

Streaming, broadbanding and pepper-potting: Managing Maori students in secondary schools

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the ways the students are sorted into classes at secondary school level, drawing upon ethnographic research conducted within Auckland secondary schools in 1987- 88. While eighteen secondary schools were included in the original research sample the discussion here centres on the ways in which students were sorted and classified at one of these schools - Nikau High School. This school was chosen for discussion because it reveals the social implications of these processes, particularly in relation to the Maori students. Of the eighteen schools in the research sample, all but four employed some form of streaming or broadbanding to place the students in classes. At least six of these schools, including Nikau High School, employed the Test of Scholastic Abilities (NZCER, 1981) as the basis for these processes and all but one of these six schools had a significant number of Maori and Pacific Islands students enrolled. Since TOSCA is still being used at Nikau High School as a basis for placing the third-form students into classes it is important to examine it in some detail and consider the implications of its use as a basis for classifying students.

Introduction

The sifting and sorting of children into classes or groups takes place in most schools although the bases upon which the practice is undertaken may vary. One of the most commonly applied criteria is that of perceived ability. While the grouping of children on the basis of their perceived abilities frequently starts during their early years at school it is at the secondary school level that the practice becomes most overt and obvious (see for example, Rist, 1970; Sharp & Green, 1975; Oakes, 1985; Simon, 1990). As Connell (1983: 119) observes, the classifying of students on the basis of perceived ability - or 'streaming', as it is commonly called - may be done for a number of different reasons. These include beliefs that it makes teaching easier and more efficient or that it provides opportunities for giving 'bright kids' more intensive instruction. It may also be employed as a means of social control. Tony Knight (in Henry, 1988: 180-81) sees streaming as one of four school-based structural determinants of educational success, the other three being student reputation, labelling, and teacher expectations (or 'prophesies in motion'.) All these factors, he explains, interact to reinforce each other in a synergistic way and in doing so contribute to the production of inequalities in educational outcomes. A number of research studies on streaming support this claim (see for example, Hargreaves, 1967; Keddie, 1971; Kealey, 1984), as does the research examined here.

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TOSCA

TOSCA is a norm-referenced, group-administered test that has been the subject of controversy and extensive debate since it was published in 1981 (see Olssen, 1988:9-25). As John Codd (1985:39) points out, not only have the antagonists in the debate failed to agree, but 'their arguments rest upon fundamentally different theoretical foundations and are located in different domains of discourse'. In spite of claims to the contrary by its developers, it has been shown to be virtually identical in form and intention to earlier IQ tests such as the *Otis Test of Mental Ability* used in New Zealand from the 1930s. John Codd (1985: 40) indicates that 'when compared with such tests, there is not a single substantive feature of the traditional IQ test that is not shared by TOSCA'.

According to the *Teachers' Manual*, TOSCA is intended to provide, firstly, 'a broad measure of the learned or developed abilities which may be termed "scholastic abilities"' and, secondly, 'an indication of the pupils' capacity to cope with the abstract manipulation of the verbal and numerical symbol system typical of mainstream New Zealand society' (Reid, 1981:4). Its developers assert, furthermore, that it can be used to assess 'the current status for school learning' and to 'predict the likelihood of future success in accomplishing the kinds of intellectual tasks encountered in academic work' of *individual* children (Reid & Gilmore, 1983: 14).

The test claims therefore not only to measure school learning but, seemingly, in its references to 'capacity' and prediction, to measure *innate* 'abilities' as well. Indeed, it implies that such abilities are fixed and quantifiable. That the two claims are linked together further implies not only that the extent of knowledge gained from school learning is an indicator of innate ability but also that innate ability can be *measured* by measuring school learning.

