What is meant by educational triage? (2 marks)

Educational triage is the process by which students are sorted due to marketization policies, they are either the no hopers (wont achieve a grade C or above) the C/D borderline, who achieve support or the students who will definitely achieve the grade.

Outline some of the ways in which marketization and selection policies may produce social class differences in educational achievement (12 marks)

Marketisation is where the government puts business ideas into education, schools are made to compete for students and do this by achieving top spots on league tables through their GCSE results.

Teachers label students as achievers/ non-achievers, this is normally done via student’s class or ethnicity. Working class students are seen as those who will not achieve and middle class students are seen as those who will achieve. As schools are judged on their percentage of A\*-C grades teachers will focus on the hopeful group- middle class and will not waste time on helping the hopeless group- working class. This means that whilst the middle class students will be pushed to achieve the top grades, the working class will be left and will underachieve.

Another marketization policy introduced was parentocracy, this meant that parents could choose which schools their children went to. This would mean that the successful schools will become oversubscribed and the failing schools will be forced to close. This may mean that the house prices surrounding area (catchment) of the successful schools will increase, as middle class parents move in to try to get their child into the school. This would mean that through middle class economic capital, middle class achievement will improve.

Parentocracy also means that the best schools will become over-subscribed so they would be able to pick the best students. Due to teacher labelling and the A-C economy middle class students will be selected over working class students. This would be because they would be seen as easier to teach and more likely to achieve, due to their parental background. This would lead to working class children being forced to attend the less successful schools, which can mean they will underachieve.

Assess the view that social class differences in educational achievement are the result of school processes such as labelling. (20 marks)

Internal school factors are those that take place within schools. One example of this is labelling, this is the idea that students are labelled according to class stereotypes and put into particular groups or given particular work based on this. A study by Cicorel found that careers advisers gave advice to students based on their background, working class students were told to enter professions that related to their backgrounds and middleclass had a similar response. This shows that the education system perpetuates class stereotypes, which can lead to working class underachievement.

Further to the idea of stereotyping is Becker’s self-fulfilling prophecy, he argued that once a person is labelled, they then internalise it and live up to it. This theory was tested in Rosenthal and Jacobson’s study of primary school children. They gave teacher false information about a group of student’s results in a test, that the students were ‘spurters’ and showed that they would do well. Later in the year the students were tested again and they found that the students improved greatly. This shows that teacher’s expectations have a huge effect on achievement. If teacher labelling working class students as underachievers then they are most likely going to live up to that label. However labelling theory is deterministic, not all students live up to their label, and many reject it, such as the black girls in Fuller’s study.

On final reason on why student’s achievement may be affected by in school processes are pupil subcultures. These are groups of students who share similar values and ideas; they are created through differentiation- where by teachers pick out who should go into certain sets or streams, often based on class stereotypes (w/c in bottom m/c in the top). Once in those sets/ streams students start to polarise, this means they form groups that are the opposite of the other groups. For example in the top set students will oppose the bottom set students and hold very different values and vice versa. This will either create anti or pro- school subgroups, the top set pro-school group will lead to high achievement and pride in success whereas the bottom set anti-school group will reject education and become failures. Lacey identified this is a boy’s grammar school, finding that the working class boys were streamed in their first year based on ‘class’ differences and by their second year had joined the anti-school groups, resulting in differentiated educational achievement by class.

However in school processes are not the only factors that affect education, cultural deprivation theorists such as Bernstein argue that working class student’s poor upbringing and lack of educational development is why they underachieve.