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## Section C: Schools

### Warmth, Demandingness, and What Else? A Reassessment of What It Takes to Be an Effective Teacher of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Children

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#### Abstract

This paper re-evaluates Fanshawe's (1976) description of effective teachers of adolescent Aborigines in the light of more recent literature and research pertaining to the effective teaching of children from a variety of cultural backgrounds. While particular attention is paid to the two-dimensional warmth-demandingness model of teacher effectiveness which informed the work of Kleinfeld (1972, 1975) and Fanshawe (1976, 1978, 1989), consideration is also given to other teacher characteristics besides warmth and demandingness, as well as teaching strategies and learning environments which are likely to be associated with positive educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children. The discussion concludes with the identification of important possibilities for future cross-cultural research into teacher effectiveness.

Writing in *The Aboriginal Child at School* more than twenty years ago, Fanshawe (1976) argued that the personal characteristics of effective teachers of adolescent Aborigines are likely to include: being

warm and supportive; making realistic demands of students; acting in a responsible, businesslike, and systematic manner; and being stimulating, imaginative and original. This description was strongly influenced by Kleinfeld's (1972, 1975) ethnographic study of Year 9 students in Alaska which suggested that effective teachers of Indian and Eskimo students are characterised by personal warmth and active demandingness, while ineffective teachers are lacking in either or both of these traits.

In developing his description of effective teachers of adolescent Aborigines, Fanshawe (1976) juxtaposed Kleinfeld's findings with quite similar conclusions reached by other American writers such as Goldberg (1964) and Ryans (1960). Goldberg had argued that important ingredients of success for teachers of "disadvantaged" students include respecting one's pupils (cf. *warmth*), acting as a student rather than a judge of pupils' cultures (cf. *warmth*), and realising the dangers of making insufficient demands of one's students (cf. *demandingness*), while Ryans had concluded that effective teachers are warm, understanding and friendly rather than aloof and egocentric (cf. *warmth*); responsible, businesslike and systematic rather than evading, unplanned and slipshod (cf. *demandingness*); and stimulating, imaginative and original rather than dull and routine (cf. *demandingness*).

Based on detailed comparisons of Kleinfeld's, Ryans', and Goldberg's models of teacher effectiveness and reviews of Australian and North American literature dealing with the effective teaching of children from ethnic minority groups, Fanshawe (1976, 1978) argued that much of what is essential to teaching effectively in Aboriginal contexts is encapsulated in Kleinfeld's *warmth and demandingness* model. Subsequent research tended to support this view. For example, in Fanshawe's (1989) investigation of Aboriginal high school students' perceptions of their teachers, teachers who were perceived to be both warm and demanding were generally associated with better academic outcomes than teachers who were perceived to be deficient either in warmth, or in demandingness, or in both warmth and demandingness. There was also strong evidence that Aboriginal students, along with their non-Aboriginal counterparts, liked teachers who were warm, supportive and friendly more than teachers who were cold, distant and aloof.

The purpose of the present paper is to re-evaluate Fanshawe's (1976, 1978) assertions about the importance of teacher warmth and demandingness in the light of more recent literature and research pertaining to the effective teaching of children from a range of cultural backgrounds. Does the more recent literature provide support for Fanshawe's claims? How relevant is Fanshawe's model of teacher effectiveness for teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children as they move into the twenty-first century? Have more recent writings on teacher effectiveness identified important additional characteristics of effective teachers that need to be incorporated into Fanshawe's model?

The relevance of Fanshawe's (1976) description of the personal characteristics of effective teachers of adolescent Aborigines has been acknowledged by such writers as Green (1982), Murray (1982), Eckermann (1987), Henry, Knight, Lingard and Taylor (1988), O'Keefe (1989), Partington and McCudden (1992), and Price (1998). O'Keefe suggests that Fanshawe's model is "still valid today and will probably be valid ten years hence" (p. 23). He then suggests a sensible and important modification to the applicability of the model, arguing

that "many of the attributes Fanshawe advocates (for secondary teachers) are equally applicable to teachers involved in teaching Aborigines in the *primary* school and indeed, to teachers in general" (p. 23).

Throughout the 1990s, the advocacy of warmth and demandingness as important characteristics of effective teachers—at all levels of education and among both minority and mainstream children—has continued to be very strong. In the United States, for example, Kuykendall (1992) argues that the academic performance of Black and Hispanic youth is enhanced by "intensive personal interaction with teachers who provide rapport, nonverbal support, and affection" (p. 37). The same writer also emphasises the importance for school achievement of teachers who have high academic expectations for their students (p. 63). In another paper dealing with Black and Hispanic children, Stringfield and Herman's (1997) review of research into teacher effectiveness leads to similar conclusions: "Students whose education takes place in goal-oriented, learning-friendly classrooms have been shown to learn more compared to students who must face alienating classrooms" (p. 270).

