning of other students in the classroom.

The responses at Pinelands North Primary School were very different as their school caters to learners with learning challenges and disabilities specifically. Participant E stated: Pinelands is an inclusive school which means that we welcome anybody who comes to our school regardless of race, religion, color, or gender identity. We believe that there are learners with barriers to learning, our job is to remove the barriers that they are experiencing, sometimes that’s physical, sometimes it’s emotional. In academics, we have to look at how we remove the barriers and how do we help the children overcome those barriers. I mean, our job is to be creative and put things in place to support the children in their educational journey. Positions that learners with challenges find themselves in are very different depending on if they seek help at Just Grace in Langa or go to Pinelands North Primary School. Pinelands is more equipped and experienced to accommodate those learners, whereas concerns at Just Grace revolve around not having the priorities, capabilities, or resources to help them succeed.

Lack of Resources in Langa

At Just Grace, a large concern among all participants was the lack of resources needed to support learners with learning challenges and disabilities. Each participant expressed in some way that they don’t have the resources to support these types of learners, and if they did, they would keep more of them in their programs. Participant D stated what she thought would be helpful for learners with challenges: It’s a challenge all around, I think. I think it takes more resources; we don’t really have those resources or those facilities to do so, which is bad in a way because that means people are excluded. I think we have to construct things a little

Connelly
bit differently. I suppose the dream would be to have someone like a facilitator, someone who comes alongside the person and helps them with their work afterward. That would all be extra resources. Participant C also illustrated what resources would be helpful in supporting learners: One resource that we would need is an expert, a therapist, or a psychologist that would be able to diagnose those learners and, depending on the learning difficulty that the learner has, would recommend how that learner could be helped. All participants at Just Grace demonstrated that they are eager to support all types of learners, but specific resources that are not available to them are needed, such as psychologists, therapists, and facilitators.

Conversely, Pinelands North Primary School has a plethora of resources that they utilize to support all types of learners with challenges and disabilities. These resources, they explained, don’t have to cost money and often come from the creativity of educators at the school. Among those resources that are paid for, Participant E stated: We have two occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, we have a counselor that comes in twice a week. So those are all our on-site therapists that are based at the school so it makes them easy to access, but they are paid for by the parents. We are a full-service school, so that means we have access to an inclusive education team, and on that team, we can access the occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, or educational psychologist. She also stressed the importance of their facilitators in supporting learners: We make use of facilitators. We have a facilitation team, and we offer a course once a year for training for facilitators; it’s actually called the facilitation of learning course so parents can do it, teacher interns from other schools can do it, and then we teach them about special needs and how to support children in the classroom according to their needs. Their team of facilitators works with children in the classrooms while the teacher teaches their lessons allowing learners with challenges to receive some guidance while learning in the same classroom as neuro-typical students. Among the resources that don’t cost anything are things like safe spaces for learners to go if they need to learn quietly or independently and catering to many different learning styles when teaching, such as using all the human senses to explain certain concepts. Participant E continued: Be open-minded because with a bit of creativity, with a bit of teamwork, anything is possible; any child will fit into the school if you’re creative and open to it. There are always answers; there are always ways of problem-solving and finding ways to support each child that comes into the school.

Many of the resources that Just Grace expressed the need for, such as facilitators and psychologists, are available at Pinelands and have proven to be
successful in supporting learners with learning challenges. Yet, there are also successful techniques that educators have put to use at Pinelands to help support all learners that don’t require budgeting or extra costs.

**Teacher Training and Teaching Methodologies**

There are differences regarding the training educators have received in Langa versus at Pinelands North Primary to accommodate learners with challenges or disabilities. At Just Grace, participants stressed the need for teacher training for special needs specifically so they know how to better help learners with challenges. Participant B stated: *If there could be trained teachers to deal with learners that have special needs or maybe if the tutors could take some training on inclusive education, that would be good.* Participant C expressed a very similar need: *Maybe we would need some training from experts for our tutors so they would be able to deal with or teach or tutor those learners who have difficulties.* Participant B also noted her observations of the differing operations happening within private versus public schools: *There are few trainings in public schools about inclusive education. I found that in private schools, they speak about their challenges in the classroom, and they come up with ideas about how to deal with those challenges. And they have regular trainings. That doesn’t normally happen in public schools.* I confirmed her observations about private schools when I visited Pinelands North Primary School the following week.

