
INTERNATIONAL BOOK OF DYSLEXIA A GUIDE TO PRACTICE AND RESOURCES

Edited by **Ian Smythe, John Everatt and Robin Salter**



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West Sussex PO19 8SQ, England

Telephone (+44) 1243 779777

Email (for orders and customer service enquiries): cs-books@wiley.co.uk

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Jossey-Bass, 989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741, USA

Wiley-VCH Verlag GmbH, Boschstr. 12, D-69469 Weinheim, Germany

John Wiley & Sons Australia Ltd, 33 Park Road, Milton, Queensland 4064, Australia

John Wiley & Sons (Asia) Pte Ltd, 2 Clementi Loop #02-01, Jin Xing Distripark, Singapore 129809

John Wiley & Sons Canada Ltd, 22 Worcester Road, Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada M9W 1L1

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0-471-49646-4

Typeset in 10/12pt Times by SNP Best-set Typesetter Ltd., Hong Kong

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Antony Rowe, Chippenham SN14 6LH

This book is printed on acid-free paper responsibly manufactured from sustainable forestry in which at least two trees are planted for each one used for paper production.

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INTRODUCTION

Dyslexia – different contexts, same problems

Ian Smythe and Robin Salter

Whereas Part 1 of this book considered aspects of dyslexia that are related to individual languages, Part 2 focuses on aspects that relate to individual countries. These chapters include discussions of many issues, including those relevant to the education system, public and professional awareness, legislation and policies, definition and terminology and prevalence within the country discussed. Practical issues of identification and assessment, intervention and resources, provisions for children and adults, as well as teacher training, advocacy groups and details of where to obtain help (voluntary and professional organizations) are also given in many chapters. In addition, some authors include further discussions of the language-related issues, such as the language context of the country and aspects of dyslexia difficulties specific to the language(s) used. Although the information provided cannot be totally comprehensive, it can be used as a guide to what is happening around the world, as well as to views and perspectives held by many individuals in a wide range of countries.

When reading all the diverse approaches to dyslexia represented in this volume (research perspectives, teaching methods, definitions, services), it is easy to get lost in the wealth of information and provision available. But, as Steve Chinn, principal of a UK specialist dyslexia school, often says, where is the dyslexic individual in all this?

We should celebrate diversity, of approaches and viewpoints, of policies and practice, but only if it leads to answering the central question: how best can we help this dyslexic person? The formation of this question in terms of 'this dyslexic individual' is deliberate to emphasize the idea that there is no 'one size fits all'. Every dyslexic individual is different. So too is every country, culture and educational context. From these pages there

can be little doubt that dyslexia is an international concern. However, perceptions, awareness and understanding within the community, the resources available, whether financial, manpower or teaching resources, will dictate the importance at the personal, school or legislative level. Given the perceived importance of dyslexia assessment and support, and the importance recognized at least among some educationalists from different countries and language backgrounds, there is a need for systematic research which identifies similarities and differences between these contexts which will aid in the development of appropriate diagnostic and remediation tools.

LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

Legislation does not equal provision. As just one example, visitors to the UK are frequently surprised to learn that despite apparent legislative provision, case after case comes before the special educational needs review tribunal of children who are five or even more years behind in terms of their literacy skills and still have not been appropriately assessed or provided with appropriate support.

The framework for provision has been with us for some time. For example, in 1948 the UN General Assembly, in Resolution 217, Article 26, declared that 'Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.' Sadly, that goal has never been met, with large numbers of parents being forced to pay for basic education, both in terms of attendance and for the resources available in classrooms, such as books. Furthermore, in the context of dyslexia, what the Resolution failed to emphasize was the need to make that education appropriate.

By the end of the Jontiem conference (1990), some progress had been made. The Jontiem declarations stated that the individual should 'be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs' (Article 1), and that 'Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system' (Article 5). Also included was the statement that 'The focus of basic education must, therefore, be on actual learning acquisition and outcome, rather than exclusively upon enrolment' (Article 4), and this 'should be met through a variety of delivery systems' (Article 5).

