

The introduction to dyslexia education essay

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According to the PIRLS 2011 study on International Results in Reading, whilst New Zealand has an acceptable degree of student achievement in literacy, unfortunately there are also students who experience on-going difficulties in literacy, (Mullis, Martin, Foy and Drucker, 2012). Similar data collected through related PIRLS studies in 2001 and 2006, questions current education pedagogies and whether they are meeting the needs of students with specific learning disabilities (SLD), in this instance dyslexia. Dyslexia is an often misused and misinterpreted term used to diagnose reading difficulties. The literal translation of the word Dyslexia comes from the Greek ' dys - meaning difficulty with, and -lexia meaning words or language. (ref). However whilst the term dyslexia is used and accepted in many countries as a specific learning disability, the New Zealand Ministry of Health does not currently recognise dyslexia as a medical condition, but rather as a developmental disorder with the preferred term of specific learning disability preferred, (ref). In contrast in 2007 the New Zealand Ministry of Education formally recognized the condition of dyslexia for the first time, yet the Ministry of Education still struggles to define a working definition that promotes their philosophy that focuses on research based inclusiveness rather than an education system that defines and categorises students in terms of their learning disabilities. In this regard, the Ministry of Education does not specifically recognise the use of the term dyslexia in the school context because of the issues associated with labeling students, and instead, individual needs are identified and appropriate interventions across a range of learning difficulties are implemented. (ref). The intention of this literature review is to initially review the definition of dyslexia through available research, with particular attention on the effectiveness of interventions used

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to improve literacy levels of dyslexic students or students at risk of dyslexia comparing international trends against New Zealand's Ministry of Education's philosophy on Dyslexia. What is Dyslexia? In line with the Ministry of Education philosophy, Snowling, (2008), suggests that it is better to consider dyslexia as a dimension rather than a disorder with clear boundaries as there appears to be many different and varying degrees of dyslexia. Whilst not officially recognized, Dyslexia is the most commonly documented form of specific learning difficulty (SLD) in New Zealand. Indicators of this SLD appear in all ages, races, and income levels. Dyslexia is not an illness, but rather it describes a different way of learning than to that of their peers. (ref). Dyslexia is best described as the way individuals processing information, and the effect this processing has on their literacy development. According to Reid and Fawcett (2005), other broad characteristics of developmental dyslexia are noticeable indicators such as speech and language difficulties, difficulties in ordering and sequencing, letter reversal, poor short term memory and poor concentration and directional orientation, whilst not and exhaustive list are indicators as to the way in which an individual processes information. Historically interventions deemed as potential cures for dyslexia were often founded around students with various other learning difficulties. In reality many of these development and behavioural abnormalities often co-exist with dyslexia, these specific learning difficulties, are commonly diagnosed as dyspraxia, specific language impairment and hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder, (Deponio, 2005). Similarly Duane, (2002) argue that this co-existence of specific learning disabilities may possibly be caused by the coinciding developmental pathways from interacting genetic and environmental influences. By <https://assignbuster.com/the-introduction-to-dyslexia-education-essay/>

mentioning dyslexia the effects of a specific learning difficulty associated with learning mathematics, called dyscalculia must also be mentioned, because „ for some dyslexic students, " easy" things in Mathematics are hard and " hard" things can be easy" (Henderson & Chinn, 2005, p. 302). In line with New Zealand Ministry of Education philosophy a learning difficulty implies that something is " wrong" with the student, this type of deficit approach leads to a focus on their weaknesses rather than recognizing their strengths. Historically this deficit approach has tended to remove students from mainstream classroom to allow remedial teachers, teacher aides or similar to work in isolation. However the Ministry of Education's approach in recognizing Specific Learning Difficulties places the focus on inclusive mainstream strategies primarily based on the way lessons are planned resourced and taught. Indicators of Dyslexia A meta-Analysis of research studies has identified a number of similarities that develop the understanding of dyslexia. Significantly much of the research revealed whilst there is no agreement on the causes and effects of dyslexia, there was significant evidence that highlighted the benefit of current pedagogical approaches in education for children identified as exhibiting phonological, visual or surface traits of dyslexia. Phonological Awareness Clay (1991) suggests that a child's ability to understand written text is an outcome of their oral language skills, and any learning approach should place an emphasis on developing the child's ability to make sense of any word. It is generally agreed that phonological awareness is where it is difficult for those identified as dyslexic to apply principals of de coding and spelling to printed words. Similarly Goswami (2002), suggests that as part of normal child development, young children process rhyme forms in speech as they begin

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to decode and learn to read. However Turner and Chapman (1999) argue that oral language is not the same as written language, and that children need specific learning in de coding these letter patterns, effectively they need to develop skills to learn how to learn. Snowling et al (2003) highlight the need for early identification of dyslexic-type symptoms at a young age in order to facilitate the development of appropriate reading strategies. A view shared by Svensson & Jacobson, (2006), who suggest that if undetected these early phonological deficits can persist through to adulthood. A further study by, Snowling and Hayiou-Thomas (2006) suggests that with appropriate interventions, children that display oral and written learning impairments, in most cases will be able to respond to appropriate teaching interventions, and become relatively normal readers. According to Joshi et al (2002), the use of systematic, explicit, decoding instruction that emphasized synthetic phonics yielded better results than other instructional methods" (p. 231). A view shared by (Sawyer, 2006; Simpson, 2000) who highlight how the use of direct instruction in aspects of phonological awareness has assisted in the gaining of reading skills Likewise, it has also been strongly promoted by many educationalists that the problem with learning to read, can both be solved and prevented by using the right teaching methods and tools. Life for many dyslexics can be difficult and unhappy, as they are often expected to perform like their non-dyslexic peers (Alexander-Passe, 2004). In this respect, any additional support they can receive outside the school is considered invaluable. In a small-scale study with dyslexic learners, Alexander-Passe (2004) found that about two-thirds of the dyslexic participants thought that their parents understood their condition. Another third probably had a more troubled life as a result of not getting appropriate

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social, emotional and practical support from those closest to them (Fawcett & Nicolson, 1991). In such cases, parents may often not even be willing to acknowledge that there is a problem. According to Sunderland and Klein (2001), successful dyslexic people tend to attribute their success to the support received from their parents. Based on this philosophy, an 18-hour course called „ Help Your Dyslexic Child“ was run for six weeks by the London Language and Literacy Unit (LLLU) at South Bank University in summer 2000. The course included information which helped parents to determine whether or not their child was dyslexic; developed their understanding of individual learning styles; and helped them to have practical strategies when helping a child in reading, spelling and writing. As a result, this developed the parents“ confidence in how to offer the best help they could to their child. Similarly, as part of promoting a dyslexia friendliness campaign, parents of dyslexic children in East Sussex took part in sessions that were aimed at understanding dyslexia better, and at helping parents to be aware of their role in developing their child“s literacy (Amos, 2004). A study undertaken by Hales (2001) highlighted the experience of dyslexic learners and their parents as they discovered various strategies that parents can use to help their dyslexic child. This may include talking to other parents of children with the same condition, believing that their effort can make a genuine difference to their child, and remembering that they know their child best. As part of a two-year evaluation project, which highlighted the parental-professional communications relating to dyslexic learners“ learning difficulties, parents“ roles were said to have evolved from a type of compensation (ie parents“ supportiveness) to communication, then, to

accountability leading to participation or partnership in which parents and teachers worked together.