Chapter 2 Education

Topic 2 Class differences in achievement (2) internal factors
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Activity: Research
Investigating the impact of setting and streaming

Learning objectives
At the end of this activity you should be able to:
• Identify key features of pupils in different sets/streams.
• Use these features to research pupils in your school/college.
• Investigate whether your school shows signs of polarisation of sets/streams.
• Evaluate the strengths and limitations of using questionnaires to investigate the impact of setting and streaming on pupils' perceptions.

The method
Using Box 6 (page 30), Banding and polarisation, in groups of three design a questionnaire to give to pupils to find out about their experience of different sets or streams in school. You need to focus on how students view their own set or stream and also how they view those from other sets and streams.

Guidance on writing and distributing the questionnaire:
1. You will need to make sure the pupils identify which stream/class they are in – make this the first question.
2. You also need to ask them which social class they consider themselves to be in. Perhaps give them a choice of middle-class or working-class.
3. Make sure your questionnaire covers all the points covered in Box 6 (because you are going to compare your results to these findings).
4. This may be a sensitive subject so confidentiality will be important. Do not ask pupils for their names.
5. You also need to consider the best way to distribute and collect the questionnaires so that the pupils cannot be identified. Perhaps you could ask teachers to give them out and collect them in class.
6. Distribute the questionnaire to a range of pupils to make sure you get a range of pupils from different streams/classes.

When you have collected in the completed questionnaires, analyse the results.

The write-up
a. Collate your results as a class.
b. Write a summary of the conclusions you were able to make as a class.
c. Do they show the same patterns as those from Beachside Comprehensive (page 31 of your textbook)?
d. What is your overall conclusion about the effect of setting and streaming on pupils perception or themselves or other groups?
e. Is there evidence of polarisation?

Methods in context
Drawing on your class' experience of conducting this research, write a brief summary of the strengths and limitations of using questionnaires to investigate the impact of setting and streaming on pupils' perceptions.