

**SOCIAL DISABILITY STUDIES –**

**SOWK 2007 (SW24A) 2006**

**GROUP PROJECT**

**THE DYSLEXIC ASSOCIATION**

*Written by students of the Social Disability Studies Class, SOWK 2007 (SW24A)*

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**March 7<sup>th</sup> 2006**

## **Introduction**

In accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO) 'there are six million (6,000,000) people living in the world with disabilities. However, in Trinidad and Tobago the findings from the year 2000, national census, indicates that there are forty five thousand, four hundred and ninety six (45,496) people living in the country with disabilities. The dyslexic community is included in this statistic.

Schwablearning states "Dyslexia is a Specific Learning Difficulty, which is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge". (Adopted by the IDA Board, November 2002 and by the National Institutes of Health, 2002).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the Dyslexia Association, the population it serves, critique its policies, evaluation of its programmes, identify the approach utilized and to promote enhancement of services to clientele.

## **Address of Association**

The Association is based at, 84 Belmont Circular Road Belmont, Port of Spain, Trinidad, West Indies, they can be reached at, Ph #: 624-7323 or e-mailed at info@dvslexiatt.org.

## **Type of disability catered to**

The Dyslexic Association caters to a specific type of learning difficulty known as Dyslexia. Learning disabilities are disorders that affect the ability to understand or use spoken or written language, do mathematical calculations, coordinate movements, or

direct attention. Although learning disabilities occur in very young children, the disorders are usually not recognized until the child reaches school age.

The most common treatment for learning disabilities is special education. Specially trained educators may perform a diagnostic educational evaluation assessing the child's academic and intellectual potential and level of academic performance. Once the evaluation is complete, the basic approach is to teach learning skills by building on the child's abilities and strengths while correcting and compensating for disabilities and weaknesses. Other professionals such as speech and language therapists also may be involved. Some medications may be effective in helping the child learn by enhancing attention and concentration. Psychological therapies may also be used.

Learning disabilities can be lifelong conditions. In some people, several overlapping learning disabilities may be apparent. Other people may have a single, isolated learning problem that has little impact on their lives.

### **What Is Dyslexia?**

"Dyslexia, or Specific Learning Difficulty, is a congenital organizing disability which impairs hand skills, short term memory, and perception so inhibiting the development of a child's literary skills-particularly reading, writing and spelling, and sometimes numeracy. In its effects, dyslexia can range from slight reading or spelling difficulties to complete illiteracy. (" Dr. H. Chasty M. Sc. (Psychology) PhD. Director, Dyslexia Institute, U.K.).

#### **Basic Facts** (Dyslexia Institute, U.K.)

- The degree to which the above skills are affected varies for each individual.
- Research has shown that differences in nerve cell arrangement and use of the two hemispheres of the brain can be detected in dyslexics.
- Approximately 10% of the population (world wide) has this different learning ability with four people out of every 100 needing special help.

- Dyslexia, which occurs irrespective of intelligence or background but more often in males, is often hereditary.
- It can affect any language area - speaking, reading, spelling, writing, organizational skills, and in some cases, mathematics, but strategies can be learned for overcoming it.

## **Characteristics and solutions for persons with Dyslexia**

Most kids have problems in school at one time or another. Ask yourself and the teacher if your child has shown these characteristics to a greater degree than normal over a period of time and in different environments, e.g., school, home, childcare.

### Ages 6-11

- Has difficulty pronouncing words, may reverse or substitute parts of words
- Has difficulty carrying out a sequence of directions
- Doesn't hear fine differences in words; e.g., writes "pin" for "pen"
- Has problems stating thoughts in an organized way
- Confuses the order of letters in words
- Doesn't recognize words previously learned
- Spells a word several different ways; doesn't recognize the correct version
- Has poor reading comprehension

### Ages 12-adult

- Has difficulty remembering what he just read
- Has difficulty concentrating when reading or writing
- Is unable to tell important information from unimportant details
- Spells poorly; misspelling is not phonetic
- Has problems taking notes accurately
- Has difficulty organizing and completing written projects