Thus, while most current educational and psychological research supports the idea that child learning is a complex, interactive process, it is claimed for TOSCA that a child's 'capacity' for learning can be identified, and his or her 'scholastic ability' assessed, by a single test score on the basis of 30 minutes work on arithmetic and word puzzles (Ballard, 1988:220). Noting that the references in the TOSCA manual to 'capacity' reflect its historical association with the doctrine that ability is largely fixed in students and that children's education should be determined on the basis of their 'capacity', Ballard (Ibid: 225) observes that the term 'cubic capacity' was the 'scientific' measure of skull size. Thus he highlights the association of mental testing with the nineteenth-century pseud sciences that were preoccupied with 'proving' the superiority of the European 'race'.

Codd (1985:48) notes that the claims made for the test, firstly, are unsound logically (the percentiles are based on sample *groups* - not individuals) and, secondly, raise important ethical concerns.

To make a prediction about an individual on the basis of an abstract statistical group to which that individual has been assigned is merely to treat that individual *as though* he or she were a *typical*

member of that group. This creates an expectation which may well be false but it may also tend to be self-fulfilling and therefore be harmful to the interests of the person concerned (Ibid).

Such predictions, continues Codd, by reducing interpersonal judgements to a mathematical calculation, represent technocratic rationality 'in its purest form':

Predictive judgements in education if they are to show respect for children as persons, will arise out of the tacit knowledge that comes from knowing them as *persons*. They most assuredly will not show that respect if they are made by consulting a table of statistics. Herein lies the moral danger of making individual predictions on the basis of statistical correlations (Ibid: 49).

This is not to dispute, however, that, in order to make appropriate educational decisions in relation to their students, teachers do need to know as much as possible about their particular learning experiences - what they have learnt, how they learn, what special talents they have and what difficulties they may be encountering. Diagnostic tests in particular areas of learning can be of some value - in complementing the range of less formal assessments teachers make in the course of their work. TOSCA, however, contributes nothing of value in this regard.

Nikau High School: A Policy of Broadbanding

Nikau High School is a large co-educational secondary school on the outskirts of Auckland city. For at least the past six years the students there have been organized into their classes through a system of 'broadbanding' based on their perceived abilities. As explained by both the principal and the associate principal, this policy involved the 'creaming off' of the 'top' students to form an 'accelerate' class and the placement of the 'slow learners' or 'remedial' students (at Form 3 and 4 levels) in classes for specialist teaching, leaving a broad, mainstream band of students to be divided up into a number of equivalent, heterogeneous classes. In the year of the research, there were twelve such 'heterogeneous' classes at Form 3 level, thirteen at Form 4 level, eleven at Form 5 level and eight at Form 6 level.

This arrangement was considered by the staff to be more desirable than streaming in that it minimised the likelihood of students being labelled according to their perceived abilities (thus avoiding, it was believed, the tailoring of teachers' expectations and goals), while at the same time providing for the extension of the 'gifted' students and the special needs of those students with difficulties. It was perceived as necessary in a large school such as this where both the third and fourth forms each comprised approximately 400 students. None of the classes was labelled in a way that would indicate the perceived abilities of the students, each being labelled according to its form-teacher's name (such as Form 3 Sm for Smith).

The third-form intake of students came from fourteen contributing schools, two thirds of which were small rural schools, the remainder being the large suburban schools in the Nikau district. At the time of the research, about 60 (15%) of the Form 3 students were Maori and most of them were from the suburban primary schools. There was a similar number of Pacific Islands students.

Clearly the placement of students at form 3 level together with the option subjects they elect to take, are significant in determining -not only their progress throughout the school but their life-chances in general. At Nikau High School responsibility for placing students into the Form 3 classes rested with the school counsellor who made the decisions on the placement of Form 3 students on the basis of TOSCA and information supplied by the primary schools. This counsellor, Terry, had virtually total control over the structuring of the Form 3 classes. Although he was required to refer his organization of the classes to the dean for approval, it seems that few of the staff fully appreciated its implications. When asked about the staff's views on the matter, Terry responded: 'They don't really know very much what is going on'.

