

# Angela Pearson

*Performing arts*

Angela Pearson

Programme leader Drama and Theatre

Biography:

Angela Pearson has worked for the institute for 4 years. She has worked in performing arts as programme leader for levels 1- 6. She is undertaking an MA in Education. Her research focuses on teachers with Dyslexia in Creative Arts and support through HE establishments.

## 'Teachers with Dyslexia in Creative arts and support through HE establishments'.

Keywords: Dyslexia, Higher Education, Teachers

This article focuses upon and examines the experiences of creative arts teachers with dyslexia in higher education (HE) and the support provided through HE establishments. At the start of the research project the researcher realised she needed to know more about the experiences of higher education teachers with dyslexia. The research aims to get an insight into the experiences of participants with dyslexia and evaluate the support provided by educational establishments. The participants of this study were an HE teacher and sound technician teaching on the music and performing arts programmes, they were assessed as being dyslexic by a University in the north of England where they are both studying a masters in Music. In order for the data to be collected interviews were used. A survey was also utilised to provide evidence. The sample consisted of teachers of HE that were working in a university environment. The teachers of these particular universities were overall not satisfied with the provision and support they were receiving from their institutions although further investigation needs to be done on the attitudes and perceptions of the employers with regards to dyslexia.

### **Introduction**

In this article the research undertaken identified HE teachers with dyslexia, their experiences and compassion to others' studies surrounding dyslexia in the

workplace and the procedures adopted by employers to support staff with dyslexia. 'People with dyslexia have good spoken communication, good people skills, great enthusiasm and a capacity to delegate' (Rooke.2016:22). These skills also contribute to what is deemed as a good teacher. Where there has been extensive research and studies supporting students in HE with dyslexia, there is the need for more studies around staff at HE level who have been diagnosed with dyslexia and the support they require. The definition of dyslexia recommended by the Research Group of Developmental Dyslexia of the World Federation of Neurology in 1968 states:

'A disorder manifested by a difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence and socio-cultural opportunity. It is dependent upon fundamental cognitive difficulties which are frequently of a constitutional character'.

Dyslexia constitutes a Special Educational Need as defined by the 1993 Education Act having been first recognised by Parliament in the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. (The Dyslexia Handbook 1996: 10).

The equality act of 2010 law states:

' a person (P) has a disability if – (a) P has a physical or mental impairment , and (b) the impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day to day activities'.(2010).

## **Literature review**

Appleyard (2017) argues that her study suggests 'links between dyslexia, and heightened visual and spatial ability in the visual arts teachers as well as students have a high percentage that are dyslexic'. Many employers do not understand or support their staff effectively and many feel isolated and undermined in their roles. When a person becomes a student at college or university, they are screened, if they highlighted that they may have dyslexia, a full diagnostic assessment, which must be undertaken by an HCPC Chartered

Psychologist specializing in adult dyslexia must be undertaken. The Equality and Human Rights Commission have produced a code of practice on the Equality act 2010 to help employers and employees to understand the law and what it means: including the code of practice on employment, these codes can then be used in legal proceedings The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC: 2010).

These codes make specific reference to ensuring a disabled worker has the same access to everything that is involved in doing and keeping a job as a non disabled person 'taking steps to remove or reduce or prevent the obstacles a disabled worker or job applicant faces' (ibid). Many of the adjustments an employer can make will not be particularly expensive, and the only requirement is to do what is reasonable - depending, among other factors, on the size and nature of the organisation. If, however, the employer does nothing, and a disabled worker can show that there were barriers that should have been identified and reasonable adjustments that could have been made, they can bring a claim in the employment tribunal, and the employer may be ordered to pay them compensation as well as make the reasonable adjustments. At the Grimsby institute their disabled policies states:

Any applicant who is classified as having a disability will be given the opportunity to discuss ways of overcoming any problems of access or any other issues relating to their disability (Grimsby Institute: 2010).

The Grimsby institute like many other establishments have to support staff with additional learning needs just as much as the students. Dyslexia is considered a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) and thus, employers cannot discriminate against current or prospective.

Discrimination Act (1995) estimates that one in ten people has dyslexia to some degree, although many have not been formally diagnosed.

This also means that employers are expected to make reasonable changes to their workplace and work practices to assist dyslexic workers to do their job without difficulty. This is not as onerous as it sounds and there is government assistance available to pay for it. In most cases a few simple changes will enable a dyslexic worker to reach their full potential, will bypass many of the problems they may be facing, and make them a much more valuable employee.

Coleman (2016) states that in a tribunal person took Starbucks to an employment tribunal alleging disability discrimination saying she had always made it known to her employer that she was dyslexic, which means she has difficulties with words and numbers, and has to be shown how to do tasks visually. The case does not set a legal precedent, but the British Dyslexia Association said it should be a wake-up call for employers.

A case study by Bartellet in 2010 highlighted the case of a member of staff in a large educational establishment with dyslexia revealed:

Experiences like this outline how important it is that employers should be alerted to how their own behaviour can exacerbate the effects of dyslexia, in review employers should point out to employers so they have time to adjust working conditions.

The highlighting of dyslexia as a condition to employers and having this open form of communication between suffers and employers seems to be the key.

## **Research Methodology**

The research methods for the study of HE staff with dyslexia and the support they receive was carried out using various methods to support the articles findings. A quantitative method of a case study on a member of staff with dyslexia and a qualitative questionnaire to assess and collate the wider statistics and results from teacher of creative arts with dyslexia will be utilised.

Essentially, quantitative researchers use numbers and large samples to test theories, and qualitative researchers use words and meanings in smaller samples to build theories (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991).

The questionnaire has been developed on survey monkey and will form the statistical basis for the study and compare to studies undertaken by the Dyslexia Scotwest charity organisation. (2010)

## **Results**

The data for this survey was collected using Survey Monkey and the two participants were interviewed. The results of the anonymous questionnaire suggest that the Higher Education staff that have been identified with dyslexia in the creative arts is very high 83% , The interviews indicated that the participants felt:

*'a sense of relief and had thought there was an issue with learning before the diagnosis'* (participant 2).

50% of the participants were diagnosed at University and had gone through college and school undiagnosed. Participant 1 stated that:

*'at school if I did not want to work, I was allowed to sit at the back of the class'*

Scotwesly (2010) states that 'About 10% of the UK population has dyslexia. In all likelihood then, most employers will employ dyslexic staff at some stage. Although the research is limited and on a small scale, the results indicate that many felt *'isolated and alone'* (Participant:1) and had very little support from management. They had all highlighted their diagnosis to employers on applications for their specific post. All participants were diagnosed through their university placements and not through their current employment.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion research undertaken in this journal highlights the need for more support for HE teachers with dyslexia, there were limitations with the results collated in the study, as the number of participants was low, further studies would be more conclusive with a larger target audience. The compassion to other studies surrounding dyslexia in the workplace and the procedures adopted by employers to support staff with dyslexia are comparable with many employees feeling isolated and alone in the work place. The literature review found limited evidence of studies undertaken into HE creative arts teachers with dyslexia, as in my introduction where there has been extensive research and studies supporting students in HE with dyslexia, there is the need for more studies around HE creative arts teachers with dyslexia. The findings of the research indicate that as an employer, a greater need for initial basements for teachers with dyslexia would be beneficial to the employee and the HE establishment, therefore supporting staff with dyslexia just as much as students with special educational needs.

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