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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

Overall, there was a sound level of knowledge and understanding; indeed some questions were capably handled by a sizeable number of candidates. There were some excellent answers to the questions.

The major weakness lay in candidates not reading the question with sufficient depth, so as to be sure as to what was being required of them. The result, in some cases, meant at best a partial response, with some allusion to the necessary points to raise, but not a coherent coverage of the question. It is not sufficient for candidates to write all that they know of a topic (however relevant that may be), without referring to the question asked. It leads to over-generalisations and little focus within the response. Proper thought, planning and consideration of what is actually required within the answer are crucial, and candidates need to be trained in this to be able to do themselves justice. This needs to be emphasised more in candidate preparation. This is true between, as well as within, questions. Candidates need to differentiate more, e.g. between socialisation and culture, so as to focus more accurately between questions, to make their responses more relevant. Some candidates would also benefit from better time management. Candidates tend to spend too long on **Questions 1** or **2**, leaving little time for the others; as a result, their responses are rushed and brief.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The question tested the appreciation of how and why socialisation is a life long process. A very popular question which was largely well-handled; most candidates had a sound knowledge of the concept. The main weakness lay in not always relating that knowledge to the specifics of the question, focusing on interaction, talking about pressures. Tighter responses would have benefited a fair number of candidates.

Question 2

This question primarily required an appreciation of cultural difference, between cultures, and over time. When this was realised, some highly effective responses were produced. When not, there was some confusion and misunderstanding, so that a sizeable number of candidates failed to deliver what **Sections B** and **C** required. Careful reading of all sections of the question must be stressed.

Question 3

This question focused primarily on racism, its causes and effects. There was a general understanding of effects, though less of causes. Answers tended to be over generalised and descriptive. This may have implications for teaching in this area.

Question 4

A consideration of the nature of power was the main requirement of this question. By and large, it was weakly handled. Candidates seemed very unsure as to what was required, and seemed unhappy in dealing with the concept. Clearer teaching in this area would be helpful.

Question 5

An understanding of culture, sub-cultures and their impact on peoples' lives, was assessed here. Responses were imaginative and perceptive, while others were mundane and over descriptive, with candidates failing to tease out the nature of identity. The relationship between culture and identity possibly needs emphasising more.

Question 6

The relationship between technology and social change was being investigated here. This question caused some candidates problems. It is this cross-over between different sections of the syllabus which needs stressing to candidates more, as to what is expected of them.

Question 7

An analysis of poverty was the basis of this question, and many candidates showed good understanding of causes and effects. This was one of the most successfully completed questions.

Question 8

Again, a question relating to power; how it is obtained and used. Overall, not many attempted this question, and few with any authority. This area of the syllabus seems unpopular with candidates, so that few are conversant with it. The concept of power needs greater emphasis and consideration within the classroom.

Question 9

This question tested the awareness and understanding of gender discrimination. It was popular, and generally, effectively answered. Candidates have clearly benefited from a focus on this in teaching.

Question 10

This question sought to assess understanding of the concept of democracy, and the role of governments today. Few attempted this, as in previous years, indicating that the sociology of politics is an area of the syllabus where candidates need a more substantial preparation.

Paper 2251/02

Paper 2

General comments

As in previous years, the performance of many of the candidates was of a very high standard. Their answers were consistently accurate and detailed, and demonstrated a good understanding of the relevant subject matter. At the other extreme, there were some rather poor scripts, though slightly fewer than last year. Such scripts are characterised by scanty responses that rely on assertion and general knowledge rather than informed and reasoned sociological comment.

There were relatively few cases of rubric error. Some candidates continue to answer more questions than the specification requires. It is the view of the Examiners that these candidates penalise themselves by spreading their effort too widely. They would be better advised to concentrate on answering the specified number of questions only.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

- (a) Most of the candidates were able to define the term *functions* accurately.
- (b) Good answers identified several relevant functions and briefly described the nature of each one.

- (c) Weak answers tended to discuss family functions in general rather than focusing specifically on how these functions have changed as societies have modernised.
- (d) Some of the responses focused too much on the reasons for the rising divorce rate in general rather than addressing the specific issue of whether the rising divorce rate is an indication that the family is in decline.

Question 2

- (a) Good answers noted that the nuclear family is based on co-residence of the biological father, mother and dependent children. Although the co-residence point is an important part of the definition of the nuclear family, some candidates overlooked this in their answers.
- (b) Most candidates provided accurate descriptions of two other types of family unit. The examples used most frequently were the extended family and the one parent family.
- (c) While most candidates correctly noted that children are an economic asset in many less industrialised societies, few went on to mention other relevant factors such as the influence of religion and tradition on decisions about family size.
- (d) Weaker answers tended to rely on assertion, with little reference to relevant sociological sources. Some better answers nevertheless failed to gain full marks because the discussion was one-sided. Good answers considered a balanced range of points about the extent to which the nuclear family is in decline in modern industrial societies.

Question 3

- (a) Good answers referred to the changing occupational structure and greater job opportunities for women as a key factor behind the trend towards greater sharing of tasks in the home. Increase in male unemployment and changing expectations of women were also mentioned as relevant factors.
- (b) Good answers drew on appropriate sociological studies of gender inequality in the home. Weak answers offered only a few general observations about the sharing of tasks within the home.
- (c) Most answers focused on the lack of economic power as a problem women face in trying to achieve equality with men in the family. Candidates who used the concept of patriarchy to develop their answers particularly impressed the Examiners.
- (d) Weaker answers discussed the causes of divorce in general, without drawing direct links to the issues raised by the question. Better answers addressed explicitly the issue of whether the rising divorce rate reflects a reaction by women against inequality in the home.

