



LITERACY SPECIALISTS
TEACHERS • ASSESSORS



The Dyslexia Compass: a European-wide perspective



A Study of Mentoring: an Enquiry research project



Exclusion within Higher Education

Dyslexia Review

Volume 33, Number 1,
Spring/Summer 2023

The Journal of The Dyslexia Guild



The launch of International CReSTeD

A report from India



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The Right to be able to Learn to Read and Write



Jessica Jarman

Supporting EAL Learners with Dyslexia

Welcome

Welcome to the Spring/Summer issue of *Dyslexia Review*.

It hasn't been much of a spring here in the UK, with relentless rain and very little sun, but to take our minds off this, we have an international feel to this issue of *Dyslexia Review*. Amita Amlani Kenyon, a specialist teacher and assessor, tells us about her amazing work for the Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils (CReSTeD) and more specifically her ground-breaking trip to India to form the foundations of an international arm of this council. Staying with the international theme, we can also read about dyslexia and how it is evaluated and assessed in different parts of Europe. Martin Bloomfield describes *The Dyslexia Compass* project, and how there is still a lack of international agreement on how to identify and measure dyslexia.

Also in this issue, our Kathleen Hickey scholarship winner, Melissa Whitley, updates us on her experiences so far on the Diploma in Specialist Teaching for Literacy-related Difficulties, and Glorious Samkelisiwe Mqadi, a student on the Enquiry Module, part of her MEd, shows us how useful mentoring can be. I think this is true whatever your setting is and her article provides food for thought as she describes her research outcomes.



We also focus on another research project that looks at Higher Education and how diversity is managed. Gill Porter has explored this issue as part of her Masters in Disability studies and reflects on the outcomes of her work. In a similar vein, Tim Deignan, an educational consultant, describes the development of a guide for dyslexic students who are producing dissertations with the aim of enhancing accessibility at this all-important time in students' lives.

You may remember in the last issue, I looked at the Woodcock and Johnson IV tests of cognitive abilities in detail; this article prompted one of our members to write a personal view of her use of this battery. If you are tempted by this purchase but still anxious about the huge outlay involved in buying this product (and why wouldn't you be?), have a read of Karen Anderson's personal account to help you decide. If you do go ahead with this purchase, don't forget to take advantage of your Guild Member discount from our Dyslexia Action shop.



Cover: Spring/Summer issue.

As well as our usual book reviews, with generous reader discounts to go with them, I also take this opportunity to urge you to save the date of 6th July. This year, we are having an online conference and we hope to appeal to those of you who often cannot make our usual live event. We have some exciting speakers who will be talking about specialist teaching of children with English as an additional language, the perennial issue of maths anxiety, the science behind visual difficulties and a workshop around a free app that helps with adult literacy and teaching but which may have other uses. I think you will agree that there is something for everyone and for APC holders, part of this attendance will count towards SASC accredited CPD hours. Lots to think about, so happy reading.

Dr Anna Smith
Editor

We would like to point out that in the article in our previous issue entitled Focus on Spelling through word structure, meaning and sound (p.14) 32 (2), on page 15, middle column, where the trigraph <ugh> is discussed, as in the word <cough>, the letter <u> should have been emboldened along with <gh>. We apologise for this printing error.



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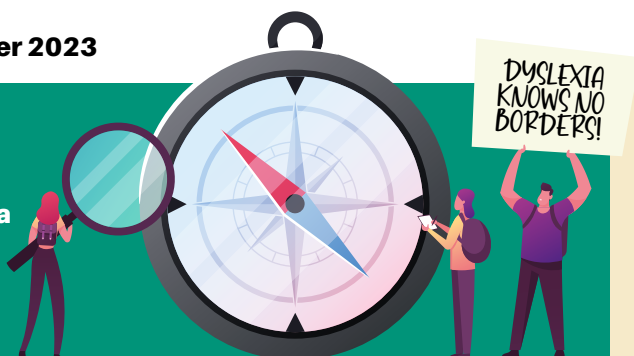
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Membership news

Jan Beechey Dip LIS MCILIP, Guild Membership and Librarian



Snapshot of membership in 2022

It is always good to reflect on how we might improve services to members. Guild recruitment during 2022 was 18.3%, which was much higher than the membership body sector average of 12.5% and we think this is due to the reasons listed.



Value for money

Full Guild membership is very keenly priced and translates to just 23p a day. Compare that with a Latte coffee around £2.76!



Professional recognition

Our grades of membership recognise your professional qualifications and experience, helping your employer recognise your achievements. Our Member Directory helps members of the public seeking assessment or tuition to contact you.



Professional networking

Access the knowledge and expertise of the sector via the Guild forums and at our annual conference where you can link with researchers, peers and colleagues.



Discounts and special offers

DELL computers, Dyslexia Action Shop purchases, plus special offers on events such as our conference, and free exam access updates.



Assessment Practising Certificates

We are a SASC issuing body for APCs and we aim to make applications as stress-free as possible. We processed 138 applications, and 16% of our members currently hold an APC with us.



Sector news and insight

Access our regular electronic newsletter, Guild Gallery, plus our *Dyslexia Review*, twice a year.



Training and Continuous Professional Development

Specialist training, CPD, webinars and e-learning from Dyslexia Action and Real Training. Our Training courses team also offers advice on courses that help with career development.



Specialist services

A library that focuses on SpLD and test loan borrowing for those with the relevant qualifications. The library issued 200 books, and Assessment Kits were issued 557 times. E-books were accessed 43,583 times, and E-journals an impressive 42,642 times!



Excellent Customer Service

We value our members and are available to speak to you by phone or email for guidance or reassurance. We pride ourselves on our high standards that put you, our member, at the heart of everything we do.

Positive comments on Access

Arrangements videos:

"Thank you, how useful. This is much appreciated. KC".
"Dear Dr Smith, Thank you so very much for sharing this and thank you to Sophia Butler! This is a wonderful resource indeed. Best wishes. SM"

Positive comments on Dr Jenny Moody

Spelling article

"Thank you very much. We have been using the spelling toolbox and wordtorque, etymonline, as a specialist teaching service for some time. It's so lovely to see an article that puts it all together. JD"

Positive comments on the library:

"Dear Jan, Thank you so much for all your help and efficiency, it's a great service you run! JC". "The Guild was pivotal in my passing the APC last year through the support of the library and the guidance regarding CPD. KC"

Positive comments on our APC service:

"Thank you for sending through detailed feedback on my submission. May I take this opportunity to thank Dyslexia Action for providing thorough feedback on my two APC submissions. GM"

New tests now available in library, **Tests of Spelling, Processing Speed, and Reading Comprehension Speed (SPARCS)** and **Test of Information**

Processing Skills (TIPS). Full Range Test of Visual Motor Integration (FRTVMI), and we hope to add a version of **Wide Range Assessment**

of Memory and Learning (WRAML) in the near future, when we know more about the STEC reviews of WRAML battery in its newest third edition.



The Dyslexia Compass

Martin Bloomfield of York Associates has been leading on a European Union funded project called *The Dyslexia Compass* (www.DyslexiaCompass.eu), a tool to “translate” dyslexia measurements and assessments across Europe. Here he tells us about the outcomes of his research.

Dyslexia knows no barriers. Or so we would like to think. It knows no borders, it knows no countries, and it knows no race. Dyslexia is neurological. Dyslexia is hereditary. Dyslexia is human. Dyslexia is neither political nor religious. Dyslexia is ethnically neutral. Or so we would like to think.

Consider the following question: if a child is dyslexic, is she dyslexic everywhere she lives? Can she “lose” her dyslexia when her parents simply move house to follow work, or to escape difficult socio-economic or political situations at home?

One would imagine not. But a project called *The Dyslexia Compass* shows that this isn’t obviously the case. And it’s not obviously the case because different countries, different cultures, and different assessment bodies, cannot agree on what dyslexia is or how to measure it. The child’s

neurology may not change, it’s true. But her diagnosis of dyslexia might!

The Dyslexia Compass was a European Union funded project, born out of a recognition that globally, people with dyslexia are being under-served – educationally, socially, economically and politically – and that this could partially be traced to a lack of international (and in many cases national) agreement on how to identify and measure levels of dyslexia.

Without a consistent methodology for measuring dyslexia, coupled with a consistent understanding of what is being measured, on the one hand, individuals moving from one region to another have been known to “lose” their dyslexia recognition, as different states recognise different things; while on the other hand, targeted support and intervention will be unreliable, with resources that cannot be consistently and universally agreed upon being allocated to services that cannot be

consistently and universally agreed upon. And this isn’t simply a concern for the education system, as studies indicate a strong connection between dyslexia, academic under-achievement, and unemployment, poverty, trauma, substance abuse, homelessness, mental health issues and suicide. The economic costs of undiagnosed dyslexia have also been the subject of numerous studies, and run into billions of pounds per year. Where different regions are providing differently for dyslexia based on differently perceived numbers of dyslexics, the natural conclusion to draw is that inequalities will increase, and the aforementioned social problems associated with poorly-served dyslexia will only become more deeply ingrained.

Within the United Kingdom alone, dyslexia provision is fragmented, with each of the constituent nations offering different help through structures that are not always satisfactorily “joined up”.

In Wales, for instance, each of the 22 authorities offer different support at Primary and Secondary school; diagnostics are routinely carried out in English but there is no specific Welsh-language testing; and there is not one centrally (and universally) recognised dyslexia organisation to serve the whole country.

Looking at Britain as a whole, figures for how many dyslexics there are range between 4% of the population estimated as having “severe” dyslexia to a general consensus of 10%, possibly rising to 15%, being on the dyslexia spectrum (although see *Dyslexia Review*, 32, 1, p.20). The difference between 10% and 15% of the UK population (5%) is roughly 3.35 million people. This is more than the combined populations of Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow, Sheffield, Edinburgh and York, who may or may not have dyslexia, depending on which figures we accept.

In Germany, each federal state measures the number of dyslexic people differently (from just over 1% of the population to over 15% of the population). In Bavaria dyslexia has been labelled an “incurable illness”. This is not a label applied in many other German states. And interestingly, in the Netherlands, while the Dutch Ministry of Education showed that in primary schools, between 10% and 19% of the students had a dyslexia statement, and in pre-vocational schools about 20% of the final exam students had dyslexia, one study revealed that only about 5% of minority ethnic children were regarded as dyslexic. This could be down to many factors, for instance cultural factors or language bias, but without any studies to show what those factors are, all figures have to be taken sensitively, and the overall picture of dyslexia in the Netherlands has to be viewed with caution.

Transnationally, the European Dyslexia Association estimates that between 5% and 12% of the population of Europe is dyslexic, while the European Commission released a report in 2013 stating that a mere 3.3% of the block’s population are dyslexic. As we can see, the disparities are significant. What is clear from the figures – dry as they may seem to some! – is that there is something approaching

an international crisis in dyslexia awareness. Different “official” bodies do not agree on what dyslexia is. Different national bodies measure dyslexia differently, arriving at wildly different conclusions regarding how many people have the condition. There is complexity and confusion in the figures because internationally, no one has apparently got to grips with what they are measuring, and how to measure for it. And finally, there is no agreement on what constitutes best practice when assessing children for dyslexia. Something, clearly, needed to be done.

