

# **A LEVEL SOCIOLOGY (AQA)**

## **30 MARK ESSAYS IN SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION by**

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# 30 MARK EDUCATION ESSAYS

## **The purpose of these materials**

The 30 mark essay contributes just under 40% of the marks on this exam paper, easily the most important question to prepare for. The aim of these materials is to help you to see where the marks, especially those for AO2 and AO3 skills, can be won. It is very important to develop a clear understanding of the type of questions that can be asked in this area of Sociology of Education. Each question will have its own particular focus, meaning you need to select certain knowledge and not other material. Many marks are lost by presenting material that is at a tangent to the question or which you do not explicitly make relevant. You need to orientate the knowledge you present to meet the demands of that particular question.

## **Marks and Skills**

**In the 30 mark essays:**

**AO1 Knowledge carries 12 marks**

**AO2 Application carries 9 marks**

**AO3 Analysis and Evaluation carries 9 marks.**

Having good knowledge is important but it is even more important to display the other skills as they carry 18/30 marks. Let's look at each of these skills in turn.

## **APPLICATION SKILLS**

- With 9/30 marks for Application skills, it is vital to show these throughout the answer - opening, closing and main paragraphs.
- Application is all about making links/connections and explaining these explicitly. It is almost as though a candidate has to make statements that say 'this is why this section of knowledge is relevant to this question'.
- Interpretation is how a question is taken apart and only relevant Knowledge chosen; application is about showing why that selection of Knowledge is relevant to the question issue.
- Links to Item. As the Item is very short, there is likely to be only a couple of points in it that can be drawn into the essay. The Item is more useful for seeing how an issue is set up - the last sentence or two in the Item often indicates an alternative view (and therefore is a focus for evaluation).
- Links to other (relevant) topics, theories and methods/methodologies.

### **Ways to show application skills – link knowledge to:**

- **a key word in the question**
- **an example**
- **a study**
- **points from the Item**
- **a theory**
- **methodological issues**
- **other topics**
- **debates raised by the question**

## ANALYSIS

- Analysis is all about explanation. It is a focus on explaining why events take the course they do, of taking ideas apart and of explaining how they link together.
- With 25% of the marks for Analysis and Evaluation skills, it is vital to show these throughout the answer - opening, closing and main paragraphs.

### Ways to show analysis skills

- explaining why two ideas connect
- developing an argument
- creating a 'chain of reasoning'
- taking a theory apart
- having a clear line of reasoning throughout your essay.
- comparing ideas/theories/explanations
- drawing out contrasts too
- explaining points from the Item

## EVALUATION SKILLS

- Most students are able to recognise at least some aspects of evaluation but this is often in a fairly limited way through the presentation of negative points, usually in the form of a list of criticisms.
- This is fine at one level and will get some recognition from examiners, but it is not full evaluation. A major hurdle for students to get over, especially at the beginning of the course, is seeing that 'evaluate' questions require them to **TEST** a claim rather than just presenting chunks of knowledge relevant to the issue in the question. The point about evaluation is to see it as using knowledge to test a claim.
- There are possibly three main aspects of evaluation: criticisms, strength and presenting alternative arguments.

### Ways to show evaluation skills

- identifying the strengths of a claim/study/theory/etc
- identifying the weaknesses of a claim/study/theory/etc. ..
- assessing the methodology of a study
- offering alternative claims to that in the question
- creating an evaluative structure in their answer
- a final evaluative paragraph

### **The Juxtaposition issue**

Many candidates place an alternative concept/theory/limitation/etc alongside the initial one. Unless this is explicitly connected then this is simple juxtapositioning. In essence this is saying 'I know there is an alternative, here it is...' without explaining why and in what ways it is an alternative.

### **Evaluation and the Item**

The Item sometimes sets up a claim in a paragraph containing a few sentences. Then an alternative is flagged up but not developed, usually in a single sentence as a final paragraph. This is often the core debate in the question so pick up on it when you read the Item.

### **Examiner Annotation**

The examiner marking your essay will be looking for evidence of these skills and will use certain annotations to identify them. The annotations they use will indicate these skills – showing how important they are in leading to your final mark.

### **Typical annotations include:**

APP for Application (of various kinds)

AN for Analysis

EVAL for Evaluation

C for concepts

TH for Theory

ST for studies.

### **How this pack is organised:**

Each Unit takes one aspect of the Sociology of Education. (NB Unit 1 starts with an overview of the whole area of Differential Educational Achievement)

- **Typical questions** on this aspect of Education are identified.
- Then **things to note about these questions**, especially their structure are outlined. These usually refer to the differences of emphasis in each question – something examiners will be watching for in your answer. Particular attention is given to ways you can demonstrate Application skills (30% of the marks, remember).
- There is then a **top mark band answer** to one of the questions with examiner annotation and commentary to show you where marks for the different skills were awarded.
- Finally there are some **exercises and brief decodes** of the other questions that are possible in this area of Sociology of Education.

## **UNIT 1 DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT (DEA) GENERIC INTERNAL VS EXTERNAL EXPLANATIONS**

### **A BIG TOPIC!**

This whole topic of differential educational achievement (DEA) covers around half the Education section in the specification. So it needs to be taken apart quite carefully as there is a fair range of potential questions that could be asked.

### **Essentially there are 5 elements to this topic:**

- 1 Internal school-based explanations of DEA
- 2 External home background explanations of DEA
- 3 DEA by social class
- 4 DEA by gender
- 5 DEA by ethnicity.

(A question could also link DEA with pupil experience of schooling/identities/subject choice – this is dealt with in the Unit on Pupil Identity.)

### **Questions are built using these five elements.**

You could get a generic DEA question that asked about the relative importance of either internal or external explanations for DEA (without specifying class, gender or ethnicity).

For example:

Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that home background factors are the main cause of differences in educational achievement.

Or: Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that differences in educational achievement are primarily the result of school processes.

Alternatively, a question could specify **one** of social class, gender or ethnicity in relation to DEA. These are covered in Units 2-4. It could also focus on either internal or external explanations or it could be general and ask for 'sociological explanations' in which case you need to bring in both.

For example:

Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of social class/gender/ethnic group differences in educational achievement.

Or: Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that home background factors are the main cause of social class/gender/ethnic group differences in educational achievement.

## **GENERIC INTERNAL VS EXTERNAL EXPLANATIONS OF DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT**

### **Typical essay questions**

You could get a generic DEA question that asked about the relative importance of either internal or external explanations for DEA (without specifying class, gender or ethnicity). Thus:

Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that home background factors are the main cause of differences in educational achievement.

Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that differences in educational achievement are primarily the result of school processes.

### **Things to note about these questions**

1 'Differences' could be replaced with 'inequalities' or other synonyms. Similarly, 'factors outside of school' could replace 'home background factors'.

These are essentially the same questions.

2 As the question does not specify a particular group, you are able to refer to class, gender and ethnic differences in achievement. Indeed, you can use this opportunity to do some comparison between internal and external explanations. It may be that internal factors are a better explanation for DEA for one group but not for another. Doing this would lead to some Evaluation marks.

3 Many candidates will be tempted into a 'display my knowledge' answer, listing and explaining a range of explanations and this can result in a knowledge-driven, 'catch-all' answer. Whichever of internal and external is specified in the question is the set of explanations that you should concentrate on.

4 What about the 'other side of the coin'? If the question is on internal then you can use external factors – but only as evaluation. Do not stick this in a chunk at the end of your essay, but feed in knowledge of external factors as evaluation as you go through internal factors.

5 It is unlikely that you can cover all of social class, gender and ethnicity in your answer, so flag them all up in your introduction and focus on two in the rest of your answer (with passing references to the third if you can). As it is unlikely that all three types of groups will be similarly affected by either of internal or external, then one thing you can do is to indicate whether some groups are more affected by internal or external,

6 One thing that most candidates do not do is to identify the DEA pattern for each Group. This is a good way to start your answer. It is also an opportunity to carry out some opening analysis or evaluation by commenting on how important or how fixed these patterns are.

7 Questions will almost certainly use words like 'primarily' or 'mainly' about the explanation of some aspect of DEA. Just at the level of logic, there are several possible answers to this. It may be true or it may be the alternative set of explanations. Or this could be true for one social group but not another (so what might cause boys' underachievement may not be the cause of class differences). Or it could be a combination of internal and external.

8 This leads to another issue that is rarely addressed in answers. How do we know which is most important? You cannot create an experimental situation in which internal factors are removed from the equation. A section on the methodological problems in attempting to measure the impact of each factor would be a good application link to methods.

9 Finally, although questions like these are clearly focused on DEA, they offer an opportunity to gain **Application marks** by making links to other areas. These include:

- Links to theory, especially to neo-liberal, functionalist, feminist and Marxist theories. You can make reference to concepts such as meritocracy (and myth of meritocracy), reproduction of social inequality, legitimization of class inequality, role of the state and patriarchy.
- Link to elements of the Item.
- AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, keep linking back to the question by using the key words in the question, especially the last element in these questions about 'most important' or 'main'.

## EXAMPLE QUESTION AND ANSWER WITH COMMENTARY

### Item A

The evidence is clear that there are substantial differences in educational achievement between different social groups in the UK. Given the emphasis in society on meritocracy, inequalities in achievement have been the cause of much social concern. Some sociologists have argued that the main cause of these differences is the result of school factors such as teacher labelling and streaming.

Others have disagreed, claiming instead that it is the result of factors in the home background of pupils or in wider society.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that differences in educational achievement between different social groups are primarily the result of school factors.**

### Deconstructing the question

The focus of question is on school factors. That's anything that goes on in school including labelling, institutional racism, streaming, A-C economy, pupil subcultures, pupil identities, curriculum, assessment, government policies etc.

However, the question states 'primarily', so along with the 'evaluate' command word, this is an invitation to assess the importance of these factors relative to alternative explanations, mainly external factors such as home background and wider societal influences. It is very important how you use these alternative explanations. DO NOT place them as a block of knowledge at the end (or anywhere else, for that matter) of your essay. This will be seen by an examiner as 'simple juxtaposition'.

The key is to apply these alternatives as you go along as evaluation of a school factor(s). It should not be done in some random manner either, but connected in some way to the initial school factor. There are examples of this in the specimen answer.

'Different groups' signals that you can use any of social class, ethnicity and gender in your answer. As there's not enough time to cover all of these, it is probably best to focus on social class and bring in others where appropriate e.g. when examining labelling based on class, refer to racialised teacher expectations as well.

There are methodological difficulties in measuring the comparative influence of school and external factors. This is difficult to measure as there are many different internal and external factors, and both sets are inter-linked.

Further application marks can come from making links to theories e.g. identifying labelling as an interactionist concepts and racialised teacher expectations as coming from critical race theory. There is also the opportunity to make links to policies, especially the role of marketisation in relation to educational triage and 'silt-shifting'.



## EXAMPLE ANSWER WITH EXAMINER ANNOTATION

Differentiates  
between  
different groups  
  
Identifies patterns

*'As Item A states, there are major inequalities in pupil achievement in the UK. The largest inequalities relate to social class, although there are also major differences in terms of ethnicity and gender too. There has been a gender gap favouring girls in many subjects and at most levels since the 1990s - although this is a reversal of the previous relationship. Some ethnic groups such as Indian and Chinese, also do far better than average whilst others, especially black British and Pakistani pupils, perform below the average.'*

METH APP

*Some sociologists have emphasised the role of school in producing these inequalities whilst others see home background and wider societal forces as being the primary influence. There is a major methodological issue here in that factors are so interlinked, that it is very difficult to measure their respective influence. One way to get some idea of the importance of each is to look at situations when elements in these factors change. For example, looking to see if there is a change in the achievement of different groups when the assessment system changes. Or if there is a new intervention in the home background such as Sure Start, it is relevant to measure the educational outcomes. It is also arguable that internal and external factors are not that distinct and are inter-linked.*

AN

TH APP

*Interactionists focus on the processes of social interaction, especially how meanings are negotiated between social actors. Applied to schools, their focus has revealed a lot about the way teacher-pupil interaction works out and how meanings are applied, particularly to pupils. The major interactionist concept of labelling has been applied to develop an explanation of how certain groups of pupils come to achieve less well than others. Studies such as Becker's show how teachers attach negative or positive labels to certain types of pupils on the basis of stereotypical assumptions about them. Becker found that the teacher's 'ideal pupil' has characteristics broadly matching middle-class pupils. Dunne and Grazeley noted that teachers normalized working-class underachievement and felt it is very difficult to overcome home background. As pupils then internalized these negative teacher expectations, they come to act in the way predicted by the teacher expectations and so a self-fulfilling prophecy is generated.*

AN

AN

ST APP

*Some evidence for this process comes from Rosenthal and Jacobsen's field experiment in which teachers were given expectations about individual pupils on a spurious but believable basis. They found that*

EVAL

positively labelled students showed greater improvement over time. However, this experiment was repeated over 300 further times and the result did not always support their initial findings. Labelling can also result in working-class and black pupils ending up in lower streams with reduced access to teaching resources and higher tier exams. These groups can also suffer through what Gillborn and Youdell term educational triage, as they are the 'walking wounded' of the examination system, left to underperform. However, this could be said to link to out of school factors in the form of education policies which have created an education market that pressurises schools into putting more effort into borderline exam candidates.

