

**A report submitted to UNESCO– DITT**

**on**

**Good Practice in Dyslexia**

**In the Middle East**

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## 1 — Language constraints

Are there specific linguistic features in your language that might make it more difficult for people with dyslexia to read and write?

- Egypt:** Some graphemes in Arabic are similar in shape (eg., /b/ & /t/)  
Some phonemes have similar phonetic features (eg., /s/ & /s/)  
The Arabic orthography has connected letters  
Some Arabic letters change their shape(s) depending on its position in the word  
There are specific spelling rule conventions whereby some letters are written but not pronounced, and some sounds are produced but not written as a letter.
- Kuwait:** The orthography (the writing system) of the Arabic language is very complex. In early education orthography is simple (what you see is what you get when reading). Later on the meaning of a word becomes more context specific. Words look the same but have different meanings (Homograph). This “shallow” vs. “opaque” nature of the Arabic orthography might influence the severity or the manifestation of dyslexia in Arabic.
- Qatar:** (*blank*)
- Saudi Arabia:**
- The shape of the letter changes depending on its position. That is, letters in isolation are different from when they are connected.
  - Similar graphemes but different phonemes.
  - Arabic reading depends on the short vowels (diacritics).

**U.A.E.** Similar phonetic features for some sounds  
There is some degree of confusion between long vowels and short vowels (eg. /nam/ vs. /na:m/.

2 — Is literacy encouraged throughout society – in education for girls, boys, men and women alike?

**Egypt:** Yes, public libraries are available in every neighborhood in Egypt. Also, a special festival for reading is held annually under the patronage of Mrs. Mubarak, yet dyslexia is not known here.

**Kuwait:** Yes, very much so. In Kuwait school/education is compulsory and free “until university level” and Kuwait has a literacy rate which exceeds 96% of its population.

**Qatar:** (*blank*)

**Saudi Arabia:** Encouragement of literacy takes place only when there are distinguished talents.

Although the first verse in our Holy book (Quran) says explicitly “Read”, nowadays we do not find parents who encourage their children to read. Parents all the time put pressure on their children to study and do homework instead of reading for pleasure which has left a negative impact on children’s concept about the book and reading in general.

It varies from one family to another.

**U.A.E.:** Yes. Literacy is encouraged throughout the country.

2b — Economic and social considerations: at this time are there circumstances that prohibit people from learning to read and write in your country?

**Egypt:** Yes, due to poverty which leads many children to drop out of school

for work (child labor).

**Kuwait:** No except for small number of population in Kuwait (identified as no nationality).

**Qatar:** (*blank*)

**Saudi Arabia:** There are no circumstances that prohibit people from learning to read and write, but in general lack practice.

The spread of multimedia resources and TV has minimized the opportunities to read.

The use of dialect in place of the standard language has certainly affected reading in a negative way because books are written in a standard language (i.e. diglossia or linguistic distance).

**U.A.E.** No, the law mandates Basic Education for all.

3 — Is dyslexia officially recognized as a handicap? If so, does this entail rights for people with dyslexia?

**Egypt:** No, not officially due to lack of awareness although some authorities/initiatives have addressed the issue lately/in recent years.

**Kuwait:** Yes, in 1996 a law was passed by Higher Council for the Disabled Affairs to guarantee functioning for Learning Disability students to attend specialist provision schools.

**Qatar:** Yes, Reading disability is one of the disabilities included in the draft document of the Learning Disability (LD).

**Saudi Arabia:** Yes, there is an acknowledgement of dyslexia as a type of learning disability.

**U.A.E.** Dyslexia has not been recognized officially as a handicap. However,

article 29 in the *Education for All* law that was passed in 2006 guaranteed the right for education for all individuals with special needs. In addition, the special education department in the ministry of education has stated in its document the right of dyslexics for specialized programs under the umbrella of special needs.

4 — Discovering dyslexia in the individual student: Are there official assessment procedures?

**Egypt:** Of course, there aren't any! Most schools and specialists do not even understand what is dyslexia or its characteristics; let alone how to assess it.

**Kuwait:** Yes, although there is a critical need to update these measures.

**Qatar:** There are different assessment procedures followed such as: assessment related to LD, Assessment (peer comparison), Formative Assessment, Dyslexia Assessment and Summative Assessment.

**Saudi Arabia:** There is no specific procedure for assessing or referring dyslexics students. Issues of assessment and referral depend on a competent teacher who can differentiate between dyslexia and poor academic achievement and make the referral accordingly. It is not surprising to discover that there are cases those are not identified.

**U.A.E.** There are some informal tools to administer individually, but there aren't any standardized tests.

5 — Do the education authorities collaborate with researchers, teachers, inspectors, people with dyslexia and their families to address the educational needs of dyslexic learners?

