

Streaming in schools

Education



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'Sociology Alive' Streaming: Not all young people are of equal ability and it is important for society to get most able people into higher status Jobs. Schools and colleges grade students by ability, with the more able students going onto University to study for more skillful and demanding Jobs.

Examinations and 'Streaming' are methods of finding the most able students, and allowing them to work with people of the same ability and learn an appropriate level of knowledge and skills needed for employment.

Critics argue that this description of the schools' grading activities wrong. Although schools may have been created to give students maximum learning opportunities, it is doubtful in practice that they actually do so. Streaming and Examination success do seem to be heavily influenced by such things as social class background, gender, and race.

'Sociology in focus' Effects of Streaming: Streaming into different-ability groups, based upon an assessment of general ability, can be seen as an ideal way in which to meet the educational needs of individual students.

However, Streaming can have some undesirable effects,

For example:

- * Students in lower streams tend to have their confidence damaged and this may result in them not trying to improve their position

- * Even when students are not disheartened, teachers may devote less attention to the students in the lower stream than those in higher stream.

- * Streaming is often linked to social class, with a disproportionately higher number of lower- stream students being drawn from the working class.
- * Transfers between streams are rare in practice

Some schools have overcome streaming and use mixed ability classes, or have gone in between and have settled for subject setting. With the introduction of the National Curriculum and the fight for students streaming is on the increase because schools want the best examination results possible.

Both Lacey and Hargreaves argue that those pupils who are allocated to low streams suffer a degradation of self. This sense of self-worth is undermined. Their person is literally under attack. The experience of failure, both as a result of the streaming system itself, and of the reinforcement of this in the negative perceptions held by the teachers in their daily work with low-stream pupils, leads these pupils to search for alternative bases on which to establish their self-esteem.