SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

SED2601

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Preface

1. Introduction

Welcome to the module, Sociology of Education: An introduction. We hope that you will enjoy engaging with the prescribed textbook, *Sociology of Education* (SoE), with its interactive text, and that you find the content interesting and informative. This document serves as a wrap-around guide which will provide you with additional support and will facilitate your understanding of the prescribed textbook (SoE).

Importantly, we hope that the module will encourage you to consider the individual, the family and the education system within the context of the broader society. The word "society" is central to the discipline of sociology of education which is concerned with how schools interact with social structures, such as the family, religion, government and the economy. You will notice that there are different theories in Sociology of Education (found in chapter 1), which explain the relationship between schools and society. One of the aims of the module is to introduce you to a selection of these theories. You will quickly grasp that there is no single theoretical understanding of schools in society and that the different theories often present ideas that are contradictory.

We also aim to enable you to apply sociological thinking to education both globally and locally to the South African context. In all the chapters you will find a range of case studies. These have been included to help you understand how certain theories or ideas can be applied in practice to the realities of education within a social context (chapter 2). In addition, the discipline of Sociology of Education also necessitates that we consider a historical view of society. You will find this in chapter 3 of SoE. The latter chapter also includes the subjects of democracy, citizenship and citizenship education. Chapter 4 examines diversity and culture in education and covers the central issues of gender, race and social class.

To clarify the content of Sociology of Education, this wrap-around guide contains seven learning units which will be linked to the chapters in SoE. So, you will need to use this wrap-around guide in combination with the prescribed textbook. You will find a variety of exercises in SoE which you are strongly encouraged to complete. These will be supplemented by exercises in your wrap-around guide.

Apart from the above, we shall provide general learning outcomes in the wrap-around guide and more specific learning outcomes at the start of each learning unit. We shall also provide you with a supplementary list of recommended readings which you can access on myUnisa. At the end of each chapter in SoE there is a comprehensive reference list which will help you to select relevant literature. For additional support, you can contact your lecturers via e-mail.

We wish you all the best with your studies in the Sociology of Education.

2. Learning outcomes

After working through this module, you will be able to:

- Work with sociological concepts and theories in the context of education.
- Use a sociological perspective to enhance your understanding of education.

- Identify and understand the key concepts of functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism.
- Identify and understand macro-sociological and micro-sociological perspectives, and understand their interrelationship.
- Work with the ecological model of the school.
- Identify some of the merits and shortcomings of the sociological theories.
- Apply sociological thinking to education in general and to the South African educational context more specifically.
- Grasp the concept of citizenship both globally and in South Africa.
- Analyse schooling in South Africa by adopting a sociological perspective which addresses both past and present concerns.

Some of the techniques used in your exercises in the wrap-around guide include the following:

Identify	Describe	Explain
Questioning	Evaluate	Compare
Summarise	Discuss	Mindmapping
Paragraph writing	Narrative writing	

PRESCRIBED TEXTBOOK: SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Your prescribed textbook, *Sociology of Education* (2018), forms the core of this module.

While you are working through the wrap-around guide, you will need to consult the prescribed textbook. To simplify the reference to the prescribed textbook, *Sociology of Education*, the abbreviation SoE will be used throughout the wrap-around guide.

LEARNING UNIT 1

What is sociology of education?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After working through this learning unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the concept of sociology of education
- Determine the functions of sociology of education and explain the main premises of the theories.
- Explain how schools are linked to social institutions/systems and social structures.
- Provide a broad explanation of three of the major sociology of education theories.

NB: Learning unit 1 links with chapter 1: Theories in Sociology of Education.

SCHEMATIC OVERVIEW

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

MAIN IDEAS

- Sociology
- Education
- Sociology of Education
- Society
- Social systems
- Social structure
- Sub-systems
- Macro-sociological and micro-sociological perspectives

FUNCTIONS OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

- Assimilation and transmission of culture and traditions
- The development of new social patterns
- The activation of constructive and creative forces

THREE MAJOR SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION THEORIES

- Functionalism
- Conflict theory
- Symbolic interactionism

NOTE THE FOLLOWING

- **Key concepts in the schematic overview:** Keep the above concepts in mind when reading through SoE. We shall clarify the concepts as we work through the textbook.
- **Learn to interact with your prescribed text:** There is a glossary on page 1 of SoE which provides a list of some of the key words found in the chapter. Ensure that you understand these concepts on completing the learning unit.

The purpose of chapter 1 in SoE is to discuss and define three key concepts: sociology, education and sociology of education. In addition, the chapter reviews three theoretical frameworks associated with the sociology of education, namely functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism. In learning unit 1, we will address what the sociology of education entails and provide a brief overview of the three theories. In learning units 2, 3 and 4, we will examine these theories in much more detail.

WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION?

The sociology of education uses theoretical perspectives and rigorous research to provide important insights into the ways in which schools affect individuals and groups. We begin by clarifying three basic concepts: sociology, education and sociology of education.

Sociology studies social groups and individuals and their interrelationships with social structures. Most of us see the world in terms of what is "every day" and familiar to us: Think of your family, friends, school and workplace. Sociology helps us to "think ourselves away" from familiar routines and to look at them with fresh eyes. Sociology helps us to engage with a broader view of our lives and helps us to explain why we act as we do. It also teaches us to question what we think is "natural" and what we take for granted in society and in our everyday practices. For example, is it natural for girls and boys to line up separately in schools or is this practice shaped by society? Sociology is not just about collecting facts, such as a school has 10 classrooms. Sociologists want to know why certain things happen in society and why, for example, we have the coexistence of well-equipped schools and less privileged schools. Sociological theories also look at why societies are structured in the way that they are and how these societies change over time. See section 1.2.1 of SoE for further details.

