

Trends and Issues of Academic Performance of Dyslexic Pupils In The South West Region of Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated trends and issues of academic performance of dyslexic pupils in some selected primary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. Focus was on documented contextual characteristics of dyslexia, explored their family environment, as well as their teachers' aptitude in improving their art of reading. Four research questions and one research hypothesis guided the study. The sample consisted of 36 pupils 9-12 years, sub samples; of 26 parents, and 18 teachers. The sample was selected purposively using informal methods of identification such as the experience of and discussions with present teachers as well as pupils' school records. Data were obtained using the following instruments: Observation guided by checklist, the Cloze Reading Test for reading comprehension, Focus Group Discussion (guided) and Questionnaire. The quantitative data were subjected to descriptive analysis while inferential statistical analysis made use of Chi Square. Analysis showed that 22 characteristics of dyslexia were identified; the family environment was not stimulating, motivating, enriching and enabling enough this impacted negatively on their language developmental process and the art of reading; and their teachers we're not pedagogically equipped for improving their reading difficulties. By implication of this study, formal introduction and sustenance of inclusive education in the South West Region is urgent. From the latter the need for the following is recommended: an assessment/diagnostic research team for dyslexia, equipping teachers with pedagogic intervention strategies as well as follow through structured supervision, and enhancing family environment. In conclusion, dyslexic pupils can excel at reading if accompanied with appropriate assistance at home and in school.

Keywords: Trends and Issues, Academic Performance, Dyslexic Pupils, South West Region Of Cameroon

I. INTRODUCTION

With the dawn of formal education, academic performance has always been a key issue to both regular and segregated schools, though with varying degrees. As a consequence of more recent trends and forces toward greater inclusion, academic performance is even gaining more grounds since education is increasingly becoming a right for every child. The Education for All (EFA) movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. In the year 2000, at the World Education Forum in Dakar, 164 governments pledged to achieve EFA and identified six goals to be met by 2015. Governments, development agencies, civil society and the private sector are working together to reach the EFA goals. In order to sustain the political commitment to EFA and accelerate progress towards the 2015 targets, the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has established several coordination mechanisms which are managed by UNESCO's EFA Global Partnerships team. This article was geared at pointing our context specific trends and issues of academic performance of pupils with dyslexia. To effectively measure trends and issues of performance of dyslexic pupils, indicators such as: characteristics of dyslexia, pupils' reading skills in English Language, family environment and pedagogic intervention strategies for dyslexic pupils were processed scientifically.

Conceptualizing issues and trends in understanding dyslexia and Learning

Formally, learners with special needs were neglected and as a result they were hardly part of the regular school population. With the progression of time however, formal education opened its doors to them but segregated them from regular schools. Nonetheless, even this situation has evolved for the better because children with special needs are not only beginning to be part of the regular school population but their needs are

also beginning to get due attention. There has undoubtedly been a great leap forward in this light, that is, from almost nothing to something. As a result of this growing concern, the researcher takes a step further by paying attention specifically to dyslexia. The reason among others being that reading is a vital component of one's academic life, the absence of this capacity it becomes extremely difficult to study since reading cuts across the academic curriculum.

The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) (1989) enshrines a right to education for every child, including children with disability. In this connection, Inclusive Education which imply that all learners with and without disabilities should be taught in the same school and classroom is endorsed by this convention. Cameroon is a signatory to both the CRC and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (www.e-include.eu/.../908-new-report-on-the-convention-on..., 2008).

Contextually, change has and is as a result of more favorable laws leading to the respect of the rights to education for all and to more open and accepting attitudes from family and society. Demographically there are more kids with disabilities as well as more learning centres in which their needs are a priority. The prevailing economic crisis has and continues to leave many with lots of constraints to want to invest on the education of children with disabilities. However, it is hoped that as society grows in the understanding of the policies and necessity for inclusion, more and more institutions will invest in it. This prevailing economic context can be boosted by the practicality of good governance, effectiveness, equity as far as education is concerned, as well as transparency. Socially, the proportion of the population who appreciate the general importance of education is on the rise, with emphasis on the rights of each child, globalization, and competition. Consequently, the percentage of society that lives with special conditions cannot be neglected because the nation will be losing on their contributions since disability, in the strict sense, does not mean inability.

To address the Rights of Persons/Children with disabilities which have long been unrecognized or denied, the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, United Nations) has significantly increased its work on the rights of persons with disabilities since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in general and on education in particular (CRPD). In addition to supporting the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and technical cooperation and research undertaken at headquarters, over 20 human rights field presences currently promote the rights of persons with disabilities, focusing on law and policy reforms.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international human rights instrument of the United Nations intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disability. Parties to this convention are required to promote, protect, and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disability as well as ensure that they enjoy full equality under the Law.

The Guiding Principles of the Convention were:

Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices and independence of persons. Non-discrimination as well as full and effective participation and inclusion in society; respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disability as part of human diversity and humanity; equality of opportunity; accessibility; equality between men and women; respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities to preserve their identities. The convention adopts a social model of disability, and defines disability as including 'those who have physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Principle of 'Reasonable Accommodation' the convention defines 'reasonable accommodation to be necessary, appropriate modification, and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case to ensure to exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 2) and demands this of all of life including inclusive education.

Right to Education: the convention states that persons with disability should be guaranteed the right to inclusive education at all levels, regardless of age, without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. State Parties should ensure that: children with disability are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education or from secondary education. Adults with disability have access to general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning. Persons with disability receive the necessary support, within the general education system to facilitate their effective education and that effective individualized support measures are put in place to maximize academic and social development. (United Nations General

Assembly, December 2006). Back in Africa, various countries have and are responding to this convention on different bases and pace. Nigeria and Ghana (West Africa) for example are more aware of the needs of persons with disability and have more centers, learning institutions, as well as more experts both in the medical and teaching fields. They and many other African countries are definitely still making progressive strides irrespective of their difficulties and set back.

Traditional beliefs, customs and attitudes held by different ethnic groups in Cameroon have for a long time influenced the education of persons with special needs. In some parts of the country, children with disabilities were and are still denied basic rights especially the right to go to school, in spite of global movements towards universalization of access to schooling for all children (*World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, 1990; Salamanca Conference on Special Needs Education, Spain, 1994; Millennium Development Goals, 2000*).

World Bank Report (2008) estimates that there are approximately 650 million disabled persons in the world of whom 80 million are in Africa with Cameroon recording 1.600, which is about 8.5% of its population. From the statistics, it seems that, among all the other disabilities, there are more visually impaired persons (600) in Cameroon. A review of some statistics collected by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2008 and published in 2010 on disabilities in 47 institutions offering special education in the ten regions of Cameroon registered 3,992 institutional based persons with disabilities: 1,552 physically handicapped; 883 hard of hearing; 281 visually impaired; 106 mentally disabled; 1,070 mixed of visually impaired, autistics, hard of hearing etc). As concerns specifically the state universities in Cameroon there are 490 disabled students with different kinds and types of disabilities (University of Buea 31, University of Douala, 89, University of Dschang, 67, University of Maroua, 54, University of Ngoundere, 49, University of Yaounde1, 107 and University of Yaounde 11, 93).

In Cameroon, the practice in families who have children with disabilities is that, choices are open to non-disabled children whereas children with disabilities are looked upon by families as unproductive and unnecessary burdens. Furthermore, non disabled children are encouraged in their studies. However, bearing in mind the fact that, persons with disabilities are human beings with the same status as any other person in the society, the government has elaborated a framework to promote and protect their rights. Law N° 83/13 of 21 July 1983 on the Protection of Disabled Persons which was enforced by Decree N°90/1516 of 26 November 1990 emphasize the need for the protection and defense of persons with disabilities. In this effect, this law and its decree of application has relaxed measures concerning the age limits for persons with disabilities to enroll in school.