The Dyslexia Compass research focused mainly, though not exclusively, on Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Romania, Croatia, Germany, Austria, Spain and the UK. While not every European country is included in this list, there is at least a broad selection from both EU and non-EU nations, and from the north, the south, the east, the west, and central Europe. This allowed participants in the project to draw reasonable conclusions about the broad applicability of the results to the continent as a whole.

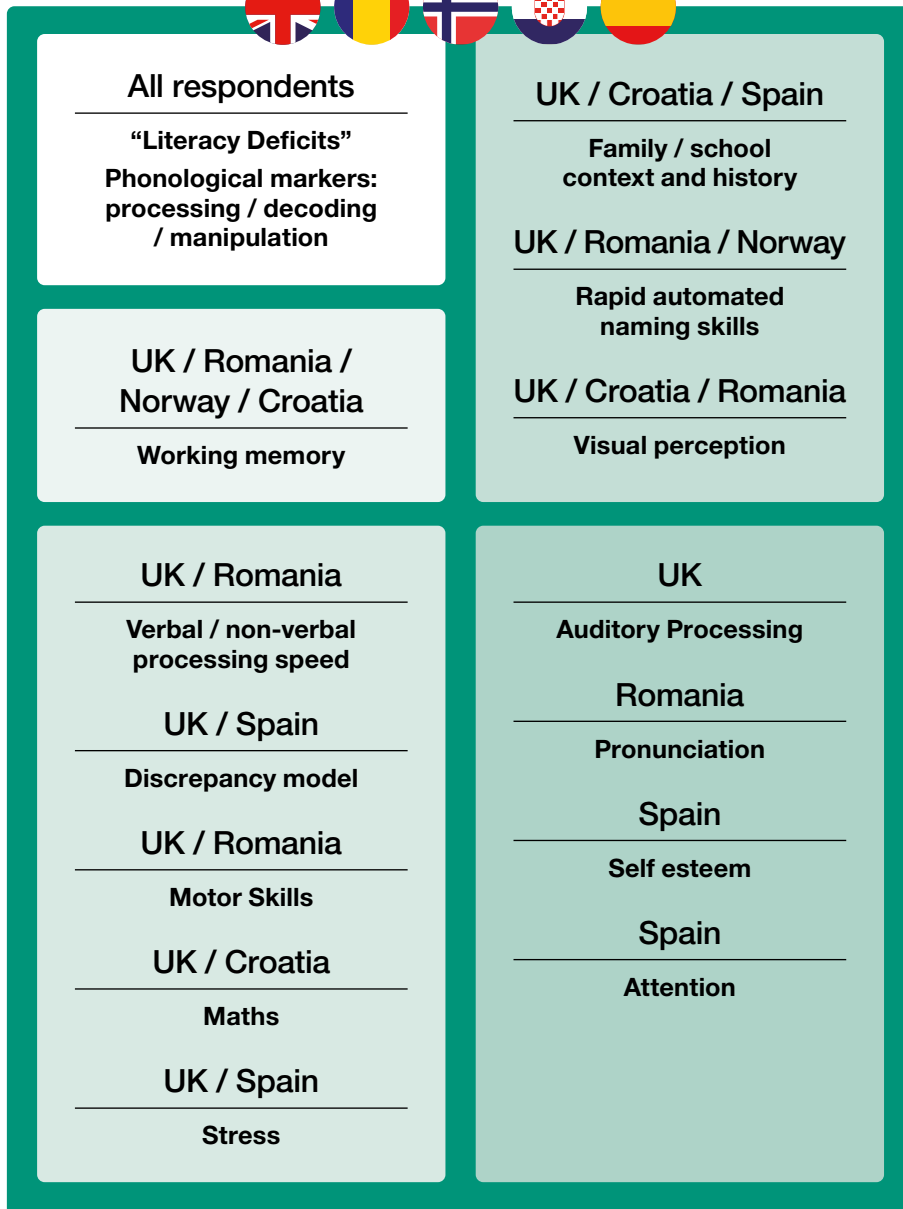
Any argument saying that the differences are reflections on national orthographies fails when confronted with countries such as Germany, Romania and the Scandinavian nations, who each show considerable variation in figures within their own borders, among children who speak the same language; and Ghana, Hungary, Ireland and the Czech Republic, who don’t share similar orthographies but whose reported figures all hover at a remarkably similar level (approximately 10%). In other words, the differences are down to measurement criteria, not language.

Part of *The Dyslexia Compass’s* research was to examine what it is that different diagnosticians have been measuring, how they’ve been measuring them, and indeed why they believe it’s important to measure these things at all. The results are enlightening, if sometimes shocking.

In terms of the tests that practitioners use, the UK is way out ahead of its European counterparts, with the possible SASC-approved tools covering many pages, while Norway, for example, uses only one tool and Romania has no standardised testing mechanisms at all. The overlap of *how* diagnosticians in different countries test for dyslexia is, therefore, negligible. In a pan-European survey of five different countries, what the practitioners were looking for differed in interesting ways, too.

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We can therefore classify (almost) all definitions of dyslexia as falling into three distinct, though connected, categories:

Cause (in other words, where it comes from), including:

- Neurobiological
- Neurological
- Developmental
- Gene-conditional
- Constitutional
- Inherited

Manifest (in other words, what it affects), including:

- Phonological decoding
- Literacy
- Cognition
- Reading
- Information processing
- Sensory perception

Value (in other words, whether it is seen positively or negatively), including:

- Disability
- Difference
- Difficulty
- Disorder
- Deficiency
- Inefficiency

It may be that where one diagnostician understands dyslexia to be a developmental (cause) reading (manifest) deficiency (value), another may understand it to be an inherited (cause) phonological (manifest) disorder (value). Stood side-by-side, we see a developmental reading deficiency vs an inherited phonological disorder.

These differences are not unimportant. It may be that the various definitions aren't technically incompatible; but as soon as we realise that they're not the same, we begin to understand why tests in one national context look for one thing, while tests in another national context look for something else. In other words, different people around the world might well say that they're all testing for dyslexia, but where they're using [a] different tools to test for [b] different characteristics (phonological processing, verbal working memory, visual perception, rapid automated naming

So, while all respondents mentioned an interest in various types of “literacy deficit” and phonological markers as being important in assessing for dyslexia, only four showed an interest in working memory, three (and in each case three different groups of respondents) showed an interest in family and social context and background, rapid automating naming skills, and visual perception, two (and in each case two different groups of respondents) who showed an interest in verbal / non-verbal processing speed, motor skills, maths skills, and stress levels during testing, and there was a number of supposed dyslexic characteristics that only respondents from single nations showed an interest in. The graphic above illustrates these differences.

What this demonstrates is that there is a huge discrepancy in what different practitioners are looking for, based in part on their initial understanding of what dyslexia is.

In the UK, for instance, when questioned about what dyslexia is, the vast majority of respondents agreed that it was a learning difference grounded in how the brain processes information differently from other, non-dyslexic brains. In Spain and Croatia, it was described in terms of reading *difficulties* rather than learning *differences*. Norwegians tended to favour more psychologically-based descriptions, focusing on phonological processing and verbal working memory. Other national diagnosticians felt differently again, often adopting a *deficit*-based model.



To find out more about *The Dyslexia Compass*, please visit the website here, and watch for upcoming developments! <https://dyslexiacompass.eu/>

skills...) based on [c] different perceptions of what dyslexia is, then it shouldn't surprise anyone that the official statistics for how many dyslexics there are in different countries diverge so much.

Other considerations that needed to be taken into account included sociological dimensions. Crucial to understanding the variety of interests, methodologies and tools used from country to country, is understanding the context that they are used within. What was sauce for the goose in one context may not have been sauce for the gander in another. Relevant considerations included (but were by no means restricted to) what influence gender is seen to have on the prevalence of dyslexia, what influence ethnicity might have on the likelihood of a dyslexia diagnosis, what influence second language orthography might have on measuring dyslexia, what the cost of a dyslexia test is in different regions, whether wealth is a factor in the demographic breakdown of dyslexia diagnoses, what social attitudes exist towards dyslexia, and whether the measurements given are in some way (and to what extent) "official".

Each of these considerations provided a different backdrop for each of the countries studied: some nations had a more diverse ethnic make-up than others, some countries were wealthier than others, some countries had different attitudes towards gender differences, some countries had very different orthographies between their

different (official and unofficial but widely used) languages and dialects. No understanding of the differences in dyslexia measurements across borders could ignore these issues, and the possible implications drawn from the findings.

Of these considerations, it was felt that some sensitive topics were reflected upon. Where the most sensitive were concerned, it's notable that there was no continent-wide consensus on whether there was an impact, or indeed what kind of impact the considerations had. For instance, no agreement could be found concerning the role gender plays in dyslexia figures, other than that there were more boys *diagnosed* than girls. Strong opinions, however, were voiced on either side of the dyslexia-gender debate. Where ethnicity was concerned, the conclusion had to be that ethnicity certainly plays a part in making any national figures questionable from the perspective of universal reliability, but what part it plays was not by any means clear, only that ethnicity concerns must be taken seriously, and that the difference that is sometimes uncovered in dyslexia assessments among different ethnic groups should make any researcher treat official statistics with some caution.

What became obvious is that where there is both over- and under-representation of different ethnic groups in dyslexia statementing, and these differences are not solely traceable to (for instance) genetic or orthographic factors; and where socio-economic factors influencing academic achievement and the likelihood of dyslexia accommodation being given to different ethnic groups in similar situations is complex and does not paint the same picture from one region to another, then disparities in dyslexia assessments between different ethnic groups must at some point be addressed.

The Dyslexia Compass made important inroads into understanding what lies behind these differences, with a view to helping "translate" one dyslexia assessment (in one country) into something that can be understandable in a different national context.

And there is light at the end of the tunnel. The significant overlaps that were identified between the countries that were studied hint at potential alignments that may otherwise have been hard to discover. The hope is, therefore, that the information taken from the Compass can be used to help align national dyslexia measurements. And if this can happen, perhaps at last, there can be a consistent, targeted, transnational approach to addressing dyslexia in such a way that no one need ever "lose their dyslexia" again, and everyone, regardless of where they live in the world, can feel that they can be served equally, effectively, and with understanding.



