

1 EDUCATION

Example answers

AS LEVEL

1 Define the term 'hidden curriculum'.

[2 marks]

STUDENT RESPONSE

The hidden curriculum includes the things that are learnt by pupils that are not part of the official curriculum.

TEACHER COMMENTS

A good general tip with definition questions is to not only define the term but to also include an example to add substance to the answer. Can you think of an example that would improve this answer?

2 Using **one** example, briefly explain how gender differences may affect subject choice.

[2 marks]

STUDENT RESPONSE

Peer pressure may be a reason behind gender differences affecting subject choice. Girls who do sports could be seen as masculine.

TEACHER COMMENTS

It is helpful to make clear what the example is. In this case, it is peer pressure. Then explain the example, preferably with some detail. This answer is appropriate but slightly more detail would be beneficial. Can you add some extra detail to this response?

- 3 Outline **three** ways in which a child receiving private education may benefit from greater opportunities than a child receiving state education.

[6 marks]

STUDENT RESPONSE

Students who go to private school are more likely to come from richer families which gives them an advantage because they can afford private tutors to help them. They also get a better quality of teaching at private school.

TEACHER COMMENTS

Answers for questions like these can be bullet pointed, as long as you explain each answer. This means the response has a clear structure and will help you organise your thoughts better. It also helps you to highlight that there are three distinct points. The answer above only includes two, one of which is not explained sufficiently. Can you re-organise this answer into a clear bullet point structure and add a third correct answer?

- 4 Outline and explain **two** reasons for gender differences in attainment at GCSE level.

[10 marks]

STUDENT RESPONSE

The rise in feminism could be a reason for gender differences in attainment at GCSE level. It resulted in the challenging of the stereotypical roles of women in society and, because of this, girls started to work harder in school. Teacher labelling could be a factor in gender differences in attainment at GCSE level. A sociologist found that teachers tended to respond positively to girls in class as they are seen as more co-operative rather than boys, who are seen as disruptive. Since the introduction of coursework, there has been a significant change in the standards of school work between girls and boys. Girls tend to be more organised, meeting deadlines and spending more time on their work. Boys, however, are seen as slower-paced and more easily distracted.

TEACHER COMMENTS

Structure is very important for an extended writing answer. The best approach is to write two separate paragraphs that each focus on one of the reasons for gender differences in education. In each paragraph, you need to make it clear how the given reason links to the question specifically and then add a detailed explanation using concepts and sociological studies to provide relevant evidence. How would you approach this question? Outline two reasons and then write a detailed paragraph for each one.

5 Read **Item A** and answer the question that follows.

ITEM A

Sociologists have found that there are systematic differences between the educational performances of different social groups in schools. This suggests that educational achievement is not simply a matter of individual ability or chance, but can be explained by looking at the social factors that influence achievement.

Some sociologists believe that the explanation of these patterns lies in factors outside of the education system itself. Pupils and students have different resources and support mechanisms at home and bring different attitudes, values and skills into the education system.

Applying material from **Item A** and your knowledge of research methods, evaluate the view that differences in educational achievement between social groups are the result of factors and processes outside of school.

[20 marks]

STUDENT RESPONSE

The differences in educational achievement between social groups, such as working-class and middle-class pupils, may be due to the influence of a number of factors which originate outside of school. For example, some sociologists highlight the material deprivation experienced by some working class pupils. Howard, for example, claims that children are not being given the correct nutrition at home, because they are eating processed foods and not eating breakfast before they come to school. This can interfere with their school work, as they will not be able to perform well due to their food intake.

Disposable income in middle class families can be a reason for differences in educational achievement between social groups. Middle and upper class families are more likely to succeed in school as they have disposable income which lets them afford better resources such as books, gadgets and private tutors, which will aid learning. Gerwitz suggests that middle and upper class parents are privileged school choosers, meaning that they support their child, and often research schools and look at league tables when finding the best school for them.

Gertzitz claims that working class parents may be disconnected local choosers because they are restricted by lack of money and don't tend to research schools. This could lead on to Herbert Hyman's theory of 'self-imposed barriers'. He states that the way in which parents bring up their children can influence their education. The working class tend to create these barriers and take limited pride in education, as the parents themselves have had a negative experience in school. This is then passed on to the child, making the middle class most successful in terms of achieving in school.

TEACHER COMMENTS

While social class is relevant, this question refers to social groups. Social classes are not the only social groups that engage with the education system. Can you think of other social groups that could be relevant to this question?

The use of sociological studies in this answer is useful and shows sound knowledge but the answer is lacking clear evaluation as it only focuses on the factors outside of school. Although the item lacks any specific detail, the question demands that you apply knowledge to it. The response is relevant to the material in the item but there are no clear links to it which would have been beneficial. Can you link the above response to the item? Also, can you think of a possible argument that you could include that would debate against the question?

A-LEVEL

- 6 Outline **two** educational policies that have introduced greater choice into secondary education in recent years.

[4 marks]

STUDENT RESPONSE

One educational policy that has introduced greater choice into secondary education is the 1944 Education Act, which provided a nationwide system of free state education.

The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced marketisation into education, creating choice and competition between schools. It encouraged parents to use OFSTED reports and league tables when choosing which school to send their children to.