EVAL

AN

Labelling links to external home background factors as teacher stereotypes may relate to language, behaviour, quality of clothing, family home address etc all of which reflect home background factors. So what a pupil brings into their school life triggers stereotypical assumptions about different social groups.

AN

APP TO Q

Gillborn and Youdell identify 'educational triage' as a major factor in determining the outcomes for different groups. As with streaming, this process reflects teacher expectations and labels, and determines the amount of teacher time and resources given to different groups, depending on their likelihood of gaining good GCSE passes. With the introduction of league tables and open enrolment, GCSE performance is particularly important to schools and is a good illustration of the way an external factor, government policy, interacts with school factors in the form of teacher expectations.

ST APP

AN

A further school factor is the existence of anti-school pupil subcultures. Lacey claims that polarisation as the result of streaming leads to anti-school subcultures especially among working-class pupils. However, Sewell highlights the influence of home background in the formation of subcultures which may lead to educational under-achievement. The absence of a male parent's 'tough love' can lead black boys to find an alternative in gang culture. Reinforced by teacher racism, this can result in different subcultural groups in school including those that are anti-school but pro-education and those that rebel against the school. This is a good illustration of the way external and internal factors are entwined.

TH APP

The role of the curriculum and assessment has been highlighted by some sociologists as an influence on achievement. Critical race theorists argue that institutional racism, ingrained for example, in an

EVAL

*ethnocentric curriculum disadvantages black students in particular. History, literature, music often excludes minority ethnic group cultures. However, although this may affect some groups, others like Chinese and Indian pupils face the same curriculum disadvantage but nevertheless outperform all other groups. Similarly, the curriculum has been criticised as being male-focused and reflecting patriarchal values yet girls outperform boys.*

EVAL

*There may be more strength in arguments about assessment processes with Gillborn claiming that black students are under-represented in Gifted and Talented programmes and higher tier exam entries. This could reflect both individual teacher and institutional racism. The introduction of coursework assessment has also seemed to favour girls and their style of learning. The recent reduction in coursework and a new emphasis on final exams at A level may well reduce the gender gap and if it does, this may well be proof that assessment influences gender outcomes.*

EVAL

AN

*It is clear that differential educational achievement has existed for a very long time and is embedded in the education system. Despite the education system going through many changes since 1945 from the tri-partite, through comprehensivisation and now marketisation and academisation, the continued existence of these inequalities suggests that the primary factors may lie outside of the education system in wider society. Alternatively it may be that each successive system has been 'worked' to favour white, middle-class pupils in which case responsibility therefore lies with the education system. Furthermore, internal and external factors do not function in isolation from each other and are often closely inter-connected. Bourdieu's idea of 'habitus' illustrates this as working-class habitus and sense of identity – external factors - are devalued by the school and which practices symbolic violence against them.'*

EVAL

EVAL

EVAL

## **Commentary**

### **This is top mark band answer (25-30 out of 30)**

Let's examine it in terms of the skills needs at A level (see the definitions and examples of the skills in the introduction to this pack).

### **AO1 Knowledge**

There is a wide range of relevant knowledge of school factors affecting achievement. Studies, sociologists, concepts and theories are all identified and developed.

## **AO2 Application**

The whole essay maintains a strong focus on school factors – the thrust of the question. There is no added-on section listing non-school factors (instead they are then fed in paragraph by paragraph as evaluation).

There is application to theories, methods, studies and educational policies.

## **AO3 Analysis and Evaluation**

There is great deal of Analysis in the form of explaining and unpacking various arguments and studies.

Evaluation is sustained throughout using alternative explanations and counter-evidence.

There is a strong reasoned, justified and evaluative final paragraph.

## **ACTIVITIES**

1 Go through the essay and put a '**C**' by each concept, **TH** by each theory mention and **ST** for each study.

2 Take any of the examiner annotations for **AN**, **EVAL** or **APP**, and explain why these skills have been displayed. Alternatively, underline the key wording that displays those skills.

3 Take each of the example paragraphs below and explain why they are not very effective paragraphs for this essay, despite the knowledge being accurate.

### **Paragraph A**

*'Rosenthal and Jacobsen carried out a field experiment in which teachers were told that on the basis of a test they carried out, some pupils would improve at a faster rate than others. Thus teachers were given expectations about individual pupils on a random but believable basis. Coming back after several months, they found that positively labelled students – the 'spurters' - showed greater improvement over time. This supports the idea that teacher labelling can have a major impact on educational achievement.'*

### **Paragraph B**

*'Other sociologists have argued that home background factors are more important than what takes place in schools. Bernstein and others claim that speech codes vary between social classes. Middle-class families make greater use of elaborated speech which is better for expressing abstract ideas in a grammatically appropriate manner. Working-class pupils use the restricted code which is grammatically simple and uses a limited vocabulary. Such pupils are more likely to underachieve at school because their home language code does not help them in schools.'*

## QUICK DECODE

Each essay question on this issue will have its own particular focus – they will be slightly different to each other. It is important that your selection of material to use and the way you use it reflects these variations. Here is a quick decode of the other question you could get on this area of the education topic.

NB Units 2-4 deal with questions on the relationship between class, gender, ethnicity and educational achievement.

You could also go through the exemplar answer and select paragraphs that, with adjustment, could be used in answer to this question.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that home background factors are the main cause of differences in educational achievement.**

This is the reverse of the exemplar question and answer (above) so your answer must focus primarily on home background factors. You can refer to school factors but only as evaluation, feeding references in as you work through each home background factor.

It is similar to the exemplar question in that it is an open question that does not specify a particular social group. You can make reference to at least two, one of which should be social class.

You should refer to the methodological issues of defining and measuring achievement.

You should identify concepts within theories for example, placing cultural deprivation within a consensus perspective and cultural capital within a conflict view.

There are many different internal and external factors and both sets are inter-linked.

## **UNIT 2 SOCIAL CLASS AND DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT**

### **Typical essay questions**

- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that home background factors are the main cause of social class differences in educational achievement.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that poverty and material deprivation are the principal barriers to educational achievement.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that social class differences in educational achievement are primarily the result of school processes.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of social class inequalities in educational achievement.

### **Things to note about these questions**

1 Except for the very general 'sociological explanations of' question, an essay question will always say 'main', 'primary' or 'principal' which indicates the evaluation thrust of the question. It will also connect this word to another drawn from the list of 'cause', 'reason', 'barrier to' etc. So the question is inviting you to test the claim that either internal or external factors are the main cause of class differences in achievement.

2 As the question specifies social class differences/inequalities, that is your main focus. However, you can bring in gender and ethnicity based issues but only to explain how these can cut across class differences.

3 Many candidates will be tempted into a 'display my knowledge' answer listing and explaining a range of explanations and this can result in a knowledge-driven, 'catch-all' answer. Whichever of internal and external is specified in the question is the set of explanations that you should concentrate on.

4 What about the 'other side of the coin'? If the question is on internal then you can use external factors – but only as evaluation. Do not stick this in a chunk at the end of your essay but feed in knowledge of external factors as evaluation as you go through internal factors.

5 One thing that most candidates do not do is to identify the DEA pattern for social class. This is a good way to start your answer. It is also an opportunity to carry out some opening analysis or evaluation by commenting on how important or how fixed these patterns are.

6 This leads to another issue that is rarely addressed in answers. How do we know which of internal and external factors is most important? You can't create an experimental situation in which internal factors are removed from the equation. A section on the methodological problems involved in measuring the impact of each factor would be a good application link to methods.

7 Finally, although questions like these are clearly focused on DEA, they offer an opportunity to gain other **Application marks** by making links to other areas. These include:

- Links to theory, especially to neo-liberal, functionalist, feminist and Marxist theories. You can make reference to concepts such as meritocracy (and myth of meritocracy), reproduction of social inequality, legitimation of class inequality and the role of the state.
- Link to elements of the Item.
- Links to educational policies – have these increased or reduced class inequalities in achievement?
- AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, keep linking back to the question by using the key words in the question, especially the last element in these questions about 'most important', 'main' or 'primary'.



## EXAMPLE QUESTION AND ANSWER WITH COMMENTARY

### Item A

The evidence is clear that there are substantial inequalities in educational achievement in the UK based on social class. Given the emphasis in society on meritocracy, inequalities in achievement have been the cause of much concern. Some sociologists have argued that poverty and material deprivation are the main cause of working-class educational underachievement.

Others have disagreed, claiming that school processes have greater impact on the educational performance of different social classes.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that poverty and material deprivation are the principal barriers to educational achievement.**

### Deconstructing the question

- The focus of question is on external factors, specifically poverty and material deprivation. Some candidates would not fully deconstruct this, failing to see that this is not just about material issues in pupil home backgrounds but also about the cultural aspects of poverty. Both need to be covered. This includes cultural deprivation, language, parental education and parenting styles, cultural capital, housing, diet and health, the costs of education etc.
- However, the question states 'principal barriers to', so along with the 'evaluate' command word, this is an invitation to assess the importance of these factors relative to alternative explanations - internal, school-based factors. How you use these alternative explanations is very important. DO NOT place them as a block of knowledge at the end (or anywhere else, for that matter) of your essay. This will be seen by an examiner as 'simple juxtaposition'.
- The key is to apply these alternatives as you go along as evaluation of a poverty/material deprivation factor(s). It shouldn't be done in some random manner either, but connected in some way to the initial home factor. There are examples of this in the specimen answer.
- There are methodological difficulties in measuring the comparative influence of external and internal factors. There are many different internal and external factors and both sets are inter-linked.
- Further application marks can come from making links to theories e.g. identifying cultural deprivation as a consensus concept and cultural capital as coming from a conflict perspective. There is also the opportunity to make links to policies, for example, the role of compensatory education programmes such as Sure Start.



