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

Deslea Maxine Konza
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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.

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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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Finally to my family - thank you John, for endless support and for assuming almost all domestic responsibilities for such a long period (and doing a better job than I ever did!) Thank you, Ellen, for proofreading all those tables – and for being proud of me. Thank you, Naomi, for reminding me where our priorities should lie – and what is ultimately important in our lives.

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.

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