At Pinelands, Participant E explained the training their educators consistently go through. *At our school we have constant training, we are always going on courses. We have staff development every Friday, where we are constantly learning and adapting according to what our children need in the school or new research, etcetera.* Teachers at Pinelands have training, conversations, and meetings to rework and improve the education of all their learners.

Not only did the training differ between schools, but so did the teaching methodologies. At Just Grace, Participant C described the flipped classroom teaching method that they utilize in their after-school tutoring sessions. *At Just Grace, we use the flipped classroom method, but it doesn’t really help a learner with learning difficulties because it requires learners to be self-motivated to self-study at home. This is quite difficult for a learner that has a learning difficulty. So our way of teaching or our methodology doesn’t really cater to their difficulties, unfortunately.* Participant A also expressed his desire to change their teaching methods so that they can better accommodate learners with challenges. *Maybe now we can try to come up with a methodology that can assist learners with difficulties. Have a program for*

Connelly
learners with learning difficulties; these learners will have tutors that were trained for them. But for now, we are far from that. This brings us back to the pressing issue of a lack of teacher training in Langa and how the training teachers receive also shapes the methodologies they use to teach students.

At Pinelands, educators use a variety of teaching methods, often depending on grade. Participant E described the Reggio Emilia approach to learning, which is mainly used in grade R but is filtered throughout the whole school. It’s basically saying that all children have 100 languages, and you can learn any of those languages. So it’s small facilitator learning as opposed to directly giving instructions. It’s putting a concept into the class and allowing the children to question and explore and discover, and so we very much use that in grade R, but it’s also filtering through the school. The approach gives the learner the agency to explore and learn concepts in whatever ways that drive them. When asked what she thinks an equivalent methology would be for high school students she responded: I think the same thing in terms of Reggio Emilia. It’s really just giving them a concept and allowing them to explore in any way they want to find answers and gather information. It’s just allowing them to problem solve and think for themselves as opposed to just giving them information and them regurgitating it. The Reggio Emilia method is just one approach utilized at Pinelands. In every classroom, they use whole person learning to cater to every type of learner. Participant E described: We very much are whole person learning, so using all our senses so we make sure we reach into all different learning styles. It’s visual queues, or auditory, or using your whole body to learn. The goal for this approach is to make sure every type of learner is accommodated in the same learning environment.

**Extra Support in and Around the Classroom**

In addition to better resources, improved teaching methodologies, and more teacher training, there are additional means of support that educators at Just Grace think would be helpful to improve the experiences of learners with learning challenges and/or disabilities. Many participants thought additional support and learning sessions for these types of learners would be beneficial. Participant A suggested a separate space where learners with challenges or disabilities could learn: More sessions for learners with this issue would be good. They would come Monday, Tuesday, and through Friday after school so we try to give more attention to them when others are not coming. It’s difficult for our tutors to accomodate them as it is. Though, other participants from Just Grace expressed concern that a separate learning environment wouldn’t be inclusive. Participant B pointed out: That would be helpful but it wouldn’t be necessarily inclusive because inclusive means

Connelly
that the learners with disabilities or learning barriers also deserve to be in the normal classes as well. Participant C expressed the same concern: We have to find ways of how to teach those two types of learners; the ‘normal’ one and the one that has a difficulty. So if we were ever to have something like that in Just Grace, we wouldn’t want to make those feel excluded. We would have to find ways of incorporating and having all of them under one umbrella. Maybe it would help to separate them but we wouldn’t want to exclude them because it’s not inclusive. Although educators at Just Grace want to support these learners individually, they are wary of how inclusive their approach to do so would be.

