Social Networks and the New Zealand National Qualifications Framework: The State’s Role in School-to-Work Transitions

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is located within recent debates and controversies concerning the relationship between schooling and the labour market. It assesses the contribution made by the State through the National Qualifications Framework in helping poorly qualified, male school-leavers make efficient school-to-work transitions. To explore this issue the study draws on data generated in semi-structured interviews conducted with: 23 male, senior secondary school students and their parents; a selection of educators in secondary schools and private training establishments; and senior officials from Skill New Zealand.

By comparing and contrasting the school-to-work transitions of the students with those of their fathers, it is shown that social networks formerly provided poorly qualified, male school students with a way to make efficient school-to-work transitions. However, economic changes of the last two decades have reduced demand in the labour market for semi-skilled and unskilled, male workers, and led to a growing number of poorly qualified, male students remaining in education as “discouraged workers”. The emergence of the “discouraged worker effect”, as it is referred to in the literature, suggests that the value of social networks has decreased. This decrease is problematic for the State because it has raised debate about the legitimacy of the State education system. It also suggests that traditional ways of organising schooling and structuring school-to-work transitions are no longer effective.
In this context it is argued that the National Qualifications Framework is an intervention designed by the State to replace those functions previously performed by social networks. This thesis shows that the attempt to replicate these functions has increased levels of state intervention and that social networks have become commodified.
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<td>ITO</td>
<td>Industry Training Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCEA</td>
<td>New Zealand Certificate in Educational Achievement</td>
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<td>NPM</td>
<td>New public management</td>
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<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>NZQA</td>
<td>New Zealand Qualifications Authority</td>
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<td>PCET</td>
<td>Post Compulsory Education and Training</td>
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<td>PTE</td>
<td>Private Training Establishment</td>
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<td>SES</td>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE REPRODUCTION OF SOCIAL CLASS

Introduction

This thesis is located within recent debates and controversies which have emerged from a comparatively new field of study within the sociology of education: the new vocationalism (Hollands, 1990). It contributes to the debate by examining the role of the State in the development and implementation of the New Zealand National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Introduced into legislation through the Education Amendment Act of 1990 (Government of New Zealand, 1995) the NQF, it was argued, would "ultimately affect almost every aspect of secondary education" (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 1994, p. 5). The NQF aimed to achieve this by replacing norm-referenced assessment with standards-based assessment and by facilitating the introduction of new forms of vocational curricula.

The argument presented in this thesis is that the NQF represents a form of state intervention designed to re-orientate New Zealand secondary schools to changes in the economy, in particular the effects of economic globalisation and the introduction of new technologies. These changes have resulted in increases in unemployment, changes to the range of skills many workers are required to have and increases in the level of credentials needed in order to secure many types of employment
(Murnane & Levy, 1993). Those most affected by these changes are workers with few or no school qualifications who are in unskilled and semi-skilled segments of the labour market. Workers in these segments have experienced declining wage levels, decreasing job security and a high rate of unemployment.

For the State these changes are important in that students can no longer leave school at the earliest opportunity and easily obtain well-paid jobs in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. According to Biggart and Furlong (1996), in the United Kingdom this has led to a growing number of low-attainment pupils who are sceptical of the value of the qualifications they are studying towards, but nevertheless remain in school because of the uncertainty inherent in entering the labour market. Thus it is becoming more common in depressed labour markets to find young people with few qualifications drifting through school without clear aims. In the past students could reject the culture of schooling and enter semi-skilled and unskilled segments of the labour market (Willis, 1977) but the erosion in the value of manual work means that this option is no longer as viable. Biggart and Furlong (1996) refer to this as the "discouraged worker effect".

In this thesis the uncertainty experienced by discouraged workers is traced back to changes in the social capital of middle and working-class families. The argument presented is that between 1955 and 1980 social capital, in the form of social networks, provided a vehicle for school-leavers to learn about the world of work and to gain employment. This process was buttressed by state schooling systems where selective assessment
practices structured school-to-work transitions in ways which limited working-class, post-school destinations. For the State, social networks were economically and socially productive because they minimised the cost of integrating young people into the labour market. Furthermore, this occurred in ways which contributed to the reproduction of social classes. As Keil (1977) noted, young working-class people had a wide range of knowledge about the world of work and much of this was acquired before full-time employment began. The emergence of the discouraged worker effect suggests that the value of social networks has decreased.

The argument presented in this thesis is that the erosion in the value of social networks has necessitated increased state intervention which is geared towards replacing those functions formerly completed by networks. Ultimately this intervention is an attempt to address concerns about the legitimacy of state education systems by increasing the efficiency of school-to-work transitions. While the concept of legitimisation appears to have been marginalised in the debate over the role of schooling since the mid-1980s, it nevertheless remains that the State is continually restructuring and reorganising schooling in response to problems posed by capitalist production. While these problems, such as the discouraged worker effect, may not in themselves fundamentally challenge the legitimacy of the State, they have led to questions about the effectiveness of the State and its solutions to current economic and social problems (Young, 1990).
This chapter presents the main themes of this thesis, describes the research setting and methodology and provides an overview of the chapters which follow.

**Themes**

A number of themes emerge as this thesis progresses. First, the NQF is best understood as part of an historical process in which the State organises schooling to ensure the reproduction of capitalist society. This is achieved primarily by the production of profitable forms of labour power. In fulfilling this role the State should not be viewed as merely an instrument appropriated by the ruling-class. Such an understanding of the State is mistaken because this gives rise to a functionalist view of the State as an object or a machine. Nor should the State be viewed as simply superstructural in the sense that only the demands of capitalist production are met. This leads to the State being characterised as creating ideological hegemony merely through hiding reality. In line with Corrigan, Ramsay and Sayer (1980) and Corrigan and Sayer (1985), the approach adopted in this thesis is to view the State as an evolutionary process, which is driven by inter- and intra-class struggles.

Second, at a basic level state intervention is central to the maintenance of capitalism because capitalism is an anarchic, unplanned system that cannot spontaneously produce and reproduce itself. For example, the State provides an educational system which in some basic, though not un-problematic ways enhances the continued viability of capitalism by training, sorting,
selecting and certifying able and willing workers (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; McNeil, 1986). The State also enhances the continued viability of capitalism by legitimising the social relations of production which develop with capitalist production. The State is able to complete these functions because, unlike feudalism or slavery, where political and economic power were combined in the same people, under capitalism these powers are formally separate. Capitalists retain their dominance in society through their ownership of the means of production but seldom attain direct political power. Liberal theorists emphasise the separation of political from economic power and this has led to the mistaken argument that the State is neutral, relatively autonomous and/or acting in the best interests of the majority. On the basis of this argument it could reasonably be expected that the selection procedures used in schools would not advantage or disadvantage learners on the basis of ascribed characteristics. In other words, it would be reasonable to expect that schooling would be meritocratic. However, evidence suggests that this is not the case (Goldthorpe, 1997) and that schools actually reproduce and legitimate social inequality (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Third, the emergence of the discouraged worker effect suggests that the ability of schools to reproduce the social relations of production is under pressure. This has generated questions about the legitimacy of schools. For example, critics argue that schools continue to organise and structure school-to-work transitions that were appropriate during a period of strong demand for manual labour (Hood, 1998). However, the erosion in the value of manual labour has rendered these mechanisms
ineffective. This has necessitated new ways of organising and structuring schools to improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions, in an age when capitalism is thought to demand new kinds of workers.

In this thesis the NQF is assessed in relation to the contribution that it makes to reorganising and restructuring schools in response to the discouraged worker effect. By reorienting schools to the demands of capital the NQF has emerged as a mechanism through which the State is attempting to "naturalise" what Apple (1993) refers to as the "neo-conservative restoration". This restoration is resulting in a shift from social democratic forms of social regulation and organisation to neo-liberal and neo-conservative forms.

It is one matter to describe how the State is reorganising and restructuring schooling; it is another to link these moves to broader shifts in the economy. For this reason the role of the NQF is investigated in relation to a number of changes in capitalist production. These changes, in particular the continuing development of the global economy and the introduction of technologies designed to replace labour power, have led to reduced wages, changes in the range of jobs available and large increases in youth unemployment in countries, such as New Zealand, where the New Right holds power. ²

In contrast to the post-war boom period of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, today there are comparatively few well paid jobs for poorly qualified, male school-leavers (Murnane & Levy, 1993).
For example, there is evidence in many households that one well-paid factory job has been replaced by two marginal service-sector jobs. As a result it is estimated the wages paid to male workers declined in the United States by 19 per cent between 1973 and 1987 (Hewlett, 1993, pp. 5-6). In addition, credential inflation has led employers to demand more successful training prior to employment. This is not necessarily a result of increased skill demands in the economy. Rather, it is as likely to reflect greater competition for the decreased number of jobs available (Collins, 1979). For example, Newman and Lennon (1995) show in a study of the fast food industry in Harlem, New York, that a creeping credentialism means that high school graduates are replacing high school dropouts and other young people in the workplace. However, after accounting for educational qualifications Newman and Lennon argue that employers also seem to favour job applicants who commute from more distant neighbourhoods. The rejection rate for local applicants was higher than that of similarly educated individuals who lived further away. In addition, in searching for jobs, “who you know” was particularly important and those isolated from employment networks were less likely to be hired.

The emergence of the Training State as a solution to the discouraged worker effect

Mizen (1994 & 1995) uses the term the “Training State” to describe the way in which the State in the United Kingdom has responded to a declining demand for poorly qualified school-leavers. As he points out, the Training State has emerged during a
period when the catch-cry from policy makers has been to reduce the size and power of the State. However, while the Training State was initially seen by policy makers as a short-term response to the vagaries of the business cycle and its depressing effects on labour-market activity, it has now become a central and defining component of economic policy.\textsuperscript{4} Similar trends are occurring in New Zealand and the term Training State can be usefully applied here. The emergence of the Training State in New Zealand can be seen for instance, in the role played by Skill New Zealand\textsuperscript{5} and the NZQA in skill formation and skill recognition (Jordan & Strathdee, 1998).

There is evidence which suggests that functions the Training State is now attempting were formerly provided by social networks. Cohen (1983, 1985 & 1990) has argued that historically working-class school-to-work transitions were structured by two "codes": "inheritance" and "apprenticeship".

Until recently, growing up working class has meant being apprenticed to a special kind of inheritance. In this, destinations were fixed to origins through an \textit{active} mastery of shared techniques and conditions of labour. As a child you were both "set on" to tasks related to a future function on the shop floor or kitchen floor, and thereby acquired a sense of being "born and bred" into your class place. This code operated through, and linked, the cultures of family, workplace and community. (Cohen, 1983, pp. 29-30, original emphasis)
This suggests families provided school-leavers with access to cultural resources which facilitated their transitions into the labour market. Indeed, the role played by families in the maintenance and reproduction of the social relations of production under capitalism has long been acknowledged by both social democrats and conservatives. Consequently the family has been a focus of state policy designed to strengthen the State's functions (Jones & Novak, 1980).

Research has shown that, in addition to providing cultural resources, families facilitated school-to-work transitions through the employment opportunities generated by their social networks (Manwaring, 1984; Rosenbaum, Kariya, Settersten, & Maier, 1990; Granovetta, 1995). As Coleman (1988) notes, social networks are a form of social capital which reside with families and the communities in which they live. Unlike economic capital, which resides in such things as machinery, and human capital which is created by changes in persons which make possible new acts, social capital describes relationships between people. Social networks can be usefully thought of as social capital when, like the other forms of capital, they facilitate productive activity. Social networks, for example, are productive when they help individuals find work or help students choose subjects at school, which later lead to employment.

Social networks are also productive when they provide job seekers with an opportunity to learn the social relations of production. They achieve this, for example, by exposing young people to the norms, traditions and the taken-for-granted practices

For a number of reasons, however, the emergence of the discouraged worker effect suggests that social networks are no longer as effectively facilitating school-to-work transitions.

The first possibility is that changes in the nature of the labour market, in particular the erosion in the value of manual labour, means that social networks are no longer a viable resource for poorly qualified school-leavers because there are simply fewer suitable jobs available.

Second, employers are increasingly demanding that job-seekers come to the workplace with relevant training and credentials. This means that the ability to utilise social networks may be constrained by the kind of training and credentials that job-seekers have.

Third, employment networks are useful only if school-leavers wish to enter the kind of employment to which their networks provide access. In this respect Okano’s research into the role played by social networks in the school-to-work transitions of young working-class men in Japan suggests that social networks and schooling interrelate; “when students saw few or no positive family resources for getting jobs, they were likely to perceive more positive resources for that purpose at school and to rely upon them” (Okano, 1995, p. 365).
Finally, obtaining credentials or, as in the case of discouraged workers, the hope of obtaining them, may lead would-be school-leavers and their parents to devalue social networks as a way of obtaining employment: these networks may lead to employment only within their current social-class position. Each of these suggestions may offer a partial explanation for the emergence of the discouraged worker effect.

In addition to raising questions about the legitimacy of the State, the apparent erosion in the value of social networks is problematic because it is difficult to meet the needs of poorly motivated students who remain at school as discouraged workers.

A reason for this is that the high cost of maintaining and expanding training systems represents a cost to capital because it reduces the level of surplus value which can be extracted from the labour process. This is because the State is forced to appropriate revenue from the economic system. This ultimately emerges as a cost to capital through the requirement that higher wages be paid to workers. Similarly capitalists themselves are required to pay taxes and this further reduces their economic competitiveness in the global economy. It is important to note that these comments do not hold for all countries. Lauder (1999), for example, argues that different economies have pursued different economic trajectories and the nature of these help determine the nature of the training systems. His claim is that economies which have emphasised the importance of high levels of skill formation are best placed to enjoy economic growth in the long term.
Secondly, it is difficult for the State to replicate those cultural traditions which have previously helped make school-to-work transitions efficient and improved the productivity of labour power. Without this productivity labour power becomes both a loss to capital in terms of the production of surplus value and a cost to the State in terms of demands made on the Welfare State. In these ways, it can be said that currently, school-to-work transitions are no longer occurring as efficiently as they have in the past.

The argument presented in this thesis is that the Training State has emerged as an alternative way of restructuring and reorganising school-to-work transitions in an attempt to replace functions which were previously fulfilled by social networks.

The Training State is further significant because it is seen to have contributed to changes in school-to-work transitions. In this regard Cohen (1983, 1985 & 1990) and Hollands (1990) argue that the codes of apprenticeship and inheritance have weakened. While the reasons for this are extremely varied (ranging from changes in working-class cultures, changes in their communities and the opening up of the non-work sphere in identity formation) the most important in terms of the Training State’s contribution to this process is the rise of the "‘career’ code with its particular stress on individualism" (Hollands, 1990, p. 15). Although Hollands stresses that the wage-labour relationship remains an important part of working-class identity formation, one expression of the impact of the Training State has been the replacement of collectivist and oppositional forms of working-class behaviour with more individualistic forms. This suggests an acceptance of neo-
conservative values such as enterprise culture. In this way the cultural apprenticeship, referred to by Cohen (1983, 1985 & 1990), Manwaring (1984) and Hollands (1990) above, is no longer as successfully conducted in the private sphere of working-class families and the communities in which they live, but is increasingly conducted in the public sphere of our schools and, as Hollands argues, through the Training State.

The notion that working-class school-to-work transitions are no longer being structured as directly by the codes of apprenticeship and inheritance has led some to suggest that social-class is no longer a primary organising principle of society. In this regard Beck (1992) argues that social-class divisions have eroded and as a result, we now live in an unequal world without class stratification. According to Beck the demise of industrial capitalism means that people have been freed from standardised roles and while inequality continues, it is individualised rather than class-based. As a result traditional structures and the associated institutions of industrial society, such as social class, no longer provide clear signposts for mapping one's life. However, such institutions do not lose their influence altogether but provide a way for individuals to construct their own biographies. As Beck explains:

... schooling means choosing and planning one’s own educational life course. The educated person becomes the producer of his or her own labor situation, and in this way, of his or her social biography. As schooling increases in duration, traditional orientations, ways of thinking, and lifestyles are
recast and replaced by universalistic forms of learning and teaching as well as by universalistic forms of knowledge and language. (ibid., p. 93)

Taken to its logical conclusion, one result of the declining influence of social-class is that the labour market has become emancipated from status restrictions and exclusions, and occupational attainment is simply a matter of individual competition for educational credentials (Scott, 1996). At the same time, the weakening of institutional restraints on identity formation means that individuals face an increasing array of choices and are forced to take more responsibility for shaping their own futures.

As soon as people enter the labour market, they experience mobility. They are removed from traditional patterns and arrangements ... they become relatively independent of inherited or newly formed ties (e.g. family, neighbourhood, friendship, partnership) There is a hidden contradiction between the mobility demands of the labour market and social bonds. (Beck, 1992, p. 94, original emphasis)

The loss of social class as a means of “mapping” one’s life is also thought to have contributed to greater risk and uncertainty for individuals. Hence Beck’s notion of the “risk society”.

The suggestion that social networks have eroded in value provides support for the claim that the influence of traditional social and economic patterns and arrangements have declined. It
also suggests that, "by becoming independent from traditional ties, people's lives take on an independent quality which, for the first time, makes possible the experience of a personal destiny" (ibid.).

If working-class students are no longer constrained by their former social-class positions then the Training State may increase choices such that they become the authors of their own labour-market situation. Some take the expansion of university education as an example of this kind of process. As Gibbons, et al. (1994) outline, the process can be characterised as the "democratisation of graduate origins and destinations" (p. 77).

The literature which argues that the influence of social-class has declined or ceased altogether tends to see class as a static entity. Scott (1996) adopts this position arguing that the working-class came about as a result of industrial capitalism and that de-industrialisation means the concept of social class is no longer valid. According to Scott this means the working-class is no longer defined directly in relation to production but in relation to other influences such as consumer cultures. Speaking of the working-class Scott (1996, pp. 244-245) argues, "class situations continue to shape their life chances in determinant and salient ways but their sense of identity owes more to consumer differences of status than it does to differences rooted in the sphere of production."

However, as authors such as Thompson (1975) and Meiksins-Wood (1985) have argued, the composition of the working-class has always changed in conjunction with economic and social change. From Thompson's perspective it can be argued that recent
shifts in production may have changed class-based opportunity structures but this has not meant society has become classless. Rather, as Bates and Riseborough (1993) argue, class inequality is reappearing in new forms. What we are witnessing then is not the end of "class", but changes in the way the social relations of production are organised under capitalism and processes of class-formation which are not the same for each generation.

If individuals have been emancipated from structures which previously restricted their occupational identities, it does not necessarily follow that young people today make more individual choices than they did in the past or that they are emancipated from their social-class positions. Jones and Wallace (cited in Krahn & Lowe, 1998) argue youth today actually have less choice than in previous decades when there were more jobs. Indeed, the choice is increasingly about entering training or becoming unemployed. So, even if working-class students are no longer restricted to their former social-class positions by inheriting cultural codes, state intervention, in the form of increased student fees and the like, may achieve the same by limiting access to education on the basis of cost.

The notion that working-class students have been emancipated by the erosion of cultural codes and that this has allowed the Training State to influence their attitudes and values, has also been challenged on the grounds that such claims misinterpret the way in which young people experience the Training State. Rather than creating working-class school-leavers who, Hollands (1990) argues, appear to be accepting the views of the ruling-class, other evidence
suggests that working-class experiences of the Training State are similar to their experience of the State, in general. For example, Mizen (1994 & 1995) argues that the wider working-class experiences of the institutional forms of the State are such that the appearance of "real benefits" actually emerge in ways which impose distinct limits on freedom. These erect additional barriers to working-class people having control over their lives. Mizen argues that this can be seen in the way that trainees have continued to resist the imperatives of the Training State. Banks et al. (1992, p. 44) found, despite the Thatcher Government’s efforts to establish a "training culture", most school-leavers had not taken it on. Others have made similar observations (Raffe & Smith, 1987). The ability of the Training State to influence the attitudes and values of school students is important because it is one way the State might compensate for the possible erosion in the value of social networks.

However, even if the State is able to influence the attitudes and values of students through, for example, motivating them to obtain educational credentials, these credentials will offer little by way of a solution to the discouraged worker effect if they do not provide information to employers which is both useful and trustworthy. Research undertaken in the United States and Britain suggests that, for non-college-bound students, school grades have little impact on their ability to find work because employers often dismiss the information provided by schools on student achievement (Rosenbaum, et al., 1990; Miller & Rosenbaum, 1997; Rosenbaum & Binder, 1997).
As noted, one difficulty in comparing the views of those who argue that social-class has lost significance with those who argue that social-class influence continues unabated, is that the two groups have different perceptions of the concept of social class. These different perceptions lead to different theoretical and methodological concerns. The concern for those who see social-class as a technical or economic category is commonly how best to measure shifts in the composition of social-class groups and whether or not society is more or less meritocratic. In contrast, Marxists such as Mizen (1994 & 1995), are concerned with how the State reproduces and maintains the social relations of production and hence reproduces social-class relationships. From this perspective, even if it can be shown that new cultural forms have emerged as a result of de-industrialisation, this would not necessarily be evidence of the declining significance of social-class because these changes have not altered the social relations of production in a fundamental way. For Marxists, changes in the composition of social class groups are an integral part of a mode of production which privileges the extraction of surplus value from the labour process ahead of the interests of any particular social-class group.

A further problem with these various conceptions of social class is that they have appeared in the literature as competing views when the evidence suggests that both processes are at work. The evidence suggests, for example that that inequality is transmitted from generation to generation. Johnson and Reed (1996) found that over forty per cent of young men whose fathers were either unemployed or in the lowest income brackets in the
early 1970s have themselves either been unemployed or are in the lowest income brackets. A similar conclusion has been reached in the United States by Solon (1992). In terms of education, Halsey (1993) found social-class inequalities measured in relative terms have remained stable for the last three generations, despite the expansion of higher education.

On the other hand, while there are clearly problems for the State in maintaining the social relations of production, the extraction of surplus value has continued unabated and economic inequality has increased both here in New Zealand (Podder and Chatterjee, 1998) and abroad (Bernstein, 1994; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1995).

Moreover, as Crompton (1993) suggests, even if commentators who argue that social-class has lost, or is losing, its ability to act as a source of identity formation are broadly correct, the work people do is likely to remain the most powerful indicator of life-chances and the associated patterns of material advantage and disadvantage. Crompton's comments are important because they highlight the wage-labour relationship as a central dynamic in capitalism. While particular cultural and social groups may come and go, maintaining the wage-labour relationship is fundamental to the maintenance of capitalism. It is with this point firmly in mind that an assessment of the role of the State in facilitating school-to-work transitions should be made.

The possibility that the State is assuming a greater role in facilitating school-to-work transitions in order to enhance the
legitimacy of the system, provides a way to link the claims made above with those generated by critical theorists such as Habermas (1976). Making this link is important because it helps situate the NQF within a theoretical tradition which can be employed to connect the erosion in the value of social networks to the emergence of legitimation deficits within capitalist economies. It also provides a way to demonstrate how and why the State is increasingly monopolising the structure, content and form of education. This monopolisation has ensured that educational policies, broadly speaking, support the maintenance of the social relations of production. An essential part of this process is the State’s expansion and increasing penetration into the lives and activities of individuals. While social policies are often implemented by supposedly neutral organisations, the effect has been to create a growing number of technocrats who have restructured the lives of workers and their families in an attempt to ensure the reproduction of profitable forms of labour power (Jones & Novak, 1980).

The next section shows how these arguments as they relate to the NQF, can be linked to the work of Habermas and others.

**State intervention and the maintenance of capitalist production**

The notion that the level of state intervention in western nations has increased throughout the twentieth century is not new. Indeed, early critical theorists such as those who comprised the Frankfurt School in the 1920s and 1930s, through to more recent critical theorists such as Habermas (1976), Wolfe (1989a & b) and
Shapiro (1984), have noted a trend towards increased state intervention. According to Habermas (1976) this is the inevitable result of the State's need to develop and deploy policies which maintain the economic system and legitimate its effects. Thus the State acts to maintain the capitalist economy by fulfilling a compensatory function. However, while the State can compensate for problems which occur in the economy, it can never resolve the contradictions in capitalism, such as the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. Such contradictions mean there is an inherent tendency towards economic crisis and legitimation deficit.

In *Legitimation Crisis* Habermas (1976) explains the necessity of state intervention by developing a model of advanced capitalist society which comprises three interrelated sub-systems: the economic sub-system, the political-administrative sub-system, and the socio-cultural sub-system. The maintenance of the social relations of production requires the maintenance of each of these sub-systems. This model is represented in the following Figure which is taken from Habermas (1976, p. 5).

![Figure 1: Habermas' model of advanced capitalist society](image)

Each sub-system has tendencies towards crisis which undermine the ability of the society to maintain and reproduce
itself. Habermas (1976) identifies four of these crisis tendencies. These are:

(i) economic - the economic sub-system distributes costs and benefits at variance with the normative value system that is used to justify its operation;

(ii) rationality - the political/administrative sub-system cannot reconcile or adequately resolve the problems that are created by the operation of the economic sub-system;

(iii) legitimation - the political/administrative sub-system's attempts to impose instrumental rationality or technocratic rationality on the traditional normative base that supports the social system further erodes this system; and

(iv) motivation - the socio-cultural sub-system is altered (in response to economic, rationality, and legitimation crises) and produces changes in the normative structure such that the previous institutional arrangements are not effective in meeting individual needs and aspirations (Ewert, 1991).

Different kinds of crises elicit different kinds of responses. For example, a crisis in the economic sub-system can be averted by action in the political-administrative sub-system. It is not difficult to find examples of the State intervening by regulating or deregulating aspects of the economic sub-system in order to maintain the viability not only of the economic sub-system, but also the system as a whole. For example, the State established and maintains the system of economic exchange and protects property
rights through maintaining law and order. However, as Codd (1995, p. 10) notes, state interventions in the political-administrative and economic sub-systems are problematic because, historically, their maintenance has destroyed many cultural life-forms. This is significant further in that these life-forms and related practices have traditionally enhanced the productivity of labour power. This has occurred for example, through the transmission of the codes of apprenticeship and inheritance (Cohen, 1983, 1985 & 1990). As Habermas (1976) points out, the State is dependent on cultural practices which it cannot itself recreate. Codd (1995) explains this process in relation to Habermas' term, "the colonisation of the life-world". He states:

The life-world, as Habermas uses this concept, is the taken-for-granted world of daily practice. It is the everyday experience, comprising unstated beliefs and assumptions, pre-intended situations, traditional ways of doing things and tacit forms of communicative action and mutual understanding. In modern society, Habermas argues, the life-world is constantly threatened by the systematic imperatives for crisis management and the forces of technocratic rationality required to maintain the state and the economy. (ibid., p.10)

Critical theorists maintain that rising educational expectations, the media, modern forms of communication and the decline of religion have combined to break up the normative basis upon which individuals traditionally made choices. As aspirations are reformulated, and as the forces which shape individual identities are robbed of tradition, individuals not only come to rely more on
the State but also to demand more from it. As individuals look to the State and its experts for solutions to their problems and realise that both are equally helpless, the crisis of legitimacy deepens.

To solve such crises the State is increasingly required to justify its actions on the basis of a rational consensus. This is because the socio-cultural sub-system operates at the level of practical interests while the political-administrative system functions at the level of technical rationality. There are fundamental differences in the way in which individuals are viewed in these two spheres. In the former, individuals are viewed as an integral part of the sub-system; problems are resolved through reference to such things as norms of behaviour and cultural tradition such as the cultural apprenticeship described by Hollands (1990) and Cohen (1983, 1985 & 1990) above. In the latter individuals and their ideas are viewed as a potential threat to the legitimacy of the State.

In effect the State attempts to disempower individuals through limiting discussion over political-moral questions, as the “genuine participation of citizens” (Baldwin, 1987) would expose, and therefore threaten, government policies which favour particular social-class groups. In order to generate a rational consensus, technocratic solutions are utilised because they mystify power relations. Putting the solutions to particular crises into the hands of “experts” is intended to promote the legitimacy of the system as a whole (Apple, 1972). As Codd (1995) notes, one consequence of this is that the techniques and solutions of engineers, lawyers, and specialists of all fields have come to replace those of philosophers
and critical thinkers. Overall, politics have been replaced by technocratic rationality.

A prime example of this is the notion of "unit standards" which are central to the functioning of the NQF. Whereas in the past the cultural apprenticeship loosely, but effectively, established standards which governed behaviour, the erosion of manual labour has necessitated the development of new standards by the State. Consequently, in the NQF there is a renewed emphasis on providing learners with standards which will improve their employability. Maintaining such standards requires the development of extensive systems of moderation and surveillance. These facilitate the emergence of new institutional complexes and new managerial systems which penetrate and more fully "colonise the life-world". The advantage for the State in adopting this approach is that it potentially depoliticises the political process by replacing questions about justice and ethics with questions about the efficiencies of particular policies.⁷

Critical theory provides insights which can be employed to link the NQF with the crisis management of capitalism. From this perspective the NQF can be seen as a form of compensatory legitimation designed to reorganise and restructure school-to-work transitions as a result of the emergence of the discouraged worker effect.

By examining these themes in relation to the NQF this thesis is a contribution to research into school-to-work transitions in New Zealand. This study is unique in that there has been no research
investigating the relationship between social networks as a form of social capital, education and employment in New Zealand. Given the emerging interest in the value of various forms of social capital from within the State here and abroad, the current study is topical. For example, in the United Kingdom the Economic and Social Research Council recently agreed to fund a large-scale research project examining the relationship between social capital and learning cultures (Schuller, 1998). Similarly, here in New Zealand, the recently-formed Work and Income New Zealand’s own research of 1000 clients indicated that 35 per cent of those who found work obtained employment through “word of mouth/friends and family” (Work and Income New Zealand, 1998). Work and Income New Zealand recommend, among other strategies, that those looking for work use their networks to find jobs. Moreover, they have recently implemented a programme whereby “work-brokers” facilitate employment opportunities for the unemployed by networking with employers.

The National Qualifications Framework

While the NQF was set up by the Labour Government under Section 253 of the July, 1990, Education Amendment Act, its origins are in a series of educational reviews and reports which date well back into the 1970’s. The most influential of these was the Report of the Working Group on Post Compulsory Education and Training (1988). In his report to the Cabinet Social Equity Committee the convenor, Gary Hawke, stated that, “New Zealand’s post compulsory education and training system, like other parts of
our society, could contribute more to both economic efficiency and social equity” (Hawke, 1988, p. 6).

This report recommended the establishment of a centralised educational authority designed to bring together a range of distinct educational bodies. The Report suggested the creation of a seamless education system. The key recommendations were:

- that PCET\(^8\) should be reformed in line with improvements in the public sector finance management such as greater provider accountability and greater user pays.
- that a system of national qualifications be established with an across the portfolio approach to qualifications which would help to reduce barriers to access and movement between institutions. (ibid., 1988, p. 6)

The Report of the Working Group on Post Compulsory Education and Training (1988) provided the basis for the publication of Learning for Life (Office of the Minister of Education, 1989). Learning for Life was a statement of the State’s intent in the area of post-compulsory education. After a number of working groups had discussed and responded to Learning for Life, the Government released some of its policy decisions regarding reform of post-compulsory education. These were reported in Learning for Life: Two (Office of the Minister of Education, 1990). Essentially, the education system was seen to be too fragmented and inefficient. One reason offered is that the system was seen to be governed by rules and regulations which confused and frustrated consumers. This meant that the system was vulnerable to pressure
group politics and created few incentives for educational institutions to manage their resources efficiently. It also meant that institutions were slow to respond to changing demand within the labour market for workers with particular skills.

To improve participation and achievement the State wanted to make education more accessible. This, it suggested, could be achieved by reducing the selective function of education. At the same time the State signalled that there were important reasons why it should continue to fund post-school education but that there was also a need to develop a broader base of funding. Students were thus required to make a greater contribution to the cost of their education.

The desire to achieve these aims provided the context for the development of the National Education Qualifications Authority. Soon after, this body became the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). The NZQA was assigned the function of interpreting and implementing the original legislation. One of the principal functions of the NZQA was to develop a framework for national qualifications in secondary schools and in post-school education and training in which;

(i) All qualifications (including pre-vocational courses provided under the Access Training Scheme) have a purpose and a relationship to each other that students and the public can understand;
and there is a flexible system for the gaining of qualifications with recognition of competency already achieved (Government of New Zealand, 1995, p. 242).

In order to meet these goals, the NZQA decided to overhaul assessment practices by developing standards-based assessment as a replacement for all other forms of assessment. A major feature of standards-based assessment is that responsibility for assessing learning outcomes is devolved away from central bodies over to teachers who must assess whether or not students have met predetermined levels of achievement. In the past norm-referenced national examinations were established and administered by central bodies, such as the Ministry of Education and the Vice Chancellors’ Committee. However, under the NQF, as initially conceived and developed, the NZQA was to oversee all assessment practices. This included accrediting providers, registering all qualifications on one framework and moderating teacher judgements to ensure consistency.

The NQF promotes the development of a modular curriculum based on units of learning (unit standards). These are developed by the NZQA-approved professional groups known as National Standard Bodies and Industry Training Organisations (ITOs). They are conceived as a collection of predetermined, clearly-defined learning outcomes. Unit standards are established at a particular level of the NQF and are published by the NZQA. They are a measure of learning of a size which allows their recombination in ways to assist in the creation of different qualifications. ITOs and National Standards Bodies also have
responsibility for developing complete qualifications, while the providers of qualifications - that is the schools, polytechnics and other educational institutions retain ownership of the delivery or teaching methods. Unit standards vary in size depending on the amount of work needed to complete them and are subsequently placed on the NQF at varying levels depending on their difficulty. There are eight levels of learning on the NQF:

- National Certificates are awarded at levels one to four
- National Diplomas are awarded at levels five and six
- Undergraduate degrees are awarded at level seven
- Other degrees and higher certificates are awarded at level eight.

While theoretically there is no minimum standard for level one unit standards these are thought to equate to an average ability, Year 11 (Form 5) student.

For secondary school students the major qualification is to be the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). To qualify for the NCEA students need to obtain a minimum of 240 credits, 40 of which must correspond to the level of the award gained.11

As already mentioned, in the initial version of the NQF it was intended that all learning would be assessed by standards-based assessment. However, this vision was not to be. In the face of criticism from a broad range of groups, in 1996 the then Minister of Education, Lockwood Smith, ordered a rethink of the NQF.
At the time a system of dual assessment had emerged with students in some subjects having their learning assessed through norm-referenced assessment and others through standards-based assessment. And, in some instances, students were being graded by both norm-referenced assessment and standards-based assessment. As a result, teacher workloads increased dramatically as they tried to implement a new system as well as maintaining the existing one (Qualifications Framework Inquiry, 1997).

The release of a White Paper on Qualifications (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998a) signalled the emergence of a "broadened" NQF. The new NQF, which is forecast to be fully implemented by the year 2001, introduces a new way of recognising learning: achievement standards. Achievement standards will be used to assess students in traditional academic areas and unit standards will be used to assess students for qualifications developed by ITOs and National Standards Bodies. Achievement standards specify what students have to achieve in each subject to earn credit towards the NCEA and will be awarded at five grade levels. Credit towards the NCEA may come from assessment using unit standards, external assessment (including examinations) and internal assessment using achievement standards. It is intended that the marks gained in norm-referenced examinations will be converted into achievement or unit standard equivalents and count towards the NCEA. Results obtained from these different methods will stand alone and be recorded separately on a student’s record of learning. However, all will generate credits towards the NCEA. Consequently a student’s annual record of learning will show:
• credits gained from achievement standards and from unit standards
• grades for achievement standards
• examination results
• the NCEA and any other National Certificates completed

Once students have left school they can continue to work towards their NCEA or other National Certificates or upgrade their qualifications through programmes at polytechnics, colleges of education, private training establishments (PTEs) or other registered training providers. It is argued by the NZQA and the Ministry of Education that NCEA results will be recognised by tertiary institutions and employers. In addition, it is acknowledged that for some purposes internal assessment will be more relevant and for others examination results may be relevant. However, for most purposes the combination of results will give the broadest picture of student achievement (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998a).

While the precise details of how the broadened NQF is to function have yet to be worked out, the basic thrust is that all learning assessed by both norm-referenced assessment and standards-based assessment will count towards the NCEA. The intention is that levels one, two and three of the NCEA will be attempted by the majority of secondary school students while level four will be attempted only by the most able students.
The research setting

This study examines the functioning of the NQF in three state-funded, co-educational secondary schools in a large metropolitan area in New Zealand. While New Zealand has never achieved a high level of industrialisation, and consequently never experienced the level of de-industrialisation reported in other studies (such as Wilson, 1987 & 1991; Weis, 1990; Bettis, 1996), there have been significant changes in the labour market. For example, in 1951 the occupational classification of “manufacturing” was the largest employer, accounting for 25 per cent of all workers, while “community, social and personal services” and “agricultural” industries accounted for about 18 per cent each. By 1991 “community, social and personal services” had increased to 26 per cent and was easily the largest single employment group, while “wholesale and retail trades” had also risen to 20 per cent. In contrast employment in “manufacturing” had fallen to 16 per cent and “agriculture” to 10 per cent (Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment, 1994a, p. 30). Recent statistical evidence show that these trends have continued (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a).

There has also been an increase in unemployment. In contrast to 1961, when just 376 people were registered as unemployed (Department of Statistics, 1972, p. 849), today the figure is over 200,000 (Work and Income New Zealand, 1999, p. 5). Accompanying the rise in unemployment is an increase in the number of students staying at school beyond the minimum age. Although differences in the way attendance data have been reported in the official statistics over the years make direct
comparisons difficult, this claim can be substantiated. In 1970 almost 50 per cent of students had left school by the end of their fifth-form year, when pupils are typically aged 15 years (Department of Statistics, 1972, p. 204). In 1996 55.4 per cent of 17 year olds and 6.9 per cent of 18 year olds participated in secondary education (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a, p. 38).

The research for this thesis was conducted between 1996 and 1999 and draws on the perceptions, opinions and experiences of

(i) secondary school educators
(ii) male, pakeha students and their parents
(iii) tutors working for PTEs.

It also draws on data gathered in interviews conducted with officials from Skill New Zealand who are involved with the organisation and administration of post-compulsory education and training. These data were collected as part of a related project (Jordan & Strathdee, 1998).

It is important to acknowledge that the current study explores the impact of the NQF on a small number of participants who live in a particular location and that the instruments used to gather data are specific to this study. Both of these factors limit the extent to which the study's findings can be generalised to other students living in different settings.

Male students are the focus of this research because the labour market remains segregated by gender (Statistics New Zealand,
The kinds of job males traditionally enter are widely recognised to have been adversely affected by globalisation and the introduction of new technology (Doeringer, et al., 1991). Moreover, the focus on males is justified because there is evidence suggesting that the job-finding methods of males and females differ. For example, Brosnan and Wilson (1978) found that informal methods of job-finding were much more productive for males than they were for females. Similarly, it is likely that networks have been used to exclude women from forms of employment that males traditionally entered such as the blue-collar trades. Given the increasing significance of qualifications in finding employment, there is an emerging concern about the poor performance of males relative to females in schools (Fergusson & Horwood, 1997; Education Review Office, 1999; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1999). Similarly, the school experiences of non-pakeha students have been shown to be different to those of pakeha students and, in some settings, the interests of Maori have been overridden by those of pakeha (Irwin, 1990). Given the diversity of experiences and the need to keep the size and scope of the study manageable, this thesis only attempts to account for the experiences of male, pakeha students.

Interviewee selection procedures

This research investigates how the State is attempting to use the NQF to reorganise schooling in order to make male school-to-work transitions efficient. For this reason the over-riding concern when selecting target schools was to choose those that were taking steps to adopt the new structures and practices which have
emerged as a result of the NQF. Three schools were selected for inclusion in this study because they were identified by teachers and principals in the local community as actively implementing the NQF.

In order to assess the role played by social networks in helping make school-to-work transitions efficient and to assess the impact of the NQF on student learning, the opinions, perceptions and experiences of 24 Year 12 (Form 6), male students were sought (eight students in each school). When selecting the sample every effort was made to include students from contrasting ability and socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds. While SES will never capture the nature of social-class (Thompson, 1975), it does provide a way to identify people who occupy different positions in the labour market. Given the changes that have occurred in the labour market and this study’s focus on school-to-work transitions, selecting students from contrasting SES and achievement backgrounds provides a way to:

a) assess the impact of the NQF on students from contrasting SES and achievement backgrounds, and
b) explore possible relationships between SES, achievement and access to social networks.

The sample has also been derived in this manner because, historically, middle-class and high-achieving students have had a defining impact on the way in which the State has attempted to organise and structure schooling in New Zealand. For example, the qualifications sought by middle-class students have traditionally
been considered the most desirable (Lee & Lee, 1992). One reason for this is that these qualifications have led to high-status and high-paying employment. In order to maintain the ideology of equality of opportunity the State has been unable to structure schooling in ways which prevent able, working-class students from attempting desirable qualifications.

The sample is divided on the basis of school achievement as measured by the students’ level of success in School Certificate. After reviewing data on student performance in School Certificate that were provided by the three schools at the beginning of 1997, high-achieving students were defined as those who had achieved a total of more than 235 marks and had achieved 50 per cent or above in at least four subjects. Low-achieving students were defined as those who had gained fewer than 220 marks and had achieved 50 per cent or above in not more than two subjects. This procedure allowed the selection of two groups of students who have experienced different degrees of success in School Certificate. For example, the high achieving students passed an average of five subjects for an average total of 325 marks, while the poorly achieving students achieved an average total of 159. Three-quarters of the latter group did not obtain more than 50 per cent in any of their subjects.

The two groups of students were then divided on the basis of their SES as measured by the Elley-Irving Scale (Elley and Irving, 1985). The Elley-Irving scale provides a way to obtain a measure of SES based on the students’ parents’/caregivers’ employment or unemployment. Occupations that require high levels of education
and are comparatively well-paid, such as dentistry, receive a rating of one, while occupations which require little in the way of formal education and are comparatively poorly paid, such as labouring, receive a rating of six. A family-based measure was obtained by averaging the SES ratings of both parents/caregivers where there were two. Students who came from families that had a measured SES of 2.5 or higher were considered to be high SES while those with a measure of 4.5 or lower were considered to be low SES. In total the 23 students were selected and comprised the following:

six low achieving, low-SES students  
five high achieving, low-SES students\textsuperscript{16}  
six low achieving, high-SES students  
six high achieving, high-SES students

Over the four years of the study, the 23 male students and their parents/caregivers were interviewed two or three times.

There were two major focuses in the interviews. First, the interviews were designed to gather data concerning the role played by social networks in helping the students and their fathers find their first jobs. By contrasting the experiences of the students with those of the fathers the study adopts an historical perspective geared to examine the changing role of social capital and the changing role of the State in facilitating efficient school-to-work transitions.
Second, the interviews were designed to gather data on the role of the NQF in restructuring and organising school-to-work transitions in the context of the discouraged worker effect.

