

The impact of dyslexia on pupils' self-esteem

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This study investigates the factors that affect the self-esteem of learners with dyslexia. It provides a brief overview of some of the key literature in this area and then describes a small-scale study conducted in two mainstream secondary schools in the north of England. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with secondary-aged pupils who had received an official diagnosis of dyslexia. Nine pupils volunteered to be interviewed. The study considers the impact of factors such as comparisons made against other students and the impact of teachers, peers and family on pupils' self-esteem. The results of the study indicate that these factors contribute significantly to self-esteem for pupils with dyslexia. However, the study found that the most significant factor that contributed to students' self-esteem was a positive diagnosis of 'dyslexia' and ownership of the label. The study concludes that an early diagnosis of dyslexia is essential for creating a positive self-image and recommends that further research is necessary into the significance of the diagnosis for these learners.

Key words: self-esteem, dyslexia, identification.

Overview of key literature

This article explores the factors that help to shape self-esteem for pupils with dyslexia. It explores the influence of teachers, peers and parents on self-esteem, as well as the influence of an official diagnosis of dyslexia. The article contributes to the existing, albeit limited, body of knowledge in this area. Riddick (1996, p. 32) points out that much of the research into self-esteem has focused on children with reading disabilities or learning difficulties in general. There has been very little research specifically examining the self-esteem of pupils with dyslexia. Earlier research (Rosenthal, 1973; Thomson and Hartley, 1980, both cited in Riddick, 1996) found that pupils with dyslexia have lower levels of self-esteem and this is supported by subsequent research (Riddick, 1995, 1996; Humphrey and Mullins, 2002a).

According to Humphrey:

'Despite a barrage of anecdotal evidence from teachers and practitioners, there is a paucity of published research

in self-concept and self-esteem in children with dyslexia' (Humphrey, 2002, p. 30).

Research has indicated that teachers have a significant influence on the development of self-esteem in pupils with dyslexia and unfair treatment from teachers can impact negatively on self-esteem (Humphrey, 2001; Humphrey and Mullins, 2002a). Research has also produced evidence of peer bullying (Humphrey, 2001), which has a negative impact on self-esteem.

Humphrey (2002) found that pupils with dyslexia both in mainstream schools and in special units were more likely to display timid behaviour, avoid situations of possible stress and continually ask for help and reassurance than learners without dyslexia. In addition, learners with dyslexia in mainstream schools had lower levels of self-esteem related to reading ability than learners without dyslexia or those with dyslexia in special units (Humphrey, 2002). Key research findings indicate that learners with dyslexia experience teasing and bullying and feelings of exclusion (Edwards, 1994; Riddick, 1995; Riddick, 1996; Humphrey, 2001, 2002, 2003). Unfair treatment by teachers has also been a consistent theme in the literature (Edwards, 1994; Osmond, 1993; Humphrey, 2001, 2003; Humphrey and Mullins, 2002b) as well as teacher resistance to the existence of dyslexia (Riddick, 1996).

Methodology

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with pupils who had received an official diagnosis of dyslexia and were placed in mainstream schools (see Figure 1). The pupils were 14–15 years old. Nine pupils volunteered to take part in the research. These pupils were selected from two schools to increase the sample size rather than for comparative purposes. Both schools were situated in areas of social deprivation. The study was conducted according to agreed ethical conventions (British Educational Research Association (BERA, www.bera.ac.uk)). Permission was obtained from the parents of the participants, the participants and relevant members of staff in both schools. The study has limitations which must be acknowledged. The sample size was small and the absence of quantitative data means that the results cannot be evaluated in terms of statistical significance.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview.

Introductory Questions

1. When did you find out that you had difficulties arising from dyslexia?
2. What things did you find difficult to learn at school because of having dyslexia?

Prompt: Did you find it difficult to learn to read?
Prompt: Did you find it difficult to learn to write?

Questions relating to Key Issue A: Comparisons with other pupils

1. When you were learning to read, were you aware that other pupils were reading better than you were?
2. When you were learning to write, were you aware that other pupils found writing easier than you did?

Prompt: What made you aware of this?

Prompt: What made you aware of this?

