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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.

**Introduction**

Tony Blair and New Labour surged into government, in 1997, on a tidal wave of policy rhetoric and proposed educational initiatives. This event, it has been suggested, heralded an evolution of inclusive educational practice within schools and early years' settings (Hodkinson, 2005; 2006). The Government supported this evolution, in practice, by introducing, amongst other things a substantially revised National Curriculum [NC] for England and Wales. This curriculum's foundation, the Government stated, was built firmly upon the principles of inclusion. Within this curriculum, a fundamental building block to the foundation of inclusive education was observed to be the creation of learning environments where stereotypical views were challenged and ones

where pupils learnt to appreciate, and view positively, the differences in others; whether these differences arose from race, gender or disability (DfES, 2004).

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, then, the Department for Education and Skills have [DfES] articulated that governmental policy would be dominated by the principles and practices of inclusive education (DfES, 2004). It has also become evident that one of this government's key success targets, for its policy of inclusive education, is that parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) and disability will have confidence that in choosing a local mainstream school their child will receive a good education and will become a valued member of the school community (DfES, 2004). However, this success criterion, and the inclusive foundation of the NC denoted earlier is, I suggest, seemingly undermined by research findings which denote that children with disabilities, who are placed into mainstream educational settings, are at a considerable risk of; increased levels of bullying and teasing (Martlew & Hodson 1991, Thomas 1996; Gray 2002); lower sociometric positioning in class (Sirpestein & Lettert 1997, Jacques *et al.* 1998; Zic & Igri 2001); and, experience social distancing (Nazo & Nikoli 1991, Weiserbs & Gottlieb 2000, Zic & Igri 2001; Guralnick 2002). Moreover, recent research (Hodkinson, forthcoming) adds to this pessimistic picture by suggesting that non-disabled children demonstrate a lack of understanding of the complexity of disability and that their conceptualisation, of such, is located firmly within the realms of medical deficit. Disturbing, one might suggest, is the finding of this study which denoted that a majority of non-disabled participants, including those pupils who had no interaction with physically disabled people, held negative attitudes towards them and to disability in general. Whilst I note that other research studies (Helmsetter *et al.*, 1994, Butler-Hayes, 1995; Moore, 1998) have demonstrated that children and young adults can, and do, hold positive views of disability, the question remains; why is it that some children's attitudes towards disability and Disabled people are formulated in the negative?

Helpfully, in respect of answering the above question, previous research suggests negative conceptualisations are derived from the 'picture' of disability created by such things as; parental attitudes (Deal, 2003), the media (Barnes, 1992), children's literature (Pederson, 2003) and peer interaction (Shakespeare, 1994). An overview of this literature base, though, denotes that the picture of disability constructed within the important medium of school textbooks has not been the subject of extensive analysis. The study's primary aim, therefore, is to examine the picture of disability and Disabled people portrayed within the textbooks presented to primary-aged pupils in English schools.

This paper, divided into three sections, will;

- 1) consider how disability has come to be defined within England;
- 2) discuss how the selective tradition of textbooks provides a powerful lens (Taxel, 1981) through which one might observe how the social world is culturally represented (Wexler, 1982); and,

- 3) outline the findings from a research study which examines how disability and Disabled people are represented in the textbooks employed within state primary schools in England.

### **Models of disability**

This first component of the paper, then, briefly outlines how disability has been conceptualised within society. A single paper such as this, though, cannot hope to provide a comprehensive definition of the concept of disability, nor, can it provide a substantive account of how it is operationalised within British society. Nevertheless, it would seem important the paper provides some defining characteristics of the concept of disability so that the representation of Disabled people and of disability found within the textbooks may be contextualised within a recognised theoretical framework. From this necessarily brief examination of the literature base, then, it seems evident that no single concept of disability has, in recent years, had ascendancy within England, indeed, there appears to be a number of differing and conflicting definitions (Michailakis, 2003).