Article 5 (3) of the 1990 decree for example, stipulates that: “pupils and students with disabilities are authorized to repeat a current class twice if the failures in the examinations are caused by the difficulties related to their physical or mental state”. Paragraph 4 of the same article stipulates that; qualified persons with disabilities in specialized private training institutions, should be attributed subventions or special didactic materials; scholarships in schools and universities, gifts in cash or kind to young persons with disabilities and to children born of parents with disabilities in need.

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability, neurological in origin and is characterized by difficulties with accurate and / or fluent word recognition, poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in a phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. (The International Dyslexia Association, 2003). Learning disability for the most part cannot be cured or fixed; it is a lifelong challenge. However, with appropriate support and intervention, people with learning /reading disabilities can achieve success in school, at work, in relationships, and in the community. Parents and teachers searching for remedies of reading problems in children found the following very resourceful and useful.

Language development in children from twenty-four months should be closely monitored because this is the best way to help prepare children for home and school subjects like reading, writing and arithmetic (the 3Rs). Language development in children between three and five also requires attention understanding and follow up because this is also the best time to spot out and attend to any developmental delays in this domain. In other words, it is much easier and effective at this stage to identify deficiencies, recommend for diagnostic evaluation and take steps to fulfilling skill gaps (early identification, assessment, diagnosis and strategic intervention). Children with reading disabilities can and should be enabled to retain concepts in reading, math, and science. Parents and teachers should be informed about ways to help each child individually thus providing an Individualized Reading Plan for each. (IRP)

Children of eight and nine years are already in Piaget's stage of concrete operation and are in the critical stage of learning basic and some general skills. Due to their cognitive development they now adequately understand and interpret oral and written communication; the most observable language ability is reading (Tchombe, 2008). From informal discussion with some public, private, and denominational regular primary school teachers and my personal experience in the South West Region of Cameroon it was clear that the efforts in keeping with laws, legislation, and policies, on inclusion have been under way but are grossly insufficient. Consequently, in spite of striving for accommodation, adaptation, support and advocacy, their fate still leans towards abuse and vulnerability for the most part mainly as a result of sheer ignorance. The physical and emotional abuse that is sometimes their lot impacts negatively on their academic performance. It was noted that there was very little provisions for children with disabilities in terms of early identification, assessment, referral for diagnosis of their condition, nor the following: appropriate pedagogic intervention strategies to support their education, legal text protecting their rights, dignity, and international instruments.

Nevertheless, there is hope, for all member states are called to implement the United Nations Convention on Persons with Disabilities, the Salamanca Declaration, and WIPO (committee on Related Rights of the World Intellectual Property Organization, Nov. 2010). The committee agreed to work towards an "appropriate international legal instrument/s for persons with print disabilities and research institutions, submit recommendations to the WIPO General Assembly in 2011 / 12 on exceptions and limitations for persons with print and other reading disabilities and limitations for education and teaching of these children, research, libraries and archives (World International Property Organization, 2010). The African group called the committee to work toward an appropriate international legal instrument to undertake text based negotiations with the objectives of reaching agreement on an international legal instrument/s which will ensure appropriate exceptions for persons with disabilities including print disabilities that is their teaching and education (March 2011)

Without a doubt therefore if any one living with dyslexia does not get adequate and proper assistance at home, in school and in the society, s/he will do everything in her/his capacity to avoid one of the most powerful and effective intellectual and academic activity called reading and that will be very detrimental in every sense and to academic performance in particular.

The inability to read and comprehend affects particularly language learning as well as general and overall academic achievement because each person begins by learning to read and after that reads to learn. Reading disabilities among others reduces the teaching and learning environment to a demanding and boring one thereby posing a stumbling block to the facility and joy of acquiring knowledge in many other subjects. To compound a bad situation, it has been and still remains a noted cause for poor academic performance and a consistent cause for school drop outs.

Conceptualizing Types of dyslexia

There are three main types of dyslexia that can affect a child's ability to spell as well as read and each type of dyslexia has a different cause. The several types of dyslexia that can affect a child's ability to spell as well as read are: trauma dyslexia, primary dyslexia and developmental dyslexia. Trauma dyslexia usually occurs after some type of brain trauma or injury to the area of the brain that controls reading and writing. This type of dyslexia is rarely seen in today's school-age population. Primary dyslexia is a dysfunction of, rather than damage to, the left side of the brain (cerebral cortex) and does not change with age or maturity. Individuals with this type are rarely able to read above a fourth-grade level and may struggle with reading, spelling, and writing as adults. Primary dyslexia is hereditary and is found more often in boys than in girls. Therefore, the difference between primary dyslexia and trauma dyslexia is that trauma dyslexia occurs after a brain trauma and primary dyslexia is a dysfunction of the brain.

The term "Developmental Dyslexia" is often used as a synonym for reading disability; however, many researchers assert that there are different types of reading disabilities, of which dyslexia is one. A reading disability can affect any part of the reading process, including difficulty with accurate or fluent word recognition, or both, word decoding, reading rate, prosody (oral reading with expression), and reading comprehension. Developmental or secondary dyslexia is caused by hormonal development during the early stages of fetal development and it diminishes as the child matures. This type is also more common in boys.

Dyslexia involves several different functions: visual, auditory and dysgraphia. Visual dyslexia is characterized by number and letter reversals and the inability to write symbols in the correct sequence. Auditory dyslexia involve difficulty with sounds of letters or groups of letters; the sounds are perceived as jumbled or not

heard correctly. Dysgraphia refers to the child's difficulty holding and controlling a pencil so that the correct markings can be made on the paper. (www.typesofdyslexia.com)

Characteristics of dyslexia

The problems displayed by individuals with dyslexia involve difficulties in acquiring and using language, reading and writing letters in the wrong order is just one manifestation of dyslexia and does not occur in all cases. Classroom teachers may not be able to determine if a child has Dyslexia but they may detect early signs that suggest further assessment by a psychologist or other health professional in order to actually diagnose the disorder. Other problems experienced by dyslexics include: Learning to speak, organizing written and spoken language, learning letters and their sounds, memorizing number facts, spelling, reading, learning a foreign language, correctly doing math operations, difficulty copying from a board or a book, problems with spatial relationships, letter and number reversals are fairly common up to the age of seven or eight and usually diminish by that time. If they do not, it may be appropriate to test for dyslexia or other learning problems.

There may be a general disorganization of written work. Auditory problems in dyslexia encompass a variety of functions; a child may not be able to understand what s/he hears; recalling sequences of things or more than one command at a time can be difficult; and remembering content, even if it involves a favorite video or storybook. Parts of words or parts of whole sentences may be missed and words can come out sounding funny. The wrong word or a similar word may be used instead; children struggling with this problem may know what they want to say but have trouble finding the actual words to express their thoughts.

Many subtle signs can be observed in children with dyslexia such as: children may become withdrawn and appear to be depressed; they may begin to act out, drawing attention away from their learning difficulty. Problems with self esteem can arise, and peer and sibling interaction can become strained; these children may lose their interest in school related activities and appear to be motivated and lazy. The emotional signs are just as important as the academic and require equal attention. It should be noted that not all students who have difficulties with these skills are dyslexic; hence, formal testing is the main way to confirm a diagnosis of suspected dyslexia.

