



GSOC.AL6 Ethnic Differences in Educational Achievement

AQA 7192 · Calculators not allowed · about 70 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. For questions worth 4 marks or more, write in full sentences. Spend about 70 minutes in total.

- 1** Which one of the following best describes the term 'ethnic group' as used in sociology of education in the UK context?

- ☐ A) a group defined only by a shared religion
- ☐ B) people who share a common cultural origin, history or identity
- ☐ C) pupils with the same exam results
- ☐ D) a group defined only by skin colour

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Define what sociologists mean by the term 'ethnocentric curriculum' in the context of UK schools.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Identify and explain two external factors outside schools that sociologists say can affect ethnic differences in educational achievement in UK pupils.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

- 4** Describe one internal school process that sociologists argue can disadvantage minority-ethnic pupils, naming the process and how it affects pupils in a UK school setting.

(Total for Question 4 is 3 marks)

- 5** Item A: A small secondary school's recent internal monitoring data. In Year 11 mock exams, the school recorded average mock scores: White British pupils 62%, Pakistani pupils 54%, Black Caribbean pupils 48%. Observations by senior staff noted that lower-attaining groups were more often placed in lower sets for mathematics and English and that some teachers described behaviour as a barrier to learning for several Black Caribbean pupils.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

- 6** Define what sociologists mean by 'institutional racism' in the context of a school or the wider education system in the UK.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

7 State one piece of evidence a sociologist might use to argue that material deprivation, rather than ethnicity alone, explains low achievement for some minority groups in UK schools.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 Identify and explain one criticism that sociologists have made of explaining ethnic differences in achievement solely in terms of cultural deprivation.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

9 Explain two ways in which teacher expectations, as an internal school factor, can influence ethnic differences in pupil achievement in UK classrooms.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

10 State one finding from research which suggests some schools treat minority-ethnic pupils as a problem group, and give a brief implication of that finding for achievement.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

11 Give one example of how the national testing and assessment system could disadvantage minority-ethnic pupils, and explain briefly why this could occur in the UK context.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

12 Identify and explain two internal school responses that research recommends to reduce ethnic differences in achievement, referring to UK school practice.

(Total for Question 12 is 4 marks)

13 Explain one way Gillborn's concept of 'institutional racism' in education can be shown in school admissions, with a UK example.

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

14 Identify and explain two ways in which pupils' identities and teacher perceptions, as Archer and others have analysed, can influence the achievement of minority-ethnic pupils in UK schools.

(Total for Question 14 is 4 marks)

15 Give one short example of how external community factors can support the achievement of a particular minority-ethnic group in the UK, and state why this helps.

(Total for Question 15 is 2 marks)

- 16** Write a balanced evaluation using your knowledge of internal school factors such as labelling, setting and institutional racism, and external factors such as material deprivation, cultural capital and family background. Refer to relevant sociological perspectives and research where appropriate.

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that school factors are the main cause of ethnic differences in educational achievement in the UK.

(Total for Question 16 is 12 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.AL6 Ethnic Differences in Educational Achievement

Question 1

- **B1** B (people who share a common cultural origin, history or identity)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies that an ethnocentric curriculum gives priority to the culture and history of one ethnic group, usually the dominant group (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. it marginalises other cultures, languages or perspectives in what is taught
- **Answer: An ethnocentric curriculum gives priority to the culture and history of the dominant ethnic group, marginalising other cultures, languages or perspectives in what is taught.**