The TOSCA Factor: Grouping by 'Ability'

The procedure, as explained by Terry, involved testing the children on TOSCA and then returning to the primary schools after marking the tests in order to confer with the primary teachers about the results. In practice, however, things did not happen quite like that - at least not in the year the research was conducted. From one of the primary school teachers it was learnt that when Terry came to get information about her Form 2 students, he had not yet marked their TOSCA tests and thus she was given no opportunity to comment on the results. Terry's account of his procedures was as follows:

What we use is a TOSCA. We ask the Form 2 teacher to administer it for us. The kids are often more relaxed [then]. And we also ask the Form 2 teacher to fill in ... a confidential report sheet. It gives us quite a bit of info on the pupil. We mark the TOSCA, take it back to the Form 2 teacher, ask is this a good mark, do you disagree with this etc. ... We use the TOSCA to identify extreme or really bright kids or slow kids, and we also use the TOSCA because we have fourteen contributing schools. Some of the teachers tend to mark their kids up. Then if the TOSCA indicates just an average kid and they're getting straight 'ones' on their report I then go back with the deans who talk to the kids while I talk to the teacher. I get them to make verbal comments and I talk to them about the TOSCA result and often teachers will say things verbally they won't put down in writing. Often it's brief. And I then take that information and make up our classes. We look for about 25 kids who are probably gifted. We are usually looking for kids who are under-achieving say, if a kid gets a very high TOSCA and comments like, "This kid could do better, 'Lacks application', 'Average", etc., we look again at them - give them a secondary school TOSCA ... So we put 25 into that group. The school also has a couple of top classes besides that - basically high-achievers. Then we look at slow learners. And in both these cases we really go on what the form teacher says.

A number of features of Terry's account warrant scrutiny. Firstly, in his claim that he used TOSCA to identify 'bright' and 'slow' kids, he was clearly assuming that the test measures innate 'abilities'. If *he* applied such labels to the children, then, without doubt, the teachers would be doing the same since he was clearly accepted as the authority in the school on these matters. (It is important to note that Terry has post-graduate qualifications in psychology, and thus is presumed to have in-depth knowledge and experience in regard to intelligence tests.) Terry stressed later that the 'top' class children were not necessarily high-achievers, but *gifted* children. 'Giftedness often isn't manifested in high-achieving' he explained, 'so usually about half the class are kids we expect to develop'. This affirms that he was employing TOSCA on the assumption that it identifies and measures *innate* 'abilities'.

The second feature relates to his comment that some of the primary school teachers 'mark their kids up' - that is, beyond the equivalent of their TOSCA score. TOSCA is perceived, apparently, as countering the weaknesses of the teachers' subjective assessments, pulling the children down to their 'rightful' places, as it were. Whilst Terry indicated that he checks out such discrepancies with the Form 2 teachers, it has already been noted that when he returned to Nikau Primary School he had not yet marked the tests and thus was in no position to discuss them. Hence, it seems clear, in these cases, that the TOSCA result was given priority over teachers' assessments, being regarded by Terry as more reliable and objective. Thus students perceived by Form 2 teachers as having capabilities that needed extending could well have had their goals limited at the high school by such assessments.

This reliance on TOSCA is particularly significant in the case of the Maori children. Nash (1985: 267) points out that 'at each age and on each version of TOSCA the mean score of Maori pupils is lower than that of the *lowest* non-Maori socio-economic group'. Furthermore, as he stresses, the test developers do not even attempt any serious explanation of this situation, but, instead, merely comment that 'some will no doubt say, maybe there are ability differences between the groups; we just have to learn to live with them!' (Reid & Gilmore, 1983: 28). Taking account of the way TOSCA is accepted by Terry, the views of the test developers are seen to assume enormous power in the

school. Clearly this could lead to some students, particularly Maori students, being 'written off' even before they enter the school.