In order to further assess the impact of the NQF on student learning a sample of 13 educators, from a variety of departments working in a range of capacities in each of the three schools was sought for interview. Because many teachers fulfilled multiple roles within their schools, a total of 34 school educators were interviewed in 1997 (12 from School B and 11 each from Schools A and C).

Five interviews were conducted in 1999 with tutors working for three local PTEs, who provide programmes funded by Skill New Zealand. The tutors were selected on the basis of their ability to provide data about their PTE’s contribution to improving the efficiency of the transitions of poorly qualified students into the labour market.

By examining how schools and PTEs function under the NQF, these interviews offered a further way to assess the contribution of the NQF to making school-to-work transitions efficient.

**Methodology**

This study adopts what Jordan (1996) refers to as historical ethnography. This involves using ethnographic techniques to uncover historical processes. This technique is used to compare and contrast the changing role of social capital and the changing role of the State in facilitating efficient school-to-work transitions.
This section briefly reviews dominant approaches to the study of the NQF before moving on to more fully describe and justify the approach adopted in this thesis.

Unlike the situation with similar competency-based regimes such as those in the United Kingdom, the NQF has attracted comparatively little interest from researchers in the field of the sociology of education. While a number of contributions have helped begin the process of analysing the effects of the NQF, most have favoured policy and institutional analysis over ethnographic studies of schools. Although these studies have added to our understanding of the policy process, they tend to be removed from the everyday functioning of schools. Roberts (1997a & b), Dobric (1998), Strathdee (1994), and Selwood (1991) adopt this approach by exploring the NQF in terms of its policy implications. While this type of research is necessary, it is ultimately limited because it fails to situate the NQF as a state intervention designed to reorganise and structure school polices and practices in order to maintain and reproduce the social relations of production. One exception to this is Codd’s (1995) analysis of the NQF. The strength of his research is that it situates the NQF within the State’s role of maintaining capitalism through managing economic crises. However, like most other research into the impact of the NQF, Codd’s analysis is partial because it does not examine the effects of the NQF on the functioning of schools. One result of this is that the impact made by the NQF on the policies and practices of teachers and schools, and the contribution that this may make to achieving the State’s goals, remain unclear. Neither do these approaches permit an investigation of the way existing social practices impact on the
reform process. One exception to this is Fitzsimmons (1996), who investigated student perceptions of the NQF. However, while Fitzsimmons' analysis is useful in that it focuses on the material impact of the NQF on schools and the subjectivities of school students, he does not situate his research within the wider debate about the role and function of the State. As a result his analysis does not offer an assessment of why the State has developed the NQF beyond that presented by the NZQA itself.

Although there have been several investigations of the relationship between the State and education in New Zealand which have focused on issues relating to social-class reproduction and transformations within capitalism, these have not tended to construct the State as an historical entity. One expression of this is the description of the emergence of the New Right State formation as a "revolution" without considering the historic role played by the State in supporting the social relations of production over longer periods of time. While those who describe the emergence of the New Right in this manner are correct to note the dramatic nature of the changes, they tend to ignore the historical processes which underpin and subsequently impact on current policy development.

Historical ethnography addresses these issues by identifying and analysing the changing role of the State in organising student transitions within the context of the changing demands of capitalism. A particular concern of this thesis is to examine the role of the State in reorganising school-to-work transitions in the context of the discouraged worker effect. Although there have been
numerous studies in the last 25 years of the relationship between "problem pupils", secondary schools and employment (Hargreaves, 1967; Willis, 1977; Biggart & Furlong 1996), few studies have related the emergence of "problem pupils" directly to possible changes in the social capital of working and middle-class students.

By adopting a notion of the State as a process, which has evolved historically, and by connecting this to ethnographic data, it is possible to identify changes in the way the State responds to legitimation deficits. Viewing the State as the outcome of historical processes does not, however, provide the theoretical space to argue that history presents a determining influence over policy formation. The approach adopted in this thesis is similar to the Marxian notion of historical materialism. From this perspective the possibilities for the future are rooted in the past but not such that the outcomes of policy formation can be known before the policy has been developed and implemented. This also suggests it is erroneous to see the State acting in a functional way for the needs of capital. Rather, policy development and implementation comes about through a process of class struggle, the outcomes of which cannot be determined before struggle takes place.

Overview of chapters

Chapter Two establishes the role played by social networks in the school-to-work transitions of the fathers interviewed in this study. After outlining the labour market and educational conditions which existed between 1950 and 1980, the value of social networks is established through examining the school-to-
work transitions of the fathers of the students selected to participate in this study. The argument is that networks were embedded in the social infrastructure and provided a resource which helped make efficient school-to-work transitions.

Chapter Three focuses on the role of social networks in the school-to-work transitions of the poorly achieving students selected to participate in this study. The chapter begins by establishing the current labour-market conditions before exploring the students’ post-school destinations and the resources used to access these. The argument here is that social networks are reproducing labour power less efficiently and have eroded in value to the State.

Chapter Four examines the history of curriculum and assessment reform since the 1900s. This chapter aims to contextualise the NQF within the ways that the State has previously organised curriculum and assessment practices. The argument presented is that up until the current period, the effect of state intervention has been to maintain the role played by schools in the reproduction of labour power by strengthening the selective function of education. This strategy was sustainable while there were enough working-class jobs for poorly qualified school-leavers. The emergence of the discouraged worker effect suggests however, that these strategies are no longer effecting efficient school-to-work transitions. This suggests the State will need to develop new strategies for reproducing labour power.
Chapter Five begins addressing the contribution made by the NQF in providing a solution to the discouraged worker effect by identifying the major theoretical positions which underpin it. After presenting these positions, two contrasting solutions to the discouraged worker effect are identified.

Chapter Six continues the process of evaluating the NQF as a solution to the discouraged worker effect by drawing on data gathered in the interviews conducted with teachers, students and parents. A focus here is on the NQF as a site of struggle for the “hearts and minds” of learners.

Chapter Seven stresses the way in which the Training State has emerged as a “purchaser of social networks”. The argument is that the Training State represents an attempt to replace the role played by social networks by directly intervening between job-seekers and employers.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by presenting an overview of the arguments made and by considering the implications that the findings have in the light of Habermas’ theory of the State.

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1 This period has been specified because it reflects a time when there was strong demand for manual labour and because all of the male parents interviewed in this study left school and entered work between 1955 and 1980.

2 Brown and Lauder (1996) argue that economies dominated by the New Right such as New Zealand’s are characterised by neo-Fordist economic strategies primarily geared to maximising short-term profitability rather than long-term economic stability.
3 Hewlett (1993, p. 6) notes a similar trend in Australia where average real earnings declined by 29 dollars a week between 1984 and 1989.

4 As Ashton and Green (1996) point out, the nexus between training, economic competitiveness and capitalist profitability in the contemporary period is unparalleled in the history of capitalism.

5 Skill New Zealand is a state funded organisation set up in 1990 as the Education and Training Support Agency to support training in industry. It works with training providers to provide tertiary education for people with low or no qualifications (Skill New Zealand, 1999).

6 Most conventional analyses of social-class reproduction are partial because they focus on cultural and financial capital as the key determinants of educational success and future placement in the labour market, while neglecting the role of social capital (Wong & Salaff, 1998).

7 Habermas is careful to establish that the rising dominance of technocratic rationality does not lobotomise the citizens of modern capitalist societies. The inherent character of communication and speech acts, trust and sincerity are resistant to total instrumentation (Foley, 1990). The growth of the new social movements such as the green and feminist movements demonstrates that the public are able to develop new forms of morality and consciousness.

8 Post Compulsory Education and Training.

9 Amongst other things this involves the providers demonstrating that their institution is able to teach to the required standards.

10 ITOs were set up by a special Act in 1992 (Government of New Zealand, 1992).

11 The Ministry of Education state that the rules will change but the basic principles will remain (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998a).

12 In 1993 the minimum school leaving age was increased from 15 years to 16 years.

13 Full details are available in Appendix A.

14 Typically this examination is sat at the end of Year 11.

15 The Elley-Irving Scale is a six point scale.

16 Due to a lack of high ability low SES students, only five respondents were able to be selected in this category.
CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN MAKING SCHOOL-TO-
WORK TRANSITIONS EFFICIENT: THE CASE OF MALE
SCHOOL-LEAVERS (1955-1980)

Introduction

Habermas and other critical theorists argue that it is the
everyday interactions between people, or the life-world, which
gives meaning and motivation to life. One way that the life-world
achieves this is by providing individuals with resources which help
them to structure their lives. However, according to Young (1990,
p. 4), capitalist development and state intervention have
increasingly colonised the life-world and eroded its ability to give
meaning and motivation to life. He contends:

The invasion or colonisation of this world, by political
administration and by the forces of system control such as
money exchange and power, has gradually reduced the
capacity of the life-world to give meaning to life. This robs
educational and occupational interaction of some of the
organising values like respect for elders, or norms of
interpersonal conduct, such as honesty in speech, upon
which they might draw.
Social networks reflect the everyday interactions which occur between people, and can, therefore, arguably be considered to be part of the life-world. As such it is reasonable to expect that, in the past, social networks have provided a way for school-leavers to structure their school-to-work transitions in ways which gave them meaning and motivation. For example, by helping them develop identities as workers and finding them jobs. It is also reasonable to expect these identities to have formed in the socio-cultural sphere and, therefore, to have developed without state intervention.

This chapter assesses the role played by social networks and school credentials in facilitating the school-to-work transitions of a sample of males who made their transitions from school to work between 1955 and 1980. It achieves this by exploring the school-to-work transitions of the fathers interviewed as part of this study.

**The labour market and schooling (1955-1980)**

In the 1960s and 1970s, many educational sociologists characterised the working-class response to formal schooling as cultural resistance (Lacey, 1970; Clarke, Hall, Jefferson & Roberts 1976; Willis, 1977). Ethnographic research revealed that working-class students viewed formal schooling as alien. The tendency was, therefore, to reject the culture of the school and the qualifications on offer. Engaging with the culture of the shop floor as manual workers, was preferred. During the post-war boom, manual jobs were plentiful and required few, if any, formal school qualifications. Consequently, working-class youth were justified in their expectation that they would follow an established tradition
by entering the labour market directly from school without qualifications. Schools supported this tradition by employing norm-referenced assessment techniques, which were designed so that many students left school poorly qualified. These students predominantly came from working-class backgrounds (Halsey, Heath & Ridge, 1980).

There has been no similar research conducted in New Zealand into the attitudes and values of male senior secondary school students during this period. However, the labour market conditions which existed at the time suggest that students were able to reject school credentials and obtain employment. The main reason for this was that, between 1955 and 1980, there was strong, albeit decreasing, demand for semi-skilled and unskilled labour. The Department of Statistics (1972, p. 849) reports that just 376 men were registered as unemployed in 1961. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the number of men registered as unemployed increased, reaching 36,469 by 1980 (Department of Statistics, 1981, p. 784).¹

For school-leavers the high level of employment meant they could easily find work. Consequently, while there was a trend towards greater numbers of students staying in school, which mirrored the increase in unemployment, compared with the situation which exists today, comparatively few students remained in school beyond the minimum leaving age of 15. For example, in 1960, just over 40 per cent of all students left after completing only two years secondary schooling. By 1970, however, the number of students leaving after two years secondary schooling
had reduced to just under 19 per cent. Table One below presents these trends in greater detail.

Table 1: Secondary school pupil retention rates by number of years attended: 1960, 1970 and 1980 (expressed as a percentage).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960²</th>
<th>1970³</th>
<th>1980⁴</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tendency for large, albeit decreasing, proportions of students to leave secondary school after three or less years of study, reflected the availability of job opportunities for school-leavers with few or no formal school qualifications. The Department of Statistics (1972) shows that in 1970, when the number of male unemployed was recorded at just 1600, over 40 per cent of students left school without qualifications (p. 204).

While many of these school-leavers entered semi-skilled and unskilled segments of the labour market, it was also likely that many entered skilled trades by obtaining craft apprenticeships. For example, in 1960, 29.7 per cent of male school-leavers proposed entering manual trades (Department of Statistics, 1962, p. 230). The comparable figure for 1965 was 27 per cent (Department of
Statistics, 1967, p. 219). In 1975 it was approximately 27 per cent (data derived from the Department of Statistics, 1977, p. 188) while in 1980 the percentage slipped, reaching about 15.5 per cent (data derived from the Department of Statistics, 1982, p. 186).

For the State, the ability of school-leavers with few or no formal school qualifications to obtain employment meant that there was little economic reason why poorly motivated, poorly achieving students should stay on in school as discouraged workers. The purpose of state intervention at the time was to integrate students into the labour market as quickly as possible. And, while progressive social reformers had been successfully extending the minimum leaving age since the introduction of mass schooling (Finn, 1987), state intervention at the time was primarily designed to limit student progression to higher levels of schooling. This intervention took the form of designing and modifying norm-referenced examinations such as School Certificate in an attempt to maintain their selective function (Lee & Lee, 1992).

Given that school qualifications are thought to indicate to employers particular skills and qualities in workers, how did those with few or no formal school qualifications make the transition from school to work? One way noted but not fully explored by Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts (1976), Doeringer, et al. (1991) or Lauder, Hughes, Dupuis and McGlinn (1992) was that working-class youth made the transition through utilising resources which were available through their social networks.
The link between social networks and employment (1955-1980)

It is often assumed that job-seekers compete for positions in the open labour market. However, Granovetta (1974) challenged this assumption by showing that access to jobs was often determined by social networks. Unlike the open labour market where all job-seekers are thought to compete on the same footing, recruitment through social networks is difficult for those who have little access to these networks. Although Granovetta’s study focused on white-collar workers, he was following in the footsteps of American labour-market economists who had found, in studies of blue-collar workers conducted since the 1930s, that formal mechanisms of job allocation rarely accounted for more than 20 per cent of all placements (Granovetta, 1974, p. 5). Formal mechanisms used such methods as commercial and public advertisements, while informal mechanisms included personal contacts and also direct application to employers not previously known to the job-seeker.

While researchers have studied different settings and used different methods, studies conducted between 1955 and 1980 or which have drawn on data gathered over this period have confirmed the role played by social networks in finding employment (Rees, 1966; Mackay, Boddy, Brack, Diack & Jones 1971; Parnes & Kohen, 1975; Lin, Ensel & Vaughn, 1981; Grieco, 1982; Jenkins, Bryman, Ford, Keil & Beardsworth, 1983; Manwaring, 1984).
A brief review of one of these studies shows why social networks were valuable. Drawing on data from five surveys conducted between 1971 and 1980-1981, Manwaring (1984) described the employment channel most commonly used by employers seeking non-skilled manual workers as the extended, internal labour-market. This term described the process of recruitment through existing employees. This occurred because knowledge about job vacancies was extended beyond the firm via the social networks of current employees to their friends and relatives. This relationship offered benefits to both workers and employers. For workers, social networks provided a source of trustworthy and reliable information about the availability of employment and information about the quality of the jobs on offer. For employers, recruitment through social networks was preferred because workers hired by this method were more likely to go to the workplace already equipped with the skills necessary to be productive. Similarly, as Grieco (1982) argued, by recruiting through social networks employers were given an indication that new recruits would fit into the workplace because they came from a community which had already integrated them into the social relations of the workplace. In these ways recruitment via social networks provided employers with a cost-effective way to recruit staff while reducing the likelihood of making hiring errors.

While the work of the social network theorists does not address the role played by school credentials in the process of finding employment, nor focuses specifically on school-leavers, findings suggest that getting a job was facilitated without state intervention.
In the next section the biographies of a selection of the male parents who participated in this study are presented in order to explore these issues. As is the case with all data presented in this thesis, these biographies have been edited to illustrate the themes that this chapter aims to address and are in accordance with the general themes that were identified in the data.

To improve the readability of the data some text has been removed and some added. In this respect, an ellipsis (...) indicates text that has been removed and square brackets ([text]) are used to indicate text that has been added. Finally, pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of all interviewees, and "I" refers to the interviewer.

Social networks, school qualifications and employment

Research conducted by social network theorists has shown that school-leavers are able to find employment through family or friends directly introducing them to recruiting employers, or through families or friends providing information about job opportunities. Approximately two-thirds of the 21 male parents interviewed as part of this study obtained employment upon leaving school through these means. Given the small size of the sample, this figure compares reasonably with Granovetta's (1974, p. 5) reading of the literature where such methods of job finding usually accounted for more than four-fifths of all placements.

The data presented in the following three biographies supports this finding by showing that the subjects' parents were often able to
help them find jobs by directly introducing them to recruiting employers or by incorporating them into family businesses.

Ron Best

Ron described himself as having behaved poorly at school and having left in 1975. He reported school qualifications were not important to him, that he just wanted to leave school and get a job and that his highest qualification was an “expulsion certificate”. Since leaving school he has worked in a variety of occupations and has trained as a Church Minister although he has never practised that ministry. He currently works as a self-employed painter. His father was a Minister of religion and his mother was a housewife. Ron reported that his father generated his first job by utilising his contacts as a Minister:

Ron:  
I left in the fifth form before the School Certificate exams. I lived in Auckland and my first job was in a bakery.

I:  
What as?

Ron:  
Just as a hand. I iced the buns and delivered the goodies from the shop. My parents got me that job.

I:  
How did they get you that?

Ron:  
I think that they knew somebody who knew somebody.

I:  
Was your father in that profession?

Ron:  
No he wasn’t. He knew a lot of people in all sorts of trades; he was a Minister.
Ron reported that he did not give much consideration to the kind of job that he went to. In this respect, Ron displayed a high degree of non-decision-making. When asked why he took the job his father obtained for him he replied:

*Ron:* I didn't give it much thought. I think that I just existed as a teenager. I just went with the flow. Like a zombie, like a sheep.

In the event Ron only stayed in the job for six months before moving on to a range of labouring jobs, pig-farming and eventually painting. He reported that jobs were easy to obtain.

*Ron:* It feels like you are not guaranteed a job any more.
*I:* Did you feel like you were guaranteed a job back then?
*Ron:* Well, you were. You could leave school and get a job. If you did not like that one, you could chuck it and get another one.

However, not all school-leavers were non-decision-makers nor could all obtain jobs of their “choice” without school qualifications.

Kevin Black

Kevin currently works as a technician in a large clothing factory. This is a job that he has held since he began full-time employment in 1973. His mother and father worked in the same factory; his father worked a press in the press-room and his mother supervised in the hosiery division.
When he was at school he wanted to enter the kind of trade which would allow him to "get a bit of cash in" on the side. He reported that in his last year of schooling the company his mother and father worked for sent a representative to his school seeking new recruits. He thought that the place sounded interesting so his mother spoke to the foreman and arranged a holiday job for him as a trial. It was during this period that he decided to stay on as an apprentice sewing-machine mechanic. When asked why he wanted a trade qualification Kevin replied:

Kevin: [My parents] suggested that I went for a trade. I think Mum might have said, "You don't get many men in commercial practice and offices. It's a women's type of thing. Men go into apprenticeships, fitter-turning or motor mechanics".

Kevin completed his training as a sewing machine mechanic but he reported that this was not his first choice of apprenticeship.

Kevin: There were three industries that I looked at and wouldn't have minded doing. They were carpentry, plumbing and the electrical business.

I: Being a sparky?

Kevin: Yes, because I wanted to do something that I could do at home and do foreigners and get a bit of cash in. I did not want an eight to five job and that was it. ... Hence, I got into that trade.

I: You went into being a sparky?
Kevin: No, I did something that I did not intend doing, that's what I am saying. My parents, well, Dad worked a second job at Thompsons in the press-room, Mum was in the hosiery division. She was a supervisor there and the guys there said that this is a good vocation and that you can go places in the world. ... So I went in and had a nose through and it was doing mechanical things and I was quite into doing mechanical bits and pieces. And I thought it was good and the money was good at the time. ... I went in for a week before Christmas and they said, “Well, come back after Christmas and if you haven’t got a job, we will give you six months trial and then, if you wish to stay, and we wish to have you, we will put you through an apprenticeship scheme”. So that’s what I did.

However, while Kevin’s social network helped him make his school-to-work transition efficient, his school qualification (School Certificate Mathematics) was important. This was because it was a pre-requisite for the apprenticeship Kevin wanted to enter.

Kevin: [My employers] wouldn’t take no one unless they had School Certificate [Mathematics] and now they won’t take you on without School Certificate, University Entrance, Sixth Form Certificate or Bursary.

I: For what kinds of jobs?

Kevin: The same job.
The resources provided by social networks were not limited to providing school-leavers with direct links to employers; they also provided them with access to a cultural tradition which helped them form their occupational identities before they left school.

Eric Winn

Eric currently works as a fabricator in a factory manufacturing aluminium windows and doors. He obtained this job because his employer, who went to school with Mrs. Winn, knew he was out of work. He left school without qualifications aged 15 and worked in the family butchery business for approximately one year. Following the advice of his father, Eric obtained his next full-time job at the freezing works in 1956 where he worked as a butcher. He obtained this job by turning up at the factory gate and asking for work. After working for the freezing company he went to work for a number of retail butchers. Following this, he opened his own butcher shop which he operated with the help of his wife. Increased competition in the meat-retailing industry brought on by the advent of large supermarkets and his sons’ desire at the time not to enter the meat-trade led him to close the shop in the early 1990s. Following this he took up his current position. By entering the meat trade, Eric was following in his father’s and grandfather’s footsteps.

Eric: ... when I left school it didn’t matter what I wanted to do. I was fortunate in that the job that I went into I wanted to go into anyway - for a lifetime career. My dad was a butcher and I went into that. I mean, I grew
up butchering. And, I guess, in a sense, looking back I didn’t have any choice. In fact it was all predetermined in a way. ... [I]f I hadn’t wanted to do that, it didn’t matter. When I left school, for every person who left school in those days, there were about three or four jobs so you could choose. If you didn’t like one after six months or a year, then you simply went on to another one. If you didn’t like that, you went on to another one.

Social networks also provided a reliable source of advice for young workers wanting to get ahead in their trade.

I: How did you get your next job?

Eric: ... I was told by my father that if I wanted to further my expertise in the trade, I had to get away from the family business. ... All through my primary and secondary schooling I was involved with the family business; after school and in the weekends and holidays and that was it. But, when I turned 16 Dad said to me that if I ever wanted to go into business for myself I had to learn stock-buying and the best way to do that was to go and work in the freezing works as a boy. ... [I]n my lunch times and morning tea times I used to go down to the yards and sit on the fence and have my lunch and look at the stock and then see them slaughtered as carcasses a few hours later and see how far out I was with the weights and the gradings.

I: So your father told you that you needed to do this?

Eric: Yes.
I: And that's what you did. He knew that?

Eric: Yes, he knew that and that was good advice from him.

Mrs. Winn: Because in those days butchers had to go and buy their own beef.

However, it is one thing to be offered advice; it is another to accept it. When asked why he followed his father's advice, Eric replied:

Eric: Well, to put it briefly, because I trusted it. It was the only advice; there was no other advice around. There was no such thing as the New Zealand Employment Service or, if there was a careers advisor, to my knowledge it wasn't around. When I was [my son's] age you got all your advice from your parents, rightly or wrongly.

One reason why Mr. Winn felt that his parents' advice was worthy was because they had good information about his skills.

Eric: What I am trying to say ... is that Dad was the local butcher. He knew the local cop, he knew the local chemist, he knew the local doctor, the local headmaster, the school teachers. Everybody in the community thought they knew what my potential was but me at the time, so Mum and Dad got good advice about what young Mr. Winn was good at.
Later, when Eric was himself an employer he reported recruiting new workers through similar means.

**Eric:** When we took our first apprentices on, you did the lot, and invariably it was through the old boys' network, or you took a boy on who was the son of a customer, a very good customer. They would come up and say, "Young Billy can't get a job", so he would be taken on. And you would start at ground zero by saying, "This is an apron", and you would take him through. But employers today have not got that luxury of time and, dare I say it, the nous to do it. ...

**I:** So why would you have taken on the son of a customer?

**Mrs. Winn:** Knowing the people, we sort of got to know what the people were like.

**Eric:** Got to know what the people were like. Also, if you had the need at the time for a lad, then why not them? Why go through the rigmarole of putting an ad in the paper and having to go through 40-odd interviews?

**I:** How did you know he was a good lad, though?

**Eric:** Well, it's one of those industries where it's possible because, as far as the corner butcher is concerned, you become fairly intimate with the family. I mean, you see them born, you see them married; birth, death and marriage sort of thing.

In addition to linking school-leavers directly with recruiting employers or incorporating them into family businesses, the
subjects' families and friends provided a valuable source of information about job vacancies and the quality of particular jobs. This information also helped facilitate school-to-work transitions in ways which required minimal levels of state intervention. The following three biographies are reported here because they illustrate these processes at work.

Andy Norris

Andy was formerly a senior technician in the railways but is currently an electrician. After leaving school with a School Certificate pass in Mathematics in 1960 he obtained his first job in the Railways, where he completed an apprenticeship as a communications technician. He remained in that job for 33 years before being laid-off when New Zealand Rail was restructured in the late 1990s. After applying for an estimated 60 jobs and retraining in a different field, he eventually obtained temporary work in a variety of semi-skilled and skilled occupations. For example, he worked as a fitter for a ventilation company installing heating units. During this period he was working towards obtaining a Trade Certificate as an electrician.

Andy’s father had worked in the Railways as a labourer and his mother was a housewife. When asked how he obtained his first job, Andy replied:

Andy:  I got my first job through a guy [I knew]. He said that there was a vacancy where he worked so I applied.

I: And that was that?
Andy: Yes, that was it. I went along and applied and they said that you had to have School Certificate Maths. “Get it and then we will take you on”.

I: You said earlier that you had the choice of three.

Andy: Yes, I had a choice of three. Two were with the Railways at the Hutt workshops [communications technician and fitter-turner]. Because a lot of guys couldn’t get jobs in Blenheim in the fitter and turner trade or whatever so they applied to the Hutt Workshops. So I was accepted there. [However], before I was taken on in the Railways, I also went down and saw the guy at Electric Power and applied for a job as an apprentice electrician and he said, “Yes” and I had an interview and he said when could I start. ... And then ... like a fool, I met someone else who had been an apprentice electrician and had tossed it in. He said, “No, it’s a terrible job. You go into old houses and pull out old wiring - a horrible job”. ... So I turned that down. ...

I: And you chose the communication technician apprenticeship in the Railways?

Andy: Yes, it sounded more interesting.

Part of the reason why Andy obtained his trade was a strong emphasis on getting a trade in his family.

Andy: There was a strong emphasis on just getting a trade. It was always pushed at me. ... Dad always emphasised at home that if you do a trade you can always fall back on it. It was pushed at home. Not really pushed, you know,
it was in a nice way and that's what is sort of ingrained in me ... and I felt well, a trade's a trade.

As was the case with Kevin, Andy needed School Certificate Mathematics before he could obtain his apprenticeship. Kevin reported that this demotivated him at school.

Andy: I didn't do too well in School Certificate. I got a subject. I was in a dilemma because I knew that I only had to get a subject to become a communications technician. I knew that I only had to pass maths. That's all I needed. Back then you could get an apprenticeship with two years secondary schooling. But you couldn't become a communications technician without three years schooling ... a lot of guys my age got Trade Certificate with only two years secondary schooling. ... I think once I knew I had this job, which I had before I sat School Certificate, I just concentrated on my maths. The rest didn't worry me too much.

As Andy indicated, not all school-leavers needed school credentials in order to obtain an apprenticeship. Fred's case illustrates this.

Fred Mann

Fred currently works as a maintenance fitter in a large industrial plant. He has worked in the same job for the last 20 years. While Fred was at school he wanted to go to sea as a deck
boy. However, Fred’s father, who originally trained as a stonemason, wanted him to get a trade first. After leaving school in the late 1960s without School Certificate, Fred began an apprenticeship in an engineering firm in the local port. While he had the choice of either a fitter-turning or boiler-making apprenticeship, he chose to pursue the boiler-making apprenticeship because he preferred the place of work. However, he did not gain the relevant trade qualification because he did not sit the required examinations, although he did obtain a welding certificate. When asked how he obtained his first job, Fred replied:

Fred: I don’t really know. Well, I don’t. All me mates were leaving school, I was only a fourth former, so I thought, “Bugger it, I will go and get a job”. ... I had jacked up two apprenticeships but I had to go to school for another year.

I: And did you do that?

Fred: No, it was actually a mate of mine who worked with the guy who I served my time [with]. He was older than me and said that their firm had not taken on any boilermaker apprentices, so I went down there and got a job. I didn’t know what one was.

I: You didn’t know what one was?

Fred: No.

I: Did you want an apprenticeship or a job?

Fred: Just an apprenticeship. It was the only reason the old man would let me leave school. ...You see my father was blind. He was blind when me and my sister were born. It was probably a security thing. ... There was always
the old saying, “If you had a trade you always had a job basically”.

I: Did you believe that?
Fred: I didn’t really care.

When it came to getting a job, it seemed that information passed on through the networks which existed in Fred’s local community was important. Fred’s wife Lyn explains:

Mrs. Mann: Because we both came from Newport everybody knew us you see. Oh yes, I know their father, he’s all right, they can have a job, type thing. And it was like our parents never shifted from the port, and neither did theirs and so they knew who the good people were and who the bad people were, if you know what I mean. That was the easy part of it.
I: So they already knew you?
Mrs. Mann: Yes, they knew us and that helps.

Indeed, this information may well have been more important than school credentials.

Fred: Well, the guy from Dutton Engineering where I got my apprenticeship, I went and seen him. The old man came down with me later on and the old man said, “What about school work?” and the guy said, “I’m not interested”. And that was basically it. If you could do the job, like you had your three month trial, and if you
couldn't do the job, well, you weren't staying. You were going back to school anyway.

I: So you had a fall-back position?

Fred: Yes, if it didn't work out you went back to school and they just got someone else.

Mike Foote

Mike is a recently retired policeman. He started work in the mid-1950s in the Post Office. His father worked in the Post Office and his mother was a housewife. Mike left school, aged 15, from the third form having gained Proficiency. Upon the advice of his father, who knew his employers were recruiting new workers, he went into the Post Office where he started off as telegraph boy. After passing various Post Office tests and internal examinations, he worked his way up to being a clerk.

Mike: My father said to me that if you want to leave school you have to work for the Post Office.

I: Why was that?

Mike: Well, because he worked for the Post Office. ... And he said if you work for the Post Office you will have security for the rest of your life. ... And so, I consequently said that I would sign on to the Post Office.

When asked why his father established these conditions and why he followed them, Mike explained:
Mike: Because he was one of those guys who came up in the Depression and was indoctrinated with the theory that if you worked for the Government your job is safe. You won't lose your job if you work for the Government. So as far as he was concerned if I worked for the Government then that was fine, I could leave school. But because he was in the Post Office and because the Post Office was his specialty he thought, well, I could follow him into the Post Office.

I: So why did you follow him into the Post Office?

Mike: To get away from school. I didn't like school.

I: Yes, but you could have gone and got another job.

Mike: Yes, I could have possibly. I wanted to go into the Navy. I wanted to go as a seaman-boy in the Navy.

I: Why didn't you do that?

Mike: I don't know. ... In those days you did what your parents told you. ... It was mainly because my mother did not really want me to go.

Not all of those interviewed made efficient school-to-work transitions through utilising contacts with recruiting employers or through information about job opportunities that was provided by families and friends. Approximately one-third of those interviewed as part of this study obtained employment through other means. Although as we shall see, social networks were important. The following four biographies illustrate the processes at work.
Don Wood

Don left school without School Certificate after being told by his parents, who thought he was not working hard enough, to leave and get a job. He currently works as a foreman in the freezer of a large-meat processing factory. He obtained his first job in 1964 by directly approaching employers. His father was a tradesman and his mother a housewife. When asked how he obtained his first job, Don replied:

Don: ... as far as I was concerned when you went from school to work you were more or less stuck there for life. I mean, when I went to work, I went up one side of the street and down the other looking for work. I was taken by a butcher and, as far as I was concerned, I was there for life.

While his parents did not provide him with direct access to a job, they were able to advise him about what would be suitable. When asked what help he received from his parents in finding a job, Don replied:

Don: None.
I: No advice from your parents?
Don: I went out and did it myself.
I: They didn't say to you go out and get a job?
Don: Well, they said, "Go and get a job". Yes, they said to, "Get an apprenticeship", so I did. I just went up one
side of the street and down the other, until I came to the butcher’s shop and he decided to give me a job. ...

I: So why did you take their advice?

Don: Because you did as your parents told you. ... You don’t disobey your parents. You did as they tell you. That’s the difference, you obeyed your parents.

I: Why?

Don: Because you knew what they said was right.

Even though Don’s social networks did not provide him with access to employment, he was able to follow their advice about obtaining an apprenticeship through other means. In this regard, Don’s experience is similar to Bob’s as we shall shortly see.

Bob Dunn

Bob, whose mother was a housewife and father was a carpenter, left school without school qualifications in 1970. He currently works as a labourer in a tannery. While his first job did not come from a resource accessed through his social network, his first full-time job offer was. He rejected this offer because he was not attracted to the job, opting instead to obtain his first job through the newspaper. When asked how he obtained his first job Bob replied:

Bob: Well, my father had my job all set up for me. I had a job as soon as I left school and I never took it.

I: And what was that?
Bob:  As a linesman with the Post Office. Which I was a bloody idiot now I look back. I should have taken it. My brother did it ... now he's earning over $100,000.

I:  So in fact you did have a job through a social network.

Bob:  Yes.

I:  Why did you not take it?

Bob:  Well, I always saw a linesman as six jokers sitting round a truck leaning on their shovels and I didn't want to do that.

I:  And what did your parents say about you not taking that job?

Bob:  Well, they never said anything. It was up to me what I wanted to do. They wanted me to have a trade behind me.

I:  So it was your choice?

Bob:  Yes.

I:  So they expected you to get a trade of some sort?

Bob:  Yes

I:  And you expect your boy to get a trade of some sort?

Bob:  Yes, it's always something to fall back on. You never forget it. ... 

I:  So were your parents able to advise you what kind of apprenticeship to go into or did you just decide yourself?

Bob:  No, they never really pushed me

I:  Why was it the butchering thing, then?

Bob:  Well, I always liked the idea. I originally wanted to be a chef or something like that, or something to do with food.
I: But I think that you said before that you didn’t actually look for a butchering apprenticeship.

Bob: No, I just saw it there [in the newspaper] and it just took my fancy.

In the next example, the lack of suitable social networks also led Ron to search for his first jobs on the open labour market. However, as we shall shortly see this position turned out to be undesirable.

Rob Tom

Rob currently works as a carpenter. He was brought up on a small, uneconomic dairy farm. His father worked part-time as a painter and paper-hanger to supplement the family income and his mother was a housewife. On leaving school (without School Certificate) Rob decided that he wanted to work in farming. However, because his father’s farm was too small, he obtained his first job through the open labour market. This proved to be unsatisfactory.

I: What about you Rob, what was your first job?

Rob: I went farming. It was just advertised in the paper and I went out there for a few months and things just didn’t suit...

Mrs. Tom: You were quite lonely.

Rob: Yes, I was quite lonely, I was only about 15 or something and my reason for leaving school was my form teacher. I think that I was in the fifth form and
the teacher said that this boy has got the ability but is not using it and he should either knuckle down to his work or he should leave school. So I left school.

When Rob decided that he wanted to leave his first job, his father suggested that he should obtain a trade.

Rob: I wanted to leave the farm so my dad said that if I wanted to leave then I should get a trade behind me. He said, “Then it doesn’t matter what it is you do, you can go and sweep gutters, whatever you want to do”. So I came back into town and did my carpentry apprenticeship and after a few changes I am back at that now so, through the full cycle, it has actually been beneficial.

I: Your dad was right.

Rob: Well, he was right. Because even [after the] 18 or 20 years that we have been out farming, when I came back into town, I tried truck-driving but that is lonely because you are never home, and, so to be home with the family, I am back to the carpentry and he’s right.

Rob’s father was able to support his suggestion that he obtain a trade by finding an apprenticeship for him.

Rob: To get me my apprenticeship, Dad took me round a few places. The first place was at a garage working as an apprentice diesel mechanic. But they were not taking anybody on at that stage. Then Dad said, “I know where
I can get you in as an apprentice carpenter”. He took me to this factory and we had a chat to the boss and I started soon after.

The final biography presented here is unique in this study because it is the only example where employment was generated by the State through secondary schooling. This occurred through the transition department of the subject’s high school.

Cole Salt

Cole left school at the age of 15 without School Certificate in 1978 and was the last of those interviewed to leave school. He currently works as a self-employed cleaner. His father was a welder and his mother a housewife. When asked how he obtained his first job Cole replied:

Cole: Well I went to Somerfield High School and they put me into one of those dumb classes, special classes, or whatever it is, because I had trouble reading and writing. And we actually had work experience. So I got my first job that way.

I: So you went out onto a building site or something, did you?

Cole: Yes, I went and made aluminium doors and windows. I worked there on a Wednesday. I did it [work experience] in a few other places but the last one was there. ... Then they gave me a job after school sweeping
the floor, and then at Christmas time it became full-time.

In a later interview Cole and his wife explained that work experience was explicitly designed to get students like himself a job.

**Cole:** That's what it was there for dummies like me - to get a job.

**I:** Work experience?

**Cole:** Yes, it wasn't for the people which have got it. It was for the idiots like me which didn't have it.

**Mrs. Salt:** That's what it was there for. My sister, she went to York and she was in that class too where she was really behind. And I think from form four they stuck her in work experience because obviously they were not going to get a high intelligent job. They were going to be stuck in either factories or, you know, labouring. So that's what they did. They gave them work experience to get them out there, to get in there.

**I:** With the hope the employer you went to see would give you a job or what?

**Mrs. Salt:** Yes.

**Cole:** Basically, they sent you to quite a few different ones so they could see what you were like. And see how good you were.

In this case, the school created a social network which helped make a poorly-qualified, school-leaver's school-to-work transition
efficient. One reason why Cole had turned to work experience organised by his school was that it seemed there were no opportunities for work through his social networks. When asked whether his parents had been able to generate a suitable job for him, Cole replied:

Cole: No.
I: Why was that?
Cole: Because my father was a welder and he looked at welding as a dirty job and I suppose he didn’t want us kids working in it. That’s why even today, well, a couple of years ago I said to Dad, “Look, I have got all the welding gear, teach me to weld”. And he said, “No”. He wouldn’t do it. So I said, “Well, I will go to polytechnic”. And he said, “Well, that’s a waste of time. What you can learn at polytechnic in a year I can teach you in five minutes”. So I said, “Well, teach me”. And he said, “No”. He said, “You don’t want to learn because everyone will come to you for welding jobs. It’s a dirty, stinking job”. And that was the end of it. So all my gear is around at his place. ...

I: So your parents didn’t say to you when you got to the end of your schooling, “What would you like to do? Perhaps I could tee you up with uncle Bob?”

Cole: No.
I: They said, “Just get a job”?
Cole: No, it was, “Get out”.
Conclusion

The data gathered in this study show that between 1955 and 1980 there was strong opportunity in the labour market for poorly-qualified male school-leavers. In this respect, there is no evidence which suggests that, during this period, students were staying on in education as discouraged workers; school students were able to reject the culture of schooling and the qualifications on offer and enter the labour market at the earliest possible moment. However, while many of those interviewed left school without qualifications, a significant proportion went on to gain them by obtaining craft apprenticeships. Indeed, the data show that obtaining a trade was perceived as a desirable way to enter the labour market. Often this view was transmitted to the school-leavers by their parents who saw entering trade training as a way of obtaining job security. For example, although Fred wanted to go to sea, his father made a condition of his leaving school that he obtain an apprenticeship because it was seen to offer job security. Similarly, Andy reported that, for male school-leavers, obtaining a trade was an accepted school-to-work transition.

While the majority of those interviewed left school with minimal levels of school qualifications, they were able to make efficient school-to-work transitions by drawing upon resources made available to them through their social networks. Such resources not only included information about what constituted a good and secure job, but also information about actual job vacancies and direct access to recruiting employers.
One reason why these resources were significant in making school-to-work transitions efficient was that they did not necessarily rely upon the school-leavers having strong occupational identities. For example, Ron’s biography shows how the process of choosing a job was structured by the employers within his father’s social network. In this respect, like many of the subjects, Ron’s decision to enter the bakery reflects a degree of non-decision making. This suggests that part of the value of social networks resides in the fact that they were able to meet the school-leavers’ expectations of what was desirable in terms of employment. That is, if they had any. In Ron’s case, he just wanted a job so that he could leave school and his social networks provided him with a resource which allowed him to do this.

In other instances, however, social networks provided a strong source of occupational identity and this too helped make school-to-work transitions efficient. For example, Eric’s biography shows how he was incorporated into the family butchering business through inheriting a cultural tradition, which helped facilitate his school-to-work transition in a way which required little state intervention. Such was the strength of this process that Eric reported that he did not have a choice about what kind of job he would enter. Rather, he reported that, in a way, entering the meat-trade was “predetermined”.

Another reason why social networks contributed to making school-to-work transitions efficient is because they provided a source of information to employers about suitable employees. Fred’s wife described the tightly-knit community in which she and
Fred grew up and suggested this was a source of information about the quality of new recruits and their potential.

While social networks clearly provided an important link between school and work, there is some evidence which suggests that school credentials impacted on the value of these networks. Kevin and Andy, both of whom obtained their first jobs through social networks, reported that before they could enter their chosen apprenticeships they had to obtain School Certificate Mathematics. However, as the biographies of other respondents show, it was easy to obtain craft apprenticeships without school qualifications.

The networks described in this chapter can be considered as well-formed and embedded within the social infrastructure of the families and communities in which the school-leavers lived.

It is important to note that those without tangible social networks were able to compensate for this by obtaining employment by other means. However, although approximately one-third of all those interviewed obtained their first jobs through other channels, this does not mean parents were unable to provide resources which helped to make their school-to-work transitions efficient. As the biographies show, parents were able to help make their sons' school-to-work transitions efficient by, for example, stressing the value of apprenticeships. More over, as Rob's biography demonstrates, parents could compensate for employment obtained through the "open" labour market which proved unsatisfactory to their sons. They did this by providing
their sons with access to more suitable employment through their social networks.

The role social networks played in helping make school-to-work transitions efficient is significant to the arguments made in this thesis because it was a process that occurred with limited state intervention. In this respect, besides the initial selection and credentialling process, there is little evidence to suggest that the State was actively involved: the State provided scant career guidance and made little attempt to link school-leavers with recruiting employers. The main reason for this is that these functions were completed in the socio-cultural sphere by social networks.

There was only one exception to this. Cole obtained his first job after completing work experience organised by his school. Cole’s story suggests one way that state intervention over and above the selective and custodial functions performed by the State, facilitated his school-to-work transition. Hence, the State can be seen in this instance to be acting to increase the efficiency of Cole’s school-to-work transition by compensating for weaknesses in the depth of his social networks.

In this chapter social networks were shown to be a resource which assisted the State in its role of maintaining capitalist production. They contributed by helping poorly-qualified school-leavers make efficient school-to-work transitions in a manner which relied upon minimal levels of state intervention. As noted in the previous chapter, capitalist production has relied on such
cultural resources in order to maintain profitability. However, the economic changes and the emergence of the discouraged worker effect raises the possibility that the value of social networks to the State has declined since the period 1955-1980. This is explored further in the next chapter.