## EXAMPLE ANSWER WITH EXAMINER ANNOTATION

Identifies importance of issue  
Identifies patterns

*'There are major social class inequalities in pupil achievement in the UK. Although there are gender and ethnicity patterns too, the largest inequalities relate to social class. Regardless of how education has been structured, through tripartite, comprehensive and marketisation, substantial social class differences have persisted. The higher up the parental social class ladder you are, the greater the likelihood of achieving substantially better GCSE and A level results. Gender and ethnicity can also interact with social class so, for example, white working-class boys are least likely to go on to university courses.'*

METH APP  
AN

*Some sociologists focus on the role of poverty and material deprivation in producing class inequalities whilst others see school factors as being more important. There is a major methodological issue here in that these two sets of factors are so interlinked that it is very difficult to measure their respective influence. One way to get some idea of the importance of each is to look at situations when elements in these factors change, so for example, if there is an intervention in the home background such as Sure Start, it is relevant to measure the educational outcomes.*

AN

*Sociologists have recognised the influence on achievement not just of material deprivation in the form of diet, school costs and housing, but also of cultural aspects such as parental values, attitudes to education and language. Even these two aspects are inextricably linked as well, for example, in the way low income limits choices in purchasing types of food, book and so on.*

TH APP

*Some sociologists operating within a broadly consensus theoretical framework have claimed that pupils from poor backgrounds experience cultural deprivation. According to this approach, many working-class families fail to socialise their children appropriately, who as result, are deprived in terms of language, inconsistent discipline and how highly education is valued. Evidence in support of this comes from assessments of the capabilities of the abilities of children as they enter schooling, so before school factors have had a chance to have an influence. One study claimed that by age three, children from lower-income families may hear up to 30 million fewer words than their more privileged counterparts.*

ST APP

ST APP

*Language clearly plays a very important part in schooling. Bereiter and Engelmann argued that working-class language is deficient with communication being disjointed and limited in range. This is supported by Bernstein's work in which he developed the notions of restricted and*

ST APP

elaborated speech codes. He claims that working-class parents are more likely to use limited vocabulary and grammatically poor sentences whereas middle-class parents use speech that is more likely to help develop abstract thought. Furthermore, Hubbs-Tait argues that middle-class parents are more likely to use language in ways that help to develop evaluative thought processes among children. As a result, middle-class children find it much easier to succeed at school as teachers use language codes and patterns that they are familiar with from their home experiences. This approach, claiming linguistic deprivation among disadvantaged families, has been criticised for 'blaming the victim' and it can be argued that part of the school's role is to compensate for any linguistic differences.

EVAL

AN

Some cultural deprivation theorists have argued that working-class subculture contains values that do not help children to do well in school. Sugarmann claims that working-class culture is typified by fatalism, collectivism, immediate gratification and present-time orientation. Doing well in education requires a belief that you can achieve and a preparedness to work for long-term individual goals so these values inhibit educational success. There is some debate over whether anti-school subcultures in schools reflect external subcultures or whether they are generated by in-school processes such as labelling and streaming. Whichever is the original cause, they interface with each other.

EVAL

EVAL

Keddie and others have criticised cultural deprivation theories as victim-blaming arguing that these are cultural differences that schooling then ignores and negativises. It can also be argued that rather than a cause of working-class underachievement, values like fatalism are the result of an education system which discriminates against working-class pupils. In this sense it could be argued that it is the school that is being deficient rather than pupils' home background culture.

AN

There is certainly an argument that material disadvantage is closely linked to educational underachievement. For example, only a third of pupils on FSM achieve five good passes at GCSE compared to two-thirds of other pupils. Partly this can be attributed to poorer quality housing with overcrowding in cold or damp houses leading to loss of sleep, inadequate personal working space. Families housed in temporary accommodation also often move frequently which can disrupt schooling. Howard highlights the impact of poor nutrition on

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*health and others have pointed to increased rates of hyperactivity linked to poor diet.*

**POLICY APP**

*A further material factor is the cost of schooling. Poor quality dress can lead to bullying and some entitled pupils also refuse FSM because of the stigma attached to them. As a result of marketisation policies, many academies have strict uniform requirements, sometimes specifying a particular expensive quality of clothing. Families in poverty find these costs difficult to meet and this stops them from exercising parental choice of schools. Government austerity policies have reduced school budgets resulting in some of the costs of schooling, such as buying A level textbooks, being pushed onto parents. Fear of debt also influences whether someone applies to university or not. With changes in government policy allowing tuition fees up to £9000 a year and the phasing out of maintenance grants, students find themselves facing debts of £50,000 or more. This puts off some pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds from even applying to university, thus limiting their educational opportunities.*

**POLICY APP**

**AN**

**POLICY APP**

*One way in which home background factors can link to other factors is through compensatory education introduced by some governments. For example, Labour brought in Sure Start which integrated education, family support and health services for disadvantaged families. However, since 2010, the number of such centres has steadily fallen as government priorities moved elsewhere.*

**TH APP**

*From a broadly conflict perspective, Bourdieu's ideas of cultural, economic and educational capital help to explain how family background and school factors interact. He argues that middle-class families possess more of each type of capital which gives their children a substantial advantage in school. The school plays an important role in devaluing working-class habitus, making disadvantaged children experience symbolic violence against their home background.*

**AN**

**AN**

**EVAL**

*It is clear that class differences in educational achievement are embedded in the education system. However, it is also clear from successive studies that pupils starting school do not start from the same baseline in that children from poor families are less developed than those from middle-class backgrounds. Although this is a strong indicator of the importance of family influences, it is also fair to say that this disadvantage does not exist in isolation from other influences. The lack of compensatory education programmes, the effects of marketisation policies on educational opportunities and the way in which schools operate with negative stereotypes of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds all interact with family factors.'*

## Commentary

### This is top mark band answer (25-30 out of 30)

Let's examine it in terms of the skills needs at A level (see the definitions and examples of the skills in the introduction to this pack).

#### AO1 Knowledge

There is a wide range of relevant knowledge of poverty/material deprivation factors affecting achievement. Studies, sociologists, concepts and theories are all identified and developed.

#### AO2 Application

The whole essay maintains a strong focus on poverty/material deprivation – the thrust of the question. There is no extraneous section listing non-school factors (this knowledge if fed in where appropriate as evaluation).

There is application to theories, methods, studies and educational policies.

#### AO3 Analysis and Evaluation

There is great deal of Analysis in the form of explaining and unpacking various arguments and studies.

Evaluation is sustained throughout using alternative explanations and counter-evidence.

There is a strong reasoned, justified and evaluative final paragraph.

## ACTIVITIES

1 Go through the essay and put a '**C**' by each concept, **TH** by each theory mention and **ST** for each study.

2 Take any of the examiner annotations for **AN**, **EVAL** or **APP**, and explain why these skills have been displayed. Alternatively, underline the key wording that displays those skills.

3 Take each of the example paragraphs below and explain why they are not very effective paragraphs for this essay, despite the knowledge being accurate. Why would an examiner not reward the apparent evaluation in Paragraph A?

### Paragraph A

*'Rosenthal and Jacobsen carried out a field experiment in which teachers were told that on the basis of a test they carried out, some pupils would improve at a faster rate than others. The results supported the idea that teacher labelling can have a major impact on educational achievement. However, their experiment was on a very small-scale and the results cannot be generalised. Furthermore, their experiment has been repeated hundreds of times with wildly varying results.'*

## Paragraph B

*'Bernstein and others claim that speech codes vary between social classes. Middle-class families make greater use of elaborated speech which is better for expressing abstract ideas in a grammatically appropriate manner. Working-class pupils use the restricted code which is grammatically simple and uses a limited vocabulary. Such pupils are more likely to underachieve at school as a result.'*

## QUICK DECODES

Each essay question on this issue will have its own particular focus – they will be slightly different to each other. It is important that your selection of material to use and the way you use it reflects these variations. Here are quick decodes of other questions on this area of the education topic.

You could also go through the exemplar answer and select paragraphs that could be used in answer to this question (sometimes with a little adjustment).

### **Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that social class differences in educational achievement are primarily the result of school processes.**

The focus of this question is on school processes, so it is more or less the inverse of the exemplar essay. In this case you should concentrate on internal, school processes such as labelling, streaming, educational triage, pupil subcultures etc.

Avoid the trap many fall into of doing this then towards the end, listing home factors. All an examiner will do is to see this as 'simple juxtaposition'. You need to feed in elements of home background factors as evaluation as you work through each school factor.

You can make passing reference as well to gender and ethnic differences but keep the focus clearly on social class inequalities.

### **Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of social class inequalities in educational achievement.**

This is an open-ended question in that it does not specify either home or school factors. So you need to cover both. As there is potentially a great deal of usable material the danger here is that of producing a long list (or two lists, one of home, the other of school) of factors thus producing a list-like, knowledge-driven answer.

One result is that you should be prepared to be fairly summaristic in the way you explain factors. You could bring in some aspects of home factors as you work through school causes – and vice versa.

You should explain that this division into home and background factors can be rather artificial as some, such as language, are connected.

## **UNIT 3 ETHNICITY AND DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT**

### **Typical essay questions**

- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that home background factors are the main cause of ethnic differences in educational achievement.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that differences in the educational achievement of different ethnic groups are primarily the result of school processes.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of ethnic inequalities in educational achievement.

### **Things to note about these questions**

1 Except for the very general 'sociological explanations of' question, an essay question will always say 'main', 'primary' or 'principal' which indicates the evaluation thrust of the question. It will also connect this word to another drawn from the list of 'cause', 'reason', 'barrier to' etc. So the question is inviting you to test the claim that either internal or external factors are the main cause of ethnic differences in achievement.

2 As the question specifies ethnic differences/inequalities so that is your main focus. However, you can bring in class and gender concerns, but only to express how these can cut across class differences. Be very careful not to turn your answer into a 'class proxy' response.

3 Many candidates will be tempted into a 'display my knowledge' answer listing and explaining a range of explanations and this can result in a knowledge-listed, 'catch-all' answer. Whichever of internal and external is specified in the question is the set of explanations that you should concentrate on.

4 What about the 'other side of the coin'? If the question is on internal then you can use external factors – but only as evaluation. Do not stick this in a chunk at the end of your essay, but feed in knowledge of external factors as evaluation as you go through internal factors.

5. Remember what 'ethnicity' means; shared common language, heritage, customs etc - so we all have an ethnicity. One thing that many candidates do not do is to identify the DEA pattern for ethnicity This is a good way to start your answer. It is



also an opportunity to carry out some opening analysis or evaluation by identifying the differences in achievement for different ethnic groups.

6 This also opens up the opportunity to identify the problematic nature of defining and measuring ethnicity and achievement. A section on these methodological problems would be a good application link to methods.

7 Finally, although questions like these are clearly focused on DEA, they offer an opportunity to gain other **Application** marks by making links to other areas. These include:

- Links to theory, especially to neo-liberal, functionalist, feminist and Marxist theories. You can make reference to concepts such as meritocracy (and myth of meritocracy), reproduction and legitimation of ethnic inequality.
- Link to elements of the Item.
- Links to educational policies – have policies increased or reduced ethnic inequalities in achievement?
- AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, keep linking back to the question by using the key words in the question, especially the last element in these questions about 'most important', 'main' or 'primary'.

## EXAMPLE QUESTION AND ANSWER WITH COMMENTARY

### Item A

The evidence is clear that there are substantial differences in educational achievement between different ethnic groups in the UK. Some minority ethnic groups, such as Chinese and Indian pupils, achieve above average exam results, whilst others underperform. Some sociologists have argued that the main cause of these differences is the result of school processes such as teacher labelling and streaming.

Others have disagreed, claiming that it is the result of factors in the home background of pupils or in wider society.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that differences in the educational achievement of different ethnic groups are primarily the result of school processes.**

### Deconstructing the question

- The focus of question is on internal school factors. These include labelling, teacher racism, racialised teacher expectations, pupil identities, pupil subcultures, ethnocentric curriculum, assessment etc.
- However, the question states 'primarily, so along with the 'evaluate' command word, this is an invitation to assess the importance of these factors relative to alternative explanations, mainly external, home background and societal factors. It is very important how you use these alternative explanations. DO NOT place them as a block of knowledge at the end (or anywhere else, for that matter) of your essay. This will be seen by an examiner as 'simple juxtaposition'.
- The key is to apply these alternatives as you go along as evaluation of a school factor(s). It shouldn't be done in some random manner either, but connected in some way to the initial internal factor. There are examples of this in the specimen answer.
- There are methodological difficulties in defining and measuring the comparative influence of external and internal factors. There are many different internal and external factors and both sets of factors are inter-linked. For example, marketisation is an external policy but directly connects to school processes.
- You need to identify the different patterns of achievement by ethnic group.
- Make links to theories e.g. identifying cultural deprivation as a consensus concept and racialised teacher expectations as coming from a conflict perspective. There is also the opportunity to make links to policies, such as the role of compensatory education programmes.



