Are we developing dyslexia in our schools?

Reading needs 'foundation' skills to enable our eyes to move quickly along printed text, to dart from letters to words, gather information in peripheral vision, then fill in the gaps in central vision.

Children, who have not been able to master those skills, are slow in identifying single words. By the time they laboriously read the end of a sentence, they have forgotten the beginning.

This is not due to a lack of intelligence or potential, but partly due to genetic and environmental factors, amongst which inappropriate teaching methods are included.

Whole words presented in early stages of reading development, are treated by our brains as designs. If this continues as a teaching method, abnormal neural networks can develop in the right hemisphere of our brain, creating a prime impediment to normal reading.

Normal reading needs to be processed mainly in the left hemisphere, where the visual, auditory and motor based neural networks are linked to our language centers, forming a high-speed 'neural highway'.

The development of such a high-speed efficient neural path requires a methodical and intensive presentation of words as being compilations of individual blocks of sounds and symbols. This is the 'Phonics' based method, the only scientific evidence based teaching method.

The 'Whole Word' teaching method requires the memorization of very many words. In early stages, progress is usually faster than conventional methods. But in later stages, most progress falls behind and for some, progress grinds to a halt. By this stage, some children are incorrectly labeled as being 'dyslexic'. Yet this teaching method is still used in some schools.