



University: a diverse community of scholars?

- The argument suggested in this slide is that if university is to be a truly *diverse* community of scholars, then the labelling of learners into some kind of designation or category that marks them out as *different* in a learning context in comparison to their their peers is inappropriate.
- Along with Elliott & Grigorenko (2014) who are recent, strong advocates of either the re-definition of dyslexia into a meaning that has shared understanding across the field of education or otherwise dispensing with the term altogether, Stanovich has long argued that the 'learning disabilities' field [*we acknowledge here the term 'learning disabilities (LD)' being broadly used in the US to mean dyslexia*] needs shaking up, particularly whilst it has remained attached to aptitude-achievement discrepancy measurement (Stanovich, 1999).
- Stanovich's position fiercely advocates a more inclusive definition of LD/dyslexia as one which effectively discards the term altogether because it is 'redundant and semantically confusing' (ibid, p350).

- Lauchlan & Boyle (2007) broadly question the use of labels in special education, concluding that aside from being necessary in order to gain access for support and funding related to disability legislation, the negative effects on the individual can be considerable and may include stigmatization, bullying, reduced opportunities in life and perhaps more significantly, lowered expectations about what a 'labelled' individual can achieve (ibid, p41).
- Norwich (1999, 2008, 2010) has written extensively about the connotations of labelling, persistently arguing for a cleaner understanding of differences in educational contexts because labels are all too frequently stigmatizing and themselves disabling, referring to the 'dilemma of difference' in relation to arguments 'for' and 'against' curriculum commonality/differentiation for best meeting the educational needs of differently-abled learners.
- Armstrong & Humphrey (2008) suggest a 'resistance-accommodation' model to explain psychological reactions to a 'formal' identification of dyslexia, - more usually referred to as a 'diagnosis' - the 'resistance' side of which is typically characterized by a disinclination to absorb the idea of dyslexia into the self-concept, possibly resulting from perhaps more often, negatively vicarious experiences of the stigmatization attached to 'difference', whereas the 'accommodation' side is suggested to take a broadly positive view by making a greater effort to focus and build on the strengths that accompany a dyslexic profile rather than dwell on difficulties and challenges.
- McPhail & Freeman (2005) have an interesting perspective on tackling the challenges of transforming learning environments and pedagogical practices into genuinely more inclusive ones by exploring the 'colonizing discourses' that disenfranchise learners with disabilities or differences through a process of being 'othered'. Their conclusions broadly urge educationalists to have the courage to confront educational ideas and practices that limit the rights of many student groups (ibid, p284).
- Pollak (2005) reports that one of the prejudicious aspects of describing the capabilities of individuals under assessment is the common use of norm-referenced comparisons. This idea is inherently derived from the long-established process of aligning measurements of learning competencies to dubious evaluations of 'intelligence', standardized as these might be (for example Wechsler Intelligence Scale assessments to identify just one), but which fail to accommodate competencies and strengths which fall outside the conventional framework of 'normal' learning capabilities - that is, in accordance with literacy-dominant education systems.