The concept of disability that appears to have been at the forefront of educational, charitable and medical thinking during the twentieth century is one that is colloquially referred to as the “medical model” (Barnes and Mercer, 2003). The defining feature of this traditional model is that ‘disability is an effect on bodily function arising from an impairment’ (Johnstone, 2001:10). Disabled people, within this model, are identified ‘as those individuals with physical, sensory and cognitive impairment’ who society considers are ‘less than whole’ (Dartington *et. al.*, 1981 in Barnes and Mercer, 2003: 2). This model, it is contended ‘categorises the able-bodied as somehow “better” or superior to people with a disability’ (Johnstone, 2001:16). Johnstone suggests the resultant effect upon societal attitude is that the ‘image of disabled people is identified with pity, fear and charity’ (Johnstone, 2001: 16). Many writers would argue, however, that this model ‘reduces the importance of political, economic and social factors’ (Michailakis, 2003: 209). Moreover, a contention forwarded, within the literature-base, strongly suggests that by ‘looking through the sociological lens, disability is not the product of isolated individual pathologies’ but is based upon restrictive societal structures (Garth and Aroni, 2003: 56). Sentiments such as these have, since the 1960’s, led to the development of a corrective analysis to the mainstream perception of disability (Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Tregaskis, 2003).

A review of the literature suggests that this “corrective analysis” found substance within the so called social model of disability. It is argued this model;

- ‘recognises the interaction of structural and attitudinal variables that create disability in society;
- recognises the voice/ opinion of the disabled person;
- acknowledges the political processes which oppress and deny civil rights to disabled people; and,

- begins to put power/ information within the control of disabled people and their organisations.' Johnstone (2001: 20)

Disability, from this perspective is not a "personal tragedy" but on the contrary "handicap" is a particular form of discrimination and that discrimination has social origins' (Michailakis, 2003: 343).

In more recent times, however, this social model of disability has been criticised as being 'atheoretical' (Johnstone, 2001: 20) and it is evident that during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century further models of disability, including the affirmative and rights based models, have been developed. These models, it would seem, present a 'collective affirmation of the positive aspects of disability culture'. Inherent within the rights-based model is the central tenet that Disabled people are discriminated against, by society, and that to overcome this, 'disabled people and their allies' must pursue the 'visibility of the democratically enforceable rights of disabled people' (Johnstone, 2001: 22). Whilst there is not time, here, to fully evaluate these models it does appear that since the 1960's there has been a substantial re-conceptualisation of disability and impairment. What seems of interest, then, especially in respects to the Government's aim of creating favourable inclusive learning, is to determine what model of disability is presented to children through the medium of the school textbook.

### **The importance of textbooks**

Within the English school system a common 'tool of the trade' (Wigginton 2005: 197) in achieving curriculum aims has, 'since the advent of typography and the rise in mass schooling' (Luke et. al. 1989: 245), been the textbook. The significance of the role of textbooks should not be underestimated as Olsen (1989) accounts, in some countries pupils, during their school career, encounter at least 32,000 textbook pages and spend 75 per cent of their classroom time engaging with the material presented within. Moreover, Podeh (2005: 2) suggests that the employment of the textbook within classrooms resembles an almost religious ritual, where the 'authority of print' puts ideas and beliefs above criticism. The importance of the textbook has, in recent years, seemingly been heightened by the expansion of the culture of educational accountability in England. It is argued that it is this culture of accountability which has observed teachers becoming more reliant on detailed curriculum guidance (Boostram 2001) and that textbooks have become the 'locus for [this] information exchange' (Luke et. al., 1989: 252).

Problematic, it would seem, to this information exchange is the premise that textbooks are based upon 'specialised forms' of institutionalised school knowledge (Dowling 1996: 49). For instance, Taxel (1981: 33) argues that textbooks are created using specialised knowledge that is 'dominated by the world view and the ideological perspectives of those occupying positions of socio-economic pre-eminence in society'. Crawford (2004) supports this contention accounting that textbooks are social constructions which employ a 'selective tradition' (Williams, 1961) to introduce pupils to the cultural and



socio-economic order of society and its inherent relationships of power and dominance. Stray (1994) goes further, considering that textbooks are the focal element in the process of cultural transmission. Stray argues that textbooks are instruments of socialisation whose purpose is to convey and inform an 'approved, even official version of what youth should believe' (Podeh, 2005: 2).