Question 3

- **B1** identifies one external factor, e.g. material deprivation linked to poverty
- **B1** explains how it affects achievement, e.g. lack of resources, poor housing or limited private tuition can reduce attainment
- **B1** identifies a second external factor, e.g. language barriers or limited English on entry
- **B1** explains how it affects achievement, e.g. pupils with limited English may struggle with comprehension and exam language early on
- **Answer: One external factor is material deprivation linked to poverty, which can limit resources, study space and extra tuition and so reduce attainment. A second is language barriers, where limited English on entry can make understanding lessons and exam language harder, lowering early attainment.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies an internal process, e.g. teacher labelling, setting or streaming
- **B1** describes how it operates, e.g. teachers form expectations about pupils based on ethnicity
- **B1** development, e.g. negative labels can lead to lower expectations and lower teacher support, harming attainment
- **Answer: One internal process is teacher labelling, where teachers form expectations about pupils based on ethnicity; negative labels can lower expectations and reduce teacher support and encouragement, which in turn can harm pupils' attainment.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies one internal practice linked to the item, e.g. setting and streaming placing lower-attaining groups into lower sets
- **B1** explains how this could affect scores, e.g. lower sets may receive lower expectations, less challenging work and fewer opportunities, reducing attainment
- **B1** identifies a second internal practice, e.g. negative teacher labelling of Black Caribbean pupils as having behaviour problems
- **B1** explains how this could affect scores, e.g. labelling can lead to exclusion from lessons, reduced help and self-fulfilling low expectations, lowering mock exam performance
- **Answer: Placing lower-attaining groups into lower sets can mean less challenging work and lower expectations, which reduces learning and mock scores. Negative teacher labelling of some Black Caribbean pupils as having behaviour problems can lead to exclusion from lessons, less teacher support and lower pupil confidence, contributing to lower mock exam results.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies that institutional racism refers to policies and practices within institutions that produce unequal outcomes for different ethnic groups
- **B1** development, e.g. it may occur without individual prejudice, through standard procedures that disadvantage some groups
- **Answer: Institutional racism is where policies and practices within institutions produce unequal outcomes for ethnic groups, and it can operate without individual prejudice, through routine procedures that disadvantage some groups.**

Question 7

- **B1** states a genuine piece of evidence, e.g. statistics showing higher rates of poverty and overcrowded housing among certain minority-ethnic groups
- **B1** brief development, e.g. linking poverty to lack of resources and lower attainment
- **Answer: One piece of evidence is that some minority-ethnic groups have higher rates of poverty and overcrowded housing, which is linked to lack of study space, fewer resources and lower educational attainment.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a criticism, e.g. it blames families and culture while ignoring structural factors like racism and poverty
- **B1** brief development, e.g. this can lead to stereotyping and policy that does not address material inequalities or school discrimination
- **Answer: A criticism is cultural deprivation explanations blame families and culture while ignoring structural factors such as racism and poverty; this risks stereotyping communities and failing to address material inequality or discrimination in schools.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies one way, e.g. low expectations lead to less challenging work set for some pupils
- **B1** development, e.g. less challenge reduces progress and exam performance over time
- **B1** identifies a second way, e.g. expectations shape teacher-pupil interactions, with more support and praise for those expected to succeed
- **B1** development, e.g. differential interaction can increase confidence in some pupils and undermine it in others, affecting attainment
- **Answer: Low expectations can lead teachers to set less challenging work for some pupils, reducing progress and exam performance. Expectations also shape interactions, with more support and praise given to pupils seen as likely to succeed, boosting their confidence while others receive less support and lose confidence, affecting attainment.**

Question 10

- **B1** states a relevant finding, e.g. studies have found higher rates of exclusion or disciplinary sanctions among some minority groups
- **B1** brief implication, e.g. exclusion or repeated punishments lead to missed lessons and lower attainment
- **Answer: Research has found higher rates of exclusion and disciplinary sanctions among some minority-ethnic groups, which leads to missed lessons and disrupted learning and therefore lower attainment.**

