**Methods in Context, planning activity: Observations and Pupil Exclusions**

**Item C**

Pupil exclusions take many forms. Permanent exclusions from school are rare, but about 1 in 20 is excluded for a fixed period, often for physical assaults against staff. There are no reliable figures for pupils sent out of individual lessons. Pupils may also self-exclude by truanting or simply ‘switching off’ in class.

Boys, pupils with special educational needs, poorer pupils and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are much more likely to be excluded.

One way of studying pupil exclusions is to use participant observation. By adopting an appropriate role, the researcher may be able get close to the pupils. However, participant observers usually only study fairly small groups. Furthermore, success greatly depends on the researcher’s ability to establish a good relationship with those being studied.

**Applying material from Item C and your knowledge of research methods, evaluate the strengths and limitations of using participant observation to investigate pupil exclusions [20 marks]**

**Who** is the sociologist researching?

**What** is the sociologist researching?

**How** is the sociologist conducting the research?

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| **Who?** | **What?** | **How?** |
|  |  |  |

**Hooks from the item –** identify strengths, limitations and issues from these points

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| --- | --- |
| Hook identified | Development into a strength or limitation |
| ‘Pupil exclusions take many forms’ |  |
| Certain pupils ‘a much more likely to be excluded’ |  |
| ‘Adopting an appropriate role’ |  |
| ‘may be able to get close’ |  |
| ‘only study fairly small groups’ |  |
| ‘depends on ability to build good relationship’ |  |

**WHO**

Outline some of the characteristics of the participants. What issues might the researcher face with these groups?

**WHAT**

What issues are presented with trying to study pupil exclusions?

**HOW**

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| **Consider some strengths and limitations of participant observation – consider whether an overt or covert approach would be better** | |
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
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**Planning:**

In the essay you need to make sure each point tries to consider WHO, WHAT, HOW – make sure you are linking to the context throughout. For top band answers you will need to discuss ethical and theoretical issues, which could include issues like validity, reliability, representativeness, alongside a discussion of who would/wouldn’t like the methodological approach.

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| **Introduction – WWWE**   * **W**hat? – What is the method in the question? Define and apply detail about the method. * **W**ho? – Who would use it? (Positivist, Interpretivist, Realist) * **W**hy? – Why would they use it? – Relating to the context in the question – in this case pupil exclusions. * **E**valuate – Who wouldn’t use it? Why? | |
| **Strength**  Try and link in at least two aspects of Who, What, How per point | **Weakness** |
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| **Conclusion**   * **Summarise strengths and weaknesses** (in relation to the **context**) * Would an **alternative method** be more suitable? Apply **methodological approaches** to this response (Positivism, Interpretivism and Realism) | |