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**On being one of the have-nots: an investigation into the relationship between emotional disturbance and reading disability in one hundred adolescents with case studies of the impact of a set of curricular strategies on ten of the teenagers**

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**ON BEING ONE OF THE HAVE-NOTS:  
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE  
AND READING DISABILITY  
IN ONE HUNDRED ADOLESCENTS,  
WITH CASE STUDIES OF THE IMPACT  
OF A SET OF CURRICULAR STRATEGIES  
ON TEN OF THE TEENAGERS**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

from

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

**BY**

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1994

## ABSTRACT

This research is an examination of a possible link between emotional disturbance and reading disability in a group of one hundred teenagers enrolled in a special education Agency. As part of the research, a set of curricular strategies aimed at reducing the emotional disturbance and remedying the reading disability were examined in terms of their effect on the lives of ten of the teenagers from the sample.

This research was based in the naturalistic paradigm, taking care to respect the multiple realities and values which exerted their influence in shaping the policies, interactions and outcomes at the site.

An important aspect of this research, fully consonant with the naturalistic paradigm, was its emergent design. The inquiry was initiated as a result of the working hypotheses formed by the candidate during his many years of sustained involvement on the site. A review of the literature served to confirm some of these hypotheses. The data, collected over a six-year period and consisting of archival material, test results and interviews with the main stakeholders at the site, served to shed further light on the question of the possible link between emotional disturbance and reading disability. The case studies of the teenagers from the sample emerged as a result of focusing on the impact of a set of specifically designed curricular strategies which were aimed at modifying their emotional disturbance and remedying their reading disability.

An important insight gained from this inquiry is that emotional disturbance and reading disability are two facets of the same problem, namely, the deprivation of the fundamental human need for emotional security. Two significant inferences drawn from this insight are that:

- (a) emotionally disturbed and reading disabled children can be helped only when measures are taken to ensure that their basic human need for emotional security is satisfied; and,
- (b) an educational institution can facilitate the satisfaction of a child's need for emotional security by designing curricular strategies which serve to repair and maintain the key relationships in that child's life.

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