1994

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

Joseph A. Murik

Recommended Citation


Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
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

JOSEPH A. MURIK,
B. A.(HONS.), B. ED., DIP. ED. (ADMIN.), M. ED.(HONS.)
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.
# Table of Contents

## CHAPTER 1:

**Introduction to the Inquiry**

1. The Aim of the Study ........................................... 1
2. The Rationale for the Study ................................... 2
3. The Setting of the Study ..................................... 3
4. The Theoretical Framework for the Study .................. 5
5. The Methods Used in the Study .............................. 7
6. The Use of the Case Study Approach in This Enquiry .... 10
7. A Summary of the Chapter .................................. 11

## CHAPTER 2:

**A Review of the Literature: Part One**

1. Introduction .................................................. 12
2. Definitions of Emotional Disturbance ....................... 12
3. Two Conditions for Emotional Disturbance ............... 17
4. Characteristics of Emotionally Disturbed Students ...... 18
5. The Prevalence of Emotional Disturbance among Students 22
6. Types of Research on Emotionally Disturbed Students ... 23
6. Theoretical Constructs of Emotional Disturbance ....... 25
7. Conclusion .................................................. 33

**A Review of the Literature: Part Two**

1. Theories of Reading .......................................... 34
2. Reading Disability in Emotionally Disturbed Students ... 42
4. Reading Disability and Need Fulfilment .................... 50
5. Case Studies in Reading Research 53  
6. Drawing the Threads Together 56

CHAPTER 3:  
Methodology of the Inquiry  
1. The Methods used for Collecting the Data 60  
2. The Participants in the Interviews 67  
3. Stages of Data Collection 69  
4. Recording, Coding and Analysing the Data 73  
5. Processes Involved in Making Sense of the Data 76

CHAPTER 4:  
Presentation and Analysis of the Data: Part One  
Introduction 77  

SECTION A: EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE IN 100 TEENAGERS  
I. Aspects of Emotional Disturbance 78  
   Conduct Disorder 79  
   Personality Problem 82  
   Inadequacy-Immaturity 84  
   Socialised Delinquency 86  

II. Contributing Factors in Emotional Disturbance 87  
   1. The Family Structure 88  
   2. The Socio-economic Situation of the Families 97  
   3. Interpersonal Dynamics in the Families 100  
   4. The Geographical Location of the Families 112  
   5. Educational Turbulence 118  

III. Key Underlying Factors in Emotional Disturbance 124
SECTION B: READING DISABILITY IN ONE HUNDRED TEENAGERS

I. Results from Standardised Reading Tests 130
II. Problems Identified from Student Answers and Interviews 132
   1. Conceptual Problems regarding the purpose of reading 134
   2. The Use of the Cue Systems 135
   3. Comprehension Strategies 137
   4. The Effect of Domestic Problems on Learning 138
   5. The Effect of Behaviour Problems on Learning 139
   6. Learning Problems 141
   7. Problems with Self-concept 143
III. Underlying Factors in the Reading Disability of the students 144

SECTION C: THE AGENCY'S RESPONSES TO THE EMOTIONAL AND LEARNING NEEDS OF THE TEENAGERS

I. Introduction 146
II. Strategies Aimed at Improving Key Relationships 147
III. Strategies Aimed at Improving Self-concept 154
IV. Strategies Aimed at Improving Literacy Skills 158

CHAPTER 5:
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA: PART TWO

Introduction 165
Student 01001 167
Student 02013 174
Student 03024 179
Student 04032 185
Student 05044 190
CHAPTER 6:
CONCLUSION
I. A Summary of the Thesis 223
II. Implications for Educational Policy and Practice 225
III. Conclusion 232

REFERENCES 233

APPENDICES

Appendix A: A Map of the Physical Facilities of the Agency 264
Appendix B: GAP Reading Comprehension Test 265
Appendix C: Burke Reading Interview & Supplementary Questions 268
Appendix D: Examples of Interview Questions Used with the Staff and the Students 271
List of Charts and Tables

Maslow's Categorization of Human Needs 51
Outline of Chapters Four and Five 77
Family Structure 88
Family Dynamics 101
The Geographical Location of the Families 112
Educational Turbulence 118
Reading levels 131
Results of the Gap Reading Comprehension Test 132