TEACHER COMMENTS

Paying attention to the demands of the question is very important. The second point is more relevant than the first as the 1944 Education Act was not generally associated with increasing choice and competition within the state sector. Can you think of an alternative?

- 7 Outline **three** reasons why there are still significant gender differences in subject choice at GCSE and A-level.

[6 marks]

STUDENT RESPONSE

Firstly, sociologists argue that the way pupils are tested has favoured girls and disadvantaged boys. More girls are likely to choose coursework-related subjects, whereas boys are often reluctant to put in the effort that coursework demands. As a result, boys are less likely to choose subjects with coursework, resulting in gender differences in subject choice.

Secondly, gender role socialisation may be responsible for gender differences in education. From an early age, boys and girls are dressed differently, given different toys, and are encouraged to take part in different activities. Through socialisation, girls and boys learn the roles expected from them in society, and this often leads to differences in their career goals and therefore subject choice. Children tend to choose the subjects they think are expected of their gender.

TEACHER COMMENTS

Using three separate paragraphs is an effective method of meeting the demands of the question. Each paragraph needs to clearly outline a particular reason behind gender differences in subject choice and then explain it in sufficient detail. Can you add a third paragraph to finish off this answer?

8 Read **Item B** below and answer the question that follows.

ITEM B

On average, children from households eligible for free school meals (FSM) are still much less likely than children from households who are not entitled to free school meals (non-FSM) to apply for or be offered a place at university. This has remained true despite recent attempts to widen the participation of children from working-class backgrounds in higher education. Furthermore, even FSM children of high academic ability are less likely to progress to university than non-FSM children of similar ability.

Applying material from **Item B**, analyse **two** reasons why children from low-income households are less likely to go to university than those from households with a higher income.

[10 marks]

STUDENT RESPONSE

They may be less likely to go to university due to material deprivation, meaning they cannot afford resources such as books and stationery. These are short-term costs that are a burden to poor families. There are also long-term costs, such as tuition fees. This can lead to underperformance as these students are not able to afford the materials needed to reach their full potential.

Cultural deprivation can also be a factor that stops children from low income households from going to university. Parents of children from low income households often have negative attitudes and values. These attitudes may lead to working class children failing at school, and they may start to see education as unimportant. As a result, they drop out of education, resulting in fewer applications to university. On the contrary, children from high income households are more successful, as their parents provide the necessary motivation, discipline and support.

TEACHER COMMENTS

Using material deprivation and cultural deprivation is a wise move but it would be advantageous to include a sociological study to support each paragraph. Also, the item offers a useful example that could be included in the material deprivation section, this is an opportunity missed in this case. It is worth remembering that the item is there to help you and therefore should be used to full effect. Can you use the item effectively in your answer? Can you think of any sociological studies that would be relevant to each point?

9 Read **Item C** below and answer the question that follows.

ITEM C

According to Department for Education figures, the ethnic group most likely, on average, to gain five or more good GCSE grades are the Chinese community, followed by other Asians, those of Mixed ethnicity, White and Black groups. However, there are big variations within ethnic groups (for example between males and females and those with different levels of income) and Black ethnic groups have high rates of participation in higher education.

Applying material from **Item C** and your knowledge, evaluate the view that ethnic differences in educational achievement are mainly the result of cultural factors.

[30 marks]

STUDENT RESPONSE

According to Item C, there are big differences in educational achievement across ethnicities. For example, Item C clearly shows that Chinese children are more likely than any other ethnic minority group to achieve five or more good GCSEs, followed closely by other Asian children. Black pupils are generally the lowest achieving ethnic group. However, Item C points out that there may also be other influences, because girls in all ethnic groups (including White) are more successful in education than boys, while middle-class Asian and Black children do a lot better than Asian and Black children from poorer families.

Moynihan argues that, because many Black families are headed by a lone mother, the absence of a father and a second wage earner means that these families may live in poverty. This puts Black children at an educational disadvantage. It is suggested by cultural deprivation theory that inadequately-socialised children become inadequate parents themselves. New right sociologists, like Murray, argue that lone parenthood and lack of male role models leads to the underachievement of Black boys.

Driver says Black girls tend to be more successful in education than Black boys because girls have positive role models of strong, independent women; they encourage and motivate girls to work hard. A good example would be Oprah Winfrey. This shows that there is also variation within ethnic groups. Also, ethnic minorities are more likely to be in poverty in the UK. Low income means that they are less likely to be able to invest in educational materials to send their children to private schools or to pay for extra tuition.

Family expectations can affect a child's school success. For example, in a traditional Indian family, they expect children to succeed and gain a good set of qualifications. This is because when such families migrated to the UK, they adopted the British norm of valuing education. Consequently, they encourage their children to make the most of their education.

Sociologists have examined the interaction in the classroom between Black boys and teachers from the labelling theory perspective. They found that teachers stereotyped Black boys as rebellious and 'anti-school'. This would often result in rebellious behaviour as a response to what the boys saw as racism from teachers. Black boys would often reject the goals and rules of the school. These stereotypes of ethnic minorities lead to differences in educational achievement.

TEACHER COMMENTS

Evaluation is key for this style of answer and therefore a strong argument needs to be developed against the question. This answer outlines some element of evaluation towards the end but this could be stretched further. The response does accurately use some sociological studies. However, these are restricted to the opening paragraphs and tend to be fairly brief. Can you develop the evaluation towards the end of the essay?