

Welcome Message

Lee Siang

Chief Executive Officer

Dyslexia Association of Singapore

I am delighted by the outstanding efforts of Angela Fawcett, Professor Emeritus and the DAS Team for putting together this excellent Handbook.

While the growth of DAS in the past decade has been immense, the Handbook reflects the range and scope of DAS programmes and makes clear the specific areas which still require further exploration and development in support of people with dyslexia and associated learning differences.

Presently, there are 3,000 students enrolled in the 13 DAS Learning Centres and more Ministry of Education schools with the School Dyslexia Remediation Programme. However, there could be as much as 20,000 students in preschools, primary and secondary schools with not just dyslexia, but dyslexia severe enough to warrant intervention. So, we are still just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the number of students the Ministry of Education and DAS should be helping.

Another area of need is expanding support to other age groups. Currently, DAS provides services to primary and secondary school students. We have only just begun our work with preschoolers and we still need to reach out to post-secondary and adult dyslexics.

DAS must continue to expand in scope and size to be able to cater for older children and higher order literacy skills, help our students in their academic subjects and well as in life skills. Additionally, we must provide support for dyslexics who have associated learning differences such as ADHD, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, etc.

Our region, as a whole, still lacks sufficient support for dyslexics. As we develop our programmes and services in Singapore they will be of interest

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to our colleagues in neighbouring countries and we must be responsive to their enquiries to further spread awareness about dyslexia and associated learning differences.

Building a pool of expertise in dyslexia and associated learning differences in Singapore is a main objective of DAS. DAS staff must not underestimate the experience and expertise we have already accumulated and we must continue to invest and give our colleagues, many of whom are below the age of 30, the opportunity to pursue professional development and gain exposure.

Most research into dyslexia is still originating in the UK and US. Our database of several thousand children with dyslexia has tremendous potential for research. This is especially true in our unique multi-lingual, multi-ethnic environment where there is tremendous emphasis on academic excellence.

Here are some highlights of some recent DAS expanded efforts:

- ◆ DAS Specialised Educational Services (SES) Preschool Programme doubled its enrolment in the past year to over 250 students.
- ◆ SES has also begun to conduct psychological assessments and specialist tutoring for young adults.
- ◆ The Ministry of Education-aided DAS Literacy Programme (MAP) has introduced an expanded integrated curriculum to provide for the literacy needs of a much wider range of students.
- ◆ To complement our Essential Maths Programme and Speech and Language Therapy, SES introduced a Chinese Programme, an English Exam Skills Programme and the Speech and Drama Arts Programme in 2013.
- ◆ From 2014, SES also introduced a series of school holiday programmes covering creative writing, presentation skills, social skills, goal setting and maths word skills workshops.
- ◆ We have responded to requests from Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines with DAS subsidiary DAS International staff making several visits to provide psychological assessments and speech and language therapy to our international clients.
- ◆ To further expand the academic pathway for professional development in our field in Singapore, DAS Academy, another DAS subsidiary,

launched a new MA in Special Educational Needs in partnership with the University of South Wales in 2013.

- ◆ DAS Educational Therapists have also taken on the challenge to broaden their expertise and become “Dual Specialists” by training to teach both Literacy and Maths or both English and Chinese, for example
- ◆ DAS has compiled for the first time an Annual Programme Evaluation report for 2013 for all major programmes.
- ◆ The SES Chinese Programme Team prepared a research paper based on the findings of their programme which was subsequently published in the July 2014 issue of the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences.
- ◆ The SES Chinese Team, SES Preschool Team and the MAP Team will also be making presentations based on the results of their programmes at the International Dyslexia Association’s Conference in San Diego, USA in November 2014.

These efforts, and in combination with the DAS Handbook, reflects the breath and complexity of the needs of our clients with dyslexia and associated learning differences. It also defines and demonstrates the vibrancy and energy of DAS staff which is critical as we continue to be in pioneering country in almost everything we do as we strive for benefit of our clients.

With all of this in mind, the DAS strategy for the next five years is clear – To build and deliver a comprehensive and holistic range of programmes and services for our dyslexic clients. I am more than confident that the essays in this first issue of the DAS Handbook will encourage DAS staff, government teachers, parents and all stakeholders to further explore dyslexia and the research and support it requires.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LEE SIANG

CEO—Dyslexia Association of Singapore

Mr Lee Siang assumed the post of Chief Executive Officer on 1st September 2014. He oversees the work of the DAS HQ Branches operations, supervises the management of the three DAS Divisions, namely the MOE aided DAS Literacy Programme (MAP), Specialised Educational Services (SES) and the Learning Centres and Outreach Division. He also sits on the Board of DAS subsidiaries, DAS Academy and DAS International. Siang is a member of the US - based International Dyslexia Global Partners Committee. He has 25 years of experience in leadership and management of which 15 years is at senior level in non - profit organisations.