1 It is important to note that in the three years between 1977 and 1980, the number of those registered as unemployed increased from 7,385 to 36,469. Consequently, while 7,385 was a significant increase on the 1961 figure, large increases in unemployment did not occur until the very end of the period in focus (Department of Statistics, 1981, p. 784).

2 Data derived from the Department of Statistics (1962, p. 231)

3 Data derived from the Department of Statistics (1972, p. 204)

4 Data derived from the Department of Statistics (1982, p. 188)

5 Although not strictly within the period 1975-1980, this study has been drawn upon because four out of the five studies that the report is based upon relate to the period in question. However, the results of the one study drawn upon, which lies partly outside of this period, are consistent with the those of the other four.

6 It should be noted that Cole was one of the youngest fathers interviewed. He made his school-to-work transition in the late 1970s, when youth unemployment had begun to increase. In this way Cole's transition may be indicative of the changing role of schools.
CHAPTER THREE

THE DISCOURAGED WORKER EFFECT AND THE EROSION IN THE VALUE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

Introduction

In the previous chapter it was shown that, between 1955 and 1980, social networks helped school-leavers who had few or no formal school qualifications find employment. This meant these school-leavers could make effective school-to-work transitions requiring limited state intervention. In terms of Habermas’ model, the availability of social networks meant the problem of finding employment was resolved through exploiting relationships which existed within the socio-cultural sub-system.

The data presented in this chapter are used to explore the argument outlined in chapter one: that New Zealand’s response to pressures such as globalisation, the introduction of new technology, and credential inflation have eroded the value of semi-skilled and unskilled work and, as a result, have eroded the value of social networks. If social networks have lost value, it is possible that state intervention may be required to help make the school-to-work transitions of poorly qualified and poorly motivated students efficient.

This chapter illustrates how changes in the labour market have impacted on the efficiency of school-to-work transitions. The changes in the labour market and other trends presented in this
chapter are intended to contrast with those reported in chapter two. If this is achieved, then the reader will concur that, in comparison with the earlier period, poorly qualified school students today face barriers to them making efficient school-to-work transitions that the earlier generation avoided.

**Globalisation, technological change and the erosion in value of male semi-skilled and unskilled labour power**

Chapter one hypothesised that changes to the labour market brought about by globalisation, the introduction of new technology, and credential inflation have all contributed to the emergence of the discouraged worker effect by eroding the value of semi-skilled and unskilled labour. Before investigating this possibility, it is necessary to briefly outline some of the effects of globalisation and the introduction of new technology as they relate to the labour market.

One effect of globalisation and the introduction of new technology is economic specialisation (Doeringer, et al. 1991; Reich, 1991; Aronowitz & De Fazio, 1994). Economies that have particular human, material and technical resources tend to support particular kinds of employment. For example, economies where low-cost labour is readily available tend to support labour-intensive industries, while economies where the cost of labour is comparatively high tend to support industries which rely more heavily upon mechanisation in order to reduce labour costs.
Economic specialisation of New Zealand's economy has resulted in changes in the distribution of people employed in the various industrial sectors. The Department of Statistics (1993, p. 11), used the New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations to identify three major industrial sectors. These were the primary, secondary, and service sectors. The primary sector comprised the major industry divisions of agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing; mining and quarrying. The secondary sector comprised manufacturing; electricity, gas and water; building and construction. The service sector comprised, wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels; transport, storage and communication; financing, insurance, real estate and business services; community, social and personal services.

Economic specialisation has led to a decrease in the proportion of people employed full-time in the secondary sector. For example, between 1951 and 1991, the proportion of people employed full-time in the secondary sector decreased from 34 per cent to 25 per cent of the labour market (Department of Statistics, 1993, pp. 10-11).

Employment in the primary sector also decreased between 1951 and 1991. In 1951, the primary sector accounted for 20 per cent of all full-time workers. By the mid 1970s this proportion had declined to approximately 11 per cent. The primary sector has remained at about this level since then (ibid.).

The decrease in the proportion of people employed in the secondary and primary sectors was compensated for by an
increase in the proportion of people employed in the service sector. For example, in 1951, the service sector accounted for 46 per cent of people employed full-time in New Zealand. By 1991, the proportion employed in the service sector had increased to 63 per cent, an increase of 17 per cent on the 1951 figure (ibid.). Although minor changes to the New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations make direct comparisons problematic, more recent figures show that these trends have continued (Statistics New Zealand, 1998b).

The decrease in the size of the secondary sector is important in the context of this chapter’s arguments because between 1951 and 1976 its share of employment remained stable at approximately 35 per cent. This was partly the result of state intervention such as trade barriers which protected industries in the secondary sector such as manufacturing, from cheaper imported goods (Department of Statistics, 1993, p. 11). However, from 1976 onwards employment in the sector gradually declined, dropping more sharply in the mid-1980’s as the State removed barriers to free trade. The global recession compounded job losses in this sector as overseas demand for New Zealand’s exports reduced. As a result of such shifts, the Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment (1994a, p. 32) estimated that in the six years between 1986 and 1991 about 100,000 jobs were lost. These were mostly in manufacturing, where many companies shut down or moved off-shore, and in the State sector which was reorganised by a government committed to New Right policies (see chapter five).
Similar trends have been noted in other countries. For example, it has been estimated that between 1981 and 1991 the number of young people aged between 16 and 26 years employed full-time in manufacturing declined by four per cent in the United States. This represented a loss of 1.65 million jobs (Zemsky, 1998, p. 85).

The increase in the proportion employed in the service sector and the corresponding decrease in the proportion employed in the secondary sector is of interest because service-sector jobs are more likely to be part-time and less highly paid. These factors have contributed to a reduction in youth incomes. Between 1986 and 1996 the median incomes of young New Zealanders aged between 15 and 25 years fell in real terms from $14,700 to $8,100 per annum. For those aged 25 and over the decrease was smaller, with incomes declining from $19,600 in 1986 to $18,100 in 1996 (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a, p. 68).

The decrease in annual median incomes in the younger age group partially reflects the high number of young people who are remaining in education and working part-time (in 1996 three in four young people employed in the wholesale and retail trade and the restaurants and hotels industries classification were also in education of some kind). Whereas in the past the majority of school-leavers left school and directly entered full-time work, this is no longer as common. In 1951 approximately 70 per cent of those aged between 15 and 19 years were in the labour market. By the early 1990s, this had reduced to 53 per cent (Ministerial Taskforce on Employment, 1994a, p. 28).
As noted in the previous paragraph, more students are combining part-time work with education. For example, in 1986 fewer than eight per cent of all those aged between 15 and 19 years were employed part-time; by 1996 this had increased to 28.1 per cent. Almost 80 per cent of these reported that they were also studying in some form (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a, p. 58). However, while the number of young people combining work and study accounts for some of the decrease in median incomes, it is also likely that some is the result of decreasing rates of pay generally. It is difficult to substantiate this claim, at least in regard to New Zealand. One reason is that Statistics New Zealand does not collect income data on individual workers. Consequently, it is difficult to meaningfully track changes in full-time income over time according to industrial sector.

Nevertheless, a number of points can be offered as evidence for this claim. As noted, the reduction in demand for labour in the secondary sector has been offset by growth in service-sector industries such as retail trades. However, jobs in the service sector tend not to be as highly paid as the jobs in the declining secondary sector, such as manufacturing. To give an example of the effect on male wage rates, Doeringer et al. (1991, p. 36) showed that in 1986 male workers employed in manufacturing in the United States had incomes which averaged $17,830 per annum. This exceeded the average income of males employed in the retail trade by 49 per cent.

Labour-market restructuring can be seen to have impacted most heavily on poorly qualified school-leavers who have found
their wage rates shrinking as they compete for the comparatively few semi-skilled and unskilled jobs available today. For example, after adjusting for inflation Doeringer et al. (1991, p. 26) showed that high-school dropouts saw their average annual incomes drop by 37 per cent between 1973 and 1986. In contrast, college graduates, in the period between 1979 and 1986, were the only group of young males to improve their real earnings.¹ Wilson (1996) supports this, arguing that an oversupply of youth labour in the United States has meant that real wage rates paid to young people reduced by approximately 30 per cent between 1970 and 1989 (p. 25).²

Similar research conducted in New Zealand supports these findings. Podder and Chatterjee (1998) suggest that technological change and greater globalisation of the world economy have contributed to increased inequality of the earned component of income by redistributing the total wage bill in favour of skilled labour. One result of this shift is that, while the bulk of the population became poorer between 1984 and 1996, the poorest segment of the economy - that is, unskilled workers and the unemployed - fared the worst. Only the very rich enjoyed increased incomes.

Another cause for the decline in wage rates paid to semi-skilled and unskilled male workers has been the entry of large numbers of women into the labour market. Hewlett (1993) argues that in the United States and Australia, a decline in the rate of pay for male workers relative to inflation led to large numbers of women entering the labour market to prop up the family wage. This means
that poorly qualified male workers are increasingly finding that they must compete with poorly qualified females for a shrinking number of jobs. This has compounded the difficulties experienced by males by increasing the competition for jobs. In New Zealand similar trends are apparent. In 1951 women constituted approximately 25 per cent of the labour force (Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Employment, 1994a, p. 28). By 1996 this proportion had increased to approximately 45 per cent (Statistics New Zealand, 1998b, p. 19).

For young poorly qualified males the expansion of the service sector and the contraction of the secondary sector is further significant because many of the low-level and part-time jobs in the expanding service sector are typically taken by women (Walby, 1991; Wilson, 1996). In New Zealand, Stuart (1995) estimates that between 1981 and 1991 women’s employment expanded by 15 per cent, or approximately 80,000 jobs, while men’s declined by eight per cent, or approximately 72,000 jobs. Evidence from Statistics New Zealand (1998a, pp. 61-63) supports this, showing that the distribution of young men and young women in the labour market varies markedly between industrial sectors. For example, young women dominate the expanding service sector with 84.4 per cent of women aged between 15 and 25 years who are employed working in this sector. This compares with 57.6 per cent of young men in the same age group. Young working men continue to dominate contracting segments of the labour market such as the trades (where about 94 per cent of all workers are male), plant and machine operators and assemblers (about 80 per cent), agriculture and fishery workers (about 75 per cent) and elementary
occupations which are defined as low-skilled, manual jobs (about 70 per cent) (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a, p. 63).

Globalisation and the introduction of new technology are also widely accepted to have reduced the number of semi-skilled and unskilled workers required in New Zealand’s economy. One reason for this is that, in the face of global economic competition, some New Zealand employers have attempted to maintain profitability by shifting production to other countries where the cost of production is lower. The removal of tariff protections led to large numbers of lay-offs in manufacturing in the mid-1980s (Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Employment, 1994b). Employers also maintain profitability through introducing new technology and this reduces the number of workers needed in the economy.

Either way, the need to be competitive in the global economy has reduced the number of workers required in New Zealand. As noted, the number of unemployed has risen dramatically since the 1970s.

When the unemployment statistics are broken down into age groupings, it can be seen that young people aged between 15 and 25 years are more likely than any other age group to be unemployed. In 1996 those aged between 15 and 25 years made up 21.2 per cent of the total working-age population but comprised 42.7 per cent of those recorded as unemployed. Between 1986 and 1991, when the level of unemployment increased for all workers by about four per cent, young people were disproportionately affected, experiencing an eight per cent increase (Statistics New Zealand,
1998a, p. 63). This suggests that young people are particularly vulnerable to unemployment during periods of economic downturn.

Labour-market restructuring and education

One consequence of labour-market restructuring which has reduced labour market demand for semi-and unskilled labour, has been an increase in secondary-school retention rates. In the ten years up until 1996 retention rates for male students continuing schooling until the age of 16 increased from 66.6 per cent to 81.7 per cent. In the same period those continuing schooling until the age of 18 increased from 6.9 per cent to 16.1 per cent (Statistics New Zealand, 1998a, pp. 38-39).

The increase in secondary schooling participation has been mirrored by a decrease in the number of students leaving school without qualifications. For example, in 1970 just over 40 per cent of school-leavers left school without any School Certificate passes. Today almost 22 per cent of male school-leavers depart without formal school qualifications (New Zealand Ministry of Education 1998c, p. 60).

The statistics reported above show that students are remaining in education longer and leaving school more highly qualified than in the past. One reason for this is that school qualifications have increased in value. For example, those with few or no school qualifications are more likely to be unemployed and where such school-leavers are employed, they are likely to be receiving lower
rates of pay than in the past. As Marginson (1997) argues, the massive rise in credentialism has increased the punishing consequences of not having educational credentials. Pye, Harwood and Mac an Ghaill (1996) support this, arguing that the political legacy of the 1980s for low-achieving working-class males is that of low expectations of finding "real work".

However, school credentials do not appear to play an important role in securing employment for work-bound school-leavers. This is discussed in the following section.

Social networks and employment in the 1980s and 1990s

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s researchers have consistently argued that social networks play an important role in helping employers to find workers and workers to find employers (Jenkins, Bryman, Ford, Keil & Beardsworth, 1983; Grieco, 1987; Rosenbaum, Kariya, Settersten & Maier, 1990; Wallace, Boyle, Cheal & Dunkerley, 1993; Okano, 1995; Miller & Rosenbaum, 1997; Wong & Salaff, 1998). Moreover, although there are variations in the results generated by different methodologies and differences between studies conducted in different settings, the importance of social networks has remained intact despite modernisation and technological change in the economy (Granovetta, 1995).

Unlike earlier research, recent work into the functioning of social networks has focused on the relationship between social networks and school qualifications. This development is useful because the relative contributions made by social networks and
school qualifications to securing jobs for poorly qualified school-leavers is more fully explored. It is also important because it challenges the current orthodoxy which maintains that in an efficient labour market, school students obtain the kinds of qualifications that employers desire and that this leads to employment. Those who have obtained more desirable qualifications will be more highly rewarded and educational systems will, to a greater or lesser extent, produce the kinds of workers demanded by employers. However, while many employers are calling for school-leavers to have higher levels of qualification, particularly as they relate to basic skills, there is little evidence to suggest that employers actually refer to basic school qualifications when making hiring decisions. For example, a number of social network theorists argue that in the United States high-school performance has little influence on whether or not school-leavers secure jobs (Rosenbaum, et al. 1990; Granovetta, 1995). Evidence from the United Kingdom supports this. Wallace et al. (1994) found in their study that 93 per cent of employers recruiting school-leavers for manual positions did not use school qualifications.

There are at least three possible explanations for these findings. First, employers may not receive good information about the potential recruits. This may reflect inadequacies in the information provided by educators about the performance of school-leavers. This is a distinct possibility in the United States where a high-school diploma only indicates that a student has satisfactorily attended high-school.

Second, employers may be unwilling to use the information
provided by schools about potential recruits. For instance, researchers in the United States report that employers do not seek more detailed information about student performance by requesting grade transcripts from schools (Rosenbaum & Binder, 1997). This may be because employers distrust the information provided.

Third, it may be that there is no route for the information about potential recruits to reach employers. In this regard, there is a growing literature which explains labour-market failure among work-bound school-leavers by arguing that labour-market transactions are embedded in a social infrastructure (Granovetra, 1995; Miller & Rosenbaum, 1997). If this infrastructure, which includes social networks, is absent, then labour markets will not function efficiently. Thus, even if school-leavers have the kinds of skills desired by employers, if there is no method through which employers can easily receive this information it will not be available.

State interventions designed to improve school-leaver qualifications and student motivation in school often rely upon effective signals from employers. The tendency for employers to ignore school-based signals such as school grades suggests that the behaviours of employers themselves may be partly to blame for the problems of which they are critical. While students are told that credentials are important, conflicting or mistrusted signals mean that their choices may be unresponsive to actual labour-market demands. Labour-market signals may indicate what fields of training students should attempt and what pay-offs result from
obtaining qualifications. Rosenbaum et al. (1990) suggest that work-bound students learn high-school grades do not affect labour-market outcomes by examining the experiences of their older peers; at least their poor motivation in school implies this. Thus the absence of an obvious economic pay-off means there is little incentive to work hard for good grades.

Although relevant research is at an early stage, preliminary evidence suggests that creating linkages between schools and employers can overcome weaknesses in information and, as a result, can improve the employment chances of disadvantaged youth. In other words, schools may be able to create social networks where such networks are lacking (Doeringer, et al., 1991; Rosenbaum & Binder, 1997).

At first sight, the continuing significance of social networks seems incongruent with a major claim of this thesis that the value of social networks to the State has declined. However, the findings of the social network theorists do not necessarily refute this. The literature shows poorly qualified school-leavers, who do not have access to social networks leading to employment, are disadvantaged in the labour market in relation to those who do. This suggests that, for poorly qualified school-leavers, access to valuable social networks can mean the difference between employment, further training or unemployment. Consequently, social networks may continue to be of value to some, whilst those who do not have access to them may remain in education as discouraged workers. In addition, as Okano (1995) suggests, would-be school-leavers may remain in school as discouraged workers because they perceive the
jobs available to them through their social networks to be undesirable. Thus, while they may eventually utilise social networks as a means of finding employment, they may do so as a last resort.

Social networks, school credentials and the efficiency of school-to-work transitions: the case of the poorly achieving students

In this section, the biographies of six subjects are presented in order to illustrate the relationships between SES, schooling, employment and social networks as found in all of the interviews conducted with the poorly achieving students. The data do not show differences between low SES and high SES students in terms of seeking employment through their social networks. Both groups of students found accessing jobs through social networks problematic. Consequently, the number of high and low SES students reported in this section are not balanced.

Steve Mann (Low-SES)

Steve is the older of two brothers. His father works as a maintenance engineer in a large industrial plant that manufactures rubber products, while his mother works as a supervisor for a large cleaning company. Steve’s father’s first job was as an apprentice boilermaker and his mother’s was an office worker in an accountancy firm. Both his parents left school at 15 without qualifications and found their first jobs through social networks.

When Steve was first interviewed, he explained that, even though he did not want to return, lack of opportunities in the
labour market and parental pressure led him to stay on in school.

Steve: I applied to one job and I was expecting that if I didn’t get that one that I would get another. But they both kinda fell through and Mum was kinda, if you didn’t get off your [backside] and get a job you might as well get back to school than hang about here all day. ... I wasn’t allowed to sit around and be a bum. I had to leave school and actually do something. And that was why I went back to school.

Throughout this period he was not motivated about obtaining credentials in all of his classes.

Steve: I don’t know what I am going to do when I leave school and get a job, and I am not really expecting to get a job where I need polytech or anything like that. ... I know what I am expecting to do this year. Just look for a job while I am getting credits in the computing and the history class. That’s the main focus.

I: What about the other subjects?

Steve: No, they come or go for me, really, this year. If I don’t want to go, I am not going to push myself too hard to really go to those.

However, Steve reported that he soon gave up on the computer and history classes partly because he “wasn’t with his mates” and partly because he had received conflicting messages about the value of school qualifications. One reason for this was that Steve had seen
relatives and a friend obtain jobs without having school qualifications. When asked why he did not work towards obtaining school qualifications, Steve replied:

Steve: I think it’s because over the course of the last two years, my two cousins and my mate have all got apprenticeships and none of them had School Certificate, and, so, I just thought it’s obvious; those three got apprenticeships which can lead to good stuff and they didn’t have qualifications.

I: So what do qualifications mean?

Steve: Not really that much in the apprenticeship field or something. Because when I went for the car-grooming [job] the guy explained to me that if another guy came along with School Certificate then he would get the job first. It was only car-grooming, you don’t have to think much for it ... [and] these three got apprenticeships, which I had been told throughout my life that you have got to get good grades to get ... so I don’t really think qualifications now really mean that much. ...

I: Why do you think that [the prospective employer] thought School Certificate was important?

Steve: I haven’t got a clue. I think he looked at the maths ones mostly. But I can’t really see how that is important to car-grooming, unless of course the amount of water you add to the dish-washing liquid or whatever or how much power you use up in the battery, or something like that [is important].
Throughout his senior secondary schooling, Steve drifted along with few ideas about what he wanted to do post-school and had trouble establishing an identity as a worker. When asked at the beginning of his sixth-form year what job he would like he replied:

*Steve: I don’t know. I don’t know that.*

*I: Do you have any ideas?*

*Steve: No. I think about some things and go, “Nah”. ... If I find an apprenticeship, I will leave now.*

*I: Are you looking around for an apprenticeship?*

*Steve: Not really. I look at school but there’s not really any about.*

Part of Steve’s problem in establishing an identity as a worker and finding work was traced, by his mother, back to weaknesses in his social networks. These meant that Steve had not been exposed to many different occupations.

*Mrs. Mann: I think half of Steve’s problem is that he doesn’t know what he wants to do. If he had an idea. He sort of says he might look at the automotive side of things but he’s not sure. But I think that if he had an idea that, yes I would like to be a builder, then at least you know what direction you are looking towards rather than if he doesn’t know ... . Perhaps because he doesn’t know anybody who has worked in that job and he does not know what it is like.*

Unlike his father who was able to form an identity as a worker
through his social networks as part of a cultural tradition, Steve did not have similar resources at his disposal. When Mr. and Mrs. Mann were asked about the kinds of jobs that their social networks provided access to, Mrs. Mann replied:

Mrs. Mann: If he wanted to be a doctor or a lawyer, well, we [don't] have that kind of network to push him in that direction.

I: So what kind of network do you have access to?

Mrs. Mann: Well, basically it [is] just working - well what I would refer to as working-class people, not professional people. ... But, see, if he [does] not want to go into the working class, if he want[s] to go into the professional line, then, well, we would be [of no use], because we [cannot] help him in any way.

However, it seemed that obtaining a working-class job and an identity as a worker through social networks was problematic for Steve.

Mrs. Mann: The only opportunities he has had is with our mate who had a courier van and he was out helping him and he got a truck. After that, he has been out helping him in the holidays and my brother-in-law has got a service station and he has gone and done a wee bit of work tidying up for him. If anybody said that they need someone to help him out for a while, well, he would go and do it, and he hasn't been paid for any of the jobs that he has done.

I: So why haven't there been the opportunities?
Mrs. Mann: They are not taking them on today.
Mr. Mann: They are just not taking them on today.
I: Do you know why that is?
Mr. Mann: That's the same as at Saxon, we used to always offer apprenticeships. Not now - nothing. ...
Mr. Mann: I actually tried to get [Steve] in at work ... [at] another company that Saxon's used to own but they sold it. I actually got a guy to ring them up and see if he could jack one up. But nothing eventuated.
I: ... What kind of job was that?
Mr. Mann: Just labouring. Because my brother does labouring. But nothing really happened anyway.
I: Why did you make that phone call?
Mr. Mann: Because there didn't really seem like there was anything else out there for him.

Shortly after starting his sixth-form year, Steve reported that he had begun to truant. However, it wasn't until the end of the year that he was picked up by his school's truancy officer and by the police. This was a significant moment in Steve's school-to-work transition because they referred him to the sixth form dean. She told Steve that he had to either attend class, which he did not want to do, or go on a training course. According to Steve, the Dean's concern was that he was not motivated at school and she thought that a training course of some kind was the best option. Following this advice, Steve went on a four-week Salvation Army work-skills course. It was during this period that a part-time, casual vacancy came up at Steve's mother's work. His mother was initially reluctant to help find Steve a job because she felt that he needed to make
greater effort to find a job himself. However, she decided to help Steve into the job because the work skills course had told her that he, "was trying to do something for himself. He wasn't expecting to get something handed to him on a plate".

Steve: I was doing work experience and one of the ladies from Mum's work left and Mum rang Jan and said that [the lady] was giving her one week notice. Jan turned round and said, "Oh, really?, I will have to find someone else for you," and mum turned around and said, "Well, Steve's still available if you want him". She pretty much said, "When will he start"? sort of thing. ...

I: And did you want the job?

Steve: Well, it wouldn't have been my first choice if I had been looking through the paper or anything, but, well, it was offered so I took it.

At the time of his last interview, Steve was hoping to obtain a job as a truck driver through the family friend with whom he had completed work experience.

However, as the next case study shows, not all poorly achieving students interviewed gave up on attempting to obtain qualifications.

John Black (High-SES)

John's father is a technician for a large clothing manufacturer. After gaining School Certificate, he obtained his first job through a
social network, starting out as an apprentice. John's mother is divorced from his father and lives in another city.

John stayed on in school until the end of Year 13 (Form 7) and left school with a low Sixth Form Certificate grade and a small number of unit standards in computing. When asked why he stayed on in school, John replied:

John: Because I was hoping to achieve more qualifications, and if I left when I was young, it would have just been a silly move. I had nothing to do and there was the possibility that I could get more qualifications down the track, so I stayed at school.

However, he was unable to realise his desire to achieve more qualifications. When asked to account for his lack of success at school, John replied:

John: I don't know. I was still learning, but I was just being social.

I: With your mates you mean?

John: Yes. Like, I was just not knuckling down in class. ... I wouldn't say that I was not motivated, it was just that I was more into having a good time.

I: So were you hoping to get qualifications?

John: Yes, but I just didn't get there. Because, like, towards the end of the year when I should have been studying, like, I was spending time with my mate who was going back to America and I kinda made some bad decisions. Like, I
left the geography exam [Bursary] one and a half hours early to go and see him off at the airport. It wasn’t the best decision, but if I hadn’t done it I would have regretted it.

Part of the trouble for John being motivated at school was that he had little idea about what he would like to do when he left school.

John: It’s so hard to lock on to some qualifications that will help after I leave school because I don’t know what it is that I am going to do.

Unlike his father, who was able to draw upon resources provided by his parents to help him form an identity as a worker, John had limited resources which could have helped him to do the same. Part of this can be traced back to weaknesses in his social capital.

Mr. Black: I feel that it is a much more risky time for kids today. And there is nothing that I can say to John to say, “Yes, there is going to be this job or that job,” because there is not. I cannot guarantee it and as I think I have told you before, our Managing Director has told us that he can only guarantee us a job for one month in advance. ... I have been through all this in my mind and I just don’t know the advice to give him. I can’t say to him, “We’ll go for that qualification because there is going to be a job at the end of the day that you will need those skills to
do".

I: So you don’t know what advice to give him?

Mr. Black: Not as to what direction to go in, because I don’t know myself.

I: So what advice can you give him?

Mr. Black: All I can give or ask of him is that, if he is going to be at school, to try his best and try and achieve as much as he can achieve and hopefully at the end of the day, which will be at the end of the year, any qualifications he does have might head or lead to a job. If I could say there is going to be this, this and this, [in terms of a job] I would need a crystal ball.

Part of the reason why Mr. Black faced difficulty in providing John with resources which would help make his school-to-work transition efficient was that the introduction of new technology and globalisation of the economy had drastically reduced the number of jobs available and the quality of these jobs in his place of work.

Mr. Black: You see, it’s unfortunate, but technology moving the way it is, we now get a machine which replaces two machines and hence we don’t need such mechanical coverage [labour power] ... . We plug the phone line into Italy and their computer there tells us what’s wrong with our machines and then they fax us with what to do or else they just say, “Pull board such-and-such and replace with a new board and send the board to us and we will repair it”... .

I: So do you need skilled labour?
Mr. Black: No, that's it. Not so much now. Basically you just need people who are computer-literate because the machines we have got now virtually tell you what's wrong with it ... . Whereas as a lot of the older machines worked on mechanical moving parts, these ones all work on computer. As long as you have the right air-flow, as long as the valve is not leaking it is really quite straightforward. ...

I: So are there less employed in the place now?

Mr. Black: Oh yes, we had in hosiery ... probably ... 600 now we have got 230, and a lot of those are casuals or temps.

Changes such as these led Mr. Black to believe that the only kind of post-school job that he could get for John would be as a labourer. However, there was some question whether even this was a possibility.

Mr. Black: It's like at work they advertise a job in the paper but the job's already gone. They are just going through the motions and it's all insider trading. It's all people whose son gets a job or whose father's out of a job. And it's all that.

I: Is it networks?

Mr. Black: Yes. It's the old school tie and it still is... . There's a salesman's job going at work right now and we knew it was coming up in December but what we didn't know until today was that the job was filled in December, but it hasn't gone into the paper until the beginning of February. You get all these people applying, but the
person is already out on the road doing the job.

I: So the person who has got the job, is he somehow connected with the company?

Mr. Black: He's connected with some of the ones higher up ... he's a nephew; nephewism we call it ... well, hosiery is one of the worst places for that. We had a guy, who's not there now, he had his wife, he had his two daughters, and he got his two cousins, his sister and his brother all jobs in pantyhose.

I: It's a family affair.

Mr. Black: Yes. It's a family affair. And the company rules state that relations cannot work in the same area, but, you see, that was turned a blind eye and overlooked. ...Now I had a [holiday] job lined up for [John] once he finished school [for the year in 1997]. But the guy who was in charge of the purse strings, he had a friend who had a son who wanted a job. And John didn't get it ... and that was a week out from when John was going to start that I was told that he didn't have a job because someone else has got it.

However, it was not simply that Mr. Black had trouble finding his son holiday jobs which had reduced the value of his social networks but also that the kinds of jobs which John may have been able access through his father once he left school were seen by John as undesirable.

John: I could not work at ... [name of Dad's work], that's for sure. I couldn't hack it. It's good money, but it's not like
a classy job. ... It's as boring as hell ... I suppose I could, if I was forced to.

I: Forced by what?

John: Forced by the fact that I wasn't right that I could get any job.

John remained in school because of his desire to obtain school qualifications and a "classy job". However, at the end of his seventh-form year, John had been unable to find a job. During the school holidays, however, his father managed to find him a temporary job in his own factory pressing socks. John accepted this job while he considered his future. When asked how he obtained this job John replied:

John: Well, the Christmas holidays were on for high-school students and I was putting my C.V. together and going round places and just dropping off my C.V. ... and, like, Dad rang up from work and said that Tony is looking for someone just for the next two weeks and so I said, "OK, I will do it". And then I worked for two weeks and Tony said, "Work for another week". So I worked for another week and it just led on from there. After I had been there a month, I thought that I definitely would not do it anymore, but the money was good so I stayed on.

During the final interview, John reported that he had been given notice at his father's place of work and that he would finish in two days. At the time, this appeared unproblematic as he had been offered two other jobs through his social networks. One was as a kitchen hand which had been offered by a former girlfriend who
had gone into business for herself, the other was working as a labourer for a landscaping company owned by his former cub-scout leader he had recently met while shopping. However, when he was later contacted by phone to see if these opportunities had materialised, John reported that they had not. In the case of the former it seemed as though a job had never existed and in the latter, he did not have the heavy transport driver’s licence that was required. As a result, John was unemployed and looking for work.

While in John’s case his lack of school qualifications did not limit his ability to access employment through his social networks (although his lack of other qualifications may have), this was not always the case with the other students.

Kim Robb (Low-SES)

Kim is the older of two brothers. His father obtained his first job as an apprentice mechanic in the open labour market in Australia. He left school with what he thinks is the equivalent to School Certificate. Kim’s mother works as a machinist, an occupation that she has had all her working life. She obtained her first job through a social network after leaving school without qualifications. Kim left school in 1998, at the age of 16 years 8 months without school qualifications. Kim was asked, during his first interview early in 1997, when he wanted to leave school. He replied:

*Kim:* Probably as late as possible.
*I:* How come?
Kim: At school, you know, it's routine. Even though I don't like it I would like to think that I would leave at the end of the year but I also want some qualifications and maybe get on to polytech. ... 

I: So will you go back next year? ... 

Kim: If the school will let me back I would probably go. ... It's a lot easier than looking for a job, I suppose.

Like Steve and John, Kim's lack of opportunity in the labour market led him to stay on in school. He attributed his lack of success in the labour market, in part, to his lack of work experience.

Kim: Well, you look in the paper and all the jobs there everyone needs experience ... and I haven't got experience at anything. So it's hard for a start.

I: So how did staying at school [fit in with that]? 

Kim: Well, it meant that I didn't have to look for a job. ... If I had a job to go to, I would have probably left school when I turned 16.

While he had hoped to obtain some qualifications, he soon gave up on the possibility.

Kim: I was hoping to get [qualifications]. But ... by two months into the sixth-form, I decided that I wasn't going to get anywhere.

I: How did you come to that opinion? 

Kim: I don't know. I couldn't see myself passing anything; actually putting the effort in.
However, it was not just Kim’s lack of ability or poor motivation towards obtaining school qualifications which was problematic; it was also that he drifted through school with little idea about what he would like to do once he left. At one stage, however, he mentioned the possibility of obtaining a craft apprenticeship. When asked during his final interview what happened to this idea, he replied:

Kim:  I don’t know. It’s just one of those things.
I:  What do you mean by that?
Kim:  I don’t know, I just lose interest. I mean, I still wouldn’t mind it but it’s a lot of work as well.
I:  When you say it’s a lot of work, what do you mean by that?
Kim:  It’s just, I wouldn’t know where to start, type thing. ...
I:  You have this idea about getting an apprenticeship. How do you actually action that idea? How do you make that idea work for you?
Kim:  I don’t know.

While Kim reported that he did not know how to obtain an apprenticeship, his father said that he had offered to try and get him one at his own place of work as an apprentice mechanic if he succeeded at school.

Mr. Robb:  I told him at the beginning of the last year ... I said to Kim that I would try and get him an apprenticeship at work but he never did the work, he never passed School Certificate. I can’t walk up to my boss and say, “Look,
I've got a boy here who would like a mechanical apprenticeship", because he hasn't done the work.

I: Why couldn't you ask him?

Mr. Robb: The reason being that he hasn't passed his School Cert's or anything like that. ... I said to Kim that you have to do well at school, you know, pass subjects so that I can walk up and show that he is keen. Because he kept saying to me that he was keen for an apprenticeship. ...

I: Do you think that your employer would demand that he have School Certificate?

Mr. Robb: Well, I know for a fact that he would have to. You have got to have something to bargain with. You have got to have fairly good grades to go and ask for an apprenticeship or even apply for one. You can't say go through high school with no qualifications whatsoever and walk up to an employer and say, "Well, I've mucked around for the last however many years at school," and say, ... "I am willing to sit here for four years and work for you".

The trend towards employers demanding that new recruits obtain school qualifications was noted by Mr. Robb in this way.

Mr Robb: Like I said, ... they might have a job going. They don't turn around and say, "Yes, your son can start on Monday". They turn around and say, "How did he do at school?" or, "How is he doing at school?" ... "How's his English? How's whatever?" Most jobs you have got to be able to read and write, explain yourself, ... you have got
to have some skills to go into most things even if they are networked they will say, "How did he do at school? How was his attendance?"

I: So do you think qualifications are more important today?

Mr. Robb: I honestly do. Because someone's not going to walk up and say, "Right'o, here's a job". Well, they might do if they were good friends, but nowadays ... you have still got to have done something. You have still got to have qualifications. ... You can't say that you have bummed around all the time and done nothing.

Like many others interviewed, Kim stayed on in school as a discouraged worker. However, half-way through his sixth-form year he decided that he would leave.

Kim: I couldn't see any point staying there. I wasn't studying. It was a bit of a joke. I couldn't see me staying at school, because as it was I was bunking. There is no point really being there if you are not studying. ... I couldn't be bothered.

Instead of staying at school, he decided to try and pick up more work as a kitchen hand, a job which he had been doing part-time. He obtained this job through a friend who had the job prior to him but who had moved on. When Kim was last interviewed he was working five days per week for a total of approximately 20 hours.

As the next case shows, the absence of valuable social networks
leads some students to turn to the Training State in the hope that training might improve their chances in the labour market.

Alan Winn (Low-SES)

Alan is the oldest of two boys in a family of four. His father obtained his first job as a butcher through a social network. His mother obtained hers at a travel agency in a similar fashion. Mr. Winn was a third generation butcher. Both Mr. and Mrs. Winn left school without qualifications.

After they married, Mr. and Mrs. Winn worked in partnership, owning a number of butcher’s shops in succession. However, a downturn in the profitability of small butchers’ shops and, to a lesser extent, their sons’ apparent desire not to follow them into the same trade, led them to sell up in the early 1990s. Mr. Winn currently works in a factory manufacturing aluminum windows and doors, while Mrs. Winn is a part-time Barnados child-care worker.

Alan stayed on in school until the end of the Year 13, leaving with two poor Sixth Form Certificate grades and a few unit standards. Like many of the other poorly achieving students interviewed, he was unclear about what he wanted to do post-school and he drifted through school in the hope that he would obtain qualifications.

When first interviewed, Alan had just returned to school for his sixth-form year. When asked why he had returned Alan said “I want
to get a certificate if I can”. However, later Alan reported that he was unable to achieve this, simply saying that his classes were, “boring” and that he just wanted a job. At the end of his sixth-form year, with his parents’ support and guidance, he chose to enter a specialist course offered in his school: the Engineering Academy. One reason for this was that he hoped that it would help him choose a career by providing him with information and experience in a variety of trades. As Alan explained, “I wanted to do something, but I didn’t know what”. One reason why the Winns turned to the Engineering Academy was that Alan had not been exposed to career possibilities through his social networks.

Mrs. Winn: We chose the Engineering Academy for Alan last year because he wanted to do something with his hands. We haven’t had experience as plumbers or drain layers or builders. We couldn’t advise him. We couldn’t say, “Go and see a friend”, or anything like that. That’s why we thought, “Well, the Engineering Academy”. Because he enjoyed his engineering in his go-carting days. So it was just to give some other ideas about what he could be. ...With what we are doing at the moment we have not got anything we can show them. He’s not going to a place of work where he can show Alan and they haven’t got positions available ....

However, it was not just exposure to ideas about possible employment opportunities that the Winns were counting on; it was also advice about what Alan was good at. As reported in Mr. Winn’s biography in the previous chapter, this information was formerly
provided by social networks. A portion of the data reported in Chapter Two are reported again to highlight contrasts between Mr. Winn's and his son's school-to-work transition.

Mr. Winn: What I am trying to say is that Dad was the local butcher. He knew the local cop, he knew the local chemist, he knew the local doctor, the local headmaster, the school teachers. Everybody in the community thought they knew what my potential was but me, at the time, so Mum and Dad got good advice about what young Mr. Winn was good at. Now the only advice that we can get about what young Alan is good at is from a report like that, [points to school report] three times a year. Which is totally useless when trying to support him to make decisions about what ... he would be good at.

While Alan entered the Engineering Academy to find out what he wanted to do, it did not provide him with any possibilities. Upon the completion of Year 13 (Form 7) Alan was still undecided about his future directions. He was unsuccessful in obtaining the few supermarket and labouring jobs he applied for, and, by early 1999, he was considering further training. Mrs. Winn noticed an advertisement in the newspaper for a pre-apprenticeship training course in butchery at the local polytechnic. The idea appealed to Alan, so his mother enrolled him in the course.

The provision of the training course was seen by the Winns to fulfill an important function in helping to make Alan's school-to-
work transition efficient. One reason for this was that it allowed access to a resource which the Winns could no longer provide.

_Mrs. Winn:_ Had we our own butcher shop he would have got skills that he is going to get from polytech. And, therefore, he wouldn’t have needed to go to polytech. But because we haven’t got it, he needs a little bit of extra knowledge of boning out and making ham and everything else before he actually goes into the meattrade.

The fact that the Winns no longer had a butcher’s shop was not only seen to limit their ability to provide skills and information which might lead Alan to a job, it was also seen to limit their ability to provide him with a job.

_Mr. Winn:_ I don’t own a family business anymore, so I can’t protect [my sons] from [unemployment] I can’t say, “Well, if they don’t do anything else”. I can’t turn round to the wife and say, “If they haven’t got a job within six months, honey, I will take them into the firm”. ... and so start [them on] the ladder that way. ... that’s gone for the greater majority of this generation.

However as the next case indicates, access to the Training State does not automatically provide a solution to problems created by the erosion in the value of social networks.
Vince Lamb (High-SES)

Vince is the younger of two children. Both his mother and father obtained their first jobs through social networks and both left school with School Certificate at the age of 16. Mr. Lamb followed his father into the engineering trade, starting out as an apprentice fitter/turner in the family firm, while Mrs. Lamb went to work as a dental assistant in a hospital. Mr. Lamb later went on to manage the engineering firm, although a recent company restructuring has meant that he has had to return to the shop floor as a fitter/turner. Mrs. Lamb works as an executive secretary.

Although Vince turned 16 during his fifth-form year, he remained at school in order to attempt School Certificate. After he failed to pass any of his subjects he returned to school for the sixth-form. There were two main explanations offered by Vince for this. The first was that he had not found work. "If there was a job going, I probably would have got it and left". The second reason for staying on was that he was in the routine of going to school. Vince reported that while at school he was poorly motivated towards obtaining qualifications. When asked why this was he replied:

Vince: Because no one else was. So I just went along with them; my friends and stuff ... I was not that motivated and teachers were — well, I can't blame the teachers - but they were not 100 per cent helpful. Half and half. Half of it was that I didn’t really like [school] and the other half was that I was not putting enough effort in.
Although Vince desired an apprenticeship as a builder, halfway through the sixth form he left school without a job to go to because he did not seem to be getting anywhere in education. He felt that he had been at school too long. Vince left school aged 17 and a half.

*Vince:* You get to the stage where you have been at school too long. You just want to move on and get a job. It doesn’t matter what it is. You just want to earn some money and start somewhere.

Fortunately, a job soon became available.

*Vince:* I sort of left ... because I wasn’t doing that good in school. I wasn’t getting anywhere. So I thought that I might as well leave and get into a job and then luckily something came up. But it wasn’t permanent because I sort of got laid off at the end of the three months. It was going to be [permanent] but it didn’t happen.

This job was found through a social contact of his father’s, as a builder’s labourer.

*Mrs. Lamb:* Bruce got Vince his first job through the guy across the road.

*Mr. Lamb:* It was just through a chain.

*Mrs. Lamb:* It was someone that we knew who was a builder who needed a labourer, so he took Vince on.

Although Vince would have been happy to stay in the job, it
was not permanent and he soon found himself out of a job. Vince was told by his then-boss, that he would need to do a pre-trades course before he could obtain the apprenticeship he desired. However, there was a wait of approximately seven months before there was a course vacancy. During this time, he was unemployed. Once in the course, Vince soon found the course work too difficult.

*Vince:* I didn’t pass many [unit standards]. I suppose I passed about half and I was trying to resit them at the end but it was just a hassle.

*I:* A hassle?

*Vince:* Yes, because I had to keep going back to night school and at the end of it I didn’t have any money. I didn’t have enough money to do them. ...

*I:* Why did you need money to do them?

*Vince:* Because they were about 40 bucks [a resit] ... and if you don’t pass them there’s your money gone. ... I just needed a job. I was just getting nowhere.

In the end, Vince did not obtain enough unit standards to obtain a pre-trades certificate. However, as part of meeting the pre-trades course requirements, students were expected to obtain work experience in the relevant trade. Again, Vince’s social networks were important.