## EXAMPLE ANSWER WITH EXAMINER ANNOTATION

Identifies variations  
in achievement

Identifies problems  
of definition and  
measurement

METHOD APP

*“There are substantial inequalities in pupil achievement based on ethnicity but these vary between groups. Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Gypsy-Roma pupils achieve below average results, whilst as Item A states, pupils of Chinese and Indian heritage achieve above average results. White pupils will always tend to appear in the middle of the achievement range simply because they constitute easily the numerically largest group. There are more difficulties in defining and measuring the educational achievement of ethnic groups than for measuring class and gender variations. Classifying pupils by ethnicity is very complex involving aspects of religion, heritage, skin colour, language and so on. So for example, the term ‘Asian’ is unhelpful as it covers a wide range of sub-groups within it. Changing categorisations also makes it difficult to undertake comparisons over time.*

TH APP

APP

AN

*Some sociologists have explained ethnic differences as the product of schooling. Critical race theory, a conflict perspective, sees racism as not just a feature of individuals but embedded and inevitable in institutions including schools. Roithmayr argues that this is so pronounced, that acting in a racist manner does not require any conscious thought on the part of individuals, it just happens. Sociologists going back to Coard in the 1970s have indicated concerns that the curriculum is ethnocentric. This is particularly pronounced in subjects like languages and history, but also appears in maths and the sciences in the way these are presented as being primarily the result of Western knowledge. The National Curriculum also reinforces this lack of diversity. As a result, non-white students do not see what they are learning as part of their culture and this inhibits their involvement in learning.*

EVAL

EVAL

*However, although an ethnocentric curriculum applies to all minority ethnic groups, some, such as Chinese and Indian pupils, achieve higher results than white pupils. This seems to imply that the curriculum is not a particularly strong explanation of ethnic differences. So the explanation may lie elsewhere in school or in aspects of the home background such as family structure and the extent to which education is valued. Certainly Lupton has argued that the adult authority model operating in Asian families and a strong work ethic, matches that of school processes.*

ST APP

Gillborn and others have also highlighted other aspects of school structure such as assessment procedures. Sanders and Horn found that where teacher assessment had more weight than exams, black pupils did less well than white pupils. Tikly also found that this group was also disproportionately more likely to be entered for lower tier exams, thus limiting their outcomes. The evidence across the curriculum and assessment seems to suggest, as Gillborn claims, that racism is a defining characteristic of the education system. The result is the underachievement of some minority ethnic groups.

EVAL

AN

Marketisation and privatisation policies pursued since the 1980s have also impacted on the educational experience of some minority ethnic groups. Some groups lack the cultural and economic capital to make best use of parental choice of schools. There is a link to social class here in that those minority ethnic groups in lower paid occupations are less likely to establish free schools or to have the material wealth to afford house moves nearer to high-achieving schools. Thus educational policies link both school and home influences in that they influence differential parental access to education.

APP

APP TO Q

EVAL

Policies aimed at reducing ethnic inequalities have taken a range of forms including assimilation and multiculturalism. More recently there have been policies aimed to improve social inclusion such as EAL programmes and Saturday schools. Mirza however, claims that these have limited impact and do not make up for the other issues, both in the home and in school, that some minority ethnic pupils face.

TH APP

AN

EVAL

Many sociologists have applied the interactionist concepts of labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy and the ideal pupil to explain why some minority ethnic groups underachieve. Gillborn and Youdell argue that teachers have racialised expectations so for example, they anticipate that black pupils will have disciplinary issues and see them as a threat. In response these pupils react negatively to being labelled and thus reinforce teacher's perceptions. One consequence is the higher rate of school exclusions for black pupils, particularly boys. Archer argues that whatever the perceived stereotypical characteristics are for different minority ethnic groups, they result in being pathologised. Even successful Chinese pupils are typified as being educational automatons; hard-working but perceived as too passive and in the case of boys, not masculine enough.

AN

One way in which pupils may react to racialised teacher expectations is by the formation of subcultures. Although some of these may be

ST APP

positive responses as Fuller and Mac an Ghail identified, some are characterised by anti-school values and behaviour. Sewell identified a range of subcultural responses by Black Caribbean boys following a similar pattern to that claimed by earlier sociologists such as A K Cohen with regard to working-class boys. Although Sewell argued that only a minority respond by joining anti-school subcultures, these 'black, macho lads' form the stereotype of all black boys in the minds of teachers. This connects to family background through the lack of a strong fatherly nurturing which makes boys vulnerable to the perverse loyalty and love found in street gangs. This home background factor interfaces with negative labelling by teachers in schools and with racism found in wider society.

AN

APP TO Q

Although a lot of attention is paid to the underachievement of black and Pakistani pupils, the performance of the white working-class in England's schools is abject. While the performance of ethnic minorities in schools has improved markedly in the last decade, attainment by the white working-class has remained dire. For example, eighty-three per cent of Chinese pupils on free school meals achieve five Cs or above in their GCSEs, yet just 35 per cent of white students on FSMs in England do – comfortably the lowest of any ethnic group. The Sutton Trust has claimed that this is the most systematic failure in schools today. Certainly some sociologists have pointed to the relationship between social class, ethnicity and achievement. Those minority ethnic groups more likely to be in low-paid or casual employment – Pakistani and Black Caribbean – are also most likely to underachieve in school. However, Bangladeshis, also mainly working class, achieve slightly better results than the average, suggesting this relationship is not so clear-cut.

AN

EVAL

AN

EVAL

Some likely factors affecting ethnic patterns in achievement encompass school and home background as well as wider society. Thus for example, when explaining the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils, there is a link between family structure, gang culture and pupil subcultural responses to racialised teacher expectations – it is all part of one story. Institutional racism in schools is likely to reflect similar structures elsewhere in society and teacher perceptions of different ethnicities is similarly going to reflect broader social attitudes. Given the diversity of ethnicities, there is a need to examine the impact of different factors on different ethnic groups. It unlikely the same factors will affect all ethnic groups in a similar fashion.'

## Commentary

### This is top mark band answer (25-30 out of 30)

Let's examine it in terms of the skills needs at A level (see the definitions and examples of the skills in the introduction to this pack).

### AO1 Knowledge

There is a wide range of relevant knowledge of school processes affecting achievement. Studies, sociologists, concepts and theories are all identified and developed.

### AO2 Application

The whole essay maintains a strong focus on school factors – the thrust of the question. There is no extraneous section listing non-school factors (though these are fed in where appropriate as evaluation).

There is application to theories, methods, studies and educational policies.

### AO3 Analysis and Evaluation

There is great deal of Analysis in the form of explaining and unpacking various arguments and studies.

Evaluation is sustained throughout using alternative explanations and counter-evidence.

There is a strong reasoned, justified and evaluative final paragraph.

## ACTIVITIES

1 Go through the essay and put a '**C**' by each concept, **TH** by each theory mention and **ST** for each study.

2 Take any of the examiner annotations for **AN**, **EV** or **APP**, and explain why these skills have been displayed. Alternatively, underline the key wording that displays those skills.

3 Take the example paragraph below and explain why it is not a very effective paragraph for this essay, despite the knowledge being accurate.

### Paragraph A

*'Some sociologists however, have argued that material deprivation plays a more important role in determining ethnic patterns of achievement. Some ethnic minorities have a higher rate of unemployment and are more likely to be found in low-paid work. They often face racial discrimination in employment and housing. As a result they experience material deprivation, being unable to move to a better catchment area or to afford computers and other learning resources. As a result, children in these households are educationally disadvantaged.'*

## **QUICK DECODES**

Each essay question on this issue will have its own particular focus – they will be slightly different to each other. It is important that your selection of material to use and the way you use it reflects these variations. Here are quick decodes of other questions on this area of the education topic.

You could also go through the exemplar answer and select paragraphs that could be used in answer to this question (sometimes with a little adjustment).

### **Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that home background factors are the main cause of ethnic differences in educational achievement.**

This is the inverse of the exemplar question/answer. The focus has to be on home background factors such as language, family structure, family attitudes and values, street culture and material deprivation.

Avoid the very common mistake of presenting this material then following on with a (probably summarised) account of school factors. This looks like (and is) indiscriminate use of knowledge and the examiner will see it as ‘simple juxtaposition’. Feed in knowledge of school processes as evaluation as you go through home background factors. You should also show that you know that home and school factors are not as separate as they are often presented.

### **Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of ethnic inequalities in educational achievement.**

This is the more open-ended question which does not specify either home or school factors. After identifying ethnic patterns in achievement (re-use the opening paragraph of the exemplar essay), you should identify home and school factors. Rather than then presenting two lists, one for each set of factors, try to feed one in as you work through the first.

You should also show that this is a bit of an artificial division and some school and home factors are linked, for example, language spans both, as does poverty.

## **UNIT 4 GENDER AND DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT**

### **Typical essay questions**

- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that school factors are the main cause of gender differences in educational achievement.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that gender differences in educational achievement are primarily the result of factors outside the school.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of gender differences in educational achievement.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of boys' underachievement.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations why girls outperform boys in educational achievement.

NB There is another possible essay drawing on this aspect of education which links achievement with the experience of school. This is dealt with in the Unit on Pupil Identity.

### **Things to note about these questions**

1 There are four possible elements in these questions. School explanations, home background explanations (or taken together as 'sociological explanations'), boys' underachievement and girls outperforming boys (and the last two taken together as 'gender differences'). You need to watch for which permutation of these elements appears in a question.

2 A question can ask specifically about boys' underachievement in which case it is that aspect of gender and achievement you need to focus on. Similarly, a question can ask about girls' better performance, so that aspect of gender is the focus of an answer. Or a question could state 'gender differences/inequalities' in which case both sides of the issue need addressing.

3 The question will have a focus on how gender and achievement patterns are caused. This could be the very general 'sociological explanations of' question, in which case you have to cover both school and home background factors. Other essay questions will focus on either home or school causes. These questions will



always say 'main', 'primary' or 'principal' which indicates the evaluation thrust of the question. So the question is inviting you to test the claim that either internal or external factors are the main cause of gender differences in achievement.

4 What about the 'other side of the coin'? If the question is on internal then you can use external factors – but only as evaluation. Do not stick this in a chunk at the end of your essay but feed in knowledge of external factors as evaluation as you go through internal factors.

5 Many candidates will be tempted into a 'display my knowledge' answer listing and explaining a range of explanations and this can result in a knowledge-driven, 'catch-all' answer. Whichever of internal and external is specified in the question and whatever aspect of gender is specified is the set of explanations that you should concentrate on.

5 As the question specifies gender differences/inequalities, gender is your main focus. However, you can bring in class and ethnicity based issues but only to express how these can cut across class differences.

6 One thing that most candidates do not do is to identify the DEA pattern for gender. This is a good way to start your answer. It is also an opportunity to carry out some opening analysis or evaluation by commenting on how important or how fixed these patterns are.

7 This leads to another issue that is rarely addressed in answers. How do we know which of internal and external factors is most important? You cannot create an experimental situation in which internal or external factors are removed from the equation. A section on the methodological problems in attempting to measure the impact of each factor would be a good application link to methods.

8 Finally, although questions like these are clearly focused on DEA, they offer an opportunity to gain other **Application marks** by making links to other areas. These include:

- Links to theory, especially to feminist, neo-liberal, functionalist, and Marxist theories. You can make reference to concepts such as patriarchy, meritocracy (and myth of meritocracy), reproduction of social inequality, legitimation of inequality and the role of the state.
- Link to elements of the Item.
- Links to educational policies – have these increased or reduced gender inequalities in achievement?
- AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, keep linking back to the question by using the key words in the question, especially the last element in these questions about 'most important', 'main' or 'primary'.

## EXAMPLE QUESTION AND ANSWER WITH COMMENTARY

### Item A

The evidence is clear that there are substantial differences in the educational performance of girls and boys in the UK. Given the emphasis in society on meritocracy, gender inequalities in achievement are the cause of much social concern. Some sociologists have argued that the main cause of these differences is the result of school processes such as the feminisation of education and changes to the way work is assessed.

