1.4 Internal Factors in Class Differences in Educational Achievement: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological terms where relevant. For questions requiring full sentences, write at least one complete sentence. Spend about 30 minutes in total.

1 Explain two evaluation points that might be used to criticise Bernstein's speech codes theory when applied to class differences in achievement.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that in-school factors are the main cause of class differences in educational achievement.

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

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3 Define what sociologists mean by 'labelling' in the context of schools and pupil behaviour.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Identify and explain two ways that streaming or setting might produce class differences in educational achievement.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Describe one key finding from Howard Becker's work on the ideal pupil and teacher labelling in schools.

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.4 Internal Factors in Class Differences in Educational Achievement: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies first criticism, e.g. evidence of restricted code among working-class families is mixed and overly deterministic	**B1**
develops first criticism, e.g. pupils can learn school discourse and teachers may adapt their language, so cultural capital is not fixed	**B1**
identifies second criticism, e.g. class differences in achievement persist even when language differences are accounted for, suggesting other factors matter	**B1**
develops second criticism, e.g. material resources, school funding and institutional practices may be more decisive than speech codes alone	**B1**

Answer: One criticism is that evidence for restricted code is mixed and deterministic, since pupils can learn school discourse and teachers may adapt; another is that class gaps remain after accounting for language differences, pointing to material and institutional factors also being important.

Question 2

Level 1 Basic statements about in-school factors or out-of-school factors with little development or supporting evidence.	**1-3**
Level 2 Some explanation of in-school factors and some alternative causes, but limited use of studies or theory and limited analysis of the balance between them.	**4-6**
Level 3 Clear explanation of in-school causes, using appropriate studies or concepts (for example labelling, streaming, pupil subcultures, Bernstein), and considered evaluation using external explanations, with some judgement.	**7-9**
Level 4 Thorough balanced discussion drawing on a range of sociological perspectives and studies. Explicit analysis of strengths and limits of in-school explanations, consideration of out-of-school factors such as material deprivation and cultural capital, and a supported conclusion on the extent to which in-school factors are the main cause.	**10-12**

Indicative content:

- Arguments that in-school factors are main cause: labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy (Becker; Rosenthal and Jacobson) directly link teacher expectations to pupil outcomes; streaming and setting produce differential access to resources and knowledge; differentiation and polarisation create anti-school subcultures that reduce working-class attainment; Bernstein's speech codes explain how classroom language advantages some pupils; empirical classroom observations and ethnographies support micro-level mechanisms.
- Evaluation and alternative explanations: material factors outside school, such as poverty, housing, nutrition and access to private tuition, affect readiness to learn and long-term attainment; cultural capital and habitus (Bourdieu) explain how middle-class families provide educational advantage outside school; selection and school choice mean that school intakes differ by class, so school effects interact with intake characteristics; methodological critiques of labelling and Pygmalion studies question the size and generality of effects.
- Sociological perspectives: Marxist views focus on structural reproduction of class via the hidden curriculum and role allocation, seeing in-school factors as part of a wider capitalist system; interactionists emphasise the importance of teacher-pupil interactions and labelling as immediate causes; the New Right may emphasise family and cultural causes outside school.
- Conclusion guidance: balanced answers will recognise in-school factors have a significant and well-documented role in producing class differences in achievement, but strong evaluations note that they operate in combination with out-of-school material and cultural factors, and that the extent to which they are 'the main' cause depends on the weight given to structural versus interactional explanations and the empirical context.

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Question 3

identifies labelling as the process of attaching a definition or stereotype to an individual or group by others, for example teachers	**B1**
development, e.g. this label influences how the labelled person is treated and how they see themselves	**B1**

Answer: Labelling is the process of attaching a definition or stereotype to an individual or group, for example by teachers; this label influences how the pupil is treated and how they see themselves.

Question 4

identifies first way, e.g. working-class pupils being placed in lower streams	**B1**
explains first way, e.g. lower streams receive lower expectations, less challenging teaching and fewer academic resources, harming achievement	**B1**
identifies second way, e.g. streaming separates pupils by behaviour as well as ability	**B1**
explains second way, e.g. polarisation can form subcultures in lower streams that reject school values and reduce effort and attainment	**B1**

Answer: Working-class pupils put into lower streams receive lower expectations and less challenging teaching, which reduces achievement; streaming also separates pupils by behaviour, so lower streams can polarise into anti-school subcultures that reject school values and lower attainment.

Question 5

identifies a key finding, e.g. teachers judge pupils against an 'ideal pupil' standard	**B1**
development, e.g. characteristics of the ideal pupil include politeness, neatness and responsiveness	**B1**
further development, e.g. pupils not seen as fitting the ideal are labelled negatively and treated differently	**B1**

Answer: Becker found that teachers judge pupils against an 'ideal pupil' standard, including politeness and neatness, and pupils who do not fit are labelled negatively and treated differently.

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