*Mrs. Lamb:* We have a friend who is a builder. We were actually out socially and he asked us what Vince was up to. And we said, “Well, he’s not doing anything at the moment, but he’s supposed to be looking for work experience”. And
he just said, "Get him to ring me and I will see if I can get him some work". So he actually worked for him for two weeks on a building site and that worked out well.

After unsuccessfully completing the pre-trades course, Vince had two days work on the docks cleaning out a ship's bilge. Again this job was generated through his social networks. After he had been unemployed for four months, Mrs. Lamb reported that she noticed an advertisement in the newspaper for a Training Opportunities course with a local PTE in building and construction. At the time of the last interview Vince was attending this course.

The case for the value of social networks can be further established by briefly reviewing the biography of one of the students who obtained their first jobs in the formally open labour market.

Bill Lady (Low-SES)

Bill is the younger of two children. Bill lives with his mother while his elder sister and his father live elsewhere. His father, who left school without School Certificate at the age of 15, is currently employed selling advertising. He obtained his first job through a social network. Bill's mother started out as a sterile technician in a local hospital, a position which emerged out of a holiday job she obtained through a friend. She currently works part-time as a factory worker and receives an income supplement from Work and Income New Zealand. Bill left school part-way through his Year 13 (Form 7). When asked to explain how he had performed in school
Bill replied:

Bill: I was keen to get School Certificate, but when I failed by that much when I thought I was doing alright, I just gave up on it. And in sixth-form I thought I would see if I could at least get a grade that's equivalent to School Certificate and I did, so I was happy with that.

However, Bill was not too concerned about his lack of school qualifications because he felt that this would not disadvantage him in the labour market.

Bill: These days [school qualifications] don't mean nothing for most jobs. I mean, employers don't give two shakes if you have Sixth Form Certificate or anything. Basically, they look at it as if they have to pay you more if you have got more qualifications. That's what they think of. I reckon it's who you know, not what you know. Employers don't really care. I mean what does getting a School Certificate English grade give you for being a mechanic?

When first interviewed Bill wanted to become an apprentice mechanic and was planning to do a pre-trades course at the local polytechnic. His desire to do the course was partially in response to advice from his father who claimed that he could get him an apprenticeship if he completed the course. However, in order to pay for the course Bill needed to obtain a student loan for which he had to be 18 years old. This, and a desire to make the most of school,
was used by Bill to justify remaining at school. However, part-way through his Year 13 Bill decided he had had enough of school and he applied for a job in a car exhaust and brake servicing company which was advertised in the local paper.

Bill: I was doing this course at school and it was real boring, so I looked in the paper for a job and it sounded like me. So I sent away for it and she called me in for an interview about two weeks later and I got the job. So I went to school and said, "I'm leaving". ... I knew that if I did not take it that I could still be waiting round for one now.

Bill attributed his success in the open labour market largely to his stable work history. He achieved this through working in an after school job which was obtained through his social network. The fact that he knew his prospective employer was also possibly helpful.

I: When you went for your job what were they interested in?

Bill: Like, experience of working, like, if you stuck with a job pretty much. As long as you didn't have real bad grades or anything like that. If you had average ones and had real good experience with work. And basically, I kinda knew the boss who was doing it. I didn't know until she interviewed me. She used to race go-carts with me. I don't know if that helped or not, but it is always good when you can talk about the same things.

I: So how important do you think that your school grades
were?

Bill: Not really. They weren’t really worried about that. They were more worried about work experience.

I: How do you know that they weren’t worried about your school grades?

Bill: Because I was talking to the boss a few days ago about it. She goes, “Oh no, it’s not something people really worry about now with a job like that today. If it’s some accounting job, then sure”. ...

I: So, in effect, then there was no real advantage in you going back to school for those extra years. Apart from the fact that it gave you a record of having attended school.

Bill: No, not really. ...

I: So why do you think that they selected you out of the 160 who applied?

Bill: ... She said it was probably work history that she looked for the most because, like, after school I was going to work as soon as I finished school so she took that as being able to stick at it.

Bill’s story shows how social capital can be employed to find a job even in the “open” labour market. Although it was not the apprenticeship he had originally desired, it was acceptable to Bill because it involved working with cars.

In terms of getting a job, it seemed as though Bill’s social networks, at least as far as his parents were concerned, were unlikely to provide an opportunity in his desired field.
Mrs. Lady: Depending on how you look at it, like, he was wanting an apprenticeship job in mechanics. ... If I had a contact, I would certainly have pushed hard, tried to get him in those circumstances. ... I: Do you not have access to those kinds of contacts? Mrs. Lady. No. His father said that he did, but nothing ever came of it. But that's not unusual [for him].

The discouraged worker effect

According to Biggart and Furlong (1996) it is becoming more common in depressed labour-markets to find low-attaining pupils who drift through upper secondary school without obtaining qualifications, yet remain there because of the dangers of entering an uncertain labour market. In this situation, students see post-compulsory education as the best option in what is a restricted range of possibilities.

The data from the qualitative interviews show that this effect exists in the schools selected to participate in this study. In this respect, all of the poorly achieving students interviewed remained in education beyond the minimum-leaving age in the hope that they would obtain qualifications which would improve their prospects in the labour market. However, it is one matter for poorly achieving students to indicate that they desire school qualifications; it is quite another to generate the level of motivation required to obtain them. The poorly achieving students interviewed were insufficiently motivated about obtaining qualifications and none were able to significantly improve their level of school
performance. For example, Steve hoped to obtain unit standard credits in two of his sixth-form subjects but he soon gave up on the idea, preferring instead to engage in peer subcultures and school truancy. Similarly, it can be difficult for some students to gain recognition for their learning. For example, although Kim spent nearly 12 years in formal schooling, he left school without obtaining any qualifications.

While many poorly achieving students interviewed reported that they would have preferred to be in paid employment and would have left school earlier if they had been able to find a job, many of those who attempted to obtain jobs found that they lacked the experience and qualifications required. Thus, for many, the decision to continue school reflected restricted opportunities in the labour market.

In addition to their low motivation and low levels of achievement, many of the poorly achieving students interviewed did not have clear ideas about what they would like to do once they left school. For example, when asked what he wanted to do when he left school, Steve Mann replied, “I don’t know. I don’t know that”. Similarly, John Black, who eventually took a temporary job at his father’s place of work reported that it was hard to “lock on” to qualifications because he did not know what he wanted to do when he left school beyond obtaining a “classy job”.

Some students, however, did have clear career goals in mind. Bill Lady, for example, consistently maintained that he wanted to be an apprentice mechanic and Vince Lamb consistently reported that
he wanted to be an apprentice builder. Vince’s problem, however, was that he could not obtain the qualifications that were required.

Part of the reason for the emergence of the discouraged worker effect can be traced back to weaknesses in the students’ social networks. Herein lies a significant difference between the school-to-work transitions made between 1955 and 1980, and those of today. In the past school-leavers were able to draw on resources made available to them through their social networks to help make their school-to-work transitions effective, but these resources have declined in value. There are several reasons for this revealed by the data.

The parents of poorly achieving students are less able today to advise their sons of the kinds of jobs worth considering. For example, whereas Mr. Black was able to draw upon advice and resources made available through his parents’ social networks to access information about what constituted a good job, he could not extend similar resources to his son. One reason for this was that globalisation and the introduction of new technologies at his place of work have severely restricted employment opportunities and have reduced his ability to advise his son about job possibilities.

At the same time, credential inflation has eroded the ability of the parents of poorly achieving students to speak for their sons at their places of work. For example, Kim Robb’s father reported that he did not feel able to ask his employer for an apprenticeship for his son because he knew that Kim lacked the required school qualifications.
Economic changes have eroded the value of cultural traditions of the kind referred to by Cohen (1990). The Winn family is the best example of this. Mr. Winn, as a third generation butcher, was able to form an identity as a worker and to learn a trade through participating in a cultural tradition which helped facilitate his progression into the world of work. However, economic changes have led to the loss of the means through which this tradition could be passed on to his sons. As a result, his son’s transition from school to work is proving far more problematic than his own. In this respect, while Alan Winn’s social networks eventually provided a source of job information, converting this form of social capital into economic capital in terms of a job had led to a reliance upon the Training State.

Globalisation of the economy and the introduction of new technology have combined to erode the value of social networks by reducing the quality of available jobs. For example, where a significant proportion of the fathers interviewed were able to leave school at the earliest possible moment and train under the apprenticeship system, none of their sons was able to continue in this tradition. For instance, Kim’s lack of school qualifications meant that his father could not help him obtain an apprenticeship as a mechanic by “speaking for him” at his place of work. In most cases, however, it seems as though few school-leavers obtain apprenticeships directly from school and the necessity of completing pre-trades courses erects additional barriers to their success.

In addition, many of the jobs obtained through social networks
were of lower quality than those obtained through similar methods between 1955 and 1980. To start with, the majority of jobs obtained by the work-bound school-leavers in this study were not linked to formal training systems which might ensure they could obtain further work-related training. It is also much more common to find school-leavers in casual, part-time and temporary positions (mirroring trends apparent in national statistics such as those reported at the beginning of this chapter). For example, John obtained his first job at his father’s place of work as a temporary labourer on a sock-pressing machine.

It is important to stress that, while social networks have eroded in value, they continue to play an important role in helping poorly qualified school-leavers find jobs. These findings are in accordance with researchers who have established the continuing significance of social networks in helping poorly achieving students find employment. However, whereas in the past students could leave school at the earliest possible moment and enter full-time work in the labour market by utilising resources made available through their social networks, many students interviewed as part of this study remained in school for longer periods before using social networks to obtain jobs. They did so either because of the eroding value of social networks or, in a related way, in the hope that they would obtain further qualifications to compensate for their lack of network capital. For example, John continued his schooling because he wanted to obtain qualifications to lead him to a “classy job” rather than ending up in his father’s factory.

In contrast to the networks described in chapter two, those
described in this chapter are fragmented and only partially integrated into the social infrastructure. Thus, while the findings reported here support those in social network theory, they also suggest that the value of these networks to the State have decreased.

In terms of Beck's (1992) argument the data show that, as far as obtaining employment is concerned, poorly qualified students continue to rely on institutions such as the family. In this sense, the data gathered as part of this study do not support the notion that individuals are being freed from institutional constraints and, as a consequence, have become relatively independent of either inherited or newly formed ties. In terms of entry into the labour market, the erosion in the value of social networks suggests that poorly qualified, male school-leavers are more constrained today than in the past because social networks provide less access to good jobs. Moreover, those who have minimal access to social networks tend to compensate for this by relying upon other institutions, in particular the Training State. Those reliant upon the Training State in order to get a job may have been "liberated" from resources made available through their social networks, but are forced to depend upon other institutions. And, in an age of greater user-pays in education, trainees are increasingly required to pay for the privilege.

The case for social networks was furthered in Bill's biography where it was demonstrated that networks offer job-seekers tangible advantages, even in the "open" labour market. Bill's part-time employment, which was obtained through a social network, allowed
him to demonstrate to his potential employer his capacity for regular work. Consequently, distinctions between the open and closed labour markets may not be clear-cut.

As with all of the other students who found jobs directly from school, Bill's level of school achievement did not appear to play a significant role in securing a job. Other factors such as his stable work history were considered more important. This point is significant because it concurs with the views of social network theorists who argue that few employers use school performance as a basis for selecting new recruits.

**Conclusion**

The argument presented in this chapter is that globalisation, the introduction of new technology and credential inflation have combined to reduce the number of workers required, to change the range of skills many workers require and to increase the levels of credentials required to obtain many forms of employment. These changes have mostly affected un-credentialled workers in unskilled and semi-skilled segments of the labour market. Workers in these segments have experienced declining wage levels, decreasing job security and increasing rates of unemployment.

For the State these changes are important because students can no longer leave school at the earliest opportunity and obtain well-paid jobs in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. Consequently, students are remaining at school as discouraged workers. In this chapter the uncertainty experienced by discouraged workers was
traced back to a decline in the value of the social networks that poorly achieving, low and high-SES students could access. This is not to argue that social networks are no longer useful; indeed the evidence presented suggests that they play a crucial role in securing work for poorly qualified school-leavers. However, the way networks are used has changed. Networks tend to be relied upon if the school leavers are unable to find employment through other means. For example, although John initially resisted the idea of working in his father's place of work, his lack of success in finding a suitable alternative led him to accept a temporary job there. In addition the jobs obtained through social networks tend to lead to jobs of lower quality when compared to the situation which existed between 1955 and 1980. Those students with limited or no access to valuable social networks tend to rely upon the Training State in the hope of it fulfilling similar functions or they become unemployed. In this light, social networks are no longer contributing as significantly to making school-to-work transitions efficient.

According to Habermas' model, these shifts are significant because they highlight that the problem of efficient school-to-work transitions is no longer being resolved in the socio-cultural sphere. This raises the possibility that state intervention will be required to increase the efficiency of school-to-work transitions. One expression of this intervention, which appeared in the data, is the way students are looking to the Training State to improve their chances in the labour market. This shift indicates that an attempt at making the school-to-work transitions of poorly qualified school-leavers efficient is occurring in the political-administrative sphere via the
Training State. This issue is pursued further in chapters five, six and seven.

Overall, the erosion in the value of social networks is significant because it suggests that as capitalism evolves it has exhausted a resource which formerly helped make school-to-work transitions efficient. As Hazeldine (1998) recently noted, New Zealanders have been living off their social capital, depreciating it without devoting energy and resources to replenish it. His argument is that economic and social change have disrupted the social fabric of society and resulted in a number of undesirable effects - including a loss of trust among strangers and a decline in the quality of relationships in society. While in the context of the arguments presented in this thesis it would be preferable to re-orientate Hazeldine's claim to implicate the State, his observation is accurate with regard to the efficiency of school-to-work transitions. The depreciation of this resource suggests that state intervention is required in order to replace or strengthen this weakened form of social capital.

It is also plausible that the emergence of the discouraged worker effect is, in part, a result of previous forms of state intervention in education. This is explored in the following chapter.

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1 Doeringer et al. (1991) note that in the 15 years preceding 1973 the earnings of young men improved almost continuously.

for all young workers aged between 16 and 26 years, between 1981 and 1991 in the United States.

3 This figure is in stark contrast to that reported in chapter one where it was shown that in 1960, 40 per cent of all students left after completing just two years secondary schooling or at the age of about 14.

4 ‘No formal qualification’ is defined by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (1998c) as no School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate or Higher School Certificate passes and less than 12 credits at level one on the NQF.
CHAPTER FOUR

ASSESSMENT AND CURRICULUM REFORM: THE STATE'S
CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITIONS

Introduction

In chapter three it was shown that in terms of helping-poorly qualified school-leavers find jobs, the value of social networks has decreased. For the State, the decline in the value of these networks means that the facilitation of efficient school-to-work transitions is no longer occurring effectively within the socio-cultural subsystem.

This chapter argues that since the development of mass schooling in New Zealand, the role played by social networks in helping students to find employment has been buttressed by state intervention. This intervention has largely been to limit achievement and participation in education. In terms of assessment practices, state intervention has involved developing and modifying norm-referenced examinations to limit students progressing to higher levels of education. Essentially, this intervention attempted to make school-to-work transitions efficient by pushing students out into the labour market as quickly as possible.

However, the ability of the State to maintain this function has been undermined by credential inflation (Dore, 1976; Collins,
1979). In order to maintain the selective function of education, the State has extended the time necessary to achieve the qualifications demanded for entry into high-status employment. In adopting this approach the State has contributed to the discouraged worker effect because it has encouraged students to remain in education for longer periods, while the retention of selective assessment practices means that many leave school poorly qualified.

State intervention has also been designed to increase the efficiency of school-to-work transitions by developing new forms of curricula. These were designed to give students the technical and vocational skills perceived to be required in the labour market and to reduce credential inflation by encouraging students to opt out of the race for high-status qualifications. However, as the following review shows, technical and vocational curricula have suffered from a lack of status when compared to academic curricula. Consequently, there has been a tendency towards academic drift and this has undermined the State's attempts to reduce demand for academic qualifications.

To sustain these arguments this chapter examines aspects of the history of assessment and curriculum reform in New Zealand. By focusing on the historical experience the chapter aims to show how the State has previously organised schooling in order to make school-to-work transitions efficient. This relates to the previous chapter by identifying the State's contribution to the discouraged worker effect. It relates to subsequent chapters by suggesting that solutions to the discouraged worker effect must involve the
development of new ways of organising education.

State intervention and selective assessment practices

Historically, assessment practices have limited student progression to higher levels of schooling. However, as this review shows, selective assessment practices in New Zealand have suffered from problems of credential inflation and, where two qualifications exist at one level of schooling, status differential. This means that one qualification is deemed to have higher status and is, therefore, sought by increasing proportions of students.

These pressures have been problematic for the State, in rendering the selective function of particular examinations ineffective. This has necessitated additional state intervention to reassert the selective function of schooling. Typically, this intervention has involved the State modifying existing assessments in the senior secondary school, or developing new procedures. One effect of this has been the extension of the time taken to obtain high-status qualifications. In order to substantiate this claim and relate it to the discouraged worker effect, it is necessary to review the historical evidence.

Rising demand for secondary level education in general and a desire to provide secondary education for academically able students, prompted the introduction of the Free Place Legislation 1901 (Recess Education Committee, 1930). From this date, students who passed the Proficiency Examination at the end of Standard Six could attend secondary school free of charge.
Hogben, who was the Inspector-General of Schools at the time, thought that about one-third of all primary school-leavers would gain Proficiency, though not all this portion would proceed to secondary school. It was hoped Proficiency would act as a gatekeeper, allowing only the intellectual elite access to a secondary school education. Those who could not pass the examination were considered to be more profitably engaged in paid work in the labour market or in the home. However, Hogben's faith that Proficiency would be both a gatekeeper and an examination with consistent standards was unfounded. One criticism was that academic standards were being compromised by the examiners (school inspectors) who lacked uniformity about what was considered an appropriate standard for the exam. A lack of any uniform assessment practices and the burgeoning demand for secondary education led to large numbers of pupils of varying ability making use of free schooling.

The popularity of the scheme amongst students and their parents, combined with the apparent low standard of the examination, led to criticisms that too many low-ability students were entering secondary school. This raised questions about the efficiency of school-to-work transitions. For example, questions were asked about the value of providing low-ability students with an academic education when they were thought to be better-off either in employment or technical training.

I have seen pupils that have qualified for free places by gaining certificates of proficiency, who seem unable to cope with the work of the secondary school, and are accordingly
deriving very little benefit from it. ... in most cases it is probable that the boys or girls referred to would be better employed in learning a trade, or in training themselves for domestic life, extending their general education and beginning the special preparation for their life work by attending continuation and technical classes in the evening. (Hogben, 1905, p. 5)

To reduce the number of pupils gaining free places and thereby limit participation in the secondary schools, the State attempted to increase the standard of Proficiency. To achieve this, sets of examinations in English, Arithmetic, Geography and Drawing were supplied by the Department of Education, and marks for the examination subjects were promulgated: English was to be marked out of 400, Arithmetic 200, Geography 100, and Drawing 100. At least 50 per cent of the aggregate marks, with not less that 30 per cent in either English or Arithmetic, were required for Proficiency (Ewing, 1970). Despite this, the numbers of students gaining Proficiency continued to increase. Between 1904 and 1914, the percentage pass requirements were again increased to limit the numbers gaining Proficiency and the Department of Education developed a new certificate - the Certificate of Competency – in the hope that it would reduce demand for Proficiency by encouraging low-ability students to opt out of the examination. Competency was offered at the same level as Proficiency and was designed to indicate that a student had satisfactorily completed primary school and was therefore entitled to free education at a technical college rather than secondary school.
From the outset, however, Competency was identified as being the poor relation to Proficiency. It indicated that the holder had passed Standard Six but had failed Proficiency. Since Proficiency assured free access to an academic education, it was considered to be the premier qualification and the development of Competency did little to reduce demand for Proficiency.

In the face of continued criticism about the standard of Proficiency the percentage mark required to pass was increased. However, this again did little to reduce the numbers passing the examination and in 1912, the pass rate for Proficiency reached 77 per cent and averaged about 70 per cent per year thereafter (ibid.).

There are several explanations for the differences between what Hogben had hoped Proficiency would achieve and the reality.

The first is that parents and students at the time viewed a free secondary education as a means to gain social mobility. This seemed justified, with employers at the time viewing Proficiency as both a preparatory and terminal qualification, and offering employment to those who had obtained it. A second reason was the ability of teachers to prepare students for the examination by "teaching to the test". Thirdly, it became apparent that schools were keeping students longer in the lower levels in order to better prepare them for Proficiency. This was a direct result of the perception that the effectiveness of the school, and, in particular, the effectiveness of teachers, would be judged by the number of
students who passed the examination. By preventing students, who the teachers believed would not pass Proficiency, from sitting the examination until they were ready, teachers hoped to increase their own and their schools' status. This practice was encouraged in 1919 when one criterion for a good teacher under a new grading system was the number of students who had obtained Proficiency. Pass rates often formed the basis upon which appointment and dismissal of teaching staff was made, an undeniable incentive for teachers to increase pass rates (Recess Education Committee, 1930).

The rising popularity of the Proficiency Examination was matched by a decline in its status. The extension of free secondary education to all in 1936 rendered Proficiency worthless as an entrance qualification to secondary education. And, in 1937, when Proficiency was abolished it was virtually worthless as an employment credential as most employers now demanded the fourth form Public Service Examination or the fifth form Matriculation Examination.

The abolition of Proficiency reflected its lack of usefulness as a gate-keeping qualification but the move was not unopposed. Conservative politicians defended the examination, claiming that it was a measure of standards which promoted pupils on the basis of ability. This view found sympathy with private-school authorities who were concerned that the loss of Proficiency may reduce the status they gained through enrolling a large number of students who succeeded in the examination. By contrast, the move was welcomed by Education Boards, the Inspectorate and many
teachers. These groups had long argued that Proficiency had reduced the opportunity to offer a broad curriculum in primary schools.

While the primary school curriculum was no longer held in the grip of Proficiency, the secondary school curriculum was becoming increasingly dominated by the needs of Matriculation, which was rapidly becoming the status qualification of the day. Matriculation was administered by the University Entrance Board and was sat in the third year of secondary schooling. It was significant in that it provided access to university education. Matriculation was intended to indicate that a student had successfully completed an academic course of study and was capable of success at university level.

Matriculation’s position as the top secondary school qualification meant that its intended and actual roles soon differed. School principals at the time reported that their attempts to introduce non-academic subject options were being frustrated by parental and student pressure for Matriculation. This was particularly worrying as the great majority of pupils did not intend entering university. From this perspective, many students were seen to continue at school in an attempt to obtain qualifications and skills which would be of little use to them in their future destinations in the labour market.

Thus an examination, the primary purpose of which was to select pupils fit for university work, has been used by banks and business firms as a means of appraising the attainments of
applicants for junior positions. The University can not be censured for this; the employers have misinterpreted the purpose of the examination. (Thomas, Beeby & Oram, 1939, p. 57)

The belief that employers had misunderstood the purpose of the Matriculation Examination prompted calls for reform from secondary and technical school principals, who wanted a leaving certificate for those not intending to proceed to university. Government officials, too, continued to be concerned about the relevance of a curriculum dominated by an examination designed to test a student’s ability to successfully complete a course of academic study. The Report of the Royal Commission on University Education in New Zealand (1925) claimed that Matriculation must be removed before satisfactory courses of secondary education, bearing more directly on the vocational destinations of pupils, could be introduced. In other words, there was a perception that schools could contribute more to making school-to-work transitions efficient by giving students skills relevant to their future roles in the labour market.

The increasing popularity of Matriculation led to a concern that the examination was no longer fulfilling its selective function. In this instance, the solution was simply to develop a new qualification: School Certificate. The hope was that this new qualification would strengthen the selective function of schooling by providing an alternative examination which would encourage students to opt out of attempting Matriculation.
School Certificate was introduced in 1934 at the same level as Matriculation. While Matriculation and School Certificate were to be of similar standard, their purposes were entirely different. School Certificate was designed as a school-leaving examination targeted at non-university aspirants while holders of Matriculation were deemed to have reached the standard required for entry to university. Originally, School Certificate consisted of the 19 Matriculation subjects, under the control of the universities, and 12 subjects of a less academic type (for example, Technical Drawing, Bookkeeping, Shorthand, Typing and Needlework) controlled by the Department of Education. Put to the market, School Certificate rapidly proved unable to match Matriculation in terms of status and public support. For example, Lee and Lee (1992, p. 37) report that soon after School Certificate's inception in 1934, approximately 18 times as many candidates entered for Matriculation as entered for School Certificate. However, to the Chief Inspector of Secondary Schools this was not a great surprise. Two years before the introduction of School Certificate he had warned that its subsequent success would depend upon employers and the general public accepting the status of the qualification. As it transpired, many employers did not fully understand School Certificate nor did they make extensive use of the qualification (Archer, 1983). For example, almost one-half the employers questioned in a New Zealand Council of Educational Research survey conducted in 1936 expressed a lack of understanding about School Certificate. Moreover, most preferred their employees to have passed Matriculation (Lee & Lee, 1992). Clearly then, in the eyes of the public, and employers, School Certificate was of inferior status to
Matriculation.

By 1940, there was much support from within the Post Primary Teachers' Association and the Universities for an end to the dual examination system by extending Matriculation into the sixth form. However, the Minister of Education's response was to extend a revised School Certificate and Matriculation into the sixth form. In addition, Matriculation was renamed as University Entrance. One reason for extending School Certificate into the sixth form was that the Minister was eager to prevent it from becoming a preparatory course for University Entrance. The idea was that School Certificate should only be a three-year course for the able minority who might complete the examination without strain, but, for the majority it was considered a four-year course. In order to increase the appeal of School Certificate, the Department of Education (1943) recommended that the number of optional subjects be increased. It was hoped that these changes would lead to the adoption of School Certificate as the general measure of a satisfactorily completed post-primary education. To aid employer and public acceptance of School Certificate, the Department of Education (1943) asserted that School Certificate should maintain academic rigour by including only substantial subjects. In addition it argued that there should be parity in terms of the difficulty of these subjects and that School Certificate should be an indication of a well-rounded education.

However, the assertion that the new School Certificate should become an important leaving qualification from the sixth form did not resemble the reality. Soon, sitting School Certificate in the
sixth form became the exception rather than the rule as more and more students took the examination in the fifth form. This led School Certificate to become a preparatory course for University Entrance, the very situation the Minister was keen to avoid. However, the separation of School Certificate from University Entrance did mean that it began to partially function as intended. The absence of any competition from other higher status qualifications operating at the same level within the school system meant that market support for the revised School Certificate was strong. Soon School Certificate had become the accepted entry qualification for nursing and teacher training and the minimum entry qualification for the New Zealand Certificate of Engineering (Lee & Lee, 1992).

However, like its predecessors, such as the Proficiency Examination, credential inflation began to render the selective function of School Certificate ineffective and hence placed its status in jeopardy. Between 1946 and 1985, for example, fifth-form enrolments and School Certificate entries increased by 382 and 590 per cent respectively. Because more students were attempting School Certificate, the number of students entering the sixth form and attempting University Entrance also increased. For example, between 1946 and 1985, sixth-form enrolments and University Entrance entries increased by 757 and 967 per cent respectively (ibid., p.44).

Soon University Entrance became the premier school-leaving qualification and its relevance as a leaving qualification was questioned. The questions were the same as those asked years
before about Proficiency; i.e. a sixth-form curriculum geared to meet the demands of a qualification designed for those intending entry to university overlooked the fact that most attempting it would not proceed to this form of post-school education. Similarly, University Entrance was considered unable to meet the vocational needs of a heterogeneous population which had divergent aspirations. By the late 1960s attention became focused upon developing a general leaving qualification as an alternative to University Entrance.

Thus, Sixth Form Certificate was introduced at the same level as University Entrance but, in contrast, was internally assessed. Again, the aim was to develop a qualification that was relevant to the post-school destinations of most learners, which would appeal to and motivate those students who were not intending university study, and which employers would find valuable. However, the two qualifications did not sit comfortably together at the same level and University Entrance was seen to have higher status than Sixth Form Certificate.

By 1971, the Post Primary Teachers Association began advocating that Sixth Form Certificate be the only qualification available at the sixth form level. To facilitate this aim, attempts were made to combine the Sixth Form Certificate and University Entrance Examinations into a single sixth-form award. As a result of this single subject passes for Sixth Form Certificate had been introduced in 1974 and the University Entrance Board had consented to the Certificate becoming the sole sixth-form award. However, the move towards amalgamation did not proceed as
early as signs had indicated. The stiffest resistance came from the University Entrance Board. The Board expressed concerns that poor moderation might lead to varying standards and that some Sixth Form Certificate course prescriptions were not suitable preparation for university study. The upshot was that University Entrance and Sixth Form Certificate continued as distinct qualifications, co-existing at the same level. Students in the sixth form were faced with two qualifications: one academic and leading to university and the other an internally assessed certificate administered by the Department of Education.

Just as School Certificate and University Entrance failed to co-exist at the same level with comparable status, so too did Sixth Form Certificate and University Entrance. Soon, sitting University Entrance became the norm and held status over Sixth Form Certificate, an award students received for satisfactorily attending school.

The collapse of the youth labour market in the early 1980s made the position of the various examinations more tenuous. Rising retention rates rendered School Certificate virtually worthless, and preparation for University Entrance continued to dominate the curriculum. This led to claims that the curriculum was at odds with the needs and capabilities of students, many of whom were not intending university study. At the time the Post Primary Teachers’ Association advocated moving University Entrance to the seventh form in order to free up the sixth form curriculum. The Employers’ Federation, too, expressed disapproval of University Entrance claiming it was not relevant to
meeting the vocational aspirations and employment destinations of the student majority (New Zealand Employers Federation, 1981).

In 1986, those keen for an end to University Entrance in the sixth form had their way. The Government announced that the examination was to be abolished and that University Bursary, which was sat at the end of the seventh form, would now be required to gain access to university. Until then University Bursary was not required to obtain access to university, but those who had achieved highly in the examination were awarded a small grant to assist in their university study. However, the move was greeted with dismay by some. For example, John Graham, the Principal of Auckland Grammar School, saw the move as part of a general shift away from the high standards which he believed could only be generated by external norm-referenced examinations (Graham, 1990; Hubbard, 1995). However, all that had really occurred was that the usefulness of University Entrance as a selective mechanism had been reduced. This was the result of the combination of increasing retention rates and credential inflation, which deflated the value of the qualification. Further, the abolition of University Entrance promoted University Bursary as the premier school-leaving certificate and encouraged students to remain at school.

The problems experienced by the University Entrance Examination were not unique. Rather, were apparent in assessment as early as the extension of mass schooling and the introduction of the Proficiency examination. Historically, the State
has attempted to maintain the selective function of education by increasing the level of achievement required to pass particular examinations, promoting new qualifications in senior secondary schooling, or by encouraging students to opt out of the race for high status qualifications through providing alternative forms of assessment.

However, there has been an unwillingness among the public and employers to accept two qualifications at the same level in secondary school as intended by policy makers. In every case where there has been a dual system (i.e., Competency and Proficiency, School Certificate and University Entrance, and Sixth Form Certificate and University Entrance) one qualification has been considered of higher status.

As increasing proportions of students chose to sit high-status examinations, the selective function, and consequently the status of these examinations reduced to the point where they no longer functioned as intended. At that point, students and parents looked to the next qualification in the hierarchy in order to find advantage in the labour market. Hence, student and parental choice and the choices made by employers have made great impact on the way qualifications function.

State interventions which have shifted high-status qualifications upward in secondary education have ensured that schools have retained their selective function. However, this has come at a cost. It has meant students must stay in school for extended periods, attempting to obtain qualifications which hold
out the promise of social mobility. This has reduced the ability of state education systems to promote efficient school-to-work transitions because state intervention has itself contributed to the discouraged worker effect. This suggests that any state intervention designed to help solve the discouraged worker effect will need to promote a different approach to that adopted in the past.

State intervention and curriculum reform

As in the history of assessment reform, the history of curriculum reform in New Zealand reflects an attempt by the State to make school-to-work transitions efficient. However, the process of reforming the curriculum also reflects a struggle between various interest groups. These groups both facilitate and frustrate curriculum change. This struggle is important because it suggests that attempts to make school-to-work transitions more efficient through curriculum reform do not always proceed as the State plans. It is possible to assess the effectiveness of state intervention and predict the likely outcomes of the NQF by looking at the ways in which various groups have reacted to curriculum reform.

Teachers who deliver the curriculum are an obvious interest group. The curriculum helps define their area of skill and largely determines the knowledge they must be familiar with. Because teachers are relied upon to interpret and deliver the curriculum, successful curriculum reform relies heavily upon their support (Wagner & Sass, 1992). Parents and their children also have an interest in what is taught in schools. While there are many
cultural, social and religious reasons for this, one principal source of this interest rests in the role played by the curriculum in promoting social mobility. Thus, historically, the most popular curriculum is that which leads to qualifications which hold out the promise of social mobility (Lee & Lee, 1992).

In a related way employers have an interest in the curriculum. As the "gate-keepers" to employment and the possibility of social mobility, employers play a significant role in defining what is valuable knowledge. One way in which they achieve this is by selecting those they view as suitably qualified school-leavers as new employees.

Historically, the State has promoted curriculum reform to improve the selective function of schooling and improve the employability of school-leavers. In both cases state intervention has intended to improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions. However, the power of the State to define what knowledge is valuable is dependent upon the compliance of various interest groups. Moreover, the way these groups interpret and utilise the opportunities offered by curriculum reform will not always be as intended by policy-makers (Ball, 1987). This means that what policy-makers intend with respect to reform, and the actual outcomes of reform, are likely to be different (Dale, 1989). In this way the State has had little power in determining the outcomes of curriculum reform or in conferring status upon curricula by decree.

Prior to the 1901 introduction of the system of free entry into
New Zealand secondary schools, the secondary-school curriculum was strongly academic. This was partly the result of an English heritage and partly through the move by secondary schools in 1888 to align themselves more closely with the university system by adopting the Matriculation Examination as the premier leaving qualification (Lee & Lee, 1992). The status conferred by Matriculation, and the desire for rural children to be offered the same access to credentials as their urban counterparts, led to the adoption of a de facto common core curriculum in district high and secondary schools. Thus, while no officially defined common core curriculum existed, the impact of Matriculation had the same effect.

Under pressure to satisfy demand from academically ambitious members of the public for more secondary school places, Liberal Premier, Richard Seddon introduced the Free Secondary Places Legislation at the turn of the century. This provided those formerly excluded by cost with access to secondary schooling. As a result secondary school rolls soon began to increase. This created strife for the then Inspector General of Schools, Hogben, who argued that an academic curriculum geared to preparing students for university was only necessary if every student was intending to go to university (Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand, 1962). With only one in twenty students advancing to university, this was not the case. Consequently, schools were seen to be producing school-leavers with qualifications that did not reflect students' future destinations. In addition, it was feared the professions were likely to become overcrowded unless something was done to
create a bias towards industry and manufacturing. In an attempt to rectify the bias towards academic curricula, Hogben argued that manual training of some form or other should be introduced into secondary schools, not as a separate subject, but rather such that it would have a true relationship with other subjects in the curriculum. This, it was felt, would lead to a curriculum that was far more useful because it would bear a closer relevance to the perceived demands of employers. It was also hoped that including technical education in academic schools would encourage some of the more able and intelligent youths to enter industry (Butchers, 1932).

The first legislative attempt to introduce a technical curriculum occurred earlier in 1895 with the Manual and Technical Elementary Instruction Act. However, due to a lack of funding, the Act failed to have any impact. This legislation was followed by the Manual and Technical Instructions Acts of 1900 and 1902 which offered financial incentives to schools to offer instruction in science, agriculture and commercial subjects. However, the inability of the Department of Education to prescribe the secondary school curriculum, and pressure exerted upon schools from ambitious and conservative parents desiring an academic education, meant that these Acts also failed to channel students into industry-based education (Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand, 1962).

For parents and their children this presented little problem as one or two years of secondary education was enough to gain access to middle-class occupations which promised social
mobility. Consequently, Hogben's faith in vocational education was not replicated in the general community. A common fear was that, should youth be directed into technical curricula, vocational opportunities would be restricted and not advanced. For example, McKenzie, Lee and Lee (1990) reported that working-class people, "wanted little to do with 'technical schooling'" (p. 4) which they suspected to be chiefly designed to keep their children in the factory. Similarly, many employers continued to train the skilled workers they needed through such means as the apprenticeship system. Consequently employers did not exert strong pressure to have technical instruction in schools.

While secondary schools resisted the opportunities offered by the Manual and Technical Instruction Acts of 1900 and 1902, a number of technical associations and some district education boards did not. They made use of the financial provisions offered through an extension of the Free Places Legislation to include evening classes in technical instruction. The apparent popularity of these courses led to the view that the public endorsed the new type of education. Hogben came to surmise that separate technical schools, while not the ideal solution, would improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions by providing some post-primary technical education. It was also hoped that providing low-ability, free-place students with an alternative form of post-primary education would ease the growing concern about the academic performance of these students in secondary schools (ibid.). Consequently, any attempt to introduce technical curricula into secondary schools was abandoned in favour of establishing technical schools.
Technical schools, the argument of the day ran, would provide opportunities for students whose ability meant they would have limited success in academic schools. It was argued that the curriculum offered would be more motivating as pupils would be gaining skills considered to bear a closer relevance to those required in the labour market. In sum, technical schools would help make school-to-work transitions efficient. Also, it was believed that separate technical schools would enhance the status of technical subjects and thus encourage the academically able as well as those who were "good with their hands", to pursue careers in industry.

By 1910 technical high schools offering a more practical curriculum\(^1\) were established in all the main centers. However, limited vacancies in the manufacturing and industrial sectors of the labour market provided technical schools with only limited opportunities to link their practical curriculum with job openings, let alone those occupations that promoted social mobility. In addition, on-the-job tuition through the apprenticeship system continued as a common form of technical training and employers were unwilling to give apprentices time off for study (Recess Education Committee, 1930). It soon became apparent that technical schools were most successful in teaching one-year courses that provided preparatory training for occupations in agriculture or office work. The fears of parents were soon realised as the type of school (technical high or secondary school) soon became associated with social background. For example, in 1926 W.J. Morrell, the Rector of Otago Boys' High School, reported to his Board that he believed the public would continue to see his
school as servicing “the professional, official or business classes” while the local technical school would be seen “to cater for the artisan or lower commercial classes” (cited in McKenzie, 1992, p. 34).

Nonetheless, a number of academic schools began to offer non-academic courses in response to market pressure. The reality for academic schools was that many of their pupils were also short-stay pupils preparing themselves for the labour market (McKenzie, Lee, & Lee, 1990). Moreover, pressure from ambitious parents, who viewed academic subjects as offering social mobility, led to the range of academic subjects in the technical colleges being gradually increased. Eventually, the technical colleges started to invade their rivals’ domain by offering courses of study which led to the Junior Civil Service and the Matriculation Examinations (Butchers, 1932). This meant that Technical and Secondary schools became increasingly similar.

If the credentials obtained in technical colleges were seen by parents as not having the same status as those from secondary schools, why did parents choose to send their children to technical colleges? Part of the explanation lies with the Proficiency Examination. With the development of intelligence testing, particularly in the United States and Great Britain, support was offered for a technical curriculum on the grounds of efficiency. The argument went that students had differing levels of intelligence and consequently different levels of schooling were needed to cater for different levels of potential. A technical curriculum was needed to meet the potential of those who were
good with their hands and not academically inclined, while an academic curriculum was needed for those with "superior" minds. It was for these reasons that access to secondary schools was limited to those who had passed Proficiency, which was sat at the end of Standard Six. Those who failed this examination but passed the Certificate of Competency were limited to attending technical colleges. Thus, primary school performance dictated the type of post-primary education a student received. Parents also sent their children to technical colleges because they were the local providers of post-primary education. Thus, some students attended either a secondary school or a technical college by virtue of location rather than their ability or preference. There were also distinctions between the various types of school, with the school attended being associated with one’s social-class. Thus, students often went to a particular type of school because of their social backgrounds.

There was a coinciding debate emerging concerning the development of a common core curriculum. This began to deepen in the 1920's. The Report of Royal Commission on University Education in New Zealand (1925) suggested that the requirements of pupils would be best met through studying a common core curriculum augmented by a number of options which matched individual needs and abilities. Despite the support offered for a common core curriculum, the Minister at the time, R.A. Wright, resisted the move, assuming there was a wide range of human abilities and interests and that a common core curriculum could not possibly meet such a wide range of demands (Lee & Lee, 1992). Hence, differential schooling was closely related to the
efficiency of educational provision. This view, however, was challenged in the *Report of the Syllabus Revision Committee* (1928) which called for the abolition of technical high schools as separate institutions and argued that the adoption of a common core curriculum could help reduce the differing levels of status accorded to technical and academic subjects. In a later report, *Educational Reorganisation in New Zealand*, the Recess Education Committee (1930) spoke out against early specialisation, calling instead for the introduction of a broad-based common curriculum that promoted delayed specialisation and practical training relevant to New Zealand’s agricultural and industrial base. This approach, it was argued, would not only promote economic growth but help individuals better cope with the increased materialism and commercialism associated with modern-day life. In addition, the introduction of new technology was perceived to have reduced the intrinsic interest workers used to have in their work. The implication was that a common core-curriculum would provide all workers with a basis to overcome the alienation of the workplace through expanding other spheres of their lives, particularly their leisure time.

Calls for a common curriculum were supported by Labour Party politicians of the day who saw a differentiated schooling system as promoting and supporting social-class divisions. A common core-curriculum was needed not only to curtail the divisive effects of the development of technical and secondary schools but because all learners, irrespective of their ability, had common needs. McKenzie, Lee and Lee (1990) describe the Labour Party’s position on post-compulsory education at the time:
First a commitment to added general education for all; second, a preference for this taking place in a common institution; third, opposition to any early course specialisation that which might be reducible to narrow trade training; and fourth, acceptance that "non-academic" subjects and activities had a worthy place as part of general education. (p. 22)

For a variety of reasons the development of a common core-curriculum was resisted. Some principals felt it would disadvantage their academic pupils, while the incumbent Ministers of Education of the time, such as R.A. Wright as noted above, saw the distinction between academic and technical education as justified, because not all students were of equal intelligence (Lee & Lee, 1992).

It was not until after the release of The post-primary curriculum (Department of Education, 1943) that the move towards a compulsory common core curriculum was given a decisive push. The report recommended the development of a compulsory common core curriculum, claiming that such a curriculum was needed to educate all adolescents for their forthcoming roles as workers, neighbours, home makers and citizens. The Report advocated that schools had an educative function concerned with creating individuals who were, "not only self-disciplined and free in sprit, gifted in work and in enjoyment, worthy and desirable persons, but also responsible and generous in social life" (Department of Education, 1943, p. 5).

