

Godalming College
Sociology Department



Sociology A level Paper 1: Education Revision Booklet

Name	Set	Group



The exam paper

Your AQA Topic 1 exam paper will have a range of questions.

Where to start:

- Make sure all of your Education booklets are complete
- Look over your textbook- it is split into FIVE topic (two sub categories) areas that your booklets cover: Class, Ethnicity, Gender, Role of education and Policy (Role of education and Policy are in one booklet)
- Use the checklist in this booklet to complete notes for each topic. This could be in the form of flash cards, written notes or mind maps.

TIP- take it a topic at a time- make brief notes first and then develop them.

What are examiners looking for?

Assessment objectives

Examiners mark your work according to three Assessment Objectives:

- **A01** - Knowledge and Understanding:
 - you have a clear awareness and understanding of key ideas, studies, concepts, statistics and theories used in Sociology of Education.
- **A02** - Application:
 - you are able to ideas, theories and studies to the specific question set and use examples of these to illustrate the point you are making.
- **A03** - Analysis and Evaluation:
 - **Analysis:** breaking down a point and explaining it in detail, looking at issues from various angles and drawing conclusions, showing how ideas fit together.
 - **Evaluation:** assessing and making a judgement about the strengths and weaknesses of an idea, theory or study.

Remember – your paper will also include a **methods in context question**. This is where you will be asked whether a specific method is suitable to study a particular area of education. This will be addressed in year 2

Look on AQA's website for examples of A-Level Education papers.

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/sociology/as-and-a-level/sociology-7191-7192/assessment-resources>

Exam questions:

- **4 – outline two**
- **6 – outline three**
- **10 – analyse two (use the item)**
- **30 – evaluate (essay - again, use the Item)**

And then...

- **20 (Methods in [Educational] Context)**
- **10 (Theory and Methods)**

The syllabus

Unit 2 Education

- Students are expected to be familiar with sociological explanations of the following content:
- The role and functions of the education system, including its relationship to the economy and to class structure
- Differential educational achievement of social groups by social class, gender and ethnicity in contemporary society
- Relationships and processes within schools, with particular reference to teacher/pupil relationships, pupil identities and subcultures, the hidden curriculum, and the organisation of teaching and learning
- The significance of educational policies, including policies of selection, marketization and privatisation, and policies to achieve greater equality of opportunity or outcome, for an understanding of the structure, role, impact and experience of and access to education; the impact of globalisation on educational policy

Education Checklist

Topic	Sub-topic	Covered? Yes/No	OK?
Key concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hidden curriculum • Formal curriculum • Meritocracy 		
Types of school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive • Independent/private/public • Academies • Free schools • Grammar / selective schools 		
Functionalist Theories of Education. (Macro Sociological theory – Consensus)	Basic understanding of Functionalist theory of education.		
	Emile Durkheim – Social Solidarity and The Division of Labour.		
	Talcott Parsons – Secondary Socialisation and Role Allocation. Universalistic and Particularistic values. Meritocracy		
	Davis and Moore – Role Allocation. Sorting and sifting		
	Schultz - Human capital theory		

	Criticisms of Functionalist theory.		
Marxist Theories of Education. (Macro Sociological theory – Conflict)	Basic understanding of Marxist theory of education.		
	Louis Althusser - Education and ideology. Ideological state apparatus.		
	Bowles and Gintis – Correspondence Theory and the Hidden Curriculum. Myth of meritocracy.		
	Criticisms of the Marxist theory of education.		
Neo Marxist Theories of Education. (Macro/Micro Sociological theory)	Paul Willis – Learning to Labour: How working class kids get working class jobs.		
	Pierre Bourdieu - types of capital – social, cultural and economic capital.		
	Glenn Rikowski - marketization and globalization		
	Criticisms of Neo,-Marxist theory of education.		
Social Democratic (political view)	Overview of the social democratic view and their influence on education policy		
	Arguments that support this view: Sharon Gerwitz - middle class parents have more choice. Stephen Ball - shift in the emphasis of education		
New Right/Neo Liberal (Political view)	Overview of the New Right view of education and their influence on education policy e.g. 1988 Education Act		
	Chubb and Moe - free market, competition		
History of Education.	Knowledge of changing education policies 1945-present		
	Conservative & New Right Policy (1979-1997) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Reform Act 1988: • Marketization • Privatisation 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cream-skimming • Silt-shifting • League tables • Parentocracy 		
	New Labour and policies (1997-2010): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMA • Education Action Zones • Sure Start • Academies in inner city areas 		
	Conservative/Lib Dem Coalition policies (2010-2015) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolition of EMA • Pupil Premium: • Extension of Academies • Free schools • Increase of university fees 		
	Conservative Policy (2015-date) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reintroducing Grammar Schools • Polict during and after the pandemic 		
Class Differential Educational Achievement- you need to know Interactionist view points for 'in' school factors.	Measures and definitions of class ("objective" vs "subjective " measurements, Marxist theory, etc.)		
	OUT OF SCHOOL		
	Material deprivation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cycle of deprivation</i> • Rowntree- family life cycle • Waldfogel and Washbrook • Cooper and Stewart 		
	Cultural Deprivation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Douglas • Sugarman • Bernstein 		
	Cultural Capital: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pierre Bourdieu 		
	Class subcultures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willis • Archer 		
	IN SCHOOL		
Interactionism and Education (Micro Sociological theory)	Basic understanding of Interactionist theory.		