By the time of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which concentrated more specifically on special educational needs, these ideals had expanded to the following:

- every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs;
- education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.

The Salamanca guidelines included a need to take full account of individual differences (Statement 21), adapting to the needs of the child (Statement 28), providing additional assistance and support to children requiring it (Statement 29), identifying difficulties and assisting pupils to overcome them (Statement 31), and offering appropriate teacher training (Statement 42).

However, as shown throughout this book, despite the large number of participants and signatories, and direct and indirect reference to Salamanca in national legislations, implementation in practice is, at best, patchy. Inclusion has meant that, with few exceptions, the dyslexic individual has been taught in the mainstream. Although this is a desirable outcome

in a world where ‘inclusion’ is the buzz word, the role of the specialist centre (such as a private specialist dyslexia school, or a state centre of excellence) should not be ignored. Frequently, these become the source of teaching methods and resources which then migrate to the state system.

It is interesting the way different countries interpret their needs, not only within the Salamanca framework, but also within their own linguistic and cultural context. The diversity of definitions of dyslexia has been discussed elsewhere (see Smythe and Everatt, Chapter 1 in Part 1). The diversity of contributors to this Part, from government officials, to non-governmental organization spokespeople, reveals the range of viewpoints and approaches that exist around the world. All, in principle, follow a similar framework for policy, resources and training (see the chapter on Wales for more details), but interpretation is derived within the context of their own language, funding, culture, political agenda and, of course, with respect to the viewpoint of their education advisors.

Part 2 of the book provides a snapshot of the interpretations found around the world. Obviously, all views cannot be expressed. While England may talk of its Code of Practice which should be a safety net for all dyslexic individuals, the truth is that many still fall through that net, due to diversity of policy interpretation, resource availability, teacher training and funding. Similarly, it is difficult to generalize about provision in the United States, where every state has its own legislation, and one short chapter cannot cover the diversity of provision (or lack of) in that country. What is exciting is to see the way some countries have changed since the first version of this book in 1997. Not only do we see new countries represented, indicating their increased awareness and understanding in the intervening period, but also we see changes in individual countries, such as Hong Kong, where identification has increased exponentially, and resource development and training have been relentless over the past few years.

SAME PROBLEMS, SIMILAR SOLUTIONS

Smythe and Everatt (see Part 1) suggest that the manifestation of dyslexia will depend not only upon the cognitive profile of the individual, but also on the language they use. Dyslexia must be evaluated with respect to an individual’s own linguistic, cultural and legislative context. However, at the same time, despite many definitions of dyslexia referring to the single word decoding, most practitioners agree that dyslexia is far more than this. Areas such as study skills, writing at length, organization skills and memory strategies are considered to be important by educators of dyslexics, and are commonly referenced around the world. Fortunately, the desire for practitioners in one country to share their resources with those of another has been demonstrated many times, leading to a spread of ideas and tools. Obviously care must be taken when transferring one idea to another context, but the principle of helping a child write at length may work as well for the dyslexic Chinese child as for the dyslexic Hungarian child.

WHAT’S IN A WORD?

The term ‘dyslexia’ (or to be more precise ‘dislexie’) was first used by Kausman in 1883, who adopted the common practice of using Greek or Latin morphemes to develop a new word. The combination of the ‘dys-’ meaning difficulties, and ‘lexis’ meaning word,