Reading, spelling, and spoken language

The impact that dyslexia has is different for each person and depends on the severity of the condition and the approaches of the remediation. The most common effects are problems with reading, spelling, and writing. Some dyslexics do not have much difficulty with early reading and spelling tasks but do experience great problems when more complex language skills are required, such as grammar, understanding textbook material, and writing essays. Children with dyslexia can also have problems with spoken language. They may find it difficult to express themselves clearly, or to fully comprehend what others mean when they speak. Such language problems are often difficult to recognize, but they can lead to major problems in school, in the workplace, and in relating to other people. The effects of dyslexia reach well beyond the classroom.

Letter reversal

[Psychological | Neuropsychological](#): some of the classic effects that many persons probably recognize and know about are the reversals of letters like 'b' and 'd' or 'p' and 'q'. Numbers also can be reversed, in how they are written and/or their sequence (e.g. '107' might become '017' or '701'). The other common effects of dyslexia beyond reading fluently and being able to comprehend written material, are in writing and spelling. There can be a tremendous breakdown in spelling, which impacts on writing (Susan and Moats 2002)

Dyslexia and language acquisition gaps

In 1968, the World Federation of Neurologists defined dyslexia as “a disorder in children who, despite conventional classroom experience, fail to attain the language skills or reading, writing, and spelling commensurate with their intellectual abilities. Dyslexia is related to reading and is language based. A dyslexic exhibits word recognition errors such as omissions, insertions, substitutions, reversals, and comprehension errors, difficulty recalling or discerning basic facts, sequence or theme, and other behavior such as missing their place while reading or reading in chopping, halting manner. Dyslexics have difficulty understanding what is read and in spelling words they already know.

It is estimated that dyslexia affects between 5-17% of the total school population and the sufferer displays difficulty reading resulting primarily from neurological factors for example a developmental dyslexia, alexia (acquired dyslexia), and hyperlexia. Hyperlexic children are characterized by having average or above average IQs and word-reading ability well above what would be expected given their ages and IQs. It can be

viewed as a superability in which word recognition ability goes far above expected levels of skill. Some hyperlexics, however, have trouble understanding speech. Most or perhaps all children with hyperlexia lie on the autism spectrum. Between 5-10% of autistic children have been estimated to be hyperlexic (NINDS 2007)

Dyslexia refers to a cluster of symptoms resulting in people having difficulties with specific language skills, particularly reading. Pupils/students with dyslexia may experience difficulties in other language skills such as spelling, writing, and pronouncing words. It is referred to as a learning disability because dyslexia can make it very difficult for pupil/student to succeed academically in the typical instructional environment, and in its more severe forms, will qualify a pupil/student for special education, special accommodations, or extra support services. Dyslexics need continuous support through schooling.

Dyslexia and learning to read Dyslexia causes difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence and sociocultural opportunity. The dyslexic pupil/student typically has great difficulty in: Understanding and applying phonic decoding principles; Building a vocabulary of words recognized by sight; Making adequate use of contextual cues to assist word recognition; Developing speed and fluency in reading; Understanding what has been read. The oral reading performance of dyslexic pupils/students tend to be very slow and labored, with maximum effort having to be devoted to identifying each individual word, leaving minimum cognitive capacity available for focusing on meaning. The pupils/student tires easily and avoids the task of reading if possible. (Kirk, Gallagher and Anastasiow 2000). Children with dyslexia have difficulty in learning to read despite traditional instruction, at least average intelligence, and an adequate opportunity to learn. It is however, often accompanied by strengths in areas such as creative work, physical co-ordination and empathy with other people.

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF DYSLEXIA

Dyslexia and frustration

Dyslexia commonly causes extreme frustration due to the disparity between low ability in literacy and numeracy and an otherwise normal level of intelligence. A couple shared their experience: "Our son's experiences have left him with extremely low self-esteem, deep suspicion and resentment against all forms of authority, along with chronic anxiety and depression". This combination of characteristics has not only prevented him from accepting the therapy he undoubtedly needs, but has also resulted in a very sparse employment history and a tendency to fits of rage, the latter no doubt exacerbated by his habitual use of illegal drugs to blot out his problems." (www.formanschool.org)

Dyslexia and self-doubt

Dyslexia can also affect a person's self-image. Pupils/students with dyslexia often end up feeling "dumb" and less capable than they actually are. After experiencing a great deal of stress due to academic problems, a pupil/student may become discouraged about continuing in school. The absence of tactfully dealing with learning challenges can lead as afore mentioned to frustration and then self-doubt, especially when it goes undiagnosed for a long time.

Another couple shared their experience: "Our son has bitter memories because he had to stay in his class in a primary school during break times to do his spellings, of being made to feel foolish by an unsympathetic teacher, and predictably of being teased unmercifully by his peers. And although he was later fortunate enough to attend a secondary school that was ahead of its time, with a Special Learning Difficulties Unit headed by a brilliant teacher, the continued feeling of being singled out from his peers still stung.

Dyslexia and low self-esteem

Loss of self-esteem is a result because children with dyslexia soon grow ashamed as they struggled with a skill their classmates master easily. This becomes more acute in the later classes when children switch from learning to read to reading to learn. Reading impaired children are kept from exploring science, history, literature, mathematics and the wealth of information presented in print. Reading is exhausting to them therefore little energy is left for understanding what they have just read. It is normal that a child who has become frustrated, doubtful of self will naturally nurse and let blossom a low esteem that is a sense of worth. As a result, such a child may show signs of depression; behavior problems at home and at school; an absence of motivation and a dislike for school. Consequently, the child's success in school may be jeopardized if the problems remain untreated. (LD OnLine, 2009)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Biological and environmental influences on language development Noam Chomsky (1928 – 1992)

The famous linguist, Noam Chomsky (1957), argued that humans are prewired to learn language at a certain time and in a certain way. The strongest evidence for the biological basis of language is that children all over the world reach language milestones at about the same time developmentally and in about the same order, despite vast variations in the language input they receive. For example, in some cultures adults never talk to their infants under one year of age, yet these infants still acquire language. Children also vary in their acquisition of language in ways that cannot be explained by environmental input alone (Hoff, 2001). For example, pioneering language researcher Roger Brown (1973) searched for evidence that parents reinforce their children for speaking grammatically. He found that they sometimes smiled and praised their children for grammatically correct sentences but they also reinforced sentences that were ungrammatical. From these observations, Brown concluded that processes operating within the child were overriding the environmental input of reinforcement.

However, children clearly do not learn language in a social vacuum (Nelson, Aksu – Koe, & Johnson, 2001; Snow & Beals, 2001). Enough variation occurs in language development when children's caregivers differ substantially in input styles to know that the environment plays a significant role in language development, especially in the acquisition of vocabulary (Tamis-LeMonda, Bornstein, & Baunwell, 2001). For example, in one recent study, by the time they were three years old, children living in poverty conditions showed vocabulary deficits compared to their counterparts in middle-income families, and the deficit continued to be present when they entered school at six years of age (Farkas, 2001).

In sum, children are neither exclusively biological linguists nor exclusively social architects of language (Berko Gleason, 2000; Gleason & Ratner, 1998). No matter how long one converses with a dog, it won't learn to talk, because it doesn't have the human child's biological capacity for language. Unfortunately, though, some children fail to develop good language skills even in the presence of very good role models and interaction. An interactionist view emphasizes the contributions of both biology and experience in language development. That is, children are biologically prepared to learn language as they and their caregivers interact.

In or out of school, encouragement of language development, not drill and practice is the key. Language development is not simply a matter of being rewarded for saying things correctly and imitating a speaker. Children benefit when their parents and teachers actively engage them in conversation, ask them questions, and emphasize interactive rather than directive language.