## **Some Solutions**

- Taking phone messages? - Ask caller to repeat or read back to caller.
- Remembering phone numbers correctly? - Always check.
- With verbal instructions? - Repeat to check accuracy - Make a written note immediately.
- With implied meaning? - Say, "Do you mean"?
- Taking minutes of a meeting?
  - Transcribe right away and circulate (in draft) to get feedback.
  - Admit that you find this difficult and ask someone else to do it.
  - Use a computer when you have to write - Draft your ideas first then copy.  
(It is easier to concentrate on hand- writing when you are not composing.)
  - Avoid time constraints. (Dyslexics are at their worst under pressure of time.) Find a quiet area when doing any task requiring concentration. (Dyslexics find it difficult to function in the presence of noise or other distractions.
  - Keep a diary.
  - Make lists.
  - Highlight items in various colours to indicate importance.
    - Allow double the time estimated.
    - Avoid procrastination; keep on top of your assignments.
  - Be aware of the need to monitor yourself for accuracy in written work, particularly when copying.
- Difficulty with reading

## **Implications**

Some implications are that dyslexics may find office duties and organization difficult and avoid that type of job. Also dyslexics may avoid bookwork, doing manual work instead of seeking academics. They may also avoid reading all together and also any career which will involve significant reading assignments. Comprehension may also be affected.

## **Historical Overview**

The Dyslexia Association is a volunteer organization, which was formed in 1990 by a group of teachers and parents concerned for their dyslexic children. The Dyslexia Association is a Registered Charity.

Soon after inception the Association met with the Ministry of Education to discuss the Common Entrance examination and as a result of this all schools are now informed that they can apply for concessions for pupils with specific learning difficulties. In an effort to increase "Public Awareness" sponsorship for television time was obtained for the film "Dyslexia: The Hidden Disability". Other articles are published in the newspapers and a newsletter is published twice per year.

In May 1995 the Caribbean Examination Council withdrew concessions of time for dyslexic candidates just one week before the CXC Examination. All major examining boards offer this concession. Because of intervention by the Association the Caribbean Examining Board agreed to reverse its ruling.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The Dyslexia Association of Trinidad and Tobago, operates with the belief in the Social Model of disability. The term Social Model was first used in 1975 when a group of disabled people formed a group called the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS). The group published a short book called the "Fundamental Principles of Disability." Shortly after that a disabled lecturer Mike Oliver was trying to introduce the concepts contained in the Fundamental principle to a group of social work students. This is when the term Social Model was first used. The Social Model has since become internationally recognized as the driving force behind the disability agenda and a cornerstone of the disabled people's movement. The Social Model in its simplest changes the focus away from people's impairments and towards removing the barriers that disabled people faced in every day life.

In fact it is not the impairment that is the problem, or the disabled person, rather it is society's failure to take into account their diverse needs. The Social Model shifts policy away from a medical, charity, care agenda into a rights led, equalities agenda.

The Social Model of disability recognizes that some people have impairments which affect how they function physically or mentally. But those people are disabled by the barriers that exist in a society that does not take account of their needs. These barriers may be in the physical, organizational or personal aspects of society - for instance, stairs without lifts, information not available in large print, or people's negative attitudes. The social model sees disabled people as having the same wants, needs and aspirations as non-disabled people. Disabled people should enjoy the same freedoms and choices as those who are non-disabled and be allowed equal responsibility in determining their life choices. Disability is not seen as something invoking pity or in need of a cure. Indeed it may be viewed as a positive asset. Equality for disabled people is seen in the same light as equality for other under-represented groups.

In the United Kingdom, the Disability Discrimination Act's definition of disability uses the medical model - disabled people are defined as people with certain conditions, or certain limitations on their ability to carry out 'normal day-to-day activities'. The requirements of the employers and service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to their policies, or practices, or physical aspects of their premises, follows the social model. By making adjustments, employers and service providers are removing the barriers that disable - they are effectively removing the disability. The Dyslexia Association uses the social model as they seek to educate the society, and to meet the needs of the person with dyslexia and other learning disabilities. The Association trains teachers in methods for teaching dyslexics and apply for concessions for pupils with specific learning difficulties. This is done in an attempt to change the way in which learning disabilities are perceived by the society, not as the fault of the person, and their inability to learn but as a result of other biological variables.

The Dyslexia Association aims to work with the Ministry of Education in an attempt to have a Specially Trained Teacher in every school, in order to enable the child with dyslexia to keep up with the other students and not miss out opportunities that are as much their right as other students who learning disabilities.