A further factor to note is that the school 'also has a couple of top classes' besides the accelerate class. The 'heterogeneous' classes, therefore, were not as heterogeneous as claimed. The broadbanding was, in fact, a covert system of streaming. (This was affirmed in a comment from the Head of the geography department, made in reference to a class said to be 'at the lower end of the spectrum'.) Thus the practice of the school was at odds with what was claimed. Again this has implications for the Maori children when taking account of the bias in the test that would place them inevitably in the low-stream classes. Academic performance was not, however, the only factor taken into account in placing students in the Form 3 classes at Nikau.

The Support Factor - Grouping by Needs

Terry also attempted to take account of the particular needs, as he perceived them, of different groups of children - those from the small rural schools, the handicapped and the Pacific Islands students. Referring to the children from the small rural schools, he explained: 'The things we look for are that there is a good support group for the children coming, say, from Hillsvue, with only ten in their Form 2 class. We like to put as many as possible in the same class'. Likewise he ensured that the handicapped children were put with teachers known to be supportive. Perceiving the Pacific Islands students to need mutual support, he made sure that a cluster of students from a particular island group were placed together in the one class. Thus in regard to these three groups of children, the rural Pakeha, the handicapped and the Pacific Islands students, a significant criterion in determining their placement in classes was the availability of and provisions for emotional support perceived as appropriate to their needs.

However, the placement of Maori children was made on the basis of quite different criteria: They were proportionally distributed or 'pepper-potted' throughout the classes. Terry explained:

We work on a normative curve, so there must be in the top class a reflection of the ethnic make-up of the school. So if there is 10% Maori in the school, then there must be three Maori in the class irrespective.

In fact, in the 'top' class in 1987, there was only one Maori student. I was later to discover that this policy of pepper-potting the Maori students had been in operation for a number of years in the school. The Maori students, it seemed, were not considered to be in need of mutual support like the other minority groups. When questioned about this, Terry responded with the claim that, 'the Maori kids we get aren't culturally strong enough to be able to do much for each other. And all you' re doing [by putting them into groups] is centralizing the family mentality'.

This claim hardly represents a convincing rationale for denying Maori students the support deemed necessary for the other groups. While it recognizes that Maori students do indeed tend to form into cohesive 'family' groups at school - to seek whanaungatanga - it ignores and, seemingly, invalidates the numerous reasons *why* they do so. It conceals the fact that, simply because Maori children and their families are identifiable as Maori, their experiences with members of the dominant group, both direct and vicarious, have frequently involved prejudice and discrimination rationalized through 'racial' ideologies and, that, over the years, responses to such experiences have become part of the urban Maori culture. It fails to recognize that it is these experiences, which, in most cases, lead Maori children in schools where they are in a minority, to seek mutual support through 'family' groups.

Terry's claim, in fact, represents a rationale for breaking up this whanaungatanga. Indeed, as was later revealed, the pepper-potting policy of the school was devised specifically for that reason. As at some of primary schools included in the research, the staff at Nikau High School, perceived the

cohesiveness of Maori students negatively and as a potential threat to control. Pepper-potting was perceived as the 'solution' to this.

Terry offered a further rationale to justify the practice. This, ironically, was that it helped to combat racism. He explained:

It's more the contribution they make to the Europeans. A lot of these kids from schools like Hillsvue, they have never had any Maoris in their school. I think it is necessary for their development that they be exposed to some Maoris and Polynesians. And I think that the Maori children have a contribution to make. The best way to overcome racism is for kids to get alongside other kids. Some of the schools that we have [contributing] are extremely racist. The first question that some of the parents ask is 'How many Maori do you have?'

This promotes a perception of the school as existing *only* to serve the interests of the Pakeha students. On this perspective, the presence of the Maori students in the school is tolerated, seemingly, only insofar as it serves to develop the Pakeha children - by 'improving' the attitudes of those of them known to be racist. No apparent concern is given to the effects on the Maori children of this practice - the implications of the asymmetrical power relations of Maori and Pakeha within the school and what it may mean for the Maori children to be placed in only ones or twos within classes of Pakeha children identified as racist. By providing disincentives to and constraints upon academic progress and producing the conditions that foster low self-esteem, the practice may well have contributed towards making TOSCA test results self-fulfilling prophecies.