Question 4

- (a) There were many very good answers to this question, covering both material and cultural factors linked to the home that may affect the educational performance of children.
- (b) Good answers, of which there were many, considered the influences of labelling, peer group, and the hidden curriculum on the educational performance of working class children.
- (c) There were some list-like responses that achieved middling marks where the suggestions made were plausible. Better answers explained briefly the reasoning behind each suggestion for how schools might seek to improve the educational performance of working class children.
- (d) Weaker answers discussed reasons for educational underachievement in general rather than linking the points to the ethnic minority groups in particular. Better answers focused directly on issues of racism and ethnic inequality.

Question 5

- (a) This was answered well in virtually every case.

- (b) While most candidates were able to identify one or two reasons why informal education was more prevalent mainly in less industrialised societies, few were able to offer a wider range of points and to develop these points in appropriate detail.
- (c) Good answers noted that formal education systems prepare young people for the world of work through teaching skills, providing qualifications, and by instilling appropriate values and attitudes.
- (d) Some answers were rather brief and lacking in sociological insight. Better answers discussed the role of education in social control and the transmission of core values.

Question 6

There were very few answers to this question.

Question 7

- (a) A lot of the answers were based on assertion and personal observation. Better responses referred to sociological studies of the relationship between television viewing and violent behaviour.
- (b) Again, good answers were the ones that focused on relevant sociological studies, such as those examining the impact of opinion polls and television coverage on voting behaviour.
- (c) Good answers included detailed references to media role models and the impact of advertising on the lifestyles of young people.
- (d) Candidates who explored the possible clash of values and lifestyles that exposure to the media may bring particularly impressed the Examiners.

Question 8

- (a) This was answered well by almost all of the candidates.
- (b) There were many answers that lacked sufficient range of points to gain full marks.
- (c) There were some good answers to this question that were based on an adapted version of the Marxist versus pluralist views of whose interests are served by the media.
- (d) There were a few well-developed answers to this question, but many others were rather too brief and lacking in range of points.

Question 9

- (a) The candidates who attempted this question demonstrated a sound understanding of what is meant by the term *stereotype*.
- (b) The best answers made good use of relevant sociological concepts, such as role models and gender divisions, to develop key points.
- (c) Most candidates were able to make one or two relevant points, but most struggle to go beyond this in terms of development and breadth of coverage.
- (d) There were some thoughtful, balanced answers that demonstrated a sound understanding of how the media may portray ethnic minority groups.

Question 10

- (a) Some weak answers simply equated alienation with being unhappy at work. Better answers demonstrated a sound sociological understanding of the concept.
- (b) This question was answered very well by most candidates.

- (c) Good answers referred to the way that the division of labour may reduce the skill level of many jobs and make work boring and repetitive. The fact that workers may lose control of their work was also mentioned as a relevant factor by some of the candidates.
- (d) Good answers noted that certain management techniques, low wages, poor job conditions, and lack of authority and control in the workplace may all cause workers to feel alienated.

Question 12

There were very few answers to these questions.

Question 13

- (a) Some answers simply referred to the idea of 'a population where people are getting older'. Better answers gave a more technical definition by noting that the term ageing population refers to a society where the birth rate is declining relative to the death rate.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify a range of relevant points to gain full marks.
- (c) This was well answered overall, though the consequences that were mentioned were almost always negative ones.
- (d) Weaker answers made only one or two suggestions, with little or no development. Better answers made a range of plausible suggestions and explained the reasoning behind each one.

Question 14

- (a) The term was accurately defined in almost every case.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify a range of relevant points to gain full marks.
- (c) Most of the candidates were able to make one or two relevant points, but only a few were able to provide a more sustained response.
- (d) A lot of the answers focused rather too narrowly on birth control campaigns. Better answers considered other factors also, such as positive discrimination in favour of smaller families and education programmes.

Question 15

- (a) Simple lists of relevant diseases gained a few marks, but the best answers specified the *type* of illnesses that are related to poverty in poor countries e.g. diseases related to malnutrition and poor diet, and to poor public health conditions.
- (b) Likewise, simple lists of relevant diseases gained a few marks, but the best answers specified the *type* of illnesses. E.g. diseases of affluence and excess, and those related to longevity and stress.
- (c) Good answers noted how improvements in health and welfare facilities, together with better education, are ways in which economic development can have a positive affect on the pattern of illness and death.
- (d) There were some good answers that drew heavily on the example of particular rural health programmes.

Question 16

- (a) Simple lists of relevant crimes gained a few marks, while the best answers also identified the *types* of crimes that are most likely to appear in the official crime statistics e.g. those involving violence, or property where claims are made for insurance purposes.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify a range of relevant reasons why many crimes are not reported to the police.

- (c) Most of the candidates were able to make one or two relevant points, but only a few developed their points in sufficient detail to gain full marks.
- (d) Good answers discussed the merits of victimisation and self-report studies.

Question 17

There were very few answers to this question.

Question 18

- (a) This was well answered by almost all of the candidates.
- (b) This was answered well in most cases, with references to a broad range of mechanisms for achieving informal social control.
- (c) Good answers drew on a theoretical understanding, often with references to the Marxist, functionalist and pluralist perspectives.
- (d) Weaker answers relied on a few basic points, often in the form of assertion. Better answers applied appropriate sociological concepts and reasoning, with some particularly good references to sub-cultures and alternative value systems.