Shirley Heath (1989) examined the language tradition of African Americans from low-income backgrounds. Adults do not simplify or edit their talk for children, in essence challenging the children to be highly active listeners. Also, adults ask only "real questions" of children – that is, questions for which the adult does not already know the answer. Adults also encourage a type of teasing with children, encouraging them to use their wits in communication. Language can be richly varied, cognitively demanding, and well suited for many life situations – oral and literary traditions not well developed, such children may experience difficulty in following directions – flexibility in language such as the ability to persuade, or express dissatisfaction in subtle ways.

Despite its utility in many job situations – rich language tradition does not meet with educational priorities. Too often schools stress rote memorization, minimizing group interaction and discouraging individual variation in communication – the structure of low-income, frequently single-parent families often provides little verbal stimulation for children. Mothers could count the number of times they initiated talk with their children – very few (other than directive or asking a quick question). Few of the mother's conversations involved either planning or executing actions with or for her child. Heath (1989) points out that the lack of parental, family and community support is wide-spread among urban housing projects. The deteriorating, impoverished condition of these inner-city areas severely impedes the ability of young children to develop the language skills they need to function competently.

Marsh's stage theory on learning to read and intellectual development (1898-1993)

George Marsh (1898-1993) quite rightly argues that one should not just look at children reading but also bear in mind that children who are learning to read have certain intellectual skills and these too are changing as they grow up. Marsh thought that the form of children's reading must be heavily influenced by the stage of intellectual development that they happen to be at. So he turned to Piaget's (1896-1980) well-known theory of intellectual development and suggested that there are distinct stages in children's reading, just as there are distinct stages of intellectual development according to Piaget. Marsh also claimed that the stage that any

child had reached in reading was determined by the stage of intellectual development that s/he happened to be at. There are, Marsh suggested, four main stages in the development:

Stage 1

When children begin to read, they learn 'rote associations' between 'an unsynthesized visual stimulus and an unanalyzed oral response' (Marsh, Friedman, Desberg & Saterdahl, 2000) They read words as logograms, and this of course has the disadvantage that they have no rational way of working out what an unfamiliar written word means. As for the use of phonological code, that is out of the question because 'children in the first stage find it very hard to decenter from the unanalyzed oral response to perform such tasks as phonemic segmentation' (Marsh et al.1999) the phrase 'difficult to decenter' is an important one, for that is Marsh's link with Piaget's theory. Piaget argued that one of the main intellectual difficulties of children of this age was that they tend to focus their attention on prominent details and cannot analyze patterns into separate parts.

Stage 2

Two major changes happen here: the child begins to use context in combination with linguistic cues to help her/him to read, and s/he also begins to make rudimentary analogies by spotting similarities between new words and familiar ones. So shown the word 'cime' in isolation children say 'cats', but shown it in context preceded by 'the', they will say 'the child'.

Stage 3

By this time (at the age of about eight years) children are well into what Piaget called the concrete operation period. This means, according to Piaget, that they are beginning to be able to master quite complex rules. Marsh claims that as a result children are now able to use combinatorial rules (another Piagetian phrase) in order to analyze words into phonemes, and to use grapheme-phoneme correspondences to 'decode' new words. In this stage children 'children can decode new words if they are regular' (Marsh et al. 1991)

Stage 4

At this final stage children begin to be able to use 'higher order' rules, such as 'the letter' 'c' is pronounced /s/ when followed by i, e, and y'. This rule is said to be a higher order one because it is a conditional rule: the pronunciation of the letter 'c' is conditional on the following vowel. This is the stage when children begin to make proper analogies when they read. 'Although the strategy may be available early in the stage of concrete operations, it is not used spontaneously to any great extent until much later in development' (Marsh &Desberg, 1991}. Again we have to turn to Piaget for a reason why analogies come so late. Piaget argued that analogies involved a kind of reasoning which children cannot master until after the age of 10 years (Piaget &Inhelder, 1958) Marsh therefore suggested that children originally treat written words as logograms; and that it is some time before children rely on grapheme-phoneme rule.

Intervention strategies

There are many techniques for teaching children with reading difficulties some of which have been introduced below. Teachers of the learning disabled need to be familiar with the standard reading methods, know how to modify them and be competent in special remedial strategies. (Gumut1990).

Basal reading approach

This involves a set of reading texts and supplementary materials such as work books, flash cards, placement and achievement test and filmstrips (Mercer, 1987). It has interrelated set of books and supportive materials intended to provide the basic materials for the development of fundamental reading skills. A basal reading series consist of graded readers that gradually increase in difficulty typically beginning with very simple readiness and first grade book or class one books and going through to class six level. The books increase in difficulty in vocabulary, story content, and skills development. They teach readiness vocabulary, word recognition, comprehension and enjoyment of literature (Lerner, 1999).

Phonic method

The children are made to learn isolated letters and their sound equivalent; then they synthesize or blend these individual phoneme elements into whole words. These children are also taught to analyze the phoneme elements that make up the word (Lerner, 1999). The phonic method teaches word recognition through learning grapheme-phoneme association. After learning vowels, consonants and blends, the child learns to sound out words by combining sounds and blending them into words (Mercer, 1990).

Linguistic approach

Many linguistic reading materials use a whole-word approach; words are taught in word families and only as wholes. In beginning reading, words are introduced that contain a short vowel and consist of a consonant-vowel-consonant pattern. The words are selected on the basis of similar spelling patterns (e. g. sat mat, cat...), and the child must learn the relationship between speech sounds and letters which means between phonemes and graphemes. The linguistic approach to reading emphasizes phonology or sound system of English Language. (Mercer, 2000)

Neurological impression method

This is a procedure for helping children acquire reading skills to which both teacher and children read together in unison. It helps the teacher and the children in question to cover a great deal of material in much the same way as the most competent readers would, without slow, laborious, attention to detail (Hallahan et al. 1999). The method consists of joining oral reading at rapid pace by the pupil/student and teacher. It is based on the assumption that a pupil/student can learn by hearing her or his own and someone else voice jointly reading the same material. The purpose is to cover as many pages in the allotted time, without tiring the student. (Mercer, 2000)

Language experience method

It builds on the children's knowledge and language base, linking the various forms of language viz, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It uses the pupils'/students' own experiences and language as the raw material. The pupils/students begin by dictating stories to the teacher (or writing stories by themselves). The stories then become the basis of their reading instruction. (Lerner, 2000) The author added that through this method, children conceptualize written materials as:

What I can think about, I can talk about

What I can say, I can write (or someone can write for me)

What I can write, I can read

I can read what others write for me to read

The method integrates the development of reading skills with the development of listening, speaking and writing skills, what the child thinks and talks about make up the materials. It stresses the child's unique interests, and experiences on the child's oral and written expression (Mercer, 1999)

Fernald method

Vocabulary is selected from stories the child has dictated and each word is taught as a whole. The teacher identifies unknown words and the child writes the word to develop word recognition (Mercer, 2000)

Repeated reading

A strategy for giving the children repeated practice to improve oral reading fluency. Passages are selected then, the children read the selected orally three or four times before proceeding to a new passage. (Lerner, 1999)

Basic skills remediation model

This model provides developmental or remedial instruction for basic academic skill deficits. Reading and mathematics deficits receive the most attention.

Tutorial model: This model emphasizes instruction in academic content areas. Areas of instruction are usually those in which the pupil/student is experiencing difficulty or failure. The teacher's major responsibility is to help keep the reading disabled student in the regular curriculum.