Others have disagreed, claiming that it is primarily the result of changes in wider society.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations why girls outperform boys in educational achievement.**

### Deconstructing the question

- The focus of question is on girls outperforming boys educationally. It does not specify either of internal or external factors so it is up to you to explain this distinction.
- What should you do regarding boys' underachievement? As results for both girls and boys have been rising during the last 20 or so years, it is legitimate to present a section explaining why boys have not improved at the same pace as girls. The question is 'girls outperforming boys' so it is not simply why girls have improved educationally but why there has been a growing gender gap in favour of girls and part of the answer is that boys have failed to keep up with them.
- It is important to indicate that you know what has been happening in terms of gender and achievement over the past thirty or so years. Identifying the patterns is good place to start.
- There are methodological difficulties in measuring the comparative influence of different external and internal factors. There are many different internal and external factors and both sets are inter-linked, making it difficult to measure their individual impact. Pointing this out can bring application marks as you are linking the issue with methods.
- Application marks can come from making links to theories e.g. suggesting that girls' improvement suggests that liberal feminist claims of a gradual change in favour of women has been taking place. There is also the opportunity to make links to policies, such as the role of compensatory education programmes such as WISE and GIST.
- You can also make reference to the influence of social class and ethnicity both of which cut across gender and achievement, fragmenting the relationship.



## EXAMPLE ANSWER WITH EXAMINER ANNOTATION

Identifies patterns

AN

*'There are major gender inequalities in pupil achievement in the UK. Although the largest inequalities relate to social class, gender is also a major factor influencing achievement. In 2016 the overall gender gap was the largest for 15 years – a 9% gap in terms of achieving 5 for more A\*-C grades. The picture does vary subject to subject, with a gap favouring girls of over 10% in subjects such as English, MFL and Art and Design. However, when it comes to computing and the sciences, the gap is fairly minimal. At A level, girls have outperformed boys until 2017 when for the first time since 2000, boys gained slightly more top grades than girls. So the pattern is not as fixed as it seems to be for social class, but nonetheless in many subjects at GCSE, girls fairly consistently outperform boys.*

Deconstructs the question

AN

*There are two sides to the issue identified in Item A that girls outperform boys. Achievement has improved for both girls and boys, so the question is, why has it risen faster for one group than for the other? The explanations may lie not just in what has affected girls' performance but also what influences there have been on boys' achievement. We also need to examine why the pattern is not the same across all subjects or at all educational levels.*

EVAL

*Some sociologists have focused on the role of factors within the education system in creating a situation whereby girls' performance has risen including such influences as school equal opportunities policies, challenging curriculum stereotypes and the effect of coursework assessment. Others have focused more on factors outside of schools such as changes in the employment structure, changing ambitions and early socialisation in the family. However, these factors do not operate completely separately; for example, government marketisation policy comes from external political structures but impacts on pupils.*

METH APP

*There are methodological difficulties in measuring the comparative influence of different external and internal factors. These are so interlinked that it is very difficult to measure their respective influence. One way to get some idea of the importance of each is to look at situations when elements in these factors change, so for example, if there is alteration in achievement following changes to assessment at GCSE and A level.*

AN

*Schools do not exist in a social vacuum and educational achievement is strongly influenced by wider social changes. There have been substantial changes to the structure of employment during the past 40 years affecting both men and women but in different ways. The growth*

**POLICY APP**

*of the service sector has opened up opportunities for women whilst the decline in manufacturing as a result of globalisation has had the opposite effect on men's work prospects, especially for working-class men. Some have argued that along with legal changes outlawing sex discrimination and unequal pay, the effect has been to increase girls' work ambitions. Sharpe's comparison of girls' ambitions in the 1970s and 1990s indicates major changes in attitudes to work. The consequence of this, it is argued, has been to increase educational motivation as girls can see greater employment opportunities to work towards. The opposite has happened to boys with the reduction in traditional work opportunities. However, this argument can be criticised as academic qualifications were not required in the past for such work, so there was also little academic motivation previously.*

**AN**

**EVAL**

**AN**

*Girls' changing ambitions may also be related to the role played by feminism. In a broad sense, feminist ideas may have raised girls' aspirations beyond motherhood and the home. General social attitudes have changed and although still not equal, there is greater equality between the sexes than previously. Feminism has also impacted specifically on schools especially in the creation of equal opportunities policies. The idea that girls and boys are entitled to the same opportunities is embedded in modern education. Policies such as GIST have focused on specific gender issues, but it is probably the broader equal entitlement that has the most fundamental impact, showing a link between broader social attitudes and school factors.*

**EVAL**

**ST APP**

*Other external factors may include early socialisation, especially the role the family plays in developing literacy. Department of Education research suggests that the gender gap is mainly the result of boy's poorer literacy skills. Reading is defined as a feminine activity as it is mainly mothers who read to their children and boys are read to less. There may be some truth in this argument as the gender gap is greatest in mainly literacy-based subjects such as English and Social Science. It has also been suggested that boys are more sport-orientated at home so less study focused. However, girls also outperform boys in dance and PE, suggesting that the relationship is not clear-cut.*

**EVAL**

**EVAL**

*Some sociologists have looked within school processes for explanations of girls outperforming boys. These has been a concern about the growth of laddish subcultures, anti-school subcultures that hold some boys back from achieving similar results to girls. Epstein found that homophobic abuse is often directed at boys, especially working-class boys, who work hard at school whilst Francis argues*

ST APP

*that boys are more concerned than girls are about how their peer group views them. The result is sometimes behaviour that reinforces a traditional masculine identity involving anti-school attitudes which then limits boy's achievement.*

ST APP

*Sewell and others, argue that there has been a feminisation of education in which schools do not value masculine traits as much as those associated with girls. Furthermore, there is a lack of male role models in education with only 14% of primary school teachers being male. The concern is also that school discipline suffers, however Read's research shows that female teachers were as likely as male teachers to take a 'disciplinarian discourse' in the classroom. The other side of the role models argument is that girls now have more role models in schools with far more female headteachers and college leaders, thus raising their aspirations.*

EVAL

AN

ST APP

*Some sociologists also argue that the introduction of coursework favours girls as it fits their mode of learning better than exam assessment. Gorard points to the way a consistent GCSE gender gap suddenly altered with the introduction of coursework in 1989. The slight lead boys have in top grades following the change to end-assessment at A level in 2017, also seems to be evidence for this. However, Paetcher argues that when you look at the reformed A levels - the only ones to have changed to end assessment – girls actually did better than boys. So the evidence on coursework does not point clearly one way or the other.*

EVAL

APP

*Social class also affects the relationship between gender and achievement. Both Evans and Archer have pointed out that working-class girls, even those who do well in exams, are more limited in terms of university entry because their working-class habitus means they prefer to stay local and retain community links.*

POLICY APP

EVAL

*Some feminists have argued that there is a moral panic about 'failing boys'. Ringrose claims that policy now focuses almost entirely on this issue and ignores those girls who underachieve and class and ethnicity variations in achievement. Others have argued that just focusing on achievement also fails to deal with the way that, despite achieving generally better results than boys, girls' experience of education is often worse in the way schools reinforce gender hegemony through behaviour like the male gaze. Finally, if girls are outperforming boys - and this is far from being evident – this does not necessarily result in higher pay and better employment prospects.'*

## Commentary

### This is top mark band answer (25-30 out of 30)

Let us examine it in terms of the skills needed at A level (see the definitions and examples of the skills in the introduction).

#### AO1 Knowledge

There is a wide range of relevant knowledge of factors influencing gender and achievement. Studies, sociologists, concepts and theories are all identified and developed. There are also no overly descriptive accounts of studies – a common weakness.

#### AO2 Application

The whole essay maintains a strong focus on girls outperforming boys. The opening paragraphs deconstruct the issue clearly. There is no section going off the point about non-school factors (which are then worked in as evaluation). There is explicit application to theories, methods, studies and educational policies.

#### AO3 Analysis and Evaluation

There is great deal of Analysis in the form of explaining and unpacking various arguments and issues. Evaluation is sustained throughout using alternative explanations and counter-evidence.

There is a strong reasoned, justified and evaluative final paragraph.

## ACTIVITIES

1 Go through the essay and put a '**C**' by each concept, **TH** by each theory mention and **ST** for each study.

2 Take any of the examiner annotations for **AN**, **EVAL** or **APP**, and explain why these skills have been displayed. Alternatively, underline the key wording that displays those skills.

3 Take the example paragraph below and explain why it is not a very effective paragraph for this essay, despite the knowledge being accurate.

#### Paragraph A

*'Some sociologists have pointed to changes in the law as a factor in explaining girls' achievement. The 1970 Equal Pay Act made it illegal to pay men and women at different levels whereas this was legal. Following this came the 1975 Equal Pay Act which made discrimination at work illegal in areas such as promotions and appointments, illegal. Some liberal feminists argue that this has led to women breaking through the 'glass ceiling' and to girls improving their exam results.'*

## QUICK DECODES

Each essay question on this issue will have its own particular focus – they will be slightly different to each other. It is important that your selection of material to use and the way you use it reflects these variations. Here are quick decodes of other questions on this area of the education topic.

You could also go through the exemplar answer and select paragraphs that could be used in answer to this question (sometimes with a little adjustment).

### **Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that school factors are the main cause of gender differences in educational achievement.**

‘Gender differences’ means that you can refer to both male and female achievement. You can use most of the content of the first two paragraphs in the exemplar essay to set out the patterns.

This question focuses on school factors so your essay should focus primarily on internal factors such as teacher labelling, feminisation of education, assessment processes and challenging stereotypes.

Avoid the very common mistake of then putting a summary of non-school factors towards the end of the essay, as this will be seen by examiners as ‘simple juxtaposition’. However, you can apply this material in an evaluative manner to school factors as you work through each one.

### **Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that gender differences in educational achievement are primarily the result of factors outside the school.**

‘Gender differences’ means that you can refer to both male and female achievement. You can use most of the content of the first two paragraphs in the exemplar essay to set out the patterns.

This question focuses on factors outside the school so your essay should focus primarily on external factors such as gender socialisation, feminism, changing ambitions and changes to the employment structure.

Avoid the very common mistake is then putting a summary of non-school factors towards the end of the essay as this will be seen by examiners as ‘simple juxtaposition’. However, you can apply this material in an evaluative manner to external factors as you work through each one.

### **Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of boys’ underachievement.**

The focus of this question is squarely on boys’ underachievement so your answer should only include material on girls’ achievement as evaluation or as analysis in relation to boys’ performance.

You could organise your answer in terms of internal and external factors.

## UNIT 5 PUPIL IDENTITIES

### Typical essay questions

- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that although girls outperform boys in terms of achievement, their experience of school is largely negative.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the way pupil identity can affect educational achievement.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the ways in which schools can influence gender identities.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of how schools reinforce social class-based identities.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of how far schools reinforce the identities of different groups of pupils.

### Things to note about these questions

1 This is a new area of Education included the AQA specification so there are no previous questions to base judgements on. However, a question is likely to focus on some aspect of the ways schools may influence class, gender and ethnic identities and/or link this to achievement.

2 Some questions will focus on explanations of the way identity is reinforced by schools. The focus could be either (or both) of social class or gender. There is probably less material for ethnicity although some conventional material on achievement could be adapted.

3 Alternatively, a question could be like the final one above. If the question is as general as this, then you can make reference to all of class, gender and ethnicity as well as relating identity to achievement.

4 Many candidates are likely to misinterpret questions on pupil identity and present a lot of material on differential educational achievement. The questions above (with the exception of the first one) are focused on identity so that has to be the main concern in an answer. Achievement can be included but only where it is clearly relevant for example, as affected by pupil identities.



5 Remember what 'identity' means; it is one's self concept, including the perceptions a person has about their abilities, flaws, status, and value. Sociologists study how self-identity develops, especially in relation to social factors.

6 This also opens up the opportunity to identify the problematic nature of defining and measuring identity. A section on these methodological problems would be a good application link to methods.

7 Finally, although questions like these are clearly focused on DEA, they offer an opportunity to gain other **Application** marks by making links to other areas. These include:

- Links to theory, especially to consensus, feminist and Marxist theories. You can make reference to concepts such as habitus, reproduction and legitimation of social inequality, labelling and subcultures .
- Link to elements of the Item.
- Links to educational policies – have these had any effect on pupil identities?
- AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, keep linking back to the question by using the key words in the question.