	<p>Themes of Interactionist theory</p> <p>Definitions of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role and self concept • Labelling and Typing, • the Self Fulfilling Prophecy • Subculture Formation • setting and streaming 		
	<p>The Hidden Curriculum- see also Marxist and Feminist theory</p>		
	<p>The 'Ideal Pupil' and labelling theory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Howard Becker • Hempel-Jorgensen • Louise Archer 		
	<p>Demonstrating labelling</p> <p>Rosenthal and Jacobson - Pygmalion in the Classroom, not interactionists but proof of labelling theory</p>		
	<p>Setting and streaming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gillborn and Youdell – The A-C Economy and Educational Triage • Stephen Ball – Beachside Comprehensive- streaming and banding 		
	<p>Subcultures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Willis – learning to labour • Lacey - Polarisation • Hargreaves - 3 main stages of 'typing' • Woods – other responses 		
	<p>School and Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archer – Nike Identities • Bourdieu – Habitus and Symbolic Capital 		
	<p>Evaluation of Interactionist theory of education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other theoretical responses • Determinism • Ingram (2009) • Evans (2009) 		
	<p>The relationship between External and Internal factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitus • Language • Labelling 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 		
Gender Differential Educational Achievement.	Three aspects of gender <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gender Gap; why are girls out performing boys? • Why do boys and girls choose different subjects? • Are girls still disadvantaged in the education system? 		
	EXTERNAL reasons for girls achievement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of Feminism – Mc Robbie (1994) • Changes in the Family • Changes in women’s position – McRobbie (2008) • Girls’ Ambition – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sue Sharpe (1996,1994) ○ Francis (2000) • Differences in levels of maturity (and what this means) 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity, Class and achievement - Archer (2010) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Symbolic capital ○ Hyper-heterosexual feminine identities ○ Boyfriends ○ Being ‘loud’ Working class girls’ dilemma ○ Successful Working class girls 		
	INTERNAL reasons for girls’ achievements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunities policies • Positive role models • Coursework • Positive teacher labelling • Challenging stereotypes • Marketisation 		
	EXTERNAL reasons for boys’ underachievement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline of manual jobs, • Changes in male roles, • Crisis of masculinity inc <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paul Willis ○ Martin Mac an Ghail • Hegemonic masculinity • Over estimation of ability 		