School services

Most schools offer a range of service delivery and placement alternatives for learning disabled persons. The most common arrangement are the regular classroom, the consultant teacher model, the itinerant teacher model, the resource room, and the self-contained special class.

Statement of the problem

In the course of her work, the researcher was struck by the number of children in school who could not read or read far below their chronological and mental ages. Consequently, many pupils fail school examinations because they cannot read written text properly. This is a difficulty that is more about language and how it is taught than anything else. To have dyslexia, among others, means to have more difficulty learning to read and dealing with text than would be expected for a given cognitive ability. There are various sources or causes of

reading difficulty or dyslexia, among which are the home or school environment, as this could be complicated by language development and learning.

Many pupils fail school examinations because they cannot read written text properly. This is a difficulty that is more about language and how it is taught than anything else. To have dyslexia, among others, means to have more difficulty learning to read and dealing with text than would be expected for a given cognitive ability. There are various sources or causes of reading difficulty or dyslexia, among which are the home or school environment, as this could be complicated by language development and learning.

Her curiosity urged her to find out how stimulating, motivating, and enriching, their family environment was as far as language developmental process and introduction to the art of reading were concerned. Furthermore, she sought to know how enabling teachers were in their knowledge of and awareness of reading problems, dyslexia, as well as intervention strategies for improving children's reading ability.

She was aware of the fact that laws, legislation and policies have been put forward to encourage the philosophy of inclusive education in Cameroon, but for the most part the promulgation of these laws were not accompanied by the consideration for training teachers, who are the core implementer of these policies, suitable physical school environment, in terms of infrastructures for accessibility, the large classroom sizes in relation to the pupil/teacher ratio and most importantly instructional material and resources. In addition, the decrees signed by the government of Cameroon are too general, insufficient, as well as nonspecific.

The contemporary trend of inclusive education is great but alone is not good enough because it requires monitoring children's experiences and providing support while in school, to the best of the researcher's knowledge this is absent. Dyslexics have difficulties reading and this is a particular difficulty because the negative consequence of reading cuts across the curriculum. The researcher is not aware of the existence of any kind of monitoring, nor preparedness for inclusive education. To go a step further it will be difficult to make provision for support if the experiences in terms of characteristics and effects are not documented. The above gaps therefore constitute the problem the researcher wants to begin exploring.

Objectives of the study

- 1) Identify the characteristics of dyslexia in selected school children.
- 2) Determine the effects of dyslexia on pupils' reading of the English Language and overall (all subjects studied in English) academic performance.
- 3) Identify pedagogic intervention strategies for improving children's reading in regular classrooms.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

Research design

This study was conducted through the survey research design. In principle the survey design requires either the selection of the entire population or a representative subset of it from which data are collected to help answer research questions (Olsen & George, 2004). Though the purpose of a survey is usually to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristic of the population (Creswell, 2003), in this case however the results will not be generalized for the simple reason that they are particular to the sample.

Population

The target population for the study was made up of all class three to five pupils in all primary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. Responding to the researcher's request each teacher she was in contact with submitted a list of those with peculiar difficulties in reading, writing and spelling in her/his class; the total was 843 from 34 schools of which 12 were public, 12 denominational, and 10 private. Those involved were pupils whose ages ranged from 9 to 12 years; of both sexes (females and males); selected from both strictly English speaking and bilingual primary schools.

Table 1 Distribution of accessible population

School type	Number of schools	Male	Female	Total Population
Public	12	160	149	309
Denominational	12	128	108	236
Lay private schools	10	156	142	298
Total	34	9.784	10.016	843

Sample

The sample of the study as presented in the table above consisted of 36 pupils 18 female and 18 male selected from 6 primary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. The teachers spearheaded the identification strategies that were used to select the representative pupils from the accessible population with varying reading problems of various intensities in collaboration with the researcher. To arrive at the latter prior work was done to identify from among the pupils who fell within the category of the study those with the most severe reading problems.

Table 2 Distribution of sample (pupils)

School type	Number of schools	Male	Female	Total
Public	2	6	6	12
Denominational	2	6	6	12
Lay private schools	2	6	6	12
Total	6	18	18	36

Respondents Demographic Information

Gender of Respondents

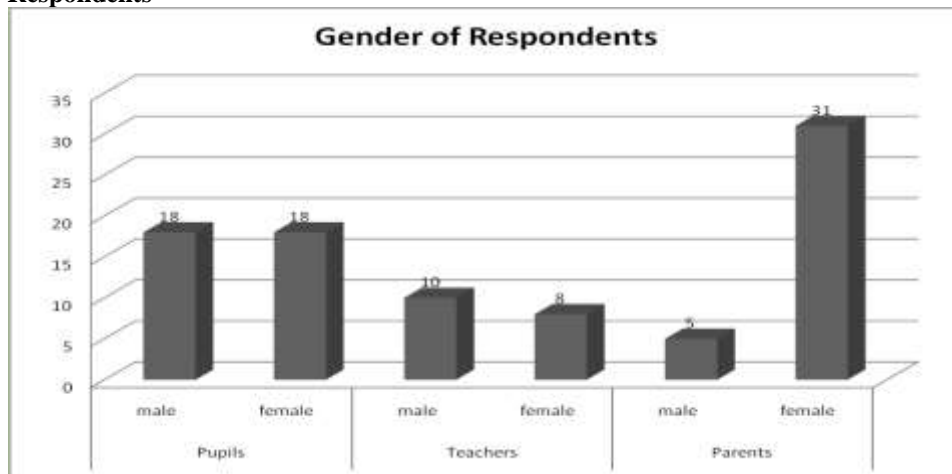


Figure 1: A bar chart illustrating the gender of respondents

Table 3: Age distribution of Respondents

Respondents	Gender	N	%
Pupils	9yrs	3	3
	10yrs	11	11
	11yrs	25	25
	12yrs	7	7
Teachers	20-5yrs	5	5
	26-0yrs	6	6
	31-0yrs	7	7
Parents	20-0yrs	15	15
	31-5yrs	12	12
	36-0yrs	9	9
Total		100	100%

Table 4: Type of school attended

Respondent	School type	N	%
Pupils	Denominational	12	33.33
	Public	12	33.33
	Lay private	12	33.33
Total		36	100%

Table 5: Educational level of Parents

Parent	Status	Level	N	%
Mothers	Single mothers	Primary	20	48.78
		Secondary dropouts	5	12.20
	Separated	Secondary dropouts	6	14.63
		Married	Ordinary level	3
			Advanced level	2
Fathers		BAC	1	2.44
		Ordinary level	3	7.32
		Advanced level	1	2.44
Total			41	100%

Research instruments

This refers to the tools that were used and how they were used for data collection which included: Observation (guided by a checklist on reading readiness designed by I. J. Ihenacho, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Jos), the Cloze test for reading comprehension (by Jakob Nielsen Feb. 2011), Focus Group Sharing (using a focus group sharing guide constructed by the researcher) and the Summated or Likert-type rating scale. Each instrument has been described below as well as their validity and reliability

IV. FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What are the characteristics of dyslexia in selected schools in the South West Region of Cameroon?

