

Title

Differential Educational Achievement Grid

Time

1 hour (if used as classroom exercise)

Preparation

This will depend upon how the grid is to be used.

Materials

One copy of the differential education grid per student.

Prior Knowledge

This will depend on how the grid is to be used (see below)

Objective

The main purpose of the grid is to relate explanations of differential educational achievement to different areas of the A-level syllabus.

There are a number of different ways the grid can be used:

1. As a classroom exercise. This might involve students working individually or in groups to brainstorm possible explanations for differential educational achievement. Once the session has been completed, a whole-class discussion can be used as the basis for completing the grid.
2. As a homework exercise. This might involve the student researching explanations and completing the grid outside the classroom.
3. As a revision exercise. As in the above examples, the grid could be completed inside or outside the classroom.

The basic idea underpinning the grid is to relate, in a visual way, different explanations for educational achievement (sociological and non-sociological if you like) to various areas of the syllabus. In particular, the themes of class, gender and ethnicity (as they relate to questions of inequality) can be highlighted using this type of grid.

The grid has a number of sections that may need elaboration:

1. Explanation: This box refers to the wide range of possible explanations for differential educational achievement it is possible to produce. Depending upon how the grid is used, these might be explicitly sociological (cultural capital, cultural deprivation, material deprivation and so forth) or quasi-sociological (in a brainstorming session, for example, students might mention things like poverty, poor diet and so forth).
2. Material: This box should be ticked if the explanation relates to material factors.
3. Cultural: This box should be ticked if the explanation relates to cultural factors.
4. Both: This box should be ticked if the explanation (be it material or cultural) has implications for both factors.
5. School: This box should be ticked if the explanation predominantly relates to what goes on within an educational institution (labelling theory might be an example here).
6. Non-school: This box should be ticked if the explanation predominantly relates to factors outside the school (parental attitudes to education might be an example here).
7. Both: This box should be ticked if the explanation could be either a school or non-school factor (perhaps depending on the actual form it takes).
8. Social class: How this box is completed will depend on the measurement of social class used. A simple categorisation might involve (U)pper, (M)iddle and (W)orking class categories.
9. Gender: (M)ale, (F)emale or (B)oth
10. Ethnic group: Again, this will depend on the way ethnic groups are categorised.
11. Region: Answers in this section will relate to the different regions in the country where the grid is used.