If one accepts the above contentions, then, textbooks seemingly become an important source for the study of the 'Zeitgeist of a certain time and people' (Wiele van, 2004: 5). This importance, Taxel (1989: 34) suggests, finds substance because the textbook has the ability to provide a 'powerful lens' which facilitates the critical examination of the 'dynamics underlying the cultural politics of education' (Crawford, 2004: 211). Put simply, in terms of this research study, if one accepts Taxel's premise, then, textbooks enable an investigation, at one level, of the prevailing concept of disability held by those pre-eminent in society. This investigation, I would suggest, is made possible because textbooks provide a record of how disability is, and has been, portrayed to primary-aged pupils.

### **Textbooks and inclusion**

It is my contention, then, that in respects to the creation of favourable inclusive learning environments the portrayal of disability within textbooks has importance at two levels. I would suggest that this importance firstly centres upon the recognition that textbooks can, and do, reproduce the inequalities which exist in society (Ninnes, 2002). Ninnes (2002) contends that this inequality of portrayal leads to the suppression of minority identity. Williams (1989), it appears, substantiates this notion arguing that textbooks reinforce society's inequalities by a process of a 'selective tradition' of knowledge. Williams observes that this 'selective tradition' centres around the fact that authors make choices about the content, images and text they include in their textbooks from the whole of an accepted storehouse of knowledge (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991). These personal selections, Williams contends, lead to a 'hidden structure of interest' (Anyon, 1979: 352) which disenfranchises some groups whilst at the same time promoting the underlying concerns and perspectives of dominant groups (Anyon, 1979; Nines, 2002). Foster (1999) cogently argues that it is this 'selective tradition' which ensures the social control of society by validating an official sanitised knowledge base. Foster (1999: 275) accounts that the employment of this validated knowledge 'render[s] marginal or invisible the achievements and experiences of some groups within our society'.

Second, I suggest, is that textbooks have an importance to inclusive educational practice because they enable children to identify with the social world in which they live. From this perspective, it is argued that the representation of the world contained within textbooks impacts upon a child's ability to take on the identity of a learner as well as to feel a sense of belonging within their school community (HSRC 2005). Subrahmanion (2003) supports this premise, arguing that learning materials are key to reshaping

the identity of learners. In addition, Anyon (1979) believes that the selective tradition upon which textbooks are based 'carries serious consequences' because it produces cultural distortions in the mind of the learner which restrict the development of respect for all human beings (Commeyrou & Alvermann, 1996: 32). This evidence suggests that if Government and teachers are to create enabling inclusive learning environments, where all pupils feel valued and welcomed, then, all learners must be able to 'find themselves and their world represented in the books from which they learn' (HSRC, 2005: 7)

## **Methodology**

A small-scale research study was undertaken to examine the scope of the representation and treatment of disability and Disabled people within the textbooks employed with primary-aged pupils. The research adopted a methodology described as proto-text analysis (Bourdillion, 1992). Within this form of methodology content, textual and discourse analysis are simultaneously employed. Through this employment the research attempted to uncover the explicit and implicit message conveyed within the sample textbooks (Johnsen, 1993). The overall aim of the analysis, then, was to uncover the textbooks' subcutaneous (Johnsen, 1993) layer by examining whether the sample books consciously or unconsciously promoted or represented prejudices or stereotypical ideas in respects of disability or Disabled people (Fritzsche, 1992).

Phase one of the research, the macro analysis, involved each textbook being read page by page with any sections which referenced disability or Disabled people being demarcated (Commeyrou & Alverman, 1996; Ninnes, 2002). Within phase two, the microanalysis stage, the demarcated sections of text were examined using 'linguistic analysis' (Crawford, 2004: 211). Here the linguistic forms within the text, such as the lexicon, agency and action, voice, verbs and adjectives (Ninnes, 2002), were analysed to reveal any 'hidden assumptions' about disability and Disabled people (Crawford, 2004: 211). During this phase, a frequency and space analysis were also conducted; simple counting and calculating of the discrete sections of text examined how frequently disability or Disabled people were mentioned. Finally, an examination of the images, within the textbooks, was undertaken. This examination involved a simple tallying of the people, categorised by race, disability and gender, which were found to be represented in each of the images (Johnsen, 1993).

For the purpose of the research two schools, of a similar size and demographic make up, in a city in the North-West of England were chosen to be the site for the data collection. All the textbooks, within these schools, employed with year one to six pupils, became the subject of the analysis.