Educators at Pinlands interpret spaces for learners with learning challenges and disabilities differently. Participant F pointed to all the spaces in just her office that are available for students to go to when they don’t feel comfortable in the classroom. It’s also about creating safe spaces for children who are different. If a student doesn’t want to take an assessment in the classroom, they can come to my office and complete it here. There’s a tent over there, picnic tables outside, and places all sorun fthe school that they can comfortably go to for quiet or individual time. Some often find that the classroom gets too loud or overwhelming. In this interpretation, spaces for learners with learning differences are not excluded from their learning environment, every space at the school can become the learning environment so even when they are away from the classroom, they are still learning.

**Barriers Preventing Successful Implementation**

There are many barriers that educators in Langa are facing that is preventing the successful implementation of inclusive education. Participant A believes that the policies outlined in Education White Paper 6 are unattainable in today’s classrooms. *White Paper 6 is good in writing but not in society. I think it was taken from other countries like the USA. There’s a curriculum that we have to follow. As a teacher how are you going to have time to deal with those learners who have learning barriers. We are not there yet. A learner who has challenges cannot be accommodated here. That learner will have to go to a special school. So what is inclusive really?* This demonstrates how educators in Langa are aware of the lack of implementation of inclusive education policy and believe it is an unrealistic expectation to put the responsibility on educators when the policy is not compatible with the current resources or structure of the classes.

Conversely, educators at Pinelands believe that it is much easier than it seems to become an inclusive school. Participant E expressed her wish for other

Connelly
schools to become more inclusive: My wish would be that other schools become more accepting of other children that are different, who have different learning needs. I think it’s incorrect information, not being well informed, the misunderstanding of what it actually is and how it doesn’t actually have to cost anything. We started off with no extra resources at all and we just started including and being creative in how we support the children. So I think that all schools can be inclusive, it’s about changing the mindset. Educators at Pinelands actually find the implementation of inclusive education to be much easier than commonly thought. They believe extra resources aren’t necessary and it comes more from the creative mindset of the community of educators at the school.
Discussion/Analysis

The education disparities caused by the Bantu Education Act of 1953 can be seen clearly through my research at Just Grace in Langa and at Pinelands North Primary School. According to all four of my participants who are educators at Just Grace, Just Grace and Langa High School lack the facilities and human resources needed to provide a quality education for students with learning challenges or disabilities. Langa was created under the Uban Areas of 1923 to segregate black South Africans into a designated location outside of Cape Town’s city center (Teagle, 2023). Schools in Langa were affected by the Bantu Education Act, which made government spending on black schools a tenth of what it was for white schools (Amnesty International, 2020). Through my observations of Langa High School during my internship and research at Just Grace, I saw the effects of this specifically in the facilities of the school. Many of the facilities, desks, chalkboards, and classrooms were run down or wrecked. Participant A, the Head of Academics at Just Grace, expressed to me that classrooms at Langa High School often have up to forty children to one teacher. Given the large responsibility that’s laid on teachers to assist all these students, educators in Langa can’t make inclusive education a priority. My research at Just Grace demonstrates that there isn’t lack of knowledge surrounding learning challenges, disabilities, or inclusive education, it’s that the ability to implement inclusive education is a privilege that comes with resources.

Contrastingly, Pinelands North Primary School, a private historically white primary school in Pinelands, has access to a plethora of resources that have enabled them to make tremendous strides in making their school inclusive for learners with challenges or disabilities (The Story of Pinelands North, 2019). As a historically white school, Pinelands North had an advantage when the current principal took over in 1997 to make her school an inclusive one. The increasing of fees was common among historically advantaged schools after 1996 to maintain smaller classrooms and hire additional teachers (Hindle, 2007).
Pinelands North Primary School fees ranged from R23,956 to R30,210 per pupil, depending on the grade of the pupil in 2023 (Ncube, 2022). These extra finds have, without a doubt, contributed to the implementation of inclusive education in Pinelands through the construction of accessible facilities around the school, the use of extra paid facilitators in the classrooms, and the use of on-site therapists which are paid for separately from the parents as explained by Participant E, the learning support coordinator. Although Pinelands North Primary School is now very racially, culturally, and neurologically diverse, its history of being a white school under Apartheid has contributed to Pinelands North educators’ abilities to transform it into a successful inclusive school.

