

1. Outline and explain two ways that home factors influence gender differences in achievement [4]

One way in which home factors influence gender differences in achievement is through gender socialisation. Girls are socialised into being more passive, which helps them to conform to teachers' ideas of being the 'ideal pupil' which means teachers will view them positively and help them to achieve.

A second way in which home factors influence gender differences in achievement is through literacy skills. Children are more likely to be read to by their mothers, which means that boys often associate literacy with the feminine domain and reject it, whilst girls embrace it as part of their identity. This places them at an advantage when studying subjects with high levels of literacy and they achieve higher grades than boys.

2. Outline and explain three ways three ways education helps to shape gender identity [6]

One way education helps shape gender identity is through subject choices. Science subjects are seen as being part of the male domain and this is reinforced through textbooks and more male teachers in science subjects. This confirms to boys that scientific ability is part of their gender identity.

A second way in which education shapes gender identity is through teacher's expectations of girl's behaviour. Girls are expected to be passive and submissive, and teachers will be more likely to discipline girls for boisterous behaviour than boys – which reinforces expectations for girls to be passive.

A final way in which education shapes gender identity is through uniform. Boys are expected to conform to masculine clothing such as trousers and shirts, while girls are expected to wear skirts and blouses. This reinforces expectations about how boys and girls should look in wider society.

Item A

In recent years, girls have been outperforming their male peers at all stages of the education system. This has been explained by sociologists as being due to changes in the way children are taught and assessed, as well as increased presence of women in educational roles.

3. Applying material from item A, analyse two ways in which in-school factors impact on gender differences in educational achievement. [10]

One way in which in-school factors impact on gender differences in achievement is through the 'increased presence of women in educational roles' (Item A). This serves two different functions, as more female teachers leads girls to see more educated role models and this increases their aspirations to work harder, achieve higher and go on to emulate their teachers. Secondly, with more females in education, boys have less male role models that are educated to be inspired by. As a consequence, boys look to other areas of society, such as sports and music for role models and perceive education to be a feminine domain. As a result, they are less motivated to achieve in academic subjects and more focused on goals in other walks of life, such as sport. However, critics would suggest that the gender of a role model is of less importance than the message that they put across.

A second way in which in-school factors might impact on gender differences in achievement is through 'changes in the way children are taught and assessed'. (Item A) This refers to changes to the curriculum following the introduction of the Education Reform Act in 1988, which introduced GCSEs and coursework, as well as the National Curriculum. Mitsos and Browne found that the introduction of coursework had increased the achievement of girls as this better suited their skill set of being more conscientious about their work. In comparison, boys were thought to do better in high-stakes tests, which explains why girls started to achieve better grades with the introduction of coursework as an element of the final grade. However, despite changes to the curriculum in 2015, which removed coursework from many subjects, girls' achievement remains higher than boys, although the introduction of linear exams has slightly improved boys' achievement.