## Results

The study's analysis of the picture of disability was based upon a sample of 96 textbooks which were published between 1974 and 2005, with the vast majority of the sample being published from the 1990's onwards. These textbooks covered six subject areas; Literacy, Numeracy, Science as well as Personal Social and Health Education, Religious Education and Geography. In total 3717 pages were subject to analysis. Despite the range of subjects and amount of text contained within the sample there was, however, a paucity of data which referred to disability. Indeed, only one short story extract from a literacy book published in 1976, half a page in relation to bullying in another literacy textbook, from 2000, and finally three short sentences in a science textbook from 1994 were found. Whilst this lack of data is by itself interesting, it did rather limit the ability of the research to pursue a line of linguistic analysis.

### *Linguistic analysis*

Despite the limited sample, it is of interest to note that the contents of one particular book, from the 1970's, were still being made available to the children in one of the schools. This book was very much a product of its time and as such employed language, in relation to disability, which did nothing to promote respect towards Disabled people. For example, a person with multiple disabilities was introduced within the story extract as 'this blind, deaf and dumb person'. Additionally, the three sentences found within a science textbook employed a photograph of a male with visual impairment to discuss 'eyes that do not work properly'. These descriptions seemingly located disability within the realms of the medical deficit. The textbook, from 2000, was a little better in that it briefly discussed disability in terms of discrimination and bullying. This text seemingly placed the understanding of disability more within the realms of the social model.

### *Analysis of the images*

<b>Pages analysed:</b>	<b>3717</b>	
<b>Illustrations:</b>	<b>1458</b>	<b>Photographs:</b>
484		
Males	2181	Males in photographs
477		
Females	1513	Females in
photographs		
390		
Male minority ethnic	282	Male minority ethnic in
111		
Female minority ethnic	206	Female minority ethnic
101		
Males with disability	3	Males with disability
5		
Females with disability	3	Females with disability
2		

*Table 1.*

The analysis of the images in the textbooks (see table 1) seems worthy of note. This analysis denoted that of the total number of people illustrated, in the sample, 59% were males and 41% were females. Additionally, the analysis of the illustrations shows that 13.2% of the images represented people from a minority ethnic heritage and of these 7.6% were male and 5.6% were of females. The examination also revealed the limited portrayal of people with disabilities. Of the 3694 people illustrated in the textbooks only six images of Disabled people were found and of these only two represented children. These six images represented only 0.16% of the total number of illustrations employed within the sample.

An analysis of the photographic images revealed a similar picture of gender differentiation to that observed within the illustrations. Here, out of the 867 people represented, 55% were male and 45% female. What was noticeable, though, was that the representation of people from a minority ethnic heritage was much greater than that portrayed within the illustrations. Approximately one quarter of the photographs portrayed images of people from a minority ethnic heritage and of these 55% were males and 45% were females. The portrayal of disability within the photographic image though was again minimal. Of the 867 people shown there were only seven people with a disability. This represents only 0.8% of the total number of people shown within the photographs. Furthermore, it should also be noted that four of these images were contained in just two of the books; one published in 1993 and the other in 2000. In total, then, out of the 4561 images analysed only 0.28% of the sample portrayed images of disability.

***The image of disability portrayed within the textbooks***

<b>Publishing Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Number of Images</b>	<b>Description</b>
2000	Literacy	2	2 wheelchair users – one possibly with cerebral palsy
1998	Science	1	A person with visual impairment and a guide dog chatting in a street scene
1998	Science	1	A person with Downs syndrome on a trike
1998	Literacy	1	A person using a wheelchair who has two legs in casts
1997	Numeracy	1	A person using crutches with one leg in a cast
1994	Science	1	A person with visual impairment and a guide dog
1993	Science	3	Two wheelchair users and one person employing a walking frame possibly with

			cerebral palsy
1979	Literacy	3	Three images of a person with learning disabilities