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Opening Up India for Neurodiversity, and creating ICReSTeD



Amita Amlani Kenyon,
Specialist teacher & Assessor,
writes for *Dyslexia Review*

At least one in 10 people in the UK may have dyslexia and although this number is difficult to verify (Houalla N, 2022), a significant proportion will be able or gifted. India has a population of 1.4 billion (Worldometer, 2023), with a much less developed diagnostic infrastructure than the UK, and therefore stands to lose out, with a significant proportion of students unable to maximise their potential in India's workforce. Each year this represents a lost generation; something that India has a moral and economic duty to address. As a part of its role as Executive Director for UNESCO Executive Board (2021), India has agreed that it will act upon the contents of 'The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016' from 2021 to 2025 (Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Dept. of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, 2016).

Closing this gap in attainment is going to be a major challenge, and with this in mind we decided to help put in place a programme of support for all schools across India to help kickstart the journey by enabling schools to screen, evaluate, and provide intervention for literacy difficulties. This programme will be targeted at independent, charity and state schools.

Our stories

My parents are of Indian Heritage and came to England from Kenya when I was eight months old.

About 15 years ago, after a successful career in technology, I switched careers and became a Specialist teacher and Assessor for Specific Learning Differences, and am passionate about making a difference in the lives of children. More recently, I have begun to think about how to give back, with a strong sense of purpose about how I might make a difference in my homeland.

Roslyn Anne McCarthy (Ros) has worked in Education all her working life, and this includes working as a Specialist teacher and Assessor for Specific Learning Differences for the past 30 years. She also acts as a

consultant for CReSTeD, where she assesses and advises schools on best practice for those students that require additional support. She cares deeply about the welfare of the young people she works with and has worked in an advisory capacity for a school in India.

Our mission

Our mission is ambitious, and ultimately intended to raise standards and enable schools across India to be recognised for the quality of support they make available to students with Specific Learning Differences. Equally important, is the goal to enable parents to make informed decisions about where to educate their children, selecting the best institutes with the right blend of academic rigour and learning support. We want to help close the gap that would otherwise mean that many students are left unsupported. As part of this mission, we wanted to establish a Centre of Excellence for Specific Learning Differences in India at Atria University.



How did we prepare?

It took nearly four years to prepare, starting in March 2019. By March 2020 we were actually ready to roll out our pilot project in Southern India, just when the Covid-19 pandemic started to hit, and this meant a complete rethink of our plans.

We managed to use these intervening three years to explore many additional educational opportunities, the potential for additional fundraising, a deeper understanding of the education system, government policies, and establishing a broad team of advisors.

To make progress during the pandemic, we decided that our programme could initially be started remotely. This then meant preparing materials, so that we were able to do dry runs of our screening and evaluation processes, on a remote basis, for schools we initially identified as good candidates.

The next obstacle we faced, again due to the pandemic, was the loss of our pilot site. The school we had initially selected and worked closely with for months in Southern India, was no longer able to fund their part of this project, and for extended periods the children and teachers were sent home, without remote access.

To keep the project moving forward we met with many overseas principals, school boards and trustees, using remote sessions to India, and some face-to-face meetings in London. These interactions really helped to solidify our thinking and we made many good contacts. We also improved and fine-tuned our proposition, and managed to convince a number of school principals of the detrimental impact on students left unsupported. With the general lack of awareness around learning support this unsurprisingly proved to be a major challenge.

A key aspect of the success of the whole project was finding a local sponsor at Atria University, as well

as the UK educational organisations, including CReSTeD, Imperial College, Patoss and Dyslexia Guild, and ultimately gaining the support of the Indian government. Several fund-raising attempts were made along the way, and some amazingly met with success!

By December 2022 we also managed to assemble an impressive board of advisors, and the idea of a new organisation was formulated, affiliated with CReSTeD, which we named as the International Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Pupils (ICReSTeD), to reflect the overseas scope of our mission.

Reorientating our objectives

By December 2022 our two key objectives for our first visit were to establish the programme of support at the university in Bangalore, and at our nominated secondary school in Mysore. However, two weeks prior to leaving the UK it became apparent that it would be unlikely that our programme would go ahead at the university, as the key directors were called out of town during our stay to follow up on urgent work.

By now, as you can imagine, we were quite used to dealing with late surprises! These setbacks meant rethinking plans with the university, and after some discussions we decided to run a series of remote and onsite workshops for schools, aimed at principals and their learning support staff, to explain the full scope and impact of the work to be carried out at the I CAN Secondary school in Mysore, and how they might benefit. These workshops were also intended to be used as an opportunity to explore their specific challenges, needs and interest levels in relation to Specific Learning Differences.

Travelling to Mysore

We landed in Bangalore on 7th January 2023, and on the 8th Ros and I set off on our journey to the beautiful city of Mysore

(also known as the yoga hub of India), filled with excitement, nerves, apprehension, and some jet lag. The journey by taxi took over four hours, travelling southwest of Bangalore to the foothills of the Chamundi Hills.

Establishing our Pilots at the I CAN Primary and Secondary Schools

On 9th January we started work with the I CAN Primary and Secondary schools and ran our programme over the following two weeks. Even with good planning we found ourselves having to work very late into the nights and during the weekends, and were grateful for the wonderful support and cooperation from all the staff, students and parents throughout our stay.

We gained a complete understanding of the schools' existing Learning Support structure, scheduled classroom observations for each of the key year groups and arranged sessions for raising awareness for Specific Learning Differences. This was then followed with training for staff to enable them to carry out Level 1 group screening, which included tests for speed of writing, reading comprehension and spellings. The staff were then able to administer as well as score the student tests for each of their classes.

Additional training was then offered to carefully selected staff, to enable them to carry out Level 2 Educational Evaluations independently. This part of the training relied on the nominated staff having the opportunity to observe, at a distance, two Full Educational Evaluations, which were administered by Ros and myself. To conclude our programme, all staff were gathered and trained to demonstrate how two individual students that were screened at Level 2 might be best supported.



A key aspect of the success of the whole project was finding a local sponsor at Atria University, as well as the UK educational organisations, including CReSTeD, Imperial College, Patoss and Dyslexia Guild.



Some light relief

During our first weekend at the I CAN Schools, we were invited to help out with preparations for the weekend events such as 'The Children's Food Markets'. This included making marigold garlands, a very popular flower in India representing the sun, symbolising brightness and positive energy. All of the food was brought in from the children's home farmlands, and all money raised was used to support the school. Watching the children happily take part in their sports days, as well as observing and being able to taste some of the children's culinary skills, was also a real treat for us.

On the evening of 17th January Ros and I visited the stunning Mysore Palace, built in the 19th century by British architect Henry Irwin, which was just a short taxi ride from the school. This is a working palace, the home of the Prince and Princess of Mysore, together with their son, who coincidentally attends the I CAN school.

Our stay in Mysore was a very rewarding and uplifting experience, and these breakout sessions introduced some fun and much needed relief from the heavy workload. It felt very much like Ros and I were part of a much bigger family! The kindness of the staff, and all the wonderful children at the schools, made our hard work so worthwhile.

Establishing a Centre of Excellence at Atria University

The second phase of our stay focussed on establishing the ICReSTeD Centre of Excellence at Atria University in Bangalore. With this in mind, it was decided that all workshops be hosted and run from the university campus.

We spent two weeks on campus, and it was during our stay here that we were able to see first-hand the much talked about number of educational institutes that are housed in Bangalore.

In every street, every corner, so many schools, colleges and universities! What really stood out throughout all of our stay was the importance and cultural emphasis on education. Bangalore is considered one of the main educational and technology hubs in India and is the second most student-friendly city after Mumbai.

During our first week on campus, we generated marketing materials and reached out to many school principals and learning support departments. We met with university staff and students to understand the current learning support structure and challenges. We were also able to assess if any of the existing staff might be suited to take on responsibilities to help scale the programme across to other schools in India during subsequent visits.

One of the highlights of this week was a demonstration of the university's impressive course learning platform, 'Xcelerator', which enables each student to have a completely customised education journey, based around their preferred learning styles. Ros and I carried out observations across a number of courses, to better understand how course materials were being delivered. We also met with lecturers and students to understand how students were coping with the course delivery and how they might make it known to the staff if they were struggling, and how lecturers might identify students that were falling

behind. We found these sessions extremely helpful. We concluded by agreeing that ICReSTeD could use Xcelerator to develop course materials as well as automating areas of assessment and report writing. Other discussions included the idea of using Machine Learning to analyse data, which we would be looking to collect whilst working on this project.

At the end of the first week, I was asked to present our programme, and strategic goals, to the Vice Chancellor of Education, the government minister responsible for 500 universities across India. Our presentation went very well (despite problems with the presentation equipment) and was received very positively, with several side meetings and hushed discussions with advisors taking place. We concluded by agreeing to continue to work together and to plan a presentation of our programme to all 500 universities.





During our second week at Atria University, we began running our workshops. All of these were held face-to-face on campus, with eight school principals and their learning support staff travelling in to attend. We had a number of schools that also wished to attend but could not on these dates and these we intend to follow up with separately. As a part of these workshops, we were able to present our goals, and describe the programme of work in more detail, citing the work done at the I CAN Schools as our proof of concept.

These sessions were highly interactive, with attendees able to help us understand their specific needs and challenges. We were able to walk away from the workshops with a clear understanding of priorities and follow-up actions based on these inputs.

On our final weekend I had a chance meeting with the Director of the Ryan International Group of Educational Institutes, responsible for over 150 secondary level schools across Mumbai, Dubai, and Australia. We discussed the project objectives, and we agreed to follow-up conversations to consider extending the project for the schools under his control.

At the end of our two weeks in Bangalore, Ros and I left the university filled with a feeling of optimism and a great sense of achievement, which was

reciprocated by all those at the university. Together, Ros and I had whole-heartedly shared our combined knowledge with those we met in India. Had we achieved all that we set out to and had hoped for? Was this to be the end of our journey? Despite many setbacks and having to pivot around a pandemic we do feel that we achieved much of what we had set out to do, partly through planning, and partly through good fortune. The director of Atria University remarked that “we have achieved over and above what he expected”.

So what happens now?

We agreed with the director of Atria University that during the next few months we would regroup, collect all our thoughts and observations, and explore how we might best continue the work through to scale, and secure appropriate funding. We also plan to reach out to all levels of educational institutes across India, Dubai and Australia with the aim of extending our programme of support beyond Mysore.

We also plan to reach out to all levels of educational institutes across India, Dubai and Australia with the aim of extending our programme of support beyond Mysore.

We plan to continue to work closely with those universities and schools identified during our first visit, which includes schools in the south-central Karnataka state of southern India. Atria University and ICReSTeD will be working closely together to secure additional funds from larger corporates and small to medium sized businesses in India.

Now back in the UK and still reflecting on what we were able to achieve, I'm reminded how fortunate we were to be able to meet with so many professionals who shared the same level of passion we both have for the work that we do here in the UK. We left India having established our proof of concept at the I CAN Schools, and our centre of excellence with Atria University, and with the knowledge that we now have an extended family who continue to give so much of their energy to promote the dreams of children.