Siang observes that "unlike other industries, work in a non-profit organisation gives you immense satisfaction that your efforts are helping clients who need your support and who are likely to not receive it otherwise!"

Siang joined the DAS in December 2001 and has played a key role in the rapid growth of the DAS Family into a thriving social enterprise with a multi-disciplinary professional work force that provides a continuum of psychological, educational and training services. He emphasises that the DAS must view itself as a social enterprise and management "must strive to fulfil our social mission by combining entrepreneurial and business skills with the philanthropic characteristics of non-profit organisations".

Siang obtained his Bachelor's Degree from the National University of Singapore via the sponsorship of a Singapore Armed Forces Training Award. He also has a Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Management from the Singapore Institute of Management, a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Western Australia, a Certificate in Dyslexia Studies, a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education from the London Metropolitan University and a Postgraduate Certificate in Specific Learning Differences, also from the London Metropolitan University. It is this unique balance of experiences and qualifications that has allowed Siang to oversee the diverse services and functions of the DAS Family.

Editors Message

Emeritus Professor Angela Fawcett

Academic Director

Dyslexia Association of Singapore

It is with great pleasure that I am able to share with you our brand new DAS Handbook. This handbook is the brain-child of our former CEO, Robin Moseley.

I had the privilege of meeting Robin Moseley at many British Dyslexia Association and International Dyslexia Association conferences in the UK and USA. We shared an instant rapport through our experiences of dyslexia and of studying as mature students. I developed immense respect and affection for Robin, and admired the changes he had been able to make at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS). My husband David and I became personal friends with Robin and his wife, Glynis. We discussed my work in early screening and intervention and in 2009 when DAS planned a conference on that topic, I was invited as keynote speaker. In 2010, I started lecturing on the Masters course, supervising the Masters dissertations for Michelle-Lynn Yap, June Siew and Priscillia Shen from the DAS Academy staff, amongst others. I was delighted with the success they were able to achieve!

In 2011, I had taken retirement from my Chair in Child Research at Swansea University, and I had begun to think my academic career might be over. Truth to be told, I was bored with retirement after just three short months! So, I was very happy to continue on with my mentoring of DAS staff in Singapore. When Robin asked me if I would consider a role as Academic Director for DAS in 2012, working from the UK and visiting three times annually, I was delighted to take up the opportunity. So how has this worked out and what have I learned?

I have learned that the DAS is the largest and most successful dyslexia association in the world, working with over 2900 children, many with financial support from the Ministry of Education

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(MOE). I have learned that DAS has a depth and breadth of understanding of dyslexia that is second to none, and I speak as Vice President of the British Dyslexia Association.

I have recognised a willingness to self evaluate and to regularly upgrade provision to ensure that our children receive the best support tailored to their needs. I have worked with staff whose warmth and concern have moved me, and whose ideas excite me. I have begun to understand the challenges faced in a multi-lingual society. I have had the opportunity to develop and launch a new journal, as well as continue to maintain a international presence and create impact in the field of dyslexia. Most recently, I had had the opportunity to present at the EARAS in Tokyo Japan, with DAS staff, and I hope to be attending their next conference in Taiwan in February 2015.

I am happy to continue working with DAS after Robin's retirement and return to England. Naturally, I am cheered to have Robin and Glynis within the same time zone as me, and I look forward to our continued friendship. However, I am also delighted to see DAS moving forward in the safe hands of Lee Siang. My role with DAS has brought me new friends and new opportunities, and I have been particularly impressed by the calibre and enthusiasm of the staff. I would like to thank them for their friendship, their co-operation and for the very real strides they have all made in developing their skills in publishing as we continue to work together.

In presenting this DAS Handbook, the fruit of our labours, I am delighted to share with you the exceptional range of expertise and skills I have found at DAS. These seem to me to be examples of best practice in reflective self-evaluation, which should enrich all who read it. The first chapters include evaluations of all the programmes run by DAS, including those funded by the Ministry of Education, and the continued progress with setting up a new banding system to empower teachers. This is followed by a series of articles on "Embrace Dyslexia" the theme of a recent visit by celebrated dyslexic author Thomas West, who contributes extensively here. Thomas Sim the DAS Academy Director of Research contributes an article here on the role of happiness in learning, echoing the new movement towards 'Positive Dyslexia', led by Rod Nicolson from the UK. Next we present international perspectives including maths from Steve Chinn and phonology. A new section on adults, drawn from best practices in the UK, introduces the topic of the rights of adult dyslexics in employment and further/higher education. This provides a marker for working with adults in policy and practice, an area that DAS are planning to move into. A series of case studies of current good practice in dealing with children with co-morbid problems is drawn largely from members of the DAS team. Finally, we present a range of practical implications for dyslexia, again compiled by members of the DAS team. We hope this contribution to the literature

will showcase the work of DAS across the world and will generate further fruitful collaborations.