**Egypt:** Unfortunately no. Usually children who may have dyslexia are diagnosed/described as lazy or stupid and end up in special needs school.

**Kuwait:** Yes, educational authorities collaborate with researchers/teachers especially on issues related to funding and allow researchers to collect data and apply their research knowledge in mainstream public schools.

**Qatar:** There is some professional development for the teachers, coordinators and teachers of LD at Charter schools.

**Saudi** There is some sort of collaboration but it is still emerging.

**Arabia:** There are some educational institutions and centers that provide training in the field of special education including dyslexia.

**U.A.E.** MOE has carried out several attempts to highlight dyslexia through media, workshops, collaboration with University of Sharjah, UAE University, but still need to work more on spreading awareness in this area.

6 — Can you provide examples of:

a) matching teaching styles to learners' needs?

**Egypt:** Not all students learn the same way. Schools in Egypt depend mainly on the visual & auditory modality. For some children, they may learn better if other modalities were used. Therefore, it is recommended if the multisensory approach is used especially with the elementary grade students.

**Kuwait:** Very difficult to match teaching styles to teachers needs due to large size classrooms. The ideal way would be to implement a multisensory approach (visually, orally, kinesthetic –tactile)

**Qatar:** Repetition, extra time, use of computer for teaching,

individual/one-on-one learning.

**Saudi Arabia:** The regular classroom teacher usually does not provide such services, but the special education teacher is more qualified to do such services as part of the individual education plan (IEP).

**U.A.E.** Multisensory approach, collaborative learning and assistive technology.

b) the teacher as collaborator?

**Egypt:** The one who continuously communicates with parents, who provides assistance with home work to dyslexic student, who will not ask the dyslexic to read without being prepared would leave on Black Board (BB) what she/he had written for a longer time, who will focus on student's strengths and try to resolve his/her weakness, who will try to sit close to the students to provide assistance (one-on-one help) wherever there is an opportunity for this, who corrects spelling errors without taking out points for poor handwriting and corrects writing without deducting points for spelling mistakes and does not cross out students errors with a red mark.

**Kuwait:** The collaborator is the one who collaborate with parents and counselors and who takes the initiative to learn about LD and the best ways to help students.

**Qatar:** Classroom teachers and LD teachers.

**Saudi Arabia:** Usually collaboration takes place between the classrooms teacher and special education teacher.

**U.A.E.** (*blank*)

c) methodologies that succeed in helping people with dyslexia to read and write?

**Egypt:** Multisensory approach (visual auditing, tactile and kinesthetic) in the beginning/early years. For example, writing on sand, making letters out of play dough and other materials made of cardboard and fabric. Unfortunately, there isn't a single program that is done in a systematic comprehensive approach except for one that was issued in Lebanon.

**Kuwait:** There are not typical teaching methods being used in the general classroom but there are some specialist schools that provide one-on-one tutoring, smaller class size (6 students' class) multisensory teaching, self-esteem and motivation sessions.

**Qatar:** Intensive, individual training, use of computers, provide extra time and repetition.

**Saudi Arabia:** Special computer programs could be used to help dyslexic children. Also other methods could be used such as adding extra space, enlarging the font and changing the background color.

If we had Arabic graded reading materials/books.

**U.A.E.** Multisensory approach, phonological awareness skills which are sometimes implemented by special education teachers, but unfortunately many teachers of early grades have no knowledge of phonological awareness.

d) the use of age- and culturally-appropriate learning resources?

**Egypt:**

- Recently professional specialists were appointed in elementary grades in place of non specialized teachers.
- Use of sand to teach the letters to young age groups.
- Use of clay especially in the southern part of Egypt to develop the talents of students who are talented in doing sculpture.

**Kuwait:** Utilizing AT, checklists and recently early screeners are bringing to impact the learning resources in Kuwait.

**Qatar:** (*Blank*)

**Saudi Arabia:** Some appropriate computer programs and enlarging the font to discriminate words and letters so students can concentrate. extra space, enlarging the font and changing the background color.

The Muslim culture encourages children to read in the Quran.

Use of different technology tools such as the OVT and smart board.

**U.A.E.:** (*Blank*)

7 — What methods do your teachers use for developing memory?

**Egypt:** Learning in Cairo depends on rote learning, of course, this is of no help to dyslexics. Nevertheless, some of the ways to enhance memory is by the use of visual aids, models & manipulative, story pictures and concept maps.

**Kuwait:** Memory games, mnemonics and other alphabet songs and rhymes are widely used here in Kuwait. Recently, a short term memory enhance program has been developed locally and it is yet to be seen how this will impact the memory strategies and skills of Arabic

speaking divide in Kuwait.