provides a simple basis for common understanding, which many have used and interpreted for their own needs. The term has become a word of universal understanding of the difficulty in the acquisition of literacy skills, and can be found in many languages, translated in many ways. More recently there has been a trend to acknowledge that defining the cut-off criteria, necessary to decide who does, or does not, receive support, is difficult with dyslexia. Disagreements over cut-off criteria and the need to acknowledge an increasing number of specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyspraxia, dysgraphia, ADHD, dysorthographia, dysautographia, to name but a few), many of which can coexist in any one individual, have led to a trend for assessments being made with respect to identifying specific cognitive strengths and weaknesses, rather than making categorical judgements. Dyslexia, therefore, is sometimes referred to as one of many specific learning difficulties (SpLDs). Other countries will use terms such as 'learning disabilities' (the United States and Canada), *legasthenie* (used by German speakers), while the equivalent term in Chinese (in Hong Kong) is translated as 'reading and writing difficulties'. However, in common use, the term 'dyslexia' and its 'linguistic relatives' (i.e. various forms of translation) remains dominant, and is understood throughout the world by parents, practitioners, researchers and dyslexics themselves.

In this age of the Internet, it can be thought easy to access information. However, it is important to remember that such access is not available to all. Sharing of information can take many forms. Marion Welchman, to whom the first version of this book was dedicated, was an international facilitator. It is hoped that this book will continue that work and provide a valuable resource in terms of information and inspiration to those looking to help the dyslexic individual. Ultimately, such information will hopefully lead to many more dyslexics being given the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Each author who was asked to contribute to this volume was provided with the same brief. However, each has interpreted it in their own way, with respect to their own understanding, their own views, and their own cultural, linguistic and national context. In comparing and contrasting these approaches to dyslexia, and the responses to the same brief, we may celebrate differences, in the same way we celebrate differences in individuals which can make the dyslexic individual so special.

EUROPEAN DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION

Reference has been made by a number of countries contributing to this book of the *European Dyslexia Association* (EDA). The EDA was created as a charity under Belgian Statute in 1987 by representatives of eight European countries and has since grown to having 41 member organisations in 28 countries, three of whom are outside Europe.

The aims of the EDA are to assist and develop support for dyslexic people in their educational, social and cultural integration into society; to promote co-operation between parents, teachers and other professionals; to publish news of its activities and to encourage research into causes, diagnosis, intervention and prevention; to carry out comparative studies and to co-operate world-wide with other organizations with similar aims.

A number of conferences have been organized by the EDA in different countries, the latest being the All-European Conference in Budapest, Hungary in October 2003. *EDA NEWS* is published three times a year. Financial support comes three from its members, sponsorship and the sale of its publications.

DYSLEXIA IN ARGENTINA

Maria Jose Quintana

INTRODUCTION

Argentina, a country of over 36 million people with Spanish as the first language, has adopted the international practice of inclusive education, with special needs children being integrated into mainstream schools. However, policies are more concerned with physical or severe mental handicaps than specific learning difficulties. The integration policy in Argentina is outlined in the *Acuerdo Marco para la Educación Especial* (Special Education Agreement Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, 1999). This Agreement states that, 'Special Educational Needs are those experienced by individuals that need extra help or resources not readily available in their educational context to aid them in the process of constructing meaning from the learning experiences set out in the curriculum.' This document sets the baseline for the future and progressive transformation of the Special Educational Needs system in our country. The aim is to develop the quality of public schools in order to make them more inclusive for children with special educational needs. Now, practice has to follow policy.

Within Argentinian legislation and policy there is no official definition or recognition of dyslexia as a distinct area of need. The *Acuerdo Marco* includes the need of dyslexic students within the spectrum of children with special education needs (*NEE: Necesidades Educativas Especiales*), and consequently there is no specific educational provision for students with dyslexia.

The term 'dyslexia' is used by some professionals in the field of education (educational psychologists, psychopedagogists, neurolinguists and speech therapists), but there is a preference for the terms 'Specific Learning Difficulty' (SpLD) and Learning Disability (LD). In a more general way, it may be referred to as 'difficulties in the acquisition of reading and writing' or 'reading and writing problems'.

PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS

There is a low level of awareness of dyslexia among the general population and few people understand the extent of the difficulties facing the dyslexic individual. However, increased media attention has helped raise the profile of the subject. Furthermore, in 2000, one whole day (out of a total of four) was dedicated to 'Dyslexia' at the International Neuropaediatrics Conference held in Buenos Aires City. However, one of the key objectives of the newly formed (2001) Asociación de Padres de Hijos con Dificultades de Aprendizaje (APDHA) is to raise public awareness.

Currently, dyslexia is given little coverage in study programmes in universities and teacher training colleges. In general, there is a low level of awareness in the educational community of the difficulties experienced by children with dyslexia.

IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT

Many schools have a special needs coordinator (SENCO) responsible for liaising between teachers, parents and professionals. Any child noted as having difficulties would be brought to the attention of the SENCO, who would gather appropriate information and liaise with the parents. Together the SENCO and parents would devise the strategies to follow which may include a school-based assessment to define the need for a referral. When no SENCO is available, all the responsibility falls on the classroom teachers, who are not trained in ways to help these children.

If it is considered appropriate, children are referred to free assistance centres within the educational system, to child psychology departments at public hospitals, private professionals or language centres for assessment and/or remediation. A diagnosis of 'dyslexia' depends on the theoretical framework used by the individuals conducting the assessment, but the majority of them will consider it an 'LD'. Usually the school will be informed of the results of their assessment and in the best of cases will be provided with some guidelines for the classroom teacher. A further problem is the small number of reading and spelling tests available in Spanish and that practically none of the specific assessment procedures or tests are validated or standardized in Argentina.

Assessment methods and techniques

A professional assessment conducted by speech therapists, psychopedagogists or neuro-linguists considers two aspects:

- reading, writing and spelling;
- the underlying cognitive processes.

Reading and writing assessment includes silent and oral reading, visual and phonological tasks, miscue analysis, metalinguistic abilities and reading comprehension as well as free writing. Spelling is assessed in copy, dictation and creative writing. Observation of written school work results is also important.

Cognitive functions assessment usually includes measures of intelligence, auditory and visual gnosias, global and fine motor skills, graphomotor coordination, attention, memory, laterality, cerebral dominance, linguistic and sequential skills.

The following tests created in Spain or Latin America are used in Argentina:

- Prueba de Comprensión Lectora de Complejidad Lingüística Progresiva (CLP) (Allende);
- Test de análisis de lecto-escritura (TALE) (Toro y Cervera);
- Test exploratorio de Dislexia Específica (Condemarín);
- Batería Woodcock de Proficiencia en el idioma (Español) (Woodcock);
- PROLEC- Batería de evaluación de los procesos lectores en Educación Primaria (Cuetos, Rodríguez and Ruano).

REMEDIATION

There is no specific remediation for learning disabilities in schools. It takes place individually and off the school premises. It may be prescribed by doctors, but it is more likely to be suggested to parents by the special education needs coordinator if the school staff includes one, or directly by the classroom teacher. It is free of charge at public hospitals. It may be completely or partially covered by the social security system or is paid for by parents privately. Parents assume a decisive and central role as they are responsible for the treatment of their dyslexic child.

Remediation methods

The remediation of reading and writing disabilities in the context of an individual treatment will consider: general and specific characteristics of the reading and writing difficulty, the child's strengths and weaknesses, individual learning styles, the emotional aspects and curriculum adaptation as suggested in the *Acuerdo Marco*. The treatment is arranged by the professional conducting the remediation and the school as there are no specific guidelines provided in the referred official document.

Although most schools provide only the minimum of support, and rarely have anyone with specialist knowledge, there are some dyslexia-friendly schools which provide more extensive support for these students. This may include a flexible grading and marking policy, the use of a personal computer, oral rather than written examinations and on very limited occasions the provision of one-to-one tuition. The nature of the support provided depends greatly on the knowledge the teachers or other members of the staff may have on the subject. Educational policy does not set any guidelines on the kind of support children with SpLD should be given.

