

## Editorial Comment

Angela J. Fawcett

It is a very great pleasure to publish the third issue of this new journal, the Asian Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences, which is published by the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS). The response to the previous two issues has been extremely gratifying, and we intend to maintain these high standards in this issue and forthcoming issues. We have now amassed an even stronger editorial board, and I am grateful for the support of the academics and professionals involved.

In this issue we present seven articles, the majority of which are drawn from the Asian context. The first two articles in this issue are experimental studies that investigate the impact of a range of manipulations on outcomes for children at risk of dyslexia.

The first article in this section from Kevin Chung at the Hong Kong Institute of Education represents a highly innovative approach to measuring the skills of poor and adequate readers of Chinese. The approach adopted involved measuring performance across a broad range of skills in 78 children, including poor readers and matched controls. Interestingly, executive skills, in this case self-regulation measured by a test of inhibition, the Heads-Toes-Knees-Shoulders

task. In this novel test, children are required to inhibit a command to touch their head and instead touch their toes. This measure of self-regulation accounts for unique variance in reading comprehension after controlling for age and IQ. This may be either a causal factor or a consequence of difficulties in learning to read in Chinese. It would be extremely interesting to use tests of this type in evaluating readers in English, because it is clear that executive skills of this type contribute to readiness to read.

The second article by Thomas Sim and colleagues from DAS focuses on the importance of early intervention for children at risk of dyslexia. In this study, 56 children aged five to six undertook structured multi-sensory intervention over periods ranging from 10 to 70 weeks. The results indicated strong improvement in all aspects of the skills targeted, and revealed effect sizes that surpassed the majority of the findings from the National Reading panel meta-analysis in 2001. Moreover, the improvements included striking increments in reading, which is notoriously hard to improve even when phonological skills are remediated. These are important results and highlight the need for continued provision of specialised support at this age level, in order to prevent reading failure and the

subsequent damage to self-esteem and potential.

The next three articles in this issue address important issues in terms of professionalism and teacher training. The article by Barbara Pavey considers the recent and ongoing changes in pedagogy embedded in the UK Dyslexia Friendly approach, which moves away from viewing dyslexia as a deficit, towards viewing this as a difference. This approach is compared with the US Universal Design for instruction that views diversity as the norm. Pavey notes the overlaps between these two approaches and considers the advantage of these for the Asian context.

In a complementary article, the implications of these approaches are considered within Asia. Siew Hui Li addresses the importance of the development of professionalisation and professionalism in Singapore, as an example of an Asian country where these concerns have not yet been fully addressed. The article emphasises the need for ethical and competent professionals who continue to develop, recognising the role that DAS has already played in bringing this to fruition.

The final article in this section from Chee Soon Weng, Zachary Walker and Kara Rosenblatt considers approaches to dyslexia in Singapore in terms of special needs teachers. In this article, the authors undertake a review of the attitudes of special education teachers towards the inclusion of SEN students in mainstream schools, which has been implemented over the past 10 years. The questionnaire study was undertaken with

38 teachers and established that they were generally positive towards the concept of inclusion and were prepared to accommodate the needs of these students within the mainstream classroom. However, the fact that some teachers were still uncomfortable with inclusion suggests that further research and support is needed to facilitate this endeavour.

The next article in this issue of the journal from Nicole Chua, addresses the impact of morphological intervention for a group of older children who have failed to achieve the expected benefit from the traditional Orton-Gillingham approach to intervention. In this case study of three boys a mixed methodology was used to evaluate the effectiveness of morphological training in improving the spelling skills and self-esteem of adolescents with learning differences. The results showed a positive effect overall, with particular advantages in terms of attitude, which support the introduction of morphology earlier for children who continue to struggle in secondary school.

Finally, the last article in this issue by Neil Alexander-Passe addresses the important issue of self-esteem and dyslexia in adults. Using mixed methods, the article considers perceptions of success in 29 dyslexic adults, a percentage of whom have suffered from depression. Following a strong empirical review of the area, the author demonstrates that, although 65 percent of the sample felt themselves to be successful, there is a gender imbalance, with more males than females feeling unsuccessful and linking this to strong feelings of inadequacy. These

attributions can be found in dyslexic men including those who would be perceived as successful by the outside world in terms of achieving a University degree. These are important findings and suggest that early failure can have permanent effects on the wellbeing of children. This article has strong implications for teachers and parents for how we support our dyslexic children and the particular need to bolster the self-esteem of boys who are failing.

We hope that you find the current issue interesting and that you will consider the APJDD as an appropriate vehicle for submitting your own research. The journal continues to be available for free access and can be downloaded from:

[www.das.org.sg/publications/research-journal](http://www.das.org.sg/publications/research-journal)