In general the Committee felt that education had been sacrificed to the narrow interests of the economy. However, the
Committee was careful to point out that they were not sacrificing vocational education for a general education. Rather, they believed that such distinctions were false. In fact, a general education could be obtained by practical methods. At the same time, the need to adequately cater for non-academically inclined students and to help make school-to-work transitions efficient, required that there be further differentiation within the curriculum. To achieve this the compulsory core-curriculum was augmented with a range of optional subjects to enable individual needs and desires to be satisfied; providing this range was also viewed as eliminating human wastage. In other words, it would help make school-to-work transitions efficient by providing school-leavers with the skills demanded by employers. To assist in this process, it was decided to extend School Certificate to include this wide range of core subjects and options. In addition, it had been decided to move Matriculation (renamed University Entrance) into the sixth form and the hope was that, as a result, School Certificate would become the major leaving certificate (Lee & Lee, 1992). The Committee was clear about the role it perceived for the revised School Certificate: it was to be a general educational qualification that bore little relationship to the more academic University Entrance. The report expressed thus:

... courses leading up to the School Certificate should, we think, be rounded-off - not, of course, in the sense that the pupil should be able to regard his education as finished, but in the sense that they should not be merely preparatory to later schooling. In general, therefore, our proposed School Certificate prescriptions reflect the outlook of the educated
layman rather than that characteristic of the academic or technical specialist, and differ in this respect from the corresponding prescriptions for the University Entrance Examination. (Department of Education, 1943, p. 9)

In addition, the Committee aimed to promote the development of equal status between technical and academic curricula. By combining these two forms of education in one system and revising and extending School Certificate to include many of these subjects, it was hoped that much of the status distinction, existing between academic and vocational education would disappear. It was hoped students would take subjects that prepared them both to be good citizens and for their future roles in the labour market. This would be both fairer, as students would be given the same opportunities, and more economically efficient, as students not intending to go to university could learn skills that would help them make efficient school-to-work transitions.

The development of the common core curriculum and the School Certificate Examination further reduced the differences between academic and technical schools. In 1962, the *Report of the Commission on Education* claimed that School Certificate had been a "great leveller" (Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand, 1962, p. 384) by reducing distinctions between vocational and academic education; in other words, by reducing distinctions between academic and technical schools.

As the differences between technical and academic schools increasingly became a reflection of the social composition of the two, and less the subject matter taught in these schools and how
they were administered, technical schools began to lose whatever distinctive character they had left. This, combined with the shift of technical education to the tertiary sector, removed the need for technical schools to exist. Within 15 years of the *Report of the Commission on Education in New Zealand* (1962) the few remaining technical schools were gone.

However, despite the best intentions of the State, the subject-status hierarchies in School Certificate remained under the comprehensive system. The adoption of single subject passes in 1968 was followed in 1974 with scaling. Scaling determined the pass rates of particular subjects on the basis of the calibre of the students taking those particular subjects (St George, 1989). Thus, the fact that there was a hierarchy of subjects based upon the ability of pupils taking particular subjects became officially recognised. This was characterised by a demarcation between academic and technical subjects. Higher pass rates have been consistently awarded to the academic subjects at the expense of vocational subjects. In 1985, for example, the pass rates in subjects such as Latin (86.6 per cent), French (83 per cent), and Physical Science (80.2 per cent) were much higher than for "technical" subjects such as Typewriting (49.1 per cent), Home Economics (44 per cent) and Engineering (48 per cent) (Hughes & Lauder, 1990). The existence of a hierarchy of subjects was a fact that had been long recognised by parents who, throughout the history of curriculum development in New Zealand, have tended to perceive academic curricula as having higher status. However, as was the case with technical schools, the technical curriculum attracted a significant proportion of students.
However, these students tend to come from low-SES backgrounds. Hughes and Lauder (1990) present figures which show that students from low-SES backgrounds take fewer School Certificate subjects than their high-SES counterparts, and the former group are less likely to pass them. When these trends were related to the number of high and low-pass subjects taken by students from different SES-backgrounds, Hughes and Lauder found that high-SES students take far more high-pass subjects than their low-SES counterparts.

Under a differentiated schooling system the predominance of low-SES students in technical education occurred as a result of selective policies linked to the examination system and as a result of the class-based nature of the educational decision-making process. Under a comprehensive system, such as that examined by Hughes and Lauder, this occurred as a result of class-based decision-making processes alone.

Conclusion

This review of the history of assessment and curriculum reform shows that state intervention has been designed with the intention of making school-to-work transitions efficient. The State has worked towards this end through attempting to limit participation and achievement in education and by attempting to give students economically relevant qualifications. In terms of assessment reform this is evidenced in state intervention, which has been designed to ensure the maintenance of the selective function of schooling. In particular, state intervention has been
designed to limit the number of students proceeding to further study at university through developing examinations such as Matriculation and University Entrance.

However, credential inflation has undermined the ability of such examinations to limit participation and achievement to the desired extent. Historically, the State has attempted to reassert the selective function of schooling by extending the length of time required before students can attempt to obtain high-status qualifications. This form of intervention can be seen to have contributed to the emergence of the discouraged worker effect because it has simply forced students to stay in education for longer periods. Thus, the erosion in the value of manual labour and the maintenance of the selective function of education have combined to create the discouraged worker effect.

Another form of state intervention designed to improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions has occurred in the area of curriculum reform. This is evident in the State’s introduction of new forms of technical and vocational education. This intervention has been geared towards improving the efficiency of school-to-work transitions by providing school-leavers with the skills perceived to be demanded by employers. In addition, this form of intervention has attempted to reduce pressure placed on high-status qualifications by encouraging students to opt out of the race for academic qualifications.

However, pressure from parents and students for high-status qualifications and the apparent demand from employers for
academic qualifications led to academic drift. Consequently, attempts to improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions through curriculum reform were ultimately undermined by pressures beyond the control of the State.

As noted in chapters two and three, part of the reason that employers tend not use school qualifications when selecting work-bound school leavers is that the kind of information they require is not provided. The ineffectiveness of school qualifications may occur because of how the State has previously attempted to organise and structure schooling. In this respect, the State may be able to improve the range of information that schools provide about the abilities and skills of work-bound school-leavers. If this was achieved it could help alleviate problems created by academic drift and credential inflation. Indeed, the ineffectiveness of previous methods employed by the State to achieve efficient school-to-work transitions, highlights the fact that different solutions are required. This possibility is explored in the next chapter where the State’s response to the emergence of the discouraged worker effect is reviewed in depth.

1 Through its ability to dictate curriculum through the Free Places Legislation the Government tried to ensure that learning in technical schools was not unduly specialised. Thus students were required to take technical courses as well as academic courses including English, arithmetic, mathematics and elementary science.

2 The core subjects set out by The post-primary school curriculum (1943) were English, Social Studies, General Science, Elementary Mathematics, Physical Education, Music, Art or Craft (including Home Crafts for girls).
CHAPTER FIVE

CONTRASTING SOLUTIONS TO THE DISCOURAGED WORKER EFFECT

Introduction

In the previous chapter it was argued that state intervention has evolved to help make school-to-work transitions efficient by limiting participation and achievement in education. This strategy was effective because the existence of social networks and strong demand in the labour market for semi- and unskilled workers meant that poorly qualified school-leavers could readily find employment. However, recent shifts in production, that have reduced labour market demand for poorly qualified school-leavers, have created new challenges for the State. One reason for this is that these shifts have eroded the value of social networks and led students to remain in education as discouraged workers.

It was also suggested that traditional strategies employed by the State to make school-to-work transitions efficient will not provide solutions to the discouraged worker effect. The main reason for this is that school-leavers produced by such strategies are no longer in high demand in the labour market. This raises the question of how the State is attempting to reorganise schooling to ensure that all students make efficient school-to-work transitions.
In this chapter the State’s attempt to improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions through the NQF is investigated. While the process of developing and implementing the NQF has resulted in substantial changes to its nature (Creech, 1998), this does not dismiss the possibility that it can contribute to making school-to-work transitions efficient. The contribution made by the NQF to a solution to the discouraged worker effect remains the subject of further empirical research and testing.

This chapter assesses the contribution made by the NQF in making efficient school-to-work transitions by identifying contrasting solutions to the discouraged worker effect that have emerged as the NQF has evolved. These solutions provide a basis for chapters six and seven, where the effects of the NQF and, more broadly, the Training State, are assessed through drawing on data gathered in the qualitative interviews conducted as part of this study. In order to generate contrasting solutions, this chapter draws on three political traditions which offer different explanations for the emergence of the discouraged worker effect.

Modern social democracy

In education, social democrats such as Dewey (1916), have traditionally argued that schools must fulfil three major functions. First, schools must help integrate individuals into society. Thus education has a role to play in fitting individuals into vocational and other adult roles in a capitalist economy. Second, while most social democrats believe that economic inequality is inevitable, the role of schooling is to create fair competition and reduce
inequality. Third, schools also play a role in developing the psychic and moral potential of individuals. Thus, for social democrats, schools figure highly as places that help maximise human potential (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Early social democrats viewed these three functions of education as integrated and inseparable, but modern social democracy stresses only their mutual compatibility. The emphasis is on the integrative function of education; other aspects will evolve as a natural consequence of achieving this sole aim. For example, modern social democracy claims that developing a fairer method of integrating learners into the labour market will result in a fairer education system that contributes more fully to personal development. These aspects have been reduced to by-products of achieving integration. While it is important to be aware of the different approaches which characterise social democratic thought, throughout this chapter the term social democracy refers to modern derivations of the theory.

At the heart of the social democratic solution to the discouraged worker effect is the desire to replace norm-referenced with standards-based assessment. Through standards-based assessment social democracy hopes to create a new educational currency, which will motivate all students to obtain educational qualifications of a kind that ensures them a place in the emerging “post-industrial” economy (Bell, 1973). Behind this view is the belief that selective assessment practices and traditional methods of curriculum development are inappropriate in an age when globalisation and the introduction of new technology mean that all
school-leavers need to be highly skilled and to update these skills throughout their lives.

**Neo-liberalism**

Neo-liberalism is characterised by a belief that the creation of free markets in education, and other spheres of society, can help solve social and economic problems such as the discouraged worker effect. From this perspective, the discouraged worker effect reflects inefficiencies in the provision of education which have, for example, limited students' ability to obtain the particular qualifications and skills demanded in the labour market. Consequently, even if students know what skills are required to find a job, they can not obtain them because state education systems have been unresponsive to shifting consumer demands.

**Neo-conservatism**

Neo-conservativism\(^1\) attributes the discouraged worker effect to egalitarian ideologies and state interventions which have encouraged low-ability and poorly motivated students to pursue inappropriate forms of schooling. For example, neo-conservativism opposes comprehensive schooling because this promotes the view that all learners can benefit from same type of education. Thus, low-ability and working-class students have been led to believe that they can benefit from the same education as their more academically able and upper-class counterparts.
According to neo-conservativism, another result of state intervention is the undermining and even the destruction of face-to-face associations by, for example, the State acting in loco parentis. Low-ability students and students from poor socio-economic backgrounds are seen to rely heavily upon the State and its education systems because qualifications hold out the promise of social mobility. This has resulted in the erosion of family and community-based forms of social capital. The neo-conservative view is that state intervention has undermined the ability and desire of individuals to solve their economic and social problems by, for example, being more self-reliant (Apple, 1993).

To resolve such problems neo-conservatives, such as Oakeshott (1989), Bloom (1987) and Graham (1990), argue that schooling should be highly selective and highlight the natural differences that exist between different “types” of people. Here the solution to the discouraged worker effect rests, in part, on promising less from state education. Schools can achieve this through stressing competition, success and defeat in the classroom in order to reconcile students to their position in the social hierarchy (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

**Social democracy, education and the economy**

Social democracy is underpinned by a coherent theory which relates education to the economy and to the role of the State. This theory is important because, together with its method of reform, it provides a solution to the discouraged worker effect. To show this,
it is necessary to review the central theoretical elements of social
democracy.

Fundamental to social democracy is a commitment to
promoting equality of opportunity within the capitalist economy. Underpinning this is a belief that capitalism can be sufficiently
reformed to limit the worst effects of this form of production. The
State, as the developer and promoter of reform, is central to the
aims of social democracy, which include extending equality of
opportunity while developing conditions conducive to capital
accumulation.

One way that state intervention aims to create these conditions
is by attempting to integrate school-leavers into the economy
efficiently. Consequently, labour-market demands define the shape
of education. From this perspective, the expansion of education,
especially higher education since the 1960s, reflects the increased
demand for skilled workers in the “post industrial society” (Bell,
1973). It is argued that rapid technological change is intrinsic to
advanced industrial society and, as a result, increasing numbers of
jobs require intensive and ongoing periods of training. Accordingly, technological change also necessitates the promotion
of equality of opportunity on the grounds that the best person for
the job is required for industry to function efficiently. This
economic justification has been explained by Kerr, Dunlop,
Harbison and Myers (1973), who state that industrialised
economies are characterised by high rates of social mobility
because the assignment of work roles on the basis of social class is
inconsistent with the economic efficiencies required by competitive
capitalism. "Industrialisation calls for flexibility and competition: it is against tradition and status based upon family, class, religion, race or caste" (Kerr et al., 1973, p. 53).

As Brown (1995) notes, this perspective allows little room for social divisions which may impede the supply of labour, and that equality of opportunity thus serves an important economic function. The economic necessity for equality of opportunity, combined with the increase in the numbers of technological, professional and scientific workers, has led to the claim that the growth in technology is contributing to a more equal society. The increasing size of the middle-class is thought to provide evidence of this. Education as the provider of technical skills has, of course, a central role to play in this process.

During the economic recession, which developed in the 1970s and deepened in the 1980s, and which led to massive increases in unemployment, social democrats began to argue that schools had not kept pace with globalisation and the introduction of new technology. One facet of this was that youth unemployment and the discouraged worker effect came to be seen as the result of a mismatch between the skills and information provided by schools to and about school-leavers, and those demanded by employers. This was seen to be both socially and economically damaging as it limited the opportunities for low-achieving students to obtain a place in the labour market and it reduced national competitiveness in the global economy by wasting human talent. Solving this would require educational reform.
Social democracy and educational reform

If the nature of the labour market has changed, then, according to social democrats, what is taught in schools and how this learning is assessed should also change. In order to build their case for such reform, social democrats argue that production in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries increasingly relied on a large, minimally-educated and poorly-paid mass of usually male workers, who completed routine, semi-skilled and unskilled tasks. Their work was organised by a small, highly-educated and well-paid elite who controlled the production process. Under this production process, distinctions between academic and vocational learning and selective assessment practices which limited participation were effective because they reflected the demands of production. In contrast, in the technologically advanced economy, where semi-skilled and unskilled work is disappearing, such distinctions and assessment practices are considered ineffective because all workers need to be highly educated.

The notion that schools are not equipping school-leavers with the skills demanded by the technologically advanced labour-market locates the source of the discouraged worker effect in the education system. The education system is considered to be attempting to organise and structure school-to-work transitions in accordance with the demands of an out-dated method of production. To rectify this, state intervention is required to increase participation, create a life-long learning culture, increase overall levels of achievement and align the status of vocational and academic learning (NZQA, 1991a). In effect, where previously state
intervention was designed to push students out of school and into work as quickly as possible, social democrats claim that obtaining and retaining a place in the post-industrial economy requires that students remain at school for longer periods and learn different skills. As American educator Dale Parnell explained in NZQA’s former publication, *Learn*:

I tell people in the US that vocational education was born with a very fundamental birth defect called “prestige deficiency” and we’ve never really been able to change that. I see it changing just now, in the last couple of years. I’m optimistic that we are beginning to see a shift and probably that’s due to the changing nature of work. We’ve shifted in our economy from manual labour to mental labour and that takes a different kind of training and background to the old manual labour. You used to be able to go to work in our steel mills for a pretty good wage and you didn’t even need a high school education. You just did what you were told. Today that’s not true. Today you’ve got to think. (NZQA, 1996a, p. 9)

However, for social democrats, improving the integrative function of education also requires that assessment practices change from merely ranking students against one another to telling employers what students can actually do. As former Director-General of Education, Bill Renwick stated:

The function of education of sorting and grading is much less central to the educational responsibilities of teachers than it was a generation ago. Public education is now looked upon less
as a scarce commodity to be rationed and more as a service which all members of the public will need to make use of in various ways at different points in their lives and for many reasons. ... If the renewed interest in education for working life has done one thing it has directed attention to the inadequacies of School Certificate and University Entrance result cards as providers of useful information about potential employees. Employers now want to know more about a prospective employee than the examination result card can tell them. (Renwick, 1981, p. 10)

Poor information flows are also believed to have contributed to credential inflation, particularly during periods of high unemployment. This has occurred because credentials have tended to serve as simple selection devices rather than indicating exactly what skills potential recruits have obtained. One result is that employers demand credentials far beyond those that are necessary for particular jobs in the hope that recruits will have the actual skills they want (Pountney, 1985).

Finally, students who do not perform well in one-off, norm-referenced examinations are seen to be locked into assessment systems which promote their failure. This has contributed to educational inequality of opportunity:

... when secondary education became the right of all children in New Zealand the present system was seen as a means of ensuring equality of opportunity, irrespective of background. The system was meant to be fair to all. It was argued that any
child born with ability would succeed. Unfortunately, experience has shown children do not have equal opportunity. Race, class, and income are more likely to determine success than innate ability. The emphasis on written examinations has ... meant that ability has been recognised only within a narrow range of intellectual skills. Practical and creative skills, for example, go unrecognised in such a system. (Hood, 1986)

The unstated assumption with norm-referenced assessment, according to NZQA's former Policy and Development Manager, Alan Barker, is only some people can learn (Barker, 1995). In order to adequately prepare all school-leavers for the demands of the post-industrial economy, and maintain economic competitiveness in the face of increased globalisation of the world economy, it is thought to be vital that all students, regardless of their social-class, race or gender, learn new skills and develop a love for life-long learning.

However, it is not only new forms of assessing and recording learning which are required to meet the challenges posed by the "new" economy: new forms of curriculum are also required. Here the claim is the curriculum has not kept pace with changing demands in the labour market. One reason for the mismatch between the skills demanded by employers and those provided by schools is that traditional approaches to curriculum development evolved from social democratic models which involved a wide range of groups: employers, teachers, state officials and others, who all had an interest in such matters, collectively deciding what constituted valuable knowledge (Jesson, 1995). However, rapid and recent technological change has rendered this method impotent as
it limits the ability of educational systems to respond quickly to technological change.

According to David Hood (1986), who went on to head the NZQA, the answer to these and other goals lay in state intervention designed to extend internal assessment and increase the involvement of employers in curriculum development. At the time there existed the political will to work towards these ends, and in 1987 a Board of Studies was established by legislation to begin formulating the required changes. However, the tenure of the board was short. Established under Russell Marshall's term as Minister of Education, the board reflected his consultative style. However, under David Lange's new leadership, the administration of education was dramatically different. During Lange's leadership, consultation came to be seen as a way of deferring important decisions, and interest groups such as teachers were considered to have "captured" policy making. As a result, the Board was seen to serve the interests of those on it. Similarly, the view that the debate over assessment should be expanded to include the tertiary sector emerged and this required a broader focus. The Board of Studies was abolished soon after it was established (Selwood, 1991).

The dissolution of the Board of Studies signalled the emergence of a neo-liberal aspect of state intervention into curriculum development and assessment practices. Like social democracy, neo-liberalism provides a coherent theory which relates to education, the economy and the State. In order to show how this theory is reflected in the evolving NQF, and contributes to
a solution for the discouraged worker effect, it is necessary to briefly review some of neo-liberalism's major claims.

**Neo-liberalism, education and the economy**

According to Shirley, Easton, Briar and Chatterjee (1990) the election of the Labour Party in 1984 was expected to return the governance of the nation to a political party which had traditionally supported social democratic objectives. However, the rise to power of a particular faction within the Labour Party, which was committed to new forms of economic liberalism, saw Labour's focus shift away from a broad philosophical commitment to the Welfare State, and from policies geared to full employment, towards neo-liberal policies which supported the development of a free-market economy. These policies were spearheaded in the State sector by a range of government departments, in particular, the Treasury and the State Services Commission.

A central tenet of neo-liberal theory is that free markets are positive because they maximise human freedom, that in turn delivers maximum economic benefits to producers, consumers and workers. Maximising human freedom is seen, for example, to have produced spectacular economic growth in Asia, Latin America, and now even Eastern Europe (Kerr, 1997). This growth is important if societies are to begin addressing some fundamental social and economic problems, such as unemployment.

Hayek's version of freedom is the most widely held amongst neo-liberals. For him freedom is a negative concept defined as
freedom from coercion (King, 1987). Coercion is perceived to occur when one is unable to take full control over one's own decisions. According to neo-liberalism, free markets are uniquely placed to maximise freedom because they "naturally" adjust conflicting interests. One reason that free markets can achieve this is they are perceived to be free of class, race or other such social and economic divisions and this allows all individuals to compete freely as equals. However, maximising freedom is not only important because it promotes equality of opportunity but also because it allows humans to follow their nature, which is characterised by a desire to accumulate wealth.

Consistent with this view is the notion that state intervention is legitimate only if it contributes to the creation and maintenance of free markets. For example, state interventions, which are needed to ensure that economic markets are free of coercion or fraud, are seen as legitimate because such measures are viewed as fundamental to maintaining freedom and are, therefore, central to maximising wealth creation. Conversely, interventions which are seen to impede individual freedom, such as welfare state policies, are considered illegitimate. One reason for this illegitimacy is that neo-liberals reject equating freedom with wealth. Consequently, redistributive policies do not increase freedom; rather, they impede it by interfering with the function of free markets. Welfare state policies do this by stifling profit-making activities. On the part of workers, the provision of unemployment benefits reduces their incentive to work for market rates and has the potential to lock them into welfare dependency. For employers, unemployment benefits reduce their ability to employ workers and make profits
because such benefits can inflate labour costs.

However, while the working-class is seen to have been disadvantaged by welfare state policies, the middle class is seen to have gained advantage. Here the claim is that the State has been captured by the middle class and has evolved to serve its particular interests. For example, state funded post-compulsory education has offered the children of middle-class parents the opportunity to receive a free university education and has, as a result, provided them with access to the credentials which lead to high-paying employment. Such expenditure is seen to be inefficient and inequitable because the rewards of tertiary study are considered to be captured by the individual. Moreover, this contributes to working-class disadvantage because this group has paid higher rates of tax in order to help provide the education of the middle class.

A further expression of this argument is the claim that middle-class capture of the curriculum has rendered it ineffective in terms of integrating school-leavers into the labour market. This has occurred because state intervention has limited the ability of working-class students to obtain economically relevant skills and qualifications. For example, state policy-makers have, until recently, been reluctant to encourage private training providers into the education sector. The absence of competition has meant that schools have been unresponsive to changing demands in the labour market for school-leavers with particular skills. This has reduced accountability across the sector and allowed poorly
performing schools to remain. This view was articulated in the New Zealand Treasury's manifesto:

The poor performance of the education sector has adverse effects on the adjustment of the labour market directly and, indirectly on the performance of the overall economy. Demand for education is substantially derived from the need to acquire labour market skills and because of this individuals have clear incentives to invest in education. To the extent that the responses of the education sector are overly laggard in adapting to changes in underlying demands, labour market adjustment is impeded rather than assisted. (New Zealand Treasury, 1984, p. 268)

This means that, even if working-class students know what skills are demanded in the labour market, they cannot obtain them because the system is not geared to meet their needs. For example, while there is a range of non-academic courses available in secondary schools, particularly at the sixth and seventh-form level, the majority of students are encouraged by a lack of choice to study towards achieving "academic" qualifications. With less than one-quarter of sixth-form students and less than one-half of seventh-form students progressing to university, this academic bias is seen to ignore the needs of the majority of school-leavers, whose post-school destinations are either in the labour market or in non-academic forms of post-compulsory education and training.

Similarly, assessment practices are seen to have been captured by schools, meaning that the validity of current methods of
recognising and rewarding achievement have not been sanctioned by market forces. This may have contributed to inequality and economic inefficiency by suppressing information about student learning.

Attempts to suppress information about students arising from the process of certification or study in schools, will increase the transaction costs of job seekers and employers and lead the latter to rely more on external signs such as the school attended by a job seeker; thus imposing both equity and efficiency costs beyond the world of education. (New Zealand Treasury, 1987, p. 146)

**Neo-liberalism and educational reform**

From a neo-liberal perspective, the creation of markets in education offers a solution to economic and other kinds of problems by creating appropriate incentives for schools to improve their services. These incentives are derived from the introduction of greater competition and the privatisation of education. Such measures are thought to improve the performance of all aspects of the education system by forcing poorly performing educational institutions to work towards meeting the needs of their clients more effectively. As James Coleman (1992) proposes: "The only way you can improve the school system is by competition from outside - competition that will make them shape up or shut down" (p. 4).

According to neo-liberals, the introduction of free-market policies is not necessarily about providing uniformity as
experienced in the public, comprehensive system. Rather, it is about providing a system which allows diversity to flourish, choices to expand and overall performance of the education sector to increase. From this perspective, the form and function of education should not be prescribed; the legitimacy of particular forms of education can only be established by free-market processes.

In order to achieve this, neo-liberals advocate a range of policy measures designed to expose the provision of education to market forces. For example, they have argued that funding for all types of post-compulsory education and training should be at the same level (Guerin, 1997). To date, the ad hoc development of the sector has meant that this has not happened, although the recent White Paper on Tertiary Education has signalled a move in this direction (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998b). On the grounds of equality and efficiency, it is important that all students across the post-compulsory sector receive the same level of state support. This is because differential rates of funding impact on the desirability of particular courses on the basis of decisions made by the State and not the end-users of training. Differential funding arrangements generate a perverse set of incentives, which lower the economic performance of the sector (Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment, 1994a).

As part of the process of creating the correct set of incentives in education, neo-liberals have successfully argued that student tuition fees for post-compulsory education should increase to reflect its true cost. The provision of free post-compulsory
education was problematic for neo-liberals because it seemed to have encouraged students to stay on in education even though there was little obvious economic reward for doing so. The introduction of student tuition fees is considered to provide incentives for students to plan their careers and courses of study carefully and to activate a greater sense of commitment from learners.

From a neo-liberal perspective, state intervention has created the discouraged worker effect by masking the punishing consequences of poor decision making and poor behaviour by providing free education and welfare benefits. As evidenced below, the social democratic desire to abolish norm-referenced assessment and the desire to develop more economically relevant curricula coincided with these neo-liberal views.

**Neo-conservatism, education and the economy**

In order to properly understand how the State is attempting to reorganise and restructure school-to-work transitions, it is necessary to understand the impact of neo-conservatism on the NQF.

Unlike the neo-liberal and social democratic perspectives, which stress the importance of the economy in dictating the shape and form of education, the neo-conservative perspective is primarily driven by a commitment to strengthen the role played by education in supporting classical liberal educational values. For conservative educator, Alan Bloom (1987), a liberal education in
terms of higher education concerns answering the question, "What is man?", in relation to his highest aspirations as opposed to his lowest and common needs. In a liberal education an educator's task is to help students pose this question for themselves. In the face of continual uncertainty and man's natural desire to answer this question, it is the role of liberal education to provide access to alternative answers to this question. Many of the answers to "the question" will go against the prevailing wisdom of the day. Thus, the liberally educated person will look beyond popular or democratic answers to this question, knowing that there exist better answers worth striving for.

To initiate a pupil into the world of human achievement is to make available to him much that does not lie on the surface of his present world. An inheritance will contain much that may not be in current use, much that has come to be neglected and even something that, for the time, has been forgotten. And to know only the dominant is to become acquainted with only an attenuated version of this inheritance. To see oneself reflected in the mirror of the present modish world is to see a sadly distorted image of a human being; for there is nothing to encourage us to believe that what has captured current fancy is the most valuable part of our inheritance, or that the better survives more readily than the worse. (Oakeshott, 1989, p. 48)

Oakeshott is quoted at length here because his writing clearly describes the conservative view. According to this view, some students will be satisfied with popular answers to the question, a minority will find their natural desire to answer it is weakened by
family and career ambitions, and a smaller minority will strive throughout their lives to become autonomous. It is for this small group, who have the capacity to benefit from the struggle to be autonomous, that liberal education exists.

Consistent with this view is the notion that certain disciplines of knowledge are superior. For conservatives the value of a particular knowledge can only be established by tradition, supported by a process in which this tradition is constantly referred to. Through this means, the best of what has been thought and written is constantly affirmed. Academic knowledge is, as a result of this process, considered to be the most prestigious because its value has been established and affirmed by tradition.

However, according to neo-conservatives, the standing of academic knowledge in schools has been challenged by egalitarians who are attempting to reform education in ways which suggest other kinds of knowledge are of equal value. This challenge has come from those who are attempting to "water down" schooling by giving in to utilitarianism, for example. A principal of an elite secondary school comments:

I have been warning this community, and those who listen in the wider community, for some years now of this undercover reform movement. I warn you again! New Zealand should and must retain its emphasis on the traditional disciplines, the basic "hard" subjects. These subjects are under siege in the face of life adjustment courses which are deemed relevant to prepare students for living beyond school. This school must
retain its rigorous, basic curriculum in which subjects of international standing dominate - English, mathematics, science, languages. These must form the basis of education right through to the seventh form. We must not succumb to the criticism that such courses are archaic and elitist, nor must the rest of New Zealand. (Graham, 1990, p. 120)

Egalitarianism has also expressed itself in education in the ideology of equality of opportunity. According to Bloom (1987), one of the problems with modern day university students is their faith in the notion that all are born equal and all have equal rights; lost in this ideology is any understanding of the divisions which have classically divided groups such as social-class. For Bloom, egalitarianism has weakened the standing of liberal education because students are increasingly selected into the best universities on the basis of ability alone. This has contributed to the erosion of academic standards because material circumstances mean that comparatively few people can strive to be autonomous and have, thereby, the greatest intellectual and moral effect on a nation.

The promotion of equality of opportunity has also led to an abhorrence of competition and an associated watering-down of academic standards because it is felt that all have a right to succeed in education. According to neo-conservativism, a good education is one which separates learners. This happens, in part, on the basis of academic ability.

Society’s shift from a culture of responsibility to one that emphasises rights is reflected in many classrooms. Yet
avoiding exams, or grading students primarily to nourish their self-esteem, does them no service. Once subjected to more rigorous testing some will fail. By then feeling entitled to success, they will see their failure as an aberration. Those with a solid academic foundation, however, will come to appreciate that real self-esteem arises not from spuriously graded work but from genuine accomplishment. (Reviving examinations, 1996)

One effect of the ideology of equality of opportunity is that schooling continues to fail youth, particularly working-class youth, by holding out the promise that all can benefit equally from the same education. It could be argued from this perspective, that the promotion of this view has contributed to the discouraged worker effect by encouraging working-class and low-ability students to continue in inappropriate forms of education.

However, for neo-conservatives such as Green (1996) the problem created by egalitarian ideologies goes further than this: it has contributed to the erosion of the central role played by families in the creation of good citizens. The claim here is that egalitarians have focused on equalising consumption and this has directed attention to areas of life which are commercialised. One effect of this has been the measurement of educational outcomes in terms of material rather than social rewards. For example, educational outcomes are currently measured in terms of examination results rather than in terms of the contribution schools could make to improving the social capital in society. This has occurred because the ideology of equality of opportunity
demands that advantages accrued to individuals through social capital be suppressed. The suppression of the role played by social capital in the creation of good and successful citizens is seen to be a blow against one of the main forces for good in society. In the process of providing equality of opportunity, the State has replaced familiar relationships and face-to-face interactions with bureaucratic relationships and interactions. This has reduced the dignity and self-reliance of all society, in other words, the promotion of equality of opportunity has eroded virtue.

Related to the erosion of virtue has been the erosion of authority. As Bruce Logan puts it, in the context of state intervention in education:

It is very simple: schools as agents of social change cannot be institutions that will put their clientele first; they will always be driven by state-sponsored ideology. And ideology in our environment, confused over the issue of authority, will always be driven by the most powerful contemporary lobby and become educational fashion.

The decline in authority that once rose out of a consistent and shared social ethic is the most significant event of our time. That is the cause of social disorder and friction in our culture, more than unemployment and poverty.

The decline in authority results not only in a collapse of respect for those in authority but also a decline in people who can be trusted to exercise it. (Logan, 1996, p. 6)
Thus for Logan, state intervention in education has helped destroy the rules and traditions which formerly provided the normative basis upon which "decent society" is based. There is little doubt as to why this is so. Egalitarianism has, for example, encouraged students to think that they are equal to their teachers. This has had the effect of rendering authority impotent and lowering moral standards in education.

Authority is a hierarchical principle. It accords rule to the higher over the lower and consequently collides with our contemporary egalitarian sentiments. Students have been, for many years now, encouraged to ask how it is that somebody, who is allegedly no better than the rest of us, is able to give orders? (ibid.)

The emergence of the discouraged worker effect is but a further expression of this general malaise and suggests that the role of schooling in legitimating inequality and reproducing "elite" culture is coming unstuck. According to neo-conservatives, reasserting this role requires educational reform.

**Neo-conservatism and educational reform**

The notion that egalitarian ideologies and state interventions have limited the ability of schools to integrate low-ability and working-class students efficiently into the labour market underpins the neo-conservative solution to the discouraged worker effect. For them, the solution to improve the integrative function of education rests in eradicating egalitarian ideologies and related practices.
Neo-conservatives want to strengthen the selective function of education and limit the means by which low-ability and working-class students stay in inappropriate forms of schooling. Consequently, they support norm-referenced assessment because it is thought to offer the most efficient method for achieving this.

However, as shown in Chapter Four, it is clear that norm-referenced assessment alone has not been sufficient to limit working-class participation in inappropriate forms of education to the extent desired by neo-conservatives. As a result, a range of further measures is advocated. It is these measures which align neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism under the banner of the New Right. A feature of the allegiance between neo-liberalism and neo-conservativism is the support offered by neo-conservatives for free-market or neo-liberal reforms on the grounds that these measures will revitalise the role played by education in the reproduction of elite culture and traditional patterns of authority (Gamble, 1988; Brown, 1990; Apple, 1993). For example, neo-conservatives support the introduction of greater consumer choice into education on the grounds it will strengthen the family. The introduction of greater consumer choice into education is thought to contribute to this by encouraging individuals to be more self-reliant. As the argument goes, greater choice will revitalise face-to-face relationships, for example, by allowing families, not the State, to choose the kind of education they require. Thus, markets are seen to create and strengthen social capital within families and the communities in which they live (Green, 1996).
Another way in which market reforms contribute to neo-conservative goals is by introducing new forms of selection. Brown (1990) argues that under the New Right the social basis upon which education is organised has shifted from meritocracy to parentocracy. According to this view, educational selection is increasingly reliant upon the wealth and wishes of parents rather than the ability and efforts of students. Brown argues that this method of selection is attractive to the State because explicit selection on the basis of social ascription is politically unacceptable. However, under the guise of increasing consumer choice, while increasing the cost of education to individuals, the New Right is attempting to find a politically acceptable way to increase the selective function of education.

While the contributions made by these different theoretical perspectives to the State in its search for a solution to the discouraged worker effect must remain the subject of empirical research and testing, they are nevertheless useful because they provide the means to identify how the State might address this problem. In the following section two solutions that have emerged in the NQF are identified.

The egalitarian solution to the discouraged worker effect

The egalitarian solution to the discouraged worker effect reflects an accord between social democracy and neo-liberalism. Underpinning this accord is a belief that standards-based assessment under the NQF will lead to the development of new
learning cultures based on new forms of vocational education, new assessment practices and increased consumer choice.

As noted earlier, egalitarians argue that the discouraged worker effect is the result of norm-referenced assessment and forms of curricula which lack utility in the labour market. These features of the education system have reduced the ability of schools to help make school-to-work transitions efficient by poorly equipping school-leavers for the demands of the emerging post-industrial economy. It is argued that standards-based assessment, under the NQF, offers a solution to these problems because it is predicted to encourage participation, increase educational standards and allow for the introduction of economically relevant curricula (NZQA, 1991b).

There are various ways that standards-based assessment is seen to contribute to meeting these goals. Unlike norm-referenced assessment, which establishes pre-determined pass rates irrespective of the overall ability of the students being assessed, under standards-based assessment standards will be maintained from year to year and all students who reach the required level will receive recognition for their learning. Thus, standards-based assessment removes structural barriers to educational success by allowing all to receive recognition for their achievement. Not only is this seen to be more motivating for students, particularly those who have fared poorly under norm-referenced assessment, but it is considered to facilitate improved teaching practices. For example, standards-based assessment may reduce barriers to learning by encouraging more frequent assessment and smaller assessment
tasks. For those groups in society who have traditionally fared poorly in schooling, this is viewed as liberating because rewards from achievement can be more frequent. Moreover, under standards-based assessment a student’s initial inability to meet the required standards may be overcome through additional study and offer the opportunity for reassessment without having to repeat a whole course. In these ways standards-based assessment under the NQF is thought to promote greater equality of opportunity which has, to date, eluded egalitarian reformers (NZQA, 1996b).

While improving the fairness of the education system is an important goal of the NQF, improving participation in education is seen to be crucial in an age where globalisation and the introduction of new technology has reduced demand for semi-skilled and unskilled workers in New Zealand. Selective assessment practices, such as those represented in norm-referenced assessment, are seen to be unable to increase participation rates or create the learning cultures needed to meet the demands of the post-industrial economy. In contrast, the NQF is thought to facilitate the development of this learning culture by offering students greater flexibility in their schooling arrangements, promoting their success and allowing them to gain qualifications incrementally throughout their lives. For example, the NQF allows learning to be undertaken in a variety of settings and to be assessed in a variety of ways.

As part of the process of improving learning outcomes, standards-based assessment is seen to maximise information flow. This is in terms of the information provided both to students about
their progress and to teachers about the skills that students have obtained. Consequently, it is argued that standards-based assessment will improve education by indicating to students and their teachers particular strengths and weaknesses as students progress through their courses of study and not just at the end of the year (ibid.). Finally, standards-based assessment is deemed to provide better information to employers about students’ actual skills. This will allow employers to make better informed, and therefore fairer, recruitment decisions (NZQA, 1997). Consequently, it is argued, standards-based assessment under the NQF will both motivate and allow all students to obtain qualifications, which will gain them a place in the emerging post-industrial economy.

However, the ability of standards-based assessment to motivate students and to improve teaching and learning are not the only aspects of the egalitarian solution to the discouraged worker effect: new forms of vocational education and training are inevitably required. These are needed in order to equip school-leavers with the skills demanded in the labour market. For the egalitarians, one way to obtain this match is to increase the involvement of employers and other end-users of qualifications in the process of developing new curricula. The method settled upon for achieving this through the NQF was the establishment of a range of ITOs, whose task it is to develop unit standards in their areas of specialty. Schools are able to offer unit standards developed by ITOs (Industry Training Organisations), and listed on the NQF, to their students. The development of these unit standards is seen to give students strong motivation for obtaining
qualifications. For example, they are considered directly relevant to meeting the needs of employers and will, as a result, improve the students' chances of employment.

When considering the benefits to the State that were thought to accrue from the standards-based assessment and new forms of vocational education, it is necessary to be cognisant of the contribution made by these moves to the creation of educational markets. This contribution appears in two main forms.

First, the increased involvement of the employers in deciding what constitutes valuable knowledge helped address concerns expressed by neo-liberals about the inefficiencies in the provision of economically relevant qualifications to students. The development of a new range of subject options is also thought to increase consumer choice and to minimise the risk of provider capture of the curriculum.

Second, the NQF contributed to the creation of educational markets by providing a common qualifications currency. This common currency, like money in an economy, is viewed as promoting greater competition between the providers of educational qualifications because all institutions are recognising and rewarding learning in the same way. The development of such a currency is central to the flexibility of the NQF; it is intended to allow students to build qualifications without attending one particular institution and, therefore, provides a means for providers to compete with each other for students as they progress through courses of study. Indeed, under the NQF there is little
necessity for learners to complete particular qualifications through one provider. Rather, qualifications can be built by simultaneously attending more than one institution. In this respect, the State's desire to create a seamless education system can be considered as applying both vertically, (i.e., between lower and higher levels of education), and horizontally (i.e., between different providers offering the same qualification at the same level of the NQF). It is important to point out that social democrats and neo-liberals view the flexibility or seamlessness these new ways of organising education are thought to generate from different perspectives. For social democrats, it is hoped this flexibility will promote greater equality of opportunity, while for neo-liberals it is thought to help create educational markets. Indeed, neo-liberals such as Hayek, argue that inequality, as defined by the egalitarians, inevitably results from free-market activity, but because free-markets are necessary for the maximisation of freedom, this inequality needs no further defence (Goldthorpe, 1997).

As a result of the increased competition for students, which may result from these measures, it is believed that all schools and other providers will become more responsive to student and employer demands. Successful schools and providers will be those that offer the qualifications which are in demand in the labour market. Poorly performing schools and providers will be those that do not offer these and will, as Coleman (1992) states, be forced to shape up or shut down. Hence, schools and providers that have declining roles will be forced to modify their practices and/or qualifications offered in order to maintain student numbers and remain viable.
By the same logic, the egalitarian solution to the discouraged worker effect is a serious attempt to fill the gap left by the erosion in the value of social networks. In reorganising and restructuring education, the egalitarian solution aims to motivate all students to obtain economically relevant educational qualifications. In effect the egalitarian solution is designed to replace interpersonal interactions, such as those found in social networks, with educational credentials. Indeed, social networks, where they still exist, can be perceived as unfair and inefficient. On the first count they function as a form of social closure (Murphy, 1988) that limits the labour-market activity of those without access to them. On the second count, they do not necessarily ensure the most efficient match between skill and employment level, and therefore may reduce economic competitiveness.

Essentially, the egalitarian aim is to reorganise and restructure education through the NQF with new management and administration systems in the expectation these will replace those traditions and practices which formerly helped make school-to-work transitions efficient. It attempts to replace norms and traditions with a set of state-mediated standards and economic priorities (Young, 1990). The questions egalitarianism faces are: to what extent can the NQF can meaningfully contribute towards creating the pro-learning cultures deemed necessary, and to what extent can the NQF create qualifications that have currency in the labour market?
The neo-conservative solution to the discouraged worker effect

In order to properly understand the neo-conservative solution to the discouraged worker effect it is necessary to understand that their solution emerges, in part, from their reaction to NZQA’s attempt to reorganise and restructure education and training.

As noted earlier, for neo-conservativism the source of the discouraged worker effect is seen not to rest in the nature of the economy, but to be the result of inappropriate forms of state intervention. Given this perspective, neo-conservatives were critical of the NQF from the outset because it appeared to be introducing non-selective forms of assessment.