ADVOCACY GROUPS

I'm the mother of a 12-year-old boy. I've known he was dyslexic since he was nine years old. He seemed to be a very smart boy until he got to school. Something was wrong; he had difficulties with reading and writing, even maths. During the first three years in school, teachers said he was immature and that he needed more time. When he reached third grade my husband read an article in English, and recognized our son's condition. We then had

him tested and diagnosed as 'dyslexic'. He started special instruction with an educational therapist. After two years he could read and write better, but this did not reflect in his school marks. The school he attended never got really involved in knowing what dyslexia is.

When looking for a new school for him, it was evident that no school knew much about dyslexia; they are not aware of how to detect it or even how to manage these children in school. I felt that my child was suffering more from a teaching disability than his own dyslexia.

During that time I met many parents who had the same problems. So in 2001 we started an association.

Asociación de Padres de Hijos con Dificultades de Aprendizaje (APHDA)

APHDA is a parents' group and its aims are:

- to promote awareness and understanding of specific learning difficulties so that proper identification and intervention can be made promptly;
- to help schools to train teachers in the detection and management of learning difficulties;
- to support parents through various means, including arranging meetings with professionals related to education, to lectures to parents and teachers on reading and writing difficulties.

REFERENCE

Ministerio de Cultura y Educación (1999) *Acuerdo Marco para la Educación Especial* (Documentos para la Concertación, Serie A, N° 19), Buenos Aires.

ORGANIZATION

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DYSLEXIA IN AUSTRALIA

Paul Whiting

THE PRINCIPAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Australian contribution to the first version of this work (Salter and Smythe, 1997) was written by Yvonne Stewart, who founded the specific learning difficulties movement in Australia. Owing to her work, autonomous SPELD organizations were set up in all states of Australia, and in New Zealand and Fiji. A national organization, AUSPELD, was also established. For many years, these have been the main organizations representing the interests of people with dyslexia.

These organizations are supported in a variety of ways: state governments supply some funds in recognition of the service provided to the community and the education systems, usually to support a telephone advisory service for parents and others. Other funds come from the sale of books, Christmas cards, and the efforts of volunteers, but most rely on membership fees. Across Australia, there are more than 5,000 members of SPELD organizations.

SPELD NSW was established in 1968, and another organization, the Association for Children with Learning Difficulties (ACLD), was established in 1972. This organization continues, though with broader concerns than dyslexia, as Learning Links Inc. In addition, there is the Victorian-based Learning Difficulties Australia (formerly Australian Resource Educators' Association), a professional association for educators in the field of learning disabilities, difficulties and differences. It has a council of members from five states of Australia comprising university lecturers, consultants and tutors. They publish the only ongoing journal for dyslexia in the country, the quarterly *Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities*.

Geographically Australia is a large and diverse country, with a population of 19 million spread over an area approaching 3,000,000 square miles. This has made it difficult for state-based or national organizations to meet all the needs of parents, so regional parent support groups were formed, initially at the suggestion of SPELD and with its support in New South Wales. In 1988, however, another organization was formed in that state to

assist these support groups. This is the Learning Difficulties Coalition. There are currently 19 parent support groups in the state of NSW.

SPELD and similar organizations offer services mostly aimed at the parents of children with dyslexia, though some offer services to adults. Services typically include a telephone help-line, referrals (to tutors, educational psychologists, speech pathologists and other relevant professionals), assessments, a specialist library, sales of books on dyslexia-related subjects, a newsletter for members, conferences, and some training courses. In 2002, for example, SPELD in the state of South Australia offered 21 training courses for parents and professionals. Some organizations (for example, SPELD Victoria) also offer some tutoring services.

Referrals are made after a consultation, most frequently to formal assessment through an educational psychologist, then to tutoring and supportive literature. Referrals are also sometimes made directly to speech pathologists, occupational therapists, and optometrists. Some organizations also offer counselling services.