*Table 2*

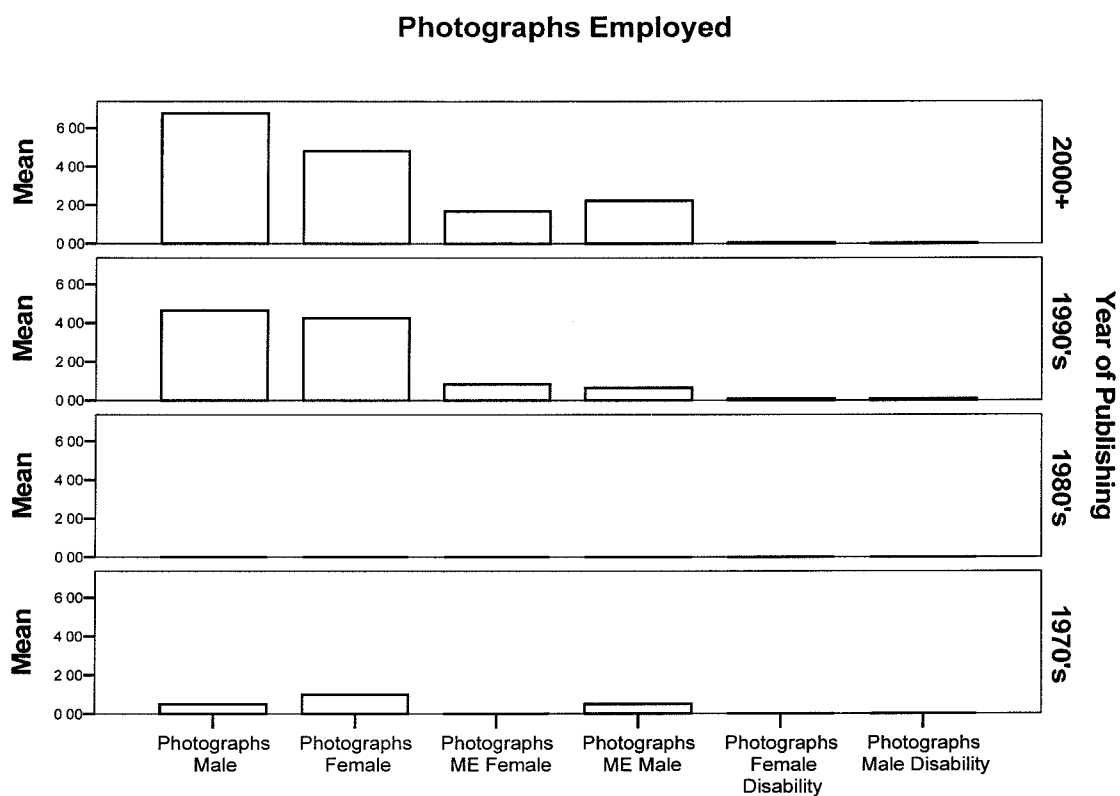
Although the image of disability portrayed within the textbooks was extremely limited an analysis of the substance of the images provided some distinctive data (see table 2). For example, the most commonly portrayed picture was that of physical disability and of the 13 images found 38% portrayed wheelchair users, 15% visual impairment and a further 15% showed people who employed walking aids. Of further interest was that 15%, of the images of physical disability, represented people with plaster casts who children, it might be reasonably assumed, would think had broken bones. These images, one might suggest, portrayed physical disability in a transient form i.e. that the person might at some stage recover from their impaired mobility. The remaining images, within the sample, seemingly represented people with learning disabilities. Also of note, was that four of the images were specifically referenced to disability, i.e. visual impairment to represent 'difficulties with the eyes' or disability in the context of discrimination. The remaining pictures, all from books published in the 1990's, employed images of disability which located Disabled people within street scenes, for example a male with a visual impairment chatting to two women outside a butcher's shop. On these occasions, no text referred specifically to disability and Disabled people were there as a 'matter of course'. Interestingly, out of the numerous images of playground and classroom scenes, represented within the textbooks, not one image of a Disabled person was observed.

### ***The employment of images in textbooks over time***

*Fig.1*



Fig. 2.



Another point worthy of note is that within the sample of textbooks analysed (see fig. 1 & 2) there appears to have been, in the main, an increasing employment of illustrations and photographs over the past 30 years. It is apparent that although the employment of the photographic image has increased, publishers still seemingly prefer to use illustrations within their textbooks. The analysis of the employment of the textbook image over time also reveals that while there has been an increase in the representation of people from a minority ethnic heritage, there has not been a similar increase in the representation of people with disabilities.

