4.2 Social Class and Educational Achievement: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological vocabulary and name sociologists where you can.

1 Evaluate the view that material deprivation is the main reason why working-class pupils tend to achieve less well than middle-class pupils. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one explanation.

(Total for Question 1 is 12 marks)

2 Government policies have tried to reduce the achievement gap linked to social class. Explain one government policy that has tried to reduce the achievement gap linked to social class.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 Sociologists sometimes explain class differences in achievement in terms of 'material deprivation'. Define material deprivation.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argued cultural, as well as material, factors help explain class differences in achievement. Explain how Bourdieu used the concept of cultural capital to explain class differences in achievement.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 The sociologist Basil Bernstein distinguished between an 'elaborated code' and a 'restricted code' of speech. Explain Bernstein's distinction between elaborated code and restricted code and how this can affect educational achievement.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 State one way the school itself, rather than a pupil's home background, might disadvantage working-class pupils.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.2 Social Class and Educational Achievement: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH material deprivation AND cultural explanations (e.g. cultural capital, language codes), supported by accurate reference to named sociologists. Strengths and weaknesses of each explanation are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout. **10-12**

Level 3 A clear evaluation that explains both material and cultural explanations, with some accurate reference to sociologists. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported. **7-9**

Level 2 Some relevant explanation of material and/or cultural factors, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between explanations. **4-6**

Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about class and achievement, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail. **1-3**

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Indicative content:

- Material deprivation case: a lack of money and resources (equipment, housing, revision materials) can directly limit a pupil's ability to study effectively, and can force some pupils into part-time work that reduces study time.
- Cultural deprivation case: Bourdieu's cultural capital and Bernstein's elaborated/restricted code suggest schools reward knowledge, tastes and language that middle-class children are more likely to already have from home.
- Supporting evidence for cultural explanations: J.W.B. Douglas's longitudinal study found parental interest linked to achievement even among children of similar ability; Diane Reay's research found middle-class parents often draw on economic, social and cultural capital to support and intervene for their children.
- Evaluation of material deprivation: critics note it cannot fully explain why some low-income pupils achieve highly or some wealthy pupils underachieve, suggesting other factors also matter.
- Evaluation of cultural explanations: critics argue cultural deprivation theory can unfairly blame working-class families and their culture, and underplays how the school's own culture and curriculum already favour middle-class ways of speaking and behaving.
- A balanced conclusion should note that material and cultural factors are difficult to separate in practice, since poverty can also limit a family's cultural resources (e.g. time for parental involvement), and both may operate together rather than as rival single causes.

Question 2

identifies a genuine UK education policy aimed at reducing class-based inequality, e.g. the Pupil Premium, extra funding given to schools for disadvantaged pupils **B1**

brief accurate development of how the policy is intended to work **B1**

Answer: The Pupil Premium gives schools extra government funding for each disadvantaged pupil they teach, intended to help close the achievement gap linked to social class.

Question 3

a lack of money or physical resources needed to succeed in education (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. poorer families may be less able to afford things like a computer, educational trips or revision guides **B1**

Answer: A lack of money or physical resources needed to succeed in education, e.g. poorer families being less able to afford a computer, educational trips or revision guides.

Question 4

identifies cultural capital as the knowledge, tastes, vocabulary and ways of behaving that are valued by the education system (oe) **B1**

explains that middle-class children are, on average, more likely to grow up with this cultural capital already present in family life **B1**

development, e.g. this can help pupils feel more confident and comfortable navigating school rules, classroom discussions and teachers' expectations **B1**

further development, e.g. Bourdieu argued schools present this culture as 'normal' or 'correct', giving pupils who already possess it a built-in advantage **B1**

Answer: Bourdieu's cultural capital is the knowledge, tastes and ways of behaving valued by schools; middle-class children are more likely to already have this from home, helping them navigate school rules and expectations, because schools treat this culture as the 'normal' or 'correct' one.

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Question 5

identifies restricted code as a more limited way of speaking, using shorter sentences and assuming shared context/meaning, which Bernstein linked to some working-class homes	**B1**
identifies elaborated code as a more explicit, wider-vocabulary way of speaking that spells out meaning fully, which Bernstein linked to some middle-class homes	**B1**
development, e.g. Bernstein argued schools mainly use and expect the elaborated code, in lessons, textbooks and exam answers	**B1**
further development, e.g. pupils less familiar with the elaborated code may therefore be at a disadvantage in understanding and expressing themselves in the way school requires	**B1**

Answer: Bernstein argued some working-class homes use a restricted code (shorter, context-dependent speech) while some middle-class homes use an elaborated code (fuller, explicit speech), and because schools mainly use and expect the elaborated code, pupils less familiar with it can be disadvantaged.

Question 6

identifies a school-based factor, e.g. that the school's own culture, curriculum or way of communicating may already be closer to middle-class ways of speaking and behaving	**B1**
brief development linking this back to Bourdieu's or Bernstein's ideas, e.g. so working-class pupils have more to adjust to in order to succeed	**B1**

Answer: The school's own culture and expected way of speaking may already be closer to middle-class norms (linking to Bourdieu's cultural capital and Bernstein's elaborated code), meaning working-class pupils have more to adjust to in order to succeed.

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