1.2 Marxist Perspectives on Education and the Correspondence Principle: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological vocabulary in full sentences for questions worth 4 marks or more. You have about 30 minutes in total.

1 Identify and explain one methodological strength of Paul Willis' Learning to Labour ethnographic study of the lads in a British secondary school.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Compare briefly how Marxist perspectives and interactionist perspectives explain pupil resistance to school rules in the setting of a British comprehensive school.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

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3 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the education system reproduces class inequality in the UK today.

(Total for Question 3 is 12 marks)

4 Define Bowles and Gintis' 'correspondence principle' as it applies to the relationship between school and workplace in capitalist societies.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

5 Describe two ways Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital helps explain differences in educational attainment between social classes in the context of UK schools.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.2 Marxist Perspectives on Education and the Correspondence Principle: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies a strength, e.g. use of long-term participant observation gave rich, detailed qualitative data	**B1**
explains the strength, e.g. this allowed Willis to access the lads' meanings, language and culture, providing insight into how resistance still reproduced class position	**B1**
further development, e.g. depth of data supports strong interpretive claims about pupil culture	**B1**
accurate methodological vocabulary such as ethnography, participant observation or validity	**B1**

Answer: A strength is Willis' long-term participant observation which produced rich qualitative data, allowing him to access the lads' meanings and culture and show how their resistance nonetheless reproduced class position; this depth gives high validity to interpretive claims.

Question 2

identifies Marxist explanation, e.g. resistance is shaped by class position and reproduces class relations	**B1**
develops Marxist point, e.g. examples such as Willis show resistance can be a response to being channelled into working-class roles	**B1**
identifies interactionist explanation, e.g. resistance arises from labelling and the meanings pupils give to school rules	**B1**
develops interactionist point, e.g. pupils form subcultures and identities in response to labels and teacher expectations	**B1**

Answer: Marxists see resistance as shaped by class position and as part of reproducing class relations, as in Willis' study where lads' resistance reflected and reinforced working-class futures; interactionists see resistance as emerging from labelling and pupils' own meanings, forming subcultures in reaction to teacher expectations.

Question 3

Level 1 Basic statements about the idea that education reproduces class inequality with limited explanation or undeveloped assertions, and little use of sociological theory or evidence.	**1-3**
Level 2 Some relevant sociological knowledge and simple explanation offered. One or two Marxist points about reproduction or hidden curriculum explained, with minimal engagement with opposing views or limited use of evidence.	**4-6**
Level 3 Good range of sociological knowledge and application. Several Marxist arguments (e.g. correspondence principle, cultural capital, ISAs, Willis) are explained and supported with evidence. Counter-arguments from other perspectives, such as interactionism or the New Right, are acknowledged and evaluated.	**7-9**
Level 4 Detailed and balanced evaluation showing clear understanding of Marxist explanations and relevant alternatives. Arguments are supported with appropriate evidence and examples, strengths and limitations are weighed, and a justified conclusion is reached about the extent to which education reproduces class inequality.	**10-12**

Indicative content:

- Marxist claims that education reproduces class inequality via the correspondence principle, hidden curriculum and ISAs, ensuring schools socialise workers into accepting capitalist relations.
- Bourdieu's cultural capital and habitus: middle-class culture is recognised and rewarded by schools, converting cultural capital into qualifications and maintaining class advantages.
- Willis' study: pupil resistance and counter-school cultures may reproduce class positions through choice of manual work identities.
- Evidence and contemporary examples: attainment gaps by social class, differential access to elite schools, impact of private schooling, and the role of resources such as private tutoring.
- Counter-arguments: interactionist evidence of pupil agency and labelling showing varied outcomes; meritocratic arguments and evidence of social mobility for some via education; policies such as pupil premium, comprehensive education, and widening participation initiatives.
- Methodological considerations: qualitative depth of studies like Willis versus large-scale quantitative evidence on attainment gaps; issues of causation versus correlation.
- Evaluation of scope and degree: education may reproduce many class inequalities but also offers some routes for mobility; the strength of reproduction varies by context, policy and time period.
- Supported judgement: on balance, many sociologists argue education significantly contributes to reproducing class inequality, but the process is complex and mediated by agency, policy and changing labour market demands.

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Question 4

identifies that the correspondence principle argues schools mirror the hierarchical relations and norms of the workplace	**B1**
development, e.g. schools reproduce attitudes like obedience, punctuality and acceptance of authority that prepare pupils for work in capitalist enterprises	**B1**

Answer: The correspondence principle argues that schools mirror the hierarchical relations and norms of the workplace, reproducing attitudes such as obedience, punctuality and acceptance of authority so pupils are prepared for work under capitalism.

Question 5

identifies first way, e.g. middle-class families pass on language, tastes and dispositions valued by schools	**B1**
development of first way, e.g. this cultural capital matches school expectations and helps middle-class pupils succeed	**B1**
identifies second way, e.g. cultural capital converts into institutionalised advantage like higher qualifications	**B1**
development of second way, e.g. qualifications then lead to better jobs, reproducing class advantage	**B1**

Answer: Bourdieu's cultural capital idea says middle-class families pass on language, tastes and dispositions that match school expectations, helping pupils succeed; cultural capital then converts into qualifications which lead to better jobs, reproducing class advantage.

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