



A-level
Sociology

7192/1 Education with theory and methods

Report on the Examination

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General comments

Overall, the paper was comparable in difficulty to previous years, though it seemed slightly more accessible, particularly for the lower tariff and higher essay-style questions, where students generally performed well. Most students demonstrated good knowledge and understanding (including applied concepts, studies and theories) across the questions except for questions 3 and 6. It was also encouraging to see a range of developed analysis in many cases, and some students provided particularly pleasing, explicit evaluation, especially in Question 4.

However, a notable number of students struggled with Question 6, with some not attempting it or providing very brief responses. This difficulty may be attributed to the question's placement as the last one on the paper or the specific challenges it posed.

Question 01

Most students performed well on this question, typically identifying that vocational education prepares students for the workforce by providing relevant skills and knowledge. Common answers included that vocational education offers alternatives to traditional academic routes, allowing some students to achieve higher.

However, some responses were too general, such as stating that 'it prepares students for jobs', without specifically linking this to vocational education. These generic answers could easily apply to both vocational and non-vocational education, which limited the marks that could be awarded.

Question 02

This was generally a high-performing question, with the vast majority of students able to score at least some marks. A significant proportion of students were able to achieve full marks, taking advantage of the wide range of possible responses. Students commonly discussed issues such as school oversubscription, geographical limitations, and the influence of socio-economic status and cultural capital on accessing high-performing schools of choice. These responses were well-developed and demonstrated a clear understanding of the factors limiting parental choice in school selection.

However, some responses were too generic, often mentioning concepts like the 'myth of parentocracy' without elaborating on how or why it limits parental choice or providing specific examples. In these cases, students sometimes relied on broad statements without adequately applying their knowledge to the specifics of the question. To score higher, students could improve by providing more detailed examples and explanations, clearly linking their points to how these factors specifically limit parental choice.

Question 03

This question appeared to pose more challenges than in previous years, particularly regarding the use and application of the 'hooks' (prompts to be developed) provided in the item. While many students effectively utilised the first hook, concerning subject choice and its potential problems for girls, there was variation in how well the second hook about identity expression and conflict was addressed. Some students mistakenly focused on boys' experiences despite the question specifically asking about girls.

It is crucial to emphasise that the last sentence of the item, which paraphrases the question, is not intended to be used as a hook for developing answers. This has been highlighted in previous examiner reports and continues to be an issue. Students should be reminded that these sentences that simply paraphrase the question should not be used as a hook for developing responses.

The subject choice hook was developed in various ways, to varying degrees of success. There were excellent responses that discussed how career guidance and societal expectations might influence girls' subject choices. These responses pointed out that girls are often guided away from traditionally male-dominated fields like STEM, impacting their future career opportunities. Moreover, some students provided thorough evaluations by discussing recent efforts in schools, such as gender-neutral policies and initiatives (including GIST and WISE) aimed at encouraging more inclusive subject choices. This critical engagement demonstrated a deep understanding of the topic and an ability to connect theoretical concepts to practical educational policies.

While the second hook about identity expression and conflict was not as commonly well-utilised, there were notable examples where it was effectively addressed. Some students explored issues like hyper-heterosexual identities and the male gaze, discussing how these factors could affect girls' experiences in school and their educational outcomes. These responses provided a nuanced analysis of how identity expression can lead to conflicts or challenges within the school environment.

Question 04

This question saw some excellent responses, with students engaging deeply with Marxist perspectives on the role of education such as Althusser's 'Ideological State Apparatus', Bowles and Gintis's 'Myth of Meritocracy' (perpetuating inequality) and the 'Correspondence Theory' (preparation for working in a capitalist society). The best answers demonstrated deep analysis, unpacking these concepts and critically assessing their relevance and applicability in modern education. For example, some students discussed the 'Myth of Meritocracy', exploring how it might manifest in contemporary educational practices and whether policies like 'pupil premium funding' effectively counteract these views. The best responses were well-focused on the usefulness of Marxist perspectives in understanding the role of education today.

A common approach was to offer juxtaposed arguments, presenting alternative perspectives such as functionalism, New Right, or postmodernism alongside Marxist perspectives. While this approach is not necessarily problematic, it can be more limiting in terms of the marks awarded, as it may lack a deeper connection to a critique or evaluation of the Marxist perspectives. Additionally, there were responses that provided general accounts of social class differences or explanations for differences in achievement. While these points have potential relevance, they were often presented in a very general manner and were not specifically linked to the role of the education system, which was central to the question.

Question 05

Students seemed to find this question more accessible than last year's, showing varying degrees of understanding of overt participant observation. Many discussed concepts like the 'Hawthorne effect', noting that the presence of a researcher might alter the behaviour of participants who know they are being observed. Some students effectively linked the aspects of being both a participant and overt, highlighting how this dual role can influence the research, such as by introducing biases due to the researcher's visible presence and potential influence on participants' behaviour.

However, most students tackled the aspects of overt and participant observation separately, discussing them as distinct components rather than integrating them fully. These responses could still gain good credit if they were developed well and/ or applied to the specific issue of studying pupil subcultures. Additionally, some weaker answers referred to observations more generally, discussing advantages and disadvantages that could apply to any type of observation. These responses were more limited in terms of the marks awarded, as they lacked specificity in addressing overt participant observation and the context of studying pupil subcultures.

Amongst the highest performing answers are those that can apply the advantages of aspects of overt participant observation to the study of pupil subcultures. For example, some students applied the concept of the ‘Hawthorne effect’ more specifically in explaining how student subcultures in schools might alter their behaviour, becoming either more conformist or rebellious (perhaps due to peer pressure), knowing they are being observed by a researcher who is visibly present (and may present as a ‘teacher in disguise’). This example effectively demonstrated the potential disadvantages of this method, highlighting issues such as reduced authenticity of the data collected.

There was also a trend of students providing accounts of issues in educational research more generally, such as difficulties in gaining access past ‘gatekeepers’, without specifically linking these points to overt participant observation and/ or the issue of studying pupil subcultures. The strongest responses provided specific applications and detailed discussions, effectively linking relevant concepts, such as gaining more *verstehen*, to the specific disadvantages of overt participant observation in the study of pupil subcultures. Weaker answers tended to rely on rote-learned material without adequate context.

Question 06

This question presented significant challenges, with many students struggling to understand and address the concept of ‘research design’ as influenced by feminism. Despite this concept being explicitly included in the specification, many responses discussed the impact of feminism in general terms without linking it specifically to aspects of research design.

However, there were examples of students who interpreted the question as intended and effectively discussed, for instance, feminist preferences for qualitative methods and the importance of building rapport. Many of the more successful answers referred to feminist researchers often favouring qualitative approaches, such as unstructured interviews, to explore sensitive topics and prioritise participants’ perspectives. In addition, some students then cited studies such as Dobash and Dobash’s research on domestic violence, illustrating how feminist methodologies can provide deeper insights into women’s experiences. They discussed how these methods aim to challenge traditional power dynamics in research, emphasising collaboration and empathy.

Despite these strong examples, there were still many responses that failed to connect feminist theoretical perspectives with specific methodological choices, limiting the depth and specificity of the analysis.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.