Questions related to Social Comparisons and Self-Esteem (Sub-division of Key Issue A)

1. How did it make you feel when you were struggling with reading and/or spelling and your peers were not?
Prompt: Can you give me any examples of times when you felt bad because your peers seemed to find certain things easier than you did?
2. When you were younger did you feel that you would do well in school or not so well?
Prompt: Why did you think this?
3. Now that you are older, have you changed your opinion about how you will do in school?
Prompt: If 'yes' – In what way have you changed your opinion?
If 'no' – Can you explain why your opinion has not changed?
4. What job/career would you like to pursue when you leave school?

Questions related to Key Issue B: Peer Relations

1. Can you think of any experiences you have had where members of your peer group have made negative comments about you *because* of your special educational needs?

Figure 1. Interview schedule: individual pupil interviews

Results

A large majority (eight/nine) of the students who were interviewed had made comparisons between themselves and other pupils prior to the official diagnosis. These comparisons varied in nature. Some pupils were able to identify specific comparisons such as reading aloud in class, spelling and writing and some were only able to make general comparisons such as finding work more difficult than the other pupils or struggling more in class. These comparisons led to feelings of being stupid, disappointed or isolated.

Feeling stupid

One student indicated that he felt 'stupid' when he compared himself to his peers and this resulted in him having a fear of other people seeing his work. Another student commented on feeling 'stupid' because he was struggling more than his peers:

'I pretty much felt I was stupid and I had something wrong with me. I wasn't confident. I wouldn't show

Prompt: Have any of your peers made derogatory/nasty comments because of your dyslexia? What sort of things do they say? Please give me as much detail as you can remember.

2. How did you deal with any negative comments? (If applicable)
3. How do you explain your difficulties to other children?

Questions related to Key Issue C: Pupils' Experiences of Teachers

Please do not refer to teachers by name.

1. Did you find your primary teachers to be generally supportive of your special educational needs?
Yes – How did they help?
No – Why were they not supportive?
2. Have you found your secondary teachers to be generally supportive of your special educational needs?
Yes – How have they helped?
No – Why are they not supportive?
3. Can you think of any experiences you have had where teachers have not been supportive of your special educational needs?
Prompt: Please give me as much detail as you can remember.
4. Can you remember any experiences where teachers have been supportive of your special educational needs?

Question Related To Key Issue D: Parents

1. Do your parents understand the problems or difficulties you have at school because of having dyslexia?
Prompts: If 'yes' – In what ways are they supportive?
If 'no' – Can you explain why you feel this?
2. Do you talk to your parents about any problems you have at school because of being dyslexic?

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions – it is very much appreciated.

Sweep Question

Is there anything else that you want to tell me about being a dyslexic?

anybody my work. I would usually just screw it up cos I didn't want anyone to see it' (Student no. 8).

Feelings of disappointment

One student indicated that he felt disappointed with himself when he compared himself to his peers. The realisation that he was struggling led to him 'giving up' and this was accompanied by his refusal to co-operate with teachers' requests:

'Well I felt like kind of disappointed with myself because I couldn't do stuff, so because I couldn't do it, I just didn't bother doing it. I failed a lot. Because I was doing really rubbish in school it affected my life at home. If a teacher asked me to write something I wouldn't do it. I found it hard so I just gave up. I'd be just naughty in general. I would not do the work purposely just to annoy the teacher. I used to try to get sent out of lessons so I needn't do as much work. I didn't know I was dyslexic but I knew I was finding it hard. Now I know I'm dyslexic, I don't think it gives me a reason to mess about. There's no point really' (Student no. 4).

Feelings of isolation

Several students who compared themselves to their peers indicated that they felt isolated and left out because they were finding the work more difficult than other people in the class:

'Well it made me feel like I was the only one and nobody else had problems. I often wondered why everyone else was better than me. I liked art and sport more' (Student no. 2).

'I felt left out cos everyone was going off ahead and finishing their work. They would get to play with games once they had finished at primary school and I'm still there working. I knew I had more problems than the rest cos I was always last to finish' (Student no. 5).

'I thought there was only me in the classroom that was struggling and finding it really hard' (Student no. 9).

'They were writing really fast and I couldn't keep up with them. I felt left out. They were like way in front and I was like way behind. It made me feel bad nearly all the time' (Student no. 6).

