



General Certificate of Education

Sociology 1191

**SCLY2 Education with Research Methods;
Health with Research Methods**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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SCLY2

General

There were fewer rubric infringements of the kind seen in the first three examination series for the new specification. Similarly, fewer candidates than last year seemed to have time management problems. There was still some suggestion of over-writing in response to Questions 3/12 and 4/13 which caused some candidates difficulties by the time they reached Questions 9/18.

Question 5/14 – the ‘methods in context’ question – continues to be the most challenging part of the paper. Although a greater proportion of candidates now deal with this question more effectively than in previous examinations, many still treated it as a straight ‘methods’ question and made little attempt to apply the method to the specified research issue. This is clearly an area where teachers can continue to develop candidates’ learning.

Section A – Education with Research Methods

The overwhelming majority of candidates attempted this section of the paper.

Question 01

Some candidates were able to offer a sound explanation of the term ‘vocational’ education, which was usually expressed as some notion of education for specific jobs/careers. Some of those candidates who were unable to offer an appropriate explanation could nevertheless give an example. Some candidates erroneously explained vocational education as non-compulsory or compensatory education.

Question 02

The majority of candidates were very comfortable with this question and scored either 4 or 6 marks. The most common answers included lack of male role models, the feminisation of education, coursework, anti-school subcultures, laddishness, and teacher labelling. Some candidates failed to add an important qualifying point, such as mentioning ‘lack of role models’ without specifying ‘male role models’ or ‘teacher labelling’ without specifying ‘negative labelling’.

Question 03

Most candidates had at least some understanding of cultural deprivation. In some cases, this was detailed and broad, referring to aspects such as linguistic codes, parental interest and attitudes, fatalism, and immediate gratification. The very best answers, which scored in the top mark band, went on to explicitly address the possible causal link between cultural deprivation and educational under-achievement.

Weaker answers offered a more limited understanding and a description of one or more aspects of cultural deprivation. Such responses sometimes strayed into accounts of material deprivation or teacher labelling with consequent negative effects on the mark. Some answers focused entirely on material deprivation or on general causes of working-class underachievement; these scored in the bottom mark band.

Many candidates took the Item as a starting point. Weaker responses either recycled or merely added some further elements of knowledge to the Item. More effective answers, which scored in the middle mark band, usually had more knowledge or offered some limited explanation of how an education market works.

There were some very sophisticated answers that went a long way beyond the information in the Item. These candidates often made reference to theory, policy detail, differences between Conservative and New Labour approaches, equal opportunities policies and, in a few cases, the likely policies of the new Liberal Democrat-Conservative government. The most successful answers explained how these policies developed an education market and offered some kind of assessment of the effects of marketisation or of the balance between marketisation and equal opportunities policies.

Although the Item set up the evaluation aspect of the question by pointing candidates in the direction of policies that appear to go against or mitigate marketisation, many candidates failed to utilise this guidance and presented such policies as simply 'other education policies'.

Some candidates transgressed the 25 year reference in the question, with some going back as far as the 1870 Education Act. Some of these answers developed into an historical account of state education, which usually resulted in the first part of the answer going unrewarded.

Question 05

Many candidates found this a challenging question. However, virtually all candidates recognised that this was a 'methods in context' question and very few offered no more than an account of pupil subcultures. Those few candidates that did so remained, for the most part, in the bottom mark band.

Many candidates offered an answer that was 'context-free'. Responses of this nature made no attempt to apply knowledge of the selected method to the study of education in general or to the specific issue of pupil subcultures. This form of response scored in the lower part of the middle mark band and even the best of such answers did not get past half marks. To score at this point in the mark range required appropriate use of concepts and some understanding of relevant methodological issues.

Better-prepared candidates were able to link their chosen method to the study of education in general. Usually this took the form of identifying some of the particular research characteristics of pupils and/or classrooms and/or schools. More successful versions of this type of response applied the strengths and limitations of the chosen method to these characteristics.

The most successful responses were able to take this one step further and relate some of the selected method's strengths and weaknesses to the study of the particular issue of pupil subcultures. For example, some candidates pointed out that pupils who have anti-school attitudes are more likely to see the research and/or the researcher as representing authority. They may then be more difficult to observe or they may disrupt group interviews, pressurising others to support or accept their actions.

Some candidates made potentially rewardable reference to studies such as that of Willis but few of these applied their knowledge to the question. Merely making such a reference is not in itself automatically rewardable. Some candidates 'lifted' points from the Item but failed to develop these. Teachers should continue to stress to candidates the need not to simply repeat Item statements but to offer some development.

Although more candidates and centres appear to be developing a clearer understanding of the demands of this question, the range of types of response highlights a continuing need for centres to develop candidates' application skills.

A few candidates offered a discussion of both methods. In these cases, marks were awarded for the better of the two discussions.

Question 06

The vast majority of candidates offered a satisfactory explanation, usually in terms of data already in existence. Some candidates needed the use of an example to confirm their explanation. A few candidates had little or no idea of the meaning of the term or recycled the term by referring to 'second-hand data'.

Question 07

Many candidates offered factors relating to choice of method rather than choice of topic and consequently failed to score marks. Answers that did score marks usually made reference to relevant factors such as the researcher's own personal interests, contemporary social issues, the concerns of funding bodies, and the accessibility of research participants.