Education White Paper 6 outlines funding strategies for the successful implementation of inclusive education policy (Department of Education, 2001, #). In section 3.8.4 of Education White Paper 6, they state, “Particular attention will be given to optimizing the expertise of specialist support personnel, such as therapists, psychologists, remedial educators, and health professionals” (Department of Education, 2001, p. 41). This falls under the budgeting for provincial education departments. Every educator I spoke to expressed how important having on-site therapists and psychologists is to the successful integration of learners with learning challenges. Given their commentary, some revisions of White Paper 6 that emphasize the importance of these human resources to the integration of learners with learning challenges should be made. The unseen challenges, as Participant F stated, are the hardest for schools to accept because diagnoses and support are challenging to obtain and easy to overlook in the classroom. If that were more transparent and explicit in White Paper 6, maybe the budgets of the provincial education departments would be reformulated to provide these needed resources to schools such as Langa High School, though more research would have to be done to support that hypothesis.

White Paper 6 identifies classroom educators as the primary resource for achieving successful policy implementation (Department of Education, 2001).
This includes orientation to new roles in schools, training in a new role focusing on multi-level instruction, cooperative learning, problem-solving, and the development of learners’ strengths (Department of Education, 2001). All six educators that I spoke to expressed the importance of classroom facilitators who work one-on-one in the classroom with students who possess learning challenges and assist them during and after class. This takes the pressure off of teachers who have to manage a classroom full of students and cannot necessarily accommodate students who need constant extra support in learning environments. Ideally, these facilitators would be found in every classroom. White Paper 6 vaguely articulates how an increase in demand for professionals in the education system is particularly important in the ‘special needs’ sector in section 3.2 (Department of Education, 2001). It doesn’t, however, explicitly include classroom facilitators. Given how effective they are in the successful implementation of inclusive education at Pinelands North, I believe it would be worth expanding on the language of professionals in the education system and specifically classroom facilitators in the policy.

Just Grace’s Youth Development Program offers volunteer after-school tutoring, which is similar to the work of a facilitator. These tutors, however, are not trained to support learners with learning challenges, nor does the teaching methodology that they utilize accommodate these learners, according to Participant C. Though the training of these tutors may seem like a burden, Pinelands North demonstrates actually how easy it is to learn how to support these learners. They offer training for facilitators once a year, and anyone, parents, volunteers, teachers, and students, can go through the training, as stated by Participant E. In terms of teaching methodologies, Participant E from Pinelands North verbalized that teaching through all the senses and allowing the students some agency in how they learn with the Reggio Emilio approach is often helpful for learners with learning challenges in her experience. Her experience, however, comes from working in a primary school, so further

Connelly
research into how these approaches would be helpful in a high school setting would be needed. Even so, it may be helpful for Just Grace to adjust their teaching methods for learners with challenges, though the use of facilitators seems to be the more effective choice.

The use of space was also a common theme of discussion at both Just Grace and Pinelands North. Educators at Pinelands demonstrated how providing a separate, yet inclusive space for learners with learning challenges doesn’t need extra funding for resources. Participant F explained that sometimes all learners need is a quiet and comfortable space, away from overwhelming distractions, to focus and do their work well. White Paper 6 outlines that processes of learning and teaching should be flexible for all learners and learning styles (Department of Education, 2001), and creating comfortable spaces like these is part of that. To make these spaces, all that’s needed is some creativity. Instead of sitting in the traditional chair and desk in a classroom, learners can go outside, find a quiet classroom, or sit on the floor. It’s just a matter of making these spaces known and accessible to the students. If they are accessible to all students, the spaces are still inclusive for all types of students.