Learning differences affect many, bright and talented children, that a large percentage of the population who can be successful and flourishing contributors to society, would have been left to suffer in silence. The Association continues to bring issues concerned with learning difficulties not just dyslexia to the fore. They have developed a partnership with the Adult Literacy Training Association (AL T A), and through training of teachers hope to reach this special population who so badly need the intervention of educators in the fight to improve the lives of persons with learning disabilities. The social model is recognized and implemented by the Association and they aim to break down the barriers that exist in society that does not take account of their needs and the needs of their clients.

The Association provides Bursary funds to pay for students who would otherwise be unable to afford remedial lessons. In every case, parents are expected to make some financial commitment according to their circumstances, and the teachers make a commitment by accepting a lower fee than they would normally expect. All monies donated go directly to funding lessons, as costs (such as incidental expenses for stationery, etc.) are met either by the committee members themselves, or by the Association.

### **Evaluation of Policies and Programmes**

The use of Donald E. Chambers, Programme and Policy evaluation method will be employed in analyzing the policy and programmes of The Dyslexia Association of Trinidad and Tobago. According to Chambers there are six elements in which a policy analyst will base judgment about a policy or programme.

These are: -

- Goals and Objectives

- Forms of benefits or services delivered
- Entitlement (eligibility) rules
- Administrative or organizational structure for services delivery
- Financing method
- Interactions among the foregoing elements

### **Goals and Objectives**

- To be a support group for dyslexics, parents and teachers.
- To educate the community about these often misunderstood learning differences, which affect so many of our bright and talented children.
- To train as many teachers as possible in methods for teaching dyslexics.
- To work with the Ministry of Education in an attempt to have a Specially Trained Teacher in every school.

### **Population served and Services Provided**

Each year the Association runs a Training Course in Specific Methods for Teaching Dyslexics. Since 1990 the Association has held 11 training courses led by specialists trained at the Dyslexia Institute, UK. Over 232 teachers have now been trained in the necessary methods to teach people with this different learning ability. The teachers are from Public and Private Schools all over Trinidad and Tobago. Forty-three of these teachers have taken the Advanced Training Courses, which were run in 1994 and 1998 and 2003, another training programme is due to begin in July of 2006 for a period of three weeks. The cost of this programme is TT 2000.00. Once every four years an advanced programme is held in July for a period of two weeks.

Two concurrent courses were conducted in 2005, training forty teachers respectively. Even so, thirty-five applicants were turned down. The Association was placed in a position of having to choose teachers from areas of what they perceived as greatest need (South and Central) over earlier applicants.

With sponsorship the association was able to give out one full scholarship and twenty-one 50% bursaries. The British High Commission also funded the Aston Assessment Kits for the course. The children come in for 10 mornings during their holiday along with their parents, so that the teachers can perfect their skills.

In 2005 the Student Support Services Unit was set up and they are currently training 29 special education teachers and four supervisors (thirty three in all) for remedial intervention at the Primary School level. In 2005, the Association was also able to contribute to up-grading skills by sending two of their Teacher Trainers to the annual conference of the International Dyslexia Association in Philadelphia. The latest research and teaching methods are presented and the structured multi-sensory programme, which is used by the association to teach, remains in the forefront of best teaching for dyslexics.

They also sent two teachers to a Mathematics Course conducted by Professor Mahesh Sharma of Harvard, which takes place each August in the U.K. Both teachers reported that the techniques learnt were invaluable and that the course exciting and stimulating. They have agreed to conduct a workshop once they have gained enough experience in the interventions learnt. This continues their efforts to improve the skills of teachers in the remediation of Mathematics difficulties, or Dyscalculia. Visualizing and Verbalizing is taught annually, a new course, LiPS, which stands for Lindamood Phonemic Sequencing, which is a therapeutic programme for children and adults with phonological awareness difficulties as it uses the feel of the mouth to overcome the deficit will be running in July for the second time.

### **Cassette Tape Library**

A library of books, cassette tapes and videotapes are available to members and a newsletter is published twice a year. There is also a collection of lecture tapes from the International Dyslexia Conferences in the U.S. This Taped Book Library was made possible through funding from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The taped-book library has over 250 titles and was started so that dyslexics could access good books by audio. Most dyslexics will tell you that they won't read for pleasure even when their reading has improved well enough to cope with the demands of school and the workplace. The taped book library was set up so that dyslexics could "read for pleasure" by a different modality. The collection continues to grow as members donate- "books" to the Association. Unfortunately, it is not yet big enough for them to advertise publicly as they will not be able to fill the need, but some word of mouth will mean that more dyslexics will enjoy the tapes. The Library, over the year, added several important publications and it continues to be well used.