Further evidence of the importance attached to teacher warmth in the American context is provided by Pianta and Walsh (1996) and Gollnick and Chinn (1998), who refer to research which associates enhanced student performance with teachers who are characterised by high levels of personal warmth. In both papers, the authors add that teacher warmth "seems to be especially important with students from low-income families and students who are targets of prejudice and discrimination" (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998:313). It is interesting to note that such assertions about the importance of teacher warmth are consistent with Kleinfeld's (1972) observation that "the fundamental factor that seems to separate classrooms where village students were silent from classrooms where they were intellectually engaged was whether the teacher assumed a stance of personal warmth or professional distance." (Kleinfeld, 1972:14)

In Australia, recent support for the importance of warmth and demandingness in teaching Aboriginal children has been provided by Munns (1998) who argues that "productive personal and pedagogical

relationships are crucial in schools serving communities not usually advantaged by formal schooling” (p. 173), and further argues that teacher-student relationships need to be formed “at both a personal and a pedagogical level in order to make an educational difference” (p. 184). Like Price (1998), Munns recognises the importance of making appropriate demands on Aboriginal students, since failure to set performance standards in school leads to underachievement and an eventual rejection of formal education:

*There is a danger that in the face of persistent opposition teachers will compromise the curriculum, offer easier work, provide unproductive help and thus allow students to ‘survive’ and get through school. Dealing with opposition in such a way leads to the forms of classroom practice which make educational inequality inevitable and increases the likelihood of a future resistance of school.* (Munns, 1998:184)

Other recent Australian writers whose views on warmth and demandingness are essentially compatible with those of Munns (1998) include Collins (1993), Partington (1998), Malin (1998), Partington and McCudden (1992), and Harris (1994). Collins (1993) argues for the establishment of “warm and friendly rapport” (p. 11) and the maintenance of high standards as crucial elements in the effective teaching of Aboriginal children; Partington (1998) argues that the primary goal of schooling for indigenous students needs to be academic achievement (cf. *demandingness*), and that if this goal is to be achieved, it needs to be pursued in a secure social environment (cf. *warmth*); and Malin (1998) refers to her own research (Malin, 1994) and research by Hudspith (1996, 1997) in which Aboriginal parents expressed the “dual concern that the classroom be a safe, comfortable and warm place for children as well as an interesting one where there is a job to be done with teacher and student working together” (p. 246). At the same time, Partington and McCudden (1992) emphasise the importance of personal relationships in Aboriginal education and argue that teachers who are unable to form warm relationships with Aboriginal

students will find it very difficult to teach them effectively; while Harris (1994) argues that although teaching skills are crucial to successful teaching and learning in the Aboriginal context, it is the personal relationship established between Aboriginal students and their teachers which is the prerequisite for successful school learning (p. 124).

An important aspect of teacher demandingness which has not yet been considered in this paper is the issue of teacher expectations. According to teacher expectations theory (e.g., Good & Brophy, 1987; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), when teachers—through words, actions, and other nonverbal communications—convey a sense of confidence in their students’ ability to succeed, this expectation may act to enhance the students’ performance (Fanshawe, 1989; Stringfield & Herman, 1997). On the other hand, when teachers convey an expectation that their students will fail, this expectation may act to diminish the students’ performance (Kuykendall, 1992). Linking Kleinfeld’s (1972) views on demandingness with teacher expectations theory, when teachers make *realistic demands* of their students and set appropriately challenging standards for their performance, they are expressing *positive expectations* which are likely to result in positive outcomes for their students, especially when these demands occur in a climate of warmth and encouragement.

In the 1990s, as in the preceding three decades, a considerable amount has been written about the importance of teacher expectations both in relation to the school population as a whole (Manning & Baruth, 1995) and in relation to ethnic minority groups (Kuykendall, 1992; Partington & McCudden, 1992). The consensus with respect to Aboriginal education appears to be that it is extremely important for teachers of Aboriginal children to hold and to convey genuinely positive expectations about their students and their students’ performances. For example, Collins (1993) urges teachers to “set high standards and stick to them” since “negative expectations from the teacher have adverse effects on the child’s achievement at school” (p. 12), and Munns (1998) reports that “when classroom practices are underpinned with deficit logic, it almost certainly results in lower teaching

expectations, a compromised curriculum and restricted academic demands on the most needy students. . . ." (p. 176).

