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**Version of item:** Presented version



# **SEBD; BESD; or even DEBS – descriptive or prescriptive. Labels and their contribution to good practice**

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SEBDA 57<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference



# The Trouble with Tiger

## ...and Bill, and Ashley, and John?

- DSM 5 (Revised Draft)
- Hyposexual desire disorder (HDD)
- Sexual Anorexia (SA)
- Hypersexual Disorder (HD)
- “If you are really going to pathologise men who can’t stop thinking about sex, that is going to be an awful lot of people” (Tyrer, 2010)

## In this presentation...

- **Prescriptions & descriptions** – historical continuities
- **Current use of labels** – perspectives on policy, practice and professional viewpoints
- **Four Questions:**
  - i. Do labels inform interventions?
  - ii. Do labels promote exclusion?
  - iii. Do labels inhibit school improvement and teacher development?
  - iv. Can we survive without labels?

## Historical continuities

- Incorporation of deficit
- Absence of precision
- The incorporation of quasi-psychology
- Pragmatic shifting and sifting
- 'Prospering and surviving'



## Current use of labels

- Policy – terminologies and paradoxes
- Practices – mediating the messages
- Professionals – paradoxes and possibilities



## Question 1: Do labels inform interventions?

- The 'therapeutic state'
- The quest for snake-oil
- Anti-psychiatry
- Prompting stasis, risk aversion and mediocrity



A collaboration between government and psychiatry... resulting in the "therapeutic state" in which disapproved thoughts, emotions, and actions are repressed ("cured") through pseudo-medical intervention

(Thomas Szasz)



## Question 2: Do labels promote exclusion?

- Labels and places
- Secret gardens, mystics and gurus
- Reflections on the key of life?



- "...its pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and, therefore, according to local residents and their MP, they shouldn't be there. These teenagers, the protesters say, are not fit to be educated in a residential area"
- *The Guardian*, March 9, 2010



- The diseasing of childhood
- Managing through medicine, therapy and misunderstanding

## Question 3: Do labels inhibit school improvement and teacher development?

- Naughty schools, naughty staff, naughty children
- What are the 'SEBD skills'?
- Professional glue-sniffing...



- reliance on theories, especially those coming from psychology and medical models, leads to a limited and distorted view of education with mechanistic consequences.
- A 'special education industry' has developed which fosters discrimination and is based on self-seeking motives.
- Refer to EBD as an 'indolent' term - having no substance or compelling discriminatory value.
- Approaches to children's behaviour in school are arbitrary and unjust
- EBD used by institutions to avoid their own responsibilities by locating the causes of poor behaviour within the child.

(following Thomas & Loxley, 2007)



## Question 4: Can we survive without labels?

- Are there alternatives?
- Who needs convincing?
- Swimming against the current in the sea of political, professional and public opinion



**"They said I shouldn't call these out-of-control youths 'yobs'. They said I should seek to understand these children have had a difficult time. I said, 'No, they're yobs. We should confront bad behaviour and stop it, not tolerate it'."**



## **Behavioural, emotional and social needs: Activity 2**

### **The nature of BESD**

**Approximate timing: 15 minutes**

**This activity will help you become familiar with the terminology used to describe BESD and to understand that such difficulties have multiple causes.**

***TDA (2010) Special educational needs and/or disabilities  
Training Toolkit***



“...the engendering of hope within them has been psychotherapeutically powerful. Hope can halt this intergenerational cycle of injury and misunderstanding and when truly aroused, its potential for changing lives restores more than the individual”

(Melvyn Rose, 1997)

## References

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