1.5 Gender Differences in Educational Achievement: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological terms where appropriate.

1 State one policy introduced in UK schools aimed at reducing gender stereotyping in subject choice, and briefly say how it works.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Explain two practical steps a secondary school could take to reduce gender stereotyping in subject choice and support more balanced attainment across subjects.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

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3 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that changes in out-of-school factors, rather than changes inside schools, are the main reason for girls improving their educational achievement. In your answer, refer to different sociological perspectives and evidence, and reach a supported conclusion.

(Total for Question 3 is 12 marks)

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4 Identify and explain two internal school factors that sociologists link to the improvement in girls' achievement in secondary schools.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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5 Describe one way subject choice can affect gender differences in achievement in UK secondary schools.

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.5 Gender Differences in Educational Achievement: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

states a policy, e.g. GIST or WISE-style initiatives encouraging girls into science and technology	**B1**
brief explanation, e.g. they offer outreach, role models and information to challenge stereotypes and make subjects seem more accessible	**B1**

Answer: GIST or WISE-style initiatives encourage girls into science and technology by offering outreach, female role models and information to challenge stereotypes and make those subjects seem more accessible.

Question 2

identifies one practical step, e.g. using female and male role models and careers talks in all subjects	**B1**
develops it, e.g. this challenges stereotypes and shows diverse career paths linked to each subject	**B1**
identifies second practical step, e.g. training teachers to avoid gendered language and biased expectations	**B1**
develops it, e.g. changes in classroom interaction and teacher expectations can boost confidence among underrepresented genders	**B1**

Answer: One step is to invite both female and male role models and run careers talks for all subjects to challenge stereotypes and show diverse career paths. A second is teacher training to avoid gendered language and biased expectations, changing classroom interaction to boost confidence among underrepresented genders.

Question 3

Level 1 Basic statements about one or two factors with limited development. Little use of sociological concepts or evidence. Conclusion, if present, is weak.	**1-3**
Level 2 Some relevant points about out-of-school and in-school factors, with some development. Includes one or two sociological studies or perspectives, but analysis is limited and the conclusion is partial.	**4-6**
Level 3 Good analysis of both out-of-school and in-school explanations, with appropriate sociological studies and perspectives used to support claims. Balanced argument and a reasoned conclusion, though not fully evaluative.	**7-9**
Level 4 Excellent evaluation showing clear understanding of competing explanations. Uses a range of sociological perspectives and named studies, assesses strengths and limitations of evidence, and reaches a well supported and balanced conclusion.	**10-12**

Indicative content:

- Out-of-school factors supporting girls improvement: changing gender role expectations, increased labour market opportunities for women, and changes in family structure raising aspirations; cite Sue Sharpe on changing priorities and statistical trends in female higher education entry
- In-school factors: equal opportunities policies (GIST, WISE), teacher expectations and classroom interaction changes, curriculum change and assessment reforms such as coursework and GCSE modifications that have advantaged girls
- Interactionist and feminist perspectives: liberal feminists stress policy and opportunity changes; radical feminists focus on persistent patriarchal barriers in school and society; interactionists focus on teacher labelling and classroom interaction
- Marxist or materialist critiques: point to class and material resources as crucial, arguing that class intersects with gender so improvements for middle-class girls may not apply to working-class girls
- Evidence limitations: difficulty of isolating causes, mixed findings in research, and issues of representativeness; some studies show policies helped, others highlight continued gendered subject segregation and boys underachievement
- Consideration of boys: some sociologists argue focusing only on girls misses rising concerns about boys and 'laddish' subcultures (Epstein, Mac an Ghaill) which complicate the picture
- Conclusion should weigh the evidence, for example arguing that both out-of-school and in-school factors are important and interact, so sociologists would not fully agree that one set alone explains girls' improvement

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Question 4

identifies one internal factor, e.g. equal opportunities policies such as GIST and WISE	**B1**
explains how it helps, e.g. such policies encourage girls into non-traditional subjects and reduce gender stereotyping in the curriculum	**B1**
identifies a second internal factor, e.g. changes in teacher expectations and classroom interaction	**B1**
explains how it helps, e.g. teachers now give more praise and encouragement to girls, leading to better motivation and attainment	**B1**

Answer: Equal opportunities policies such as GIST and WISE encourage girls into non-traditional subjects and reduce stereotyping; and changes in teacher expectations and classroom interaction, with more praise and higher expectations for girls, increase motivation and attainment.

Question 5

identifies a way, e.g. gendered patterns of subject choice such as more boys choosing computing and more girls choosing English	**B1**
development, e.g. this affects measured achievement because high-scoring subjects can be chosen more by one gender	**B1**
further development, e.g. subject choice influences future study and career routes, reinforcing gendered outcomes	**B1**

Answer: Gendered subject choice, for example more boys in computing and more girls in English, can affect measured achievement because different subjects have different grading patterns and influence future study and career routes, reinforcing gendered outcomes.

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