	<p>INTERNAL reasons for boys underachievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feminisation of the curriculum • Negative teacher labelling • Lack of male role models • Anti School subcultures 		
	<p>Evaluations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a moral panic about girl's achievement? • Are girls achieving their full potential still? • Differences in achievement between middle and working class boys and girls • How significant is coursework? • Can you clearly measure maturity of boys and girls? 		
<p>Feminist Theories of Education. (Marco Sociological Theory – Conflict)- also see gender</p>	<p>Basic Understanding of Feminist theory of education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberal feminism • Radical Feminism 		
	<p>Why do boys and girls choose different subjects?</p>		
	<p>EXTERNAL reasons for gendered subject choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological differences • Gender socialisation • Gendered career opportunities 		
	<p>INTERNAL reasons for gendered subject choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender domains • Gender Regime and school pressure • Gendered subject images • Peer pressure 		
	<p>Key theorists and researchers including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robbie • Lees • Jackson • Kelly • Osler • Hannan • Francis • Oakley • Archer 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitsos and Browne <p style="text-align: right;">etc</p>		
Ethnicity Differential Educational Achievement	Why do different ethnic groups achieve differently in education?		
	EXTERNAL reasons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural deprivation • Language spoken at home • Family structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of nurturing role models – Sewell (2009) • Material deprivation • Racism and stereotyping in wider society 		
	INTERNAL reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labelling and teacher racism • Discipline • Subcultures (positive and negative) • Ethnocentric curriculum • Critical race theory • Marketisation and segregation • The “New IQism” • Access to opportunities 		
	Key theorist and researchers including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gillborn (and Youdell) • Mirza • Bhatti • Wright • Archer (and Francis) • Sewell • Rex • Noone • Fuller <p style="text-align: right;">etc</p>		
Key education policies- you need to relate these to other areas in the course (this list is not exhaustive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocationalism • Tripartite system • Comprehensivisation • Changes in assessment- coursework, GCSEs, A-levels • 1988 Education Reform Act • New institutions- Free Schools, Academies • Government control/inspection • Fees- higher education 		

Revision ideas

1. Create glossaries and word lists
2. Create concept cards - concept on the front and definition on the back
3. Use these cards in Pictionary revision games and play in pairs
4. Use concept cards so they are paired, with a pile of concepts in front of them. Describe and explain the concept without saying the word itself (Taboo) and pairs play against each other to see how many you can get in a minute
5. Use these cards in games of bingo where you choose concepts for their bingo board and then you read out descriptions of the concepts, which they have to recognise in order to win.
6. Play 'odd one out' with concepts in pairs. Explain choices.
7. Find links or differences between concepts you have paired.
8. Time yourselves to write essays for 20-30 minutes

Making Revision Notes – two specific techniques

Flash cards Rather than just writing r-e-a-l-l-y small, the aim here is to reframe or otherwise adjust your revision notes to help you. If you use flashcards you might try the following

Model

Concept *what is the key term*
Source – *who used it? What perspective?*
Definition – *what does it mean?*
Criticism – *one criticism from another theorist or perspective*

Example

Hidden Curriculum
Bowles and Gintis / Marxist
Pupils learn to accept the capitalist system by learning passivity and subservience
Pupils are not passive objects – they make active choices that shape their futures and choose working class jobs (neoMarxist/Willis)

Different theorists might use the same concept in different ways

Hidden Curriculum 2
Howard Becker / Peter Woods- interactionist
Labelled by their teachers, pupils form subcultures within the school. Woods says these reflect relative power within the school and vary by year group etc.
These accounts tend to neglect wider issues of power and control in society by focusing only on the small scale (Marxist, Feminist, Critical race Theory)

Hidden Curriculum 3
Ann Oakley - feminist
Gender roles are reinforced by the curriculum either by unintentional canalisation
This is an unmeasurable and therefore unprovable concept (Positivist)

Some students have used notebooks instead – either way, smaller is better.

Mind maps

Consider mapping individual perspectives or even theorists across different areas of the syllabus = for example what the **New Right** say about education, the Family and leave a space for Social Stratification (huge!) and Crime and Deviance (even huger!!).

Or theorists that recur such as **Parsons** (Education, Family and Social Stratification) or **Durkheim** (Education, Stratification and Crime & Deviance) or **Oakley** (Family, education, Stratification)

This is best on large pieces of paper with a quarter each key topic area. Consider this later in the course. (Or see the **MindGenius** programme on college computers - here you can throw a bunch of concepts into a random list and then rearrange them on screen)

Question Guidance and Practice

These questions are taken from the pre 2015 syllabus and adapted to the structure of the current question paper. They are a bit haphazard and occasionally repetitive but are of some use in gaining practice in AQA topics.

EXAM COMMAND WORDS

- **Define** Provide a meaning for a key word or concept
- **Outline** You need to describe the main points
- **Explain** Provide a reason for something
- **Outline and explain-** As above but you must first describe and then explain the reason for it
- **Analyse** - You are required to break down a topic and consider different viewpoints. Try and dig a bit deeper than in the questions above
- **Evaluate** - This means that you need to weigh up a viewpoint taking into account relevant strengths and weaknesses. If you are able to come to a clear conclusion about the question asked then even better!