It is apparent from the preceding discussion that the literature which identifies warmth and demandingness as important characteristics of effective teachers of both minority and mainstream children has continued to expand in the 1990s, and there generally seems to be good support for *warmth and demandingness* models of teacher effectiveness such as those discussed and researched by Kleinfeld (1972, 1975) and Fanshawe (1976, 1989). However, there is obviously more to being an effective teacher than simply being warm and demanding (Manning & Baruth, 1996), and this is reflected in the extensive literature on teacher effectiveness which focuses on things other than warmth and demandingness. The following part of the discussion will therefore identify teacher characteristics other than warmth and demandingness, along with teaching strategies and learning environments, which are likely to be associated with positive educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children. Limitations of space will permit only a brief acknowledgement of a selection of factors, though many of them are sufficiently important to be worthy of separate papers in their own right.

It has already been suggested that effective teachers of Aboriginal students, in addition to being warm and demanding, are likely to be responsible, businesslike and systematic, and stimulating, imaginative and original (Fanshawe, 1976, 1978, 1989; O'Keefe, 1989). Based on their concern and compassion for the children in their care, these teachers will also respect their pupils, being neither prejudiced, racist, nor sexist (Manning & Baruth, 1996), acting as students rather than judges of their pupils' cultures (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Reubens, 1996), and realising the dangers of self-fulfilling prophecies and of making insufficient demands of their students (Fanshawe, 1976; Goldberg, 1964; Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). It is possible that further searches of the literature will suggest other important characteristics. However, in contemplating further research into the characteristics of effective teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children, the

present list seems to provide a good starting point, especially as it has not been easy in researching the present paper to find additional characteristics which are not already subsumed by the generic qualities identified in this paragraph.

Much has been written about appropriate teaching strategies for Aboriginal and other minority group children. For example, Manning & Baruth (1996) emphasise the importance of planning and implementing culturally appropriate instruction, arguing that teachers must have the skills and understanding to deal with "learning styles, the dangers of ability grouping, the benefits of cooperative learning, culturally different perceptions of motivation and competition, learners who may not want to excel at the expense of their peers, and stereotypical beliefs about a culture's ability to learn or not to learn. . . ." (p. 216). Many writers (e.g., Kuykendall, 1992; Partington & McCudden, 1992) refer to the importance of involving parents in the education of their children, and emphasis is also placed on the importance of understanding students' cultures and of incorporating cultural knowledge throughout one's teaching (e.g., Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Partington, 1998). While such discussions are very important, the advice given is often quite general, and readers who are looking for more specific discussions of the skills and strategies of effective teachers of minority group children may find it helpful to consult the work of Partington and McCudden (1992), Malin (1998), Kuykendall (1992), and Manning and Baruth (1996).

As with the discussion of teaching strategies, much of what has been written about appropriate learning environments for Aboriginal and other minority group children tends to be rather general. Often the emphasis is on interpersonal relationships rather than the physical aspects of the class setting, and the statements frequently seem to complement the central theme of the present paper, i.e. that teachers need to exude personal warmth and make realistic demands. For example, Kuykendall (1992) refers to the need for "an academic environment that offers encouragement, praise, and the opportunity for accomplishment" (p. 23), and Malin (1998) refers to the need to create a classroom atmosphere where Aboriginal children can feel a sense of belonging.

A particularly important aspect of the learning environment is the curriculum, and there are many writers who stress the special importance of *relevancy* in the curriculum for children from minority groups (e.g., Malin, 1998; Partington & McCuddin, 1992; Kuykendall, 1992). Curriculum must take account of the child's culture (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Munns, 1998), and the curriculum must cater for the needs of the child (Partington & McCuddin, 1992), including the need to feel valued and to feel that one's culture is valued (Kuykendall, 1992; Partington & McCuddin, 1992).

Much of what has been presented in this paper in relation to effective teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children is based on informed opinion, experience, or extrapolation from North American

findings rather than empirical investigations conducted in Australia. Some Australian research has been undertaken which supports the applicability of Kleinfeld's (1972, 1975) warmth-demandingness model of teacher effectiveness to Aboriginal students (e.g., Fanshawe, 1989; Jones, 1979). However, the relative importance of various other teacher characteristics, teaching strategies, learning environments, and curriculum programs in the task of effectively teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children requires further empirical inquiry. Indeed, as Australia and the world contemplate a new millenium, it is an opportune time for major cross-cultural research not only into the effective teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children but also into the effective teaching of indigenous children around the world.

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