The Teacher-Perquisite Factor

The principal appeared to have faith in the broadbanding policy, as being fair and reasonable to *all* students, yet he casually mentioned that the school had a policy whereby the children of the teachers were entitled to be placed in the accelerate classes, regardless of their levels of performance. He justified this policy by saying that 'there are not many perks in the job for teachers and they deserve a few'. What this policy represents, however, is recognition, firstly, that the students in the accelerate class get something *extra* - some advantages not available to the other classes - and, secondly, that these 'extras' can benefit *all* students - not just the 'gifted' ones. The policy, in fact acknowledges the inequity in principle, of the practice of streaming or broadbanding.

The Inequity of Streaming

Jeannie Oakes (1985) highlights the inequity of the practice, on the basis of research in the United States on 'tracking' - the equivalent of streaming in New Zealand. She provides empirical evidence from a study of twenty-five schools that where tracking took place, there were considerable differences between the high and the low tracks in regard to not only the information to which students were given access but also in the cognitive levels of the tasks to which they were assigned, the opportunities for learning and the quality of the instruction. The lower the track, the greater the limits applied to access to knowledge. As a result, observes Oakes, 'high-track students got Shakespeare; low-track students got reading kits. High-track students got mathematical concepts; low-track students got computational exercises'. By contrast, the researchers found that in schools with heterogeneous grouping, a significant proportion of classes had programmes that approximated to those of the high-track classes in other schools, and that about 70% of heterogeneous English and maths classes were exposed to the highest level of curricular content (1985: 192). Oakes states:

It is clear from what we know about the development of American secondary schooling around the turn of the century and from the considerable work of contemporary researchers that tracking is *not* what it may first appear to be to the casual observer or the unquestioning student, parent, teacher or administrator. Tracking does *not* equalize educational opportunity for diverse groups of students. It does *not* increase the efficiency of schools by maximizing learning opportunities for

everyone, nor does it divide students neatly into homogeneous groups. Tracking does *not* meet individual needs. Moreover, tracking does *not* increase student achievement.

What tracking does, in fact, appears to be quite the opposite. Tracking seems to retard the academic progress of many students - those in average and low groups. Tracking seems to foster low self-esteem amongst these same students and promote school misbehaviour and dropping out.

Tracking also appears to lower the aspirations of students who are not in the top groups. And perhaps most important, in view of all the above, is that tracking separates rich from poor, whites from non-whites. The end result is that poor and minority students are found more often than others in the bottom tracks. And once there, they are likely to suffer far more negative consequences of schooling than are their more fortunate peers. This much we know (Ibid: 40).

Oakes's research makes it clear that in schools with tracking, significant differences prevail in regard to the types of knowledge made accessible to students:

Students are being exposed to knowledge and taught behaviours that differ not only educationally but in socially important ways. Students at the top are exposed to the knowledge that is highly valued in our culture, knowledge that identifies its possessors as "educated". This knowledge, too, is that which permits access to certain educational futures - specifically, college or university attendance (Ibid: 91-92).

Not only are the credentials from such knowledge of value in providing access to the upper social and economic levels of the adult world but the non-subject related behaviours developed at the same time are those highly valued in society: independent and critical thinking, creativity and questioning - the attributes of leaders and decision-makers.

However, the knowledge and behaviours taught to low-track students are, in general, of quite a different sort. The problem is not that they have no value but that they generally have little exchange value in a social and economic sense. Not only do they have little prestige but they do not permit special access either.

