



General Certificate of Education

**Health and Social Care
8626/8629**

HC12 Human Development

Report on the Examination

January 2010

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HC12: Human Development

General comments

Candidates showed a good range of technical knowledge of theories and studies. However, there was a general weakness in understanding of how this knowledge can be applied to actual child rearing. This showed up in questions that asked about the implications of a theory for child rearing. Also present, though perhaps rather less than previously, was a tendency to mistakenly attribute adult-like cognitions to very young children.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- 1(a)(i)** Most candidates gave an extract from the scenario which included one or more of the gender role stereotypes expressed there. However, there was evidence of uncertainty of what the term means. This was shown by a tendency for candidates to quote sections of the scenario which included other material in addition to the stereotypes. Evidently some candidates confused gender role stereotypes with sex-typing (the differential treatment of girls and boys).
- 1(a)(ii)** Most candidates were able to give two agents of socialisation referred to in the scenario. A minority gave answers that described behaviours rather than identifying agents.
- 1(b)** Most candidates referred appropriately to features of social learning theory and linked these to the scenario. Relatively few pointed out how boys and girls are differentially influenced. Some candidates might have been put off by the question's reference to the 'cultural transmission' of sex differences in behaviour, although they should be familiar with this terminology, which appears in the specifications. Some candidates described a study illustrating social learning, instead of following the instruction to refer to the scenario. Answers which failed to identify any features of social learning theory, but instead expanded on the scenario did not receive credit.
- 1(c)(i)** A majority of candidates gave actual sex differences in behaviour and abilities for which good evidence exists. Aggression was most often given. Some candidates made the mistake of suggesting stereotypes rather than actual differences. For example, they suggested that boys are 'supposed to be' more aggressive than girls.
- 1(c)(ii)** Most candidates who gained marks for (c)(i) gave an appropriate genetic explanation of differences in aggression. Some made the mistake of saying that girls have no testosterone.

Question 2

- 2(a)** There was a significant number of answers gaining full marks. Given a description of a botched version of Piaget's conservation of volume test, most candidates identified at least one of the mistakes. Some candidates recognised that the questions asked by the tester were not of the correct form, but then went on to suggest equally misleading questions themselves, e.g. "Is there still the same amount of water now?", or "Which

beaker has more in?” Some objected to the use of orange juice rather than water (not a mistake), and some to allowing the subject to see the liquid being poured. A few candidates evidently knew about the Rose and Blank idea of dispensing with the first question altogether. However, this did not receive credit, as it was not what Piaget did.

- 2(b)** There were some good answers to this question about McGarrigle and Donaldson’s version of the conservation of number test. Most candidates knew about the role of ‘naughty teddy’. However the way in which this version of the test was an improvement on Piaget’s was not usually well understood. Candidates often said that the use of the teddy made the test less formal, more fun, less confusing or more child-friendly. In fact the use of the teddy was designed to reduce the risk that the child would attribute an intention to change the beads to the tester, and so assume that the number might have changed.
- 2(c)** This question revealed some lack of knowledge about the stage of concrete operations, and some confusion with other stages.
- 2(d)** Few candidates answered this question well. All that was required was practical suggestions as to how a parent might contribute to a child’s cognitive development, assuming Piaget’s theory was correct. Some candidates mistakenly suggested that parents should leave the child alone to play – not quite the same as giving the child opportunities to discover things for him/herself. One problem might be that some candidates do not understand the phrase ‘the implications for child rearing of a theory’. It is important that they should, because this question can be asked of any of the theories featuring in this unit. Some candidates, who had shown reasonable knowledge of Piaget in the previous sections now began to refer to attachment.

Question 3

- 3(a)(i) and (ii)** Some candidates showed detailed knowledge of stages of language development.
- 3(b)** Most candidates recognised from the scenario that the father’s actions in some ways might have aided the child’s language development and also recognised actions that would have helped that were not taken. Quite a lot of candidates digressed into descriptions of a learning theory of language acquisition, rather focussing on what the question asked. Of these, many seemed mistakenly to think that this theory is a good description of how language is acquired. This led some to comment that ignoring a child’s utterances can aid language development. In fact, as a theory of language development, learning theory has been discredited for more than half a century.

Question 4

- 4(a)** This question, on the survival value of attachment, sometimes received answers which overlapped with the next section on the ‘critical period’ for attachment. There were some good answers recognising that the proximity-maintaining behaviour triggered by the onset of attachment has the effect of making the (mobile) child stay out of danger. A few candidates made the mistake of thinking that the child becomes attached because s/he knows about danger and stays close in a conscious effort to survive. Some candidates

wrote about ground-nesting birds instead of children. Some candidates added superfluous material about the effects of separation.

- 4(b)** Most candidates showed awareness of Bowlby's view of a critical period, and of the impact on this view of Tizard's studies of adoption. Some used the opportunity to discuss other aspects of Bowlby's work, not relevant to this question.
- 4(c)** A very large majority of candidates showed some knowledge of the findings' of Ainsworth's classic study, and there were many detailed descriptions. In particular the types of insecure attachment were better known than in previous series, suggesting that more candidates are learning about this. Candidates who failed to refer to the implications for child rearing of the findings of the study did not achieve marks in the top band.

Grade boundaries

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