

A Critical Discourse Analysis: Embedded Inequalities in the UK Disability Social Security System

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Abstract : In 2006, the UK Labour government published a Green Paper introducing Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) as a replacement for Incapacity Benefit (IB), as well as a new Work Capability Assessment (WCA); signalling a controversial political and economic shift in disability welfare policy. In 2016, the Conservative government published Improving Lives: The Work, Health, and Disability Green Paper, as part of their social reform agenda, evidently to address the 'injustice' of the 'disability employment gap'. This paper contextualises ESA in the wider ideology and rhetoric of 'welfare to work', 'dependency' and 'responsibility'. Using the British 'social model of disability' as a theoretical framework, the study engages in a critical discourse analysis of these two Green Papers. By uncovering the medicalised conceptions embedded in the texts, the analysis has revealed ESA is linked with late capitalisms concern with the 'disability category'.

Keywords : disability, employment, social security, welfare

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