
A-LEVEL SOCIOLOGY

7192/1 Education with Theory and Methods
Report on the Examination

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General

The first sitting of this paper for the new A-level specification elicited a range of responses from students. Most managed their time appropriately and only a very small minority left some questions unanswered. There was evidence of some very well taught and well prepared students with good knowledge of relevant material. This was particularly the case for question 04. In general, however, the skill of application was less evident. For the Methods in Context question, very few students were able to apply their knowledge of the research methods to the specific issue in the question. For question 03 there was limited application to the specific issue of pupils' experience.

Students appear to have coped with the new style question and answer booklet, with a large number of students also producing plans for the extended writing answers in an additional booklet. However, in the 4 and 6 mark questions, some students are writing far too much, thereby losing focus on the precise wording of the question.

Education

Question 01

Most students answered this question successfully and were able to identify two cultural factors. Common responses included reference to family structure, language and parental attitudes. However, a significant number of partial responses failed to specify a link to a particular ethnic group in their answers or had class-based developments. Incorrect answers included generalised discussions about cultural deprivation and cultural capital, or examples of material rather than cultural factors.

Question 02

This question was, in the main, dealt with very effectively, with most students able to identify and explain at least two factors. Common successful responses included coursework, peer group pressure, textbooks containing gender stereotypes and the gender of teachers. Many of these were then able to go on and explain how it influenced their subject choice. Where marks were not awarded was often the result of overlapping factors being presented, or through making general points about gender and achievement, losing focus on subject choice. Other incorrect responses discussed external socialisation or career expectations without linking these to internal factors.

Question 03

This question required students to apply material from the Item and connect these with pupils' experience. The more successful responses were able to identify two explicit hooks from the Item (league tables or wider range of school types), apply these to a discussion of parental choice and connect to pupils' experience. They were able to analyse and evaluate these by drawing on different social class pupil experiences through a discussion of issues such as how league tables have led to educational triage and the work of Gerwitz.

A number of students were not able to apply the hooks relating to increased parental choice from the Item and so were unable to score beyond the bottom band. Instead, many went on to develop concepts such as parentocracy, the A-C economy and marketisation that were not explicit in the Item. While most were able to identify at least one hook from the Item, students were less successful in applying these explicitly to pupils' experience. Many responses stopped short at *"leads to better experience of school"* and *"parents getting their children in to a good school and getting results"*. Often responses focused solely on school or parental choice rather than pupils' experience. In their analysis of a wider range of schools, a number of students referred to material on the tripartite system and private schools, and therefore did not refer to increased parental choice.

Question 04

There were a range of different responses to this question and many made appropriate use of the Item. The question was generally dealt with well by students, especially considering this was the first year of this type of question. The majority of students were at least able to get into the 13-18 mark band, which explains the mean mark of 18 for the question.

The majority of students had reasonable to good knowledge on the Marxist and functionalist perspectives on the role of education and could apply these to some extent to ideas and values.

Feminism and particularly post-modernism were applied with more varied levels of success. The most effective responses were based on substantial knowledge and understanding, but also demonstrated a wide range of AO2/3 skills. Such answers maintained a full focus on ideas and values, and had sustained evaluation throughout, applying material directly to the question. Many students were able to differentiate between radical and liberal feminist perspectives. However, references to interactionist and New Right perspectives generally lacked application to the transmission of ideas and values.

Weaker answers were very descriptive and tended to provide a more superficial analysis of functionalism and Marxism. Evaluation was mainly by juxtaposition with limited attempts to apply material to the question. In some answers material on economic functions was not applied specifically to the issue of transmission of idea and values and there was a drift into factors relating to achievement.

Methods in Context

Question 05

The most important factor in answering this question successfully was the extent to which students applied their understanding of field experiments to the specific issue of the effects of teachers' labelling of pupils. This question proved to be quite demanding of students mainly because of confusion over the nature of field experiments. Few students could locate field experiments within a positivist theoretical framework. Often students made statements about the research method that were more appropriate to forms of observation than field experiments. The lack of clear understanding of the strengths and limitations of field experiments also made it difficult for many students to link these to specific research characteristics of labelling. As a result, answers were often generic responses based on the research method with very limited, if any, relationship to studying either education in general or labelling in particular.

Other responses presented some generic research characteristics of investigating education, such as that head teachers may wish to protect the reputation of their school and therefore be unwilling to allow research to take place. More developed versions of this approach pointed to the possible negative consequences for a school's reputation in a marketised education system and of research into the effects of teachers labelling pupils.

Most students were able to make use of the Item, although many focused in on the "*small scale*" and "*natural setting*" without relating these to the strengths and limitations of the method or to the issue. However, stronger responses did take advantage of the hooks from the Item, for example, applying "*small scale*" to issues of generalisation and representativeness, drawing on sampling and problems of isolating variables to the characteristics of labelling. Better responses were able to connect features of the method, such as the difficulty in controlling variables, to issues relating to characteristics of studying labelling, for example that it can be caused by a number of both in-school and external factors. However, the majority of students were unable to apply a characteristic of labelling to the method of field experiments to reach the requirements of the top band.

Theory and Methods

Question 06

The majority of students were able to present two practical disadvantages of documents. Common answers included reference to time, cost, access and authenticity. Stronger answers could explain the problem in some detail and show good application and analysis in relation to both public and personal documents. More developed responses were able to link the disadvantage to a specific piece of research where documents had been used, or linked the disadvantage to a particular issue.

However, relatively few students could offer a sustained development of the practical disadvantages they had identified and many responses were quite short in length. Some answers were not rewarded beyond the 1-3 band, as they discussed theoretical or, to a lesser extent, ethical issues, rather than practical disadvantages. Some students identified a practical issue but drifted into explaining it in relation to theoretical concerns.

Schools and colleges are reminded that there are no marks for evaluation for this question. A significant number of students had evaluative statements regarding the advantages of documents tagged on to the end of responses that were not relevant to the question.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

[UMS conversion calculator](#)