Question 08

Many candidates offered characteristics of personal documents, such as bias, rather than a clear problem with their use. Those that scored well on this question often pointed to lack of representativeness, irrelevant content, or problems of interpretation or categorisation.

Question 09

Most candidates were able to offer at least some problems of postal questionnaires and some went a long way beyond this. The strongest answers were those that focused very clearly on the postal dimension, usually examining problems relating to low response rate, representativeness, lack of researcher presence, interpretation, question design, and so on. Such answers also framed their discussion in a theoretical dimension, made appropriate use of key concepts and offered some evaluation through comparison with other modes of delivery or by suggesting counter-balancing strengths of postal questionnaires.

Weaker responses usually offered a more limited range of problems and with less development. These responses also often drifted into accounts of questionnaires in general or offered a two-part answer covering both problems and strengths. Reliability and validity were often used interchangeably in answers.

Section B – Health with Research Methods

Few candidates attempted this section of the paper.

Question 10

Candidates either did or did not know what 'iatrogenesis' means. There was little opportunity for candidates who did not know the meaning to work it out on the spot. Some candidates did not attempt an answer.

Question 11

This question was generally well answered with most candidates scoring 4 or 6 marks. Reasons cited were usually drawn from language barriers, racism, class-related disadvantages, or lack of knowledge of health provision. Where marks were missed, this seemed to be more the result of presenting overlapping points rather than a lack of appropriate knowledge.

Question 12

Most candidates had at least some basic understanding of reasons for the superior power and status of doctors; few answers scored in the bottom mark band. The strongest answers detailed reasons such as traits, control over the sick role, exclusion strategies, relationship to the bio-medical model of health, or doctors' role in a capitalist society. The very best answers offered some evaluation of these reasons or placed them in a clear theoretical framework.

Less effective responses tended to have a narrower range of reasons, repetitive description of those reasons, or a lack of relevant concepts or theory.

Question 13

Some candidates did not go much beyond the Item and appeared to have little of their own knowledge about this issue. More effective, but still limited, answers offered a sound account of labelling but without linking it specifically to differing rates of mental illness among different social groups. The most effective answers made this connection.

Top band answers also often offered alternative explanations of differences in rates of mental illness. Better responses also referred to a broader range of concepts and issues such as stigma, societal reaction, poverty, stress, vulnerability factors, or racism.

Goffman, Szasz, Nazroo and Scheff featured in the best responses.

Question 14

Many candidates found this a challenging question. However, virtually all candidates recognised that this was a 'methods in context' question and very few offered no more than an account of sociological explanations of gender differences in the use of GP services. Those that did score, for the most part, in the bottom mark band.

Many candidates offered an answer that was 'context-free'. Responses of this nature made no attempt to apply knowledge of the selected method to the study of health in general or the specific issue of gender differences in the use of GP services. This form of response scored in the lower part of the middle mark band and even the best of such answers did not get past half marks. To score at this point in the mark range required appropriate use of concepts and some understanding of relevant methodological issues.

Better-prepared candidates were able to link their chosen method to the study of health in general. This usually took the form of identifying some of the particular research characteristics of patients and doctors. More successful versions of this type of response applied the strengths and limitations of the chosen method to these characteristics.

The best responses were able to take this one step further and relate some of the selected method's strengths and weaknesses to the study of the particular issue of gender differences in the use of GP services. For example, some candidates discussed the particular difficulties of accessing medical settings, problems of obtaining consent, and the professional role maintenance of health professionals.

Some candidates 'lifted' points from the Item but failed to develop these. Teachers should continue to stress to candidates the need not to simply repeat Item statements but to offer some development.

Although more candidates and centres appear to be developing a clearer understanding of the demands of this question, the range of types of response highlights a continuing need for centres to develop candidates' application skills.

A few candidates offered a discussion of both methods. In these cases, marks were awarded for the better of the two discussions.

Question 15

The vast majority of candidates offered a satisfactory explanation, usually in terms of data already in existence. Some candidates needed the use of an example to confirm their explanation. A few candidates had little or no idea of the meaning of the term or recycled the term by referring to 'second-hand data'.

Question 16

Many candidates offered factors relating to choice of method rather than choice of topic and consequently failed to score marks. Answers that did score marks usually made reference to relevant factors such as the researcher's own personal interests, contemporary social issues, the concerns of funding bodies, and the accessibility of research participants.

Question 17

Many candidates offered characteristics of personal documents, such as bias, rather than a clear problem with their use. Those that scored well on this question often pointed to lack of representativeness, irrelevant content, or problems of interpretation or categorisation.

Question 18

Most candidates were able to offer at least some problems of postal questionnaires and some went a long way beyond this. The strongest answers were those that focused very clearly on the postal dimension, usually examining problems relating to low response rate, representativeness, lack of researcher presence, interpretation, question design, and so on. Such answers also framed their discussion in a theoretical dimension, made appropriate use of key concepts and offered some evaluation through comparison with other modes of delivery or by suggesting counter-balancing strengths of postal questionnaires.

Weaker responses usually offered a more limited range of problems and with less development. These responses also often drifted into accounts of questionnaires in general or offered a two-part answer covering both problems and strengths. Reliability and validity were often used interchangeably in answers.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.