ASSISTANCE FOR DYSPLEXIA

Most parents and others concerned with dyslexia must seek assistance outside the school system. This is because school systems either do not recognize dyslexia as a specific learning difficulty or have inadequate resources to help every child. This is understandable, when it is considered that the proportion of children potentially requiring additional assistance will approximate 7 per cent (estimates have ranged from 2 per cent to 11 per cent, and even higher) (Andrews *et al.*, 1979; Loudon *et al.*, 2000). The result is that many families cannot afford the assistance available through organizations like SPELD. From a national planning perspective, it would be preferable to provide adequate teaching services in schools, as the Australian Business Council (for example) estimated a few years ago that poor or non-existent literacy costs Australia \$3 billion per year.

GOVERNMENT PROVISION

In most states of Australia, government Departments of Education do not directly recognize learning disability, dyslexia or specific learning difficulties except by inference. They therefore do not offer targeted help. However, government school systems are increasingly emphasizing effective early teaching of literacy and numeracy skills (Elkins, 2001). This is part of an attempt to reduce the need for expensive support services later in a child's education progress. In addition, most states attempt to intervene early through Reading Recovery programmes (Clay, 1993a, 1993b) for children who do not begin reading successfully by the end of the first year of school. This programme is effective for the majority of students who are slow to begin reading, but is not effective for dyslexic students (called by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), students with 'significant learning difficulties') (Center *et al.*, 1995). Some SPELD organizations note that the greatest difficulty their clients have is that dyslexia is not recognized as a lifelong disability that requires ongoing support and is not able to be remediated by short courses.

In two states, NSW and Queensland, school systems offer the help of a support teacher for learning difficulties. Currently there are nearly 1,200 of these teachers in NSW. These

teachers, sometimes allocated to one school but often shared between schools, must assist with the identification and assessment of learning difficulties of all kinds, must plan, implement, monitor and evaluate programmes for students with learning difficulties, and provide either in-class support or short-term intensive withdrawal programmes, as well as providing training and development for classroom teachers (see, e.g. NSW DET, 2001). These services are rarely adequate for the needs of dyslexic students. Only NSW has a district and state-level infrastructure to support these teachers. In addition, NSW has 35 support classes for reading, each taking six students for one term with a further term of in-school follow-up.

In South Australia, a centrally-based Learning Difficulties Support Team provides professional development, information and advice to groups of parents, Learning Assistance Programme volunteers, School Services Officers, individuals and groups of teachers. The service covers pre-school to Year 12. Professional development is also negotiated to suit individual sites. Topics include information about characteristics of learning difficulties/learning disabilities, inclusive methodology, effective teaching practices and ways of supporting and accommodating students in the different learning areas.

Where there is not direct support (e.g. from a Support Teacher), states rely wholly on the regular class teacher to modify the curriculum appropriately for dyslexic students. Needless to say, in many cases the modifications are not made, because teachers just do not have the knowledge and time to make them. In some cases, advice is available from learning difficulties consultants in the State Office of Education.

Parents or adult dyslexics thus find that they must seek help outside the education system, and may obtain it from Irlen Dyslexia Centres, Samonas Sound Therapy, Educational Kinesiology, Paediatric Physiotherapy or Occupational Therapy, Behavioural Optometry, Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment (Kozulin *et al.*, 2001), Biofeedback, etc. Many of these approaches offer to correct underlying processing deficits leading to dyslexia. More conventional approaches that are widely used are *Alpha to Omega* (Hornsby and Shear, 1993), *The Writing Road to Reading* (Spalding and Spalding, 1969), *Visualising and Verbalising* (Bell, 1986), *Auditory Discrimination in Depth* (Lindamood and Lindamood, 1975), or one of the many phonics-based approaches such as THRASS (Ritchie and Davies, 1996), or *Discovering Reading through Sounds* (Lamond and Whiting, 1992), etc.