1. Shorter Descriptive Questions – two points:

4 mark questions – “Outline...”

These will ask for a simple outline of two factors or concepts. Use the material in the rest of the booklet to help prepare for these.

1. Outline two ways in which a lack of cultural capital may affect educational achievement. (4 marks)
2. Outline two factors or processes within schools that may tend to negatively affect working-class pupils' achievement. (4 marks)
3. Outline two ways in which school mirrors features of the workplace. (4 marks)
4. Outline two ways in which successive governments have tried to encourage vocational education in schools. (4 marks)
5. Outline two criticisms that sociologists might make of vocational education.(4 marks)
6. Outline **two** factors or processes within schools that may negatively affect working-class pupils' achievement. (4 marks)
7. Outline two ways in which schools may produce a “gender regime”. (4 marks)

8. Outline two educational reforms which have tried to reduce class-based differences in educational achievement. (4 marks)
9. Outline two reasons why some parents are better able than others to choose which school their child attends. (4 marks)
10. Outline two ways in which interactions between pupils and teachers may affect attainment and/or behaviour. (4 marks)

2. Shorter Descriptive Questions – three points:

6 marks - “Outline...”

- Again these questions will simply ask you to outline concepts/reasons/explanations/etc.
 - There will be no Item for this question
 - Consider bullet points, but at least try to leave a line separating elements in your answer.
1. Outline **three** factors that may explain gender differences in subject choice (6 marks)
 2. Outline **three** ways in which a child’s cultural background may fail ‘to equip them to meet the demands of schooling’ (6 marks).
 3. Outline **three** ways in which school prepares pupils for work. (6 marks)
 4. Outline three factors that may explain why girls often choose to study different subjects from boys. (6 marks)
 5. Outline three educational policies that may have affected educational attainment. (6 marks)
 6. Outline three functions of the education system. (6 marks)
 7. Outline three examples of “laddish” behaviour that may make it difficult for boys to do well in school. (6 marks)
 8. Outline three reasons why girls’ examination performance has improved in recent years. (6 marks)
 9. Outline three policies that government or educational bodies have introduced to overcome children's cultural deprivation. (6 marks)

3. Longer analytical questions:

10 mark questions – “Applying material from Item A, analyse two – “

These are similar to the 10 mark questions elsewhere (Outline and explain...)” but

- They will – in the exam - refer to an Item (**Item A**) to which you will need to refer (but not copy) in your response and

- They will ask you to analyse (break down the question and consider differing viewpoints)

As with the longer essay questions that follow, the Item may refer to a brief description of a theory or concept or may equally refer to an example of a policy or contemporary example. It really is up to the board as to what sort of stimulus they feel appropriate.

- Try to read the Item carefully and ensure that some points will refer directly to it.
- Try to avoid copying anything from the Item – if you need detail write it in your own words using such phrases as “...as the Item says...” or “...with reference to the Item...” or “...although the Item states that...we may instead ...”) to ensure that the examiner knows that you have used it!

It is recommended that you can show the examiner that you can use two distinct paragraphs to highlight the difference between your two key points and for your convenience (it will be easier to ensure that they are of equivalent length and that an effective range of content – referring to a theory, contemporary evidence, statistical material etc.) in each part. You need not include an introduction unless you feel it is absolutely necessary, perhaps to define key terms.

Item A

Functionalist writers such as Durkheim have seen one of the major functions of the school as helping to create a sense of social solidarity. For example, the American education system provides a shared language and a shared history for all American citizens regardless of origin, as well as the daily ritual of an oath of loyalty.

Other functionalists have seen the role of the school as a bridge between family and society, with school preparing pupils to enter the adult world, in particular the world of work. In this view, both school and modern society are based on meritocratic principles, where status is achieved on merit or worth.

1. **Applying material from Item A, analyse two criticisms that may be made of the functionalist view of the role of the education system. (10 marks)**

Item A

Students of all social classes are achieving more highly than ever before, but major differences in educational achievement persist. For example, those from professional and managerial backgrounds (classes I and II) are about two and a half times more likely to get five or more A* to C GCSEs than pupils from the unskilled manual class V. Similarly, class I students are five to six times more likely to go on to higher education than those from class V.