Table 6: Characteristics of Dyslexia

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std Dev	Dec.
1	Trait 1: Letters	35	1	0	0	3.9722	.16667	A
2	Numbers	35	0	0	1	3.9167	.50000	A
3	Geometric figures	36	0	0	0	3.1201	.66451	A
4	Pictures	36	0	0	0	4.0000	.00000	A
5	Trait 2: Spoken words	36	0	0	0	4.0000	.00000	A
6	Sounds	20	15	0	1	3.5000	.65465	A
7	Trait 3: Meaning of words	19	17	0	0	3.5278	.50631	A
8	Sentences	0	1	0	35	2.6738	.71594	A
9	Direction	36	0	0	0	4.0000	.00000	A
10	Trait 4: Letters in the alphabet	20	15	0	1	3.5000	.50709	A
11	Words	36	0	0	0	4.0000	.00000	A
12	Numerals	20	15	0	1	3.5000	.50709	A
13	Trait 5: Drawing	0	36	0	0	3.0000	.00000	A
14	Copying notes	35	1	0	0	3.9726	.16655	A
	Mean Score	364	101	00	39	3.62022 9	.313486	A

\bar{x} = Mean Std Dev = Standard deviation A = Accepted R = Rejected

$$\text{Decision level: } \bar{x} = \frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

Table 7: Difficulties Associated with Dyslexia

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std Dev	Dec.
I	Oral Reading					3.4706	.66220	
1	Reads in a slow word-by-word manner	19	13	4	0			A
2	Ignores punctuation	17	14	4	1	3.3824	.69695	A
3	Mispronounce many words	13	17	5	1	3.2647	.66555	A
4	Adds words	16	14	6	0	3.3235	.72699	A
5	Omits words	13	17	6	0	3.2353	.69887	A
6	Reverses words	0	18	18	0	2.5000	.50752	A
7	Repeats words	0	18	18	0	2.5000	.50752	A
8	Repeats lines	18	0	0	18	2.5000	1.52256	A
9	Avoids reading	12	18	4	2	3.1471	.82139	A
II	General					3.4706	.61473	
10	Unable to sit still	18	15	3	0			A
11	Easily distracted	20	10	5	1	3.4118	.82085	A
12	Appears tense in reading situation	21	10	4	1	3.4706	.78760	A
III	Comprehension					3.3529	.91725	
13	Cannot identify the main idea	20	9	5	2			A
14	Cannot answer questions about meaning of words	22	11	3	0	3.6471	.54397	A
15	Cannot relate the sequence of events in a story	24	10	2	0	3.4706	.66220	A
	Mean score	233	194	87	26	3.2098143	0.743743	A

Oral reading

Reading was boring for both themselves and their listeners because they read in a slow word-by-word manner and they did not recognize, understand, nor respect punctuation marks. Pronunciation was very problematic because for the most part they omitted and skipped particularly words they could not pronounce. Since each text they read made very little and sometimes no sense at all; consequently, the latter neither bothered nor distracted them because the absence of some words or phrases had no impact. They were inclined to add known words which were like the ones in their assigned reading text because they neither made out similarities nor difference. They frequently repeated known and familiar words as well as lines or sentences while reading.

Generally therefore since oral reading was such an arduous task they did all in their power to avoid it; for example some of the pupils reacted by gradually degenerating into a quiet passivity, while others consistently read under their breath.

General

Reading is an exercise which requires discipline among many others; these pupils' lack of reading depth can partly be explained by the following which can be described as enemies to depth and profitable reading. They generally lived with and clearly manifested a short attention span (easily distracted) which exposed them to a lack of steadiness (unable to sit still) and anxiety which made them tensed in reading

situations because they were always almost defeated or failed before they even started reading any passage. They were not disciplined enough to sit still and relax for effective reading and thinking.

Comprehension

It is obvious that one's capacity to understand is tightly connected to one's reading aptitude. Having identified the numerous problems these pupils had with reading orally and silently, it was a natural consequence that they exhibited such low level of comprehension. One usually has to read in between lines to catch and identify main ideas; grasping the main ideas enables one to answer questions about meaning of words which in turn denote understanding. If one does not understand in the first place, it follows that retention cannot be in place and there is no way one can relate the sequence of events in any story or piece of writing if s/he neither understood nor retained. The pupils' problem with comprehension can to a great extent be understood in this light.

Do dyslexia affect pupils' reading of the English Language as well as overall academic performance? Results of the cloze test for reading comprehension (Jakob Nielsen Feb. 2011)

Table 8 Class three

PUPILS	SCORE ON 20	PERCENTAGE
1	3	15
2	5	25
3	3	15
4	4	20
5	4	20
6	6	30
7	5	25
8	5	25
9	3	15
10	5	25
11	4	20
12	4	20

The highest reading score for class 3 is 6 on 20 that is 30% while the lowest score is 3 on 20 that is 15%. This clearly indicated that the sample needed and still needs more and unique help to learn the initial contents in their readers.

Table 9 Class four

PUPIL	SCORE ON 20	PERCENTAGE
1	4	20
2	6	30
3	4	20
4	5	25
5	5	25
6	6	30
7	4	20
8	5	25
9	5	25
10	6	30
11	3	15
12	5	25

The highest score for class 4 is 6 on 20 that is 30% while the lowest score is 3 on 20 that 15%; these are considerably very poor results considering the fact that the sample should have mastered the contents of this beginning chapter. They definitely need additional help because of the difficulties they encounter.

Table 10 Class five

PUPIL	SCORE ON 20	PERCENTAGE
1	5	25
2	5	25
3	6	30
4	5	25
5	3	15
6	4	20
7	3	15
8	4	20
9	3	15
10	4	20
11	5	25
12	3	15

The highest score for class 5 is 6 on 20 that is 30% while the lowest score is 3 that is 15%. All the classes have a common high and low score. No pupil scored more than 30%; it is obvious from the general results of The Cloze Reading Test that these pupils definitely have problems with reading common words within the aptitude of their chronological and mental ages.

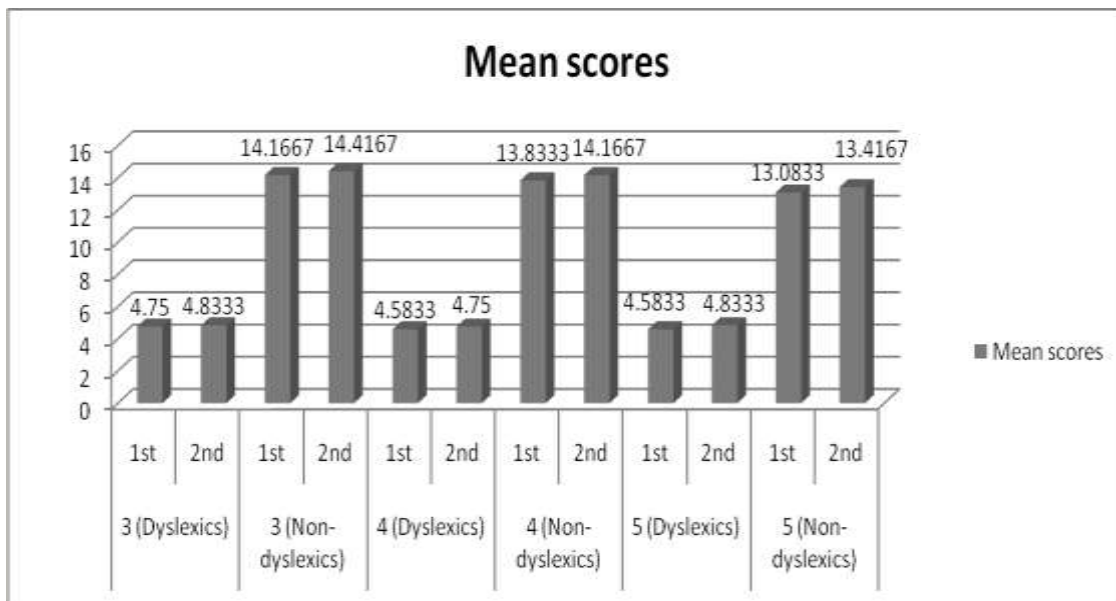


Figure 2: A bar chart illustrating the effects of dyslexia on academic performance

Above is a bar chart representation of the information on table 7 which indicated a one-sided trend. Vividly, it is clear that regular pupils in all three classes registered more than three times both the minimum and maximum scores when compared with the scores of pupils with dyslexia. In the same vein the mean scores and standard deviation of regular pupils were by far higher than those of pupils with dyslexia.

