Revision

Education with research methods exam practice

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Use these exam-style questions to help you revise.

Although these questions broadly follows the format of part of an AQA question on Education with research methods, it would be useful to answer it no matter which specification you are following.

Questions

1. Define the term ‘parental aspirations’. (2 marks)

   There are only 2 marks available, so don’t be tempted to write too much. On the other hand, what you do write must be a clear definition. This concept has two parts — ‘parental’ and ‘aspirations’. It might sound obvious, but your definition should address both. It is a good idea to make a list (for all your topics) of the concepts used with a brief definition of each.

2. Using one example, briefly explain how the ethos of a school can affect pupils’ attainment. (2 marks)

   There is no need to explain what is meant by ‘the ethos of a school’, but if you can do this in one brief sentence, it might be a good idea to do so. Make sure that your example is focused on ‘pupil attainment’. Again, only 2 marks are available, so don’t be tempted to write more than is necessary.

3. Outline three reasons why females are generally out-performing males in the education system. (6 marks)

   This kind of question will typically carry 2 marks for each of the three reasons or explanations asked for. Aim to state a reason clearly. Then, write a brief sentence giving more detail or explanation. Avoid writing too much.
4. Outline and explain two reasons why working-class pupils are more likely than middle-class pupils to end up in bottom streams or sets. (10 marks)

This is the kind of question which allows you to write in more detail, as it has a higher mark allocation. Again, you may wish to start by writing just one sentence to show that you understand what negative labelling is, though the question does not require you to do this. Once you have clearly stated your first reason, your explanation should not only be fuller, but should contain analysis — that is, you should ‘unpick’ the various factors involved. This is where a note-type plan can come in useful. For example, if one of your reasons is pupils’ attitudes towards education, jot down a few important words, e.g. instant gratification, ‘having a laugh’, no family role models etc. Then do the same with your second reason. It is a good idea to leave a space between the two reasons to show clearly where the second one starts.

5. Read the item below and answer the question that follows.

School league tables were introduced in 1992 as part of the creation of a free market in education. It was argued that parents needed the information from league tables based on schools’ results to make informed choices when selecting a school for their child. It was also believed that local competition among schools would raise standards. Critics, however, say that league tables place too much emphasis on academic performance.

Applying material from the item and your knowledge of research methods, evaluate the strengths and limitations of using statistical data on test and exam results to judge the performance of a school. (20 marks)

The first thing to do in this type of question is to read the item carefully — you will need to use some of the information in it in your answer. The important word here is ‘use’ — you will get no marks for simply copying out chunks. The second thing is to remember that you are not evaluating ‘statistical data’ — you are looking at the pros and cons of this type of method for a particular purpose. In this case, judging schools’ performance. With this in mind, it will be helpful before you start to write to jot down some notes under two headings, such as ‘strengths’ and ‘limitations’ — always keeping your focus on judging the performance of schools. It would be useful to take the concept of a ‘free market in education’ from the item and explain briefly what this means. Your answer should include the possible strengths and limitations suggested by the item, and enlarge on them — for example, the ‘informed choice’ includes being able to compare schools within the same area, and competition between schools might indeed raise standards by making teachers focus on test results. If, as the critics say, there is too much emphasis on academic performance, what other criteria are there? In addition to the material you obtain from the item, you will also need to introduce your own, but remember not to stray into a general discussion of the uses and limitations of statistical data — keep the focus on the purpose for which it is intended.

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