ABOUT THE EDITOR



EMERITUS PROFESSOR ANGELA FAWCETT

Academic Director

Dyslexia Association of Singapore

Emeritus Professor Angela Fawcett is a leading international researcher into dyslexia and other developmental disabilities, encompassing a range of theoretical and applied contributions to this field. Angela is also an Honorary Professor at the University of Sheffield. Her approach is broad and interdisciplinary ranging from child and cognitive development to educational screening and intervention, as well as developmental cognitive neuroscience. She is the Vice President of the British Dyslexia Association and also the Former Chair and Director of the Centre for Child Research at the Swansea University, UK.

My Journey to DAS

Robin Moseley

Retired CEO

Dyslexia Association of Singapore

I stepped into a classroom in a not very nice area of London as a qualified teacher for the first time on Monday, 2 September 1968. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that 46 years later I would end my career as a CEO in Singapore.

At the time I was too anxious to think of anything but survival. My class had 52 pupils and only seven could speak English. Fortunately I had taken over my class from a very eccentric and absent-minded man. Once, he set a London double decker bus on fire by throwing his cigarette into the collection box instead of his used ticket. He often forgot to turn up for lessons so the class had learned to fend for themselves. Luckily they were able to show me how to run a classroom and I learned more about teaching from my class than I had during three years of teacher training.

Although I found teaching to be very demanding, I quickly grew to love it. Significantly, in that first class, there was an 11 year old who could barely read or write and it was through helping him that I began to realise that both he and I were dyslexic. I had never heard of dyslexia before this.

Looking back now, I realise that my father was probably dyslexic. He was a very bright man but worked as a draughtsman for British Railways, a job that he hated. He was a skilled artist and I have some of his drawings still. He was wise and witty, although often depressed. I remember that my mother handled all the family correspondence, usually with my father dictating what to write. Sadly, my son has inherited my dyslexia and has struggled to overcome his difficulties.

I hated school and was delighted when I left for the world of work. My secondary school days were particularly unhappy. In those days in Britain, children took a selection test at age 11 to determine which type of secondary school they would attend. As the test involved mainly reasoning puzzles, which

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I enjoyed and was good at, I was selected for an academic grammar school. What a disaster! I had only started to read fluently at nine and still could not write very well. The next few years were a misery and I became a successful truant. My teachers never complained when I was missing from their classes and I suspect they were only too pleased not to see me in their lessons.

Fortunately, I became much more successful in real life. This is true for many dyslexic people and there is one obvious reason for this. At school, a student cannot go to his teacher and say, "I am not very good at writing, so let's cut it out of the curriculum." He is far more likely to be told to repeat the writing assignment and his parents – anxious to help – send him to extra writing tuition. As a result, dyslexic children often end up concentrating on all the areas with which they have difficulty and spend little time enjoying those areas where they can be successful. And then, people wonder why dyslexic children get depressed and can be badly behaved.

In real life, of course, you can often concentrate on the areas you are good at and largely ignore all those activities in which you are poor. For instance, you will never see me on a dance floor as I have very poor motor coordination and look ridiculous when attempting to dance.

Dyslexics need good strategies in order to succeed. My best strategy was to marry my wife, Glynis, who has loyally and ably supported me for nearly 50 years. I discovered I was good at understanding and working with people. I came to understand my own profile of weaknesses and strengths and learned to maximise my strengths. I set about learning to spell by rote and practised until I could spell all common English words. I still cannot easily distinguish the sounds in words, and therefore have to learn by heart new words and names. Technology has also helped enormously and I have been very lucky to live in a world of fast developing computerisation.

Although people have "discovered" many cures and solutions to solve the problem of dyslexia, my own experience is that skilled diagnosis and teaching, together with hard work and persistence, is the key to success. What motivates me in my work with the DAS is the thought of so many children still suffering in school, as I did over 50 years ago, when they could so easily be helped to succeed.

