



Editorial Comment

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It is a very great pleasure to publish the 8th issue of this new journal, the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences (APJDD), which is published by the Dyslexia Association of Singapore. The response to the previous 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 the next issue planned for January 2018, we are privileged to have Professor John Everatt, currently our executive editor, as guest editor. Papers for consideration for this issue should be submitted to John by e-mail, john.everatt@canterbury.ac.nz.

In this issue we present seven articles, the majority of which are again drawn from the Asian context and region. Readers will have noted that the 2016 PISA results demonstrated that standards in the region remain high, outstandingly so in Singapore, and so it is particularly appropriate that DAS, leaders in the region, should publish this journal.

This issue of the journal includes a series of interesting experimental studies, including both controlled and case study approaches. The articles are all alike in

considering wider aspects of dyslexia, beyond the simple accuracy of single word reading, and these include fluency, cognitive skills, narrative writing, grammar and exam skills, IT and mentoring teachers, in addition to how to optimise time on task.

The first article from Lhannie Estrera and Professor Akiro Uno from Japan, examines the impact of cognitive skills on literacy in third grade Filipino children, comparing progress between a transparent and an opaque language (English). In this large scale experimental study, around 100 children were assessed on phonology, processing speed, receptive vocabulary and non-verbal intelligence in order to identify predictors of success. The article concludes that although phonology and naming speed are implicated in both languages, vocabulary is only predictive for English. This has important implications for research in a region where students are bilingual, but where much of the teaching is conducted in English.

APJDD has previously published articles from Edmen Leong and his team at DAS, which have demonstrated the impact of an English exam skills programme that targets grammar, vocabulary and

comprehension. In this enhancement to their research, Leong and colleagues present a controlled study of outcomes for two groups of children, those who participated in their training programme and matched controls. The results demonstrate a highly significant impact of DAS intervention in an area which is under-researched, hard to remediate and particularly relevant for progress as the focus on school changes from learning to read to reading to learn. Moreover, in this article, the authors also provide qualitative feedback based on videos of classroom observations, that illustrate the response of students to the support they receive, in terms of executive function and independent thinking.

In the next article, another key aspect of literacy, fluency in reading is examined in a controlled study of the impact of a movement programme in increasing processing speed in Italian children with severe dyslexia and dyspraxia. Previous research has identified an improvement in children of this type using motor skill training, but here the authors Piero Crispiani and Eleonora Palmieri enhance their findings by using a control group matched for age to establish the level of deficit in the dyslexic group, and show that their performance becomes more normalised following intensive treatment, although not achieving the levels of the non-dyslexic controls.

Continuing the literacy theme, and linking in with the severity of difficulties in the previous article, in the next article Serena Tan Abdullah and colleagues from DAS present an interesting exploratory case study on the impact of structured support

on the narrative writing skills of a small group of dyslexic students. It is well known that, even when reading skills are improved, dyslexic children do not do themselves justice in their written work. Here the authors provide two approaches, both based on the use of a structured picture enriched programme to enrich the writing process. In addition, some of the students were offered a structured checklist to develop their executive planning skills, without the need for verbal reminders. The programme was effective with all the children taking part, but the most striking aspect was the level of improvement for those children who were really struggling initially. This is a particularly important aspect of support, because it is usually easier to increase and maintain performance in children with mild to moderate difficulties and not those with severe difficulties.

The next three articles examine issues relating to continuing professional development in teachers, an area of considerable interest to our readers, given that we now have the RETA register of educational therapists at DAS to provide support of this type. Two of these articles also share a common theme, different approaches to optimising the time that students spend learning, using IT as a tool. The first article from Radhika Misquitta and colleagues from Mumbai, worked with 90 preservice teachers on video recording of their teaching sessions over a 3-week period to identify how much time was spent on instruction and how much on student led learning, using a web based timer to record sessions. Results demonstrated that the majority of time was teacher rather than student led,

but also found a substantial amount of time wasted in some classes in transitions. Implications are discussed, a training programme for teachers was developed and the need for further research linking these findings to student outcomes for children with disabilities was highlighted.

In the second of these articles, Soofrina Mubarak and colleagues from DAS examine teachers attitudes to the use of IT, here in the form of Smart Bars, in order to optimise students' experience in working with these. This article forms a precursor to an accompanying article planned for publication in a future issue of APJDD which will evaluate the impact of this technology on students. The results of this survey study indicate that the majority of teaching staff feel competent in using these tools, and that they have given their students a good opportunity to interact with Smart Bars. In line with other research, the teachers were less enthusiastic about IT than the students themselves, who were 100% united in enjoying this opportunity. In this example of good practice in the area, DAS are setting up further training to enhance teacher and learners experience, and they will be incorporating iPads into the final study.

The final article on continuing professional development from Sumathi Krishna Kumar and colleagues at DAS considers the impact of two different mentoring approaches on the attitude and progress of teachers. 28 teachers in their first 2 years of teaching undertook a survey, and 6 of them took part in a further interview study. The results clearly

indicate that teachers prefer to receive mentoring concurrently with their teaching and that this proves more effective than after the teaching has taken place. This is an important issue, given that there are problems internationally in retention for teachers of special needs, based on the highly demanding nature of this role. This is a further example of good practice in the area.

In conclusion, this is a particularly strong set of articles, all with implications for the Asia Pacific context, and we hope that you will enjoy this issue and continue to contribute your articles for review.

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