## Discussion

Within the next section of the paper I intend to pursue two distinct lines of analysis based upon the results from the study. First, I will examine how the limited 'picture of disability' portrayed within the textbooks has the potentiality to affect an individual learner's conceptualisation of Disabled people. Second, I will suggest that if the Government is to be effective in the creation of inclusive learning environments, where all learners are valued, then, policies of inclusive education must consider the textbooks mediating role in the promotion of cultural democracy (Slee, 2001).

The results of the study denote that the construction of disability within the sample textbooks is limited in the extreme. Whilst it is apparent that the observed construct does not produce a 'cultural silence' (Crawford, 2000: 1) it does, I suggest, serve to reduce the representation of disability to that of a societal whisper. Of further concern, is that the limited construct of disability, that is created, seemingly places disability within the realms of medical deficit as the prevalent image revealed centres around physical disability. This medical deficit construct, I suggest, is problematic because it serves to provide 'an easily assimilable version of a complex reality' (David, 2001: 141). Moreover, this image of disability does not enable all learners to 'find themselves and their world represented' within the textbooks that may be presented to them (HSRC, 2005: 7). If children are repeatedly presented with a limited construct, and moreover omission, of disability within textbooks what affect will this have on their conceptualisation of Disabled people? Taxel (1989) suggests that consistently exposing children to limited constructs, such as these, can lead to the development of negative attitudes. Furthermore, Commeyras and Alverman (1996: 32) argue that whilst omissions and misrepresentation, of minority groups, are at the very least insensitive they also have serious consequences in that they legitimate, in the mind of the reader, the constructed 'social realities' contained within the textbook. It is argued, that these constructed realities are harmful because they provide a distortion of the truth that leads the reader to conclude that 'certain groups, and the individuals within them, are not important members of society' (Taxel, 1989: 341). Commeyras and Alverman (1996: 32) contend that these constructed realities of minority groups serve only to 'impede the development of respect for all human beings.'

In summary, then, if one accepts the above line of analysis it becomes reasonable to suggest that the mediating role of the textbook, in this research, is one of the promotion of a social construction of disability which is based upon inexact scholarship, omission and imbalanced information (David, 2001). The result of this mediating influence, it may be contended, leads children inextricably into the formulation of negative attitudes (Taxel, 1989) or, indeed, 'ridiculous representations' (Cai, 1994: 180) of Disabled People. Problematic, though, to the substantiation of this line of analysis is I suggest that some researchers observe it to be formulated upon a simplistic contrived notion of the role of the learner.

For example, from the perspective of resistance and response theorist one must question the belief that the *modus operandi* of textbooks is the cultural transmission of sanitised societal values. From these researchers standpoint, if one unreservedly accepts the line of analysis mentioned earlier, then, one must also accept that the learner's role in the information exchange is one of a passive assimilation of the 'social hieroglyph' of disability observed within the textbooks (Stray, 1994: 1) . Whilst it is evident that researchers such as Zimet (1976: 10) contend that 'what is read does indeed influence the reader' other researchers cogently argue that there is a 'light year difference' between simply reading a text and finding 'out how people actually respond to it' (Kell-Byrne 1984: 196). For resistance and response theorists the learner is not passive but actually is an 'active, creative and dynamic' person who interacts proactively with textbooks 'in a process of meaning making' (Taxel, 1989: 35). A further difficulty that presents itself, in the acceptance of the role of textbooks as straight jackets of cultural transmission, is that a number of other factors would also seem to mediate the process of meaning making experienced by individual learners. For example, Luke *et. al.* (1989: 241) points out that the 'school text is always the object of teacher mediation' and, therefore, the learner's process of meaning making is likewise based upon how 'teachers make children aware of ...the cultural geography of the knowledge presented in textbooks' (David, 2001: 140). As Apple (1992: 10) relates 'we cannot assume what is in the text is actually taught. Nor, can we assume what is actually taught is learnt'. Based upon this premise, it may be contended, that the 'exact role of the textbook in socialization becomes difficult to establish' (Podeh, 2005). Furthermore, Podeh (2005: .2) suggests that as the younger generation have a growing exposure to electronic media, the centrality of the textbook as an agent of cultural socialization has been diminished. It is my contention, then, that with respects to children's socialization of disability, the role of the textbook in the process of cultural transmission remains unclear. Of greater significance, I would suggest, is what the social hieroglyph of disability presented within these textbooks tells us of nature of cultural democracy within the operationalization of governmental policies of inclusion.

