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Adults' writing and Reading Difficulties

Professionals and researchers have been paying attention to reading and writing difficulties and to functional illiteracy. They have been focusing mostly on industrial workers, since the middle of the 80'. More precise analyses were made in the middle of the 90' at the Adult Education Centre of Slovenia. Slovenia was one of the 22 countries which carried out an OECD research study on functional literacy and more information on the findings are to be found in this study (Ester Mozina, National institute for adult education, Ljubljana, 2000). Apparently some segments of the population in Slovenia have had big difficulties with functional literacy and they find it difficult to converse with the environment they live in. In spite of it, reading and writing difficulties have not become a state affair like in France and have not been recognised as a priority by the Government and the media. The priorities are as follows: education of managers, foreign languages, business education, etc.

With some exceptions (primary education for adults, secondary education for the young unemployed) in Slovenia adults have to pay for their education. People with reading and writing difficulties are mainly of lower social status, and they are not particularly motivated for their further education and even when they have enough funds they are not ready to invest in their education. They would also tend to reject the educational programmes.

Dyslexia is only a part of the reading and writing difficulties. It is a more general educational problem induced by socially and culturally less developed environment, by selective school system etc. Moreover, access to education for people from lower social classes is not easy, and they have performed very simple and repetitive work tasks in industrial labour etc.

Dyslexia is a neurological difficulty showing in how a person obtains reading and writing skills. Unless a person with dyslexia had discovered his/her own way of learning, which is usually very much individual and specific, acquiring reading and writing skills may prolong. It may also lead to his or her inferiority feelings or dropping out from school. "I did not like the school and the school did not like me" once said a successful dyslexic.

If the person with dyslexia is helped individually and precociously to discover his/her own way of learning, the educational outcomes are better, then the person can show his/her high potential abilities and display his or her usually high intelligence. Some analyses carried out among people with dyslexia show that reading and writing or learning difficulties are accompanied by other difficulties typical of dyslexia like: low ability to envisage the consequences, difficulties in space orientation, disturbed mapping of the thoughts, ability for judging the quantities and their relations, ability to perceive and predict social relationships, etc.

In Slovenian policy and media, for the time being, no attention has been paid to the adults with dyslexia. Only school teachers get some information or attend specialised lectures. The general public is not aware of this phenomena in adults. Dyslexia remains an individual problem and mainly coped with within families. But this is not the case with children. As far back as the late 50' a well-known clinical psychologist *Dr. Borut Sali* prepared the diagnostic for dyslexia among children. With his team of experts he prepared also special didactic educational materials which teachers and parents can use to help children with dyslexia. Educational counselling institutes always have some experts for dyslexia who test the children with difficulties in their schooling. The *Svetovalni center za mladostnike in starše* (Counselling Centre for Young People and Their Parents) and its experts *Dr. Marija Kavkler*, *dr. Lidija Magajne*, *dr. Anica Mikuš-Kos* and others) have been active in this field.

There is a special NGO organisation, the association BRAVO for children with dyslexia and their parents. It publishes books and leaflets about dyslexia. It publishes its own journal.

Recently in Kranjska gora took place the First National Conference on Dyslexia organised by the Counselling Centre for Young People and Their Parents.

We feel that more research work should be done in interdisciplinary teams, because still a lot is to be discovered. There is also a great need for practical help to people with dyslexia in their education and work. The diagnostic and counselling services should orient themselves also to adults.

More: http://www.statvoks.no/forward/index_articles.htm