Such differences are the result of a variety of factors. Within schools, processes such as teachers’ expectations of and interactions with their pupils, labelling, and the self-fulfilling prophecy, all tend to disadvantage working-class pupils and negatively affect their achievement.

However, some sociologists argue that material factors outside school are more important, while others argue that cultural differences between the classes are the key to explaining differences in achievement.

2. **Applying material from Item A, analyse two “cultural differences between the classes” that may explain class differences in achievement. (10 marks)**

Item A

Girls are now doing better than boys in GCSE and A Level, and there are now more females than males in higher education. In part, this is the result of changes in policies by government, local authorities, schools and others, and of changes in practice by teachers.

However, evidence suggests that some other gender differences in education have not greatly changed. For example, as Coffey notes, girls and boys follow different “gender routes” through school, choosing different subjects to study. The hidden curriculum also plays an important part in influencing boys’ and girls’ experience of school. Schools often have an informal status hierarchy which gives high status to heterosexual masculinity and devalues femininity and subordinate, less “macho” forms of masculinity. This status hierarchy acts as a form of social control which Mac an Ghaill refers to as a “gender regime”.

3. Applying material from Item A, analyse two changes in policies which may have led to improvements in girls’ performance. (10 marks)

Item A

Most sociologists see material deprivation as a major cause of under-achievement. However, according to cultural deprivation theory, some working-class and ethnic minority children fail because their parents do not socialise them into the appropriate norms, values and skills. For example, Douglas (1964) found that many working-class parents were uninterested in their children's progress and did little to support their education: they failed to attend parents' evenings, did not help them with their homework and did not read to them.

As a result, such children are poorly equipped to take advantage of educational opportunities. For cultural deprivation theorists, government and educational bodies need to introduce policies to remedy the situation and give such children the chance to succeed.

However, while cultural deprivation has been used to explain class and ethnic differences in achievement, most sociologists consider that when it comes to gender, other factors are more important, particularly as the pattern of achievement has changed rapidly in recent years, with girls now generally out-performing boys at all levels of schooling.

4. Applying material from Item A, analyse two reasons why girls are "now generally out-performing boys at all levels of schooling". . (10 marks)

Item A

Howard Becker’s research shows that teachers have an image of the ‘ideal pupil’ who is well motivated, enthusiastic, cooperative and presentable. Becker found that middle-class pupils came closest to this ideal, while teachers label working-class pupils as lacking motivation and difficult to control. Likewise, the different labels that teachers attach to boys and girls also help to explain gender differences in achievement and subject choice.

However, attaching labels to individual children can sometimes result in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Similarly, some sociologists argue that a hidden curriculum, which operates to reproduce a labour force for capitalism by mirroring in school many of the features of the workplace, also works to the disadvantage of working-class pupils and contributes to their failure.

However, while the ideas of labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy throw light on how some working-class children come to fail, many sociologists criticise labelling theory for being an inadequate explanation of class differences in achievement.

5. Applying material from Item A, analyse two reasons why labelling theory may be “an inadequate explanation of class differences in achievement”. (10 marks)

Item A

Boys of Afro-Caribbean origin are among those groups who do least well in the British education system. One possible explanation for their under-achievement is the effect of factors within school. These factors include such things as streaming, the ethnocentric nature of the curriculum and the ethnocentric way in which school is organised, as well as racist labelling by teachers.

However, while such factors may play a part in creating ethnic differences in educational achievement, this would not explain why girls of Afro-Caribbean origin do relatively well in school, since they too are presumably exposed to these same factors. Also, compared with white girls, white boys also under-achieve, and this can hardly be explained by racism in school.

6. Applying material from Item A, analyse two factors apart from those referred to in Item A that may account for the educational under-achievement of boys. (10 marks)

Item A

The education system has two key functions – the reproduction of class inequality and the legitimisation of class inequality. It may do this in various ways. For example, Stephen Ball argues that in recent years the education systems in many countries have undergone a process of “marketisation”. In Britain, this has come about largely as a result of the 1988 Education Reform Act. This Act introduced policies such as the publication of examination league tables, and funding for schools based on the number of pupils they could attract. The Act also brought in what Miriam David describes as “parentocracy”: the idea that parents would be able to choose which school their child would attend. In reality, however, not all parents are equally successful choosers: evidence from both Britain and the USA shows that middle-class and white parents are more likely to succeed in gaining places for their children in schools that get better results.

