1.2 Marxist Perspectives on Education and the Correspondence Principle

AQA 7192 · about 60 minutes · Write-in edition

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological vocabulary in full sentences for questions worth 4 marks or more. You have about 60 minutes in total.

1 Define Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural reproduction' in the context of schooling and class advantage.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Give one government policy aimed at reducing class inequality in education in the UK context, and explain one limitation of that policy.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

3 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 3 is 4 marks)

4 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 4 is 4 marks)

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

(Total for Question 5 is 12 marks)

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

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

7 Identify and explain one way the hidden curriculum helps to reproduce class inequalities within the education system in the UK school context.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

8 Describe one key finding from Paul Willis' Learning to Labour study of the 'lads' and counter-school culture in a British secondary school setting.

(Total for Question 8 is 3 marks)

9 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 9 is 4 marks)

10 Identify and explain one common criticism made of Bowles and Gintis' correspondence principle when applied to the modern UK education system.

(Total for Question 10 is 4 marks)

11 Explain two ways Marxists argue the ideology of meritocracy operates in schools to legitimise class inequality in the context of contemporary education.

(Total for Question 11 is 4 marks)

Mark scheme · 1.2 Marxist Perspectives on Education and the Correspondence Principle

Question 1

identifies that cultural reproduction is the process by which schools reproduce social class through the transmission and reward of middle-class culture	**B1**
development, e.g. cultural capital passed down by families gives middle-class pupils an advantage in school, which is then converted into qualifications and class advantage	**B1**

Answer: Cultural reproduction is the process where schools reproduce social class by transmitting and rewarding middle-class culture; cultural capital from families gives middle-class pupils advantages that convert into qualifications and maintain class advantage.

Question 2

gives one policy, e.g. pupil premium funding to schools for disadvantaged pupils	**B1**
explains how policy aims to reduce inequality, e.g. extra resources for disadvantaged pupils to raise attainment	**B1**
identifies one limitation, e.g. funding may be insufficient or schools may not use it effectively	**B1**
develops limitation, e.g. structural issues like housing, parental education and cultural capital are not solved by school funding alone	**B1**

Answer: Policy example: pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils, intended to give extra resources to raise attainment. Limitation: funding may be insufficient or poorly used, and it cannot by itself address structural issues such as housing, parental education and cultural capital that drive inequality.

Question 3

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 4

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 5

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.

Question 6

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 7

identifies a way, e.g. schools reward conformity and passive acceptance of authority **B1**

explains how this reproduces class inequality, e.g. working-class children may be socialised into accepting lower-status roles while middle-class children are encouraged to be confident and question, leading to different outcomes **B1**

further development, e.g. links to teachers' expectations or streaming which reinforce classed outcomes **B1**

accurate use of sociological terms like hidden curriculum or cultural reproduction **B1**

Answer: Hidden curriculum rewards conformity and acceptance of authority; working-class pupils who learn to accept orders may be channelled into lower-status jobs while middle-class pupils, encouraged to be independent, attain higher positions. This reproduces class inequality through teachers' expectations and streaming.

Question 8

identifies a finding, e.g. the lads formed a counter-school culture that rejected school values **B1**

development, e.g. they showed disdain for academic work and teachers, valuing manual labour identities **B1**

further development, e.g. this resistance still reproduced class inequality because the lads accepted working-class jobs later **B1**

Answer: Willis found the lads formed a counter-school culture that rejected school values, showing disdain for academic work and teachers and valuing manual labour identities; this resistance nevertheless reproduced class inequality because they accepted working-class jobs later on.

Question 9

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.

Question 10

identifies a criticism, e.g. it is too deterministic about pupils passively accepting roles	**B1**
explains criticism, e.g. interactionists and others argue pupils can resist and create their own subcultures, so correspondence cannot fully explain outcomes	**B1**
further development, e.g. also notes that modern schooling includes meritocratic elements and opportunities for social mobility	**B1**
accurate linking of criticism to theoretical alternatives	**B1**

Answer: A common criticism is that Bowles and Gintis are too deterministic about pupils passively accepting workplace roles; interactionists show pupils can resist and form subcultures, and modern schooling also contains meritocratic elements and mobility opportunities, so correspondence alone is insufficient.

Question 11

identifies first way, e.g. meritocracy claims success is due to talent and effort	**B1**
develops first way, e.g. this legitimises unequal outcomes by blaming individuals rather than structural class advantages	**B1**
identifies second way, e.g. schools use testing and credentials to present inequality as fair	**B1**
develops second way, e.g. qualifications mask the role of cultural and economic capital in producing success	**B1**

Answer: Marxists say meritocracy claims success comes from talent and effort, which blames individuals rather than structural class advantages; schools also use testing and credentials to present inequality as fair, masking the role of cultural and economic capital in producing success.