An effective teaching model based on classroom observations of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

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AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING MODEL BASED ON CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS OF STUDENTS WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

DESLEA KONZA
BA Dip Ed Dip Spec Ed MEd (Hons)

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
1999
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, who ensured that her children received the education that circumstances denied her.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my supervisors, Dr Jessica Grainger and Dr Pauline Harris, thank you for your valuable guidance and direction throughout the conduct of this research. Particular thanks also to Dr Garry Hoban, Associate Professor Brian Cambourne, Dr Jan Turbill and Dr Wilma Vialle for collegial support at critical times that went far beyond the call of duty.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the classroom interactions of students diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to develop a model of effective teaching for them. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, which views individual development as a function of the interactions between an individual and different aspects of the surrounding environments, was used as a theoretical framework for this investigation.

The study employed a multiple-case study mode of enquiry (Yin, 1994). Data were collected on ten students at two schools over a period of one school year, although findings relating to only five of those students are presented in detail. A rich data base concerning classroom interactions developed from narrative recording of timed classroom observations; measurements of time on task and academic engaged time; formal and informal interviews with students, parents, teachers and principals; and collection of work samples.

Results from this study confirmed the literature which argues that students with ADHD have a predisposition to learning and behavioural difficulties. Learning environments, however, have the potential to either exacerbate these difficulties, allowing the full expression of behaviours that will detract from learning, or alternatively to suppress those behaviours and maximise the developmental potential of students with this diagnosis. This study confirmed the effective teaching literature for students with ADHD. Findings from this study also suggest that a model of effective teaching for students with this diagnosis contains organisational, management and instructional strategies which interact with a strong interpersonal bond between student and teacher to facilitate high levels of engagement in learning tasks. This bond or alliance between student and teacher is seen to be critical for students with ADHD as it acts as a prime motivator, assisting students to focus their attention and maintain engagement in core educational experiences.

It is recommended that more consideration be given in teacher education courses to the development of interpersonal skills and to ways in which a strong teacher/student bond may be developed. Additional recommendations relate to specific classroom practices which were found to maximise engaged time. Research recommendations include the development of training programs for students with ADHD in co-operative learning and group task skills and the investigation of the role of visual aids and self-talk with this population.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**  
iv  

**ABSTRACT**  
v  

**LIST OF TABLES**  
x  

**LIST OF FIGURES**  
xiii

## CHAPTER ONE: THE PURPOSE AND AIMS OF THE STUDY

1.1 The Aims of the Study  
1.2 The Evolution of Current Understandings of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder  
1.3 Current Conceptualisation of the Core Characteristics of ADHD  
1.4 Rationale for this Study  
1.5 Significance of this Study  
1.6 Delimitations of this Study  
1.7 Organisation of this Thesis  
2  
3  
6  
7  
10  
13  
13

## CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

2.1 General Systems Theory  
2.2 Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model  
2.3 Chapter Summary  
16  
19  
30

## CHAPTER THREE: THE NATURE OF ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO LEARNING AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES

3.1 The Cardinal Features of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and their Impact on Learning and Behaviour  
3.2 The Incidence of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and its Potential Negative Impact on the School Environment  
3.3 The Compounding Effects of the Comorbidity of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and other Disorders  
3.4 Proposed Aetiologies of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Consequent Treatment Approaches  
3.5 Emergence of Current Treatments in Response to Biomedical Explanations  
3.6 The Relationship between Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and the Learning Environment  
3.7 Chapter Summary  
33  
37  
38  
41  
46  
52  
54  
vi
CHAPTER FOUR: THE ECOLOGY OF THE CLASSROOM AND ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT ON LEARNING AND BEHAVIOUR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 A Definition of Learning for this Thesis</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 The Classroom as an Ecological System</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 The Link between Academic Engaged Time and Learning</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Conclusions of Time-Based Research and its Relationship to Learning</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 The Link between Classroom Practices and Academic Achievement</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Recommended Teaching Practices for Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Summary of Literature on Practices Linked to Academic Engaged Time and Academic Gains, and Practices Recommended for Students with ADHD</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 The Nature of Classroom Tasks and their Relationship to Learning</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 The Significance of the Emotional Climate of the Classroom</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10 Chapter Summary</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER FIVE: SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH PARADIGM, DATA COLLECTION AND DATA RECORDING PROCEDURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Selection of the Research Paradigm</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Research Design</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Negotiating the Research Sites</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Settings</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Data Collection and Recording Procedures</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Data Organisation</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Chapter Summary</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER SIX: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHICH EMERGED THROUGHOUT THE CONDUCT OF THIS RESEARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 The Issue of Informed Consent</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 The Issue of Confidentiality</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 The Issue of Individual Realities</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 The Issue of Researcher versus Counsellor</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Chapter Summary</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER SEVEN: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISPLAY PROCEDURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Analysis and Display of Classroom Observational Data</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Analysis of Classroom Ecology</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3 Checks for Reliability and Validity  157
7.4 Chapter Summary  163

CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS RELATED TO KYLE
8.1 Background Information on Kyle  167
8.2 Conceptual Issues Highlighted By Findings Related To Kyle  169
8.3 Tabulated Data From Classroom Observations  170
8.4 Summary Of Data Related To Kyle  191
8.5 Emerging Trends  192

CHAPTER NINE: FINDINGS RELATED TO JAMES
9.1 Background Information on James  193
9.2 Conceptual Issues Highlighted by Findings Related to James  196
9.3 Tabulated Data from Classroom Observations  196
9.4 Summary of Data Related to James  221
9.5 Emerging Trends  222

