APPROACHES FOR IDENTIFICATION OF DYSLEXIA

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Abstract- Dyslexia is one of the most complex issues that have been paid a wide range of global arguments. These arguments include many matters starting from its definition, label and identification and ending with provision and treating reading and writing problems. Identifying dyslexia is still very contentious matter that has very different opinions and practices across the world. Internationally, two models are highly practiced and debated at the same time which are IQ–achievement discrepancyand Response to Intervention RTI. This paper examines these models as well as some other approaches of identifications. Roles of teachers in treating and assessing dyslexia is crucial which will be discussed from international perspectives.

Keywords- Dyslexia, Identification, Specific Learning Difficulties.

INTRODUCTION

Identification of dyslexia is a significant stage which needs more caution, in that it might wrongly exclude some students who have dyslexia or include others who do not have it, a problem that has been happened for many students (Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003). Sideridis (2007) indicates that different implications, associated with identification of dyslexia, affect not only the academic aspect of the learners but also their social functioning and life success. Importantly, there is no one ideal or agreed identification method. Debate of identification is getting wider as there are different tests for identification has been suggested by research. For example, Bangor Dyslexia Test (Miles, 1997), Dyslexia Screening Test (DST) and Dyslexia Early Screening Test (DEST) (Nicolson & Fawcett, 1996), Response to Intervention (RTI) (D. Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001). However, a few others suggest that there is no need for identification because schools can overcome learning difficulties by providing good quality of teaching (Armstrong & Squires, 2015). The following paragraphs will discuss international practice of the identification of dyslexia.

IQ–ACHIEVEMENT DISCREPANCY AND RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION

Discrepancy model and RTI are two main types of dealing with dyslexia around the world. Discrepancy is explained by the existence of a clear gap between aptitude and achievement. This model used in the U.S. and defined in the federal regulatory as a significant discrepancy between IQ and achievement tests scores (Fletcher, Coulter, Reschly, & Vaughn, 2004). The use of the IQ–achievement discrepancy is taking very big space of argument in dyslexia identification (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). There are educators who are still in favour of this model. Dombrowski (2015) argues that he disagrees with views that saying there is no need to include IQ the comprehensive evaluation process; because 'IQ is one of the most extensively researched constructs in the field of psychology' P. 169. Significant research argues against IQ-discrepancy model and proposed RTI as an alternative model for identification (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). RTI has been explained widely as 'a process in which students are provided quality instruction, their progress is monitored, those who do not respond appropriately are provided additional instruction and their progress is monitored, and those who continue to not respond appropriately are considered for special education services' (Bradley, Danielson, & Doolittle, 2005, p. 486). Many countries adopt RTI model. Some of these countries apply the similar idea of RTI but with different name. For example, the UK adopts 3 waves of the intervention, while Ireland presents its three tier of intervention as: support for all, support for some and school support plus (Armstrong & Squires, 2015).

The movement from IQ–achievement discrepancy toward RTI can be referred to different arguments. In the following, three aspects played important roles of this movement. Firstly, because of depending on discrepancy model, dyslexic students frequently have been left without identification until students face threat of failure, where at this late time services start running discrepancy process (Cottrell, 2014). However, RTI is characterised by providing early intervention to overcome school failure for all children who at risk (Douglas Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Secondly, in the U.S., the number of students who are identified as having dyslexia has been growing from not more than 2% in 1976–1977 to be over 6% in 1999–2000. This significant increase was combined with concerns of probable misidentification and highly economic costs; where IQ–achievement discrepancy is considered to be the cause of this implications (Cottrell, 2014; Douglas Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006) . Thirdly, Fletcher et al. (2004) studied four reports in the U.S. in 2001-2002 and found that All

four reports indicated that the number of students who were identified as having dyslexia could be decreased with providing better quality of reading instruction. On other hand, RTI is effective to build an educational plan for a student based on regular monitoring with paying more attention on the environmental classroom (Bradley et al., 2005). Especially, effective teaching with progress monitoring should take place regardless a student has or has not special needs (Cottrell, 2014). By using RTI, misidentification of dyslexia cases is expected to be reduced significantly because of the activation of evidence-based instruction within RTI tiers.

