

Disability Construction Among Early Childhood Educators in Nova Scotia

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■ Introduction

- *Traditionally, disability has been viewed through the medical model, which views disability predominantly through an individual's medical signifiers. The medical model in the context of education continues to construct disability as something to be fixed and remediated. However, this study proposes static medicalized constructions on disability need to be disrupted with attendance to the wider dimensions of experience, including disability as a viable identity maker in the lives of young children*

■ Aim

- *The aim of this thesis was to gain new insights on Nova Scotia early childhood educators (ECEs) knowledge and perspectives on how inclusion is delivered, including how ECEs construct disability in their everyday practice.*

■ Research question

- *What are the inclusive experiences and philosophies of Nova Scotia early childhood educators when working with disabled children and their families?*

■ Literature

- *“The medical model presumes that ‘normality’ is the desired state of being. This model places the idea that it is the disabled person’s responsibility to adapt to society rather than society accommodating their needs” (Mackenzie et al., 2005, p. 5).*
- *The social model of disability challenges the historical conception of disability as a tragedy and views it as a viable identity*

■ Methodology

- *This was a qualitative research that used focus groups*

■ Participants

Participant Pseudonyms Used	Age	Gender	Years of experience	Level of classification
Suzy	36	Woman	19 years	Level 3
Rachel	30	Woman	10 years	Level 2
Emma	32	Woman	15 years	Level 2
Melissa	60	Woman	20 years	Level 3
Alice	36	Woman	16 years	Level 2

Theme One: Inclusive Language in the ECE field

- This theme analyses the language ECEs use to describe and refer to disabled children

Theme Two: Pedagogical Differences and Inclusive Delivery

- ECEs' educational background plays a significant role when it comes to their experience in inclusive delivery, as well, as the expectations they have of disabled children.

Theme Three: Perceptions Around Inclusive Delivery

- Therapies and early intervention sessions provided by external organizations could be beneficial for disabled children. However, most of the time these services are based on the medical model of disability.

Conclusion

- This thesis exposed the ways ableism can be potentially reproduced in the early childhood field often unknowingly, the limitations that the medical model of disability has when referring to the disabled experience, and the importance of adopting a socio-cultural model to discuss and understand the disabled identity.