CHAPTER TEN: FINDINGS RELATED TO RICKY
10.1 Background Information on Ricky  224
10.2 Conceptual Issues Highlighted by Findings Related To Ricky  226
10.3 Tabulated Data from Classroom Observations  227
10.4 Summary of Data Related to Ricky  257
10.5 Emerging Trends  258

CHAPTER ELEVEN: FINDINGS RELATED TO MITCHELL
11.1 Background Information on Mitchell  260
11.2 Conceptual Issues Highlighted By Findings Related to Mitchell  262
11.3 Tabulated Data from Classroom Observations  262
11.4 Summary of Data Related to Mitchell  288
11.5 Emerging Trends  289

CHAPTER TWELVE: FINDINGS RELATED TO ERIC
12.1 Background Information on Eric  291
12.2 Conceptual Issues Highlighted By Findings Related to Eric  294
12.3 Tabulated Data from Classroom Observations  294
12.4 Summary of Data Related to Eric  319
12.5 Emerging Trends  320

viii
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION EMERGING FROM THIS THESIS

13.1 Response to Research Question 1 325
13.2 Response to Research Question 2 327
13.3 Response to Research Question 3 330
13.4 Response to Research Question 4 333
13.5 Response to Research Question 5 335
13.6 Response to Research Question 6 338
13.7 Response to Research Question 7 340
13.8 Response to Research Question 8 341
13.9 Chapter Summary 345

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: RECOMMENDATIONS - TOWARDS A MORE EFFECTIVE MODEL OF TEACHING STUDENTS WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

14.1 An Ecological Model of Effective Teaching for Students with ADHD 346
14.2 Recommendations for Teaching Practice 355
14.3 Recommendations for Teacher Education 359
14.4 Recommendations for Further Research 361
14.5 Final Reflection 363

REFERENCES 365

APPENDIX A Bronfenbrenner's Hypotheses 394
APPENDIX B Field note Samples 399
APPENDIX C Letter to Paediatricians 408
APPENDIX D Interview Schedules 411
APPENDIX E Work Samples 415
APPENDIX F Examples of Memos 420
APPENDIX G Time on Task Summary Tables 424
APPENDIX H Academic Engaged Time Summary Table 428
# LIST OF TABLES

| Table 4.1 | Summary Table Comparing Classroom Practices Linked to High Levels of Academic Engaged Time, High academic Gains and Practices Recommended for Teachers of Students with ADHD | 82 |
| Table 5.1 | Timeline of Data Collection Procedures | 101 |
| Table 5.2 | Summary of Participants at Site One | 110 |
| Table 5.3 | Summary of Participants at Site Two | 112 |
| Table 5.4 | Observations Patterns at Site One | 114 |
| Table 5.5 | Observations Patterns at Site Two | 115 |
| Table 7.1 | Extract of Field Notes Recorded Tuesday, 6 August, 1996 | 139 |
| Table 7.2 | Task Characteristics in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time - extract | 146 |
| Table 7.3 | Target Student (Kyle) Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time - extract | 148 |
| Table 7.4 | Peer Behaviour toward Mitchell in relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time - extract | 149 |
| Table 7.5 | Organisation of the Physical Environment in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Mitchell - extract | 151 |
| Table 7.6 | Managing Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Eric - extract | 153 |
| Table 7.7 | Instructional Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Eric - extract | 155 |
| Table 8.1 | Task Characteristics in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Kyle | 172 |
| Table 8.2 | Target Student (Kyle) Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time | 176 |
| Table 8.3 | Peer Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Kyle | 178 |
| Table 8.4 | Organisation of the Physical Environment in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Kyle | 182 |
| Table 8.5 | Managing Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Kyle | 185 |
| Table 8.6 | Instructional Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Kyle | 190 |
| Table 9.1 | Task Characteristics in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for James | 198 |
Table 9.2  Target Student (James) Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time 205
Table 9.3  Peer Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for James 209
Table 9.4  Organisation of the Physical Environment in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for James 213
Table 9.5  Managing Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for James 217
Table 9.6  Instructional Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for James 220
Table 10.1  Task Characteristics in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Ricky 229
Table 10.2  Average Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time Measures for Ricky with Individual Teachers 230
Table 10.3  Target Student (Ricky) Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time 234
Table 10.4  Peer Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Ricky 236
Table 10.5  Organisation of the Physical Environment in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Ricky 242
Table 10.6  Managing Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Ricky 251
Table 10.7  Instructional Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Ricky 256
Table 11.1  Task Characteristics in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Mitchell 266
Table 11.2  Target Student (Mitchell) Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time 271
Table 11.3  Peer Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Mitchell 273
Table 11.4  Organisation of the Physical Environment in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Mitchell 277
Table 11.5  Managing Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Mitchell 283
Table 11.6  Instructional Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Mitchell 287
Table 12.1  Task Characteristics in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Eric 296
<p>| Table 12.2 | Target Student (Eric) Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time | 299 |
| Table 12.3 | Peer Behaviour in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Eric | 302 |
| Table 12.4 | Organisation of the Physical Environment in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Eric | 305 |
| Table 12.5 | Managing Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Eric | 313 |
| Table 12.6 | Instructional Behaviour of Teacher in Relation to Time on Task and Academic Engaged Time for Eric | 319 |
| Table 13.1 | Factors Consistently Present During Periods of High Academic Engaged Time in Relation to their Usual Presence within Target Students' Classrooms | 343 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of the Environment</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>A Representation of the Research Process used in this Thesis</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Plan of Ricky's Composite Classroom</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>Plan of Ricky's Intensive Reading Classroom</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>Plan of Mitchell's Classroom</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>A Model of Effective Teaching for Students with ADHD</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>