Everyone, for example, needs to acquire functional literacy and computation skills, not so much for the benefit of the individual as for the functioning of society as a whole. Students who have only access to this low-prestige knowledge are being denied, by omission, access to both educationally and socially important learnings. While necessary to keep the social system functioning smoothly, behaviour patterns such as following directions, good work habits, punctuality, being realistic about goals, and so forth are not those attributes we most admire in our leaders (Ibid: 92)

This is particularly significant in the light of one further detail concerning the make-up of the Form 3 classes at Nikau High School in the year of the research. It seems that having made up each of the broadband classes to the right size, Terry had a few children left over. To tidy up this problem, he placed these students in the slow remedial class which was low in number. Thus in the interests of administrative efficiency, students who were acknowledged to be capable of a mainstream programme were placed where their access to valued knowledge was to be considerably limited. Terry, we can see, had considerable power in controlling the access of students to highly valued knowledge. His disregard for the interests of these 'extra' students further highlights that he attached greater importance to the needs of some groups of students than those of others. Therefore because the interests of Maori children were clearly of low priority for him, Maori students inevitably had the odds stacked against them from the day they entered Nikau High School.

Evidence of the way students' access to knowledge was controlled by the streaming system of the school was seen in two science lessons taken consecutively by the one teacher, the first lesson being with a 'slow' form 4 class and the second with the 'top' Form 3. The Form 4 students were required to test the pH factor of soil samples, and the Form 3 students experimented with electrical circuits. I was invited to observe these lessons by Ross, the science teacher, who stressed that because the two classes were of very different abilities, he employed different approaches in

teaching them. Ross explained that he had modified his scheme for the slow students, since, with one or two exceptions, these students would be unlikely to sit the School Certificate examination the following year, and consequently there was no need for him to adhere to the syllabus. He could, in fact, teach them virtually whatever he wanted, he said, and hence, he tried to concentrate on 'the practical things the kids would be likely to use in everyday life' rather than on heavily theoretical things, the periodic table and so forth which would 'switch the kids off'. He added that these 'slow kids' had mostly teachers, like himself who maintained fairly firm control, but managed to get quite positive responses from the students nevertheless.

The students in this Form 4 class, mostly boys, seemed to respond to the lesson with interest and cooperation. Their attitudes towards the teacher seemed positive and Ross, while clearly fulfilling the role of authority figure, managing the lesson step by step, treated the students as mature young adults, without appearing to be 'talk down' to them. They did their experiments as instructed and recorded the results step by step under his guidance.

The Form 3 students were working in groups with a degree of freedom not accorded to the Form 4 students. They were provided with a range of equipment and were required to experiment with the wiring of circuits in different ways and to do conductor tests with a range of materials copper, aluminium, zinc, plastic, rubber etc. They were noisy and animated, talking exuberantly with each other. Ross was tolerant of this noise, explaining it to me as a 'busy noise' and commenting that the students were nevertheless 'on task'.

In their discussion the Form 4 students were required to identify whether soil was acidic or alkaline. They were told to put various proportions of chemicals such as sulphate of ammonia or lime into the test-tubes of soil and water and to take the pH readings. The Form 3 students on the other hand, were asked to theorize why certain effects were obtained with the electrical equipment. They were commended for using their existing theoretical knowledge and for making generalizations from their experiments. The Form 4 students were commended for doing what they were told correctly and for taking their pH readings accurately.

Together with their new scientific knowledge, the Form 3 students were gaining experience and competence in a range of intellectual skills including logical thinking, application of theory to practice and ability to theorize from practical situations. The Form 4 students, with their new knowledge, were learning a different range of skills, primarily of a technical kind, and how to obey instructions accurately. It was evident also that the programme of the Form 4 class had a much greater emphasis on social control than that of the Form 3 class. The Form 3 students were being given access to the knowledge and skills that would not only gain them credentials but were also the intellectual qualities that are valued in leaders and decision-makers. The Form 4 students were given knowledge that would indeed be useful but did not lead to credentials. The skills developed however would probably help them to become useful law-abiding citizens.