The data are consistent with findings in published research which indicate that children with dyslexia often make comparative self-referential statements as well as preferring subjects in which their difficulties are not on display (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002b). The feeling of isolation was a consistent theme across the interview data in my study. The students spoke about their dislike of being expected to produce the same amount of written work as their peers within the same time constraints. They resented being kept inside during break times to catch up on work. They questioned the overuse of writing for recording outcomes in all lessons and they stressed that the best teachers allowed them to record their 'work' in a range of ways. For example, one student talked about how a teacher had allowed him to make a short film to record the outcomes of a science investigation. A hatred of reading aloud was a consistent theme across the data, resulting in pupils making negative comparisons between themselves and their peers. This issue has also been documented in the literature (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002b).

The influence of teachers

The participants expressed mixed views about their teachers. Some described how teachers had humiliated them and this impacted negatively on their self-esteem:

'Well I had this teacher called Mrs P and she really didn't understand. She was always telling my parents that I was too slow . . . She used to bully me. I didn't like her . . . She used to get me in front of the class and humiliate me in front of the others. Then she'd make me

sit in a corner and encourage the class to laugh at me. She was horrible . . . I can rant on about Mrs P for ages. When it was playtime she'd always give me extra work and I'd never get a break . . . She'd shout at me a lot. She used to call me stupid and a baby' (Student no.8).

'She was getting on at me cos I couldn't do the spelling test. She said you shouldn't be at this low level. You'll be kept in at break if you don't get higher marks. She refused to accept that I had a genuine problem. She said I was lazy' (Student no. 5).

'She just like set work and said get on with it. I didn't know what to do. She said you should have been listening' (Student no. 6).

'We got this sheet of paper and it had loads of writing on it and he asked us to read it. I said I can't, it's too long for me . . . He told me to stop moaning and just get on with it . . . I walked out. He's a teacher, I asked for help and he told me to stop moaning. I needed help and he's meant to be there to help me and he wasn't' (Student no. 2).

'My music teacher . . . He doesn't really like me. He used to make comments like say I was rubbish and that I'd never get anywhere in life. He had all these notes and weird symbols on the board and I was confused and I couldn't answer the questions and he'd have a really big go at me' (Student no.4).

Teachers are significant others and contribute to pupils' self-esteem (Humphrey, 2003). The findings in my study concur with findings in published research (Edwards, 1994; Humphrey, 2001; Humphrey, 2002; Humphrey and Mullins, 2002a) that highlight negative teacher attitudes towards learners with dyslexia and teacher resistance to the existence of dyslexia.

Some of the participants were able to identify teachers, both past and present, who were more effective. A recurring theme identified by the participants in terms of evaluating teacher effectiveness was the notion of *support*. Some teachers had also developed strategies for helping pupils with their writing and these strategies were valued:

'Some of them have written for me in lessons and they have given me encouragement and stuff and help with spelling. Yeah they have been generally supportive' (Student no. 3).

'Well the person I think has done the most and really supported me is Mrs S. She has done the most out of the school . . . She knows how I feel. She's qualified to work with dyslexic people . . . She's always been there if I've needed someone to talk to or needed help. If I'm feeling down I'll go and talk to her and she has always sorted it out for me . . . She's the only teacher in the school that's really done wonders for me. She has really helped me' (Student no. 9).

'My history teacher at the moment, Miss K. She is very supportive. My special needs teachers have been supportive obviously . . . They have told my teachers that I have got dyslexia so some of my teachers now realise that I need to be treated slightly differently, like not expecting me to write as much. All of them in fact have changed things like my history teacher. Like when they do lots of writing, I don't have to do it. She prints it off. My science teachers . . . print the work off for me. I still do the questions and stuff. I'm not lazy. I still do all the work that they have to do . . . I just don't have to write as much. That's the main example. It's just a lot easier to work in the lesson' (Student no. 4).

Students perceived support in different ways. Some students emphasised the importance of teachers *understanding* their individual needs. Others stressed the importance of teachers making adaptations to their normal classroom practice and being flexible in their approach. Students above all emphasised the importance of developing effective relationships with their teachers so that they had someone to talk to.

The influence of peers

About half of the students who were interviewed had not experienced verbal or physical abuse because of their dyslexia. They made the following comments:

'No I've not suffered any bullying. Most of my mates are very supportive like J, who I've been with since nursery. He knows what I struggle with and I know what he struggles with so we help each other' (Student no. 2).

'No I never experienced anything negative because of my dyslexia. It's just dyslexia; it's not exactly a big issue. It doesn't change who you are. Everyone has been fine with me. I mean, I used to make fun of myself about my spelling' (Student no. 7).

