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# A-LEVEL SOCIOLOGY

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

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7192  
Autumn 2021

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## **General Introduction to the Autumn Series**

This has been another unusual exam series in many ways. Entry patterns have been very different from those normally seen in the summer, and students had a very different experience in preparation for these exams. It is therefore more difficult to make meaningful comparisons between the range of student responses seen in this series and those seen in a normal summer series. The smaller entry also means that there is less evidence available for examiners to comment on.

In this report, senior examiners will summarise the performance of students in this series in a way that is as helpful as possible to teachers preparing future cohorts while taking into account the unusual circumstances and limited evidence available.

## **Overview of Entry**

Similarly to last year, this series saw a very small entry of students. In general, most students found this paper accessible and there was a range of answers with varying ability to demonstrate the skills of knowledge, application, analysis and evaluation. However, there was generally a lower quality and standard of answers in comparison to previous normal summer entries with a number of students finding Q1 and Q5 more difficult in particular.

Most students attempted all of the questions, indicating that they coped well with the demands of writing under timed conditions. However, a small number of students left questions unanswered (particularly question 5 and/ or 6). Similarly to previous years, some students wrote lengthy answers to the 4-mark and 6-mark questions which may explain why a few of these students seemed to run out of time in answering the final question(s).

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **Question 01**

This question seemed to cause students some difficulties. There were a wide range of answers offered but many students appeared to be confused or demonstrate little knowledge and understanding of this area of the specification. There were a number of answers that focused either on globalisation or educational policies more generally rather than the ways that globalisation may have influenced educational policies. Stronger answers were able to outline international testing programmes and marketisation policies, in particular, as ways (or examples) of globalisation influencing educational policies in the UK.

### **Question 02**

Most students could offer at least one or two reasons why some working-class boys join anti-school subcultures. Answers tended to refer to labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy as well as expressions of identity and/ or fatalistic attitudes. Some students outlined reasons linked more specifically to ethnicity, such as the ethnocentric curriculum, rather than working class boys and therefore were less successful in gaining marks.

### **Question 03**

In general, this was a well answered question. Most students were able to identify the hooks in the item i.e 'curriculum prioritising some cultures' and 'teacher expectations based on stereotypes'. Many were then able to develop these hooks in explaining ways in which the ethnocentric curriculum and teacher labelling may affect the experiences of some minority ethnic groups, for

example, leading to the self-fulfilling prophecy and affecting their self-esteem. Additionally, the most successful answers were able to apply studies and research in providing further detail and analysis of the ways in which minority ethnic groups may be affected by these processes. Furthermore, some were able to provide some explicit evaluation and discussion of the extent to which minority ethnic groups are affected, for example by labelling, in applying Fuller's research that outlines the ways that pupils may reject their labels.

#### **Question 04**

Despite the much lower than usual entry, there was some range in the responses to this question. Many students were able to outline a debate for and against the view that the education system is meritocratic, to varying levels of success. For example, some made reference to the national curriculum and external exams to outline how the education system could be seen as a fair and equal system whilst labelling by teachers, setting and streaming and the ethnocentric curriculum could mean that education is biased and unfair.

The most successful answers were able to present their arguments and evidence through a debate between sociological perspectives. For example, many students outlined Parson's views of the education system being meritocratic and the ways that education is the 'bridge' between the family and wider society and enabling people to gain achieved status. Some continued to apply Davis and Moore's view of the 'selective role' that the education system performs in 'sifting and sorting' pupils into the appropriate positions in the workplace. This was often counter-argued with Marxist views. For example, many argued that Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' provides the middle class with an advantage that means they are more likely to achieve in school. Some also included feminist theories and viewpoints in explaining gender differences in achievement and opportunities as well as discussions of the extent to which some ethnic minority groups may experience obstacles to achieving well in the education system.

Less effective answers tended to be descriptive and had a limited range of explanations and viewpoints. Some students referred more generally to functionalist and Marxist theories of education and struggled to apply these to views of meritocracy and/ or to the education system. The most successful answers demonstrated more sophisticated analysis and evaluation in debating the extent to which the education system is meritocratic or whether there is a 'myth of meritocracy'.

#### **Question 05**

Unfortunately, students generally struggled with this question. Despite the prompts provided in the item, many students seemed to view 'secondary data' as being exclusively about secondary quantitative data or official statistics. Therefore, there were many assertions and generalisations made about secondary quantitative data that were applied and generalised to all secondary data. For example, a number of students referred to (all) secondary data as being high in reliability and low in validity, with generalised, and (often) inaccurate explanations. Stronger answers were able to draw out the strengths and limitations of the different types of secondary data types available in comparing the strengths and limitations of official statistics, for example, with the range of more qualitative documents that are available within schools. Unfortunately, a small number of students devoted large sections of their answers to discussions of alternative methods which were rarely creditworthy (unless they were used as a comparison to exemplify strengths and limitations of secondary data).

There were some attempts at explaining and discussing issues with studying education more generally. For example, some explained the difficulties of accessing some school documents (such as exercise books and pupil reports) due to the different gatekeepers' permissions needed.

Unfortunately, there were only a very small number of responses that made attempts at developing and applying the strengths and limitations of using secondary data to study the specific issue ie the academic progress in schools. For example, while using league tables of exam results will enable the researcher to look for correlations and trends between the progress of pupils between schools, they do not provide any detail of the reasons why the pupils may or may not have made progress, to the various experiences they have outside of schools .

### **Question 06**

Many students also seemed to struggle with this question. Some students were unable to offer a clear argument against the positivist view of Sociology being scientific, with some muddled and confused ideas being presented. Others were able to offer some clarity of response in offering arguments, which included difficulties of studying Sociology objectively. However, these were often written with limited or basic analysis. The more successful answers offered more developed application and analysis, for example, in explaining the reasons why studying issues such as divorce, achievement or criminal behaviours are difficult to study objectively and went on to outline reasons why they should not be regarded as 'social facts'.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Overall, there were a clear range of marks in this unusually small cohort of students for this specification. The knowledge and skills demonstrated in the education section were broadly similar to previous examination series. However, knowledge and skills in the methods in context and Theory & Methods questions were generally weaker than previous series. It appeared that students had prepared less well for these topics and questions.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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