Acknowledgements

This vision would not have been realised without the continued support and encouragement from close friends and family, and the kindness, hospitality and trust placed in us from all those at the I CAN schools and The Atria University. Without this we would not have been able to turn this project into such a positive and affirming experience, and for this we thank you all.



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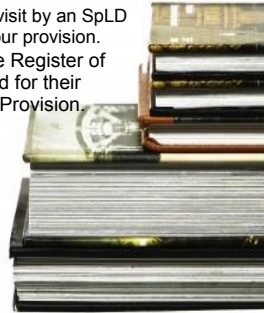
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Kathleen Hickey Scholarship Winner

Dyslexia Action celebrated a 50th Anniversary last year and launched the scholarship to celebrate the pioneering teacher training methods developed by Kathleen Hickey.

We catch up with Melissa Whitley, the scholarship winner, since she started training on the Diploma in Specialist Teaching for Literacy-related Difficulties at the start of this year. Melissa works at an infants' school in West Yorkshire.

I have taught children with literacy difficulties for many years. I'm very lucky, it's a wonderful way to spend my day. Over the years I've found myself becoming fascinated with how children learn to read and why some seem to grasp it effortlessly while others struggle. Teaching a systematic phonic scheme is effective for the majority of children I teach, but for others I sometimes question whether I've done enough and whether a different approach would have suited them better.

While researching literacy problems, it became apparent that there is a lack of specialist training for teachers within schools and frustrated parents were at a loss with how to help their children. With this in mind I've been determined to find out more. It really saddens me to hear about adults who have struggled through school, not realising that their problems were due to dyslexia and who probably could have been helped with a better understanding of how to teach them.

As funding a level 5 course is out of my reach at the minute, I have only been able to complete some basic training. When I discovered there was the possibility of a scholarship I jumped at the chance – my fingers have never moved so fast across a keyboard. For me, the application took little effort; it's very easy to write about something you feel so passionate about. So then I waited, with everything



'Miss Hickey's clear understanding of the importance of thorough and competence-based teacher training shines through in many of her writings.'
(Cochrane, 2021)

crossed, I'd no idea whether I was even in with a chance.

When the email came through from Anna Smith I just couldn't believe it! I was over the moon and had a little dance round the kitchen. An exciting chat with Anna and Julie Trisnan followed, and now here we are, all set to go!

I'm so thankful to be given this opportunity. I'm hoping that by completing this course I can help children fulfil their potential, improve their life chances and ultimately their happiness.

Firstly, what a fabulous and interesting course this is! I'm thoroughly enjoying the content and finding myself eager to complete each task, just so I can find out what the next one is.

Q What is most interesting about the Diploma course you are studying with Dyslexia Action?

By far the most interesting thing is realising just how little we know about dyslexia. It's clear to me now how dyslexia affects learners in so many different ways that we simply don't understand.

I completely appreciate the frustration of parents who presume all teachers are trained to teach children with dyslexia and co-occurring difficulties, but that sadly isn't the case.

Q What is most challenging?

To be perfectly honest, when the course went live, I was faced with so many different components, my initial reaction was to panic. It was just a bit overwhelming for a non-techy person like me to navigate around the Moodle learning platform. So, I took a deep breath, gave myself a talking to, and slowly and systematically got to grips with it.

Q How are you fitting things into your schedule?

I'm not the most organised person in the world, and actually, while reading about how some people struggle with organisation and executive

functioning, I thought to myself, that's me! So ironically, I've been using some of the strategies from the course to help me plan and organise myself!

I'll be honest, it's a bit like spinning plates at the moment and I'm dropping a few from time to time, mainly the housework plate, but the good thing is that with the course being online I can pick and choose my time to study.

I'm so keen to learn everything, I keep getting ahead of myself by asking my lovely online tutor about things we haven't even covered yet.

Q What are you looking forward to?

That's an easy one – trying out some of the new teaching methods with the children.

I can't wait! I'm so keen to learn everything, I keep getting ahead of myself by asking my lovely online tutor about things we haven't even covered yet!

So, all in all, yes, a bit less sleep, a messy house, I can't remember what my husband looks like, and my friends are running for the hills at the very mention of dyslexia! But as I said to my work colleagues the other day, this is such an interesting and thought provoking course, all teachers, regardless of who they teach, should do it. Imagine if this kind of teaching was available to all learners!



Further Information

Cochrane, G. (2021) Miss Hickey – More than a cameo role? *Dyslexia Review* 31(2) p.12-16.

For details on becoming a specialist teacher:
<https://rb.gy/2wzgz>



A Study of Mentoring: An Enquiry research project



Glorious Samkelisiwe Mqadi has recently finished the Enquiry Module, the final step in gaining her Masters in Education. Here she describes her action research project about the impact of mentoring on teachers.

Growing up in South Africa, I realised the education system in my country does not favour learners with learning differences, particularly those with dyslexia. This has been the driving force which ignited a burning desire in me to find means of ameliorating the learning standards of those learners. Enrolling in the Master of Arts in Leading Inclusive Education programme with Middlesex University and Real Training brought me a step closer to imparting and implementing change in the education sector.

I am currently working in the eastern part of South Korea, in a small public elementary school with 20 teachers and 230 pupils. I have been at the school for three years as the only teacher from overseas, while all other staff are Korean. The school has a good support system for learners, with practices that enhance their Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. However, staff are less supported, as suggested by



the high attrition rate of approximately five teachers a year. As part of my Enquiry Module research plan, this observation seemed important to explore, in my current setting but also universally. I decided to develop and evaluate a mentoring programme within my setting.

According to Eric Parsloe, from The Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring, the purpose of mentoring is to “support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.” (University of Glasgow, unknown date). Hudson (2013) examined the impact mentoring has on teachers’ practice through surveys and interviews, concluding that the provision of this kind of support has a wo-way effect: improving teaching in the newly qualified and allowing for reflection on mentors’ own teaching practices. Mentoring seems especially important when working with children with learning difficulties

such as dyslexia. McLachlan and Davis (2013) showed that supporting and developing specialist teachers improves confidence and teaching skills, and enhances relationships between teachers and learners, leading to more effective learning. Mentoring should be carried out carefully, however, and some studies report that mentoring can have a deleterious effect. It is crucial to value and respect mentees’ abilities and ideas (Cross et al., 2019); develop clear goals and maintain realistic time frames (Starr, 2013); and control emotions (Abetang, Oguma and Abetang, 2020). Straus, Johnson and Marquez (2013) report that a competitive mindset, lack of communication and/or commitment, conflicts of interest and inexperienced mentors are all reasons why mentoring might fail.

I planned my research carefully, observing the teaching practice of participants before introducing my mentoring programme, and then gathering the same observations after a set period with my programme in place, so that I could measure any changes in practice. I also interviewed staff members before and after the mentoring period.

My observations were of two kinds: either curriculum-based, where I noted behaviours such as how well prepared teachers were or how frequently they walked around the classroom; or observations were concerned with psychosocial factors and included noting humour levels when interacting with pupils, or confidence levels when teaching.

I developed a six-week mentoring programme centred around these two dimensions. Every week I would introduce different strategies for teachers to implement, based on the areas that they wanted to address. Each week teachers provided feedback about what strategies were most effective and they had opportunities to suggest alternatives. Consequently, strategies that worked were kept, and the less effective ones were replaced. For the psychosocial dimension, I used different motivations to enhance teachers' wellbeing and confidence, based on Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory of motivation (1977).

To keep me on track and to ensure that the programme was achieving its intended objectives, I completed Gibbs's Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988) on a weekly basis and met with the Vice Principal frequently for quality checks.

The interview data was also very useful, as it gave me an opportunity to understand how teachers felt in response to my mentoring programme.

My observation data revealed that after mentoring, teaching skills ratings increased from 3.5 to 4.2, an approximate increase of 20%, and the psychosocial scores increased from 3.9 to 4.6, with an increase of approximately 17%. While I can't be certain that this was because of my mentoring intervention, the overall observational score changes were significant at a level of $p=.001$.

The interview data was also very useful, as it gave me an opportunity to understand how teachers felt in response to my mentoring programme. I analysed responses according to themes including:

- **confidence levels**, associated with:
 - the ability to differentiate instructions
 - relationships with students and teachers
- **teaching skills**, associated with:
 - the ability to differentiate instructions
 - improved job satisfaction
- **wellbeing**, associated with:
 - perceived support

One of my mentees stated that they had "found differentiation of instruction useful to my career and my life in general as I am now happier and slowly falling in love with the teaching profession."

Another commented that "the programme was effective because even though I am a special needs teacher I realised that there are strategies I overlooked which were very helpful in the classroom."

One participant stated at first that she wasn't keen to take part as she did not believe mentoring would make a difference. Despite her reluctance, towards the end of the project she began to remind me of our mentoring sessions and also started attending school gatherings; this change was very rewarding for me to observe.

Naturally, the usual limitations apply: my sample size of four was very small and I knew all of the participants, so may have been unconsciously biased, emphasising or ignoring detail. Also, perhaps participants told me what I wanted to hear: that the mentoring was beneficial. I would also like to have explored the long-term outcomes of mentoring: I wonder if effects are strong at first but may not last over a longer period of mentoring. However, I feel confident that my study shows that mentoring can enhance wellbeing and improve teaching practice and, who knows, it may help to reduce attrition rate in the long term.

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Neurodiverse Students, Ableism and HE as Sites of Exclusion



Gill Porter, Specialist Study Skills / Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) Tutor and Member of the Dyslexia Guild, tells us about her research into the study experiences of neurodiverse students in Higher Education.