The students who experienced just verbal abuse (teasing, name calling) made the following comments:

'I was doing this Egyptian thing and I needed the alphabet to change it into hieroglyphics. I couldn't remember the alphabet so I asked someone in class and they started to make fun of me calling me a baby. I explained that I was dyslexic and that I've got a reason for finding it difficult. When I was in primary school I didn't know I was dyslexic so I wasn't able to explain it to people' (Student no. 5).

'When I go out of class to catch-up lessons they laugh and say "Are you going to ketchup now?" That's what they call it. It's not nice. I just say "Yeah, I am". When I come back into the lesson everyone looks at me when I ask the teacher what work I've missed and what I've got to do. I get upset that I can't do the work cos I've missed part of the lesson and some of them laugh at me' (Student no. 6).

'I said it in front of the class. The teacher said has anybody got any problems or something like that. We were in one of those general studies lessons where you talk about real life and issues in the world. I wanted to talk about dyslexia so I told the whole class about my dyslexia. Now some of them call me duggy S . . . [his name]. I just let it go in one ear and out of the other. I don't like it but you can't just react to everything that everybody says' (Student no. 9).

For those students who had experienced bullying, verbal abuse was a consistent theme in the data. This is consistent with findings in the literature (Humphrey, 2001). The final response presented here is consistent with research by Humphrey and Mullins which found that students were often ridiculed by peers when they tried to explain their difficulties to them (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002b).

The influence of parents

All participants identified that their parents had supported them and a recurring theme was that parents were often proactive in terms of getting a diagnosis for their child:

'She was always with me and when I first found out I cried . . . I don't know why I just did. It was like I was upset. I just thought I'd never be able to spell and stuff and I didn't want to tell anybody at all. My mum told me not to be ashamed of it. She said it's not a problem' (Student no. 1).

'Yeah both my parents are supportive. My dad took me for the actual tests. They encourage me to do my best' (Student no. 6).

'My dad refused to believe I was stupid. He said there's something wrong but he's definitely not bloody stupid. My parents are completely supportive. My dad got me the laptop and everything' (Student no. 8).

'My mum said you are struggling and I said yes I am. I told her that I kept seeing the words from back to front, like I'd read it as ti. Then my mum went up to the school and told them I had a problem. We didn't know if it was dyslexia cos we didn't know what dyslexia was. I had some assessments with the school and they said I wasn't dyslexic. They didn't believe that I had something wrong. They didn't believe my mum. My mum took it further. She had a look round to see if there were any dyslexic units and there was one in R . . . so I went to have some tests done and they said I was dyslexic. I then went there from year six to the end of year seven. All my family are supportive. They all paid for my dyslexia lessons at [named dyslexia unit]' (Student no. 9).

The findings of this study concur with findings in the literature. Riddick (1995) found that schools were often dismissive of parental concerns and she highlights that in

many cases parents often expressed concerns before the school had identified any issues. Additionally Riddick emphasises that parents often acted independently of the school in order to obtain a formal identification of dyslexia (Riddick, 1995).

The significance of the diagnosis

According to Riddick:

'Whilst the arguments for and against the term dyslexia have been well rehearsed there has been little research which has looked systematically at what the label means for children and their parents' (Riddick, 1995, pp. 457–458).

The majority of the students in this study commented that their self-esteem had increased after the diagnosis had taken place. They felt that the label gave them a way of explaining their difficulties to their peers and the word 'dyslexia' gave them a reason for their difficulties. The students no longer saw themselves as *stupid* or *thick*. Their comments are presented below:

'I knew why I had been doing so bad and getting bad grades and stuff and then I knew it was alright. Other children used to make me feel bad by bullying me and calling me names. Now I know I'm not stupid even though I struggle with reading and spelling!' (Student no. 1)

'Being told I'm dyslexic has helped me; yeah it definitely has because I have a label. I know I'm dyslexic. Before I knew it I thought I was thick. Well I mean dyslexic people aren't stupid. It's just that they have problems and need help and I just need some help and I'm fine now' (Student no. 4).

'Now I'm dyslexic I know why I'm behind. In primary I didn't know why I was behind, but now that I do, it's a bit easier. Before the diagnosis my teachers had made me feel bad about myself. I felt stupid. From the day I got the diagnosis I felt better about myself' (Student no. 5).