7. Applying material from Item A, analyse two educational policies apart from those mentioned in Item A that may have affected differences in educational achievement. (10 marks)

Other 10 mark questions

No Items are available for these but they do represent AQA phrasing and topics.

You will have Items on Paper 1 in the exam.

- ...analyse **two** reasons why girls may be less likely than boys to be affected by anti-school subcultures. (10 marks)
- ...analyse **two** ways in which schools are ‘based on meritocratic principles’ (10 marks).
- ...analyse **two** reasons, which might explain why boys ‘tend to do less well than girls’ in school. (10 marks).
- ...analyse **two** criticisms that may be made of the functionalist view of the role of the education system (10 marks).
- ...analyse **two** ways in which schools may reinforce existing social class inequalities (10 marks)
- ...analyse **two** policies or reforms aimed at raising educational achievement and briefly explain how each was meant to do so (10 marks)
- ...analyse **two** reasons for ethnic differences in educational achievement, **apart from** marketization policies. (10 marks).¹

¹ [nb in this last question the Item could be used in a similar way, e.g., “**apart from** that used in the Item”]

4. Long Essay Questions:

30 mark essays - **“Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate...”**

Essays in the Education paper because they are worth 30 marks require planning, depth of understanding and argument.

There should always be a clear **introduction** (“unpacking” the question, explaining the debate) and a **conclusion** with reasoned judgement supported by evidence.

Be careful to ensure that **every paragraph relates to the question asked** and does not drift into irrelevant detail.

The questions on your paper will always refer to an Item – you must use the Item to present the best answer possible.

BUT

- don’t copy it
- don’t ignore it and
- don’t confuse it with the question itself

it is an **essential supplement**)

Some possible questions (adapted from older AQA papers):

Item B

Functionalist sociologists see the education system as a vital social institution in modern society. They argue that the education system exists to perform a range of essential functions for individuals, for institutions such as the economy, and for wider society. Functionalists regard these functions as positive ones that enable society to operate efficiently, fairly and without conflict.

However, other sociologists criticise the functionalists for wrongly assuming that education serves the interests of society as a whole.

1. **Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the contribution of functionalist sociologists to our understanding of the role of the education system in society. [30 marks]**

Item B

According to some sociologists, the main function of the education system is to reproduce and legitimise social inequalities. For example, they argue that schools systematically fail the majority of working-class pupils, whose destiny is to end up in the same kind of working-class jobs as their parents. This reproduces the class structure from one generation to the next. The education system then legitimises these inequalities by claiming that every pupil has an equal chance to succeed.

However, some critics argue that schooling is in fact meritocratic and that failure is the fault of the individual, not of the education system.

2. **Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that the main function of the education system is to reproduce and legitimise social inequalities. [30 marks]**

Item B

According to functionalists, the education system encourages open competition while giving everyone an equal chance to succeed. As a result, all pupils can show what they are capable of achieving and what kind of future work role they are best suited for. The system is then able to provide each child with an education appropriate to their talents and to fit each individual with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need in their adult role. Functionalists see this as having two main advantages. For the individual, it allows social mobility and rewards people according to their ability, not their social background. For society, it promotes a successful economy by ensuring each job is filled by someone with the appropriate talents. This leads to higher living standards for everyone.

- 3. Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that the function of the education system is to select and prepare individuals for their future work roles. [30 marks]**

Item B

Functionalists argue that value consensus – agreed social values – is essential for the well-being of society. Schools play a vital role by socialising young people into these basic values. In western societies, schools stress the value of achievement and the importance of equal opportunity. For example, schools operate on meritocratic principles. Functionalists also see education as ‘sifting and sorting’ young people, matching them to the future work roles that suit their abilities.

However, not all sociologists agree that the main function of education is to maintain a value consensus in society. Marxists argue that education transmits values that benefit the ruling class, not society as a whole.

- 4. Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that ‘the main function of education is to maintain a value consensus in society’. [30 marks]**

Item B

From as early as 22 months, children of parents in the higher social classes I and II with higher educational levels are already 14 percentage points further up the scale of educational development than children of classes IV and V parents with low educational attainment.

Poverty also affects the likelihood of progressing through school to attain formal educational qualifications. For example, truants are more likely to have parents from poorer backgrounds, in low-skilled rather than managerial jobs, living in council housing. Similarly, children excluded from school are more likely to be from poorer families, have disrupted family circumstances or be from schools with a high level of disadvantage.