Background

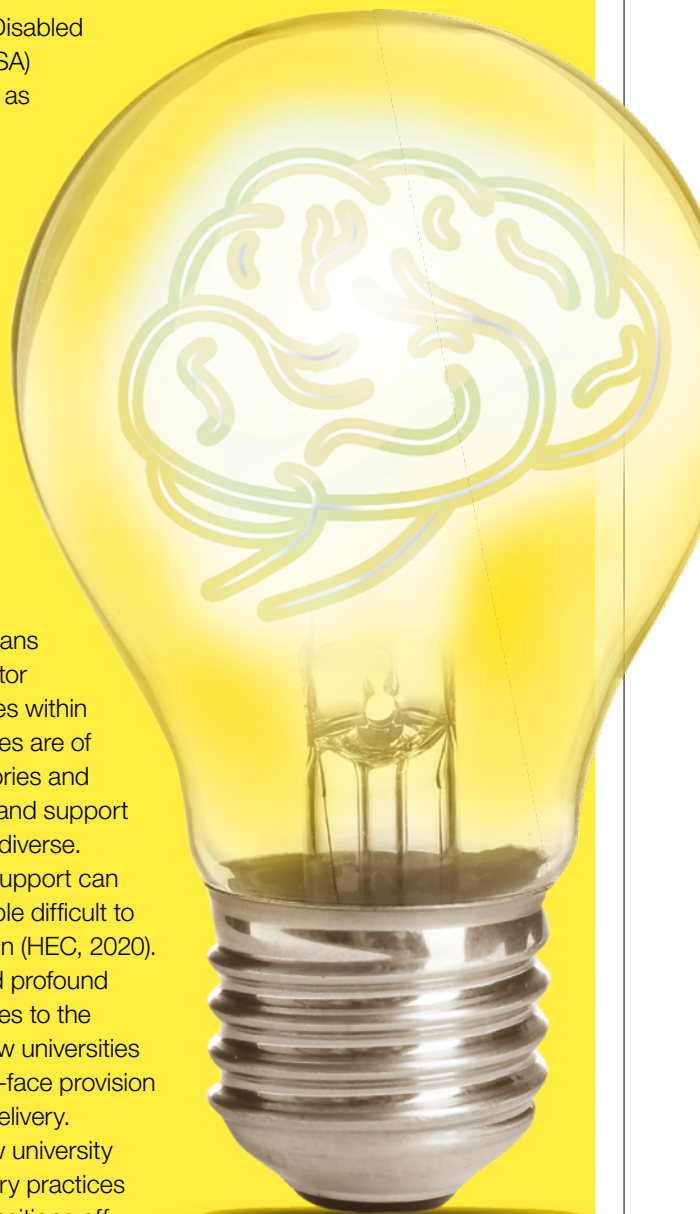
Covid-19 meant I began working across an increased number of Higher Education (HE) institutions via online freelance work. During 2021/22 I also studied a Masters in Disability Studies, submitting a dissertation, the title of which is 'Examining the effects of pedagogical changes during the academic years 2019-2022 on the study experiences of final year neurodiverse undergraduate students: are there lessons to be learned from the Covid-19 epidemic?'. Having now worked across around 30 institutions, I continue to hear students' stories of institutions' exclusionary practices and although these are anecdotal, they are common.

The research

The HE model developed to support neurodiverse and disabled students has largely been responsive to changing legislature. Hence, although universities declare philosophical commitment to the social model of disability, their processes are established on an individualised, medical model, with the non-disabled student established as the 'norm'. As such, this has led to 'retrofitting' existing systems and structures (Dolmage, 2017), resulting in parallel systems of disability support and academic provision. In recent years, instigated by reduced resourcing

of government-funded Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and direction from such as the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group (DSSLG) (2017), universities have been tasked to move towards more inclusive pedagogies at philosophical and policy levels – with varying levels of success at practical levels. With inclusion interpreted broadly and left to institutions to determine implementation, this means disparity across the sector as well as inconsistencies within institutions. As universities are of such varying sizes, histories and demographics, access and support across them is similarly diverse. Thus, trying to access support can be a geographical gamble difficult to anticipate pre-application (HEC, 2020).

At a time of rapid and profound change, sector responses to the COVID-19 pandemic saw universities adapt traditional face-to-face provision to online and blended delivery. My study examined how university systems and exclusionary practices were perpetuated in transitions off and online during the pandemic.



A note on neurodiversity / participants

As debates persist regarding identification of neurodiversity, this was a limited exercise to set parameters for the research, where 'neurodiversity' was used to cover students identified with: Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (AD(H)D), Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), dyspraxia, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and/or with overlapping profiles

across these. The study also acknowledged tensions across and within these identifications. However, these constitute the largest numbers of students who disclose and seek DSA support and numbers have continued to rise (AdvanceHE, 2021). Both participants identified as neurodiverse and were in receipt of DSA funded support.

It critiqued the notion that, although extensive, rapid changes proved possible for the 'default' non-disabled student, for neurodiverse students, adoption of truly inclusive practices remains slow. Further, despite the Disabled Students UK's (DSUK) (2022) paper, 'Going back is not a choice' calling for institutions not to return to 'normal', as campuses reopened and pre-pandemic modes of delivery resumed, some enabling provisions introduced during the pandemic – and which collaterally supported neurodiverse students – had already started to be removed.

Research design

With the Disability Rights Movement mantra – 'Nothing about us without us' – as a core value, the study suited qualitative, exploratory research centrally situating neurodiverse students' voices. I recruited two students to my study and this was a limitation, as I would have preferred more. However, recruitment was challenging at a time prospective participants had their own demands of study.

Findings

Several themes emerged:

- varied responses to what the Disabled Students' Commission (DSC, 2022a, p.22) called "online learning: pandemic Marmite"
- overlooking and overburdening neurodiverse and disabled students for continued hybrid delivery
- including neurodiverse and disabled students at design stages
- needing voices to be heard.

Discussion included participants' insights into their lived experiences. For broader representation these are situated alongside voices of neurodiverse and disabled students



from studies and reports from such as DSUK and the DSC as well as wider literature. This is a complex area; hence this is a brief snapshot of some of the study's findings.

Pandemic Marmite

- one participant hated online delivery
- one enjoyed new opportunities and modes of study

With Covid-19 came the sector-wide lockdown of March 2020 and entire institutions moving online. Prior to this, studying remotely – despite requests by neurodiverse and disabled students – had not been widely possible in universities with traditional pedagogies.

However, Covid-19 also exacerbated "existing inequalities, with disabled students continuing to face unprecedented challenges" (DSC, 2022a, p.13). Of 2,885 neurodiverse and disabled students sampled, 83.67% agreed the pandemic negatively impacted academic progress and presented additional challenges (ANMHP,

2021, p.5). Across off and online transitions, "the overarching pattern is that disabled students are de-prioritised" (DSUK, 2022, p.38).

Overlooked/overburdened

- although satisfied with Study Skills Tutors / Learning Mentors, course contact varied off and online
- both felt continually having to self-advocate for academic provisions that should have been in place, meant they did more additional work than their neurotypical peers
- both were unsure if changes were made to a Learning Support Plan (LSP) or reasonable accommodations through transitions off and online

Although of 2,885 neurodiverse and disabled students surveyed, 68.85% said they felt online delivery of their DSA supported their learning (ANMHP, 2021), it remained "frustrating that different parts of the university did not talk to each other... so I often found myself having to explain

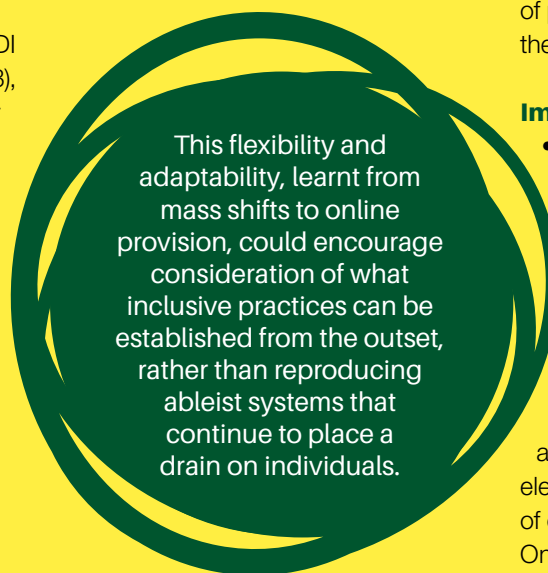
from scratch what my situation was.” (DSC, 2022a, p.21). ‘LSPs’ and reasonable accommodations form part of a complex system whereby neurodiverse and disabled students perform additional labour. Further, accessibilities such as availability of course resources, alongside variable implementation of reasonable accommodations, were exacerbated in transitions: one participant reported appropriate resources were only made available back on campus following repeated requests. This energy needed for such additional tasks and seeking access forms a consistent feature in student feedback. With returns to campuses, recommendations for more efficient processes have been identified “to reduce the time-consuming and mentally draining burden of administrative tasks” (GDI Hub and Snowdon Trust, 2021, p.3), which has been echoed in calls for ‘passports’ for neurodiverse and disabled students (Holmes, 2022).

These additional demands divert focus away from study and wider university experiences. They also remain problematic, perpetuating an ‘othering’ of neurodiverse and disabled students by maintaining exclusionary practices and the ‘problem’ of disability rather than implementing default inclusive pedagogies to meet the needs of increasingly diverse cohorts recruited by institutions’ widening participation agendas. Recommendations for redesigning curricula and pedagogy include the increased flexibility, accessibility and adaptability offered by changes to practices made during the pandemic as standard practice (GDI Hub and Snowdon Trust, 2021, p.3). This flexibility and adaptability, learnt from mass shifts to online provision, could encourage consideration of what inclusive practices can be established from the outset, rather than reproducing ableist systems that continue to place a drain on individuals.

Hybrid, please

- Both believed hybrid delivery should continue

Although neurodiverse students reported issues across some online provision, asked what they hoped universities would take forward, feedback was to continue to provide online availability (DSUK, 2022) including, for instance: discussion forums; flexible modes of assessment and submission; flexible deadlines; tutor meetings; access to recordings and essential resources. Nevertheless, and although both participants saw benefits for continuing with lecture recordings, as well as flexible attendance and assessments, one advised that their institution had already ceased providing recordings.



Neither participants’ course held exams. Further, all assignments/ assessments were online. For one, this was a welcome development, although they were unaware if this would continue after the 2021/22 academic year; for the other it was their course’s standard practice. One participant suggested students should be able to choose their mode of assessment; and this flexibility correlates with the recommendations of the DSC (2022b, p.11). The OfS (2021, p.10) also reported digitally assessing students does not just uphold standards but can also improve them.

Online, though, does not necessarily equate with accessibility. Both participants advised that their institutions only provided a limited range of accessible online texts; for one this was a reason they were glad to have returned to campus and be using the library, but for the other it meant sourcing books from elsewhere, as going to campus continued to be a struggle. Although recommendations had been to reflect on staff disability/ inclusion training and academic teams’ confidence in incorporating more accessible and inclusive (blended) provision into curriculums and teaching (DSC, 2022a, p.18), 74% of neurodiverse and disabled students surveyed reported they still did not feel involved in discussions – or considered in changes – to modes of provision and how accessible they might be (DSUK, 2022).

Improving spaces

- both thought their university spaces needed to be more welcoming to neurodiverse students

Although the university environment forms an important part of learning experiences and requires thoughtful planning and cohesion across physical and electronic spaces, there can be a lack of consideration in the design stages. One of the participants revealed one reason they did not want to return to campus was because it was inaccessible. The other participant mentioned that, although they were glad to have returned to campus, overloaded lift facilities caused by poorly coordinated spaces impacted their ability to navigate campus and caused anxiety. They further suggested their institution needed quiet areas to decompress. Where one participant was enjoying increased social engagement on campus, the other was experiencing challenges accessing public transport and the anxiety this induced ‘post’ pandemic with its ongoing disabling effects.

As one student reflected:

“Universities have the opportunity to set an example to the rest of the world...they have an obligation of being the first to create a good, supportive environment for disabled students.” (DSUK, 2021).

There was demand, then, to “harness this time of great change” for teaching and learning and for spaces to be fully accessible from the outset (HEC, 2020, p.4) rather than to continue trying to adapt them.

