



## Editorial Comment

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It is a very great pleasure to launch this new journal, the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences, which is published by the Dyslexia Association of Singapore. Our research into the market for this journal identified a very real need for a high quality journal that could cover a broad range of developmental differences in the area.

The Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences is unique in addressing a range of special educational needs including dyslexia, autism, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, and ADHD in the Asian Pacific context. The journal covers theory into practice and will provide a showcase for research in the Asia Pacific region as well as highlighting research areas which have implications for further research within Asia and beyond.

Based on many years experience as editor-in-chief of *Dyslexia: an International Journal of Research and Practice*, I have been well placed to recruit a strong editorial board. I have been heartened by the very positive response from our editorial board towards the need for a new journal, and by the submission of a broad range of high quality articles for review. The articles included here in this first issue have been selected based on the following criteria. The articles all

successfully contribute to the further understanding of developmental differences as well as applications and implications in educational, social and cultural environments. The papers include sound research methods, and good interpretation and validity of results, presented in the appropriate academic context. They are all original papers that have not been published in other journals or publications.

Over the last 18 months, as Academic Director for the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, I have reached a clear understanding of the difficulties we face in helping children who are bi-lingual to reach their potential. I see the introduction of this journal as an important step in broadening knowledge and understanding in the area, not least of the overlaps between many of the conditions that we are working with.

My own research, with my colleague Professor Rod Nicolson from Sheffield has for example produced a new theory of procedural learning deficits in dyslexia, (Nicolson and Fawcett, 2007) which can provide a framework for understanding the strengths as well as the weaknesses in children with a range of developmental differences. However, the journal is not constrained by adherence to any specific

theoretical stance, but is open to good quality submissions from all theoretical persuasions. There is rich potential here to work together towards a better future for our children, sharing knowledge and expertise to move the area forward in seeking effective and cost-effective solutions to aid our work. A key issue here to my mind is the availability of information on progress in the field, and it is planned that this journal will be instrumental in spreading awareness of research and practice that has proved effective in other contexts, in addition to progress in Asia.

The brief of the journal is to include research papers based on sound methodology, reviews of developments in the area, and case studies of theory into practice. We will publish controlled studies, longitudinal studies, and simple accounts of approaches that have worked in the Asia Pacific context. There is also a strong commitment to recognising the need for greater understanding for children with developmental differences, and this will be a theme running through the journal, starting from this first issue. This journal should be a showcase for publishing material from well established and highly regarded authors right through to post-doctoral students and teachers who have never prepared an article before. The editor is committed to developing the skills of her contributors, where appropriate, to facilitate the growth of a new generation of researchers and practitioners. The peer review process will ensure that all the material published is worthy of publication in this journal.

In this first issue, I have grouped the

articles in terms of their methodology and approach, starting with controlled research studies that report statistics. Following a section on human aspects of dyslexia, a series of case studies and reviews are presented. The first two articles in the research studies are drawn from an Asian background, with contributions from Professor Connie Ho and colleagues, and Professor Ken Poon and colleagues. In the Ho paper, 'Pragmatic Skills in Chinese Dyslexic Children: Evidence from a Parental Checklist', Lam and Ho compare children with autism and dyslexia with controls. Interestingly they show that the dyslexic group fall between the autistic and the controls in their understanding of language, reflecting a mild pragmatic impairment that has not previously been identified in this group. The Lee and Poon article addresses a key area for language learning in Asia, 'The impact of teaching methods on learning Chinese characters in bi-lingual children with dyslexia'. The authors show that the Stroke method is more effective than Hanyu Pinyin in teaching children Chinese characters in primary 1.

The article from James Chapman and Bill Tunmer from New Zealand 'The Literacy performance of Young adults who had reading difficulties in school' reviews the impact of intervention approaches on literacy in young adults, noting that skills remain low in this group. The authors conclude that schemes advocated by the New Zealand government have been largely unsuccessful in improving literacy in this group, and commend the use of phonological interventions in line with those used in the UK, the US and Singapore. This section is followed by

two articles on early screening and intervention; the first article by See and Koay is entitled 'The Identification of dyslexia in pre-school children in a Multi-Lingual society'. This article reviews the impact of screening on the identification of children at risk for dyslexia within the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, using the Dyslexia Early screening test (Nicolson and Fawcett, 2004).

The second article on this topic by Fawcett and colleagues 'Sustained benefits of a multi-skill intervention on pre-school children at risk for reading difficulties' considers the value of screening and intervention with children in nursery and demonstrates lasting impact for a short-term intervention at age 4 years in comparison with controls.

These articles precede an article from Tom West, 'Amazing shortcomings, Amazing strengths'. Tom is one of the major players in the USA in recognising the importance of strengths in dyslexia, and presents an inspiring piece in line with the emerging Positive dyslexia movement. This seeks to explore the strengths of dyslexia, rather than focusing on weaknesses in literacy, encouraging adults to follow their strengths and arguing for the important role of dyslexic adults in a creative society.

The final section of the journal includes a case study; from Tim Bunn of the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, on the understanding and management of Maths difficulties in Singapore 'Mathematical difficulties in Singapore: a case study approach'. The article acknowledges controversies in the area

and discusses how children with 'dyscalculia' or maths difficulties present and can be helped.

The calibre of these articles is exceptional and fulfils our criteria for a combination of theoretical rigor and applied value.

We are confident that we can maintain this standard of submission for the next issue that will be published in July 2014. In this issue, we will be calling for papers for the International conference on Developmental Differences, which is planned for 2015. We also plan to make articles available on the new DAS website for early view, following acceptance for issue 2 onwards.

We look forward to receiving your submissions and to continue to produce an outstanding journal that addresses issues of prime importance for the Asia Pacific region.

## References

- Nicolson, R. I. & Fawcett, A. J (2003). *The Dyslexia Early Screening Test*. 2nd edition. The Psychological Corporation, London
- Nicolson, R. I. & Fawcett, A. J. (2007). Procedural learning difficulties: reuniting the developmental disorders? *Trends in Neurosciences*, 30 (4), 135-141