**Qatar:** (*Blank*)

**Saudi** There are some memory games that can help to enhance memory.

**Arabia:** Memorizing poetry or quranic verses.  
The use of mnemonics by the teacher

**U.A.E.:** Worksheets, competitions among students.

8 — What methods are used for developing phonological skills?

**Egypt:** Students in elementary schools in Egypt may learn more than one language. However, there are no programs or methods used to develop phonological skills except for some specialized programs that teach Quran and focus on production of sounds and other phonological skills and recitation of Quran.

**Kuwait:** Phonological deletion and phonological segmentation drills are sometimes part of the specialist provision in schools' daily teaching practices.

**Qatar:** (*Blank*)

**Saudi** The student can be trained by a speech language pathologist to

**Arabia:** improve auditory and phonological skills. In addition, some training in Quran recitation by a specialized instructor.

Nursery rhymes and children's songs can improve phonological skills.

Reading aloud by the classroom teacher and ask students to repeat after the teacher.

**U.A.E.:** Task analysis, use of the visual-auditory mode and Assistive Technology.

9 — How are children encouraged to learn?

**Egypt:** Encouraged by giving the certificates for their academic achievement, by being patient with them and not pressuring them.

**Kuwait:** By making learning an anxiety free experience and by providing best facilities and extracurricular activities in the mainstream schools.

**Qatar:** (*Blank*)

**Saudi Arabia:** Children can be encouraged by teaching them a more modern approach rather than the traditional approach. Also, by using different types of reinforcement.  
Small size classrooms and using co-teaching models.  
Learning through play.

**U.A.E.:** - Learning through play  
- Employing different reinforcement strategies

10 — What appropriate teaching environments and approaches do you consider work well for children with dyslexia?

**Egypt:** Inclusive schools and establish schools that are “dyslexia-friendly” which could have the following as their objectives: professional development of teachers, active learning, efficient practices, implement special methods in teaching the dyslexic, be able to identify the weaknesses of the dyslexics, train teachers and administrators on counseling issues needed for the dyslexics. Involve parents in the learning process of their dyslexic children.  
Differentiate assessments for the dyslexics such as oral exams, projects, and open book exams.

**Kuwait:** - Smaller classes (approx 6 students)  
- Multisensory teaching methods  
- Learning academic concepts through music, art, physical education, and educational computer game  
- Shorted class time/frequent breaks

**Qatar:** Use of individual learning and technology, extra time, repeating question.

**Saudi Arabia:** An appropriate environment for dyslexic students should include the following:

- Specialized trained teachers
- Appropriate assistive technology tools
- An environment that has other extra-curricular activities to motivate dyslexic students to read
- A family who is willing to collaborate with school
- Laws and regulations to guarantee the students' rights
- Educating families about the importance of literacy and best examples on family literacy practices
- Preparing qualified professionals whom the teachers can consult with or make referrals to.

**U.A.E.:**

- Enrich the learning environment with different resources.
- Provide positive reinforcement.
- Identify learning styles of students and tailor their learning based on their preferred learning style.

11 — Please give examples of how you develop talents of individual students.

**Egypt:** Example 1: When a dyslexic student has talents in mechanical work if he is encouraged by giving him a prize or reward whenever he needs a machine at school or at home. Such they will improve his/herself esteem and may become motivated to go to industrial education rather than general education.

Example 2: If a dyslexic student has talents in a particular sport, and s/he receives encouragement, this may motivate them to improve academically.

**Kuwait:** Through diagnostic teachings to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the child, followed by utilizing music, art, physical education, and counseling to encourage positive self concept, self confidence and motivation.

**Qatar:** (*Blank*)

**Saudi** Offer special contests and other enrichment programs

**Arabia:**

**U.A.E.:** Use of appropriate tools to identify these talents implementing programs that focus on critical thinking.

12 — Further comments on good practice

**Egypt:**

- We would like to suggest that teacher in Arab world will benefit from workshops as to how to use the multisensory approach when teaching the Arabic language, particularly that this method has been repeated by mentioned as a successful method.
- More attention to be given to practice and hands on experiences rather than only focusing on theoretical information.

**Kuwait:**

- Teacher as mentor (not authoritarian)
- Frequent feedback from teacher
- Calm environment, free from anxiety
- Teaching students how to be independent learners (Life and study or thinking skills)

**Qatar:** (*Blank*)

**Saudi** The area of dyslexia is a very important area and must be always  
**Arabia:** updated according to recent research findings. Also, teachers need to receive professional development through workshops and seminars. Distinguished teachers in the area of dyslexia must receive some sort of incentives. Good teachers should use different modalities when

teaching and must accept students regardless of their weaknesses. Also, teachers should implement strategies such as the use of group of learning and different resources including technology.

**U.A.E.:** (*blank*)