## EXAMPLE QUESTION AND ANSWER WITH COMMENTARY

### Item A

Sociologists are interested in the way school processes attempt to shape a pupil's identity and how this interacts with the identity they have from their home background. Some sociologists have argued that this interaction produces a tension between what the school expects and the demands of the pupil's cultural background. The outcomes are sometimes problematic for the pupil and for the school.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of how schools influence the identities of different groups of pupils.**

### Deconstructing the question

- The focus of question is pupil identities so it is important not to fall into presenting a 'differential achievement answer'. You can make passing references to the role of pupil identity in relation to achievement but keep the focus squarely on pupil identities.
- The question specifies different groups of pupils so you should cover social class, gender and ethnicity. Remember that the way the school may have an influence may vary between these groups.
- With a question like this there is going to be a lot of opportunity to offer analysis in the form of explaining how concepts such as habitus operate.
- Evaluation is going to be more difficult with this question. It can be brought in through comparing consensus and conflict approaches, challenging the impact of policies or questioning whether education creates a subcultural reaction or whether this subculture is already in existence outside the school.
- Application marks can come from making links to theories e.g. identifying habitus as a conflict concept and labelling as coming from an interactionist perspective. There is also the opportunity to make links to policies, such as the impact of compensatory education programmes, and to apply a range of sociological studies.



## EXAMPLE ANSWER WITH EXAMINER ANNOTATION

Sets up debate

*‘Sociological research has examined the relationship between school and pupil identities. Consensus approaches tend to see identity as something that is largely constructed by social institutions, including the school. On the other hand, conflict approaches see pupil identities as not necessarily confirming to the values of the school and instead reflecting class, gender and ethnic backgrounds.*

TH APP

*Functionalists see the school as having a very important role in the creation of pupil identity. Parsons views the school as a focal socialising agency which acts as a bridge between family and wider society. Within the family an individual child is judged by particularistic standards but in wider society, individuals meet universalistic standards. Children need to know how to adapt and move from one to the other in order to know how to act in society, as what may be acceptable in one’s family, may not be in society. So school is a vital part of this secondary socialisation process by which a person’s identity is moulded in such a way that they can accept society’s ways of doing things. Wrong however, considers this to be an over-socialised view in which people are easily moulded. It fails to acknowledge the way individuals and subcultures can create their own identity which may be at odds with that favoured by society.*

AN

EVAL

TH APP

*Sociologists working within a broadly conflict perspective have used Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to help to understand the way in which pupil identities may come into conflict with the values of the school. From this perspective, the school may attempt to set out a set of values and norms as functionalism suggests, but this does not necessarily mean that all students accept them. As Item A states, there is a tension ‘between what the school expects and the demands of the pupil’s cultural background’. Habitus refers to the lifestyles, values and view of what is normal, held by a group. The habitus of working-class pupils is very different to the middle-class habitus of the school resulting in a conflict of identities. As the school does not value working-class habitus, pupils from that background face a choice between the identity the school wants to see and that of their home culture.*

AN

EVAL

*The impact of this conflict is so great that it can be described as the school carrying out ‘symbolic violence’ against working-class pupils. Archer found that many working-class pupils are aware that the school devalued them and consequently they construct lifestyle identities that reflect their class habitus. Fashion is an important way of expressing this and ‘Nike’ identities make a statement of their authentic habitus.*

APP

*Creating a street style which meets peer group approval, can be perceived by the school as a threat and by middle-class pupils as lacking in taste. So in one sense, the role of the school here is to unconsciously help generate a counter-school identity. This conflict also contributes to working-class underachievement as educational success and higher education are seen as not something ‘for the likes of us’.*

POLICY APP

*It may be that recent marketisation and privatisation policies have served to heighten the conflict between the norms and values of the school, and the habitus of working-class pupils. Some academies have very strict uniform rules and codes of behaviour. Wearing blazers, ties always done up and so on, is far removed from a ‘Nike’ identity and can be seen as a way of keeping working-class pupils in their place. Free Schools and academisation which may have increased the degree of class segregation in schools, constitutes institutionalised symbolic violence against working-class pupils.*

AN

TH APP

*Feminist approaches to the role of education in relation to gender and identity tend to see it in terms of reinforcing traditional hegemonic masculinity. To this extent, the influence of school is to maintain existing gender identities. This can take many different forms in school. Mac an Ghaill identifies the ‘male gaze’ in which male pupils and teachers appraise females as sexual objects, defining female pupils and teachers as subordinate. Verbal abuse, such as calling girls ‘slags’ and ‘drags’, also contributes to reinforcing dominant sexual identities by categorising female pupils in terms of sexual availability. The operation of double standards in the way sexually successful boys are applauded but similar girls are denigrated, further reinforces dominant gender identities.*

AN

ST APP

*Verbal abuse also reinforces gender norms in relation to heterosexual identity. ‘Gay’ and ‘queer’ are used to denigrate male pupils who conform to the school or who are friendly with girls. Mac an Ghaill found working-class boys saw themselves as ‘macho lads’ and referred to others, who worked hard, as ‘dickhead achievers’. Parker also saw that even just being friendly with girls, rather than seeing them as sexual objects, led to abuse. All these processes within school help to maintain gender norms and identities.*

AN

*Archer also identified the way female pupils would construct a hyper-heterosexual identity, spending comparatively large sums of money on make-up, hairstyles and clothing. Having a boyfriend (of the right*

**APP TO Q**

kind) brings symbolic capital from their peers and some working-class girls developed 'loud' feminine identities. All of these traits have the potential to bring the girls into conflict with the school, for example, through being distracted from schoolwork by a boyfriend or wearing the wrong clothing at school.

**ST APP**

Many of the issues raised by sociologists about the way the school interacts with class and gender identities, can be applied to the experiences of minority ethnic group pupils. Gillborn and Youdell argue that teachers have racialised expectations so for example, they anticipate that black pupils will have disciplinary issues and see them as a threat. One way in which pupils may react to racialised teacher expectations is by the formation of subcultures. Although Sewell argued that only a minority respond by joining anti-school subcultures, these 'black, macho lads' form the stereotype of all black boys in the minds of teachers. The result is a cycle of reinforcement of a particular identity with behaviour conforming to the negative expectations of the school and consequently reinforcing those expectations.

**AN**

**APP TO Q**

The school is clearly not a neutral presence in the creation of pupil identities. Consensus approaches argue that it is the school's role to mould pupil identity into that which society requires, instilled with a sense of society's history and values. However, it is clear that not all pupils accept this common identity. Instead, some pupils have different identities drawn from their gender, class and ethnicity. In terms of class and ethnicity, this is likely to bring pupils into conflict with the school. In terms of gender however, the identities created in school match those of wider society. Feminists would certainly claim that school reproduces the hegemonic masculinity common to wider society'.

**EVAL**

## **Commentary**

### **This is top mark band answer (25-30 out of 30)**

Let's examine it in terms of the skills needs at A level (see the definitions and examples of the skills in the introduction to this pack).

### **AO1 Knowledge**

There is a wide range of relevant knowledge of a range of aspects of pupil identity. Studies, sociologists, concepts and theories are all identified and developed.

## **AO2 Application**

The whole essay maintains a strong focus on pupil identities – the thrust of the question. There is no drift into achievement (though there are references where appropriate).

There is application to theories, methods, studies and educational policies.

## **AO3 Analysis and Evaluation**

There is great deal of Analysis in the form of explaining and unpacking various arguments and studies.

Evaluation is more difficult to introduce in a question like this but is present in several places.

There is a strong, reasoned final paragraph.

## **ACTIVITIES**

1 Go through the essay and put a '**C**' by each concept, **TH** by each theory mention and **ST** for each study.

2 Take any of the examiner annotations for **AN**, **EVAL** or **APP**, and explain why these skills have been displayed. Alternatively, underline the key wording that displays those skills.

3 Underline where the essay uses the key words in the question – 'Marxist', 'functionalist', 'similar concerns', 'very different conclusions and 'role of education'. Underline synonyms for these words too.

4 Take the example paragraph below and explain why it is not a very effective paragraph for this essay, despite the knowledge being accurate.

### **Paragraph A**

*'Some sociologists have seen a connection between pupil identity and achievement. There are major inequalities in achievement between different social groups. Middle-class, white female pupils tend to outperform other groups. There are exceptions such as Chinese and Indian pupils and this shows that class, ethnicity and gender all cut across each other when it comes to educational achievement.'*

## **QUICK DECODES**

Each essay question on this issue will have its own particular focus – they will be slightly different to each other. It is important that your selection of material to use and the way you use it reflects these variations. Here are quick decodes of other questions on this area of the education topic.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that although girls outperform boys in terms of achievement, their experience of school is largely negative.**

This question combines two elements of the Education topic. It is essentially a two-part (although the parts are connected) question. Your opening paragraph should explain this.

The first main part of your answer should address the achievement aspect of the question, outlining gender patterns in achievement and a summary of possible explanations of these patterns.

The second part of the essay should focus on girls' experience of education referring to subject choice, the male gaze, patriarchal structures etc.

You can then conclude by bringing the two parts together.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the ways in which schools can influence gender identities.**

This is essentially the same as the exemplar question except that you need to focus exclusively on gender identities.

So you need to expand the material on the exemplar essay.

This illustrates a common general exam technique. You need to be able to expand or compress the same material depending upon the needs of the question. This is a good skill to practice and it would be very useful to have in any revision notes, full and compressed versions of the same material.

## UNIT 6 EDUCATION POLICY

### Typical essay questions

- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the effects of policies designed to create an education market in Britain.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that marketisation and privatisation policies have increased educational inequality.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that marketisation and privatisation policies have raised standards for all social groups.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that education policies (in the last 30 years) have failed to reduce inequalities in educational opportunity and outcome.

### Things to note about these questions

1. Firstly, note that these questions all have a twist in the tail. They all want you to deal with education policies in relation to an effect they may have had. So it's important to think about what the role of knowledge is here. Of course, it is important to display your knowledge of different policies, but to gain a high mark, it is also important to connect these policies to their arguable effects (on equality of opportunity, achievement etc). Many candidates will be tempted into a 'display my knowledge' answer, listing and explaining a series of educational policies. This is all well and good but without a focus on the effects of these policies, the question is not going to be answered in an effective way.
2. Some questions might ask about marketisation/creation of an education market. Others might specify marketisation and privatisation policies. So it is important that you are clear about the differences (and similarities) between these two types of policy. (Essentially, one is creating an internal market within the state education system; privatisation is handing over control/ownership of state funded schools to private concerns. But both encourage competition.) If the question specifies both, then you need to define both and place the different policies into each type (e.g. privatisation policies include free schools and academisation; marketisation includes formula funding and parental choice.) If the question is more general like the first one (above), then you should introduce the two ideas of marketisation and privatisation policies – this will give you marks for Analysis.

3. A question may specify a time period – 30 years is quite common. Although not intended as an exact time period, you should keep broadly to it. Thirty years would cover the period during which comprehensive education was subject to first marketisation, then privatisation, policies. So reference to grammar and secondary modern schooling would not be appropriate unless you made it clear that this system still operated (and operates) in a few parts of the UK such as Northern Ireland and Kent.
4. An essay is very likely to specify some kind of effect or outcome of policies. These could include:
  - Inequality/equality of educational outcomes, usually measured by achievement/exam results.
  - Inequality/equality of educational opportunities.
  - Whether educational standards have been raised as a consequence, for all or for certain groups.
  - Effects on different social groups (class, gender and ethnicity).
  - Impact on selection (who/what controls which pupils are selected for a school).
5. Finally, although questions like these are clearly focused on education policy, they offer an opportunity to gain **Application marks** by making links to other topic areas. These include:
  - Links to theory, especially to neo-liberal, functionalist, feminist and Marxist theories. You can make reference to concepts such as meritocracy (and myth of meritocracy), reproduction of social inequality, legitimisation of class inequality, role of the state and patriarchy.
  - Links to differential educational achievement by class, gender and ethnicity –especially as this provides evidence of inequality of educational outcomes, if not of opportunities.
  - Links to the impact of globalisation on educational policy.
  - Link to elements of the Item.
  - AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, keep linking back to the question by using the key words in the question, especially the last element in these questions about ‘effects’, ‘raising standards’ etc.