TECHNOLOGY AND DYSLEXIA

The Internet has, to a great extent, internationalized dyslexia so that few approaches are unique to Australia. Many of the approaches listed above have come from other countries. The same is true of technologies that have not until now been widely used in Australia. SPELD has made available to groups and individuals a computer-based program from the UK, the *Touch Type, Read and Spell* program, which has materially assisted many dyslexics (Whiting and Chapman, 2000). An increasing number of such programs are available, claiming to assist dyslexics. Other tools, such as the Reading Pen (a hand-held scanner that reads words and phrases to the student) (Whiting, 1999), text readers such as the Kurzweil 3000, *Read and Write* (www.texthelp.com), hand-held spellers such as the *Franklin Spellmaster*, portable keyboards such as *Alphasmart* (www.alphasmart.com), brainstorming and organizational programmes such as *Inspiration*, and dictation and text-prediction programmes are all just beginning to be used. *Textease*, a talking word-processor, is used by some 'good teachers' in Victoria for primary students mainly, as is

the spelling programme *WordShark*. Unfortunately, their utility is not widely recognized, even by educational authorities.

SPECIAL PROVISIONS (REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS)

Many school systems in Australia offer special provisions to students who are shown to be dyslexic and whose performance without the specified provision is impaired. These provisions include extra time in examinations, use of a reader and/or writer for examinations, use of a laptop computer, examination papers printed on individually specified coloured paper, separate room for examination or larger print for exam papers.

HELP FOR ADULT DYSLEXICS

There is little specific assistance available for adult dyslexics in Australia. The only formal provision comes through the Further Education (TAFE) system, and many of the 109 campuses in NSW offer some provision for learning disabilities instruction, though it is usually offered under some other category of service (such as 'neurological disabilities'). Many campuses offer classroom instruction in literacy, but this is not acceptable to most adults whose prior experiences in classrooms have been so disappointing. In any case, such instruction is not intended for dyslexics. Other states of Australia offer services to people with disabilities, but it is not clear that this specifically includes students with dyslexia. Assistance in the form of special provisions is available to dyslexic students in universities (Mungovan *et al.*, 1999).

Adults seek help from sources that happen to be publicized in the media, and may find such help in private centres such as those referred to above.

RESEARCH

Research into aspects of dyslexia is being conducted in a number of Australian universities, and some operate centres that include learning disabilities (dyslexia): at the University of Queensland, the Sir Fred and Eleanor Schonell Centre; at the University of Sydney, the Evelyn McCloughan Children's Centre; at Macquarie University, the Special Education Centre; and at Newcastle University, the Special Education Centre. In addition, in each state there is one or more Irlen Dyslexia Centre, concerned mainly with assessment and treatment of visual perceptual difficulties resulting in dyslexic symptoms.

From the above lists, it will be seen that there is not much research directed specifically at dyslexia. One reason may be the difficulty of recruiting dyslexics for research when school systems do not identify dyslexia. However, there is some research of good quality, and mention should be made of the internationally recognized research on language processing in reading disabilities emanating from the University of New England in NSW (e.g. Byrne *et al.*, 2000), from Macquarie University (e.g. Coltheart *et al.*, 1996), and that on visual perceptual difficulties from Newcastle University and the University of Sydney (e.g. Robinson and Foreman, 1999; Robinson *et al.*, 2001; Whiting and Robinson, 2001), and the University of Wollongong (e.g. Conlon *et al.*, 1999).

LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

Australia has no protective legislation such as that of the United Kingdom and the United States. However, in 1992 the Australian government passed the Disability Discrimination Act which offers protection against discrimination for people with all kinds of disabilities, including those that result in them 'learning differently'. An example of this category of disability would be 'a person with autism, dyslexia, attention deficit disorder or an intellectual disability' (Tait, 1995). The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission states that learning disability is covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (www.hreoc.gov.au/disabilityrights).