### **Cultural democracy, inclusion and textbooks**

Whilst one might argue as to the immediacy of the role of textbooks in influencing a child's conceptualisation of disability, it is my contention that to

truly understand the textbook's mediating role one must return to the foundations upon which inclusive education is built. Inclusion, many argue, is founded upon the principles of human rights, democracy, equity and social justice with its ultimate goal being to develop schools 'where all children are participating and treated equally' (Sandhull, 2005: 1). This form of inclusion rhetoric (Hodkinson, 2005) is clearly observable within governmental statements which relate to inclusive education and to other legislative measures such as the Disability and Discrimination Act 2005. However, I would suggest, that inclusion in this guise although 'widely accepted' has problems in converting this 'initial idea into reality' within schools and early years settings (Churchill, 2003: 13).

To substantiate my contention lets us take a moment to consider inclusion as formulated upon the principles of human rights and democracy. From a human rights and democracy perspective, the imperative of inclusion must be to 'discrimination equality and to the status of vulnerable groups' within society (Sandhull, 2005: 4). In this form, inclusion becomes a form of cultural democracy and as such, I suggest, becomes a moral concept which necessitates the expression of the values of 'self-fulfilment, self-determination and equality (Carr & Harnett, 1996: 40). However, for Bernstein (1996) an essential pre-requisite, in the promotion of cultural democracy, is that the individual will have the right to participate and to be included within society at a social, intellectual and cultural level. Problematic, to the pursuance of inclusion as a facet of cultural democracy is that the very term itself suggest that 'something smaller is included into something bigger' (Garcia & Metcalf, 2005: 34). For Garcia & Metcalf, then, the term inclusion brings into sharp focus the connotation of dominant and subordinate groups within society i.e. those who include and those who are included. I am minded, here, of Slee's (2001: 387) contention that for inclusion to be effective 'we have to recognise that relations of dominance' exist in society. By doing this, it becomes apparent that obstacles to effective 'inclusion are embedded in simple everyday habits' and that schools as 'integral parts of society' are controlled by the attitudes of its dominant members (Highbeam, 2005: 1). Slee (2001: 386) contends that if inclusion is to be made effective then educators must 'recognise disablement as cultural interplay characterised by unequal social relations'. He suggests a failure to recognise that disability is created, in such a manner, condemns inclusion to the realms of resource allocation and the physical location of Disabled pupils. It is my contention, then, that if inclusion is to move beyond the 'phenomena of structure' (Clough, 2005: 74) and is to be truly built upon human rights and the democratic imperative, then, it must give 'preference to strategies of empowerment over more service delivery orientated responses' (Sandhull, 2005: 6). I suggest, here, that it is in the pursuance of this democratic imperative where the mediating role of the textbook becomes most important.

## **Conclusion**

The results, from this study, denote that the representation of disability within textbooks is limited. Furthermore, it is apparent that the construct of disability

that is observed is 'infected with the notion of child-deficit' (Clough, 2005: 74). Clough (2005: 79) argues that curricula have always been a means of exclusion, and I would suggest that textbooks, in the representation of disability, are likewise fulfilling a similar exclusionary role. It is my belief, that for inclusion to be truly effective it must be 'concerned with the well-being of learners' (Sandhull, 2005: 5) who are placed within mainstream educational settings. It must be ensured, therefore, that within mainstream settings inclusion is formulated not just on the deliverance of service orientated responses but also by a confrontation of resources and facilities, so as to overcome the 'current injustice [within schools, which are] based upon continued practices of privilege and power' (Highbeam, 2005: 1). The limited construct of disability found within the textbooks is, I contend, a clear articulation of the cultural dominance of non-disabled people within our society. If we are to move forward with the important educational policy of inclusion, then, I suggest textbooks must be sensitively constructed. They should seek to support a culturally responsive pedagogy that would observe Disabled people being more prominently and more positively located within the materials that support the teaching and learning of pupils within our primary schools.

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