In developing physical and remote spaces, neurodiverse and disabled students need to be considered in all parts of planning and viewed as priority rather than an afterthought (DSUK, 2022). Where systems have been designed to address previous oversights and exclusions, the pandemic required extensive shifts to create new spaces and pedagogies. Returning to campus offered opportunities to consider how these could be embedded to support neurodiverse and disabled students going forward (HEC, 2020), although as a respondent to DSUK’s (2022) study commented: “*There shouldn’t have had to be a pandemic to make things accessible.*”

Voices

- the National Student Survey is insufficient
- both had stopped completing feedback forms
- one believed student representatives were overburdened; one liaised with their course rep but was unaware of follow-up.

Yet the second most common response to what universities should consider when developing policies and practices to improve accessibility was: “listen to disabled students” (DSUK, 2022, p.3).



Online, though, does not necessarily equate with accessibility.

If such systems of ‘listening’ are not fully encouraging student feedback and empowerment, other methods require consideration. As one student commented (DSC, 2022a, p.17): institutions need to create safe spaces to share experiences, “ensuring changes are done in co-creation.”

Sum-up

Covid-19 demonstrated extensive, rapid change can be enacted in reconfiguring traditional pedagogies. As there remain possible COVID-19 resurgences and future pandemics, as well as ongoing need for sector overhaul, the lessons from these off and online transitions should

not be ignored. Without prioritising urgent change, neurodiverse and disabled students continue to face accommodation rather than inclusion, and are subject to a geographical lottery of varying degrees of ‘inclusive’ practice across the sector, institutions and courses. However, despite the DSC (2022b) circulating its formal consultation in December 2022 seeking ‘commitment’ to potential change across the sector, the pace of change remains slow in comparison with the extensive shifts possible during the pandemic.

With special thanks to the students who took time to participate at a very busy point in their university studies.

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Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Cognitive Abilities (W-J IV COG) - my experiences

Karen Anderson MDG, Specialist Teacher and Assessor, Sheffield Dyslexia Centre, reflects on her use of the test and whether it offers value for money.

Introduction

I qualified with Dyslexia Action in 2009 and hold a current Assessment Practising Certificate (APC). Alongside my teaching and other commitments within the Sheffield Dyslexia Centre, I undertake approximately 100 assessments per year. I will soon have used the Woodcock-Johnson IV Cognitive Abilities (W-J IV COG) battery of tests in over 75 of these, mostly with those under 16 years of age but also with some who are older or younger.

I appreciate the choice of tests (within the range of those approved by the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) is based on personal preference,

but I hope that recounting my experiences may be helpful for those of you who are contemplating a switch.

I am in a very fortunate position in that I have access to a wide selection of other tests. However currently, my “go-to” set consists of the W-J IV COG, the Academic Achievement Battery (AAB) – with the substitution of the single word reading test from the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC) and The Helen Arkell Spelling Test 2nd edition (HAST-2) for younger children, the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing 2nd edition (CTOPP 2) and the Test of Word Reading Efficiency 2nd edition (TOWRE 2).



Several concerns have been raised about the W-J IV COG Battery of tests:

Cumbersome easels

All the W-J IV COG subtests come in two sturdy, self-standing easels, each a little larger than A5 in size. I have rearranged my easels (as they come as ring binders) so that most of the time I only use, one with all my regular subtests arranged in this. The other easel contains all the subtests I never or rarely use but is available, for instance, if I want to investigate aspects of visual memory.

In practice, I find it no more cumbersome than the Wide Range Intelligence Test (WRIT) easel: a little heavier, but smaller in size.

Online scoring

This was a particular concern for me as I am an assessor who likes to score as I go along. However, this has proved not to be a problem at all. I set up the scoring record before the session by adding the person's information and putting a score of 1 into the first subtest. This saves as a record which can be updated as we progress through the assessment.

The printed estimates in the test papers (based on age) are useful as a very general guide, but I prefer to generate a series of test reports as more scores become available, as these are far more accurate. This then allows for any further investigation if necessary or prevents over-testing if evidence is already obtained.

Results must be "committed" to allow a test report to be generated (I use the Score Report Form in pdf version) but there is a generous time limit (90 days) in which you can alter a particular test record. Therefore, there are no restrictions within the testing process itself and a new "report" can be generated after each subtest or group of subtests.

Audio facility

If using a laptop for scoring, also using it (with additional speakers if better quality is required) for audio does not cause any extra inconvenience. I already have the audio facility available for the administration of some of the subtests within the CTOPP 2. (Especially for the occasions when the alternative phonology subtests in CTOPP 2 are required to ensure a reliable diagnosis.)

Confidence intervals


The W-J IV COG quotes 68% confidence intervals, which I found a little unnerving after years of using 95%. However, the explanation within the manual is reassuring and I appear to have overcome my original shock! (I would be very interested to hear others' opinions.)

These can easily be converted to 95% confidence intervals by multiplying by 1.96, as this confidence level is recommended by SASC.

Cost

There is a large initial outlay, but as assessors we have a duty to keep our tests up to date. Although WRIT has served many of us very well for a long time, it is now an old test and itself has many flaws which we have forgiven (and perhaps forgotten) because there was really no alternative.

We cannot expect to have good quality tests without appreciating that the work involved in producing new ones has a financial implication.



**Guild members
can purchase tests
with a discount
from Dyslexia
Action Shop.**

Which subtests to use:

I have experimented with different combinations of W-J IV COG subtests and in my opinion I have found that the following appears to provide me with the most accurate picture:

Underlying Abilities

I use the Combined Gf-Gc as per the W-J IV COG manual, in that I use the Oral Vocabulary and General Information (two subtests for each) for underlying verbal abilities and Concept Formation and Number Series for the non-verbal aspect of an individual's underlying reasoning abilities.

I was initially concerned about the use of Number series, particularly as a maths specialist (former Maths Lead in Dyslexia Action Sheffield Centre) but have, in practice, not found this to be a problem. It just requires more explanation if this is out of line with the other subtests when describing an individual's profile.

I have found that I am not comfortable quoting a combined score as often perhaps as with the WRIT, but this has not caused any problems.

The information obtained does not mirror exactly that obtained from the WRIT but is likely to be a reliable indication of underlying ability and thus provides a vital contribution to the description of the overall profile. One of my 'scares' early on suggests that this is the case: the first person on whom I used the W-J IV COG in earnest (i.e. not for practice) was a 17-year-old girl who produced a particularly low non-verbal result. I was so concerned I retested using the more familiar WRIT but obtained a statistically identical set of results!

Phonological Processing

I personally do not use the phonological processing subtests in the W-J IV COG. I do not feel they investigate the strengths and weaknesses in this area in enough detail to base a dyslexia diagnosis on them, and I continue to rely on the trusty CTOPP 2.

However, I do use the W-J IV COG Non-Word Repetition subtest for Phonological memory rather than the equivalent in the CTOPP 2.

Working Memory

I use the Digits Backwards subtest but also find the Memory for Words informative. This is especially true for those who appear to score well with the digits, but for whom the background information and performance in other aspects of the assessment process clearly indicate poor skills in this area. If an individual has developed techniques which appear to mask their true difficulties within the Digits Backwards test, the other memory subtests help to reveal the true picture; I sometimes use the Object-Number Sequencing and (less so) the Verbal Attention subtests if I want to investigate auditory memory more thoroughly.

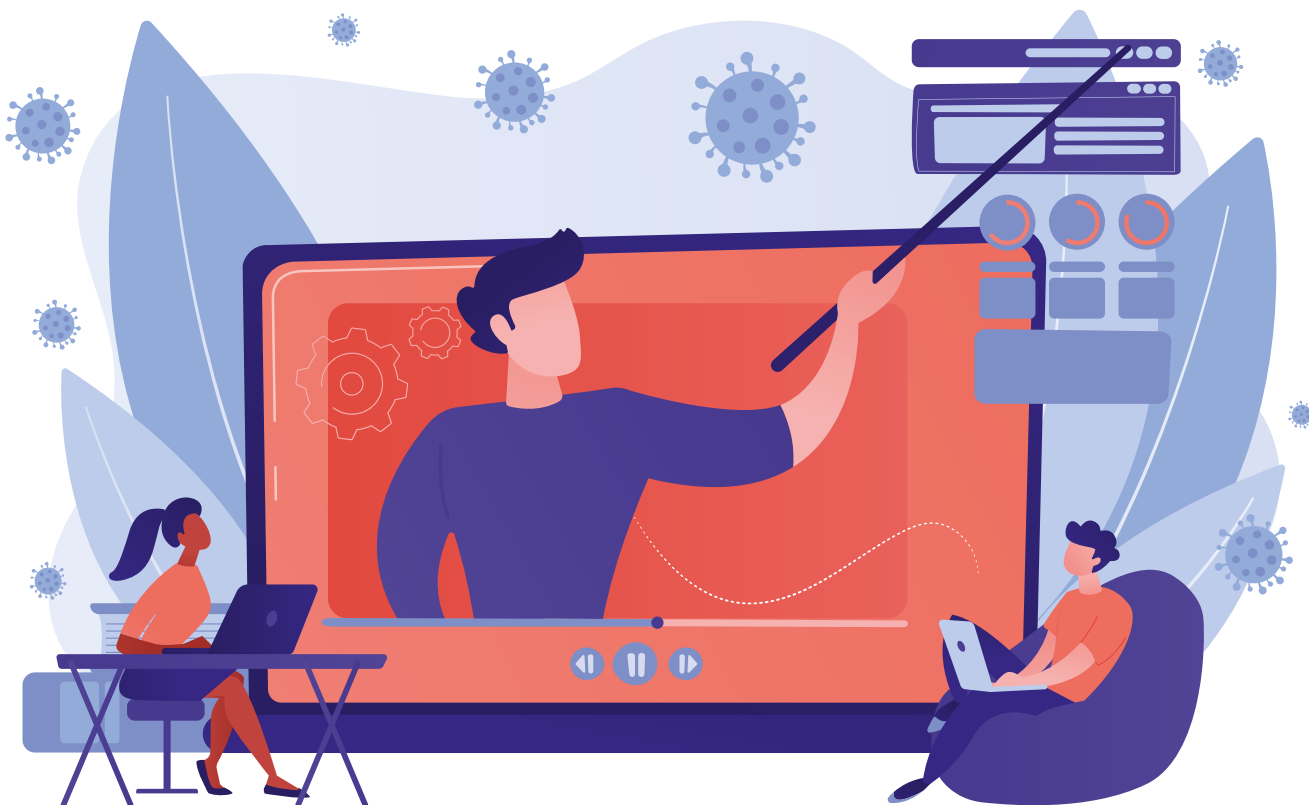
Visual Processing Speed

Letter-Pattern Matching and Pair Cancellation provide a combined Cognitive Processing speed result.

Summary

We have to be careful about attempting to exactly match one set of tests to another – especially with those tests which have become so familiar to us.

