



Editorial Comment

Angela J. Fawcett, Editor-in-Chief

It is a very great pleasure to publish this issue of the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences, published by the Dyslexia Association of Singapore Limited (DAS), which is now in its 10th year of publication. This is a milestone for any journal, and I am pleased to report that the journal goes from strength to strength, addressing major issues in research and practice. In common with most Dyslexia Associations, DAS have extended their reach to include a wider range of developmental differences, including a range of co-morbidities, and this is now clearly reflected in DAS revised mission, "*Helping People with Dyslexia and other Specific Learning Differences Achieve*". We continue to be grateful for the support of our scientific board of reviewers and the international editorial board drawn from both academics and professionals, to reflect the aims of the journal. This enables us to resolve any outstanding issues satisfactorily and ensures we continue to maintain the highest international standards of ethics and professionalism.

In this issue we present articles on a range of topics, with particular emphasis in this edition on Mathematics and on e-learning technology. There has been a strong interest internationally in Dyscalculia, but here we are addressing firstly the progress of children in developing geometric thinking, and secondly the progress of children with dyslexia who have been receiving support in processing problems. The first article, by Dr Mirela Duranovic from Bosnia, addresses an area of Mathematics that has been largely overlooked in the literature. Working with 120 children aged 10, the author identified 11 children with geometric difficulties and found problems in the speed of a range of visuo-spatial tasks in comparison with controls. Adopting a 5-level model of geometric knowledge, the majority of the experimental group fell at level 1 or 2, with improvements linked to levels of understanding rather than age. In the second article on Mathematics, by Aishah Abdullah (Albel) from DAS, the author examines the theoretical underpinning of problem solving, a key area in Singaporean Maths, using Polya's 4 step process and the concrete representational approach in a case study with 8 children with dyslexia. In addition to the rich theoretical background provided, with evidence of improvement for children who adopted the structured approach, a range of outstanding recommendations for practice with children who struggle with problems solving are provided in this interesting article.

In the section on e-learning, a major study by Rosalyn Wee and Serena Tan Abdullah from DAS, with upper secondary and tertiary students with dyslexia, addressed the relevance and effectiveness of the iStudySmart™ approach in improving executive function and essential study skills and techniques. In addition to measuring the impact of the iStudySmart™ programme on these students, their self-confidence, motivation and independence were evaluated in a series of questionnaire, pre, post and after 6 months delay. Positive findings were reinforced by positive comments from parents on the effects of the programme. Impressive results were found for improvements in planning and organisation, writing and presentation. However, although improved, time management and prioritisation required further work to apply in the students' daily lives.

The next article, by Stephanie Ong, Nithyashree Murthy and Soofrina Binte Mubarak from DAS, examined the applications of educational technology in teaching and learning at DAS. Recognising the importance of e-learning for students, particularly following the COVID-19 lockdown, this article examines the impact of teacher's attitudes towards technology in implementing these e-learning programmes. The article considers the use of EduTech in teaching and learning, and the usefulness of the approach, using Technology Adoption Paradigm (TAM). This, the first article of two, considers how 8 educational therapists at DAS interacted with new technology, identifying clear differences in the ease and competence of individuals related to age and experience. In the follow-up study, to be published in the next issue of APJDD, we will see whether their advocacy of technology, low, middle or high, is reflected in the scores of the children they teach. Finally, another study from Soofrina Binte Mubarak at DAS examines the theoretical underpinning of technology, to identify and evaluate three training needs analysis models, to identify gaps in provision, analysing training needs to improve planning, decision making and problem-solving initiatives. The author proposes a new integrated model, which will be examined in greater detail in the second part of this article, in preparation, to be published in the next issue of APJDD. We look forward with great interest to reading more about these highly relevant topics in e-learning and technology.

In the final section of this issue two further articles are presented, one from Dr Margaret Meehan, a former colleague at Swansea University and myself on the impact of bilingualism. This is an interesting topic that has variously claimed improved executive function for the bilingual as opposed to delay in early learning. In order to evaluate the impact of working in Welsh, a comparison was made of performance for students with dyslexia and controls in both Welsh and English. The initial pilot study identified that the Welsh wordchains stimuli were much longer than the English, thus increasing the level of difficulty. In the final study, we found that the Welsh students with dyslexia were slowest at identifying the individual words when presented as a chain, with Welsh non-dyslexics and English-speaking dyslexics almost equivalent to each other, and finally English controls achieving the fastest results overall. The article also includes a case study of a Welsh student and the impact of language on their dyslexia is presented, with

implications for bilingual students worldwide.

The last article in this issue, from Rima Natasha Hartanto, Dyah Ayu Palupi, Ersita Sari and Ayu Yowanda, from the Dyslexia Association of Indonesia, presents an interesting case study on the long-term emotional difficulties experienced by a child with dyslexia. Originally identified at age 3, showing problems with separation, language and following instructions, it was decided that no further therapy was needed. However, dyslexia was finally diagnosed at age 9, and there was emerging evidence for a range of other disorders, including ADHD, language and social skills-based diagnoses such as autism. The article follows the boy's progress over a series of intense interventions targeting different aspects of his behaviour, from learning to social and emotional aspects. The authors recommend the need for a more comprehensive approach to diagnosis, to identify the co-morbidities that exist between conditions, and to examine the consequences of continued failure on long term outcomes. This is an interesting and important study on the need for consistent and ongoing support for these children.

In conclusion, let me wish you all a Happy and Healthy 2023, with the opportunities to apply the lessons we have learned during COVID, in a period of lower infections where the strengths of these new approaches can be fully exploited, in addition to our pre-COVID expertise. I look forward to bringing you the next issue of this journal and further opportunities for updating our knowledge and understanding of the complexities of the area of developmental differences.