It can be concluded from the table and bar chart above those dyslexia significantly affects reading capacity which in turn affects the overall academic performance of those living with it because class 3 pupils living with dyslexia had an average of 4.75 and 4.83 respectively compared to non-dyslexics who had an average of 14.16 and 14.41. The standard deviation is .86603 and .57735 for pupils with dyslexia respectively compared 1.52753 and .90034 respectively for non-dyslexics.

Equally, class 4 pupils living with dyslexia recorded means scores of 4.58 and 4.75 respectively as compared to 13.83 and 14.16 of non-dyslexics. Their standard deviation stands at .79296 and .75373 respectively for dyslexics as against .93744 and 1.02986 respectively for non-dyslexia.

The mean scores of dyslexic pupils in class 5 were 4.58 and 4.83 respectively as compared to those of non-dyslexics which is 13.08 and 13.41 respectively. What is the same, the standard deviation of dyslexics in class 5 is .99620 and 71774 as compared to 1.31137 and 90034 respectively for non – dyslexics.

Worthy of note is the fact that pupils with reading problems as with the cases cited are prone to a greater extent to underperform in all other subjects because this problematic language and reading capacity is employed at all times in the service of other subject matter. Therefore, each one needs a viable language, reading, and comprehension capacity to understand, retain, and reproduce every other subject matter.

Research Question3: Were the pupils' regular teachers equipped with pedagogic intervention strategies for improving the art and skill of reading?

Table 11: Pedagogic Intervention Strategies for Improving the Art of Reading in Regular Classrooms

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std Dev	Dec.
	Knowledge of Approaches					3.3333	.59409	A
1	The 'whole-language' approach	7	0	10	1			
2	The 'shared-book experience'	5	13	0	0	3.2778	.46089	A
3	The 'language-experience approach'	7	10	1	0	3.3333	.59409	A
4	The 'guided reading strategy'	5	10	3	0	3.1111	.67640	A
5	Guided reading sessions	7	10	1	0	3.2778	.66911	A
6	Guidance	7	7	4	0	3.1667	.78591	A
7	The Basal Reading Approach	6	4	7	1	2.8333	.98518	A
8	The Phonic Method	11	6	1	0	3.5000	.78591	A
9	The Linguistic Approach	9	7	1	1	3.3333	.84017	A
10	The Neurological Impression Method	6	6	3	3	2.8333	1.09813	A
11	The Language Experience Method	7	10	0	1	3.2778	.75190	A
12	The Fenald Method	5	5	7	1	2.7778	.94281	A
13	Repeat Reading	9	6	2	1	3.2778	.89479	A
	ABILITY TO USE STRATEGIES					1.5000	.92355	
14	Regular teachers are equipped with pedagogic strategies to manage (dyslexia or reading disability) in their classrooms	1	2	2	13			R
15	I teach beginning readers the alphabetic and how it can be applied	2	1	4	11	2.3333	.48507	R
16	The Whole-Language Approach	0	0	5	13	2.0556	.53930	R
17	The Shared-Book Experience	0	17	1	0	2.9444	.23570	A
18	The Language Experience Approach	1	0	4	13	2.1333	.51450	R
19	The Guided-Reading Strategy	2	0	5	11	2.2333	.61835	R
20	The Guided Reading Session	1	0	3	14	2.0889	.47140	R
21	Guidance	1	0	6	11	2.1222	.57451	R
22	The Basal Approach	1	3	13	1	2.2222	.64676	R
23	The Phonic Method	0	0	7	11	2.0556	.80237	R
24	The Linguistic Approach	4	11	2	1	3.0000	.76696	A

25	The Neurological Impression Method	0	0	5	13	2.1000	.70711	R
26	The Language Experience Method	1	0	6	11	1.9444	.80237	R
27	The Fenald Method	1	7	9	1	2.5556	.61570	A
28	Repeated Reading	6	9	3	0	3.1667	.70711	A
KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIAL SERVICES						3.3333	.48507	
29	The Special Classroom	6	12	0	0			A
30	A dyslexic resource teacher	5	11	2	0	3.1667	.61835	A
31	A Resource Room	6	7	5	0	3.0556	.80237	A
32	A consultant Teacher	4	12	2	0	3.1111	.58298	A
33	An Itinerant Teacher	3	8	5	2	2.6667	.90749	A
34	Placement alternatives	0	0	0	18	1.0000	.00000	R
BENEFITS FROM SPECIAL SERVICES								
35	The Special Classroom	0	0	0	18	1.0000	.00000	R
36	The Resource Room	0	0	0	18	1.0000	.00000	R
37	The Consultant Teacher	0	0	0	18	1.0000	.00000	R
38	The Itinerant Teacher	0	0	0	18	1.0000	.00000	R

\bar{x} = Mean Std Dev = Standard deviation A = Accepted R = Rejected

The complete version of the table above is in the appendix (page 190). The analysis is in four parts: first found aimed and finding out the teacher's knowledge of the existing strategies, second aimed how finding out their ability to use the various strategies, third tested their knowledge of special services for dyslexic pupils and finally, their experience or benefit from these services. Worthy of note is the fact that though the strategies are many and varied they are not at all mutually exclusive, they overlap and a combination of different ones produce hybrid strategies.

Knowledge of intervention strategies: The first thirteen items aimed at establishing and testing the respondents, common knowledge of most of the recommended strategies for pedagogic intervention aimed at acquiring and improving reading skills.

The strategies are recommended for all learners that is; those identified with problems and those without any particular difficulty. The distinguishing point for each case has to do with variations of individual needs, pace, as well as individual attention. The named strategies were described to test whether or not teachers knew, understood, and could identify them. Given the mean level of significance and the means scores, the first 13 items were all accepted denoting the fact that they understood and could identify the strategies.

In spite of the fact that the teachers generally agreed that they knew a great variety of teaching strategies; the fourteenth item delved into inquiring the degree of the respondents' level of skills training as well as practice. The majority (13 out of 18) strongly disagreed that they were not equipped for teaching the art of reading in integrated classrooms. The researcher from observation confirms the honesty of the majority and hopes that those who accepted that they are equipped are indeed because this was not very evident from her observation.

Ability to use known strategies: Having established a common understanding of the intervention strategies for pupils learning to read, the 15th to 28th items asked each teacher to do a reality check and then indicate the strategies s/he uses in her/his classroom. In discussions with the teachers the researcher realized that they strongly agreed to some strategies even when they employed only a minute aspect of it, that is, not the method in its entirety.

The fifteenth item had to do with teaching the alphabet; in all, 15 out of 18 teachers do not begin with this essential. The effects of this absence, is very evident in pupil's inability to both recognize the sound of and use letters. The seventeenth item on the "shared-book experience" showed that 17 out of 18 teachers agreed to its usage in their classrooms; this is the most popular strategy in terms of usage, while the sixteenth item which is based on the "whole language approach" clearly indicated that teachers neither used it entirely nor partially. One can conclude that even those who earlier claimed knowledge of this item claimed more of head than practical knowledge.

