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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

There was a wide range of ability displayed by candidates, and some poor responses were offset by some excellent ones. The paper did a good job in differentiating between candidates.

There was a better allocation of time by candidates and fewer candidates had problems in organising an appropriate response because they had not allocated time properly. When there were weaker responses to parts of questions carrying greater marks, it was primarily a lack of development of answers, rather than due to lack of time. Some better examination preparation and practise is required.

Question 1, the compulsory question on methodology was an effective measure of ability. It does draw attention to the need for this area of the syllabus to be highlighted and emphasised in teaching, so as to equip all candidates with the necessary skills and knowledge to deal with such questions, as well as forming a deeper understanding of the role and nature of sociology.

As a general criticism, too many candidates' responses lacked specificity; it was too often a question of writing all they knew about a topic, rather than a considered reply to a specific question. It is a question of better examination preparation and paper practise being needed, that will lead to the cumulative development of skills required to cope well. Even with the shorter responses, perhaps requiring a definition, a tighter approach should be encouraged.

There was, at times, a lack of development of answers, in the parts of the questions requiring a further comment and, a longer consideration, and these are, of course, the parts which carry the most marks. Even able candidates lost out here, and failed to do themselves justice. Often the example is stated with the advantages or disadvantages given without any further development.

The key to improvement is in better examination preparation and in making sure candidates know to look at the range of implications in a question. Candidates need to be encouraged and to practise, going beyond responding to cue words. They need to look more deeply at the question, and relate their knowledge to it. The secret lies in essay practise and good preparation. Where it happens, and this is evident within certain Centres, we see candidates doing well.

Comments on specific questions**Section A****Question 1**

This was reasonably well done, though parts **(d)** and **(e)** less so. One problem was a lack of development as was mentioned in the general analysis, though some candidates did give full and effective answers. Answers tended to be too generalised, i.e. with the questions on newspapers and historical documents, too many candidates discussed the pros and cons of methodology in general rather than being specific as the question required. There needed to be more careful reading of the question and tailoring the response accordingly.

It still seems that some candidates need more time spent on methodology, and better preparation for the examination.

Section B**Question 2**

This was a question which clearly sought to explore the concept of socialisation, a major concept, which many candidates had a fair understanding of. Reasonably well done as this question was, again the major weakness lay in a lack of development in parts **(c)** and **(d)**. A number of candidates lacked proper recognition of the question within part **(c)** and few effectively discussed variance *within* a society, but rather compared one society with another.

It is necessary to read a question and provide what is asked for. For example, in part **(d)**, too many candidates merely described socialisation, and then instinct, without engaging in their significance, or how they interrelate. Fuller examination guidance and essay practise are needed.

Question 3

This was a very popular question and the one that was generally the best answered. Gender is a popular topic which this question sought to explore. Candidates did seem well prepared in this area, were reasonably knowledgeable, and were on the whole quite successful. The criticism, again, would be lack of development in some responses, a reluctance to go beyond the obvious.

Section C**Question 4**

This question was aimed at discussion of the role of class on modern societies, and did demonstrate that the notion of social class was generally well understood; though few candidates could get into the higher bands within the late parts. It was the application of knowledge which let some candidates down and using it to answer a particular question or to discuss issues. Again, more practise at answering questions may be useful.

Question 5

This question, which was primarily seeking a discussion of social mobility, again revealed a reasonably good broad understanding of the ideas, with the major problem being the application of that knowledge.

Too many candidates in part **(d)**, for example, were content to describe the various avenues of social mobility, without assessing them, as they were required to do. More careful reading, and more practise of the answer is needed.

Section D**Question 6**

This question was aimed at consideration of democracy and was typified more by confusion rather than clarity. It was not a popular question (although when done well was done very well) and too many did it poorly; almost as if seeking desperately for a question to turn to and alighting on this. Candidates do need knowledge of the area of power and authority and of politics, even if they do not like it. The syllabus and the examination require it. Candidates do need to be better prepared in this area; they need greater knowledge and confidence, which was lacking for too many.

Question 7

Another question relating to politics, and again on the whole tackled poorly. It does suggest a lack of interest or limited classroom coverage and preparation. This is a handicap for candidates, in an examination where there is not an extensive question choice. Candidates need to have a fuller knowledge of this area, and of all areas of the syllabus.