An important takeaway from my observations at Just Grace, in particular, is that the current inclusive education policy is not compatible with the current state and structure of historically disadvantaged schools such as those in Langa. Participant A from Just Grace believes that successful inclusive education is unattainable based on his experiences working in schools in Langa. He believes it is unrealistic for educators to be expected to implement this policy with these lack of resources, and he thinks that White Paper 6 needs to be adjusted accordingly in order to be fully implemented in schools in Langa. Although I agree that the policy is not compatible with the current state of education at Just Grace in Langa specifically, I do believe that it is improving. The open discussions about the issue prove that people are thinking about inclusive education and want to implement it in new ways at Just Grace. When Connelly
asked if they think Just Grace will better support learners with learning challenges or disabilities in the future, all participants from Just Grace answered yes in light of their experiences and conversations they’ve had within the organization. White Paper 6 is idealistic and has outlined how South Africa can continue to improve its education system from what it was under Apartheid. Although inclusive education is not fully implemented in most schools, I do believe that educators are continuing to find ways to support learners with learning challenges.
Conclusion

Just Grace’s issue of having a lack of resources to support students with learning challenges stems from the Bantu Education System under Apartheid. Most students who seek support from Just Grace come from Langa High School, where they initially are not receiving the academic support they need to succeed. Historically, Langa High School was a disadvantaged school that wasn’t receiving the necessary funding or resources for decades. Given this, after 1994, implementing an inclusive approach to education wasn’t a priority.

Contrastingly, Pinelands North Primary School was a historically white school that had the necessary initial resources to become inclusive when the current principal took over in 1997. Additionally, Just Grace as an organization has some limitations. When donors donate money to the organization, they have expectations of what Just Grace will do with that money. Consequently, Just Grace cannot always execute what they want because of their limited agency in that way.

My conversations with educators from Just Grace and Pinelands North Primary School have revealed critical barriers that students with learning challenges and disabilities face when accessing their right to education. Learners with learning challenges at Just Grace are often not diagnosed, overlooked, or referred to other schools because they cannot be accommodated with the limited resources Just Grace has access to. Resources such as psychologists, therapists, facilitators, and training are needed in order to support these students. All these

Connelly
resources are utilized at Pinelands, where inclusive education implementation is successful. There are ways, however, to relatively accommodate these learners for little to no cost. Adopting new teaching methodologies, such as the Reggio Emilia approach and creating safe and separate spaces for learners, are useful techniques used at Pinelands North Primary School and might be worth making use of at Just Grace. Additionally, facilitator training for volunteers at Just Grace might be more accessible than previously thought, as Pinelands offers facilitator training once a year that teaches anyone how to accommodate learners with challenges. These, however, are partial and temporary solutions to the larger issue of the need for necessary resources for successful policy implementation.

Education White Paper 6 serves as the blueprint for successful inclusive education policy implementation, though I believe that some revisions could be made to emphasize certain areas that I observed to be crucial to the integration of learners with learning challenges and disabilities specifically. These include on-site therapists and psychologists, classroom facilitators, and training to support learners with learning challenges. I observe the language surrounding these topics in White Paper 6 to be very vague and in need of specificity and clarification to help provincial education departments better balance their budgets to provide the necessary funding for these resources. Overall, however, my conversations with educators at Just Grace brought me hope that inclusive education for learners with learning challenges and disabilities in Langa is improving.
In the future, if I were to continue this research, I would continue it in schools in Langa. My research was limited as I only had access to educators at Just Grace, a non-profit organization. I believe further research on inclusive education policy implementation for learners with learning challenges and disabilities is important and holds a lot of potential given the lack of implementation. Additionally, more research needs to be done on learners with learning challenges specifically. Their challenges are invisible and easily overlooked in the classroom, yet they have the same right as their counterparts to a quality and equal education. I believe it is important for researchers to get in the classroom and hear the struggles educators who have experience working with all different types of learners are going through and see it first-hand in the classroom.
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Connelly


https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=52ce82c35e07bfd575c0cdd8d8c6b87f9be3d96c
Consent form given to participants at Just Grace:

**PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Title of the Study: Understanding Inclusive Education Policy Implementation in Langa, Cape Town Through the Perspectives of Program Directors and Teachers at Just Grace and Langa High School
Researcher Name: Caroline Connelly

My name is Caroline Connelly I am a student with the SIT South Africa: Multiculturalism and Human Rights Fall 2023 program.

I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting for partial fulfillment of my as part of the SIT Study Abroad program in South Africa: Multiculturalism and Human Rights. Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy of this form.