Although these critics against discrepancy model, there are many, or might be the majority of, countries use it and different educators are in favour of it (Dombrowski, 2015; Kavale, Holdnack, & Mostert, 2005). Sideridis (2007) investigated identification of dyslexia in eight countries and found that most of them follow the discrepancy model while only one country use RTI. To reflect upon what have been said, one cannot ignore that discrepancy model play important role of identifying dyslexic students and presents important indicators of dyslexia presence. Also, discrepancy model is not complicated in general and can be easily adopt it in different context whether it has effective education or not which might encourage many countries to adopt it. However, there are critical points are common in this model which leads to look for another model. The points are probability of misidentification, late identification which cause risk of failure, absence of providing instruction that based on evidence. RTI is a promise model and can respond to the previous points. However, it is reasonably new modeland needs certain reinforcements to adopt it. For example, RTI needs more evidence that shows how applicability is it, and how the results are good. Especially, RTI has certain process that easy to be explained theoretically, but it is important to be applied successfully in practice such as monitoring students' progress and how respond to the intervention is evaluated; and how different contexts can support or hinder applying it. It is important to reflect answers of these questions on specifying a definition and an approach in order to be a reliable with different conditions and contexts.

CONCERNS AND OBSTACLES IN IDENTIFICATION

Regardless concerns of specific technics or tests, there are some general problems face the identification procedures. Sideridis (2007) summarised concerns related to the identification of dyslexia that have been found across eight countries. Two of these concerns are associated with standardized measures of ability as either they are absence or their validity of identification criteria is doubtful. Also, cultural and linguistic factors play roles that need to be carefully considered in identification, as the criteria might need to be amended according to a student's background. Finally, much attention is needed for the intervention issues and practices. Although Sideridis stated last point in broad manner, it indicates the need for more contribution to be paid in this area, where this thesis is tackled in the Saudi context. Armstrong and Squires (2015) highlight important influences on identification. Under socio-political effects, they present conflict issues exist within England schools. These schools are evaluated based on quantity of students who achieve the level of attainment that is determined by policy. A school will be considered with higher performing if higher number of students achieves the level. Because students with special needs are taken into account in the evaluation, some schools try to expand the label of special needs for more students in order to be excused from low number of achievers or to be seen in better position in general. Another influence is age. Teachers probably think that students, who are younger than their colleagues but in the same age cohort, are in the scope of special needs.

From previous discussion, it can be seen that concerns of identification is very associated with context of each country. For example, this might happen because of presence of various accents or languages or because of issues related to the educational policy as what happens in England schools. Therefore, understanding the context is crucial when evaluating interventions or programme of dyslexia as what this thesis would tackle.

TECHNIQUES ARE USED IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF DYSLEXIA

There are common techniques (e.g. observation, checklist and interviews) which are considered widely for the identification purpose. They are sometimes used as a support tool to collect more information and evidence about doubtful cases. For example, teachers might be uncertain with a student who is suffering from reading and writing difficulties where they might be due to temporary reasons such as his/her place in the classroom or to permanent problems such as difficulties in recognising written symbols. Reid, Deponio, and Petch (2005) gathered information about identification of dyslexia from all educational authorities in Scotland. The outcomes indicate that many authorities use teacher observation, checklists, temporary screening, discussion with parental and home visiting service.

TEACHERS OF DYSLEXIA

There are teachers who are responsible to support dyslexic students. Usually these teachers have qualifications to practice this work. In Saudi, teachers

of dyslexia should be graduated from education colleges - department of special education and their major is dyslexia. They work with dyslexic students in the resources room, but do not deal with other students or teach in regular classroom. In other countries, some teachers take more qualifications to support dyslexic students although they are still working in regular classroom. Also, teachers who are in schools that adopt RTI model have responsibilities to identify strengths and weaknesses of their students and evaluate their progress and compare it with their peers'. Sideridis (2007) highlights that the diagnosis of dyslexia in Botswana is carried out by teachers. However, these teachers are lack of important skills and training which hinders successful identification. It seems that it is good to be aware with such suggestions in different countries. However, more explanation should consider, clarify and discuss teachers' positions and responsibilities in their work with dyslexia. For example, it is not clear whether indicted teachers in Botswana work with only dyslexic students or with all students. If this was clear, more outcomes can be deduced. In general, teacher in many countries are under pressure (Armstrong & Squires, 2015; Galton &MacBeath, 2008). This pressure might influence identification of dyslexia in such: providing inadequate quality of teaching, lack of applying identification techniques (e.g. observation and monitoring students) and understanding each student's situation, strengths and weakness.

CONCLUSION

Before selecting certain approaches for identifying dyslexia, students should be received good quality of education and different methods of teaching to make sure that the problem is not due to poor schooling. The usage of different approaches of identification with various techniques of following-up is crucial to understand the strengths and weaknesses of dyslexic students. This will allow better decisions and educational plan.

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