



A-LEVEL SOCIOLOGY

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

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General

This series saw a more 'normal' entry of students when compared to the pandemic-affected examinations of recent years. In general, most students found this paper accessible and there were a range of answers with varying ability to demonstrate the skills of knowledge, application, analysis and evaluation. There was some clear evidence that students were prepared well for the education section in particular. However, knowledge and understanding of group interviews (question 5) and of 'social facts' (question 6) tended to be less developed in comparison.

The vast majority of students attempted all questions. However, there was a small number of students who did not attempt question 6. This may have been as a result of running out of time or finding the question too challenging. In general, the answers to the smaller tariff questions were well focussed and of reasonable length and students tended to focus any additional time on the more extended answer questions.

Education

Question 01

This question appeared very accessible to students. Most were able to outline at least one way that schools promote competition between pupils with half of the cohort achieving all of the available marks. The majority of successful answers included the way schools set assessments to rank pupils, school reward systems and competitive teams within schools. Unsuccessful answers focused on government policies such as league tables without any reference to the way that schools then promoted competition between pupils.

Question 02

This question was generally answered well. The majority of students were able to offer at least one or two ways that the education system may be seen as patriarchal. There was a wide range of responses which included male dominance in more senior roles within schools and gender bias in careers advice. Some students struggled to gain full credit for their answers where their response was generic and not linked clearly to differences in power. For example, some simply stated 'subject choice' whereas more successful answers included the way that females may be less encouraged to choose more prestigious subjects as a result of existing gendered stereotypes. A very small number of students did not seem to understand the term 'patriarchy' and their answers focussed instead, for example, on social class inequalities.

Question 03

The vast majority of students were able to apply at least one way in which relationships and processes within schools may lead to anti school subcultures to the available hooks. Most students were able to develop the hook that 'teachers may label' pupils and were able to explain how this may result in the development of anti-school subcultures. Many students were able to apply sociological studies such as from Becker, Rosenthal & Jacobson and Woods etc. More successful answers referred to a range of sociological concepts in their answers which included the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and 'polarisation'. Some answers offered some effective explicit evaluation in explaining that some students may reject these labels, with some references to Fuller's study.

However, many students struggled to get into the 8-10 mark band. This was usually the result of not offering a clearly separate way (often overlapping very similar ideas in both parts of the answer) that relationships and processes within schools may lead to anti-school subcultures using the hooks. The most successful answers tended to utilise the second hook about schools having 'views about appropriate pupil behaviour' and apply this in the intended way in explaining that some pupils experience 'symbolic violence' due to the differences in 'habitus' between some teachers and some pupils which may result in some pupils joining anti school subcultures as a form of resistance.

Question 04

This question worked well in providing varying levels of challenge and there was a clear range of marks across all levels. Unfortunately, some answers drifted into lengthy discussions of policies that were not linked to marketisation, for example the tripartite system or the development of comprehensives. However, most students were able to provide at least some basic knowledge and understanding of marketisation policies which usually included open enrolment, formula funding, academies and free schools etc. As a result, most students (maybe partly a result of some of the advance information released from the exam board) were able to score marks towards the top end of the 13-18 level and higher. Weaker responses had a narrower range of these policies and were outlined in a more general and descriptive way. The better answers were able to develop and explain how these policies affected diversity and choice for students, parents and schools. It was also pleasing to see that some answers were able to clearly differentiate between diversity and choice in their analysis of the effects of these marketisation policies.

In general, there was a pleasing range of relevant theories and studies used in students' responses which included New Right theorists Chubb & Moe as well as Bartlett and Gilbourn & Youdell. Furthermore, there were a range of relevant and useful concepts (to varying levels of success) which included 'parentocracy', 'cultural capital' and 'skilled choosers' etc. Stronger answers were then able to provide specific evaluation, including the 'myth of parentocracy', in challenging the extent to which marketisation policies enabled choice and diversity for everyone equally.

Methods in Context

Question 05

This question produced a wide range of responses. Most students were able to offer at least some very basic knowledge and understanding of some strengths and limitations of group interviews. Weaker answers tended to recycle and re use material provided in the item and added very little or no knowledge of group interviews at all. Some responses drifted into accounts of other research methods but were seldom used to illustrate the strengths or limitations of group interviews. Others were able to gain some credit with more general discussions of strengths and limitations of interviews. Better responses were able to develop some of their strengths and limitations of interviews and apply them to the group nature of group interviews. For example, some students developed the idea of peer pressure from the item in discussing why some students may answer in more 'socially desirable' ways to please their friends or that some students may dominate the discussion over others.

Many answers discussed general characteristics of studying education such as the difficulties of getting past gate keepers (including the headteacher) or that students are vulnerable and extra care needs to be taken. However, these were not always applied clearly, or at all, to strengths and limitations of group interviews. Better answers were also able to apply some of the strengths and limitations of using group interviews to these generic research characteristics of investigating education such as the disruptive nature of taking larger numbers of students out of lessons at any time or that it might be difficult to find spaces in schools to conduct larger group interviews.

The most successful answers were able to apply their knowledge and understanding of group interviews to the specific issue of researching reasons for subject choice made by pupils. The most common example included developing the idea of 'peer pressure' from the item in explaining how this could result in some students answering in 'socially desirable ways'. This was applied specifically to the issue of subject choice, for example, in explaining that some males may not admit to choosing subjects outside of their gender domain as they fear being ridiculed by their peers and therefore reducing the validity of the group interview.

Theory and Methods

Question 06

This question was generally challenging and students were much less successful compared with others on the paper. There were some non-responses to this question which may have been a result of a lack of understanding, or of running out of time. Some others were at least able to offer some limitations of official statistics (or quantitative data) more generally. These often included some general explanations of official statistics not being able to provide the researcher with detailed insights into the reasons behind the statistics or not being able to provide the researcher with 'verstehen'. However, many of the answers limited to the 1-3 mark band seldom made any reference to why official statistics are not seen as 'social facts'. It was evident that a number of students were not familiar with this term.

Better answers were able to explain, at least in part, one or two reasons why official statistics should not be seen as social facts. The most common reasons tended to focus on official statistics lacking validity due to the way they are socially constructed and therefore should not be seen as truthful and as facts. Stronger answers were able to provide some detailed analysis and application of useful examples to demonstrate these reasons which were drawn from different areas of social life; for example, using crime statistics.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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