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

I am interested in exploring inclusive education in Langa, Cape Town, along with an internship at Just Grace. Inclusive education policy in South Africa’s context involves the equal integration and inclusion of all different learners regarding disabilities, learning challenges, background, ethnicity, or class into the existing system with extra support, diagnoses, and special programs (Department of Education, 2001). My research will specifically examine the inclusion and integration of students with disabilities and learning challenges in Langa. I intend to showcase this through the voices of program directors and teachers at Just Grace, an after-school non-profit program specializing in assisting students struggling in school, and at Langa High School, where teachers see their students every day and may have developed relationships with them in ways they can better understand where student support might be lacking or thriving. I hope my research can serve as a starting point for better understanding the unique challenges of implementing inclusive education for students with learning challenges and disabilities in Langa that would benefit Langa High School and Just Grace.

**STUDY PROCEDURES**

Connelly
Your participation will consist of an interview at Just Grace and will require approximately 30 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio recorded. You can still participate in this research study if you do not wish to be audio recorded. The audio recording will be saved and password protected. They will be used solely for the purpose of this research project and not shared with anyone else.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study and no penalties should you choose not to participate; participation is voluntary. During the interview (focus group) you have the right not to answer any questions or to discontinue participation at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The findings of this research study may help Just Grace understand how they can better implement inclusive education or support learners with disabilities or learning challenges. There are no direct benefits to the participants.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. I will protect the anonymity of every participant by not disclosing their names or identities during data collection and after the study is finished. The researcher will be the only person with access to this data. Data will be stored a password protected computer. Data will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no identifiable information will be used. All data will be anonymous by using a pseudonym.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

“I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.”

Participant’s signature ___________________________ Date ________________

Connelly
Consent to Quote from Interview
I may wish to quote from the interview in the presentations or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym (fake name) will be used in order to protect your identity.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:
_____ (initial) I agree to…
_____ (initial) I do not agree to…

Consent to Audio-Record Interview
Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:
_____ (initial) I agree to…
_____ (initial) I do not agree to…

RESEARCHER’S CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at connelly2@kenyon.edu or my advisor at emmanence@gmail.com

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION
In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by an SIT Study Abroad Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the researcher please contact the Institutional Review Board at:

School for International Training
Institutional Review Board
1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676
Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676 USA
irb@sit.edu
802-258-3132
Consent form given to participants at Pinelands North Primary School:

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STUDY PROCEDURES

Your participation will consist of an interview at Pinelands North Primary School and will require approximately 30 minutes of your time. The interview will be audio recorded. You can still participate in this research study if you do not wish to be audio-recorded. The audio recording will be saved and

Connelly
password-protected. They will be used solely for the purpose of this research project and not shared with anyone else.

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**POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

The findings of this research study may help Just Grace and/or Pinelands North Primary School understand how they can better implement inclusive education or support learners with disabilities or learning challenges. There are no direct benefits to the participants.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. I will protect the anonymity of every participant by not disclosing their names or identities during data collection and after the study is finished. The researcher will be the only person with access to this data. Data will be stored on a password-protected computer. Data will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no identifiable information will be used. All data will be anonymous by using a pseudonym.

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Participant’s signature ___________________________ Date ___________

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Connelly
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I may wish to quote from the interview in the presentations or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym (fake name) will be used in order to protect your identity.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:
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School for International Training
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1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676
Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676 USA
irb@sit.edu
802-258-3132

Connelly
General Questions Asked:

1. Tell me about yourself. What is your position? How did you find yourself working for Just Grace?
2. Tell me a little about Just Grace
3. What is your understanding of inclusive education?
4. What is your understanding of learning challenges and disabilities?
5. What’s your training? Did you ever receive training for students with learning challenges or general disabilities?
6. How relevant do you think inclusive education is to the work that you do?
7. Do you have students with learning challenges or disabilities come through your program?
8. What is the application process like for these students?
9. How would you better support these students? What do you need?
10. What teaching methods best help these students succeed?
11. Do you see Just Grace better supporting these students in the future?
12. What is your selection or recruitment process like?
13. Do you reach out to students with learning challenges or disabilities?

*Questions varied in every interview*