At GCSE, West found that low income could account for 66 per cent of the difference in attainment within a local authority area. Similarly, McCallum and Redhead found that GCSE success was associated with higher levels of home ownership and lower levels of unemployment.

Source: adapted from M HOWARD ET AL., *Poverty: the facts*, 4th edition (CPAG) 2001

- 5. Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the view that poverty is the main cause of social class differences in educational achievement. [30 marks]**

Item B

Writers from a New Right perspective have suggested that giving more power to schools and to parents will help drive up standards as schools compete to provide a better service.

This means allowing schools to decide their spending priorities and allowing them more control over what type of pupils they admit. They propose giving more power to parents so that they can force schools to be more responsive to parents' wishes. They point to the academic success of many private schools and suggest that this is due to the fact that they are answerable to their customers, the parents.

Alternatively, Gewirtz (1995) suggests that increased competition between schools has mainly benefited middle-class pupils and parents because they have the means to gain access to the best schools. This means that the more academically successful schools attract middle-class parents and pupils who have cultural and material advantages.

- 6. Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the extent to which policies of encouraging competition between schools and increasing parental choice have improved the achievement of working-class pupils. [30 marks]**

Item B

Although the educational performance of both girls and boys has improved over the past twenty years, a significant gender gap in achievement has developed. Girls now outperform boys in most subjects and at most levels of education. This is especially true of pupils at GCSE where 10% more girls than boys achieve five or more A*-C grades.

Some sociologists claim that gender differences in achievement are the result of changes in wider society, such as the impact of feminist ideas and changing employment opportunities for both girls and boys.

However, others argue that the education system has become 'feminised', for example through an emphasis on coursework in assessment, which may favour girls. Furthermore, a lack of male primary school teachers means that many boys do not have an adult male role model in their early experiences of school.

- 7. Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that gender differences in educational achievement are primarily the 'result of changes in wider society'. [30 marks]**

Item B

The educational achievements of both boys and girls have improved since the 1980s, but girls' results have improved more rapidly. They have overtaken boys in Key Stage tests, at GCSE and at A level. Girls are also more likely than boys to go to university.

However, gender differences in subject choice remain relatively unchanged in both academic and vocational courses. Sociologists argue that these patterns of achievement and of subject choice are the result of factors both within the education system and in wider society.

- 8. Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations of gender differences in achievement and in subject choice. [30 marks]**

Item B

There are significant differences in average levels of educational achievement among groups from different ethnic backgrounds. For example, children from Chinese families have tended to obtain higher academic qualifications than whites.

A number of reasons have been put forward to explain these patterns. Some researchers suggest that the causes lie inside the school. For example, Taylor (1981) argued that some teachers have a negative view of black students. Institutional racism within the education system may also be part of the problem. However, other sociologists recognise the need to look for alternative explanations.

- 9. Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate sociological explanations for the educational achievement of children from different minority ethnic groups. [30 marks]**

Item B

There are clear differences in the educational achievement of different ethnic groups. For example, in 2006, 73% of pupils of Indian origin gained 5 A*-C passes at GCSE compared with 56% of white and 47% of black pupils. Sociologists are interested in the causes of these inequalities in educational achievement. Some argue that ethnic differences in educational achievement are primarily the result of school factors. For example Wright (1992) found that teachers perceived and treated minority ethnic pupils differently from white pupils. Afro-Caribbean boys were often expected to behave badly and they received a disproportionate amount of negative teacher attention. Other sociologists claim that non-school factors such as family structure and home background have a greater impact on the educational achievement of different ethnic groups.

10. Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the claim that 'ethnic differences in educational achievement are primarily the result of school factors'. [30 marks]

Item B

Since 1988, a major focus of government education policies has been to establish an education market. Many politicians have argued that policies to promote competition between schools and choice for parents will drive up standards and raise pupils' achievement. These policies include the publication of examination 'league tables' and Ofsted inspection reports. But such policies may in fact widen the achievement gap between different social groups. However, policies such as compensatory education may help to narrow this gap by creating greater opportunities for previously disadvantaged groups.

11. Applying material from Item B and your own knowledge, evaluate the impact of government education policies on inequalities of achievement between social groups. [30 marks]

Some more possibilities without Items.

