
EDITORIAL

So many debates on appropriate and effective practice in education in general and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in particular argue in an “antagonistic” way, taking one of two diametrically opposed points of view and trying to “prove” one over the other in all situations and for all learners. Examples of this would be the acrimonious disputes over “whole word” and phonetic approaches to the teaching of reading and the discovery learning and expository methods of teaching. After much research, it was clear that, in each case there were advantages and disadvantages, that teaching was based on particular and differing assumptions concerning the nature of the learner, and that each had different aims and objectives for learning processes and outcomes. It was also found in practice that each was appropriate for some learners and not for others, at different stages in learning and for different learning materials and that no single method could be the sole methodology for all teaching content nor for all learners.

A far more profitable approach is for educational researchers and practitioners to seek to understand the students for whom and the conditions under which each educational strategy is the more appropriate. With such an understanding, it becomes possible for teachers to have real choice in the selection of teaching strategies for bringing specific content to specific learners in such ways as provide for the unique learning styles of their students. The article by Harris in this issue of *The Aboriginal Child at School* does just this and adds significantly to our understanding of language immersion, and contributes to our knowledge of what is involved in teaching for language maintenance and revival.

One of our recurring themes is that of the terrible consequences for children’s self concept, self confidence and learning when the “self-fulfilling prophecy” phenomenon operates negatively in the school and classroom. The following from the article by Christine Nicholls reminds us of the importance of maintaining high expectations and aspirations for our learners - *It is crucial that teachers do not lower their expectations of Aboriginal students on the basis of their own ethno-central socio-cultural misinterpretations of students’ behaviour or language.*

Kind regards

Dawn Muir