The 18th to the 23rd items were rejected because the 18th item on the "language experience approach" indicated that 17 out of 18 teachers did not use it in their classrooms. This is the least popular strategy as far as usage is concerned. The 19th item on the "guided reading strategy", the 20th item on the "guided reading session" and the 21st item based on "guidance" showed clearly that 17 out of 18 did not use it in teaching their lessons. The latter is also true of the 22nd item on the "basal approach" as well as the 23rd item which was on the "phonic method" all 18 asserted that they did not use it with 11 strongly agreed. The 25th item on the "neurological impression method" as well as the 26th item on the "language experience method" was also far from the practice of all the teachers. The question of the researcher is what underlies such a gross lack? Is this due to a lack of due knowledge, interest, time, classroom size, dissatisfaction with remuneration...?

The 24th item on the "linguistic approach" and the 25th item on "neurological impression method" and 26th on "language experience method" also revealed that 17 did not use it with 11 strongly disagreed and 1 strongly agreed. The item was rejected. The twenty-seventh item on the Fenald Method is unpopular and this may be part of the reason for the pupils being very poor in vocabulary. The twenty-eighth item on "repeated reading" showed that 15 use it in their classrooms with 6 strongly agreed, and 3 disagreed. Though this item was accepted as a popular strategy but its effect was not evident with some pupils.

Special services: The 29th – 33rd items tested respondents' knowledge on special services since dyslexia calls for such services. The accurate options for all the items was strongly agreed (SA) and all the items were accepted. It was not good news for pupils with reading problems and dyslexia to know that their teachers know nothing about the services of a dyslexic resource teacher 30th item. The claimed knowledge about the other services

Use and benefit from special services: After having tested their knowledge on these services, the teachers were asked to identify whether or not they were benefiting from these services. The items 34 – 38 on benefits were all consistently and totally rejected by all 18 respondents, that is, they did not benefit from them. This may result from two reasons first that the services exist but teachers are ignorant of them or that the services did not exist at all. In the context of the South West Region of Cameroon the latter is true.

Finally, after this very wide range of methods, the teachers were asked to indicate those methods they used in teaching which were not in their questionnaire as well as comment on their effectiveness. There was no indication of anything from all 18 teachers.

Recommendations

Pupils and students do not make the educational system; on the contrary and to a great extent family environment, teachers, and the community make pupils/students. The consistent out – cry about falling standards in the Cameroonian educational system is a function of all that family situation, educational administrators, teachers, as well as the wider community has made of it; over and above all this, is the fact that we do not have a reading culture. Children are neither responsible for nor can they control the family environment in which

they are brought up in, socio-economic background... these and others cumulatively determine a child's position on the developmental ladder when s/he gets to school. What is more - our schools should be able to transform all that each pupil brings however small into the best for her/him.

The researcher realized that, pupils with reading disabilities in integrated classrooms need particular attention during instruction. While stimulating, motivating, enriching and enabling family environment is highly advocated, teachers need to take as a matter of responsibility their preparation for inclusive classrooms in keeping with modern trends. With the required assistance from family, institutions, Ministry of Education, the Government, NGOs, in particular pupils with reading disabilities will be more successful in school and beyond. In this light, the following may help each conscious individual in the above mentioned groups to reconsider the manner of executing their responsibilities:

- 1) It will be wonderful if the Government can provide a multidisciplinary assessment team for dyslexia in the South West Region (personnel and facilities) for early identification, assessment, diagnosis, early intervention both medically and pedagogically in keeping with the modern trends of inclusive education.
- 2) Non-governmental organizations can organize seminars and forums for educating disadvantaged families on how to put in place and sustain a stimulating, motivating, enriching and enabling family environment for supporting language development and the art of reading.
- 3) The Ministry of Education can ensure that the curriculum of Teacher Training Colleges is in keeping with current issues and trends; that is, furnishing trainees with appropriate intervention strategies for dyslexics in regular classrooms.
- 4) Each educational institution needs to be reinforced and reconstructed for efficiency where teachers are positively challenged daily to become more resourceful, productive, and critical because poor academic performance in some institutions has been the direct result of teacher's ineffective input.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this study was to determine the traits of dyslexia and its effects on reading performance and overall academic performance, find out how parents initially cooperated with the language development of their children and how they were introduced to reading; and finally, document how regular teachers teach the art of reading. To achieve this purpose, three research questions and one hypothesis was formulated and tested. To answer the research questions and test the hypothesis, assessment tests, anecdotal records, observations, questionnaire, and focus group sharing were employed. The 36 pupils were observed guided by a checklist and tested using the cloze reading test for comprehension, the questionnaire was administered to 18 teachers and the parents of the pupils participated in focus group sharing (a group of their choice).

The data derived were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis; mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, chi square was used to test the hypothesis at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance. The findings showed that dyslexia affect reading ability/performance and overall academic performance; family environment was not stimulating, motivating, enriching and enabling for the language development of their children and did not introduce them to the art of reading; as well as the fact that regular teachers were not equipped for improving the art of reading in integrated classrooms.

A network of theories including Noam Chomsky's theory on Language Development, George Marsh's theory on Learning to Read, Sociocultural Perspectives of children with reading disabilities and Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive learning theory were employed. The network of theoretical, conceptual and empirical research reviewed indicated that reading disability results from complex sources, their severity is impacted by genetics, family environment, and the way teachers teach children the art and skill of reading.

The survey research design was adopted for this study with a mixture of instruments including observation, the cloze test for reading comprehension, focus group discussion and sharing and the summated rating scale. All research instruments were developed and validated. The research was carried out in six primary schools in the South West region of Cameroon. The population of the study was made up of pupils, their teachers and their parents. The sample size was made up of thirty-six (36) pupils (gender balanced) who were purposively selected to suit the study.

The findings from this study are notable because it has documented the characteristics of dyslexia in selected schools in the South West Region of Cameroon, and provides insight on the difficulties associated with dyslexia which compound its effects on pupil's ability to read and overall academic performance; it found out how these children were introduced to reading as well as noted how regular teachers teach reading in their

classrooms. The results indicated that if the pupils with reading disabilities do not get accurate and timely assistance from parents, significant others, and teachers especially the deficit continuously leads to academic difficulties. It reiterated the fact that effective language development and communication patterns prepares children from the outset for learning to read and reading to learn.

In a nut shell therefore, the researchers take home message is that some children with reading problems in the regular classrooms in the South West Region of Cameroon have reading disabilities. This condition has a past, a present, and a future: its past refers to the family environment surrounding a child's birth and upbringing that is it should be stimulating, motivating, enriching and enabling to impact positively on language developmental processes and the art of reading. In addition, if children with dyslexia are placed in regular classrooms where their teachers are neither aware of their condition nor have the capacity for pedagogic intervention, the latter will undoubtedly impact negatively on children's language depth, reading ability and overall academic performance.

Nevertheless, the researcher sees a way forward for learners with dyslexia in Cameroon; the ray of hope emerges from the fact that those who have been part of this study together with the researcher are now ambassadors for the cause of pupils with reading disabilities in regular schools.

From this study it can be concluded that practical tips for providing a stimulating, motivating, enriching, and enabling environment where necessary as well as pupil-centered instruction by teachers who are equipped with intervention strategies for teaching the art of reading will go a long way to alleviate reading disabilities, and improve the overall quality of reading in and out of school, as well as academic performance. The researcher is of the opinion that the following cannot be overemphasized: the art of reading to children, instilling the desire for reading very early and helping them develop the right attitude to and fondness for reading. For effectiveness all the above should begin as early as gestation period and continue at home and at school until the required level of skills have been attained

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