I now use W-J IV COG instead of WRIT, Test of Memory and Learning 2nd edition (TOMAL 2), the phonological memory subtests in CTOPP 2 and Symbol Digit Modalities Test (SDMT) and although it does not provide exact substitutes, I believe this battery provides as good, or even better, levels of information necessary to be able to produce helpful and accurate diagnostic assessment reports.



Dissertation support for dyslexic students in Covid lockdown and beyond



During the Covid-19 pandemic, university study skills tutor, education consultant and Dyslexia Guild Associate member Tim Deignan PhD FHEA developed a long-format online guide to “Doing Your Dissertation” for students with dyslexia. Focusing on qualitative social science dissertations, the guide also aimed to encourage virtual student engagement and academic community belonging during the pandemic lockdown and beyond.

Covid-19, university lockdown and the move online

During the Covid-19 pandemic, educational institutions around the world were closed to help curb community transmission. As described by Cone et al (2022, p.845), there was a “sudden need for digital solutions across the

field of education”. Along with other UK educational institutions, Leeds Beckett University moved online. In a university of its size, with approximately 25,000 students, you might expect perhaps 1,500 or more with a Specific Learning Disability (SpLD) such as dyslexia. Members of the disability support

team began developing additional resources in different formats such as pptx, mp4, pdf for their students to self-access during lockdown.

Pre-pandemic, in a face-to-face and one-to-one context, I would often help individual students with SpLDs to understand and navigate the various stages of planning and producing a dissertation. Students, particularly those with dyslexia, can be overwhelmed by the quantity and content of library textbooks providing dissertation advice. The amount and density of text to process can be intimidating and confusing; overly complex descriptions, explanations and examples can undermine dyslexic students’ often already limited confidence in their academic skills (Blake et al, 2022).

Students who have difficulty understanding what is involved in doing a dissertation may delay or not engage properly in the process and then receive grades which do not reflect their ability. In the context of the Covid-19 lockdown, I felt that developing a self-access, long-format, online guide to “Doing Your Dissertation” could provide a good return on the time invested. My aim was to develop a customised resource, tailored to dyslexic students at Leeds Beckett University.

I wanted to provide contextualised study skills support, encouraging the students to connect virtually with their university resources and community, to help them develop a greater sense of academic confidence and belonging during the Covid-19 lockdown and beyond.

Developing an online dissertation guide

While textbooks on conducting a dissertation may not always be user-friendly for dyslexic students, they can often contain segments which might be very helpful indeed, such as diagrams, clear succinct examples and explainers. What if our university’s online library catalogue could be sampled, nuggets from various E-books identified and brought together in an online dissertation resource aimed at students with dyslexia? What if the guide could be additionally customised to incorporate and signpost students to other valuable information and support provided by their university which could further help them on their pandemic dissertation journey?

I first conducted a literature search within the E-books in our library catalogue, looking for content relating to dissertation research, with a focus on qualitative social science research projects. From some 50 E-books, I identified clips that seemed user-friendly and helpful in terms of their textual clarity and economical use of space. I developed an outline

structure for the guide and wrote a commentary to act as a ‘glue’, binding the excerpts from the various E-books together, advising and guiding students through the various stages of the dissertation process.




I likewise searched our university’s library and student services web pages for resources related to dissertation research which could be further incorporated into the guide. This led to the inclusion of information and web-links to various online resources such as our university’s academic integrity tutorial, virtual library workshops on various aspects of dissertation study skills, library guides, information on academic librarians, academic skills and subject support relating to specific programme areas. The aim was to integrate this content as seamlessly as possible. The process eventually resulted in the production of “Doing Your Dissertation”, a long-format, 60-page, online self-study guide for dyslexic students.



The guide was designed so that students could ‘dip’ into it if they needed help with a specific aspect of their dissertation, such as developing a research proposal. Or, if preferred, they could work all the way through from the beginning. The guide encouraged students to read the advisory commentary and the E-book extracts, find and use the E-books cited, and do follow-up tasks to engage further with our wider university resources relating to the various aspects of conducting dissertation research.

The guide was uploaded onto the university’s disability support web pages, along with the other new resources produced by our team during Covid. These included support materials in various formats (pptx, mp4, pdf, etc) relating to finding key contact information, making use of module handbooks, key and recommended readings, assessment information, decoding assignments, essay introductions and conclusions, essay main body paragraphs, structuring paragraphs in reflective writing, learning from feedback on assessments, etc. Although the resources were housed on the disability support web pages, they could be accessed by any student at the university and by academic staff if they wanted to signpost students to them or incorporate them into their own student seminars or workshops.

How to use this resource:

-  **Read the advice and the E-book extracts.**
-  **Find and use the E-books mentioned.**
-  **Do the tasks in the red boxes.**

Task: Think about your research topic and your interview plans. What kind of knowledge production are you interested in? What is it that you want to know, exactly? Are there any ethical or other issues relating to power and control that you need to consider? Is it possible that any power issues might influence the knowledge production process in your research project? Look at Brinkmann’s (2013) E-book to find out more about how this might happen.

The semi-structured interview is a popular research method. Elliot (2016) explains how it typically involves an open and flexible approach where the interviewer follows a prepared schedule that covers the various aspects of the topic.

semi-structured interview

A method of research used in the social sciences, within the qualitative approaches. It is the most commonly used type of interview, and, as opposed to a structured interview, it is more open, allowing new ideas to be raised during the interview by the interviewees. It usually involves the use of an interview schedule which includes the broad topics to be covered and some indicative questions for each topic. During the interviewing process there is flexibility, and opportunities to adapt questions, change order, or ask extra unplanned questions to explore and clarify the interviewee’s responses.

It is essential to develop your interview questions carefully. Gillham (2000, p.21) warns that if you simply “knock out” your questions then the interview that you conduct may be “disastrous” because the data will be poor and perhaps even “impossible to analyse”.

Looking back, looking forward


Peters et al (2022, p.717) note that, “historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew”. Covid-19 had prompted me to reflect on my pre-pandemic experience and learning from traditional face-to-face, one-to-one dyslexia support and to use this in an online one-to-many resource. The dissertation guide is not intended as a “one size fits all” solution, as what works in dyslexia support will be contingent on individual and context-specific circumstances (Deignan, 2013). However, the guide does aim to contextualise our students’ academic skills development by using the particular online learning environment of their own university.

It also reduces complex research concepts and processes into manageable chunks. For example, there is a juxtapositioning of short explainers and examples, and the Methodology and Methods section encourages students to question and position themselves consciously as researchers with regard to their philosophy and values, and to consider the implications for deciding their research design. “Doing Your Dissertation” has helped to scaffold their thinking by contrasting positivist approaches with phenomenological approaches, guiding them through relevant literature, and signposting them to E-books and other resources. Hopefully, during the pandemic lockdown, it helped to promote inclusion, access, academic confidence and belonging.

Shaw et al (2020, p.121) found that during the pandemic, it was in fact possible to make online learning for dyslexic students “a largely positive experience, with an improved culture of togetherness, improved freedom and control”. They urged educators to “resist a return to ‘the way things have always been done’ when the pandemic has resolved” (ibid, p.107). Indeed, online study skills support has become a new normal for many dyslexic university students in the UK. The dissertation guide continues as a post-pandemic resource,

What is the nature of reality? What is the nature of knowledge?
How can we find truth? What methods should we use?

As a researcher, your answers to these questions are significant because, as Neuman (2014, p.93) points out, all research rests on assumptions about reality and knowledge. We use the terms **ontology** and **epistemology** to refer to the nature of reality and of knowledge.



Ontology: An area of philosophy that deals with the nature of being, or what exists; the area of philosophy that asks what really is and what the fundamental categories of reality are. (Neuman 2014, p.94)

Epistemology: An area of philosophy concerned with the creation of knowledge; focuses on how we know what we know or what are the most valid ways to reach truth. (Neuman 2014, p.95)

For your research project, you will be investigating a topic that is real and one which you want to know more about, in order to produce knowledge on the topic. You will need to describe its nature, and decide what methods are best to investigate it. For example, you may want to conduct research on some aspect of racism in a particular context. This would require a consideration of definitions and theories, such as Critical Race Theory, relating to

a future-facing ‘live’ document that can be updated as needed with new content. I have also since produced a companion resource with identical design features – a long-format guide on essay writing aimed at dyslexic students. Both guides were designed to act as an initial one-stop-shop for students, giving them a clear overview of the key stages in the planning and production process and signposting them to further support as needed.

The guides have not been evaluated formally but feedback on both, from students and from staff, has been positive. A specialist mentor, supporting student wellbeing, described the essay guide as “fantastic... it contains information on all the things students struggle with and consequently end up losing marks for”. A student with dyslexia, when faced with their final-year undergraduate dissertation, commented that they were “overwhelmed with the task ahead”. They “didn’t really know where to start”. The dissertation guide, “provided a starting point, a series

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of guidelines and what is expected in each part of the dissertation. Guidance also on resources available was useful. It was easy to read and also useful to go back to as the work progressed”.

As dyslexia-friendly means user-friendly, the dissertation guide may also help non-dyslexic students undertaking a dissertation research project. Its production values are aligned with the principles of Universal

Design for Learning, where flexibility of both study resources and ways of learning is key (Hamilton and Petty, 2023). In principle, there is no reason why concepts such as ontology, epistemology and axiology, or the features of different social research traditions, should not be made more comprehensible to all student researchers. Blake et al (2022, p.29) recommend that “academic skills support should not be structured around a deficit discourse”. In fact, the only mention of ‘disability’ in the dissertation guide is on its cover, noting its incidental origin within a university’s Disability Advice team.



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Modelling Exciting Writing

A guide for primary teaching

(2022) 2nd edition. Adam Bushnell, Rob Smith and David Waugh. London: Sage

Reviewed by Julie Skinner, Marchwood Junior School

This book has a clear purpose: to make modelling writing exciting “for both new and experienced primary school teachers” to enable children to create written work which would normally be beyond their capabilities. Written with passion and experience, crammed full of interesting case studies in an easy to absorb format, it certainly achieves its objective.

