



**The Hong Kong Society of
Child Neurology and Developmental Paediatrics**
香港兒童腦科及體智發展學會

BY EMAIL AND POST

20th June 2007

Ms. Alice Tai

The Ombudsman

30/F China Merchants Tower, Shun Tak Centre

168-200 Connaught Road, Central, Hong Kong.

Dear Ms. Tai,

The Hong Kong Society of Child Neurology and Developmental Paediatrics (HKCNDP) applauds your good work in initiating a direct investigation into Assessment for SLD in Hong Kong, and we also understand that this is but the beginning of a series of investigations to cover the range of issues on the subject. We however regret that the data collection for the Investigation is far from ideal in that many of the key players on the issue were not being consulted at all and the conclusion derived therefrom in your recent Report is not global enough to reveal true picture of the issue. Amongst many of the points which we beg to differ, one of the major discrepancies is the local prevalence rate of 12% which is already well documented in publications and yet NOT properly reflected in your Report. I have attached herewith a recent publication on “Prevalence, Gender Ratio and Gender Differences in Reading-Related Cognitive Abilities among Chinese Children with Dyslexia in Hong Kong” by a group of local professionals and academics (which also included experts from EMB) showing the true incidence. We must stress once again the importance of this local incidence in view of its vital effect on the magnitude of the problem and thus its consequential implication and demand on local resources and manpower required for proper management of this problem in our Community.

Our Society (HKCNDP) is an active professional organization established by professionals from transdisciplinary areas and intersectoral domains dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, betterment of child health services, provision of public health education and promotion of child advocacy for the subspecialties of child neurology and developmental paediatrics. Child health embraces well being in the domains of *medical, social and education*.

Specific Learning Disabilities (Difficulties) being an important component within the education sector thus becomes an essential and integral part of our endeavours for children with these Disabilities. The work of HKCNDP on Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in Hong Kong commenced in 1996, followed by the formal establishment of a Working Party on SLD in 1998 to address scientific aspects, services and advocacy for SLD in Hong Kong. Over the years, this Party hosted numerous scientific conferences and cross sector policy meetings involving HKCNDP members, academic institutions, the then Education Department and current Education & Manpower Bureau, Department of Health, Legislative Councillors, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC), the Hong Kong Examination & Assessment Authority, parent associations and invited overseas authorities on the subject. Publications on the subject include Manuscripts of seminars in March and December 1999 including a position statement on definitions and future directions, Response to the EOC on the Code of Practice on Education under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance in relation to SLD in March 2001 (also published in our official publication Brainchild), the November 2004 issue of Brainchild dedicated to SLD, and a Position Paper on the Future Directions on SLD from a HKCNDP hosted Forum held in July 2005 with wide representation from local academics, professionals, education sector and community service providers. This position paper was circulated to related Bureaux and Departments and policy makers, among others, with positive feedback. In May 2005, HKCNDP was invited to attend a special meeting of the Rehabilitation Programme Plan Review Working Group to discuss the admission of SLD as a disability category in the RPP, which is strongly supported by HKCNDP.

Over the last 10 years, HKCNDP maintains a close relationship with the parent group, the Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities (ASLD), whereby needs of children with SLD at different stages of development and education, and of their families, are kept in close view. With our joint effort we are pleased to witness the big stride from the misconception of many Hong Kong professionals, including the government education authorities, that dyslexia (specific learning disabilities in reading and writing) does not significantly exist in the Chinese community, to the present day universal acceptance that it does occur in the Chinese language and that the mechanism of word decoding and reading have many shared underpinnings with English and other alphabetic languages. We appreciate the good work of all dedicated professionals, parents, policy makers and many public notaries.

Ms Tai, we as professionals dedicated to child health are very keen to offer help whenever and wherever possible to the best healthcare of our children in Hong Kong and we therefore are already to offer our professional help to you should you deem fit now and in the future. Once again please accept our deepest appreciation for all the good work you have initiated, innovated and achieved for our children of Hong Kong.

Our best regards to you and our appreciation to your good work..

Yours Sincerely,

On behalf of the Society Council



Dr. CHAN Chok-wan

President, the Hong Kong Society of Child Neurology and Developmental Paediatrics (HKCNDP)

Chairman, Working Party on Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), HKCNDP

Encl.

1. HKCNDP Submission to the Legco “Response to the Ombudsman’s Direct Investigation on Assessment of Children with Specific Learning Difficulties (Disabilities)” on 28th May 2007 at the Legco by Dr. Chan Chok Wan
2. Summary of the Paper on “Prevalence, Gender Ratio and Gender Differences in Reading-Related Cognitive Abilities among Chinese Children with Dyslexia in Hong Kong” by David W Chan et al, Educational Studies, Vol 33, No.2, June 2007, pp. 249-265