The UK Women's Club continues to contribute to the Library and in 2005 received a donation of \$8,000. They were able to purchase some otherwise unaffordable assessment measures, which were recommended when Pauline Clayton from the Dyslexia Institute in the U.K. was here lecturing in 2003. They were also able to buy additional books and teaching resources, and private donors added several valuable publications from their own collection. Although the library is small, it is an excellent one and even the student body at UWI has come to rely on it.

## **Referrals**

The office runs a referral system for dyslexic students, putting parents in touch with trained teachers in their area for screening and tutoring. They also refer students to educational psychologists and speech and hearing clinicians. Although most of the referrals are children, adults also rely on the Association. Some adults require literacy lessons, but many just need strategies to cope in the workplace, or more information about dyslexia or even just an understanding ear.

Over the course of the year, they may see labourers to business owners, all looking for help with this "hidden disability". The Association keeps a register of trained teachers and is able to place children and adult dyslexics with teachers for specialist tutoring. The Association also has a register of Educational Psychologists for referral for assessments.

## Talks

The Association endeavors to deliver talks to teachers and parents whenever they are asked. This can become difficult because all of their teachers tutor after school, and this is usually when schools are able to schedule visiting lecturers. This means that they do not actively pursue these opportunities, and therefore are not able to deliver as many sessions as they perhaps should.

- Talks were given in a two-hour session to the teaching staff at Trinity East on "What is Dyslexia and How to Recognize it" and on accommodations and strategies that can be used in the classroom.
- Hazel Pillai delivered a talk on "Classroom Strategies to Help Dyslexic Students" at a two-day seminar on learning disabilities held at St. Monica's school.
- Consultations and workshops Barbara Jenkins was able to represent the Association at a Think Tank Conference held at UWI on "Disability/Integration and Development, The Way Forward in Education". Although it turned out that the meeting was mostly concerned with "visible" disabilities, she was able to submit comments, so that hopefully the aspirations of the Association vis-à-vis provision of specialist remedial teachers in schools should receive consideration. Dr. Lynch was also present and was able to make a case for learning disabilities to be included in the deliberations.
- The Association was invited to attend a British Council and UWI initiative on Quality Teacher Education. This was a three-day affair; all participants were able to submit comments. The proceedings are to be documented and a proposal written.
- Hazel Pillai also donated her time to a bpTT initiative to up-grade teachers' skills in the Mayaro-Guayaguayare area.

The Ministry of Education has recently published a draft document on Student Support Services and many of the recommendations made by the Association have been included, so that, they are clearly making inroads.

## **Administrative or organizational structure for services delivery**

The Association is run by a board of directors, headed by chairperson, Ms. Cathryn Kelshall, a vice chairperson Mrs. Hazel Pillai, one secretary Mrs. Maritza Hee Houg and two board members, Mrs. Barbara Jenkins and Mrs. Hyacinth Guppy.

Office Staffing of the office at 84 Belmont Circular Road is as follows: They have a paid Office Manager for two mornings a week, and Ms Hyacinth Guppy-Hickson has donated every Friday morning. Ms. Cathryn Kelshall, Chairman is in office on Tuesday mornings and the office is now manned four mornings a week.

Currently the Association rents a small office from the Adult Literacy Training Association (ALTA). However, the Association has admitted to outgrowing the tiny office, and will have to look at the possibility of increasing manpower. To do this, they will also have to increase space.

Besides the usual paperwork, the office handles requests for information, referrals for assessments and teaching, phone counselling and library services, which is used by parents, teachers and students doing research on dyslexia is also offered along with visits by the public.

ALTA though a landlord, firstly, shares a vision and a teaching methodology with the association so that the relationship has been symbiotic. Secondly, they have use of their photocopier and communal areas. Their training room is often available when needed by the Association for rent. And lastly, all the ALTA staff are accommodating when people visit outside of hours.

