1.4 Internal Factors in Class Differences in Educational Achievement

AQA 7192 · about 60 minutes · Write-in edition

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 60 minutes in total.

1 State one methodological criticism often made of Rosenthal and Jacobson's Pygmalion in the Classroom study.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Describe how the process of differentiation and polarisation, as described by Lacey and Ball, can operate inside a school to create class differences in achievement.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

3 Explain one strength of using the labelling perspective to understand class differences in achievement.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 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 4 is 4 marks)

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

(Total for Question 5 is 12 marks)

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

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

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

(Total for Question 8 is 3 marks)

9 Describe two features of pupil subcultures identified by Lacey in his study of a grammar school.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

10 Outline and explain two ways that labelling in schools can affect a pupil's long term educational achievement.

(Total for Question 10 is 4 marks)

11 Explain two ways that streaming and the formation of pupil subcultures can influence attainment gaps between social classes.

(Total for Question 11 is 4 marks)

Mark scheme · 1.4 Internal Factors in Class Differences in Educational Achievement

Question 1

identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. the study used ambiguous measures and the 'spurters' identification may have been unreliable	**B1**
brief development, e.g. critics suggest observer effects or sample issues may have influenced results	**B1**

Answer: A common criticism is that the identification of 'spurters' was unreliable and measures were ambiguous, and observer effects or sample issues may have influenced the reported results.

Question 2

identifies differentiation, e.g. teachers categorise pupils by ability and behaviour	**B1**
develops differentiation, e.g. this categorisation affects expectations, sets and access to resources	**B1**
identifies polarisation, e.g. pupils move towards pro-school or anti-school subcultures	**B1**
develops polarisation, e.g. lower-status pupils often form anti-school groups that resist authority and reduce attainment, reinforcing class differences	**B1**

Answer: Teachers differentiate pupils by perceived ability and behaviour, affecting expectations, sets and resource access; polarisation then pushes lower-status pupils into anti-school subcultures that resist authority and lower attainment, reinforcing class differences.

Question 3

identifies a strength, e.g. it highlights the role of teachers and interactions in producing inequalities	**B1**
develops the strength, e.g. it explains how micro-level processes can produce measurable differences in attainment	**B1**

Answer: A strength is that labelling highlights how teacher interactions and expectations can produce inequalities, showing how micro-level processes can lead to measurable differences in attainment.

Question 4

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 5

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.

Question 6

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 7

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 8

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.

Question 9

identifies first feature, e.g. differentiation between pupils by teachers leading to streaming **B1**

development of first feature, e.g. teachers' categorisation leads to unequal treatment and status differences **B1**

identifies second feature, e.g. polarisation into pro-school and anti-school subcultures **B1**

development of second feature, e.g. anti-school groups reject school values and may lower their academic effort **B1**

Answer: Lacey described differentiation by teachers that leads to unequal status and treatment, and polarisation into pro-school and anti-school subcultures where anti-school groups reject school values and reduce academic effort.

Question 10

identifies first way, e.g. internalisation of a negative label reduces pupil motivation **B1**

applies or develops first way, e.g. over time lower motivation causes poorer exam results and restricted future choices **B1**

identifies second way, e.g. differential access to opportunities or sets **B1**

applies or develops second way, e.g. being in lower sets limits curriculum, teacher expectations and access to advanced qualifications, reducing long term attainment **B1**

Answer: A negative label can be internalised, reducing motivation and effort so exam results fall and future options shrink; labelling can also lead to being placed in lower sets, limiting curriculum access and teacher expectations, which reduces long-term qualifications and achievement.

Question 11

identifies first way, e.g. lower streams often have lower teacher expectations and poorer teaching **B1**

develops first way, e.g. this produces lower attainment among working-class pupils more often placed in lower streams **B1**

identifies second way, e.g. polarisation into anti-school subcultures in lower streams **B1**

develops second way, e.g. anti-school subcultures value resisting school rules and do not pursue academic success, widening class gaps **B1**

Answer: Lower streams receive lower expectations and poorer teaching, which reduces attainment for working-class pupils who are disproportionately placed there; polarisation can create anti-school subcultures in lower streams that reject academic success, further widening class attainment gaps.