



## Editorial Comment

Angela Fawcett, Editor in Chief

It is a very great pleasure to introduce the latest edition of the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental of Developmental Differences. This issue has been published to coincide with the UNITE 2024 conference in June, an important event in representing the first face-to-face conference for the Dyslexia Association of Singapore since the COVID pandemic. As such, we have a greater number of contributions to share with you than we would normally present.

A key article from an independent think tank, Research for Impact, has highlighted the need for a broadening of the remit of DAS, to include struggling learners, in line with educational policy. This first article by Yuen and Yoong is entitled 'Empowering Struggling Learners: A Research Roadmap for the Dyslexia Association of Singapore'. Their review suggests that struggling learners, (that is, those who are unable to keep up with their peers, but show a learning profile similar to those with dyslexia but do not have a formal diagnosis of a learning difference such as dyslexia), are disadvantaged throughout their lives and action must be taken to ameliorate this situation. The Dyslexia Association of Singapore is now opening their doors to anyone who learns differently, following a series of profiling tests or full psychological assessment to identify their learning profile. This Research for Impact paper goes on to discuss articles past, present and future, many published in this journal which have evaluated the success of DAS interventions. Many of these are now presented in this issue of the journal.

A number of articles in this issue address the impact of working online during the COVID pandemic, on both therapists and children participating, and how these findings can enhance future research projects. The topic is led by a general article from Nurul Hudaa entitled 'Virtual Educational Therapy: experiences and perceptions of Educational Therapists at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore'. This article examines the reactions of 10 Educational therapists to moving online, adopting a phenomenological approach to reveal the benefits and challenges, and success factors and conditions, to enable therapists to design better online therapy in future. This is followed by an article from Siva entitled 'Blended Synchronous Learning Environment- Perceptions and Experiences of Educational Therapists at Dyslexia Association of Singapore' on running a dual mode intervention, known as BSLE learning, where some participants are online and others face to face. They extract themes which conclude that there are both benefits and challenges to this approach, and suggest strategies for improving BSLE and reducing the impact on therapists, working with an interview study of three educational therapists.

In their article Hamzah and Gill address the strengths and difficulties associated with trying to move a drama curriculum online, and the reactions of the students in their article entitled 'The impact of social-emotional competencies on dram students with dyslexia during the pandemic'. This article identifies a number of factors in an interview study, such as comfort in the home environment that can facilitate or impede progress for individual students, and what some participants identified as the benefit of not needing to travel to get to their lessons.

A general overview of the issues, the need for ongoing training and a new model for success is presented in the article from Mubarak entitled 'On Identifying training needs in using Educational Technology: a new Integrated Model'. In this article, the author evaluates any disparities between the expected expertise of educational therapists in relation to incorporating technology into their teaching programme. Using a series of surveys, observations, focus groups and interviews, a series of 7 issues were identified that influenced the outcomes, largely pertaining to skills but also to knowledge and attitudes towards technology. A new integrated model for training for the future will encompass student responses in addition to those of therapists, with implications for training more widely.

The next article by Wu, entitled 'Designing for dyslexic individuals in the digital environment' considers the usefulness of a series of simple tools to help with literacy in older participants, evaluating them with university students and secondary school pupils, finding strong individual preferences to impact on their usage.

This is followed by an article from Fong and Lay, entitled 'Evaluating a Reading Comprehension Curriculum and Factors Predicting Reading Comprehension Performance'. This article evaluates the impact of a new curriculum for comprehension at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, in a longitudinal study conducted over three time periods. Interestingly, this article compares high and low verbal ability in the group to find predictors of success in reading comprehension, and finds that, although the new curriculum is favoured by the higher achieving children, the less able children preferred the previous version.

The next article, from Zolfagharian, Tafti and Jarrahi entitled 'Exploring the Challenges of Dyslexia in Education and the Workplace: A Multi-Case Study of Academic and Professional Journeys' examines the experiences of dyslexic adults including some who dropped out of school. A series of interviews here indicates great fluency in this group, understanding of both strengths and weaknesses in these participants, and an emphasis on how their strengths have helped them through, even in the presence of school failure.

The final article is unique, from Fawcett and Bragonier, entitled 'Dean Bragonier and NoticeAbility: the man, the model and the need' which includes the transcription of an interview with Bragonier himself, the dyslexic CEO of NoticeAbility, following the recent

successful Magellan tour. This article concludes with a review of the need for strengths-based support, with the costs and benefits of not providing support such as NoticeAbility to allow children with dyslexia, in the early years of secondary school, to demonstrate their competence in a collaborative, mentor-led workshop on topics chosen to highlight dyslexic abilities.

The final section of the APJDD includes the abstracts from the presentations from UNITE 2024 Conference in Singapore demonstrating a rich selection of presentations delivered at the conference all of which will be available on the DAS YouTube channel.

We are confident that this selection of articles will inform and inspire others to research some of the important areas that have been highlighted here.