'I'm more confident now that I know I'm dyslexic. It was a turning point for me. If someone gives me a piece of work to do, I try harder. If someone made fun of me I'd explain to them that I have dyslexia and pretty much keep a cool. I see myself as fine. I've got lots of friends and I'm happy. I really wouldn't like to not be dyslexic' (Student no. 8).

'It's not that we're thick or anything. It's because our minds are working in a different way to everyone else's' (Student no. 9).

'It's only dyslexia and some of the richest and most successful people in the world are dyslexic. Dyslexic

people might be bad at one thing but they excel at other things so that's OK' (Student no. 7).

The findings of this study concur with Riddick's findings (Riddick, 1995) which show that pupils valued the diagnosis and use of the official label. Riddick identifies the dominant themes arising out of the children's comments about the use of the term 'dyslexia'. These are:

- not thinking they were thick or stupid;
- that it had helped;
- that it had specifically helped them to understand;
- that there were other children with the same problem (Riddick, 1995, p. 463).

Riddick's (1995) findings correlate with the findings in this study. Clearly the students saw the label as being useful. My study found that in terms of self-esteem, the diagnosis of dyslexia and the ownership of the label had a positive impact on the students' self-esteem. Indeed, I found that the diagnosis of dyslexia and the ownership of the label were far more important factors that contributed towards a positive self-image than other factors such as the effect of teachers, peers or relatives. The students identified the official diagnosis of dyslexia as the turning point for realising that they had a genuine specific difficulty rather than a general learning difficulty. They spoke about the diagnosis as a defining moment in terms of shaping their identity and self-esteem.

Discussion

This section draws on the voices of the students to make recommendations for ways in which schools and teachers can more effectively meet the needs of students with dyslexia.

Research by Humphrey and Mullins (2002a) indicates that the experience of dyslexia can have a negative impact on pupils' self-concept and self-esteem. In addition, they found that pupils with dyslexia tended to attribute success to external factors rather than internal factors (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002a), thus illustrating the theory of 'learned helplessness' (Peterson *et al.*, 1993). Research has indicated that learners with dyslexia attribute success to factors such as teacher quality rather than to their own intelligence (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002a). Success is therefore blamed on external factors rather than being perceived as something that can be controlled (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002a). This suggests that learners with dyslexia have a very poor internal locus of control. They feel that they are not in control of their own success in relation to learning, due to their own perceived inadequacies. Research has pointed to the link between learned helplessness, attributional style and low self-concept (Butkowsky and Willows, 1980; Humphrey, 2001). In contrast learners without dyslexia blame failure on internal factors such as lack of effort or lack of interest in a subject but not lack of ability, thus protecting their

self-concept (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002a). This suggests that learners without dyslexia have a very strong locus of control.

Burden and Burdett (2005) focused on pupils' attitudes towards learning and their sense of agency in an independent residential school for pupils with dyslexia. The researchers use their data to challenge the findings by Humphrey and Mullins on the relationship between dyslexia, self-esteem and locus of control. In contrast, Burden and Burdett (2005) found that the pupils with dyslexia had 'highly positive attitudes towards learning' (p. 103) and had a strong sense of being in control of their own destinies. The study found that the participants felt in control of their own learning and they felt capable of achieving their ambitions. Thus, the participants had not generally internalised feelings of learned helplessness (Burden and Burdett, 2005).

It is pertinent to note that Burden and Burdett's study was carried out in a specialist school for learners with dyslexia. In contrast the study described by Humphrey and Mullins (2002a) examined the feelings of learners with dyslexia in both mainstream schools and special units for learners with dyslexia. Burden and Burdett (2005, p. 103) note:

'It is just feasible that similar results might be forthcoming from a comparison group of pupils with dyslexia attending mainstream secondary schools, but we very much doubt it'.

The data presented in my study challenge this assertion. The mainstream pupils with dyslexia were all very confident and they attributed this to the diagnosis and ownership of the label. For these pupils the label helped them to explain their difficulties. They realised that they had a specific difficulty and that this was unrelated to intelligence. Prior to the diagnosis their self-esteem was significantly lower than it appeared to be after diagnosis. Their self-esteem had been damaged as a result of negative interactions with teachers and peers, although in all cases the parents had worked hard to preserve their self-image. However research has indicated that peers are an important source of self-esteem (Kirchner and Vondraek, 1975, cited in Humphrey, 2003). My data suggest that the negative influences from both teachers and peers negated the positive support provided by parents. The diagnosis was a turning point in terms of building up confidence, self-concept and self-esteem and consequently its significance should not be underestimated. The need for an early diagnosis is therefore crucial in order to stop children from developing learned helplessness.