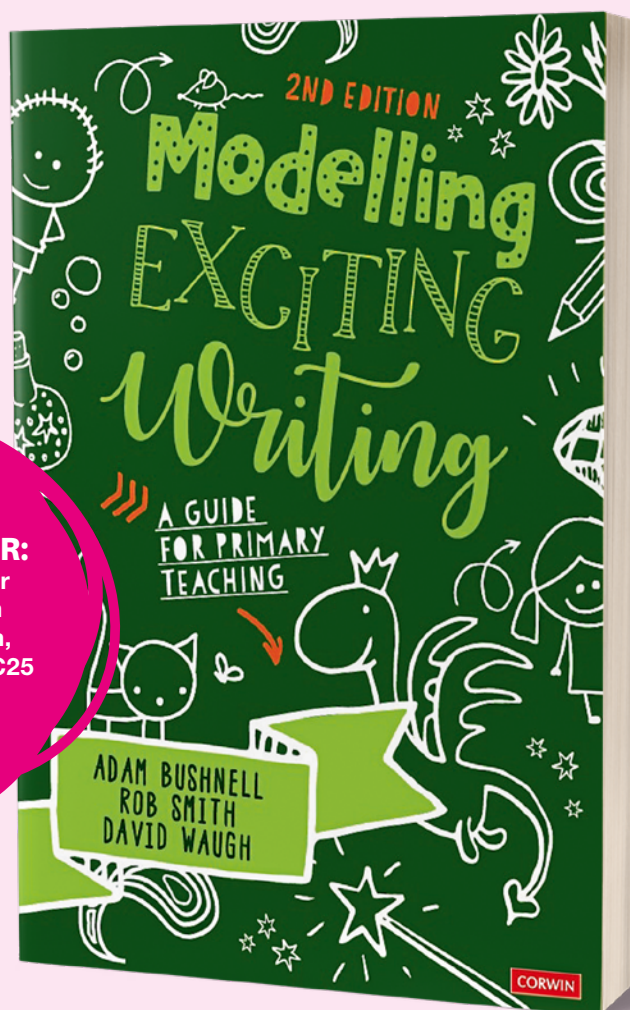
The book begins with an exploration of spelling, punctuation and grammar and an interesting political insight into the origins of the current grammar curriculum. The book advocates actively engaging children with grammar through writing. Simple but ingenious examples of this are given in every chapter, including modelled dialogue between teacher and student and many inventive ideas to engage children with grammar.

Each chapter begins with a useful reference to the relevant teaching standards, includes research into the area and poses thought-provoking questions for teachers to reflect upon. The wow factor each chapter has to be detailed case studies which a window into how this look in the classroom.

The case studies give wealth of ideas to improve the teaching of writing, often giving an example of the finished product from a child and an opportunity to consider the impact of the teaching strategies. In addition, each chapter references several high quality texts to use in the classroom together with additional online resources to explore and complement your teaching.

An excellently written book which will appeal to any teacher who wants to improve their practice of teaching writing to ensure children of all abilities

are engaged. Exciting and thought-provoking case studies will excite the most experienced of writing teachers. Pertinent reminders are given that to be a good teacher of writing you need to write yourself, and this book should inspire you to pick up your pencil and join the children.



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Dyslexia: A History

(2022) Philip Kirby and Margaret J Snowling. Montreal & Kingston, London, Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press

Reviewed by Jan Beechey, MCILIP, Dyslexia Guild Librarian

Today, the term Dyslexia is well known to teachers, psychologists, researchers and the general public, so it is fascinating to read about the social and political history, and how that recognition happened. The authors have analysed 150 years of historical documents to show how understanding of dyslexia has developed over time. In fact, they (alongside Professor Bob Evans), were instrumental in setting up The UK Dyslexia Archive, a collection gathered from many organisations and people, and now housed at Oxford University.

The book is composed chronologically and organised into four parts.

Part 1, 'Foundations' looks at the origins of dyslexia at the end of the 19th century; part 2, 'Evidence', focuses on the development of the scientific basis for dyslexia; part 3, 'Recognition' provides a case study of the political and societal recognition in Britain; and part 4, 'Legacies', considers the ways in which the past may affect the shape of dyslexia's future.

Dyslexia's 'early history' was dominated by males in the 19th century, but that began to shift in the early 20th century, with the emergence of teachers and researchers such as Anna Gillingham, Bessie Stillman and Edith Norrie, all pioneers in dyslexia provision in the West. It is so good to understand the history of dyslexia against the background of the politics of the day, and to understand how concerned parents, teachers, psychologists and researchers fought to gain recognition of the term, and to try and find ways to support children within schools.

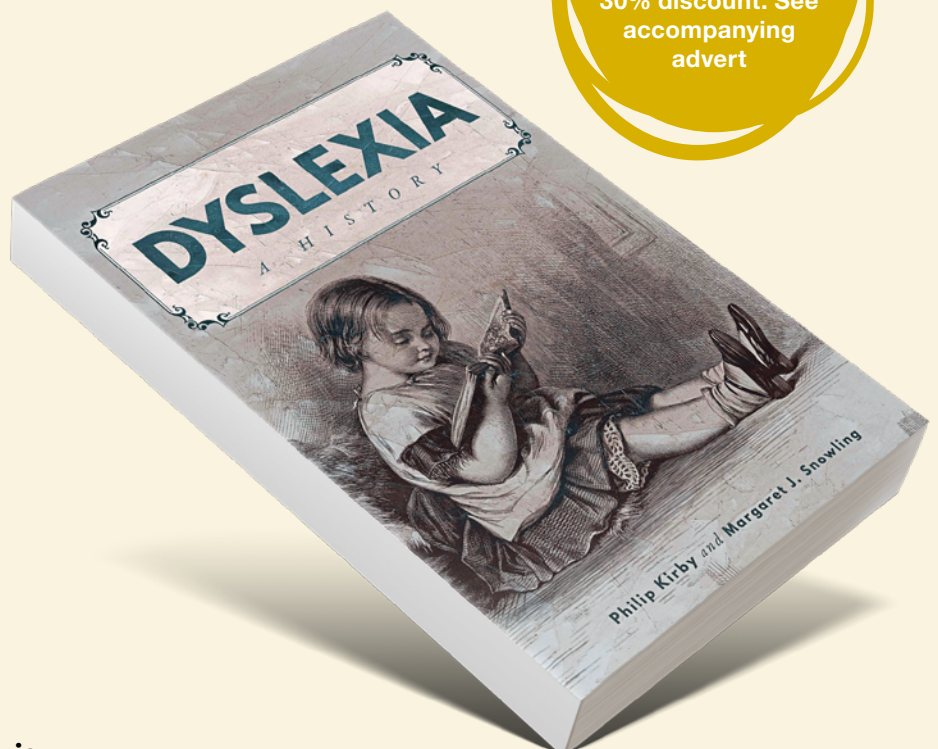
Chapter 2 focuses on how psychology framed dyslexia and became the dominant approach to

understanding dyslexia in the early 20th century, and how research formed globally, looking at those forming the avant-garde in the USA and Denmark and how their work influenced others. For student teachers, Chapter 4: Researching Dyslexia gives a very good overview of the research base and how some models of dyslexia emerged or were superseded by others. Chapter 7 examines the scope of dyslexia today and considers the future of dyslexia, which gave me food for thought. There is also a very good overview of the 'dyslexia debate' and the arguments that dyslexia is just 'a pretentious word for thick' or an 'excuse for bad teaching'. The fact that a lot of the dyslexia organisations that sprang up in the 1970s were started by 'middle-class mothers' in the south of the UK also gives the impression that dyslexia

only affects particular classes of children but the book examines society at the time and the reasons around some of the arguments and criticisms that continue to pop up in the press from time to time. The authors conclude that it was social rather than political efforts which brought dyslexia to public attention. We owe a lot to those who fought those battles. There is a handy timeline of 50 key dates at the back of the book to put it all in context.

Overall, I would recommend you read it to understand how you and those you support fit into the specific learning difficulties (SpLD) scene today.

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Dyslexia

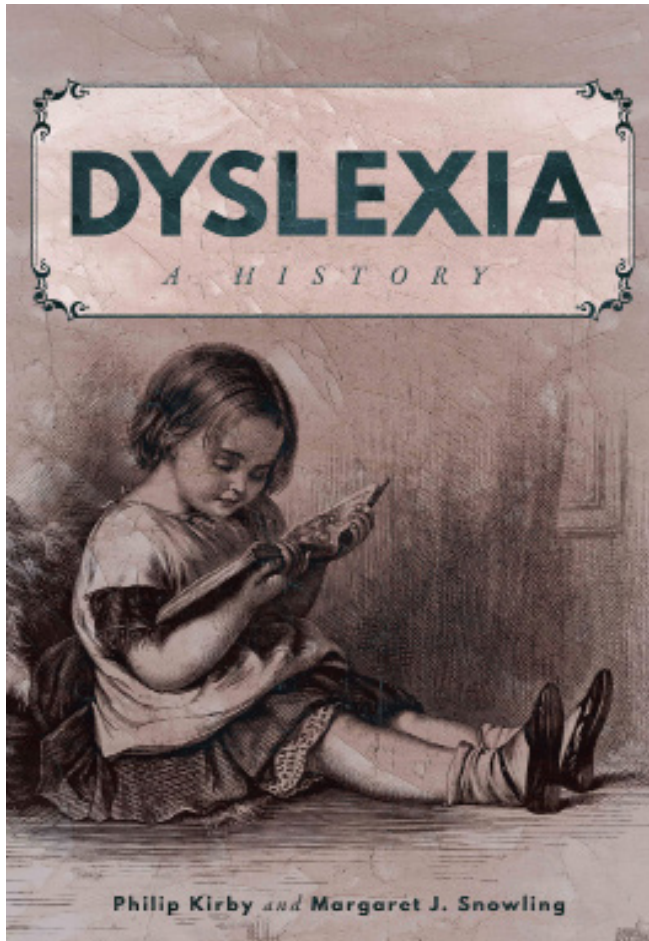
A History

Philip Kirby and Margaret J. Snowling



From Victorian "word-blindness" to today's neurodiversity movement.

'Kirby and Snowling offer a superb understanding of the trends and issues relating to dyslexia from the late nineteenth century to present day. Far more than a chronology, this is an astute and cleverly researched account of the concept of dyslexia, its controversy, and the academic, political, and social influences that have shaped our current understanding of this disability. An outstanding piece of work.' **Gavin Reid**, co-author of *The Dyslexia Assessment*



In 1896 the British physician William Pringle Morgan published an account of "Percy," a "bright and intelligent boy, quick at games, and in no way inferior to others of his age." Yet, in spite of his intelligence, Percy had great difficulty learning to read.

Percy was one of the first children to be described as having word-blindness, better known today as dyslexia. In this first comprehensive history of dyslexia Philip Kirby and Margaret Snowling chart a journey that begins with Victorian medicine and continues to dyslexia's current status as the most globally recognised specific learning difficulty. In an engaging narrative style, Kirby and Snowling tell the story of dyslexia, examining its origins and revealing the many scientists, teachers, and campaigners who put it on the map. Through this history they explain current debates over the diagnosis of dyslexia and its impact on learning.

For those who have lived experience of dyslexia, professionals who have supported them, and scholars of social history, education, psychology, and childhood studies, *Dyslexia* reflects on the place of literacy in society – whom it has benefited, and whom it has left behind.

Philip Kirby is lecturer in social science, King's College London.

Margaret J. Snowling is professor of psychology, University of Oxford, and president of St John's College.

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- 5. Savings on every order.** As a Guild member, you benefit from a 10% discount on every purchase - ensuring you get the best value as well as the best service, only from the Dyslexia Action Shop.

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