## EXAMPLE QUESTION AND ANSWER WITH COMMENTARY

### Item A

The introduction of an education market and the privatisation of educational services constitute a fundamental shift in the way state education is run in the UK. Supporters of policies such as league tables, parental choice and new types of schools funded by the state but run by private companies, argue that the result will be to raise standards for all.

Critics of such policies claim that all the old educational inequalities have been maintained and even increased by the creation of a 'privatised education market'.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the effects of marketisation and privatisation policies.**

### Deconstructing the question

- The question requires you to separate out marketisation and privatisation policies. This is best done in the opening paragraph and then referred to as you go along. These policies are about how schools are funded, who controls the schools, the role of parents and the types of school on offer.
- The focus of the question is on the effects of these policies. So identify the range of possible effects including on inequality/equality of educational opportunity, impact on educational outcomes/achievement, effect on different social groups, whether standards have risen as a consequence and impact on selection. These are all terms that you should use throughout your answer.
- It is also worth considering how the effects can be measured and like most policy effects, this is not straightforward. The usual way is exam results. But as exam systems change, it is difficult to carry out comparison over time. Furthermore, just because some groups do less well than others does not mean the system has penalised them, it may be the result of other, primarily home background, factors.
- What have different theories to say about marketisation/privatisation of state-funded education? Such policies are favoured by neo-liberalism and also could fit into functionalist approach. Marketisation/privatisation policies are criticised mainly from conflict approaches which view them as reproducing and legitimating social inequalities.

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## Answer with Examiner annotation

Differentiates  
between  
marketisation and  
privatisation.

*“The education system in parts of the UK has undergone major policy changes over the last thirty years. From the 1980s, governments introduced policies to create an internal education market in which schools competed with each other but were still largely run by local councils. From 2010 the emphasis changed to privatisation with many state-funded schools being handed over to private organisations to run.*

EVAL

*There are several ways to analyse the effects of these policies including inequality of educational selection, opportunities and outcome, how different social groups have been affected and whether or not standards have risen as a result. Measuring these possible outcomes is not easy especially as the GCSE and A level systems have changed in recent years making even recent comparison very difficult.*

TH APP

*Marketisation and privatisation policies have largely fitted into a neo-liberal framework. This approach argues that the most effective way to raise education standards is to create an education market for state schools in which schools compete with each other for pupils. This then forces them to improve their performance as otherwise parents will place their children in higher-performing schools. Conflict approaches such as Marxism and feminism have tended to be more critical of marketisation and privatisation, claiming that these policies perpetuate social inequalities.*

AN

TH  
APP

Outline of  
knowledge of  
appropriate  
policies

*Although the roots of marketisation policies can be traced back to the early 1980s, it was really the 1988 Education Reform Act that introduced the fundamental changes. League tables were brought in so that school results were made public in a way that parents could see which were getting the best results. As parents were given the right to apply to any school, not just their local one, league tables informed their choice. Schools were also now paid per pupil through formula funding which encouraged them to do everything they could to attract the most pupils. Other policies included business sponsorship, Ofsted inspections and the introduction of tuition fees for university study. It was claimed that competition would force schools to improve, standards would rise and ‘parentocracy’ would be the main driving force.*

AN

APP TO Q

*One of the effects of these major changes is that schools ‘play the system’. Successful schools are in a position to manipulate which types of students they accept with girls and middle-class pupils being preferred because of the greater likelihood of higher results. This*

AN

*'cream-skimming' and 'silt-shifting' penalises male, working-class and black pupils who are then more likely to end up in a lower-achieving school which has to take them for the money they will bring in. There is then a self-perpetuating cycle in which these groups have a poorer education and their results suffer.*

APP TO Q

*A further result is that parents can also 'play the system'; especially middle-class parents who have the cultural, financial and educational capital to make them what Gewirtz called 'privileged skilled choosers'. They know how admissions policies work and also have the economic power to move house or pay extra travel costs in order to get their children into high-achieving schools. So the result of creating an education market is to perpetuate and possibly increase educational and social inequalities.*

AN

EV

*Marxists would argue that creating parentocracy also legitimates educational inequalities. If a pupil underachieves then the parent has to take some responsibility as it has been their choice to put them into a particular school. Some claim that parentocracy is a myth, as schools can manipulate the selection process and in some areas there is no actual choice of schools. It favours middle-class parents over working-class parents.*

EV

Contemporary  
knowledge

APP TO Q

*Privatisation policies have been introduced by Conservative-led governments since 2010. Although begun before then, academisation and the free school programme have increased rapidly since then with the proportion of secondary schools remaining in local authority control dropping to 31% in 2017. There has also been the growth of academy chains which run a number of academies, including the Harris academy chain which had 44 schools in 2017. One of the effects of this rapid change has been the commodification of education – it is a commodity to be bought and sold for profit like many other things. Although academies and multi-academy chains are non-profit making, a form of profit-making exists in that they pay their executive heads and chief executives high salaries and bonuses. Some critics argue that this is money that is better spent on pupils' education. A further effect is that there is also a growing global dimension to privatisation with multinational companies increasingly involved in running academy chains, providing examinations, teaching materials and other education services. This reduces the power of the nation state in running its education system.*

EV

EV

AN	<i>The main basis on which to judge the effects of these policy changes is how far educational outcomes have been affected. The professed aim of marketisation and privatisation was that it would raise standards across the board as schools increased their efforts to attract more students. Supporter of these policies claim that this has happened.</i>
EV	<i>However, there is limited evidence for judgements to be made. One reason is that educational changes take time to work through and it may be that such a fundamental change in policy will take decades to work through. As there have been major changes to the way GCSE and A levels have been structured, it is also difficult to make direct comparisons as any changes may be the result of different forms of assessment rather than changes to schools. Critics have argued that the persistence of substantial class, gender and ethnicity-based inequalities in educational achievement is proof that these changes have not raised standards for all groups of pupils. Furthermore it has been argued that parentocracy has been undermined. Whereas with local authority-run schools, parents could take concerns such as admissions or special needs provision to the responsible local authority, now it is much more difficult to do so with privately run schools.</i>
METH APP	
EV	<i>These policies have been the biggest change to education for 50 years. By creating an education market, it could be argued that the result is bound to be winners and losers as in any market. So some social groups continue to be disadvantaged in terms of access to educational opportunity, selection and outcomes. Ball argues that there is a process of fragmentation taking place. The education system is becoming less of a system and more of a patchwork of education providers taking control of state-run schools. This makes it even more difficult to assess the effects of marketisation and privatisation policies.'</i>
AN	
EV	

### **Commentary**

**This is a top mark band answer (25 – 30 out of 30).**

Let's examine it in terms of the skills needed at A level. (See the definitions and examples of the skills in the introduction to this pack).

#### **AO1 Knowledge**

There is a lot of knowledge in this answer but it does not get bogged down in lengthy descriptions of policies or theories. This allows space for the other skills to be displayed.

All the knowledge is relevant to the question- there are no diversions into material which is at a tangent to the question.

There is some contemporary knowledge.

## **AO2 Application**

There is explicit application to theory and to methodological issues with measuring the effects of these policies.

There is a link to differential educational achievement (which avoids being descriptive) – another topic within the Education section of the specification.

Most importantly there is lots of application to the key element in the question, the effects of these policies. Just go through and count the number of times ‘effects’ or some synonym such as ‘results’ or ‘impact’. That shows how the answer keeps returning to the question.

## **A03 Analysis and Evaluation**

Evaluation is sustained throughout the answer.

Analysis is present throughout as well from the opening paragraph which differentiates between marketisation and privatisation, through the section on methodological issues, the main paragraphs and the final ‘reasoned, justified conclusion’.

## **ACTIVITIES**

1 Go through the essay and put a ‘**C**’ by each concept, **TH** by each theory mention and **ST** for each study.

2 Take any of the examiner annotations for **AN**, **EVAL** or **APP**, and explain why these skills have been displayed. Alternatively, underline the key wording that displays those skills.

3 Underline where the essay uses the key words in the question – ‘marketisation’, ‘privatisation’ and ‘effects’. Underline synonyms for these words too.

4 Take each of the example paragraphs below and explain why they are not very effective paragraphs for this essay, despite the knowledge being accurate. Paragraph B includes some evaluation of the 11 plus. Why then would an examiner not reward it for Evaluation?

### **Paragraph A**

*‘The government has accelerated the growth of academies with nearly 70% of secondary schools now being outside local authority control. Academies are non-profit-making organisations, run by faith groups, charities or private companies. Academies receive public money to run state schools but are private companies or charities. Some of these are in chains as big as some former local education authorities. If an academy fails Ofsted inspections, it can be handed over to another private company of academy chain.’*

## Paragraph B

*'The education system in Britain has had several major changes. In 1944 the tripartite system was introduced and pupils had to take an entrance exam at 11 which decided which type of school they went to. Grammar schools had a disproportionately middle-class entry and had better access to university education. Critics of this system argued that the 11plus was biased towards the sort of knowledge middle-class pupils were more likely to have. This system was then replaced with comprehensive schools which had no entrance exam and were open to all pupils in a neighbourhood.'*

## QUICK DECODES

Each essay question on this issue will have its own particular focus – they will be slightly different to each other. It is important that your selection of material to use and the way you use it reflects these variations. Here are quick decodes of other questions on this area of the education topic.

You could also go through the exemplar answer and select paragraphs that could be used in answer to this question (sometimes with a little adjustment).

### **Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that marketisation and privatisation policies have increased educational inequality.**

The question specifies both marketisation and privatisation so explain both the differences between them and the way one is a continuation of the other.

You can also examine what we mean by educational inequality – opportunity or outcome?

The question clearly links these policies with educational outcomes, in this case inequality. So although you need to display your knowledge of the policies, there is a danger of this becoming something of a 'list'. It will be more effective to outline a policy or group of policies and then examine whether it has increased or decreased educational inequality. This maintains a kind of 'running evaluation' throughout your answer.



**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that marketisation and privatisation policies have raised standards for all social groups.**

The question specifies both marketisation and privatisation so explain both the differences between them and the way one is a continuation of the other.

The 'raised standards for all groups' is very important wording. This may have been the intention behind these policies but have all social groups – class, gender and ethnic – benefitted?

Avoid the 'list' answer which describes the policies then tries to evaluate their effects in a section at the end of the essay. It is more effective to outline a policy or group of policies and then examine whether it has raised standards for all social groups. This maintains a kind of 'running evaluation' throughout your answer.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that education policies (in the last 30 years) have failed to reduce inequalities in educational opportunity and outcome.**

'(in the last 30 years)' indicates that the focus should be primarily on marketisation and privatisation policies (although comprehensive education was present during part of the period). As with other questions on this area, point out the difference between marketisation and privatisation and how one developed from the other.

This question specifies educational opportunity and outcomes so it is important to define these terms and treat them separately.

The focus is on inequalities so you should try to refer to class, gender and ethnic inequalities.

Although you need to display your knowledge of the policies, there is a danger of this becoming something of a 'list'. It will be more effective to outline a policy or group of policies and then examine whether it has failed to reduce educational inequality. This maintains a kind of 'running evaluation' throughout your answer.



## UNIT 7 ROLE OF EDUCATION

### Typical essay questions

- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanation of the relationship between education and the economy.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the role of education in transmitting ideas and values.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that Marxist and functionalist approaches share similar concerns but reach very different conclusions about the role of education in society.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that education reproduces and legitimates inequality in educational opportunity.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the contribution of functionalist (or Marxist; or feminist) approaches to our understanding of the role of education in society.
- Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological contributions to our understanding of the functions performed by education.

### Things to note about these questions

- 1 There are several elements in this aspect of education that could be selected in order to create a question. Firstly, there are the main theories: functionalist, Marxist and feminist (with contributions from New Right and post-modernist viewpoints). Secondly, there are the different concerns that make up the 'role of education' in society. There is its role in terms of communicating ideas and values (including legitimisation of inequality). There is also education's relationship to the economy. Finally, there is the issue of inequality of educational opportunity (which links as well to differential educational achievement).
- 2 A question is likely to be made up of some, but not all, of these elements. **It is crucial that you therefore identify right from the start which of these elements are in the question and therefore which you have to focus on.** Not doing this opens up to the possibility you will create a 'catch-all' answer with sections annotated by examiners as 'tangential' or 'not applied to question'.