Again no Items are available for these but they do represent AQA phrasing and topics.

You will have Items on Paper 1 in the exam.

- ...evaluate the ways in which external factors may affect social class differences in educational achievement. (30 marks)
- ...evaluate the view that schools and what takes place within them are the main cause of social class differences in educational achievement. (30 marks)
- ...evaluate the ways in which home factors may affect social class differences in educational achievement." (30 marks)
- ...evaluate sociological explanations for the educational achievement of children from different minority ethnic groups. (30 marks)

The following pages include some more activities for you to use, complete and adapt for your own revision.

Functionalism	Marxism	New Right
Education should encourage a sense of social solidarity and cultural awareness	What we learn at school corresponds to what we need to be exploited workers	Favour the Marketization of education- this involves competition and choice
Education ensures that the most talented and able members of society are rewarded with the most functional important roles	Education itself has become a capitalist enterprise	Believe that the government control and fund the majority of schools and educational institutions
School is a bridge between the family and work. Schools are miniature versions of society and prepare young people for their place in society	The middle classes have an advantage in education due to their possession of cultural capital	Education system should operate on the same principles as the market for goods and services
Education teaches the specialist knowledge and skills that they need to play their part in the social division of labour	It is the rejection of school which prepares young working class males for the world of manual work	Concerned that education has moved too far in trying to create equality, instead there should be a focus on standards
School and society are based on meritocratic principles that everyone is given an equal opportunity, we succeed through our own achievement and effort	Education is part of the ideological state apparatus of society. It helps to maintain ruling class power and control	UK needs to create a skilled workforce to compete with other countries

	Functionalism	Marxism	Neo-Marxism	Interactionism
Key names				
Positive or critical?				
Key Concepts				
Purpose of Education				
Strengths				
Weaknesses				

Revision cards: some examples of concepts

Social solidarity	Secondary socialisation	Role allocation
Equality of opportunity	Legitimation on inequality	Ideology
Correspondence principle	Reproduction of inequality	Counter school subculture
Material deprivation	Cultural deprivation	Cultural capital
Restricted and elaborated codes	Social capital	Gender gap
Racism	Labelling	Self-fulfilling prophecy
Hidden curriculum	Vocationalism	Marketization
Tripartite system	Comprehensive	League tables

Vocational	
Public Schools	
Marketization	
Secondary education	
League tables	
Streaming	
PSE/PSHE	
Ethnocentric	
Multicultural education	
Material Deprivation	
Positive discrimination	
Tripartite system	
Differential educational achievement	
Compensatory education	
Cultural capital	
Equality of opportunity	
Meritocracy	
Myth of meritocracy	
State education	
Hidden curriculum	
Habitus	
Cultural deprivation	

Research Methods

This section will be dealt with elsewhere, especially the Theory and Methods question at the very end (Outline and explain... for 10 marks).

With regard to the 30 mark “Methods in Context” question, it is worth considering the possibilities regarding educational questions that come up and the range of methods that might be used.

Research topic in schools could easily include (this is not exhaustive):

- Educational disadvantage
- The effects of material deprivation
- The effects of culture or ethnicity
- Male / female underachievement
- Male / female subject choice
- The formation of anti- (or pro-) school subcultures
- The attitudes of teachers and staff
- Parental expectations and its impact on achievements or aspirations
- The impact of the formal curriculum
- The impact of the hidden curriculum

And the methods that might be applied including:

- Secondary data
- Documents (official or personal)
- Official Statistics
- Quantitative or qualitative methods
- Overt or covert methods
- Questionnaires (postal, self-completion, open/closed questions, etc.)
- Interviews (formal or informal, Structured, focused or unstructured, etc.)
- Observation (Participant, non-participant, etc.)
- Ethnography
- Experimental methods
- Longitudinal studies
- Case Studies
- Triangulation / methodological pluralism

And although it has never yet shown up you should consider various forms of sampling

And the same issues will always arise specific to schooling, for example:

- Problems of access (including gatekeepers, legal constraints such as CRB checks etc.)
- Problems of informed consent
- Problems of the Hawthorne Effect (ask any Inspector)
- Problems of response and social desirability (teachers, pupils, parents, etc.)

As well as the obvious PET (PERVERT?) analysis of the method in general, although it is important that you do not give a general answer, but one specific to the scenario and methods offered.