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

Chair Person	Mrs. Cathryn Kelshall	<a href="mailto:info@dvslexiatt.org">info@dvslexiatt.org</a>
Vice Chair	Mrs. Hazel Pillai	<a href="mailto:hazelp@tstt.net.tt">hazelp@tstt.net.tt</a> 768-6611

Secretary	Mrs. Maritza Hee Houng	heehoung@tstt.net.tt
Board Member	Mrs. Barbara Jenkins	bienkins@wow.net
	Mrs. Hyacinth Guppy-Hickson	hvie 1999@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Ms. Christine Ambrose	
PRO	Ms. Carmen Quintin Georges	

### **About the Programme**

The Teaching Course is carried out annually during the last three weeks of July. The programme is based on the work of Dr. Samuel Orton, Anna Gillingham and Bessie Stillman. According to Dr. Orton, a major hurdle in learning to read is the necessity of establishing a firm and consistent association between a visually presented symbol and its auditory component. Orton advocated the use of all sensory pathways to reinforce weak memory patterns and to strengthen all pathways.

This programme used was developed by Kathleen Hickey and has been used at the Dyslexia Institute, U.K. since 1973. In the light of research into memory and learning styles, the programme has been further evolved to include these ideas while still adhering faithfully to the students' literacy needs.

The programme used by the Dyslexia Association proceeds slowly in small steps, provides immediate feedback, and is multi-sensory in its presentation. In each case there is much practice and review until the skills become automatic, thus liberating the student to concentrate on understanding. The programme is suitable for teaching children as well as adults.

### **The Course Includes:**

Assessments for teachers, multi-sensory teaching of reading, handwriting and spelling, perception, sequencing, listening skills and phonemic awareness, language skills, the

language of number, story writing, comprehension, help in the classroom, lesson planning, and meta-cognition. Emphasis is on practical work and there is ample opportunity to practice the techniques learnt, as children come in to be taught during the last two weeks.

The course is limited to 20 participants and is ideal for teachers who can work with small groups in a remedial setting. Application forms are mailed out in April. The Aston Index test is the diagnostic test used. The structured multi-sensory programme, which is taught by the Association, remains in the forefront of best teaching for dyslexics. The Lindamood Phonemic Sequencing (LiPS) is an amazing therapeutic programme for children and adults with phonological awareness difficulties as it uses the feel of the mouth to overcome the deficit.

### **Financing**

**Bursary Fund** - The Bursary fund pays for students who would otherwise be unable to afford remedial lessons. In every case, parents are expected to make some financial commitment according to their circumstances, and the teachers make a commitment by accepting a lower fee than they would normally expect. All monies donated go directly to funding lessons, as costs (such as incidental expenses for stationery, etc.) are met either by the committee members themselves, or by the Association.

### **Companies who contributed to the Training Course**

Many of the following companies fund the course on a regular basis: -

Agostini Insurance, Bechtel, Cosmar Ltd., CUNA Caribbean, EOG Resources, Exklar Technologies, Guardian Life, Home Construction Ltd., Label House, Lexicon, McCann Eriksson, National Gas Co. of T&T, Neal & Massy Foundation, Peakes, Petrotrin, Phoenix Park, Point Lisas Nitrogen, Prestige Holdings, Rentokil Ltd., RBTT Trust, and Scotiabank.

One full scholarship and twenty-one 50% bursaries were given out in 2005. The British High Commission funded the Aston Assessment Kits used in the course. Also teachers

participating in the course pay a fee of TT \$2000.00 and purchase personal Aston Assessment Kits at a cost of TT \$900.00.

In 2005 the Association was inundated with requests for places on the annual 3-week Teachers' Training Course in July. They therefore made the decision to run two concurrent courses so that 40 teachers could be trained.

However, the Association now has a seat on the Advisory Committee for Special Education.

### **Forms of Benefits or Services Delivered**

Annually, the Association conducts a Training Course in Specific Methods for Teaching Dyslexics. The course is run at a cost of TT \$2000.00 per person. A library of books, cassette tapes and videotapes are available to members and a newsletter is published twice a year.

The Association also has a Taped Book Library of over 250 'books' for children and adults. There is also a collection of lecture tapes from the International Dyslexia Conferences in the U.S. This Taped Book Library was made possible through funding from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, and from private citizens who have donated to the library from their personal collection.

As part of the ongoing role of the Association, information on current developments in the teaching and diagnosing of dyslexics is gathered from both the Dyslexia Institute [Www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk](http://Www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk) and the British Dyslexia Association in the U.K., and the International Dyslexia Association in the U.S.A. [www.interdys.org](http://www.interdys.org).

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**March 7<sup>th</sup> 2006**