Speaking of the NQF Graham (1990) argued:

All of this seems to be aimed at trying to disguise the inequality of people particularly in an academic sense; no assessment of school work as it is presently understood by secondary schools is going to be able to disguise the fact that, some are average and some are low achievers. No matter how blunt the assessment procedure, there will always be a top, a middle and a bottom, unless, of course the achievement-based assessment is so low that all get As. ... Real education must lead to inequality of outcome. Individuals are not equal and proper education will surely widen the gap between the able and the less able. (p. 121)
Similarly, neo-conservatives were concerned with the NZQA's attempt to equate the status of vocational and academic knowledge by measuring learning outcomes of both forms of knowledge in the same manner. As noted above, academic knowledge has a special status and cannot be reduced to mere standards. Here the concern is that the NQF has a utilitarian focus:

... one of my disappointments with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is that it promises not only to trivialise much of 'academic' or 'general' education but also is unlikely to lead to quality programmes and vocational qualifications for those who, for reasons of ability or aspiration, intend to go into the workforce or trade apprenticeship on leaving school. This workplace orientation is not, I suggest, at the heart of the educational enterprise. Education is the disinterested study of what Matthew Arnold referred to as "the best that has been done and thought". It has no extrinsic purpose. (Irwin, 1997, p. 4)

The NQF also violated neo-conservative assumptions that standards are established through tradition and not by the State:

... notions of a framework remind me of what C.S. Lewis derided as a "pragmatometer" in the last of his space trilogy novels - a device for defining the indefinable, identifying the unknowable, and connecting the unconnectable conceived by people suffering from a severe case of hubris. It is not just the pragmatics of the more extreme concept of a framework (such as definitional problems or the cost of assessment and
moderation) that bother me. It is much more the mentality that seeks to reduce everything to numbers, to categories, to levels, to credits, and removes the mystery, the aspects of human existence and our search for the truth about ourselves and the world around us. Above all, perhaps, it excludes the sentiments whose absence makes us into what Lewis would call, now in politically incorrect language, 'men without chests' - that is without meeting the ground between the cerebral and the visceral which prevents us from being just one or the other. (ibid., p. 11)

One symptom of this form of state intervention was that it disrupted interpersonal relationships by, for example, acting in loco parentis. This is problematic because it has led to greater reliance on the State to solve individual problems. For example, rather than supporting the weakest members of society, state intervention, as promoted by the NQF, appears to reduce parental participation in, and responsibility over, the education their children receive. Not only was this frowned on as reducing self reliance, it was also understood to weaken the family. Logan (1996) argues:

... unit standards now invading every secondary school in New Zealand are an ideologically driven imposition of state power on the teacher. Having lost the living dynamic connection between parent-child-teacher the State must now act as surrogate parent. In that new order, academic achievement is separated from virtue. (p. 6)
From this perspective, the egalitarian solution was seen as actually exacerbating the discouraged worker effect by encouraging students to remain in education and undermining the ability of education to legitimate social divisions. Moreover, it was perceived as actually further eroding the status of the family by imposing a state-determined set of educational priorities.

For neo-conservativism, the solution to the discouraged worker effect rests in increasing the selective function of education through retaining norm-referenced assessment and increasing the cost of education. While the historical evidence suggests that norm-referenced assessment has not sufficiently limited participation and achievement, increasing the cost of education may have the desired effect in areas of education where the State is able to introduce greater user-pays (Brown, 1990). To date, increasing the level of user-pays has only occurred at tertiary level and is therefore unlikely to offer a solution to the discouraged worker effect.

However, a further question for neo-conservativism is whether increasing the selective function of education by supporting free-market or neo-liberal policies can lead to the desired social outcomes. In this respect, Wolfe (1989a & b) argues that the market cannot achieve neo-conservative goals because the moral codes of free-markets are at odds with those desired by neo-conservativism. As he points out, ensuring the functioning of free-markets ensures neo-liberal support for a strong, authoritarian state. This form of administration is required precisely because capitalist development has damaged forms of social capital, that
previously enhanced productivity. Also the moral codes that underpin free-markets are not conducive to reduced state intervention. This point has been made by neo-liberal economists, Brennan and Buchanan (1985), who stress that the State is required to replace these forms of social capital. They state: "good games depend on good rules more than they depend on good players" (p. 150). In attempting to use the State and the market as sources of moral guidance, neo-conservatives appear to risk the possibility that the method they employ is in fact the cause of the problem they are attempting to solve.

Conclusion

Within the NQF two contrasting solutions to the discouraged worker effect can be identified. The egalitarians are relying, once again, on the State to develop a solution embracing a new form of educational technology. It is argued that this will motivate and allow all students to obtain economically relevant qualifications. Based on this, the egalitarian solution is an attempt to replace the role formerly played by social networks, in making school-to-work transitions efficient, with educational qualifications.

The neo-conservative solution maintains that the discouraged worker effect is the result of egalitarian ideologies, which promote the view that everyone can learn. Consequently, students are remaining at school for longer periods in the hope of obtaining high-status qualifications. These egalitarian ideologies have emerged partly because "social engineers" have dominated the State and promoted their own social objectives at the expense of
those they profess to want to help. In a related fashion, state intervention has eroded the value of face-to-face interaction by, for example, acting in loco parentis. This has undermined the family by eroding the authority of parents. Neo-conservatives hope that when the family is supported by a legal framework, when the Welfare State is abolished, when the social workers and egalitarian educators are replaced and when state regulation is removed, the void remaining will be filled by tradition, virtue and greater self-reliance. At the heart of the neo-conservative solution to the discouraged worker effect then, is the belief that increasing the selective function of education would revitalise family-based forms of social capital and lead individuals to be more self-reliant. This outlook took seriously the role formerly played by social networks in making the school-to-work transitions of poorly qualified school-leavers efficient.

These contrasting solutions illustrate some of the major traditions encapsulated in the NQF. While these perspectives are useful to begin understanding the NQF, the actual ability of the NQF to provide solutions to the discouraged worker effect remains open. In order to further the process of assessing how the State is reorganising and restructuring education to increase the efficiency of school-to-work transitions, it is necessary to turn to the data generated in the interviews conducted with the students, teachers and parents as part of this study.

1 Apple (1993) argues that in the New Right, conservatism has become activist and hence the emergence of neo-conservatism.
As Corrigan (1988) notes, other aspects of society can also be commodified and be put into competition with one another if a common "currency" can be developed. He goes on to argue that social relationships created by competition and commodification are vital to capitalism.
CHAPTER SIX

THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK AS A SOLUTION TO THE DISCOURAGED WORKER EFFECT

Introduction

Contrasting solutions to the discouraged worker effect were identified in the previous chapter. Discussion of these solutions began the process of assessing the State's response to the discouraged worker effect through the NQF. From the egalitarian perspective, the NQF represents an attempt to create an educational system in which all students are motivated towards obtaining, and are able to achieve, qualifications which will help them gain employment. Motivating students and allowing them to achieve qualifications is considered important in the context of economic changes which have increased the punishing consequences of not having educational qualifications. From the egalitarian perspective standards-based assessment offers an opportunity to resolve the discouraged worker effect because it is perceived as more motivating than norm-referenced assessment; it removes the necessity to fail pre-determined proportions of students and it facilitates the introduction of the new vocationalism.

By contrast, the neo-conservative solution rests on strengthening the selective function of education. Neo-conservatives believe this is best achieved through retaining norm-referenced assessment in academic areas of the curriculum and the
introduction of market mechanisms into education. From this perspective, egalitarian ideologies have created the discouraged worker effect by encouraging poorly achieving and working-class students to engage in inappropriate forms of education. While neo-conservatives supported the introduction of new vocational subjects linked to the NQF for work-bound students, the development of standards-based assessment and its application to academic areas of the curriculum was viewed as a further expression of egalitarianism and, was thus predicted to make matters deteriorate.

However, the historical evidence presented in Chapter Four shows that credential inflation has undermined the State's ability to limit participation to the extent desired through norm-referenced assessment alone. Similarly, the historical evidence show a tendency for students, their parents and employers to desire academic qualifications which has undermined attempts by the State to increase the vocational component of education. This suggests that retaining norm-referenced assessment and the development of the new vocationalism will not on their own offer the State a solution to the discouraged worker effect.

This chapter addresses these issues by drawing on the data generated in the interviews which were conducted with the teachers, students and their parents as part of this study.
Standards-based assessment and student motivation

The NQF was enacted into legislation in 1991 and the first unit standards appeared in those schools selected to participate in the study in 1995. Despite the predictions of the NZQA that the NQF would have a major impact on student learning (NZQA, 1994), in 1997 when the students were first interviewed, many had only a partial understanding of standards-based assessment under the NQF.

John (high-SES, low-achievement): I know that you have to get all the boxes and once you get all the boxes then that’s your certificate ... And it can be, like, instead of Sixth Form Certificate, like, if you don’t pass Sixth Form Certificate then you can use that instead. ... It’s a good one to use if you don’t pass.

Ron (high-SES, low-achievement): It all seems very cloudy. I mean, they give you heaps of pamphlets and they talk about it but, at the end of it, it’s still - you don’t really see what it is that you are going for. I get mixed up. Like last year, I got mixed up with School Certificate and unit standards. I really wanted to be focussed on School Certificate but then unit standards got in the way. If it was just one thing, I think that it would be much easier. It’s all very cloudy.

Simon (low-SES, high-achievement): Unit standards gives you credits and I don’t really understand it that much. I just
know that you get credits and get ticked off and hopefully you get a unit out of it - if you get enough credits. And, I don’t know what happens to them. Like, you don’t get an official looking piece of paper or anything. ... we sat the test and then we didn’t know what it meant when we got unit standard 2145 and we thought, “Oh, Cool”. Like, we did not really know what we had got.

Bryan (high-SES, high-achievement): I have actually got a unit standard. It just says Science Core 316, or something - it’s crazy.

I: Why is it crazy?

Bryan: Because you don’t know what it is. ... I am not even sure what I got it for, whether it’s for the whole year or only one bit, or if it’s any good.

According to the NZQA, it is up to schools to ensure that students understand the potential of the NQF (Martin, 1994). The evidence gathered in this study suggests that schools have not been successful in achieving this and students have yet to properly understand the NQF.

In contrast to the students, the teachers interviewed had a clear understanding of standards-based assessment under the NQF and were supportive of the egalitarian philosophy, which they believed underpinned it. The data show that this support was in part a reaction against what were perceived to be the retrogressive effects of norm-referenced assessment.
Principal, School C: All of us who have been involved ... with the assessment of education, have been in favour of moving away from norm-referenced assessment because it ties you up so much. You are saying to half of the kids that they have failed. ... I used to have kids doing six modules in internally-assessed science and they would pass the lot and then they would fail [at the end of the year] because ... norm-referencing would take place.

Principal, School B: When [the NQF] was being sold, it was really a reaction in many ways. I mean, there was dissatisfaction with School Certificate and this concept of norm-referencing. Huge dissatisfaction with Sixth Form Certificate. I mean, it has been an anathema to all of us that, before the kids even start work in the sixth form, the results are already there. It doesn't matter how hard you work. It is just totally, totally useless.

I: Were you happy with norm-referenced assessment?

HOD (Head of Department), English, School C: No, I don't think anyone is. Well, I suppose some people are but, no, I haven't been. I think that it's artificial in that it sets pass/fail levels and then there's a normal curve distribution and that's the cut-off. It doesn't allow for individual differences and sometimes you may just have a group who do a heck of a lot better than that.

HOD, Science, School A: Well, you see, there is nothing here for [poorly achieving, male students]. As fifth-formers they
are sitting School Certificate but it's norm referenced. You know they are almost predestined to get scores of less than 50 per cent and Sixth Form Certificate, of course - they go into courses where the grades are governed by the ability pool that goes in that particular class so they can't achieve. The system works to prevent them from achieving.

This evidence is indicative of the widespread support for the egalitarian solution to the discouraged worker effect which existed among those teachers interviewed. Further expression of this support can be found in the perception standards-based assessment could allow all students to get recognition for their learning by means not possible under norm-referenced assessment. Standards-based assessment offered this possibility by showing what students had achieved, by allowing them to be assessed in new ways and providing opportunities for reassessment.

HOD, Social Science, School C: There are unit standards at each level which are suitable. If you can't do something at level three, then you can get a qualification at level two and if you can't get a level four then you can get a level three. So you go home with something tangible. Where, if you don't get 50 per cent in School Certificate, you go home with nothing. It says, "Do not come back Monday". At least with unit standards you can leave school with something. And there is actually a record. The unit standards actually show that you have passed something; you have achieved something.
Principal, School B: We have had generations who have gone through and failed School Certificate, and failed Sixth Form Certificate and then cleared off. Now, you want to have a look at some of these kids' curriculum vitae these days. ... Unit standards are something that you can build your whole curriculum vitae around. For some kids to actually have acknowledged on a bit of paper, signed by someone important that he can actually set up the boxing for a house, pour the concrete, use a hammer, hold a plane; he's actually got something.

Steve (low-SES, low-achievement): I pretty much like it ... I just find it easier than doing the test at the end of the year - being able to do it all the way through.

John (high-SES, low-achievement): For business studies, I will probably get a 'B' or a 'C' and I should pass IT2 pretty easily because you get three chances to pass the test. So, the first time most people don't pass. You just get an idea what is in the test and you save it and you go through in, like, one of your lunch hours and get the answer and study it. And, next time, if you don't get it, you will definitely get it a third time. It's pretty easy.

Carl (low-SES, low-achievement): [Standards-based assessment] gives me two chances to pass the year sort of thing. Because, if I don't get all my credits throughout the year, well, I can still do re-tests.
While there was widespread support among teachers for the philosophy which underpinned the NQF and evidence it had allowed students to get some recognition for their learning, the efficacy of the egalitarian solution rests on the NQF’s ability to give students sufficient unit standards to improve their position in the labour market. In this regard, the data suggest that poorly achieving students would not enjoy the level of success required to attain these levels.

Counsellor, School A: Well, [the poorly achieving students] are not going to get enough off it. I mean, they will pick up one or two units, but in the end the units that they are competing with are those low-end units.

Mathematics Teacher, School C: Lazy kids, kids who bunk school, who are poor attendees, who have poor work habits, are pretty well going to be the same [as under norm-referenced assessment]. I don’t know that there is a system which deals adequately with those sorts of kids.

HOD, English, School B: Unit standards require that [students] are very well-organised and that they are well-disciplined. Now, a lot of kids who come from backgrounds where education is not valued ... They don’t do homework. They don’t have the right gear - and we have a goodly number of those. Now, the actual process that unit standards demands of them, that they be here, that they do this, that they hand something in and then they can resit it - but they don’t resit it because they
forget to resit it or they can’t be bothered to resit or they haven’t done it by the right time. ... I know they are seen as short-term goals but those kids don’t work well under those kinds of structured constraints; that they have to keep their records, they have to keep all their bits of paper and they have to pay for things on time and all the rest of it. It is actually a bit of a nightmare keeping the kids organised and all the paperwork. ... [t]he kids that are supposedly the ones who are meant to benefit from the unit standards. ... [but] they don’t have those skills and it requires a huge amount of organisation by the teacher and keeping track of the kids and ... those are the kids who are out doing the work experience or off on a trip somewhere.

Dave (high-SES, high-achievement): You are still going to have people who achieve a lot and some people who achieve an average amount, regardless of how we measure it. And it’s the way we try and look at it. It’s people who try and look at it in different ways who come up with things like unit standards. We are looking at the same problem in a different way. We are just getting a whole lot of new numbers and new course names and new little qualifications which may turn into big qualifications. Some people are going to get big qualifications and some people are going to get dribs and drabs of qualifications, just the way they did before when the had their D in English instead of their A in English. ... we can only lift the curve on its axis; we
cannot change the shape of the curve. It's unfortunate but I don't see any proof that it is changing ...

One way the data suggest that the NQF is unlikely to improve the labour-market position of poorly achieving students is that standards-based assessment has yet to motivate students in the manner predicted by the NZQA. This indicates that the NQF has yet to contribute meaningfully to the creation of a learning culture upon which the success of the egalitarian solution depends. Indeed, in some instances standards-based was seen as more demotivating than norm-referenced assessment.

Accounting Teacher, School B: I started off trying to offer unit standards and, of course, it's harder because you have to make them up yourself [but] the kids were not particularly interested, so in the end I just flagged it.
I: Why were they not particularly interested?
Teacher: They just would not do the work. It didn't mean anything to them. ... they were not prepared to do the work.

HOD, Computing, School C: What we found in the first couple of years [was], while theoretically there was not meant to be a limit on the number of resits, what we had was that, with poor academic and good academic kids alike, they would keep bashing their heads against a brick wall until it broke. They wouldn't learn, they wouldn't do any preparation for the tests. ... Some of them, they are not able. I mean, some kids just are not able to
handle it. I even mean some of the top academic kids that we get through can still have three attempts at an assessment. And really, for those sort of kids, it is inexcusable. ... I feel that they are letting themselves down, that they are not actually trying to learn it.

I: So you say that you just missed out by one or two marks?

Nigel (high-SES, high-achievement): That was in maths I think.

I: So did you go back for re-sits?

Nigel: Yes, sometimes. But I just had to put a bit of extra work in to get the units but I just couldn’t really be bothered.

I: So you couldn’t be bothered going back for the reassessments?

Nigel: Oh, I went back for the reassessments, but it’s just that I didn’t do the work for them. I didn’t do the study for them.

I: The obvious question is why not? Do you not see a point in doing the extra work?

Nigel: Yes, I do, but it’s just that I put my head down. I go, like, I think to myself, yes, now I will do a bit [of study], but then the bed’s too comfortable and I just go to sleep.

Carl (low-SES, low-achievement): They [unit standards] are a good idea, so long as you can work throughout the year. As for me, I would prefer just to sit the test at the end of the year.

I: Why do you think that they are a good idea?
Carl: Well, if you don’t pass them the first time you have always got a chance to sit them again by re-sitting.

I: Do you prefer an end-of-year test because you can’t work throughout the year?

Carl: I could, it’s just that I didn’t.

I: Do you know why that is?

Carl: I couldn’t be bothered.

HOD, Mathematics, School B: There are kids here who get half-way through the year under internal assessment, they know that they are not doing very well because they are getting this feedback. And they know really that even if they work their butts off they know that they are really not going to be able to get that very much higher when it comes to the crunch. And so you get a whole lot more disaffected people earlier.

HOD, Science, School B: The main concern that I have got is the students’ perception of them. They don’t want to do them. They don’t see them as relevant. ... [S]ome of them actually avoid doing the assessments.

Further evidence to suggest that standards-based assessment can be demotivating, contributed to a perception it could be more highly selective than norm-referenced assessment.

HOD, English, School A: I am talking with the view that the NQF will work if it’s sufficiently changed. At the moment, if the trials don’t produce changes in the way unit standards
are written so that the initial aim of the qualification change is fulfilled - which was to get all kids having some achievement on the NQF - [then] we are back where we started.

I: Why can’t the kids get the unit standards that you are talking about?

HOD: It seems at the moment in the early stages that either the way they have been written or the way they are moderated or the way that they have to be applied in the classroom - they are very detailed and prescriptive [this means that] the standards have been set too high for those kids.

HOD, Science, School B: The pass rates are less in unit standards at fifth and sixth-form level than what they were for the exam in our field work assessment and stuff like that. So therefore, it is really only your top kids who are going through ... and they look at it and say, “Well, what am I doing this for when I am going to get a three in Sixth Form Certificate or whatever,” or, “I am going to get my 65 per cent in School Certificate: Why do I need my unit standards so I can do whatever it might be?” ... most people that I talk to in this school about unit standards have the same experience as I do. Which is that more kids are actually failing unit standards than were actually failing the exams.

I: I am interested in the NQF. You said that you did some units last year.
Kim (low-SES, low-achievement): Well, I tried to.

I: Tried to? Tell me what happened?

Kim: I don’t know. I guess I failed. ... you have to get everything right otherwise you don’t get the standard. You see, I missed out.

HOD, History, School B: One of the most important features of the NQF as originally devised [is] that everyone should be able to achieve something. I am not seeing that as being possible. I am having people pass on last year’s stuff quite comfortably and failing to get unit standards. I am having some of our brighter students not getting unit standards simply because of language difficulties and some interpretation difficulties and the nature in some cases of our top flight intellectual beast who sees a grand picture and goes for it. But with unit standards, if they fail to do element two, performance criteria three, they don’t get the unit standards. So I am not necessarily seeing the less able get something that they wouldn’t get previously and I thought that was one of the driving forces behind unit standards.

The inability of standards-based assessment to replace norm-referenced assessment led to a related concern expressed by teachers and students: standards-based assessment may lead to a situation in which poorly motivated, poorly achieving students may attain no qualifications at all, as opposed to gaining a poor School Certificate grade.
HOD, English, School B: Oh yes, well, [unit standards] are laid down by the ITOs but I think that is marvellous for those kids. But even they are finding that the unit standards are quite hard. And there are some who will need two years to do the course and some who can do it in one and there are some who will keep resitting until the cows come home and they are not going to get that unit standard. So what measure do they have? They have nothing but failure. They have nothing to say that I have achieved this much, I can do this much. They have just got, well, "I can do these bits of the unit standards but I didn't get the whole thing therefore I didn't get it".

I: So really it's no different to norm-referencing?

HOD: I don't think it is. I think in many ways it is almost harsher because you can't say I got 40 per cent therefore I can do 40 per cent. You just say, I didn't get anything and for your really learning-disadvantaged kids they are never going to get them. They are not going to get unit standards.

I: What are they going to come out of school with?

HOD: Previously in this subject after three years you could get School Certificate and then you could get Sixth Form Certificate. At any stage you could leave. And you had something and I am not saying that they were ideal but I am simply saying that you had something. Now if you leave at 16, you have had a year in the fifth form you might have, I suppose, a few unit standards here and there - scattered ... you are not going to get your
National Certificate because you have not got enough unit standards. You are going to have nothing.

HOD, Geography, School A: I was quite open-minded about it all, but after trialling them, I had some reservations about their academic validity or their educational validity because I think, you know, you choose a set of criteria which may require kids to achieve at certain levels before they get credit for the total unit. Now, in a lot of the ones that we tried, and it may well be that we didn’t set them out right, but sometimes the kids missed out because they missed the level one thing and yet they are getting the more complex thing at the other end. Whereas in the old days you would look at that and say, “Yes, they know more than 50 per cent,” and ... you might say, “Well, 50 per cent, so what?” But at least you could say that they know more than they don’t know. They get credit for it. The kids now can know 70 per cent of it but because they don’t get the crucial or a couple of crucial items, they might miss out.

Sam (high-SES, low-achievement): People are still going to fail unit standards. With School Certificate, you could still get it, but not do well in it. You could still get it by doing all your work, like, with Sixth Form Certificate you get Sixth Form Certificate and then you get a grade but you get it by handing in all your work. With unit standards there is no kind of course completion.
I: Do you think that some of your friends could leave with nothing?

Sam: Yes, easily. They are doing Sixth Form Certificate as well, so they won’t, but if it was only unit standards it would be so easy for them to leave from school with no qualifications.

Mrs. Best (low-SES): I mean he didn’t get his Information Technology because he only got 19 credits out of a possible so many. You know, if that had been School Certificate he would have sat School Certificate and got it. But he mucked around because he knew that he didn’t have to do it, you see.

I: Why didn’t he have to do it?

Mrs. Best. Because they can just .... sit them any old time. He said, “I can do them any old time. Now I paid my hook-on fee I can just do them any old time I like. No big hurry”.

I: So what did that mean to him?

Mr. Best: Nothing. He didn’t do them in the end. ... “There’s no big hurry, I can do them any old time, I like”. ... my own opinion is that it’s nicer to have an exam at the end of the year where you can. For example, in my fifth form year I mucked around. I was a stirrer, a show-off, pillock, but I could have swotted the last little bit and, you know, revised and all that sort of stuff and perhaps still got School Certificate. Whereas now, you have pillocks like I was who wouldn’t get anything.
The NQF and dual assessment

In Chapter Four it was shown that different qualifications that are intended to have parity of status, have not successfully resided at the same level of schooling. Rather, one qualification has always been considered as more desirable. It is clear from the data that standards-based assessment under the NQF has, to date, been unable to dislodge norm-referenced as the premier form of assessment. This has created problems for the NZQA: it has been difficult to convince the students and the few parents who were able to comment on the NQF, of the merits of standards-based assessment while norm-referenced assessment continues.

Kim (low-SES, low-achievement): At the moment, there is still School Certificate, so you think more of School Certificate than of unit standards, because, I don’t know, it’s just the way everyone talks, like, “Oh, yes - gotta get School Certificate”. They don’t talk about unit standards.

Ron (high-SES, low-achievement): I have done a few unit standards, but I don’t hold them in as high regard to Sixth Form Certificate. Sixth Form Certificate comes before unit standards.

I: How come?

Ron: I just feel, I don’t know, it just feels like that it’s a bigger qualification to me than having unit standards for some reason. ... I think that Bursary will have it over unit standards in the end.
I: So you weren't bothered with the Sixth Form Certificate assessment either?

Bill (low-SES, low-achievement): No not really. But I was less bothered by that than that unit standard crap. It's just a load of bull. ... It's just so much bull crap. It's just made up of little unit standards, bla, bla, bla. It's ... [rubbish]. ... Honestly, it's a waste of time. You have to get 100 per cent so give it to the norms. ... no one is going to do 100 per cent just to get a qualification thing in a framework or whatever it is. No one cares except the norms.

John (high-SES, low-achievement): Units are just, like, to be honest, a bum. They really are. It's like you have all these little bits. I don't think that they amount to much. A certificate sounds better.

Mrs. Best: (low-SES) I think the NZQA thing - I was really disappointed about that. [Simon] did four subjects last year. Even though he did six [subjects at school] ... one of them was computers [non School Certificate] and one of them was typing [non School Certificate] except that they don't call it that any more.

I: Information Processing?

Mrs. Best: And Information Technology. He did those two. And what did he get to show for it? Just that you have so many little units or credits or something. ... Why couldn't he have had a School Certificate? It annoyed me.
Mr. Best: And what are unit standards? What are these unit standards working towards? What is the qualification at the end of them?

I: National Certificate.

Mr. Best: Of whatever the subject is?

Mrs. Best: But if he had done School Certificate with his typing he would have got the same.

I: Is it not the same?

Mrs. Best: No, it doesn't look to me like it's the same qualification, you know.

Mr. Best: I think an employer would think the same until it's ... been around longer. They will think, "Oh well, he's got four subjects in School Certificate but he's only got 20 out of 30 unit standards". It doesn't mean anything.

The perception that existing qualifications, such as School Certificate, were superior to those based on unit standards, led to a concern among teachers that their students may be disadvantaged by studying towards qualifications linked to the NQF. This was caused in part by the State's continued support for norm-referenced assessment which raised the possibility that distinctions between schools could emerge, on the basis of the kind of assessment offered. From a neo-conservative viewpoint, such distinctions are valid and important. Teachers however, were committed to promoting any opportunities for their students, and this led them to support norm-referenced assessment. This was apparent from the data in two related arguments. First, teachers reported that national examinations were egalitarian because it was irrelevant what school students attended.
HOD Geography, School A: Now they go into an exam like School Certificate and it doesn’t matter who they are, what their background is, what school they went to, they are a number. That number is marked and they get the result back and they get a ‘C’ or what ever. But that’s their result to keep against ... [name of a private single sex school], against ... [name of another private single sex school], against ... [name of another private single sex school], against ... [name of another private single sex school], against every other school. They can say, “I have achieved that. It’s my result”. Whereas [under the NQF] you might get polarisation. You might get some schools that are sort of known for maintaining good standards and ... students like ours might be disadvantaged.

Second, teachers were concerned that the State’s continued support for norm-referenced assessment raised the possibility that schools may become polarized on the basis of whether they use standards-based or norm-referenced assessment.

English Teacher, School B: And possibly, one day, I could see a unit standard from [single-sex, state school] would be perceived to be more advantageous than one obtained here.

I: Why do you say that?

Teacher: I don’t know. Probably because people perceive that if you are a teacher at [name of a single-sex, state school] or [name of another single-sex, state school] and all
those kinds of schools that you are a better teacher than if you are a teacher at a school like this. Therefore, the teaching that they would have received to get that unit standard would have been better. Also, because unit standards are all done by the school – yes, there is some kind of moderation but it’s not like moderation in an exam which is marked entirely away from school. They will say that the quality of the teaching and the quality of the marking, just that the standards are superior. ... possibly, one day, a unit standard from [name of a single-sex, state school] will be perceived as more advantageous than one obtained here.

Principal, School B: Principals are really scared that you will get a situation in New Zealand where you get first and second-class schools - almost back to the old real schools and technical schools. ... I think schools will be very reluctant to go totally unit standards and leave behind the tertiary pathway.

English Teacher, School C: I guess ... we would be afraid that we would be disadvantaging our kids. As long as School Certificate is still there. If someone had the strength of mind to actually go ahead and do away with School Certificate, which is what we understood was going to happen, then that would be great. The other implication that has come through is that if you are not as capable you do unit standards ... and if you are brighter you do School Certificate, so what message are
we giving our kids? You are doing unit standards so the implication is that you are not so bright. ... [If] you are out there in the community and you want a qualification that reflects your intelligence then you go to a school where there is School Certificate.

Standards-based assessment and employers

In the past, State intervention designed to increase the vocational component of education has proved problematic. One reason for this is that employers have tended to demand qualifications linked to academic courses of study and consequently students tended to favour these courses. This is not to suggest that the State has been unable to diversify the provision of curricula, but simply that the comparatively low demand for vocational courses has not limited the number of students enrolling for the higher status academic qualifications to the desired extent. Moreover, the provision of vocational curricula will not necessarily provide a solution to the discouraged worker effect, as students may simply choose these courses as a way of avoiding conventional “school work”.

Under the NQF, the State aimed to avoid such problems by ensuring that employers were involved directly in developing qualifications which were relevant to their industries. In theory, this meant employers could be sure that new recruits had the skills they desired and students could be confident that the qualifications they were attempting to obtain would have utility in the labour market. Aligning the skills acquired by students in
school more closely to those demanded by employers would hopefully improve the discouraged worker problem by enabling students to formulate clear aims in education and, thus improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions.

While the creation of ITOs to develop unit standards may seem a plausible strategy to motivate students to achieve and to improve their employment prospects, the evidence suggests that if students did succeed in obtaining a few unit standards, there was doubt whether this would actually help them gain employment. Employers were not perceived to be sufficiently interested in unit standards.

Guidance Counsellor, School C: You know, if a lot of employers don't understand the current education system how the hell are they going to understand the current National Certificate? It is one thing for employers ... to lobby effectively to get what they want but ... you can't even get a busy small employer to a basic business accounting course for a day, let alone get them to understand the education system. ... The really limited [School A] kids who are not going to pass School Certificate, if they can pass some really basic unit standards, even if it is just to produce a career plan, or basic English, that's still a qualification, and it's better than nothing, but it still means [little] out in the workforce.
Counsellor, School A: ... employers keep saying, "We want people to be able to do these things", but they actually don't place a lot of value on the actual skills. ... I mean, I really don't think unit standards have the status. Even though employers say they want kids to be able to do this and this and this. The units that they say are the skills they want in people are not in the framework. When they say they want the kid to be reliable and to be able to work - all those kinds of things, the way in which they measure an ability to achieve this is by sticking at school and passing examinations. That's the way employers measure this, by School Certificate. And to measure it any other way is actually quite waffly.

HOD, Mathematics, School C: I don't know any employers who have sat down and said, "I need these unit standards". I mean, it just hasn't happened. And the other thing is, how many kids at the age of 15 know what they want to do? So, end of story. ...We had the bizarre situation also last year - the end of last year - when the armed services came here and said that, "You need Sixth Form Certificate", and someone sidles up and says, "Well, what unit standards would you need in maths? You need a six or better in Sixth Form Certificate, what unit standards do you need?" And they went, "Um", so they said, "We had better find that out". Then two or three weeks later we get a ring from somewhere [and] they were asking us what did we think should be the comparison.
I: So the armed forces rang up and asked you?

HOD: No, the armed forces went and asked the Ministry [of Education] and the Ministry asked us.

I: They followed it up?

HOD: Yes, they followed it up all right, but I am surprised that the Ministry or NZQA were not up with the play and had not got to them first. I mean, if you can't go out and sell it to the branches of government, then what's the point? At the beginning of the year I had a number of students who wanted to go to polytechnic and they were told that Sixth Form Certificate grades were all that counted. They were not even looking at unit standards. ... I had another student who wanted to be a carpenter. He was in the alternative math class and his boss had said, "I want School Cert". So, the kid changed out of the alternative class to a class which had School Certificate Maths.

John (high-SES, low-achievement): If you go up to the right employer [with unit standards] and he knows what they are, he will be impressed. But most employers, I feel, will think that there's a lot of numbers on this page, what do they mean? And they will probably pass over your C.V. they will just go, "There's too much for them to know about". ... And, now I see some polytechs ... are saying, "Oh, we won't need Bursary, say, for design, the degree in design, we won't need Bursary", but you get 80 kids applying for 20 places. The kids who have done
Bursary and succeeded, they will be the ones who will get in ... .

Steve (low-SES, low-achievement): I used to think that I will get all my unit standards and I will be able to waltz into a job sort of thing. But then I started thinking about it and I thought how many actual places, if you go for a job and all, that actually ask you for unit standards? They don't. They only ask you about School Certificate. That happened in my bakery apprenticeship. They should be concerned about how my unit standards were in maths, not just in School Certificate.

Sam (high-SES, low-achievement): I don't know if employers really care [about the NQF], because I think they are perfectly happy with School Certificate ... .

The apparent inability of the NQF to generate widespread support from employers is problematic for the State because it has resulted in little incentive for students to obtain unit standards. It also suggests that while the ITO developed qualifications may reflect demands from particular industries for specific skills at a national level, at the local level it appears employers are able to satisfactorily recruit staff by other means, for example, through their social networks.
The NQF and the institutional form of schools

The egalitarian solution to the discouraged worker effect relied on the NQF contributing to the creation of a common educational currency. Creating this currency is a central part of the creation of educational markets in allowing students to build qualifications by attending more than one institution. There was no evidence in the data to suggest that students were using the NQF in this manner. In fact, the evidence suggests that schools lack the institutional form required to allow students to engage in multilevel study within a particular school, let alone between various schools. The inability of schools to develop structures which would allow students to engage in multi-level study has further damaged teachers' perceptions of the NQF.

*Geography Teacher, School B: What I found too with unit standards is, of course, is having multilevel classes, which we do here - and you know I am not saying that is not a good thing - but, the really good kids, bingo, they are through it and the kids who need a lot of help are at the other end of the scale. I don't know that it always works so well.*

*I: Because the bright kids are finished?*

*Teacher: Yes, well, they are sitting there saying, "Done this," and, "We have done that". And, then, one of the interesting things was when we went to these things some of the people from the "dream world" [the NZQA] said, "Well, of course, you just promote them up a level", and we said, "Well, you can't really" ... .*
Geography Teacher, School B: I mean, he [Lockwood Smith, former Minister of Education] had the idea that I could be teaching a sixth form now; the bright ones could be doing seventh-form unit standards and the lesser able could be doing fifth-form unit standards, but in practical, reality terms you can't do that. ... you can't do that with just one person teaching a class. You can't teach three different topics with three different lots of assessment and three different lots of marking.

HOD, Science, School C: Kids who have already passed the unit standards in the first time through - when the second assessment comes up which happens to be on the same element - say, "Well, I have already got it", [and] they say, "What's the point? I have already got it". Yet they have to be here. The law says that. Now if you were to take unit standards to their full extent then we should be able to put a notice up what unit standards are being served up today and if you have already got it, well, then you can go home.

I: Is there some kind of problem between the unit standards philosophy and the way in which schools are allowed to or able to manage the students' time?

HOD: Yes, definitely. Seamless education is a myth in compulsory education. It's unmanageable ... it deals with the individual that can go from one step to the next step and do this element and this unit standard and so on, but you haven't got one kid in front of you;
you have got 30 kids. ... you have got to try and deal with them in some way which is manageable for you.

In order to make the demands placed on them by the NQF more manageable the teachers gave only a limited number of opportunities for students to have work reassessed.

HOD, Science, School B: ... this concept of re-submission and reassessment, giving them almost endless opportunities is absolutely unworkable from the teacher point of view. The kids find it confusing too. So, what I have done this year is that they do an assessment, if it's appropriate they might be asked to resubmit it, otherwise that's it. If they want a reassessment they can come back next year and do it.

Assistant Principal, School C: [The] NZQA have said, “Well, you can recognise those high achievers because what they will be doing is churning through the unit standards a lot more quickly”. That's fine in theory, but how do you timetable all that? How do you timetable it when five students in your maths class have completed the whole unit standard in one week and the rest of the class need at least another two weeks on it? What do you do with those kids? [It's] so easy to say, “They have done it, now they can move on to other ones”. In theory, that would be great, but in reality it can't happen.
The tendency to limit the number of reassessments students can avail themselves of, and the tendency to rely on written assessment in some settings, limits the potential of the NQF to realise some key goals of the egalitarians. For instance, the limit placed on the number of resits means standards-based assessment is functioning in a similar fashion to norm-referenced assessment, in that students are required to complete a year's work before being offered the possibility of reassessment. This severely limits opportunities for students to remedy gaps in their learning and progress in education quickly.

The lack of a suitable institutional form which could replace the motivational structures that exist under norm-referenced assessment (particularly for high-achieving students), was part of a broader concern expressed by teachers and some students that standards-based assessment would not serve able students well.

HOD, History, School B: The philosophy is that you will compete against a standard. I think that denies something inside of people which actually quite likes the idea of measuring themselves not against something inanimate but, rather, animate. The idea of the framework is to take out competition with other people but I think that ignores the fact that competition with other people is a key motivator in many kids. And, I think that is why my observation is that the brighter kids do not like unit standards. The brighter kids want to be at the top of the tree and just saying to them, "Well, aren't you clever, you've done a level two unit standard and you
are only Year 11,” when others are doing level one, doesn’t give them a buzz at all. They have no desire. They would rather get a better mark and prove themselves, than they would go on to something more difficult.

**HOD Geography, School C:** If you go to the unit standards situation, some of the low or middle to lower students can just get a pass and that’s all they need. ... The high-ability kids just get to tick off seven things no matter how well they do. Last year in geography half to three-quarters of the class bowled most of them easily. I have kids who will be sitting Scholarship in geography and they were passing just as much as somebody who is way back. That’s a bit of a worry.

**I:** Why is it a bit of a worry?

**HOD:** Well, I think that we should be pushing. I am a bit of a fan for saying if you are good at something then let’s strive to be better.

**I:** And do you think unit standards allow that?

**HOD:** No, not right now. I think you need to strive for excellence.

**I:** So did you do some more unit standards after I saw you last year?

**Dave (high-SES, high-achievement):** Yes, in economics, and I have not got a thing back from the government about it at all. ... I also did it in the fifth form, a lot of the history unit standards. The teachers went on strike and I
missed out on the lot. ... So my opinion of unit standards is pretty darn low. I haven't got anything from it ... and I even studied for those tests. They are pretty easy. It wasn't much of a challenge. I really just went straight through them all because there was no real challenge. That is not necessarily the case in economics, I managed to fail one but the teacher came along and asked a few questions and I said, "How did I manage to write that"? Correction, tick, smile. Everyone is happy.

The inability of the NQF to sufficiently motivate students and enable them to obtain qualifications which would improve their position in the labour market had also led teachers to turn away from standards-based assessment in particular subject areas.

HOD. Mathematics, School C: During the holidays, I will write to NZQA ... asking if there is any point me continuing in unit standard assessment in my mainstream courses, because they haven't stuck to what they said they were going to do by removing the other qualifications ... . I will not remove a chance for a kid, because people say, "Why don't you go straight for unit standards and not sit, say, for example Sixth Form Certificate?". Well, Sixth Form Certificate is still recognised by most people and it would be very presumptuous of me to say, "No, you are not going to have that". And I don't think that it's fair to the students.
English Teacher, School C: I was not going to do Sixth Form Certificate next year [1998]. We were going to run sixth form without it and move straight into unit standards. But now we have to dual assess. We have to because the Green Paper has not supported unit standards enough, in my opinion. I don’t want kids coming out of [here] with no Sixth Form Certificate grade in English and perhaps be competing for a job with a kid who has a two or a three in Sixth Form Certificate English. And our kids will say, “Well, I have got 24 points at level two in English”, but the employers won’t know about that. ... ordinary Joe Bloggs in an office who wants to employ a sixth-form girl is going to want Sixth Form Certificate.

The inability of the NQF to realise its key goals raises the dilemma about the future role of standards-based assessment in the secondary schools selected to participate in this study.

The likely future of standards-based assessment

In some areas of the curriculum teachers reported that standards-based assessment did have its uses.

English Teacher, School B: [standards-based assessment is] very good for certain things and for a certain level. It’s a nuts and bolts thing ... and for the nuts and bolts side of English it’s good. It doesn’t have to be unit standards but rather the idea behind unit standards.
HOD, Science, School C: We are looking at offering unit standards for our lesser-able students because they can achieve these little increments and get an element this week and they don’t have a great big test.

HOD, Information Processing, School B: Well, [unit standards] are very appropriate for our subject area, which is skill-based. ... You see they do a unit in processing, so they have to learn the basics. ... [the units] are very clearly defined. They can see what they have to achieve. They can see that they have achieved it, so I like them.

Given this strength there was a tendency to offer standards-based assessment to low-achieving students, whose mastery of basic concepts is a problem.

HOD, English, School B: We do have two classes doing the unit standards. They are senior classes doing the pre-employment programme, which means that the [English] class is part of a package deal of specific maths and English units and they do related units. ... they are all laid down by the ITOs ... I think that it's marvellous for those kids.

HOD, Mathematics, School A: The people who are doing unit standards are the low achievers. The people who haven't coped well with theoretical maths - so they are dealing with basic arithmetic concepts: time, money, percentages, those sorts of aspects.
HOD English, School C: We have put our low ability fifth formers who clearly wouldn't cope doing the School Certificate syllabus. We have actually made an alternative course for them and offered them some communication skills [unit standards] which are still English-based but they look at specific things like report-writing and letter-writing ... .

Conclusion

Viewed in the light of contrasting solutions to the discouraged worker effect that were identified in Chapter Five, these data clearly show that the NQF is not contributing meaningfully to making school-to-work transitions efficient. From an egalitarian perspective, the NQF has not been able to generate a new learning culture in which poorly motivated and poorly achieving students push themselves towards, and obtain, qualifications that will improve their labour-market prospects. Although it should be noted that employers have not been interviewed, the evidence from teachers suggests that should these students obtain unit standards this will not improve their labour-market position because employers are not sufficiently interested in, or knowledgeable about the NQF. The perception among teachers was that standards-based assessment best suits students for whom mastery of basic skills is a problem, or in areas of the curriculum where learning outcomes can be clearly specified. These factors mean that the NQF has evolved as a means of assessing study in vocational areas such as those developed by the ITOs and in assessing the learning of poorly achieving students. In terms of
assessing poorly achieving students’ learning, the use of standards-based assessment appears to be determined on a departmental basis and its use is, therefore, occurring sporadically rather than on a systematic basis.

From a neo-conservative perspective the introduction of standards-based assessment has not removed the selective function of education and fears that the NQF promised more from education may be premature. From an egalitarian perspective, the data show that the NQF has been unable to replace the role played by social networks in making school-to-work transitions efficient. The NQF has not yet motivated work-bound students to obtain educational qualifications nor enabled them access to credentials that will improve their prospects in the labour market. This is significant: it indicates the NQF has been unable to compensate for the erosion in the value of social networks. The NQF has therefore yet to offer relevant solutions to the discouraged worker effect.

