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**The effects of a school intervention on
Year 10 students: A cognitive and attitudinal
perspective**

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requirements for the degree of
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Anne Catherine Marsh
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FOREWORD

Bandura (2001) stated in his abstract that the essence of humanness is the ability to exercise control over the nature and quality of our life. In recent years I have worked with students, both adults and children, who have perceived themselves as “dumb” and unable to easily learn new ideas, and I have experienced how these negative messages can impede learning. I learnt that our beliefs about our perceived abilities can handicap or enable us, and also that we can change beliefs that are not enabling us to learn effectively. I found that teaching only curriculum content and skills to those who believe they have failed academically, does not enable them to take control of their learning. I also had to create conditions where they could realise that they were intelligent people, who were able to learn what they wanted to learn. I have seen that when students believe in the incremental nature of their intelligence they will set ambitious goals, and work hard and long to develop the strategies and knowledge to achieve these goals. With Bandura (2001), I firmly believe that life can be what we make it.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of a school's new intervention called The Diploma Programme, which aimed to increase academic achievement by encouraging students to develop into self-regulated learners. The programme monitored and rewarded the study skills punctuality and attendance, social co-operation, class-work and homework completion, and bringing correct equipment, by awarding credits towards a diploma. Participants were 33 self-selected Year 10 students who were placed in three groups based on the Year 10 PAT reading comprehension class percentiles. A questionnaire administered before The Diploma Programme and at the end of the school year, examined students' self-reported changes in study skills, as well as in the attitudinal factors academic motivation, locus of control, and self-efficacy. Diploma credits were also examined for significant difference over the year, within and between the three groups. Results indicated that The Diploma Programme was initially effective in encouraging study skills across reading skill levels, but dropped in effectiveness over the year. Results also indicated that while reading skill level influences both study skills and academic achievement, the internal locus of control factor 'effort' can modify levels of performance. The group with high reading skills achieved the highest academically, tended to use the most study skills and to exhibit the highest levels of academic self-efficacy. However, the group with low reading skills, who reported using more 'effort' than the other groups, achieved higher academically and tended to use more study skills by the end of the year than the group with moderate reading skills. Recommendations made to develop and maintain the effectiveness of The Diploma Programme over the year included changes within The Diploma Programme, as well as changes in classrooms and the wider school.

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