The application of this legislation was tested in 2000 before the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. In that case the Commission found that, 'The complainant, . . . suffers from dyslexia. Expert evidence . . . satisfied me that the complainant's dyslexia amounted to a "disability" within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.' The party complained against, which had denied the complainant special provisions in examination, was fined. This has been a recent and important landmark in the struggle to have the needs of dyslexics addressed in Australia. A case has yet to succeed where the complaint is that a student has been denied appropriate educational provisions. This author's understanding is that school authorities have settled all such complaints out of court, thus evading the possibility of adverse findings.

Without specific legislation, however, Australia is in a more difficult position than either the UK or the USA, where a requirement for specific educational provision is supported by legislation, and does not have to be argued on the grounds of discrimination.

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DYSLEXIA IN AUSTRIA

Maria Götzinger-Hiebner and Michael Kalmár

INTRODUCTION

Dyslexia, understood as an impairment of the acquisition of reading/writing/spelling in otherwise bright children, has been widely known and accepted in Austria since the 1950s, due to the work of Dr Lotte Schenk-Danzinger, the legendary 'Mother of Dyslexia'. (She cheerfully adopted this title and, in her late years, changed it herself into 'Grandmother'.) Dr Schenk-Danzinger was a psychologist and the mother of a dyslexic child, and worked on the scientific level as well as on the level of school practice. Her books on dyslexia are still standard literature in German-speaking countries. Together with Othmar Kowarik, a special needs teacher, she set up classes for dyslexic children and free training courses outwith school in Vienna, which ensured a high level of awareness and acceptance among teachers. In the 1980s, her concept was abandoned in favour of an all-embracing 'integrative multisensory' approach for children with different kinds of learning difficulties. In the past decade, dyslexia has become a topic again. Initiatives have sprung up in different parts of Austria – private groups such as Österreichischer Bundesverband Legasthenie, and groups of psychologists working in schools and universities.

LEGISLATION

In Austria, school legislation is centralized. Curricula are issued by the Federal Ministry of Education for all schools. However, regional boards of education (one for each of the nine federal states) can make their own interpretation and there is ample provision to do so. That means that, in fact, we have a federal situation granting the regional boards a high degree of autonomy. In the past few years, school authorities have begun to accept their responsibility for dyslexic children and students in primary and secondary schools. In a number of regulations, teachers are requested to consider the problems connected with dyslexia, especially in written exams.

TEACHER TRAINING

The teacher training institutes are generally free to determine their curricula. Some information on dyslexia is offered. Courses that give teachers more detailed information are rare, and usually not obligatory.

Advanced teacher training institutes are independent of the teacher training colleges. Their task is the post-graduate training of teachers. Some of them provide full courses on the treatment of dyslexia in schools. However, their curricula differ widely from each other. There is also a course offered by the University of Salzburg. Although the situation is improving, there is still a lack of qualified help in schools, and much is left to the private sector.

Illiteracy in adults is seen as a problem and some adult training centres provide instruction in reading, writing and maths. They are usually not aware that part of their clientele is dyslexic.

THE WORK OF NGOS

In 1991, the first national Austrian dyslexia organization – the Österreichischer Bundesverband Legasthenie – was founded by a group of parents, psychologists and teachers. Dr Lotte Schenk-Danzinger was a founding member and the association is still very much obliged to her.

The Bundesverband provides free counselling for parents and teachers in personal meetings and through a telephone help-line. The association does not offer assessment or therapy but helps parents to find qualified professionals if needed. It publishes a quarterly journal and information brochures. Among its other activities are lectures and workshops for teachers and parents and training courses for teachers and therapists, both in the private sector and in advanced teacher training institutes. A great deal of grass-roots work is done to improve the situation.

A number of other (mostly regional) dyslexia organizations have since been founded. In 1998, a second national dyslexia association, the Erster Österreichischer Dachverband Legasthenie (EOEDL) was founded in Klagenfurt by the leaders of a regional organization. In cooperation with the Firstcybertrade Inc. and the Kärntner Landesverband Legasthenie, the EOEDL offers a distance learning course that leads to a diploma as a dyslexia trainer.

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