An obvious feature of the Form 4 programme was that it was tailored to accord with the low expectations Ross had of the students' capabilities, based on understandings that these students were *naturally* 'slow'. These understandings were the products of the school's system for classifying the students, seemingly affirmed by their current performances. With the acceptance of these identified 'abilities' as *natural*, there was no imperative to consider the reasons why and how these students had 'arrived' at their low levels of performance - to consider to what extent their poor performances, rather than being the products of inherent learning disabilities, might have represented the cumulative effects of social conditions and the processes of schooling, including the consistent limiting of access to knowledge together with low expectations. Thus there was no reason to believe that the performance levels could be improved. It had been assumed that TOSCA had already sorted out these differences. After all, Terry had stated that through TOSCA he would be searching for under-achievers.

On the basis of these low expectations, therefore, it was assumed by the school that these students would not sit School Certificate, and it was on this assumption that the limited science

programme was rationalized. Ross's argument in favour of his programme for the Form 4 students was that it maintained the students' interest and thus overcame any problems of control and management while, at the same time, providing the students with useful knowledge. The programme thus combined goals of social control with student interest and useful knowledge. It set out to provide *enough* knowledge to achieve these goals. This highlights a distinction in the ways the needs of the two groups of students were perceived within the school. The priority of the programme for the 'bright' Form 3 students was intellectual development. The priority for that of the 'slow' Form 4 students seemed to be social control. The school, therefore was deciding that, for certain students, social control should take priority over intellectual development. The technocratic reasoning fostered by intelligence tests such as TOSCA enables such decisions to be made with ease by teachers.

Thus decisions which are, in fact, both moral and political in character, are taken on the understanding that they are rational and scientific.

Obvious questions arising from the decision to limit the Form 4 programme concern the extent to which the students' decisions to leave school and to not sit School Certificate were simply reflections of teachers' expectations. Furthermore, what would be the chances of those two or three students who as Ross admitted, might wish to sit School Certificate?

A further example at this high school of teachers making decisions on student access to knowledge, reveals how assumptions about the limitations of some students made on the basis of streaming can indeed be erroneous. This example relates to the area of social studies, history and geography. The HODs of history and geography, concerned at the decline in the numbers of students electing to take history and geography as options in the senior school, decided that this might be caused by the low status accorded social studies - that it was perceived by some fourth-formers as 'not a top subject'. To overcome this, they decided to offer 'something better' and designed a new scheme of history and geography to replace social studies for *some* of the fourth-form classes. Furthermore, the HODs themselves, and other specialist teachers, were to teach the classes, thus ensuring high quality teaching in regard to both the knowledge and skills communicated - something which the 'peripheral' teachers of social studies could not be expected to match.² The classes selected to benefit from this prestigious programme were from the top and middle streams of the fourth form. As the Head of geography explained:

The original thinking was that they would be from the upper end ... I think that the history people felt that they needed the higher calibre students to cope with the concepts ... We ended up with three top classes ... doing it... and we've also got two middle classes who are probably at the lower end of the spectrum. I'm teaching three classes along with Derek [Head of History] and we've both got one of the top and two of the middle and that too is interesting - to see how that gels ... I think there will be one or two students in the slower classes who are, perhaps, getting a bit lost ... but I think that's a small minority. I've been pleased by the bulk of those students who seem to be responding. We're all very keen on what we're teaching and I think that comes through - and the resource materials we've got are first class.

Two features of this situation are significant. Firstly, it reveals that, given the opportunity, the lower stream students *were* able to master the concepts deemed appropriate in the first place for *only* the top stream students. It highlights the fact that teachers' assumptions about the 'abilities' of their students - the direct outcome of the streaming structure - were *not* necessarily accurate or justifiable. The second significant feature is the fact that not all the students were being given access to this higher quality history/geography programme, that students in other classes were having to settle for less. This was not entirely the fault of the teachers concerned, but rather the outcome of a combination of factors including the streaming system and the fact that social studies as a subject has to rely on a high number of peripheral teachers. The situation was one of competition for scarce resources. In this particular case, it was because of the vagaries of the school timetable that two low-stream classes 'won' these resources together with the top stream classes. Clearly the teachers saw

the top classes as the logical recipients of the higher quality programme. The streaming system inevitably lends itself to that sort of understanding.

