

L@ng#age of SEND is Contr*ver\$ial

'Inclusion is controversial- a critical exploration into the language of special educational needs and disability (SEND)'

Aims:

- 1 Compare the use of language and words towards disability historically and currently
- 2 To showcase the contested debate for and against labelling disability, using two main models of disability in the UK
- 3 Discuss weaknesses in national policy and guidance in England

Methods:



I used a critical literature-based approach examining wider publications about disability rights, labelling, disability research, and special education.

Why is this important?



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This poster represents my response to the statement 'Inclusion is controversial'. I have chosen to explore this topic as it is something I have grown up around, and would like to continue specialising into. I strongly believe that everyone deserves to feel included, and one of the ways we can strive to achieve this is by critically considering the foundation of our beliefs- language.



1

Language Historically and Currently:



Negative connotations to other words such as 'sad', 'unfit', 'madness' (Clark and Marsh, 2002).

Grouping people with disabilities as one group, ignoring unique qualities and talents.

Ultimately words can lead to **stereotyping** and **labelling**. This label may be negative or positive. Regardless, in times of uncertainty from non-disabled people stereotypes are relied upon to understand someone who is 'different' (Nario-Redmond, 2010).

'Negative and patronising language produces predictably negative and patronising images and attitudes'

(The Disabled People Association, 2003, P.4)

2

Contested Need for Labels:

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Support



Awareness



Identity



Dehumanising

Limiting



Creates generalisations

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Problems in Policy:

3



There is a **lack of cohesion** between service providers, resulting in various terms for the same affair. This has resulted in minimal universal language between professionals.

This creates:



Failure to establish best practice



Confusion

Impact and Conclusion:

'...language of SEND is highly contentious and confusing for both parents and professionals'

(Ofsted, 2010, P.8)

Labels have always existed and continue to exist. Over time our beliefs and views evolve, resulting in some terms becoming unacceptable and obsolete. Even among people within disability

communities, there is much debate surrounding appropriate and acceptable terms. Some prefer a person-based approach, recognising the individual first. Others argue that a disability orientated term highlights their lived experiences, which involve pride in the disability identity. Currently, the system of support and action in the UK is based upon this disability first or medical model. There is still great value placed upon recognising a disability and providing for individual needs. As this system is well established and entrenched throughout most sectors, it would be highly challenging to alter this. Among professionals language is contentious and not consistent. There is no clear understanding of the language that should be used. One suggestion provided is that people experiencing disability should be the ones to create labels. Ultimately, language should aim for inclusion and respect, and must involve the voices of those living with disability.

Clark, L., and Marsh, S. (2002) Patriarchy in the UK: The Language of Disability [online] Available at: <https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/Clark-Laurence-language.pdf> (Accessed: November 29th 2019)
 Disabled People's Association. (2003) *Dictionary of Disability Terminology* [online] Available at: <http://www.dpa.org.sg/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Dictionary.pdf> (Accessed: November 29th 2019)
 Nario-Redmond, M. (2010) 'Cultural stereotypes of disabled and non-disabled men and women: Consensus for global category representations and diagnostic domains', *British Journal for Social Psychology*, 49(1), pp. 471-488
 Ofsted. (2010) *The special needs and disability review: a statement is not enough* [online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413814/Special_education_needs_and_disability_review.pdf (Accessed: November 23rd 2019)