AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

Health and Social Care 8626/8629

HC12   Human Development

Report on the Examination

June 2009

HC12: Human Development

Candidates' responses ranged across nearly the full mark range available.

Compared with a year ago, there was less evidence of whole centres of under-prepared candidates.
There was also less confusion between 'studies' and 'theories'.

Questions which required candidates to write about the implications of a theory (3(c) and 4(a)(ii)) puzzled some. It is important that candidates should understand how the scientific study of human development impacts on actual childcare.

Some candidates were led astray in answering questions by assuming that answers to questions on the same topic in previous series would be suitable. Recycling prepared answers is no substitute for understanding the specification material.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question gave a positive start to the paper

(a) Asked to describe a study of parenting styles, most candidates made correct reference to the three styles of parenting studied by Sears et al and Baumrind. Some included relevant results in terms of the child behaviour correlated with each style. Several candidates failed to give any information about the sample and method or procedure used. Such information is essential in a description of a study.
A few candidates confused the findings of the Sears and Baumrind studies, and some described studies that were not aimed at investigating parenting styles.

(b)(i) Most candidates named three agents of socialisation given in the scenario. A small minority showed uncertainty and quoted from the scenario, usually describing behaviour rather than identifying agents. Example: 'The children go to the same school."

(b)(ii) A majority of candidates recognised that Martine in the scenario tended to have an authoritarian style. There was widespread recognition that Martine's use of physical punishment might have contributed to her children's aggression because of modelling. Many candidates also saw that, in the absence of much positive attention from their mother, the children might have found the attention they received when being punished, rewarding. Some candidates related these explanations correctly to social learning theory. There was also some valid use of learning theory explanations. Some weaker answers focussed on what Martine should have done, instead of answering the question.

Question 2

(a)(i) Some candidates showed familiarity with stages of language development, and identified Tom in the scenario as displaying language typical of the telegraphic stage. Other candidates tended to just repeat the information given in the scenario, for which they gained no credit.

(a)(ii) Asked to explain how conversations (like the one illustrated in the scenario) can aid language development, some candidates just described a theory of language acquisition, and gained few marks.

Better answers did what the question asked, and focussed on some of the specific language behaviours illustrated in the scenario (asking questions, answering questions, recasting speech etc).

(b) Most candidates recognised that the situation described could be most convincingly explained by accents being acquired by social learning.

(c) A small majority of candidates showed awareness of features of development that indicate the influence of genetics and maturation, and successfully applied these to language acquisition. This topic appeared to be better understood than in previous series.

Question 3

This question was the least well answered of the four.

(a) Few candidates recognised that this question, about explanations for the timing of attachment, related to cognitive and ethological explanations. Failing this, many candidates therefore described stages in the development of attachments, or Bowlby's theory of attachment.

(b) Asked to evaluate a learning theory explanation for attachment, many candidates argued in favour of such an explanation. Those who were able to relate attachment to the reinforcement of proximity (e.g. by feeding or nappy changing) gained marks for this. Relatively few pointed out the failure of the theory to explain known facts about attachment.

(c) Asked to describe Bowlby's theory and discuss its implications for child-rearing, most candidates showed a good grasp of basic features of the theory. Fewer candidates actually enumerated the implications. However there was often relevant evaluation in terms of the findings of attachment research.

Question 4

(a)(i) There were some accurate descriptions of the role of assimilation and accommodation in the formation of new schemas. Weaker answers showed a lack of understanding of these concepts, which were sometimes confused with each other.

(a)(ii) About half of all candidates were able to state the implications for child-rearing of Piaget's theory. Other candidates evidently did not understand the question, and instead wrote irrelevantly about stages of development or criticisms of the theory.

(b)(i) Many candidates showed knowledge of the stage of formal operations and of a relevant test. Those who did not often described tests applicable for earlier stages of development.

(b)(ii) Most candidates were able to name at least two other stages of cognitive development.

Grade boundaries
Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the AQA website at
www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html