- 3 So if the question is about the relationship between education and the economy, that, and not its ideological functions, is what you need to examine. You may get a question that just asks the wide open general question about different sociological explanations of the functions/role of education. This looks easy but the key is for you to then identify not just the different perspectives, but also the issues they all tend to deal with.
- 4 Finally, although questions like these are clearly focused on different theoretical approaches to the role of education, they offer an opportunity to gain **Application marks** by making links to other topic areas. These include:
  - Links to differential educational achievement by class, gender and ethnicity –especially as this provides evidence of inequality of educational outcomes, if not of opportunities.
  - Links to educational policies that relate to the economic, ideological and reproduction of inequality functions of education.
  - Link to elements of the Item.
  - AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, keep linking back to the question by using the key words in the question, especially ‘role of education’, ‘inequality’, ‘ideas and values’, ‘reproduction and legitimation’ etc.

## EXAMPLE QUESTION AND ANSWER WITH COMMENTARY

### Item A

Many sociologists, especially those who take a social systems approach, have examined the role that education plays in society. Although functionalism and Marxism are often seen as being virtually opposite perspectives, it can be claimed that they share similar concerns in that they both see education as performing important functions for society.

However, they may not reach similar conclusions about the form these functions take or the effects education has on different groups in society.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that Marxist and functionalist approaches share similar concerns but reach very different conclusions about the role of education in society.**

### Deconstructing the question

- The question requires you to examine whether or not Marxism and functionalism do actually share similar concerns. So you need to identify areas of similarity, including being macro approaches with a focus on the functions of education, the role education plays in relation to the economy,

how education transmits ideas and values, the role of the state/education policy and a focus on equality/inequality of educational opportunity.

- However it is important from the start, to indicate that although they have shared issues, their approaches and conclusions are radically different. With a fundamental division over how far society is based on shared values or values imposed to the benefit of one powerful group, there may be agreement as to how some functions operate but not about their causes and consequences.
- In terms of organising an answer, many candidates would run through functionalism and then cover Marxism. Organising material in this way is easy but difficult to then draw out comparisons. It is much more effective to identify an area of concern and to examine how each approach then treats it. For example, take equality/inequality. Both perspectives have a strong focus on this, with functionalists arguing that it is the outcome of a meritocratic system, whilst Marxists claim it is the reproduction of social inequality through a class bias in education process.

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## Answer with Examiner annotation

AN

*'On the surface, functionalism and Marxism appear to be very different perspectives on education and on society as a whole. There is a fundamental difference in orientation, as one emphasises the centrality of consensus within society, while the other emphasises conflict as the defining characteristic of society. However, as Item A indicates, both perspectives are social systems approaches, it is not surprising that they both look at the role of education as part of the social structure.*

AN

*Indeed, some have called Marxism a 'conflict-functionalism' theory as, like functionalism, it looks at the functions each part of society performs for society as a whole. As a consequence, they do share some similar*

AN

*concerns about the role of education including its relationship to the economy, how much equality and inequality there is and how important schooling is in terms of transmitting values and ideas. However, just*

EVAL

*because they share some similar focal points does not then mean they end up in agreement about education's role in society.*

AN

*Both functionalism and Marxism have a focus on the issue of educational equality and inequality. This involves examining how far there is equality of access to education and equality of educational outcomes. Both approaches accept that there is inequality in educational outcomes although they disagree as to how much equality of educational opportunity there is. Functionalists argue that modern industrial society is open and meritocratic. In other words, access to jobs and to positions of power depends on an individual's educational qualifications and other skills, not on their family background. Davis and Moore claim there is equality of educational opportunity, with the education system being a neutral process operating a 'sift and sort' function. There is, of course, inequality of outcomes but that is not the result of the education system and stems from individuals having different abilities and attitudes to work.*

EVAL

EVAL

*Marxism agrees that there is inequality of educational outcomes, in fact, this is a central concern of Marxist analysis. However, it does not accept that this is the result of differences in individual capabilities, but sees educational inequality as resulting from inequalities in wider society and in the education system itself. Education essentially reproduces existing social inequalities, passing them on from one generation to the next, with working-class pupils being failed by the system. School processes*

AN

*such as teacher labelling, educational triage, streaming and the creation of anti-school pupil subcultures, all work to reduce the educational outcomes of working-class pupils. Bourdieu argues that schools have a bias towards middle-class habitus – placing a higher value on middle-*

**AN**

*class attitudes, tastes, language etc – and therefore commits symbolic violence against working-class pupils and their ‘Nike identities’. So although both approaches share a concern about inequality of educational outcomes, functionalists see this as a legitimate outcome in a meritocratic society, Marxists view it as further evidence of bias against working-class pupils within the education system.*

**EVAL**

**TH APP**

**EV**

*Marketisation and privatisation policies may also increase educational inequalities. Neo-liberals claim that removing the ‘dead hand of the state’ from state schools and introducing market forces will drive up standards for all students. Critics of these policies however, argue that the ability of middle-class parents to ‘game’ the new system by using their greater economic and cultural capital, results in middle-class pupils gaining a further advantage.*

**AN**  
**POLICY APP**

*Both perspectives see education as being very important for the transmission of ideas and values. Durkheim argued that society requires a sense of solidarity in order to survive and so that individuals feel a sense of shared identity and culture. For example, the National Curriculum places the teaching of British history and literature at the heart of what is learned in schools whilst in the USA, pupils salute the flag and sing the national anthem at the start of the school day. This is supported by Parsons who sees education as a ‘focal socialising agency’ that transmits the idea that status is achieved not ascribed by birth as it is in the family.*

**AN**

**EV**

**APP**

*One value that functionalists argue is transmitted through education is that of meritocracy. Parsons and others claim that education is meritocratic and that the idea that everyone has the same educational opportunity is embedded in the whole school system. He argues that school acts a bridge between the family and wider society and helps individuals move from being judged by particularistic standards to universalistic standards. So status is achieved not ascribed at birth. Marxists disagree very strongly with this claim, pointing to the systemic bias in education against the working class. Althusser argues that education is an ideological state apparatus which transmits ideas and values that legitimise social inequality. Similarly, Bowles and Gintis see education as a giant myth-making machine and the biggest myth is that of meritocracy. By claiming everyone has an equal chance, education helps the working-class to see educational failure as their fault, not as the outcome of a systemically biased process. This legitimation of inequality is just as important as the actual inequality itself as it contributes towards the generation of*

EVAL

*false class consciousness. Thus, functionalists and Marxists agree about the importance of education in transmitting ideas and some of the ways this is done, but they fundamentally disagree about the nature and purpose of those ideas.*

AN

*Functionalism and Marxism share a concern about the role of education in relation to the economy. Durkheim argues that a modern industrial economy with a complex division of labour requires workers to have specialist knowledge and skills. Creating this workforce of the future is a major function of education. Blau and Duncan see education as expanding society's 'human capital'; the skills of its workforce. Davis and Moore have also seen education as having a broader role in relation to the economy, that of selecting and allocating pupils to future work role. In their eyes, inequality is a necessity as it ensures that the most talented occupy the most important economic positions by giving them greater rewards. This view has been criticised by neo-liberals who have argued that the state has failed to prepare people for work. Tumin also argues that Davis and Moore's arguments are circular and are a justification rather than explanation of existing inequalities.*

AN

EVAL

*Marxists agree that education prepares young people for the world of work, but in their eyes, this is preparation to be exploited in a capitalist economy. Bowles and Gintis claim that there is a correspondence principle through which schools mirror the world of work. Hierarchies, power inequalities, acceptance of competition, motivation by extrinsic reward, the fragmentation of knowledge and alienation are all found in school and at work. A 'hidden curriculum' operates in schools through which exploitation is normalised. Although some Marxists such as Willis, have argued that working-class pupils do see through this process, nonetheless, their actions lead them into dead-end jobs anyway. Postmodernists have also claimed that although this may have been the case in a Fordist economy, in a post-Fordist economy, blind obedience is less necessary and may even be a problem.*

AN

EVAL

*Although both approaches see issues to do with the transmission of values, the relationship between education and the economy and equality of opportunity as central concerns, these are viewed in very different contexts. For Marxists, education is all about social control – of values, ideas, the curriculum, employment opportunities and reproducing social inequality. For functionalists it is about the positive functions education may play in terms of role allocation, access to education and developing a trained future workforce.'*

EVAL

*Although both approaches see issues to do with the transmission of values, the relationship between education and the economy and equality of opportunity as central concerns, these are viewed in very different contexts. For Marxists, education is all about social control – of values, ideas, the curriculum, employment opportunities and reproducing social inequality. For functionalists it is about the positive functions education may play in terms of role allocation, access to education and developing a trained future workforce.'*

APP TO Q

EVAL

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## ACTIVITIES

- 1 Go through the essay and put a **'C'** by each concept, **TH** by each theory mention and **ST** for each study.
- 2 Take any of the examiner annotations for **AN**, **EVAL** or **APP**, and explain why these skills have been displayed. Alternatively, underline the key wording that displays those skills.
- 3 Underline where the essay uses the key words in the question – 'Marxist', 'functionalist', 'similar concerns', 'very different conclusions and 'role of education'. Underline synonyms for these words and phrases too.
- 4 Take the example paragraph below and explain why it is not a particularly effective paragraph for this essay, despite the knowledge being accurate.

### Paragraph A

*'Althusser argues that the state is the mechanism by which the ruling class maintains their dominant position in society. He argues that education is an example of an ideological state apparatus that maintains ruling class dominance by controlling the thoughts and ideas people have. As the working class are exploited in capitalist society, it is important that they do not become aware of their unequal position, otherwise they might try to change society. Education gives out messages that their failure to achieve is legitimate and the result of their own individual failings rather than being a product of the system.'*

## QUICK DECODES

Each essay question on this issue will have its own particular focus – they will be slightly different to each other. It is important that your selection of material to use and the way you use it reflects these variations. Here are quick decodes of other questions on this area of the education topic.

### **Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanation of the relationship between education and the economy.**

The key wording in this question is 'the relationship between education and the economy'. This means that your essay should focus on the economic role of education.

It is important not to drift into material that is primarily about the ideological function of education or into material on achievement without connecting it to the economic function. For example, material about meritocracy should focus on it as a process of selection rather than as an idea transmitted in schools



You should compare and contrast functionalist, neo-liberal/New Right, Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches.

You can use (with some adjustment) some of the material in the exemplar answer, especially paragraphs 7 and 8.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of the role of education in transmitting ideas and values.**

The key wording in this question is ‘transmitting of values and ideas’. This means that your essay should focus on the ideological role of education. You need to link everything you write to the ways and reasons why education transmits ideas and values.

It is important not to drift into material that is primarily about the economic function of education or into material on achievement without connecting it to the transmission of ideas. For example, material about meritocracy should focus on it as an idea transmitted in schools rather than as a process of selection.

You should compare and contrast functionalist, neo-liberal/New Right, Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches.

You can use (with some adjustment) some of the material in the exemplar answer, especially paragraphs 5 and 6.

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that education reproduces and legitimates inequality in educational opportunity.**

There are two separate but connected ideas in this question. Does education reproduce inequality? Does it legitimate (justify) inequality? One is about the processes involved in creating educational inequality as measured through differences in achievement. The other is concerned with inequality in terms of what ideas and values are used to explain the existence of inequality.

You should outline and compare conflict approaches to this issue (Marxism and feminism) with consensus views (functionalism and neo-liberal).

**Applying material from Item A and your own knowledge, evaluate the contribution of functionalist (or Marxist; or feminist) approaches to our understanding of the role of education in society.**

Whichever theory is stated in the question is the one you should focus on. You can use the other theories but do not present them in a separate block as simple alternatives; they need to be applied as evaluation in appropriate places.

You could identify three main areas of concern – equality/inequality of educational opportunities/outcomes, economic functions and the transmission of ideas. Set out what the theory stated in the question says, offer any criticisms and alternative theoretical positions.