

Listening to the Voices of Teachers Who Are Dyslexic: The Careers, Professional Development, and Strategies Used by of Teachers Who Are Dyslexic

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Abstract : Little research has been undertaken on adult dyslexia and the impact it has on those who have professional careers. There are many complexities behind the career decisions people make, but for teachers who are dyslexic, it can be even more complex. Dyslexia particularly impacts on written and verbal communication, as well as planning and organisation skills which are essential skills for a teacher. As the teachers are aware of their areas of weakness many, make the conscious decision not to disclose their disability at work. In England, the reduction to three attempts to pass the compulsory English and Maths tests prior to undertaking teacher training may mean that dyslexics are now excluded from trying to enter the profession. Together with the fact that dyslexic teachers often chose to remain 'hidden' the situation appears to be counter to the inclusive rhetoric that dominates the current educational discourse. This paper is based on in-depth narrative research that has been undertaken with a small group of teachers who are dyslexic in England and firstly explores the strategies and resources that the teachers have found useful. The narratives of the teachers are full of difficulties as well as diversity, consequently, the paper secondly examines how life experiences have impacted on the way the teachers see their dyslexia and how it affects them professionally. Using a narrative methodology enables the teachers to tell their 'stories' of how they feel their dyslexia impacts on their lives professionally. The first interview centred around a limited number of semi structured questions about family background, educational experiences, career development, management roles and professional disclosure. The second interview focused on the complexities of being a teacher who is dyslexic and to 'unlock' some of their work based narratives visual elicitation was used. Photographs of work-based strategies, issues or concerns were sent to the researcher and these were used as the basis for discussion in the second interview. The paper concludes by discussing possible reasonable adjustments and professional development that might benefit teachers who are dyslexic.

Keywords : dyslexia, life history, narrative, professional, professional development, strategies, teachers

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