The continued dominance of norm-referenced assessment indicates a “victory” for neo-conservatives. However, the evidence presented in Chapter Four shows that credential inflation and academic drift has undermined the ability of the State to sufficiently limit participation. The retention of norm-referenced assessment is, therefore, merely a continuation of previous and now discredited strategies adopted by the State to limit participation, and consequently offers little as a solution to the discouraged worker effect. Moreover, should the new vocational subjects that are linked to the NQF succeed in encouraging poorly achieving students to opt out of the race for academic
qualifications, the data suggest this is unlikely to ease the State's problems by achieving efficient school-to-work transitions. The main reason for this is that employers do not rely on specific school qualifications when selecting new recruits and the NQF has yet to generate any tangible support among employers to alter this.

Finally, the evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the NQF has not contributed to the realisation of neo-liberal goals. The NQF seems to have been unable to create a common educational currency to facilitate the creation of markets in education. Similarly, it has not facilitated the introduction of greater user-pays into secondary education. In this respect, the NQF has not been able to limit participation on the basis of cost.

This is not to suggest the NQF does not contribute at all to the realisation of neo-liberal goals. The possibility that it does so is further explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER SEVEN

PURCHASING SOCIAL NETWORKS

Introduction

The NZQA had aimed to create a seamless education system through which all learning was to be assessed by standards-based assessment. The failure of this aim was recognised by the then Minister of Education, Wyatt Creech, when he announced the “Achievement 2001: Qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds” policy. When releasing details of the new policy Creech stated:

The National Qualifications Framework was established seven years ago. It was intended to meet the continuing and changing demands of education and in the workplace and in training [sic]. Since that time however, there have been strong debates about how the current Qualifications Framework is working in practice. There were some real problems - the teacher workload implications from moderation and assessment is but one example. Much of the theoretical differences of the debate have become very arid and rather pointless. We in the education sector have to remember that what counts is the very practical consideration, the qualification a young person is armed with as they go on to further education, training or employment. ... What I am announcing today is a qualifications system that brings together the best of what we have now. It will make certain that every student, regardless of the skills they have, will have those skills recognised. The new approach will cope
better with both ends of the achievement spectrum. The best features of all forms of assessment have been unified so that students no matter what their preferred learning style or choice of study will be able to display their abilities and register their achievement. (Creech, 1998, pp. 1-2)

The Minister has been quoted at length because his statement outlines the new direction taken by the NQF. Of central importance is the retention of both standards-based assessment and norm-referenced assessment. This is designed to allow students from “both ends of the achievement spectrum” to receive recognition for their learning.

Standards-based assessment may, in theory, allow students to receive recognition for their learning, but, the evidence presented in Chapter Six demonstrates it has made little meaningful impact on student learning at either end of the achievement spectrum. To reiterate, while some low-achieving students have been able to obtain a few unit standards, there is little evidence these students have developed a new learning culture, or that even if they could gain more units, this would improve their chances of obtaining a job. The evidence shows the general perception among teachers, students and parents is that employers have little understanding of the NQF and, where qualifications are required, school-leavers who have School Certificate are preferred. In addition, as was shown in Chapter Three, the majority of work-bound student interviewees found social networks were the means through which they obtained their first jobs and that for these jobs school qualifications were not important. This finding suggests “who you
"know" counts more than school qualifications. However, the availability of social networks did not prevent students from continuing at school as discouraged workers.

The NZQA's inability to create a seamless education system and a vastly improved learning culture does not mean, however, that the State and the NQF are not contributing at all in making school-to-work transitions efficient. While the NQF has not yet provided a complete solution to the discouraged worker effect, it may improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions by other mechanisms.

This chapter continues to assess the impact of the State and the NQF on school-to-work transitions by drawing on the perceptions of the Skill New Zealand officials, guidance staff, teachers, students and parents who were interviewed as part of this study. While the data presented in this chapter are drawn from only a few low-achieving students, when combined with that gathered in the other interviews, some compelling conclusions can be drawn.

In terms of producing more efficient school-to-work transitions, the impact of the NQF can be more fully understood in the context of neo-liberal reforms, such as the Education Act of 1989 (Government of New Zealand, 1995). This formally recognised Private Training Establishments (PTEs) and linked their funding, in part, to the provision of unit standards. As Guerin (1997) notes, the Education Act of 1989 was part of a broader shift to new public management (NPM) or the application of
business principles to the state sector. This represents a shift from process accountability to outcomes accountability and the "preference for private ownership, contestable provision and the contracting out of most publicly-funded services" (Guerin, 1997, p. 61).

The emergence of Private Training Establishments

While PTEs existed in different forms prior to the Education Act of 1989, their contribution to the provision of post-compulsory education and training was comparatively insignificant. In this respect, one effect of the application of the NPM to the education sector has been to increase the number of private institutions offering training programmes (ibid.). While the NQF itself cannot be considered directly responsible for increases in the number and range of training programmes, it provides a mechanism for the State to organise and structure the provision of these programmes by ensuring PTEs meet minimum standards of provision. In addition by linking all courses to the NQF, the qualifications on offer will, it is presumed, have currency in the labour market.

The increase in the number and range of institutions now offering formal qualifications provides prima facie evidence that state intervention has facilitated diversification in the provision of training programmes. At a post-compulsory level this is, in part, due to the increasing amount of state funds being awarded to PTEs (Guerin, 1997). At the senior secondary school level it is due, in
part, to the development of the “academy” programmes,\textsuperscript{4} which are being offered in some working-class schools.\textsuperscript{5}

The extent to which the academy programmes have influenced some secondary school programmes is clearly evident in School A, which offered several different Academies to its senior students in 1998. Students usually participate in academy programmes for half the academic week. In the remaining time students choose from a range of academic and non-academic subjects that lead to awards such as School Certificate and Bursary. A small number of students participate in two academy programmes.

Academy programmes have attracted students to, and retained them in, the school and allowed problems created by de-zoning to be addressed.\textsuperscript{6} As the assessment manager of School A argued, “In our worst year, we lost nine teaching positions. The development of the academies has allowed us not only to retain staff, but to employ more”\textsuperscript{7}.

It is important to point out that the implementation of the NQF does not, in itself, explain the development of these programmes. The programmes are as likely to be a result of schools attempting to combat problems associated with falling rolls, and may have developed irrespective of the NQF. Whatever the case, the important point to note in this chapter’s context is that these programmes, like those developed by PTEs, have been linked by the State to the NQF, through the requirement that such courses offer unit standards.
The extent to which the introduction of the NQF and the creation of educational markets have contributed to greater diversity in the provision of senior secondary schooling and post-compulsory education and training remains the subject of research and testing. However, the development of PTEs and the academy programmes represent major shifts in the provision of education and training. It is, however, an open question whether or not such measures actually assist in making school-to-work transitions efficient. For example, if the new school or PTE-based programmes assist students to obtain jobs, then it is reasonable to argue they contribute meaningfully to this goal. In contrast, if they encourage students to remain in inappropriate forms of education, they may actually contribute to the problem. Students may simply be attending these programmes to avoid conventional school work and the realities of the labour market.

Neo-conservativism and the creation of educational markets

As discussed in Chapter Five, underpinning the neo-conservative solution to the discouraged worker effect is the belief that the effect is the result of inappropriate forms of State intervention. These beliefs have encouraged low-ability and working-class students to continue inappropriate forms of education. For neo-conservatives, the solution to this problem rests in developing a broader education system to suit different people. An academic education should, according to this view, be available to those who have both the intelligence and the economic resources to benefit from this form of education. For
working-class students, however, a vocational education is deemed appropriate, as this reflects their future destinations as workers.

As Corrigan (1988) points out, market mechanisms are ideally placed to strengthen social divisions and conservatives know this. Others have made similar claims. Brown (1990), discussing the English context, argues that the marketisation of education is intended to strengthen social divisions by breaking down comprehensive education in favour of a return to the former selective system. Essentially, his argument is that the introduction of markets into education signals a return to the principles of selection which existed prior to the advent of meritocracy, when money was a key factor in determining educational success. As a result of this shift, as the argument goes, the situation is returning to where obtaining educational success is increasingly reliant on the wealth and wishes of parents rather than the efforts and abilities of students. In support of Brown (1990), Lauder, Hughes, Watson et al. (1995) argue that, in principle, the introduction of market reforms may lead some schools to specialise in producing high academic achievement, while others may specialise in alternative philosophies and teaching methods which eschew credential success. However, Lauder et al. (1995) suggest that this is unlikely to occur, given the increased demand for credentials in post-industrial society; schools with weak academic records risk being considered less desirable and hence may experience dwindling consumer support. Thus, market mechanisms may themselves impede the development of the diversity of provision that Hirsch (1994) argues is vital to their successful functioning.
Underpinning the prediction made by Lauder et al. (1995) is a belief that students from different social-class backgrounds will desire school credentials. They offer tentative evidence for their claim by noting that families across all SES groups viewed high-circuit schools as the most desirable. However, while high, middle, and low-SES families all considered high-circuit schools as the most desirable, this does not necessarily mean that the development of diversity of provision will be impeded by the introduction of market mechanisms into education.

As Brown (1987) and Lauder et al. (1992) argue, the aims and significance of education are different for students from different social-class backgrounds. In this respect, Lauder et al. (1992) show that students from different social class backgrounds have different “frames of reference” through which they understand education. When they interviewed high-achieving students from professional backgrounds it was found that these students tended to assume they would attend university. In contrast, for high-achieving working-class students, university attendance was far less straightforward and these students tended to have different frames of reference to their middle-class peers.

Although these different frames of reference may be translated into middle-class advantage in educational markets, it does not necessarily follow that markets will not facilitate the diversification of provision. A reason for this is that the new PTE and academy programmes may meet the objectives of working-class students by helping them to obtain jobs through means other than obtaining formal qualifications.
Social network theory can help illuminate possible processes at work because they showed that basic school credentials did not play a significant role in securing employment for work-bound school-leavers. Given this evidence and that of Lauder et al. (1992), it is reasonable to hypothesize that working-class students may be judging the value of courses on grounds other than the qualifications offered. Moreover, even if, as Lauder et al. (1995) and Hughes (1999) suggest, working-class parents and their children desire high-circuit schools, it does not necessarily follow that they will continue this preference throughout the children’s schooling. For example, while working-class students may desire school credentials at the beginning of their secondary school careers, the mechanisms which sort and select students may lead them to be “cooled out” and, as a result, come to view what school can offer differently.

If this line of argument is correct then it is plausible that students may be attracted to specific schools and training courses for reasons other than the particular qualifications on offer. This raises the possibility that the contribution made by senior secondary schooling and other forms of post-compulsory education and training in enabling working-class students to obtain jobs, has not yet been fully explored by researchers. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the former Minister of Education, Nick Smith, claims, “Schools are not widget factories. We are talking about people and, as a consequence, measuring the performance of a school is far more than examination results” (Iosefa, 1999).
His view is supported by Claudia Wysocki, the principal of a private secondary school for girls and member of the Education Forum. She argued in the same article that league tables were, “out of line, and so behind the times. Some schools are doing dynamic, exciting things” and have “turned around the lives of many students”. League tables, she claimed, showed none of that.

The claim that the introduction of market mechanisms and the NQF have contributed to greater diversity in the provision of education and training, must continue as a subject of research and testing. Social network theory provides a means of theorising about how this diversity might develop. In this respect, the evidence presented below is intended to assess ways in which diversity may eventuate.

Social networks and diversity of provision

As in earlier manifestations of the NQF, the development of the Achievement 2001 policy is premised on the claim that obtaining qualifications is of the utmost importance. As the then Minister of Education, Wyatt Creech (1998) announced:

It is impossible to underestimate the importance of qualifications young people aim for while they are at school. A student’s qualifications are tangible evidence of their skills and achievements, and they record the results of many years of teaching and learning. They provide employers and tertiary institutions with an assessment of what skills a student would bring to a job or to further training. (p. 1)
However, while school credentials may serve as a yardstick to ration access to higher education, social network theory suggests they are not used by employers when hiring work-bound school-leavers; and those without access to social networks are disadvantaged in the labour market in comparison to those who have. In this respect, Rosenbaum and Binder (1997) suggest that school-employer linkages can improve the position of disadvantaged groups in the labour market. Thus social network theory is useful because it suggests ways in which the State might usefully organise and structure education and training in order to increase the efficiency of school-to-work transitions. In addition, it may shed light on how the introduction of market mechanisms and the NQF might contribute to this process.

The State and the purchase of social networks

In order to understand the data presented in this section it is necessary to outline some of the training schemes developed by the State and linked to the NQF which were encountered by the poorly achieving students interviewed as part of this study. Put simply, there were three main ways the students engaged with the Training State in order to compensate for their lack of valuable social networks. These were by:

- attending pre-trades courses at the local polytechnic
- entering academy programmes offered in their high schools
- attending Youth Training (YT)\textsuperscript{12} or Training Opportunities (TO)\textsuperscript{13} courses.
Briefly, YT and TO courses are fully funded by the State and administered through Skill New Zealand, which purchases training outcomes. The trainers interviewed referred to YT and TO synonymously as Training Opportunity Programmes (TOP) as YT and TO were formerly known. The development of YT and TO reflect recent changes in the provision of training which separated the training of those aged 18 years or younger from those aged 18 years or more and placed them into slightly different schemes.

In accordance with the principles of the NPM, the underlying thrust of the YT and TO programmes is that all courses have "positive outcomes". A positive is considered to be a trainee who, after enrolling in a particular course, finds work or enters further training and is engaged in either of these two activities two months after completing the course. The percentage of students required to become positive outcomes varies from course to course and depends on the specific nature of the course. The success of the training providers in meeting the required number of positive outcomes is used to determine further funding. For example, the Forecourt Training YT Programme, offered at Vocation College, is required to place a minimum of 37 per cent of students into full-time jobs, 33 per cent into part-time work of 30 hours or more per week and 27 per cent into further training. Of course, entry into full-time work is preferred by Skill New Zealand, hence the percentages of trainees entering part-time work or further training are lower when programmes place more than the required percentages of graduates into full-time employment.
According to Guerin (1997, p. 71), PTEs, which enrolled 89 per cent of all TOP trainees in 1995, had obtained better further training and employment outcomes than polytechnics, and charged prices that were five to seven per cent lower. One reason offered by Guerin for the superior performance of PTEs was they appeared to have closer links with employers.

Courses which are not funded by Skill New Zealand do not need to meet "performance outcomes" and rely solely on revenue gathered through charging students tuition fees (for example, pre-trades courses) or on funding from the Ministry of Education (in the case of school-based programmes such as the academies).

Among those low-achieving students who remained in education as discouraged workers, the decision to enter the vocational programmes reflected a combination of factors. For some it was a way of engaging in activities which they thought would be more interesting than school.

Bill (low-SES, low-achievement): Building [Academy] was good ... it worked because it was a variety of things that you want to do. Like, you mix it with school work and it's not as harsh. Like, doing school work all day is pretty boring. In trades you get out and you do things ... . We are building a bach [holiday home]. And [the tutor] gets us out on work experience for what we want to do. Like, I want to be a mechanic, so I do work experience there. But it's just something different [from] school. ... I am sick of school and [the Academy's] fun. You are still
learning and it's stuff that you need to know when you are older. [If] you need to fix your house, you would have learnt it there and you don't have to pay someone else to do it.

Carl (low-SES, low-achievement): I chose the Fitness Academy because it sounded exciting. The things that you do [such as] the Coast to Coast, sky-diving and snow survival ... .

The desire to obtain credentials did not always figure highly in the students' decision to enter specialist programmes while at school. One reason for this was, as Bill reports below, due to their failure in formal examinations and the perception that credentials were not required for the kinds of jobs they had in mind.

Bill (low-SES, low-achievement): I was keen to get School Certificate but when I failed by that much, I just gave up. ... These days qualifications don't mean nothing to most jobs. I mean employers don't give two sh*%es whether you have got Sixth Form Certificate or anything. Basically they look at it as if they have to pay you more if you have got more qualifications. ... I reckon these days it's not what you know, it's who you know.

For Bill the decision to enter the Building Academy was not only driven by a desire to "get out of school work" and to gain skills that he might need later in life but also because he thought
that it would help him obtain a craft apprenticeship through connections that the tutors had developed with employers.

Bill (low-SES, low-achievement): You have to do two weeks [work experience] per term ... so it’s, like, eight weeks, so I will hopefully get a good place that will take me on when I finish school. ... That’s the only reason. If it didn’t include work experience I probably wouldn’t have done it.

This is a view shared by Alan.

I: Why did you take the Engineering Academy?

Alan (low-SES, low-achievement): Well, that’s what I want to do when I leave. ... Something like die-casting or something like it.

I: That’s a metal work thing, isn’t it?

Alan: Yes, and welding.

I: So [do you see the] Engineering Academy ... as a leg in?

Alan: Yes, the ... course is giving me work experience and I hope that this is going to lead me to a job. It may lead onto a job and that would be good.

Carl decided to enter the Fitness Academy upon completing Year 13, preferring the qualifications on offer and because the links the course had developed with the Army. Although Carl did not actually know what qualifications these were, gaining them is seen as a requirement to access employment opportunities generated by the school-employer linkages.
Carl (low-SES, low-achievement): [The course] just give[s] me a chance to get into the Army. They give me the minimum qualifications required to get into the Army. If you do that you have got more chance of getting into the Army. ... They basically guarantee you a job once you have done the course.

While these courses appeared to the students to improve their chances in the labour market through linking them directly to employment opportunities, there is evidence that similar practices were occurring elsewhere in the students’ schools.

Principal, School C: We don't let a kid leave the school unless they are going to a training programme or to a job. We have a great record at that, [HOD, Transition] is quite superb. Both he and his transition person- they find jobs for the kids and we do job search, or they go into a training programme.

HOD, Information Processing, School B: The more that I am involved in talking to employment people, and I am quite involved in that now, with the partnership links that we are developing. ... Very few of the people who leave from our area are jobless. We get a lot of employers phoning here and we send off two or three people for them to have a look at and so employers find that it is easier to phone us - and I think that they phone one or two schools at the time - than to
advertise and have to respond to hundreds. So we are effectively an agency.

Career Guidance, School A: Employers ... come to us for full-time jobs. We have had 18 offered this year. But they don't just come to us. They usually spread the word around three or four schools and it's becoming very marginal about the amount of effort we put into it in terms of whether or not we get a job out of it. If they just come to us then it's worth going flat out. ... [However] we go all out every time because we want our students to get the jobs. ... We have had some successes. We have also had a lot more success by sending people out on work experience. [W]hen the employers have had a try before they buy period, they often offer the person a job.

If the schools were unable to generate jobs for students, there were other means available. Bill reported that if he could not obtain a craft apprenticeship through the links the Building Academy could generate with employers, he would simply go on the pre-trades course at polytechnic. This was seen as a good way to obtain a job. When asked why this was so, Bill replied:

Bill (low-SES, low-achievement): Because ... [pre-trades certificate], like, is just a way to get into it. People just don't hire you if you don't have any experience, and that's the best course to get on. They basically guarantee you a
job. ... that's basically what you have to do these days.  
Pre-trade means everything ... .

One reason why pre-trades courses are seen by some students as “basically guaranteeing you a job” was because they offer a way to access employers.

Mr. Winn (low-SES): The way we are doing it [Alan’s] been put into a job that they know is already there. Those jobs are not advertised. Because the butchers know they can get these trained, slightly trained-up boys, they know that they are so far into their training. ...

Alan (low-SES, low-achievement): Last week a guy from Big Fresh and another local butcher rang up and asked, “Can you keep an eye on a couple of the guys through the course that we can hire?”

I: So you think that attending the course is going to expose you to employers?

Alan: Yes.

Mrs. Winn: Yes, ... the majority of employers don’t advertise in the paper. They just go to the course co-ordinator. ... They will take them on for work experience, and at the end of the time eighty per cent of them get a job through attending the course.

However, the cost of such courses is considered by others as a disincentive.
Carl (low-SES, low-achievement): I am not going to get an apprenticeship. ... it's a waste of time and a waste of money. ... It costs three grand [$3000] to get an apprenticeship these days.

The data show that the State provided Steve with access to valuable social networks differently.

Steve (low-SES, low-achievement): I applied for a job through the careers lady and then I didn't get it and all that. ... And then [the form head] ... called me to her office one day and we had a little talk and she suggested that I go down and look at the courses. So I went down and looked at the courses and I found a five-day course. And I got in trouble for finding that one because I was supposed to find one that would get me right out of school. ...

I: So did the head of form want you out of school?
Steve: The head of form wanted me to be learning and stuff like that, and, since I wasn't going to class, she wanted me to be actively doing something.

I: ... so why did you choose the [Job College] careers one?
Steve: Because I was accepted into it. That was it.

I: Describe how you got onto that course.
Steve: The head of form, she gave me a sheet and said, "This would probably be a good one for you because you don't know what you want to do. Apply for it". And I got it, and so that's why I did it. ...

I: And this course taught you about job skills?
Steve: Yes.
I: You had to apply for a few jobs?
Steve: Yes, I had to do a CV and that kind of stuff.
I: And where did that lead you to? ...
Steve: I did some work experience.
I: Organised by whom?
Steve: Another teacher at the Job College. And then, well, Mum had put the word in for me where she works, and someone left and I got in there.

While the skills and qualifications Steve obtained on the work-skills course did not directly link him with a job, it nonetheless enabled his mother to feel comfortable providing him with access to employment opportunities within her social network. This was because attending the work-skills course provided evidence that Steve was attempting to find a job.

I: Was it important to you that he had tried to find other jobs before you would try and find him a job?
Mrs. Mann (low-SES): Yes, because I did say to you at one stage that I wasn’t going to [get Steve a job] ... but he had tried and he did that course. It was the best thing he ever did.
I: The Job College one?
Mrs. Mann: Yes, ... it built his confidence. So after that, after he had applied for some jobs, this job came up.
I: ... Why was it important that he had tried to get a job?
Mrs. Mann: Because it told me that he was trying to do something for himself. He wasn’t expecting to get everything
handed to him on a plate. He needed to get out and do that bit for himself.

I: So would you have used that network, that resource that you had access to, had he not applied for those jobs?

Mrs. Mann: No, I don’t think so. No, he had to [try himself], didn’t he?

Mr. Mann: He had to get off his fanny and do something.

However, access to state funded courses does not automatically mean access to a job. Rather, access to the networks generated by the State is sometimes dependent on other factors, such as whether or not students have passed the course and if they can meet the cost of training.

Vince attended a pre-trades course because he believed it was the only way of obtaining the craft apprenticeship in building he desired.

Vince (high-SES, low-achievement): I didn’t pass many of them [unit standards]. I suppose I passed about half and I was trying to resit them at the end but it was just a hassle.

I: A hassle?

Vince: Yes, because I had to keep going back to night school and at the end of it I didn’t have any money. I didn’t have enough money to do them. ...

I: Why did you need money to do them?
Vince: Because they were about 40 bucks [a resit] ... and if you don't pass them there's your money gone. ... I just needed a job. I was just getting nowhere.

Vince's inability to obtain the pre-trades certificate led him to rely upon a YT programme in work-skills with a PTE. Vince was attracted to the course because he perceived it would help him get a job.

I: Have they [the tutors] generated work ... for you?
Vince: Yes, they have about a seventy per cent success rate.
I: When you say that they have got about a seventy per cent success rate what do you mean?
Vince: Oh, through the people who do the course. That's how you get a job at the end of it. ... You work with a builder for ten weeks and in those ten weeks ... every week you take a day off to look for a job, something permanent. You have got a tutor who sort of helps you out, brings you job lists and stuff to see if you would like any. And they give you a run to see if you like them. ... Hopefully I am going to get a job. I definitely will get one. Because there are quite a few out there. Probably not what I would like to do but I need some money coming in, some sort of income.

I: So how do you think that you will get that job?
Vince: It's probably me. I probably need to go through the Yellow Pages. Ring up the builders. Go round the building sites and ask if they want any labourers.
Mrs. Lamb: Vince had to write a list of the employers that he would like to work for and send that off to [the PTE]. And the women there did the work for him and rang around to find someone who would be prepared to take him on for ten weeks. And the rest of the contact was with his case-worker and she ... got him a job [work-experience] with a builder.

While the trainees interviewed as part of this study were attracted to courses by the links that the trainers could generate with employers, the introduction of the NPM had created real incentives for tutors teaching in YT or TO programmes to develop these links. Tom, a work-based trainer for a PTE, reported that one of his main functions was to be a “work-broker”.

Tom (Tutor, Vocation College): Work-based training is that they are actually trained on the job. So, if you like, we are work-brokers in a measure. We find jobs and we fit people into them. They work for them for eight weeks. All employers say to us, “If we get a good worker, we won’t let him go”. ... What we are doing is finding jobs and putting people straight into them.

I: So how do you find the work?

Tom: Networking, cold-calling, from the newspaper. I see jobs in the newspaper and I will ring up. Since I have been doing it for so long now, it’s a network thing.

I: Do you have people who you know recruit?
Tom: Yes I do. Two firms I will give you: one is Reece Fittings and [the other is] Fastening Systems, both of those firms have taken seven of my people over the years. ...

I: Why do you think that they have taken students of yours?

Tom: Only because the students that I have put out there are good ones. They know that they don't have to train them.

Sally: (Placement Co-ordinator, International College): The employment liaison people go into the workplace and generate leads for trainees.

The tutors are accountable if they fail to get the number of placements required to ensure funding from Skill New Zealand continues. This creates strong incentives for the tutors to meet performance targets.

Sally: If the tutor doesn't get enough placements, he would have to answer for it. We lost a course because the outcomes weren't there. The tutor should have done more.

The need to meet performance outcomes and to maintain their own employment has influenced the criteria that some of the PTEs and tutors use in recruiting students into their courses.

Sally: The tutors want someone who, when they get to the work end of the course ... is going to deliver an
outcome either in terms of a job or going on to further training. ... New recruits need to be focused; someone who doesn’t have a lot of life-skill problems. Many of them will, but those without are easier to train.

John (Tutor, Vocation College): Basically we have now started looking for that customer service personality at the interview stage, then I’ve got X number of weeks to then try and create something that’s OK for the job.

Tom (Tutor, Vocation College): We are outcome-driven so we want to take the best people on. If I can get you a job I will take you on my course. If you are not going to try, which we can pick, I don’t want to take you on my course because I am going to lose my job. This firm lost six courses last year because of the outcomes. That was half the firm wiped out. ... I: So you lost those courses because you couldn’t get the outcomes?

Tom: Yes that was [Skill New Zealand’s] reasoning

I: Why were you unable to get the outcomes?

Tom: Because of the kind of students that we are getting on the courses.

John: It comes back to the beginning of the conversation where I said that we have raised the standards ... at the interview level [since then].

Tom: We don’t want to take people that we can’t get jobs for because we won’t have a job ourselves.
John: And yet when I first came here those were the people we zeroed in on because [they were people] who needed some help in life. ...

I: If someone was completely hopeless and no training provider would take them on, what would you do with that person?

John: Well, that's the issue that's now been created since they came down hard on outcomes and for me, personally, that's an issue that I have trouble with. Who is looking after the bottom of the barrel? They have just been thrown out literally, now. They used to have a wee bit of hope before. They could come and learn a few skills, and when I say learn a few skills, I actually teach personal hygiene; change your underpants every day, wash under your armpits and brush your teeth. ... so really the bottom of the barrel are starting to wander round the street looking more lost than ever. I don't know who is catering for them.

The reality of selecting particular students was underpinned by a desire to protect the networks that the tutors had developed with employers.

John: (Tutor, Vocation College): We had ... one [applicant] and he was 600 weeks unemployed. And I said to him, "I am not taking you on my course, pal, because I don't know whether or not you would turn up". ... and the guy was 31. ... I said to him, "You do another course here, so I can check your comings and goings and know if you
can arrive on time, I will take you on my next course". So we put him on John's course and he turned up for two half days. ... But that [kind of person] ruins my clients out there. In fact, if I put people out there into industry that do that, I wouldn't have anybody to put people to work under. So unless I know somebody really wants a job, I am not going to put them out there.

The evidence presented here suggests the NQF provided a framework for tutors to organise and structure their courses in order to meet the needs of the various industries that graduates hoped to enter. However, it appeared the employers were not interested in the actual unit standards the students had obtained:

Tom (Tutor, Vocation College): The course has been created [by the ITO] - that's my guidelines - it's the area that the industry wants me to work in. They are the areas that they require people to have knowledge in or skills in. So that's the baseline that we work from. ...

I: But are they actually interested in whether or not they have got the credits [unit standards]?

Tom: No, ... every employer says to me, "You give me a kid with attitude, I don't care if he's got experience or not. If he's got a good attitude to work, we can teach him anything".

I: ... how important is it that the students get the unit standards to employers?
Tom: It's not for the employers ... it's more important to Skill New Zealand because they say, "You have to do this". And we have always had a conflict of what are we here for. Are we here to educate these kids to these unit standards, or are we here to get them jobs? ... I see it that we are to get them jobs.

Sally (Placement Co-ordinator, International College): We are trying to take the emphasis off the unit standards. We want them [the students] to get the skills. The skills are the important thing; the right attitude - team players. Qualifications are right at the bottom for employers. The skills seem to be the thing that employers are interested in. Then they train them.

John (Tutor, Vocation College): So many employers out there have not heard of [the NZF]. They don't know what a unit standard is, they don't know what the framework is, and no one has bothered to tell them.

Indeed it seems that Skill New Zealand itself is more interested in other factors and this is reflected in the way the performance of the courses is assessed.

Sarah (Senior Manager, Skill New Zealand, Wellington): The fact is that [the performance outcomes] reflect what we already know, from our own operation and our own work on what makes a successful provider compared to an unsuccessful provider. We did some work a couple
of years ago and basically the cost has nothing to do with it. ... The successful ones are those which get the employment outcomes. So the differences are the quality of the people working for them, and those people might be completely unqualified ... they ... have exceptional networks which link into the labour market opportunities. That would be number one. I can't remember the rest. There were about five, but that was the outstanding one.

Sally (Placement Co-ordinator, International College): Skill New Zealand requires data on the unit standards achieved, but it's the other outcomes that they are interested in. We used to emphasize unit standards, but we have decided that it's the skills which are important. ... Sometimes the focus on qualifications can detract from the real task, which is getting the trainees jobs. We hook them onto the NQF and this, at least, allows them to get started if they want.

These comments raise questions about what skills the PTEs are actually providing. The data suggest that the tutors were trying to create appropriate attitudes and dispositions to work in their trainees.

John (Tutor, Vocation College): We are not teaching skills academically as such, even though an industry has created a course. Most people are capable of doing that. It's lack of confidence. It's the single biggest thing
we work on. They won’t talk in a group so ... we make
them the team leader for a week, you make them stand
up and write on the board or talk to the class. ... 
Interview exercises, look people in the eye when they
are talking to them. They have none of those skills. Yet
underneath it they are good workers.

Tom (Tutor, Vocation College): Unit standard number sixty-two is
personal appearance. Now we can say OK, the job that I
am going to put you into is an office situation so ... in
theory by the end of this course [you are] wearing a
tie, trousers - dressed up, so that when you go in there
you are in a natural environment, but most of these
kids can’t afford those clothes anyway. ... I teach from
18 years of age to 50 and they are all in the room at
the same time ... so there’s a hell of an age group. You
are getting people from different eras. You are getting
40 year-olds who come from an era where they had a
work ethic and an appearance ethic. ... They are O.K.
right from the start ... while you are trying to teach the
modern 18 year-old that he can’t front up to an
interview with his knees hanging out his jeans, even
though they are fashionable and a pair of sports shoes
and rings and studs and all the rest of it. Because that’s
his current culture, but it’s not acceptable at an
employment level.
John (Tutor, Vocation College): It's life skills that we are teaching rather than being educators. ... We are trying to slot them into society at a level that they are accepted.

The commodification of social networks

In the introduction to this thesis the issue of the contribution made by the State in helping make school-to-work transitions efficient is raised. The data presented in this chapter help answer this by demonstrating that the State is contributing meaningfully to this end through PTEs, other providers and, to a lesser extent, secondary schools, by encouraging them to develop links with employers.

At the secondary school level this is apparent in that teachers and guidance personnel attempt to help their students obtain employment by creating and fostering links with recruiting employers. It is at the post-secondary level, however, that the role of the State, in utilising social networks in order to improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions, is most obvious. Indeed, the viability of the PTE programmes that are funded by the State depend on the ability of tutors to generate positive outcomes. In order to meet these outcomes, the trainers had, as one of the interviewees replied, become work-brokers.

The emergence of work-brokers suggests that the success of the State in making school-to-work transitions efficient rests on the ability of trainers to network and “slot” trainees into the labour-market. As social network theory shows, this relationship
between employers and PTEs depends largely on the trust that trainers can develop with employers. From the interviews this trust was primarily developed through the ability of the trainers to provide employers with appropriately skilled and presentable new recruits.

The data show that some PTEs are de-emphasizing unit standards. This suggests that the notion of skill is problematic where the NQF is concerned. In the YT and TO courses trainers tend to focus on making the trainees work-ready rather than qualified in terms of the unit standards they may have obtained. Thus, the primary focus of the trainers interviewed is on creating appropriate attitudes and dispositions in trainees. For example, Tom, a PTE tutor, reported that part of his job was to create a “work ethic” and an “appearance ethic” in young trainees. In this regard, while the NQF has evolved as a means for trainers to structure and organise their courses in accordance with the demands of the relevant ITOs, it appears that employers do not select new recruits on the basis of their qualifications but on recommendations of the trainers. In the case of pre-apprenticeship courses, qualifications are more important, but again, it must be stressed that tutors’ recommendations are also critical.

The introduction of the NPM into training has had a number of effects. Mainly, it has caused trainers to select students they believe will maximise their chances of obtaining positive outcomes. This means that there is a tendency to favour trainees likely to develop, or who come to the course already equipped with, the necessary skills and attitudes required to become positive
outcomes. In this respect, the Training State is emerging as a mechanism of further sorting and selecting students who have already been sorted and selected in conventional schooling.

Finally in the case of the academy programmes, students are, in part, attracted to the courses because they perceive that the associated work-experience will provide access to recruiting employers.

The role now played by the trainers as work-brokers represents a fundamental shift in the nature of social networks. Where networks formerly resided within the socio-cultural sphere and, therefore, operated with limited state intervention, the emergence of the State as a purchaser of social networks represents a deeper level of state intervention. Moreover, this represents the commodification of social networks. The notion that the State is purchasing social networks has emerged as a result of the application of the NPM to education. This is expressed in the contractual relationships which exist between Skill New Zealand, PTEs and other providers of education and training. In this relationship social networks are adopting a commodified form and have become integral to the way in which production is organised through exchange. In other words, the social networks generated by trainers have become a form of capital which is being sold to the State and trainees.
Conclusion

The argument presented in this chapter is that the State is attempting to make school-to-work transitions efficient by purchasing and creating social networks. While it should be noted that the data from the students are limited, taken with that gathered in the other interviews, the evidence is compelling. Poorly qualified school-leavers are attracted to courses offered by the PTEs, schools and polytechnics because of the employment networks the course tutors can generate. While in some instances, particularly the pre-trades courses, credentials seem to be important, in other courses such as the TO and YT, they do not. As one trainer responded, they are, “Trying to give the trainees skills not qualifications”. Providing students with the skills demanded by employers is seen as critical because this enhances the ability of the PTEs to place trainees into work, which is central to achieving positive outcomes. It is important to note that while Skill New Zealand requires trainers to furnish returns of the unit standards obtained by students in TO and YT courses, this is not used as a basis for funding decisions. In this respect, the role of the NQF rests in the way in which it provides a measure for organising and structuring courses designed to meet the needs of employers. Any qualifications that students might obtain are of secondary concern.

The development of PTEs as an expression of new public management represents a further step in the creation of educational markets. Although the utility of the qualifications on offer varies from course to course, consistent among all is the
notion that attending courses will allow students access to social networks which will improve their chances of obtaining a job. This was clearly demonstrated in the YT and TO courses where the State has emerged as the purchaser of social networks. However, in all courses, providing poorly qualified school-leavers with access to social networks was a priority. In this respect social networks have become commodified and access to them determined, in part, by cost.

This finding is also important because it suggests a way in which the State has been able to create educational markets. To date, creating educational markets has been problematic because of the difficulty in measuring outcomes. However, under the NPM as adopted by Skill New Zealand, this problem has been partially resolved. The purchase of positive outcomes allows the State to meaningfully compare the performance of public and private sector providers on the basis of cost. It would seem, on the basis of Guerin’s (1997) evidence, that spending less actually gives better results. Taken to its extreme, this appears to provide neo-liberal reformers with a reason for believing the per capita cost of education can be reduced while improving the performance of the sector.

Finally, in terms of the overall theoretical position adopted in this thesis, the emergence of the State as a provider and purchaser of social networks indicates that the State is attempting to replicate a function which formerly operated in the socio-cultural sphere. As such, it represents a deeper level of State intervention designed to make school-to-work transitions efficient.
1 Senior Manager, Skill New Zealand.
2 The move to NPM is part of a broader shift towards neo-liberal systems of managing state apparatuses (Boston, Martin, Pallot & Walsh, 1996).
3 All PTE must be accredited by the NZQA. This means that they must offer unit standards linked to the NQF.
4 Briefly, these programmes are each based on a different theme and offer standards-based assessment linked to the NQF.
5 Seven secondary school offered academy programmes. Six of these are low-circuit schools as Lauder at al. (1995) defined them. The remaining school was classified as "other".
6 De-zoning is a central neo-liberal reform and it has reduced the consumer demand for working-class schools (Lauder et al., 1995).
7 In the early 1980s, School A had a roll of more than 1400 students. However, the introduction of market policies led the school's roll to drop to such an extent that, in 1997, well under 1000 pupils were enrolled. However, the development of the academy programmes has led the school to enjoy increased support, with the role increasing to almost 1200 in 1999.
8 Following Ball, Bowe and Gewirtz (1995), Lauder et al. (1995) argued that schools could be divided into three "circuits" on the basis of their SES intakes. Ball and his colleagues theorised that high-circuit schools will be desired by middle-class parents because they largely draw on a middle-class intake. In contrast, low-circuit schools, which have a majority of working-class students, will be considered by working-class parents.
9 However this finding was in contrast to Ball et al. (1995) who found that working-class parents had no knowledge of the high circuit schools available to them.
10 In this regard, Lauder et al. (1994) suggest competition between working-class schools has led some schools to cater for niche markets.
11 The Education Forum is a right-wing think-tank which regularly publishes reports on various aspects of education.
12 YT has been designed for school-leavers aged 18 or younger and who are poorly qualified. Trainees may be admitted to YT courses if they meet other criteria. See the Appendix C for details.
13 TO has been designed for poorly qualified school-leavers aged 18 or 19 and who are registered with Work and Income New Zealand; the long-term unemployed and youth-need clients. Trainees may be admitted to TO courses if they meet other criteria. See Appendix C for details.

14 This means, for example, that a student who entered a job immediately after completing the course, but who left prior to the measuring point, does not count as a successful outcome.
CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study begins with the widely accepted premise that state intervention is central to the maintenance of capitalist production. The State must intervene because capitalism is an anarchic and unplanned system, which cannot spontaneously produce and reproduce itself. One way the State intervenes to maintain capitalist production is by ensuring that school students are integrated efficiently into the labour market. The emergence of the discouraged worker effect suggests that the State is no longer achieving this. The central concern in this thesis is to assess how the State is attempting to reorganise and restructure schooling in order to make school-to-work transitions efficient. In particular, it assesses the contribution made to this process by the NQF.

The data reported in this thesis show that between 1955 and 1980 strong demand in the labour market for poorly qualified, male school-leavers meant male students could leave school at the earliest possible moment and obtain work. An important way that these school-leavers found work was through utilising resources made available by their social networks. Social networks provided these school-leavers with direct access to recruiting employers, as well as access to information about job opportunities. Social networks also enhanced the efficiency of school-to-work transitions and improved the productivity of labour power by incorporating
students into a cultural tradition (Cohen, 1983, 1985, & 1990). This tradition transmitted attitudes, values and skills which were central to worker productivity (Manwaring, 1984). Moreover, between 1955 and 1980 social networks led to jobs that, in comparison to those available to poorly qualified male school-leavers today, were more secure, more highly paid and more likely to be full-time rather than part-time. Essentially, the networks that existed between 1955 and 1980 can be considered well formed and embedded within the social infrastructure of the families and communities in which the school-leavers lived.

For the State the role played by social networks in helping poorly qualified school-leavers obtain jobs between 1955 and 1980 was significant because the process of making efficient school-to-work transitions occurred with limited state intervention. However, continued globalisation of the economy, the introduction of new technology and credential inflation have combined to erode the value of the social networks available to poorly qualified, male school-leavers. As a result, the types of jobs such school-leavers can access through their social networks are, in comparison to those obtained by their fathers, more likely to be temporary, poorly paid, and part-time. Today social networks are fragmented and only partially integrated into social infrastructure. Moreover, those who do not have access to valuable social networks tend to attempt to compensate for this by relying on the Training State.

The decline in the value of social networks has meant that poorly motivated and poorly qualified male school students now continue education as discouraged workers. One reason why the
emergence of the discouraged worker effect is problematic for the State is that it raises debate about the effectiveness of its education system. For example, critics argue that the State continues to organise and structure school-to-work transitions in the manner appropriate when there was strong demand in the labour market for poorly qualified school-leavers (Hood, 1998). Changes in production brought about by the increased globalisation of the economy and the introduction of new technology have rendered these strategies ineffective; as a result new methods are required.

Besides raising questions about the effectiveness of the State, the erosion in the value of social networks is problematic: it is difficult to meet the needs of poorly motivated students who remain at school as discouraged workers. For example, the high cost of maintaining and expanding training systems represents a cost to capital in that it reduces the level of surplus value that can be extracted from the labour process. This is because the State is forced to appropriate revenue from the economic system via taxation. This ultimately emerges as a cost to capital due to the requirement that higher wages be paid to workers. Similarly, capitalists themselves are required to pay taxes and this further reduces their economic competitiveness in the global economy. More significant, in the context of this thesis, is the difficulty the State now experiences in attempting to replicate the role formerly played by social networks in facilitating efficient youth transitions into the labour market and which helped improve the productivity of labour. Without this productivity labour power becomes both a loss to capitalism, in terms of the production of surplus value, and
a cost to the State in terms of demands made on both its training systems and, increasingly, on the Welfare State.

The erosion in the value of social networks has further implications in questioning the reproduction of social classes and the emergence of the "risk society" (Beck, 1992). The implication is that, as the value of social networks has declined, individuals have become emancipated from institutional constraints, and as a result have become relatively independent of inherited or newly formed ties.

