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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

SOCIOLOGY

GCE Ordinary Level

Paper 2251/01

Paper 1

General comments

Within a re-organised question paper candidates coped reasonably well. There was a wide range of ability displayed, ranging from the fairly mediocre to some excellent responses. The question paper did a good job in differentiating between candidates.

It did seem that some lessons are being learned from previous years, with fewer candidates letting themselves down by not reading the question thoroughly enough, so spoiling their responses. Though there is still the need for a fair number of candidates to read *all* parts of the question, to organise an appropriate response accordingly, and allocate time appropriately, e.g. not to spend as much time on a part worth two marks as one worth eight marks. It is to some extent a question of examination preparation and practise.

The compulsory question on methodology was an effective measure of ability. Some candidates were let down, one suspects, by insufficient focus in lessons on this area, which left them floundering. Candidates need this area of the syllabus emphasising, in order to equip them to deal with such questions, as well as an understanding of the role and nature of sociology. As it was, some candidates were under-prepared for the examination, and perhaps failed to do themselves justice.

The understanding of questions seemed better, with some exceptions, answers are still too generalised, i.e. too much of "what I know about a particular topic", rather than an answer to a specific question. Candidates need help to construct their answers, they need to focus their answers, to think and organise their responses, before committing pen to paper.

The more capable and better prepared candidates did not make these mistakes. All candidates need to be encouraged to think through their answers, to look for key words and respond to key pointers in the questions. Within the parts carrying the greater number of marks, they need to develop their responses more fully, to give examples etc.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

A question quite deliberately aimed at assessing candidates understanding of sociology and science of methodology, and as mentioned above it did reveal some lack of preparation. Generally, candidates were aware of the different forms of methodology, of official statistics, but were generally weak on ethical issues, (too many did not understand the term); and few could, with any real meaning, discuss the relationship between the social and natural sciences. This suggests a weakness in preparation as much as ability. More time needs to be spent on the relevant arguments.

Question 2

There is a generally sound knowledge and awareness of the role and importance of socialisation, which the question focused on; and generally candidates handled this question quite well. The problem was part (b), where few candidates could discuss broader ideas, even implicitly. There was an over reliance on discussing gender, providing largely a follow on from part (b). Candidates need to be encouraged to widen out their responses, to think more thoroughly about what each part is after.

Question 3

This question was clearly aimed at assessing the understanding of the nature of culture and its significance, and was handled reasonably well. Candidates were less happy with the notion of change and reasons for it. It is again perhaps worthwhile reminding teachers that the notion of social change is an integral part of the syllabus, and they need to equip candidates with the knowledge to account for this, within all the areas of the syllabus.

Question 4

The major problem with **Question 4** responses, which by and large was reasonably well coped with, was part **(d)**, the changes in rates of social mobility. Few candidates appreciated that focus, and many were content to merely describe how an individual might achieve social mobility. It is about reading the question carefully, and the need to account for broad social change, the focus of the question.

Question 5

This question was assessing awareness of social stratification. Whilst the ideas of distribution of wealth caused some difficulties, most candidates coped reasonably well. The main problems lay in the level of depth and development in answers, particularly in part **(c)** and **(d)**. There is again a need to read the question carefully, i.e. part **(c)** said groups not individuals.

Question 6

A question covering political awareness and democracy, and it always seems to create problems. Power and Authority questions are always less popular, perhaps reflecting personal choice, or probably less time in class being spent on this area. The nature of the syllabus does require a more substantial preparation of candidates. The result of this was that **Question 6** was far less popular, few dealt with it effectively, and far too often it seemed the last resort of candidates looking desperately around for a fourth question to answer.

Question 7

Similarly with this question, focusing on the nature of power and authority, few candidates felt competent enough to tackle it, and a good many who tried, failed to do it justice. This section of the syllabus clearly needs more work in the classroom.

Paper 2251/02

Paper 2

General comments

Once again, the overall standard of the scripts was pleasingly high. It is only a small minority of candidates who appear ill prepared to meet the requirements of the paper. They invariably attempt to answer the questions without reference to appropriate sociological sources or evidence of sociological understanding. Their answers are scant and, in some cases, inappropriately written in note-form. Most of the candidates, however, amply demonstrate a sound knowledge of relevant sociological material and their answers are literate and well expounded.