This means that, because Maori students in schools with streaming tend to end up in the lower streams, they are likely to receive less than the top students. (Implicitly this is because lower stream students have come to be perceived as less deserving.) Such schools, in their practice, continue the processes of knowledge-control begun in the nineteenth century,³ rationalized now, not directly by ideologies of 'race', but by those of meritocracy. Many teachers are ready to rationalize streaming on a range of grounds but as Oakes (Ibid:62) succinctly states:

Regardless of how 'fair' their placement might appear to be by traditional educational standards, it is never equitable to have any group of students be systematically offered less when it comes to educational quality.

Clearly, at Nikau High School, some students were systematically offered less than others, in terms of knowledge and quality of teaching. The injustice, however, cannot be attributed entirely to the individual teachers insofar as they are trapped within the structures of the system themselves. They are faced with contradictions not entirely of their own making and are obliged to make pragmatic decisions regarding them. Ross the science teacher was not responsible for the streaming system nor for the cumulative effects of social conditions which contributed to the students of the Form 4 class being classified as 'slow', and he had to make decisions about their teaching programme. Clearly, because the students of this class had had a different set of experiences with schooling they could not have coped with an identical programme to that offered to the 'top' Form 3. The decision he made to modify the programme was nevertheless essentially a moral and political decision.

Similarly, the history and geography teachers faced with decisions regarding the allocation of scarce resources, were not responsible for the problem. The decisions they made appear entirely reasonable and just because they are supported by the scientific rationality of psychological testing and acceptance of the concept of 'ability' in terms of 'innate mental capacity' which, as Codd (1985:47) has pointed out, has become thoroughly embedded in the commonsense of teachers. From that perspective it 'makes sense' to distribute those resources the way they do, primarily amongst those who have consistently been given such opportunities throughout their schooling. Conversely it 'makes sense' to withhold those resources from those who, equally consistently, have been offered 'less' throughout their lives. In that they consistently function to safeguard the interests of the dominant class, such decisions must be seen as political decisions. The 'commonsense' that rationalized this approach is the ideology of instrumental or technocratic reason. Technocratic reasoning backs up the decisions made by teachers by concealing their political character.

Conclusion

This study has set out to show that while the practices of streaming and broadbanding serve the interests of some students they discriminates unjustly against others. Inevitably they result in the students in the lower streams receiving 'less' than those in the upper streams or classes. Since Maori students are mostly to be found in the lower streams, this means that the practice can only aggravate the crisis in Maori education manifested through widespread educational underachievement. To recognize this, however, is not to claim that teachers are necessarily unconcerned about their Maori students or the others of their students in the lower streams. While pedagogy and teacher-attitudes play a significant part, the issue here is primarily one of school structures and processes, the political dimensions of which have been concealed through technocratic reasoning. As already noted, teachers themselves are caught up in these structures and as individuals may have little or no direct control over the unjust practices that result. By recognizing and highlighting the political nature of these processes, however, they can work collectively for structural change- within both their own schools and the education system at large.

Notes

1. Pseudonyms have been used for the names of schools and teachers.
2. Because social studies was part of the core curriculum up until the fourth form level, it required a greater number of teachers than there were in the school with specialist qualifications in the subject. This meant that much of the social studies teaching was done by teachers who were specialists in other subjects such as English or music and may not have had any background in history or geography. Such teachers were referred to as peripheral teachers of social studies. The fact that the teaching of social studies had to rely upon a high number of peripheral teachers would seem to help explain why the subject was perceived as 'not a top subject by students.
3. See Simon, 1992; 1993.

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