

**Dyslexia** does not just affect reading! It can have a wider impact throughout life.



## 1 Background information

The context for this research is the primary education sector in Saudi Arabia with specific reference to the provision for students with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) in reading and writing. This area is covered by legislation in Saudi Arabia and there is a nationwide declared ambition to reform and expand education and “to achieve equity in the delivery of education services, including inclusion of special needs students in the regular classroom” The discourse surrounding different kinds of learning needs in Saudi Arabia is still evolving, however, and at present there is no specific provision for dyslexia within the broader SEN system. The concept of dyslexia is known in academic and government circles but very little has been done so far to provide effective systems for assessment and referral of this particular SpLD.

## 2 Research context

1. There is a gap between academic thinking on dyslexia at university level, and actual teaching practice in primary schools, where Ministry of Education instructions have no specific provision for dyslexia and most serving teachers have little or no understanding of dyslexia.

2. The provision of resource rooms and specialist SEN teachers is the approach recommended by the Saudi Arabian government for children with SpLD, but that in practice there is a lack of such resources in many primary schools.

3. children who are selected for extra support are taught low level literacy skills on a programme that is different from that of their peers in mainstream classes.

## 3 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to make recommendations for better identification, assessment and support mechanisms for children with dyslexia in Saudi Arabia and for better education about dyslexia in the teacher training and professional teacher development sector.

## 4 Methods

An ethnographic approach is used to collect classroom data in two primary schools selected through purposive sampling. Ethnography allows researcher to see more deeply into social situation as they occur. (Delamont, 2002).

1. Semi-structured interviews 

2. Documents analysis 

3. Field notes 

4. Observation 

Classroom

Resource room



## Teaching support



## 5 Discussion

1. The local culture and the pedagogical traditions of Saudi Arabia have coloured the way that people see the world (Schwandt, 2000), and so it was important to gain this understanding because any improvement process has to start at the point where the people are, and build on the existing knowledge that people have.

1. Raise awareness about dyslexia, and find ways of ensuring that students with dyslexia are identified, assessed and referred in such a way that they receive support tailored to their own specific needs rather than broader categories of SEN which may not apply to them.

3. The need of appropriate training courses in universities on dyslexia in Saudi Arabia.

## 6 References

1. Delamont, S. (2002) *Fieldwork in Educational Settings: Methods, Pitfalls and Procedures*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) London: Falmer.
2. Schwandt, T. J. (2000) Three epistemological stances for qualitative enquiry: Interpretation, hermeneutics and social construction. In K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 189-213.