Paper 2251/02

Paper 2

General comments

The standard of the answers overall was pleasingly high. Most of the candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the relevant sociological material. However, some candidates seemed poorly prepared for the examination and relied mainly on assertion and general knowledge in answering the questions. It should be emphasised that answers lacking references to relevant sociological concepts and studies achieve very few marks.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

- (a) Most of the candidates were able to achieve full marks by providing a satisfactory definition of the term 'traditional society'.
- (b) Almost all of the candidates achieved full marks by describing two functions of the family.
- (c) Weak answers discussed changes in family roles rather than focusing on the way functions have changed. Good answers identified several ways in which family functions have changed and linked this clearly to the process of modernisation.
- (d) Weak answers relied on assertion rather than sociological knowledge and reasoning. Better answers discussed the significance of the family, changes such as the rising divorce rate, loss of family functions, and the decline in first marriages.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates recognised that monogamy refers to the marriage of one man to one woman. A few candidates confused the term with polygamy.
- (b) Some candidates clearly lacked an understanding of the term 'polygamy'. Good answers identified two relevant reasons why polygamy exists in some societies and described each reason in the requisite detail.
- (c) Quite a few candidates confused the reference to declining first marriages with the notion of the rising divorce rate. Good answers focused squarely on the issue of why, in many modern societies, more people apparently are choosing not to marry or delay marriage until a later age.
- (d) Good answers identified a range of evidence purportedly supporting the idea that marriage is less important than it used to be and subjected this material to critical scrutiny. Weaker answers were often confined to a few simple points about the rising divorce rate.

Question 3

- (a) Some candidates confused the term 'informal education' with the hidden curriculum. Good answers note that informal education takes place within the wider community, not in schools and colleges.
- (b) Most of the candidates were able to describe adequately two functions performed by schools apart from preparing young people for work.
- (c) Some candidates struggled to identify relevant reasons why skills are learned mainly through informal education in less industrialised societies. Good answers discussed three or four possible reasons, such as the people being too poor to afford schooling, rural communities possibly having no need for formal education, and the influence of repressive political regimes fearing the introduction of mass education schemes in some countries.
- (d) Good answers described several ways in which schools prepare young people for work. At the top of the mark range, the responses also provided an assessment of how far schools contribute to preparing young people for work.

Question 4

- (a) Some candidates confused the term 'ethnic minority' with the idea of an underclass or impoverished group within the population. Good answers noted that the term refers to a group of people who share a common culture that is different from that of the majority of society.
- (b) Almost all of the candidates described adequately two ways in which home background may influence a child's chances of being successful at school.
- (c) Good answers considered both the positive and the negative aspects of peer group influence in the context of educational achievement. A few candidates appeared not to have heard of the term 'peer group'.
- (d) Good answers discussed a range of factors that may influence the educational performance of ethnic minority groups, including the process of labelling, the hidden curriculum, community and home background, and cultural capital explanations.

Question 5

- (a) The candidates defined the term well.
- (b) Most of the candidates understood the difference between formal and informal social control.
- (c) Good answers described a range of mechanisms that may be used to achieve social control in tribal societies, such as ritual, intermarriage, ostracism, religion, and publicly voiced complaints.
- (d) Weak answers were confined to a few simple points about where power lies in society. Better answers often approached the question by discussing the Marxist versus pluralist views of social control.

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates recognised that juvenile delinquency refers to crimes committed by young people, usually under the age of 18.
- (b) Most of the candidates were able to identify two reasons why rates of juvenile delinquency are much higher in inner city areas.
- (c) Good answers discussed several reasons why young working class males are responsible for a high proportion of the recorded crime in modern societies. Candidates impressed the Examiners particularly by considering the possibility that the prevalence of young working class males in the crime figures may, in part, be a function of the way in which the law enforcement agencies operate.
- (d) Good answers offered a solid critique of official crime statistics, explaining why the figures may be misleading and unreliable. Some candidates also impressed by considering ways in which the crime statistics may still be useful in sociological research despite their limitations.

Question 7

- (a) The term was well defined by almost all of the candidates.
- (b) Good answers referred to forms of communication such as religious instruction, works of art, face-to-face communication, and official messengers.
- (c) Weak answers offered a few simple points about how the mass media influence behaviour in general. Better answers focused on the specific ways in which the media may influence young people.
- (d) Good answers demonstrated knowledge of relevant sociological theories, including the hypodermic syringe model, the audience selection model, and the cultural effects approach.

Question 8

- (a) Newsworthiness refers to the criteria used by journalists to decide what information and events are worth reporting in the news. A lot of the candidates struggled to define the term.
- (b) Most of the candidates were able to describe adequately two factors that influence the content of the news apart from the concept of newsworthiness.
- (c) Good answers discussed several reasons why news reports may contain bias, covering both the internal processes of newsgathering and external influences such as political interference and the demands of advertisers.
- (d) Weak answers offered a few basic points about the supposed power of the media. Better answers focused on the extent to which the media are able to change and shape political attitudes specifically. The pluralist versus Marxist debate featured to good effect in some answers.