In Singapore today, the DAS is helping over 2,600 dyslexic children to achieve success, but that still leaves many more dyslexic students who have not been identified and are not receiving the help and support they need. We can and must help these children and young adults.

I suppose like many dyslexics, my career has just happened without any planning. I started as a teacher, but I quickly found that I liked teaching children with learning

issues so I studied psychology in the evenings whilst continuing teaching full-time. I then trained as an Educational Psychologist and this became my role for the next 36 years.

In 1982, I became an expatriate working in Cyprus, then Hong Kong and finally in Singapore, where I have lived for the last 22 years. Of all the jobs I have had over the years, I can sincerely say my time with DAS has been the most satisfying. Helping so many dyslexic children succeed has been great, but it is the great pleasure of seeing young people becoming outstanding professionals with DAS that has been the greatest joy.

Although my career of 46 years has come to an end, the problems caused by dyslexia and other specific learning differences will continue for generations to come. Therefore, the work of the DAS has only just begun and many challenges and opportunities lie ahead. I leave Singapore happy in the knowledge that DAS will continue to grow and develop to meet the needs of children and adults well into the future.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ROBIN MOSELEY

Educational Psychologist

Retired CEO—Dyslexia Association of Singapore

Robin was a resident of Singapore for 22 years and is now retired and living in the UK. Robin came to Singapore to work as an Educational Psychologist for the international school Tanglin Trust (1982 to 2002), then became the CEO of DAS in 2002. He retired as CEO in August 2014.

Vital Visionary—Robin Moseley

“Helping Dyslexic People Achieve”

Deborah Hewes

*Head of Publicity and Publications
Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

Robin Moseley joined the Dyslexia Association of Singapore as a member of the Executive Committee in 1996. He then took up the position of Chief Executive Officer in 2002. He spent 12 years at DAS building the DAS into a world-renowned organisation that helps dyslexic people achieve.

Robin is a teacher and Chartered Educational Psychologist with over 46 years’ experience. He qualified as a teacher at Newland Park College, Institute of Education, Oxford University in 1968 and started work as a teacher in London where he specialised in teaching children with learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. In 1973, he qualified as an Educational Psychologist after studying at Birkbeck College, the Institute of Education and University College, all three institutions being part of London University. He holds three degrees in Psychology, Child Development and Educational Psychology. Robin practised as a psychologist in Essex, London and Herefordshire and then in 1982 started working for the British government in Cyprus and from 1985 in Hong Kong. For six years, he was a part-time tutor in Educational Psychology at Hong Kong University.

Robin moved to Singapore in August 1992 to work at Tanglin Trust School where he was Consultant Educational Psychologist and Head of Learning Support. Robin’s involvement with the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) started in 1996 when he was invited to become a member of the DAS Executive Committee. On his retirement from Tanglin Trust he was encouraged to take up the CEO position of DAS and in September 2002 he joined DAS as the Chief Executive Officer. Little did he know then that he would be staying in Singapore for another 12

“To build a world class organisation dedicated to helping dyslexic people and those with specific learning differences in Singapore.”

years. Robin was instrumental in creating a new vision and mission for DAS which over the last 12 years has grown into a social enterprise that can claim to be one of the largest Dyslexia Associations in the world, in the context of staff, students it supports, scope of services and its annual turnover.

Robin, a proud dyslexic, has a passion for helping all individuals with learning differences. His vision for DAS has allowed the organisation to grow and support thousands of children with dyslexia as well as enabling others who support those with learning differences by providing professional development opportunities by the way of workshops and courses, international conferences and tertiary programmes.

He has also ensured that DAS empowered its parents with the skills to support their child at home by sharing of his personal story and by providing a series of DAS workshops and courses to meet that need.

Robin retired from DAS on 31 August 2014, DAS would like to wish him all the best in his retirement. Robin's legacy will continue to grow and meet its mission for people with dyslexia in Singapore.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



DEBORAH HEWES

*Head of Publicity and Publications
Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

Deborah has been with DAS since May 2011. Deborah is a dyslexic and passionate about raising awareness about learning differences. All three of her children have learning differences and as a result she has spent the majority of the last 17 years supporting her children's academic careers as well as helping other families with children who have learning differences. Deborah has lived in Singapore for 13 years and she has devoted the first 10 years working in an International School as a Learning Support Assistant and parent volunteer supporting students who learn differently with math, reading and literacy. She has also worked as a shadow assistant for students with behavioural issues and Asperger's Syndrome.

Deborah completed her Psychology honours degree at UNISIM in Singapore and her thesis was titled "Adolescents with learning disabilities: an investigation of academic self-concept, self-esteem and depression in International school students."