The data presented in Chapter Three are supportive of Beck’s (1992) notion of "risk society". For example, the data show finding a job is far more problematic and consequently leaving school is far riskier today than it was between 1955 and 1980. The data also show that during the earlier period social networks helped reduce risk by providing school-leavers with a source of reliable information about the quality of jobs and by providing direct links with recruiting employers.

However, as far as securing a job is concerned, the data gathered as part of this study do not support the notion that individuals are being freed from institutional constraints, nor have they become relatively independent of inherited or newly formed ties. In this respect, the data show that social networks are weak only in the sense they no longer provide poorly qualified, male school-leavers with access to "good" jobs. However, they remain strong in the sense that they are the most important resource used by poorly qualified students to obtain employment.
Those who do not have access to social networks tend to compensate for this by relying upon other institutions, in particular the Training State. Thus, while those who rely upon the Training State in order to get a job may have been “liberated” from depending on their social networks, they are subsequently forced to depend upon other institutions. And, in an age of greater user-pays in education, trainees are increasingly required to pay for the privilege.

The fact that students are remaining in education for longer periods but remaining poorly motivated towards their schooling and leaving poorly qualified suggests that the discouraged worker effect is, in part, a function of the education system. Since the advent of mass schooling in New Zealand, the dominant means of regulation has been an attempt to limit participation and achievement in education in order to push students into the labour market as quickly as possible. The traditional approach adopted by the State to achieve this was to develop norm-referenced assessment procedures and to encourage students who were perceived as unsuited to academic courses of study to pursue vocational courses. However, state intervention designed to achieve this has only been partially successful. In terms of curriculum reform, state intervention designed to increase the vocational component of the curriculum has been undermined by pressure from parents and students who have demanded access to qualifications that hold out the promise of social mobility. Traditionally, these qualifications have been academic qualifications. Consequently, attempts to improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions through curriculum reform have
ultimately been undermined by pressures beyond the control of the State. In terms of assessment reform, the evidence presented in Chapter Four shows that the State has not had the power to ensure the long-term viability of particular assessment interventions. One reason for this is that credential inflation has continually undermined the ability of the State to limit participation in education to the desired extent. The traditional strategy adopted by the State to reassert the selective function of schooling in the face of credential inflation has been to develop new assessments higher up in secondary schooling. While this strategy has offered the State a means of temporarily reasserting the selective function of education, it has also encouraged students to continue their education for longer periods. In this respect, the strategy traditionally employed by the State to organise and structure schooling has contributed to the discouraged worker effect. The long-term ineffectiveness of this strategy indicates that new methods of integrating school students into the labour market need to be developed.

This thesis uses the NQF as an example of how the State is responding to problems generated by the discouraged worker effect. Underpinning the NQF is an attempt to replace the role formerly played by social networks and selective assessment practices in helping make school-to-work transitions efficient. It was hoped that the NQF would help develop a new learning culture in which all students were highly motivated towards and able to obtain economically relevant qualifications. Gaining such qualifications and developing such a learning culture is considered essential in the face of economic changes that have
reduced labour market demand for poorly qualified male school-leavers. From this perspective, the discouraged worker effect is the direct result of ineffective forms of state intervention, in particular norm-referenced assessment, which is seen to limit achievement in education.

The validity of the NQF as a solution to the discouraged worker effect is contested. One source of criticism comes from neo-conservatives who argue that the discouraged worker effect is the result of inappropriate forms of state intervention. For them the effect reflects egalitarian ideologies which have encouraged low-ability and working-class students to pursue inappropriate forms of education. Neo-conservatives wish to strengthen the selective function of education and limit low-ability and working-class students to forms of education that reflect their future destinations as workers. To achieve this, neo-conservatives support the retention of norm-referenced assessment and the introduction of markets into education on the grounds that these measures will limit working-class participation in elite forms of education (Apple, 1993).

In the event, the State supported the neo-conservative solution to the discouraged worker effect by retaining norm-referenced assessment. One reason for this was that the NQF did not seem to be able to improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions in the manner predicted by the NZQA. In this regard, the data presented in Chapter Five show that the NQF has been unable to create a learning culture or enable school students to obtain qualifications to improve their position in the labour
market. As a result, the preferred status of norm-referenced assessment remains unchanged. While the retention of norm-referenced assessment represents a victory for neo-conservatives, it has yet to provide a solution to the discouraged worker effect and is unlikely to do so. Indeed, it represents the continuation of a traditional strategy that has been rendered ineffective by changing patterns of capitalist production and the erosion in the value of social networks.

The State's inability to find a solution to the discouraged worker effect does not mean that the State is unable to structure and organise education in ways, which improve the efficiency of school-to-work transitions. The data show that the State is achieving this goal through applying the principles of NPM at a tertiary level. The application of NPM has seen Skill New Zealand focus on purchasing positive training outcomes. A positive training outcome is considered to be a student who obtains employment or who moves on to further education after completing a training course. While providers must offer courses linked to the NQF in order to obtain state funds, the actual qualifications students obtain are not of primary interest to Skill New Zealand. Thus, while the NQF provides a framework to organise and structure training in accordance with the perceived needs of employers, in the settings explored in this thesis the actual qualifications on offer are secondary to other resources that are made available to trainees. The most crucial of these in the context of this study is the role played by the trainers in helping trainees to find jobs. The trainers report that networking is the most efficient means of helping their students obtain jobs. Thus,
networking is the best way of obtaining the percentage of positive training outcomes required to ensure continued funding. In this regard, a senior Skill New Zealand official claimed that his organisation was “purchasing social networks”.

While the role played by the trainers in networking among recruiting employers is most apparent in courses funded by Skill New Zealand, it is also in evidence in school-based programmes, particularly, the academy programmes. Here, students report that part of their attraction to these courses is in the networks that attending these courses provide access to. A similar process can be seen in other forms of training. In pre-trades courses, part of the attraction expressed by students for attending was in the employment networks that the tutors had been able to generate with recruiting employers. These courses are fully funded by students; consequently it is the students who are in reality purchasing social networks.

The application of NPM to state-funded courses has had a number of effects. The pressure for measurable outcomes has led tutors to select students on the basis of whether or not they appear a “good bet”. A good bet is a student who appears during the selection stage as likely to deliver a “positive training outcome”. This suggests that new forms of social selection among low-achieving students have been introduced. It has led to an emphasis on getting students work-ready, rather than qualified in the formal sense. This involves tutors primarily focusing on creating a work-ethic and an appearance-ethic and producing students who are likely to become positive outcomes. Finally, it
signifies that social networks have assumed a commodified form, which has become part of the tutors' human capital. This capital is sold either to the State or to students and has become part of the process of exchange.

In this thesis, the erosion in the value of social networks is given significance through the work of Habermas (1976). Habermas argues that increasing levels of state intervention are required in order to maintain the capitalist economy and legitimate its effects. However, while the State can compensate for problems in the economy, it can never resolve the contradictions in capitalism, such as the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. According to Habermas, advanced capitalist society comprises three inter-related subsystems: the economic, the political-administrative, and the socio-cultural. Each sub-system has tendencies towards crises that undermine the ability of society to maintain and reproduce itself. Different kinds of crises elicit different kinds of responses. For example, a crisis in the economic sub-system can elicit a response from the political-administrative sub-system. However, state interventions in the economic and the political-administrative sub-systems are problematic because historically, their maintenance has destroyed aspects of the socio-cultural sub-system. This is significant because state intervention has eroded many cultural practices and other resources upon which capitalist production depends, but that neither capitalism nor the State can efficiently replace. In modern society, the imperatives of crisis management and the forces of technocratic rationality have undermined these cultural practices and related resources. This has led to the colonisation of the socio-cultural
sub-system or the life-world. Essentially, state intervention and economic development have reduced the ability of the everyday interactions and the cultural supports that exist between people, to give meaning and motivation to life. This robs the life-world such of its ability to organise human interaction. As Young (1989) notes, the economic and political-administrative sub-systems have been borrowing significance from the life-world for some time.

Replacing functions formerly completed in the life world is further problematic because in order for intervention to be seen as legitimate, the State must create a rational consensus among the public. According to Habermas, the State attempts to create this through drawing on scientific-technological knowledge and by developing technocratic interventions. Scientific-technological knowledge and technocratic interventions normally provide the strongest sources of legitimation because they mystify power relations and present the interests of the few as 'generalisable interests'. The development of technocratic interventions to political problems is an attempt to limit doubt about the integrity of the political-administrative sub-system. However, the inability of state intervention to resolve the contradictions in capitalist production means that there is always a tendency towards crises of rationality.

Social networks are taken in this thesis to be an aspect of the life-world because they reflect the every-day interactions that exist between people. The evidence presented in this thesis shows that in the past school-leavers were able to organise and structure their school-to-work transitions by drawing on resources made available
through their social networks. For example, the data show that in the past, male school leavers could obtain employment through their social networks and learn about the world of work through inheriting a cultural tradition similar to that described by Cohen (1983, 1985 & 1990). These practices and understandings were significant because they helped establish standards that governed labour market behaviour and helped individuals to find employment. Moreover, they did so in ways that relied on minimal levels of state intervention. However, economic development, in particular the erosion in the value of manual labour has reduced the ability of social networks to fulfil these functions. In order to maintain the social relations of production, the State has been compelled to replace functions formerly completed through social networks.

Two strategies were identified in this thesis as attempts by the State to replace functions formerly completed by social networks in helping poorly qualified school leavers make school-to-work transitions. The first was the development of the NQF and its system of unit standards. From a Habermasian perspective, the development of unit standards represents an attempt to replace standards that were formerly established and transmitted as part of a cultural inheritance with state mandated standards that are developed within and transmitted through the State bureaucracy. In effect, the NQF is a response from within the political-administrative sub-system to problems created by functional weaknesses with in the socio-cultural sub-system. More specifically, the NQF is a technocratic system designed to compensate for the erosion in the value of social networks and the
emergence of the DWE. However, while the NQF was presented as being in the interests of all, the data show that it was unable to generate a rational consensus thus, compounding the crisis of legitimation for the State.

The second solution to problems created by the erosion in the value of social networks that was identified in this thesis was the "purchase of social networks". The data suggest that the State is attempting to improve school-to-work transitions by purchasing access to the social networks that are developed and maintained by PTE tutors. The purchase of social networks has emerged as a result of the application of NPM to training systems and is expressed in the contractual relationships that exist between SNZ and the PTEs. In this relationship, social networks have assumed a commodified form and have become part of the way in which production is organised through exchange. In other words, the social capital embedded in the tutors' social networks is being sold to the State. However, while in practice, the State is purchasing social networks, SNZ continues to promote the view that qualifications play an important role in helping school leavers to obtain employment. In fact, some PTEs are actually de-emphasizing qualifications and this suggests that the notion of skill is problematic as far as SNZ and the NQF are concerned. Tutors tend to focus on making trainees work-ready rather than having them gain unit standards. A primary focus of the tutors interviewed is on creating appropriate attitudes and dispositions in trainees. For example, part of Tom's job was to create a "work ethic" and an "appearance ethic" in young trainees. The creation of these two ethics in young trainees resonates with claims made
by social conservatives about the erosion of forms of authority that formerly resided in the socio-cultural sub-system. For example, Mead (1986) argues that State intervention is required to create an obligation to work because many young people today lack pro-work attitudes and values. He claims that pro-work attitudes and values were formerly transmitted across generations within families. However, the provision of welfare benefits and desire for high status employment on the part of unemployed people mean that many prefer to stay on welfare than to work. To reverse this, Mead argues that the unemployed need both ‘help and hassle’ to get them off welfare.

From a social capital perspective, the role played by the State in “purchasing social networks” suggests that state intervention is able to create social capital. Indeed, from the State’s perspective, the data presented here is encouraging and suggests that the application of NPM to training systems maximises the likelihood that the unemployed will obtain employment while achieving this objective at the least possible price. This finding is of interest because it suggests that neo-liberal reforms are not necessarily destroying social capital as some critics suggest (Cox & Caddwell, 2000). Indeed, the data show that the application of NPM to training systems encourages tutors to cultivate social capital and the strength of these networks serves as a powerful indicator of success or failure of tutors to provide the training outcomes purchased by SNZ. Thus, NPM provides a way to measure the quality of the relationships that exist between tutors and employers.
While the State continues to promote the connection between qualifications and employment, the data presented suggests that in practice it is pursuing a different course. The "purchase social networks" represents an attempt to replace functions formerly completed within the communities that young people lived. As such, it represents a new mode of organising life based on welfare state regulation. Although the State continues to promote the link between school qualifications and employment (Creech, 1998), in some settings it appears to be pursuing a different course. Replacing social networks sees the State intervening directly into the social-cultural sub-system in a fashion predicted by Habermas (1976) and suggests that the NQF has been more successful in creating social capital than in creating human capital.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWEE SELECTION PROCEDURES

Introduction

This appendix describes the schools which participated in this study and describes the procedures used to select them. In addition, it describes the procedures used to select the school educators, the PTE tutors, the students and their parents/caregivers, all of whom provide the qualitative data used in this thesis.

School selection

A principal aim of this study is to assess the impact of the NQF on senior secondary school students. For this reason, it was necessary to select secondary schools which could provide access to students and teachers for interview.

A number of considerations were taken into account when selecting secondary schools. These were:

a. In order to assess the impact of the NQF, schools which were employing standards-based assessment in a range of academic and non-academic subjects at a senior secondary level were sought.
b. Schools participating in a Ministry of Education funded project (henceforth the 'Howard Study') were favoured because data required to select students from within selected schools had
already been collected and were available to the author.
c. For practical reasons, such as the need to conduct interviews
during the evenings and the cost of travel, local schools were
sought.
d. Given the focus of this thesis on the experiences of male
students, co-educational or single-sex boys’ schools were sought.

Late in 1995 teaching staff in the Howard Study schools were
asked to identify local schools which they believed were making
the greatest progress towards introducing standards-based
assessment under the NQF. From this information, four schools
emerged as possibilities in terms of consideration ‘a’ above. Course
booklets for the 1997 year were obtained from these schools to
further assess their level of involvement in the NQF. These
supported the teachers’ perceptions that these schools offered
standards-based assessment under the NQF in a range of subjects.

Of these four schools, two were participating in the Howard
Study, were local, and were co-educational. These were identified
as possible participants in the current study. Of the remaining two
schools, one was rejected because it did not satisfy consideration
‘c’ above. The other, while not participating in the Howard Study,
was identified as a possible participant in this study because
information needed to select students was available.

Meetings were arranged with the principal of each school
during 1996. During these meetings, the aims of the study were
discussed, the commitment required by the school was described,
and permission to conduct the study was sought. All of the principals agreed to their schools participating in the study.

Description of the three schools

School A

School A is a large, state-funded, co-educational institution which participates in the Howard Study. The SES composition of the student population in the school is low in relation to the majority of secondary schools in Christchurch, and in 1996 the school received a decile rating of three from the Ministry of Education.

In 1998 School A was among the bottom 25 per cent of schools in a league table of school performance in both the School Certificate and University Bursary examinations (Iosefa, 1999).

School A is currently under-subscribed and, in the past, has struggled to maintain staffing levels. However, as a result of new programmes it has experienced roll growth and this has allowed the school to employ more staff.

The deputy principal reported that the school finds it difficult to recruit highly achieving and high-SES students. One result of this is that the school predominantly caters for low-SES and poorly achieving students. However, as the school attracts a few highly achieving and high-SES students, it caters for a student population which has diverse needs. Accordingly the school offers a wide
range of academic and non-academic subject options.

The principal of School A was supportive of standards-based assessment under the NQF and informed staff in 1996 that by 1998 all courses should be based on unit standards where relevant unit standards were available. In 1997, the school offered standards-based assessment under the NQF at sixth-form level in a wide range of subjects. In some sixth-form subjects, including information processing and computing, assessment against unit standards was listed in the course booklet as the only form of assessment. In subjects such as physics, geography, English and history, assessment in both standards-based assessment and norm-referenced assessment were offered. In subjects such as French and German, norm-referenced assessment was the only form of assessment offered.

School A offered in 1997 a range of academic subjects leading to Bursary as well as a large range of non-academic subjects including drama television, legal studies, media studies, travel and art, and women's studies. In addition, the senior school has recently been reorganised into a number of "academies", each based on a different theme. For example, there is an Academy which aims to prepare students for obtaining apprenticeships as mechanics.

School B

School B is a large, state funded, co-educational institution which participates in the Howard Study. Like School A, it attracts
some high-SES and highly achieving students and caters for a diverse range of educational needs. In 1996, the school received a decile rating of three from the Ministry of Education.

In 1998, School B was among the bottom 25 per cent of schools in a league table of school performance in both the School Certificate and University Bursary examinations (Iosefa, 1999).

The principal of School B was supportive of standards-based assessment under the NQF, arguing that it was the best thing for the kinds of students that attended his school. Standards-based assessment on the NQF was seen by the principal as a way to improve the chance for students who graduated from his school to succeed in the labour market.

School B reported in its 1997 course booklet that it was accredited to offer unit standards in a wide range of curriculum areas. In some sixth-form subjects including business administration, information processing, legal studies, electro-technology, and tourism, standards-based assessment was given as the only form of assessment at a senior secondary level. In other subjects, unit standards were offered in addition to traditional assessment methods. Examples where this occurred included accounting, home economics, biology, history, chemistry, geography and graphics. Others were either promising standards-based assessment under the NQF if unit standards became available or described standards-based assessment as a possibility. For example, computer studies, English, mathematics, media studies, physics, classics, and design technology. There were some
subjects which were not offering unit standards, such as French, Japanese, music, drama and physical education.

School B offered in 1997 a range of academic subjects leading to Bursary as well as a large range of non-academic subjects, including vehicle maintenance, furniture-making, electro-technology, and screen printing. In addition, School B has recently begun providing academy type programmes similar to those set up by School A.

School C

Like Schools A and B, School C is a large, state funded, co-educational institution. However, in contrast to schools A and B, it draws a high proportion of its students from high-SES backgrounds and in 1996 the school received a decile rating of one from the Ministry of Education. It is oversubscribed and has an enrolment scheme to limit student numbers.

Students from School C achieve more highly in external examinations than either Schools A or B. For example, in 1998, School C obtained results that put it in the top 50 per cent of schools in a league table of school performance in School Certificate (Iosefa, 1999).

As was the case with the other two schools, in School C there appeared to be a general move towards implementing unit standards into as many curriculum areas as possible. Indeed during the initial meeting, the principal suggested that by 1998
the school would not offer Sixth Form Certificate but would rely completely on unit standards.

In 1997, School C offered unit standards at sixth form level in a wide range of subjects. In some subjects, including chemistry, biology, computers and programming, information technology, office systems, legal studies and physics, assessment against unit standards was given in the course booklet as the only form of assessment offered. In some subjects, for example, geography, accounting and chemistry, unit standards were offered in addition to Sixth Form Certificate. Other subjects were either offering unit standards if they became available or described them as a possibility (for example, graphics and design, clothing and textiles, and economics). Some subjects, for example, music and French were not offering standards-based assessment under the NQF.

In 1997 School C offered a range of academic subjects leading to Bursary as well as a large range of non-academic subjects, including office systems, media studies, tourism and travel, automotive trades and horticulture.

The process of selecting schools was completed in November 1996. Having selected the schools, attention was focused on selecting a sample of educators from within these schools to interview.

**Educator selection**

The principle aim of the educator interviews was to gather
data on the perceptions and experiences of the practitioners who work with standards-based assessment in the selected secondary schools. In order to elicit a range of opinions, interviews with the head of department and one other teacher from five departments in each of the three schools were planned. The aim of these interviews was to obtain data about the functioning of standards-based assessment under the NQF as it related to the selected departments. However, in the event, many of the educators were able to comment on the functioning of standards-based assessment in more than one curriculum or professional area. For example, the geography HOD at School C was also the teacher in charge of tourism, the information processing teacher at School B also taught accounting, and the geography teacher at School B was also the Year 12 (Form 6) dean. Data provided by the educators, which were gathered in addition to information on the area for which they were selected to participate, were included in the study. This was justified on the grounds that it provided a broad picture of the functioning of standards-based assessment on the NQF in the target schools.

In addition to these interviews, in each of the three schools interviews were sought with the principal, one guidance/transition counsellor and the teacher in charge of assessment practices. Thus, in each school the following educators were identified as possible interviewees.

a. Heads of Department

   English
   Mathematics
b. Teachers
   English
   Mathematics
   Social Science (Geography or History)
   Science
   Information Technology/Processing or Computing

c. The person in charge of school assessment practices.

d. One guidance/transition counsellor.

e. The Principal.

This selection offered the possibility of conducting 13 educator interviews in each school. In the event 12 interviews were conducted in Schools B and C but only 11 in School A. There were two reasons why fewer interviews than planned were conducted. Firstly, some interviewees fulfilled dual roles. In school A the assessment manager was also a science teacher, in School C the assessment manager was HOD of science, and in School B the assessment manager was also a mathematics teacher. In addition, the Principal of School A declined to be interviewed citing time constraints and claiming that the assessment manager knew more about the impact of the NQF.

Before being interviewed, all educators were contacted by
phone to see if they were willing to discuss the possibility of participating in this study. Only the principal of School A declined to participate. Individual meetings were then arranged with all of the educators during 1997. During these, the aims of the study were outlined and the commitment required by the participants was described. All agreed to participate.

**Student and parent/caregiver selection**

The principal aims of the student interviews were to obtain data on the impact of standards-based assessment on male, pakeha students from contrasting SES and achievement backgrounds, and to ascertain how work-bound school-leavers obtained their first employment. The parent/caregiver interviews were similar in that they aimed to gather data on the parents’ or caregivers’ perceptions of standards-based assessment and to ascertain how the male parents/caregivers obtained their first jobs after leaving school. The parents/caregivers were selected to participate in the study by virtue of their relationship to the students, and no additional criteria were used.

In order to achieve these aims while limiting the length of this study to three years, a sample of Year 12 (Form 6) students comprising the following categories were sought:

Category 1: High-SES, High-Achievement
Category 2: High-SES, Low-Achievement
Category 3: Low-SES, High-Achievement
Category 4: Low-SES, Low-Achievement
In order to keep the study to a manageable size, it was decided to limit the sample to eight students from each school. Consequently, two students were sought for each of the four categories in each of the three schools. This gave a total of 24 students.

To help identify students from contrasting SES and achievement backgrounds, a database of the Year 12 male students in the selected schools was developed. This comprised information on the students’ SES and their prior achievement in School Certificate.

Data on students’ SES were generated in two ways. For the Howard Study schools, comprehensive SES data on individual students were recorded in the Howard Study’s database. Access to the data was negotiated with the directors of the Howard Study.

The Howard Study developed their measure of SES through coding the students’ parents/caregivers’ SES according to the Elley-Irving index of occupational status. The Elley-Irving index is derived from calculating the median income and educational levels for each occupational group as used in the five-yearly New Zealand Population Census. The actual scale is divided into six categories and numbered one to six. Level one refers to those jobs which require the highest level of qualification and are the most highly paid, while level six refers to those jobs which are least well paid and which require comparatively low levels of qualification. As such, the index is not a measure of social class and, while there are limitations with the measure, it is congruent with the labour-market focus which underpins this study.
In order to minimise the possibility that recent changes to the labour market might adversely affect their use of the Elley-Irving index, the Howard researchers calculated individual SES ratings by employing a work history approach. This involved both parents/caregivers (where there were two) listing on a questionnaire the nature of and length of the three paid jobs they had held for the longest time. These were then classified according to the Elley-Irving index, multiplied by the number of years that the job had been performed, added up per individual and then divided by the total years accounted for by their respective jobs. This meant that the jobs were proportionally weighted by the number of years they had been performed. The data generated for both parents/caregivers (where there were two) were then combined and averaged to generate a measure of family SES.

For students who were not participating in the Howard Study, a snapshot procedure was employed to generate a measure of SES. This involved obtaining the addresses of the students and the names of their parents/caregivers and using these data to obtain the parents/caregivers’ occupations from the 1996 electoral rolls. The parents/caregivers were then classified on the Elley-Irving index. Where the occupations of two caregivers were supplied, an average measure of SES was calculated. Where there was only one available, this was used directly.

By the time both procedures had been completed, each student’s SES was recorded on the study’s database on a six-point scale with one the highest and six the lowest.
In order to select students who had experienced contrasting levels of success in external examinations, the School Certificate results were obtained from the selected schools for the 1996 year. The following information was recorded for each student and entered into the data base:

a. The number of school certificate subjects taken.

b. The number of school certificate subjects where the student had obtained a percentage mark of 50 per cent or better.

c. The total percentage marks gained in all School Certificate Examinations sat.

Once students' SES and prior school achievement had been recorded on the data base, there was a total of 189 students for whom there was full information, out of a possible 233 Year 12 students who had returned to one of the three schools at the beginning of 1997. Each school had approximately the same proportion of students for whom there was full information. This ranged from 83 per cent in School B to 78 per cent in School C.

After reviewing data on student performance in School Certificate that were provided by the three schools at the beginning of 1997, high-achieving students were defined as those who had achieved a total of more than 235 marks and had passed at least four subjects. Low-achieving students were defined as those who had gained fewer than 220 marks and who had not passed not more than two subjects.
This procedure allowed the selection of two groups of students who have experienced different degrees of success in School Certificate. For example, the high achieving students passed an average of five subjects for an average total of 325 marks, while the poorly achieving students achieved an average total of 159. Three-quarters of the latter group did not pass any of their subjects.

Once the sample had been separated on the basis of their achievement in School Certificate, attention was focused on selecting students from within these two groups from contrasting SES backgrounds. After reviewing the data, it was decided to define low-SES students as having an Elley-Irving rating of 4.5 or below and high-SES students as having a rating of 2.5 or above.

Two students in each category from each school were selected at random for possible inclusion in this study and were contacted by phone to see if they were willing to discuss the possibility of participating in the study. Refusals were received from two poorly achieving, high-SES students, one from School A and one from School C. Fortunately, a suitable replacement who was willing to discuss the possibility of participating in this study was found for School C. There was, however, a problem in finding a second poorly achieving, high-SES student from School A.

In an attempt to find a suitable student in this category, information gathered on those students, who had originally been excluded from the study on the grounds that they did not have complete information on their prior achievement, was reviewed.
There were two students for whom complete SES data were available but for whom achievement data were missing. In the first instance, the school was approached for information which might explain the lack of School Certificate data. In one case the student was a special needs pupil and was not participating in mainstream classes. He was not selected on the grounds that he did not match the background characteristics of the other poorly achieving students. In the second case the student had, for no known reason, not sat School Certificate. After three unsuccessful attempts to contact his parents/caregivers by phone and two unanswered messages to contact the researcher were left on their answer-phone, the matter was not further pursued.

The alternative of attempting to obtain SES data for poorly achieving students was not taken as all reasonable means of obtaining this information had already been attempted. In any event, the lack of the full quota of students in this category did not threaten the viability of the study as the aims set when establishing the sample could be met, albeit with 23 rather than 24 students.

Initial face to face interviews were arranged with the students and the parents/caregivers who had agreed to discuss the possibility of participating. These interviews were conducted in the participants’ homes during the evenings. After discussing the study’s aims and detailing what would be required of them, the participants were asked if they were willing to participate in the study. No refusals were received. After this procedure had been completed, a sample comprising the following was established:
Table A: SES and achievement composition of the student sample
(Note: 'S.C.' refers to School Certificate):

**Category 1: High-SES/High-Achievement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number of S.C. Subjects Sat</th>
<th>Number S.C. Subjects Passed</th>
<th>Total in S.C.</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Subject's pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Mike Foote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Dave Don</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Peter Kay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Brian Ewen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Nigel Norris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Bob Camp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Category 2: High-SES/Low-Achievement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number of S.C. Subjects Sat</th>
<th>Number S.C. Subjects Passed</th>
<th>Total in S.C.</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Subject's pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Vince Lamb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Andrew Gillies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Ron Duck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Sam Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>John Black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Category 3: Low-SES/High-Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number of S.C. Subjects Sat</th>
<th>Number S.C. Subjects Passed</th>
<th>Total in S.C.</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Subject's pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jonny Salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Jim Lom</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tony Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rob Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Alan Tom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Simon Best</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Category 4: Low-SES/Low-Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number of S.C. Subjects Sat</th>
<th>Number S.C. Subjects Passed</th>
<th>Total in S.C.</th>
<th>SES</th>
<th>Subject's pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Bill Lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Alan Winn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Kim Robb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Carl Bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Dan Dunn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Steve Mann</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Private training establishment tutor selection

The aim of the tutor interviews was to assess the contribution made by the PTEs to making the school-to-work transitions of the poorly qualified school-leavers efficient and to assess the contribution made by the NQF to this process.
A 'grapevine' method was employed to recruit tutors for interview. This involved making contact with a PTE tutor who was known to the author and asking who would be a useful source of data within his and other organisations. From this contact, two names of tutors were obtained. Both were tutors and placement coordinators, one of whom came from within the contact's own firm while the other was from a rival firm. These people were contacted by phone to discuss the possibility of participating in the current study and to check their ability to supply the required information. Both were willing and able to supply the required information and were subsequently interviewed. At the completion of these interviews, the tutors were asked for the names of other tutors within their own and other PTEs who would be useful informants. By following this method, five tutors were selected for interview. No tutor refused to participate in the study.

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1 Decile ratings are assigned by the New Zealand Ministry of Education on the basis of schools' perceived level of disadvantage. This rating is then used to distribute extra funding.
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEWS

Introduction

A semi-structured interview format was used to gather data from all interviewees. With the exception of one teacher interview in School C, all interviews were recorded on a portable tape recorder and transcribed as soon as practical after interviewing. The exception was as a result of the teacher's reluctance to be recorded. In this case handwritten notes were made by the researcher during the interview.

Only data which were considered relevant were transcribed. Information considered irrelevant was that which did not relate directly to the aims of the study, such as the parents/caregivers' or students' opinions of particular teachers.

In this section, the aims of the interviews are established and copies of the interview schedules are provided.

Educator interviews

As the group that delivers standards-based assessment under the NQF, educators are ideally placed to describe the advantages and disadvantages of the NQF. The aim of the educator interviews was, therefore, to elicit information about how useful unit standards are in meeting the education and training needs of
different groups of students within the selected schools. For example, the educators were asked how appropriate unit standards were to meeting the needs of highly achieving and poorly achieving students. Particular attention was focussed on the contribution made by the NQF to making school-to-work transitions efficient.

The educator interviews varied in length. The longest was with the principal of School C where the interview lasted approximately two hours while the shortest was 25 minutes with a teacher who needed to prepare for the next class. Most interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes. All but two of the interviews were conducted in the interviewees’ schools. The exceptions were the Principals of Schools B and C who were interviewed in their homes.

A copy of the educator interview schedule is provided at the end of this appendix.

Student interviews

The student interviews aimed to elicit information on the following: First, they sought information concerning how motivated students were by standards-based assessment. Here, for example, the students were asked if they made use of re-assessment possibilities offered under the NQF. Second, the interviews sought to identify and explore the students’ career decision-making practices. For example, the students were asked what they wanted to do once they left school and why they wanted to do this. Particular attention was focused on the role that the
NQF might play helping students make efficient school-to-work transitions. Third, the interviews attempted to identify the possible impact that the students' families and their wider social networks had in structuring the students' opportunities in the labour market.

All of the students in the sample were interviewed two or three times during the four years of the study. There were three reasons for interviewing the students two or three times. First, it allowed for the possibility that students' responses to the NQF may have changed over time. Second, it allowed issues unresolved from earlier interviews to be addressed through supplementary questions. Third, it provided a way to test the efficacy of the NQF to help these students make connections with the labour market before and after they obtained jobs or went to further training or welfare.

There were four different interview schedules used to interview students. These were:

(i) Initial interviews (Conducted between April and June 1997).
(ii) Follow-up interviews (Conducted between March and May 1998).
(iii) Final interviews (Conducted between March and May 1998 and at the beginning of 1999).
(iv) Training interviews (Conducted between March and May 1998 and at the beginning of 1999).
Between April and June 1997 initial interviews were undertaken with all students. These interviews were designed to gather data on the students' perceptions of standards-based assessment under the NQF as well as their career ambitions before they left school.

Between March and May 1998 follow-up interviews were conducted with those students who returned to school. These interviews were designed to gather further data on the students' perceptions of standards-based assessment under the NQF as well as their career ambitions before they left school.

Between March and May 1998, students who had left school since initial interviews had been conducted, and had entered the labour market, were given final interviews. These were designed to gather data on how these students obtained their first jobs and the role played by the NQF in this process. During this same period, training interviews were undertaken with those students who had left school since the initial interviews had been conducted and who had entered some form of post-school training. The training interviews focussed on assessing the impact of the NQF and post-school training programmes provided by the PTEs and the local polytechnic to help students find employment.

At the beginning of 1999 poorly achieving students who, at the time of the March-May round of interviews, were still at school were re-interviewed. Final interviews were undertaken with those who had obtained employment, while training interviews were given to those who were in further education and training at, for
example, a PTE.

At the beginning of 1999 high-achieving students were contacted by phone to ascertain what they were doing in terms of education or employment. All of these students were following options which they had nominated during the follow-up interviews and consequently did not offer additional information. These students were not re-interviewed.

The initial interviews tended to be the longest, averaging 40 minutes each. The follow-up, final and training interviews were slightly shorter averaging 30 minutes each.

A copy of the student interview schedules is provided at the end of this appendix.

The parent/caregiver interviews

The parent/caregiver interviews aimed to elicit information on the following: First, they sought information on how the male parents/caregivers obtained their first jobs. Interviewees were asked, for example, what jobs they first entered upon leaving school and how they obtained them. They were also asked how they made employment decisions. The role played by social networks in the process of finding employment was a particular focus here. They were also asked their opinions and perceptions of standards-based assessment under the NQF.

Like the students in this study, the parents/caregivers were interviewed two or three times. Parents/caregivers were only
interviewed if their sons were interviewed. For example, when students had their final interviews, their parents/caregivers also had their final interviews. The parent/caregiver interviews were usually conducted either immediately before or immediately after the student interviews.

There were four interview schedules used to interview parents/caregivers. These were:

(i) Initial interviews (Conducted between April and June 1997).
(ii) Follow-up interviews (Conducted between March and May 1998).
(iii) Final interviews (Conducted between March and May 1998 and at the beginning of 1999).
(iv) Training interviews (Conducted between May and March 1998 and at the beginning of 1999).

The initial interviews were designed to obtain data on the parents/caregivers' perceptions of standards-based assessment under the NQF as well as data on how the fathers obtained their first jobs. Initial interviews were undertaken with all parents/caregivers and were conducted between April and June 1997.

Follow-up interviews were conducted during subsequent interviews where the parents/caregivers' sons were still at school. They were designed to continue gathering data on the parents/caregivers' perceptions of standard-based assessment
under the NQF and the parents/caregivers’ possible contributions to making their sons’ school-to-work transitions efficient. Final/training interviews were conducted with the parents/caregivers once their sons had left school and were either in employment or post-compulsory training. The final/training interviews were designed to obtain data on the parents/caregivers’ actual contribution to the sons obtaining employment.

The initial parent/caregiver interviews were the longest, lasting for an average of 40 minutes, while the follow-up and final interviews were slightly shorter, lasting approximately 30 minutes.

Copies of the parent/caregiver interview schedules are provided at the end of this appendix.

The Private Training Establishment tutor interviews

The aims of the tutor interviews were to obtain data on the role played by PTEs in helping poorly qualified school leavers find jobs and second, to assess the NQF’s contribution to this process. All PTE tutors were interviewed once and the interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes.

A copy of the PTE tutor interview schedule is provided at the end of this appendix.
EDUCATOR INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Can you tell me briefly about your previous teaching experience and your current role in this school?
2. How does the NQF and standards-based assessment operates in your area of the school?
3. Why has the school pursued this course of action?
4. What impact has the NQF and standards-based assessment had on your school?
5. What impact has the NQF and standards-based assessment had on student learning?
6. How have your students' reacted to standards-based assessment under the NQF?
7. Are there differences in the reactions of highly achieving and poorly achieving students to standards-based assessment under the NQF?
8. How you think that the NQF is going to improve the labour market position of the poorly achieving students in your school?
9. What in your experience are some of the advantages and disadvantages of standards-based assessment under the NQF?
10. There has been a lot of uncertainty in the media about the future of the NQF. How do you think your school will make use of the NQF in the future?
STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Initial Student Interview

1. Do you like school?
2. What subjects are you taking this year?
3. Why did you choose these subjects?
4. How did you perform in school last year?
5. Can you tell me why you performed to that level?
6. Do you want to stay at school?
7. Why have you stayed on at school?
8. Are you motivated at school?
9. What would you like to do once you leave school?
10. Are you working towards any qualifications?
11. Are qualifications important to you?
12. Are you doing any unit standards?
13. What do you think of them?
14. Have you made use of the reassessment opportunities offered by the NQF?
15. Does standards-based assessment motivate you?
16. Do you think that unit standards will help you obtain a job?

Follow-up Student Interview

1. Are you enjoying school more or less than last year?
2. How would you describe your motivation compared to last year?
3. What subjects are you taking this year?
4. Why did you choose these subjects?
5. How would you describe your performance in school last year?
6. Can you tell me why you performed to that level?
7. Why have you stayed on at school?
8. Do you want to stay at school?
9. Are you motivated at school?
10. What would you like to do once you leave school?
11. Are you working towards any qualifications this year?
12. Are these qualifications important to you?
13. Why are they important?
14. Are you doing any unit standards this year?
15. What do you think of them?
16. Are you finding them motivating?
17. Do you think that qualifications will help you obtain a job?
18. Do you think that you would be able get a job through a social network of some kind?

Final Student Interviews

1. Why did you leave school?
2. How did you get your job?
3. How useful were social networks in helping you obtain this job?
4. What did your parents/caregivers think of you leaving school?
5. What kind of job is it?
6. How important were qualifications to obtaining the job?
7. Since last year, have your views of unit standards changed?
Trainee Interviews

1. Why did you choose to attend this course?
2. What role do unit standards play in the course?
3. How important to you are the qualifications on offer?
4. Why are they or why aren’t they important to you?
5. How do you think attending the course will help you obtain a job?
6. Is networking an important part of the course?
7. Could your parents/caregivers have helped you to get a job?

Initial Parent/Caregiver Interview

1. How did you obtain your first and subsequent full-time job(s)?
2. What role did social networks play in this process?
3. What advice did you receive about obtaining a job?
4. Tell me about your experience of school?
5. What qualifications did you obtain at school?
6. At what age did you leave?
7. How important were qualifications in obtaining your first job?
8. How important do you think qualifications are for school-leavers today?
9. What qualifications would you like your son to leave school with?
10. How would you describe your son’s performance at school?
11. Why do you think he has performed at this level?
12. Do you think that your son is motivated towards school?
13. What advice have you been able to offer your son which might help him obtain a job?
14. Have you heard of the NQF and standards-based assessment?
15. (If yes) What do you think of the NQF and standards-based assessment?

Follow-up Parent/Caregiver Interview

1. How would you describe your son’s performance at school since the last time we spoke?
2. Why do you think he has performed at this level?
3. Do you think that your son is motivated towards school?
4. What advice have you been able to offer your son which might help him obtain a job?
5. Have you heard of the NQF and standards-based assessment?
6. (If yes) What do you think of the NQF and standards-based assessment?
7. What help are you able to offer your son to obtain a job?
8. What are you hoping to achieve from your son attending school?

Final Parent/Caregiver Interview

1. How did your son obtain his job?
2. What contribution did you make to [name of student] getting his job?
3. (If no parent/caregiver contribution) Could you have helped [name of student] to get a job?
Training Parent/Caregiver Interview

1. How do you think your son attending a training programme will help him obtain a job?

2. Is your son able to access resources in the training programmes that you are unable to provide?

3. Could you have got your son a job?

PTE Tutor Interviews

1. What is your role in this company?

2. What is the purpose of the courses you offer?

3. How important is it that you help students find employment?

4. How do you help your students obtain jobs?

5. How important are qualifications in the process of helping these students obtain jobs?

6. What impact has the NQF had on your programmes?

7. What do the employers that you work with look for in new recruits?
APPENDIX C: TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AND YOUTH TRAINING
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (Skill New Zealand, “n.d.”)

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES
(FOR PEOPLE 18 YEARS AND OVER)

School leaver 18/19
People aged 18 or 19 who are registered with WINZ, low\(^1\) qualifications and have left school within the last 6 months

WINZ18+
People who are registered with WINZ as unemployed job seekers for at least 26 weeks continuous duration and have low\(^1\) qualifications

Youth Needs Clients
People between 16 and 20 years\(^2\) with low\(^1\) or higher\(^3\) qualifications who have been identified by WINZ as Youth Need clients and have been assessed as in need of the kind of training offered by Training Opportunities; (at least 13 weeks continuous duration while aged between 16 and 20 years)

Esother
People who are registered with WINZ in the Needs category of ‘long term job seeker’, have higher\(^3\) qualifications and have been assessed as likely to benefit from Training Opportunities

Refugee
People with refugee status, who are within 12 months of entering New Zealand and are registered with WINZ
Justice
People who have served a sentence of six months or more and left prison within the past six months, who have low\(^1\) qualifications, and are registered with WINZ.

Workbridge
People who are registered with Workbridge as active job seekers and have been referred to a course by Workbridge after and in-depth interview\(^4\)

Domestic Purposes/Widows Benefit
People who have received the Domestic Purposes or Widow’s Benefit for at least the previous 12 months and have low qualifications.

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1. Low qualifications means no more than 2 School Certificate passes, and no qualifications higher than sixth form certificate.
2. The Agency expects that in most circumstances, clients aged 16 and 17 would be referred to Youth Training courses.
3. Higher qualifications means having higher than 2 school certificate passes and no institutional qualifications — defined as being level 5 or above on the Framework.
4. The interview must identify a physical/psychiatric/intellectual/learning disability which prevents a job seeker from applying their qualifications in the labour market.

No trainee will be eligible for Training Opportunities once they have accumulated 240 credits.
YOUTH TRAINING

School Leavers
People aged 18 or 19 who are registered with WINZ, low\(^1\) qualifications and have left school within the last 6 months

Youth Needs Clients
People between 16 and 20 years with low\(^1\) or higher\(^2\) qualifications who have been identified by WINZ as Youth Need clients and have been assessed as in need of the kind of training offered by Training Opportunities; (at least 13 weeks continuous duration while aged between 16 and 20 years)

Refugee
People with refugee status, who are within 12 months of entering New Zealand

Workbridge
People who are registered with Workbridge as active job seekers and have been referred to a course by Workbridge after and in-depth interview\(^3\)

18 and 19 years old school-leavers January – June 1999
School leavers aged 18 or 19 years who have a School Leaving Certificate dated within the last six months.

1. Low qualifications means no more than 2 School Certificate passes, and no qualifications higher that sixth form certificate
2. Higher qualifications means having higher than 2 school certificate passes and no institutional qualifications – defined as being level 5 or above on the Framework
3. The interview must identify a physical/psychiatric/intellectual/learning disability which prevents a job seeker from applying their qualifications in the labour market.

No learner will be eligible for Training Opportunities once they have accumulated 240 credits.