There were no rubric errors, though a few candidates failed to number the sub-parts of each question. The importance of candidates indicating clearly where each sub-part of a question starts and finishes should be emphasised.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) The term was well understood by most candidates.
- (b) The majority of the candidates achieved full marks by identifying two example of how roles within the family have changed and describing each example accurately.
- (c) Weaker answers were confined to brief observations about just one or two reasons why the roles of children have changed. Better answers covered a wider range of reasons in greater detail.
- (d) Weak answers relied on a few general assertions about the status of men and women in modern societies. Good answers drew on a range of relevant sociological evidence about the extent of sexual equality in the family today.

Question 2

- (a) A few candidates confused the term with the nuclear family, but the vast majority gave accurate answers.
- (b) While most of the candidates were able to identify one or two relevant reasons why the extended family is usually associated with more traditional ways of life, many struggled to describe the reasons coherently and so failed to gain full marks.
- (c) This proved a difficult question for quite a few candidates. Economic progress often leads to the break-up of the extended family because it involves increased opportunities for social and geographical mobility; greater financial independence of smaller family units and individual family members; and the weakening of traditional cultural and religious ties. Good answers covered many of these points.
- (d) A few candidates attempted to answer this question without seemingly being aware of the relevant sociological debates on the subject. Good answers, by comparison, referred to the appropriate sociological arguments and evidence.

Question 3

- (a) Many candidates wrongly identified the term gender as referring to the biological differences between the sexes. Gender refers to the socially expected behaviour patterns of males and females.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify two appropriate reasons and describe each in reasonable detail.
- (c) Weak answers relied on a few assertions about how boys and girls are treated by teachers. Better answers drew on appropriate sociological evidence about gender divisions within schools.
- (d) There were many good answers to this question. The best answers considered the reasons for boys 'failure' alongside the reasons why the performance of girls has improved.

Question 4

- (a) The term was well understood by most of the candidates.
- (b) Most of the candidates were able to achieve full marks by describing accurately two ways in which formal education may improve a person's chances of being successful in society.
- (c) In the better answers several appropriate problems were identified and both home and school factors were considered.
- (d) Some of the answers demonstrated little understanding of what compensatory education programmes involve. Good answers were characterised by relevant understanding of the concept and a convincing attempt to assess the strengths and limitations of compensatory education.

Question 5

- (a) Most of the candidates recognised that subculture refers to a distinguishable set of values and behaviour associated with a particular group or movement in society.
- (b) Most candidates achieved full marks by offering a clear and detailed statement of two relevant influences.
- (c) Weaker answers relied on a few basic observations about the main characteristics of youth culture. Better answers focused specifically on the factors that help to explain the growth of youth subcultures.
- (d) Answers to this question were generally rather elementary. Good answers made a concerted attempt to assess the degree of threat that youth cultures pose and reached persuasive, well-balanced conclusions.

Question 6

- (a) This term was poorly defined overall. Many candidates simply defined the term 'minority' and failed to discuss the meaning of 'ethnicity'.
- (b) This question was well answered, with each reason fully described.
- (c) Good answers referred to relevant factors such as family responsibilities, greater maturity with age, and the possible deterrent effect of having been prosecuted and punished for previous offences.
- (d) Weak answers were restricted to one or two basic points with little sociological backing. Better answers covered a range of appropriate sociological factors and reached well-reasoned conclusions.

Question 7

- (a) Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of what is meant by the phrase 'mass media'.
- (b) This question was poorly answered, with the candidates generally failing to identify relevant trends.
- (c) Weak answers relied mainly on assertion and tended to over-generalise. Better answers identified several respects in which ownership of the mass media may be a source of power and described each with the use of appropriate examples.
- (d) A lot of the answers merited marks in the middle of the range. They succeeded in identifying several ways in which the owners may be able to influence the content of the mass media, but the answer often lacked assessment and an overall conclusion.

Question 8

- (a) Some candidates confused the term with 'life chances', but most clearly understood what is meant by 'lifestyle'.
- (b) Most of the candidates were able to gain full marks by offering a clear and accurate description of two relevant examples.
- (c) Some middling-type answers were rather list-like. Better answers described more fully several of the purposes of advertising.
- (d) Good answers discussed a range of factors, such as peer group pressure, films, pop music, sub-cultures, social concerns, and health and fitness issues. Weaker answers were restricted to a few basic observations with little or no relevant development.