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Inclusive Education and the cultural representation of disability and Disabled people within the English Education System: a critical examination of the mediating influence of primary school textbooks

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Abstract

This paper examines the picture of disability and Disabled people portrayed within the textbooks presented to primary-aged pupils in English schools. The study's analysis of the picture of disability was based upon a sample of 96 textbooks which were published between 1974 and 2005. The study's findings denote the sample textbooks contained a limited construct of disability. The paper argues that this construct suggests that there is a cultural dominance of non-disabled people within the textbooks commonly presented to primary-aged children. The paper's conclusion suggests that if we are to move forward with the important educational policy of inclusion, then, textbooks must be sensitively constructed. It is contended that textbooks should seek to support a culturally responsive pedagogy that observes Disabled people being more prominently and more positively located within the materials that support the teaching and learning of pupils.

Key words: Textbooks, Disability, Primary School Textbooks, Representation of the Disabled, Textbook Research.

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