Humphrey and Mullins (2002a) argue that children with dyslexia perceive a strong association between reading ability and intelligence. They argue that these learners perceive themselves as lacking in intelligence because they struggle with reading and they conclude that these learners will continue to think in this way until their reading is corrected. While the need for early intervention in the area of reading is crucial, the data presented in my study suggest

that children do not always make this association. Many of the participants continued to find reading complex and challenging. However they were able to separate their specific learning difficulty from intelligence. Many of the participants spoke about finding reading and spelling challenging but they recognised the multidimensional nature of intelligence. This suggests that schools need to celebrate pupils' talents and knowledge in a range of areas as this is vital for preserving pupils' self-esteem. Unfortunately, the current standards agenda marginalises attainment in more creative domains. These are often the areas in which learners with dyslexia thrive and are able to demonstrate their capabilities. Until the education system begins to recognise and celebrate 'success' in a range of areas, learners with dyslexia will continue to be classified and marked out as failures. For these pupils, unless there is a transformation of the current assessment system (Lloyd, 2008), their successes in other areas will continue to be devalued and this will have a detrimental impact on their self-concept and self-esteem. These learners will always be losers (Cole, 2005) unless their achievements are recognised and valued.

Conclusions

The data in this study indicate that for learners with dyslexia, the official diagnosis is critical in order to develop self-concept and self-esteem. Prior to the diagnosis, negative interactions from peers and teachers towards learners with dyslexia resulted in low self-esteem and feelings of isolation. In many of these learners there was a feeling of learned helplessness prior to the diagnosis. After the diagnosis, learners' confidence increased and students were able to differentiate between their specific difficulties and the notion of intelligence. Some learners emphasised the multidimensional nature of intelligence and were keen to point out that many talented famous people also have dyslexia. Parental support was consistent across the whole sample and parents were often active in taking steps towards an assessment and diagnosis. However, prior to the diagnosis, this support from parents appeared to have a minimum effect on the self-esteem of this group of learners.

The students suggested several important recommendations to develop practice in schools. For example, one student emphasised the importance of good initial teacher training:

'I think if teachers knew a bit more about dyslexia and they had a student in their class, they would know they were having difficulties and they would know how to help them. I think when teachers get trained they should do a section on how to deal with dyslexia and how to help dyslexics in class' (Student no. 4).

Another student made a similar comment:

'When teachers are training they should go through a training course where they get to learn how to deal with dyslexic kids because it isn't fair on the dyslexic kids who

have to put up with chelping from teachers – why haven't you done your homework? Why haven't you done enough work? It's not really fair. It gets me down. I mean, I've put walls through, I've put doors through and I just think that teachers should be more aware of the importance of a dyslexic kid. It's not that we are thick or anything. It's because our minds are working in a different way to everyone else's' (Student no. 9).

The launch of the Inclusion Development Programme (DCSF, 2008) and the training materials for undergraduate primary and secondary providers of initial teacher training (TDA, 2008, 2009) will hopefully address this issue but it will take some time before the impact of this training can be measured.

Some students made practical suggestions that could be adopted by teachers in order to make their teaching and learning environment more inclusive for students with dyslexia. The following comment was made:

'I think teachers should make lessons more exciting cos I get bored and distracted. If I'm not interested or think the teacher is droning on I just doze off into my own little world. I have to be excited, have to want to learn the subject. It's really important with dyslexic people because I think we have a short attention span' (Student no. 7).

This has implications in terms of pedagogical approaches adopted by teachers. All teachers should therefore aim to make learning a rich multi-sensory experience and lessons should cater for visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles. Some learners talked about the need to slow down the pace and the research also highlighted the need to increase other students' awareness of dyslexia. One student said: *'They should definitely be told that dyslexics aren't stupid'* (Student no. 4).

Some participants stressed the need for schools to address all forms of bullying seriously. In fact one student invented the term *dyslexiaism* and stressed the need for schools to take this as seriously as they take racism. The research presented in this article suggests that there is need for further research into the impact of the official diagnosis of dyslexia on pupils' self-concept and self-esteem.

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