Question 11

- **B1** gives a correct example, e.g. tests biased towards cultural knowledge of majority group or language used that disadvantages EAL pupils
- **B1** brief explanation, e.g. unfamiliar cultural references or complex language can reduce performance of pupils from different backgrounds
- **Answer: An example is national tests containing cultural references or language that favour the majority culture; unfamiliar references or complex language can reduce EAL pupils' ability to understand questions, lowering their scores.**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies one response, e.g. staff training on cultural awareness and anti bias teaching
- **B1** explains how it helps, e.g. reduces stereotyping and improves teacher expectations and interactions
- **B1** identifies a second response, e.g. review of setting and assessment policies to ensure fairness
- **B1** explains how it helps, e.g. fairer placement and assessment can prevent minorities being confined to lower sets and improve outcomes
- **Answer: One response is staff training on cultural awareness to reduce stereotyping and improve teacher expectations and interactions. A second is reviewing setting and assessment policies to ensure fairness so minority pupils are not confined to lower sets and have equal access to challenge and support.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies a way, e.g. admission policies and selection procedures that favour those with connections or knowledge of the system
- **B1** development, e.g. this can disadvantage some minority families who lack social capital or knowledge, resulting in fewer places at higher performing schools
- **Answer: Gillborn's institutional racism can appear in admissions when selection and oversubscription rules advantage families with social capital or system knowledge, disadvantaging some minority families who then gain fewer places at higher performing schools.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies one way, e.g. teachers stereotype pupils into identities such as the 'ideal pupil' or 'pathologised pupil'
- **B1** explains impact, e.g. stereotyping can lead to differential treatment, affecting opportunities and attainment
- **B1** identifies a second way, e.g. pupil responses to labels, such as rejecting school values or adopting compensatory identities
- **B1** explains impact, e.g. identities that conflict with school expectations can reduce engagement and performance
- **Answer: One way is stereotyping into identities like the 'ideal pupil' or the 'pathologised pupil', which leads to differential treatment and unequal opportunities. A second is pupil responses to these labels, such as rejecting school values or forming identities that conflict with expectations, reducing engagement and attainment.**

Question 15

- **B1** gives an example, e.g. community-led after school tuition or mentoring programmes
- **B1** brief reason why, e.g. provides extra academic support, role models and homework help that boost attainment
- **Answer: An example is community-led after school tuition and mentoring, which provides extra academic support, role models and homework help and so boosts attainment for pupils from that community.**

Question 16

- **Level 1** (1-3): Basic assertions about school factors or external factors with little development or supporting evidence.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some developed points on either school factors or external factors, with limited use of research and few alternative perspectives.
- **Level 3** (7-9): Clear discussion including both school factors and external factors, supported by named research or theoretical perspectives, with some evaluation of their relative importance.
- **Level 4** (10-12): A well-developed, balanced evaluation that argues a judgement, uses a range of sociological evidence and perspectives such as Gillborn on institutional racism, Archer on identity, and material deprivation explanations, and considers limitations of each view.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Arguments that school factors are main cause: teacher labelling leading to self fulfilling prophecy; setting and streaming concentrating minority pupils in lower sets; institutional racism in admissions, assessment and exclusions as Gillborn argues; ethnocentric curriculum marginalising minority identities; evidence of disproportionate exclusions or sanctions.
 - Evidence and perspectives supporting external explanations: material deprivation and class overlap with ethnicity affecting resources and attendance; cultural capital differences affecting familiarity with school norms; family support and community contexts; statistical patterns where socioeconomic controls reduce ethnic gaps.
 - Sociological research to use: Gillborn on institutional racism in assessment and policy, Archer on pupil identities and how schools construct ethnic minority pupils, Mirza on teacher racism and its effects, Sewell on cultural and peer influences on achievement for some groups, and evidence that controlling for social class reduces some ethnic gaps.
 - Evaluation and synthesis: show how both sets of factors interact, not compete; for example, poverty can make pupils more likely to be placed in lower sets, while institutional bias can amplify disadvantages. Consider policy implications and the difficulty of isolating causes in complex systems. Conclude with a supported judgement on whether school factors are the main cause or one of several interacting causes, acknowledging the strength of structural external factors.