Education is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and preparing individuals intellectually for mature life (Schofield, 1999:2). Education is not a static phenomenon, but a dynamic and ever-changing process (Dhiman, 2008:104). Generally, education serves as a form of socialisation. It is the means through which knowledge and learning skills are acquired for servicing society and maintaining order (Siyakwazi & Siyakwazi, 1999:4). See section 1.2.2 of SoE for further details.

Sociology of education is the learning of educational structures, processes and practices from a sociological perspective. It is a core field within the discipline of sociology. However, it is also considered to be a part of the discipline of education. Therefore, sociology of education defines the scientific analysis of the social processes and social patterns involved in the educational system. This means that it is used to increase the understanding of the relationship between educational institutions and society, both at the micro and the macro levels. See section 1.2.3 of SoE for further details.

ACTIVITY 1.1

Think about the two basic components of sociology of education: sociology and education. Without looking at SoE, explain what you think these two words mean.

Sociology	Education

ACTIVITY 1.2

Read the definitions in sections 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 on pages 2, 3 and 4 of SoE and summarise them:

Sociology_____

_____

_____

Education_____

_____

_____

ACTIVITY 1.3

Read section 1.2.3 on page 4 of SoE. Sociology of Education focuses on "educational structure, processes and practices from a sociological perspective". "Educational structures" could mean how education is structured by the state (the provision of state schools in society); "educational processes" could mean development in the educational field perhaps around the curriculum and "practices" could mean what happens in schools, such as organising the day around a timetable.

Provide your own examples of structure, processes and practices within an educational context.

_____

_____

NOTE THE FOLLOWING

What is meant by "curriculum"? One's understanding of curriculum is that it reflects all the modules taught at a school. Another meaning of curriculum is broader and it embraces everything that is taught in schools both explicitly and implicitly. Learners cover various subjects at school, but they also learn about being punctual and polite (this acquisition of social skills is sometimes referred to as the hidden curriculum). Some interpretations of the curriculum include the idea of power, for example, who decides what is taught in the schools?

NB: A syllabus has a narrower focus and provides guidelines on what should be taught, for example, in mathematics on a day-to-day basis.

MICRO- AND MACRO-SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Micro-sociological and macro-sociological approaches help us to understand the **level of analysis** of sociological theories. See page 6 of SoE for a definition of micro- and macro-sociological approaches.

Micro-sociological approaches focus on small, everyday situations and incorporate our face-to-face interactions (communications, connections) with other human beings. Interactions are found in all social institutions such as the school, the family and the work place.

Macro-sociological approaches tend to focus on long-term processes within society, such as the development of modern, urban, industrialised societies. If a sociological theory focuses on *large* social systems, such as the economy or on the political system then we tend to think of these theories as "macro".

NOTE THE FOLLOWING

What is important to grasp is that micro- and macro-approaches are interrelated. To understand face-to-face interactions in the classroom we also need to have grasped the bigger, institutional background of people's lives. For instance, if you are studying "everyday" behaviour in schools you would need to examine the bigger picture such as the different social classes (e.g. middle class and working class) that exist in schools or certain changes impacting on the school such as computer technology.

ACTIVITY 1.4

Consider the following 3 issues in education: **Bullying; the provision of textbooks; the provision of school buildings**. Explain how these can be seen from both micro- and macro-sociological perspectives.

THE FUNCTIONS OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Read through pages 4–6 in the prescribed textbook for an overview of the functions of sociology of education. According to SoE, education has the following functions: Assimilation and transmission of culture and traditions; development of new social patterns; activation and constructive and creative forces. Note that the inclusion of culture and tradition in school practices must follow the principles of democracy. In terms of the Constitution in South Africa, we cannot "force" citizens (or learners) to follow one set of traditions or fit in with one culture.

ACTIVITY 1.5

Can you think of any other functions of education appropriate to South African education?

THREE THEORIES OF SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION: FUNCTIONALISM, CONFLICT THEORY AND SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Chapter 1 of the prescribed textbook introduces some of sociology's main theories of education which examine schools within the context of modern, industrialised societies. Importantly, sociology of education is about humans and their complex behaviour and as such it is difficult to find one answer or one theory which explains the whole of society.

The main ideas of the following three theories will be discussed in this section. Learning units 2, 3 and 4 will develop the discussion on these theories and link the theories to family, school and society (see SoE: pages 14–17).

NOTE THE FOLLOWING

By using core concepts, a **theory** attempts to explain rather than merely describe something. Sociological theories attempt to explain how societies work. For example, a core concept of functionalism is order and in conflict theory the notion of inequality is central to its argument. Giddens (2006:104) states the following: "A diversity of theoretical approaches is found in Sociology. The reason for this is not particularly puzzling: Theoretical disputes are difficult to resolve even in the natural sciences. In sociology of education we face special difficulties because of the complex problems involved in subjecting our own behaviour to study."

Consequently, the points of view found in the three theories will sometimes clash!

ACTIVITY **1.6**

Read through the following introductory sections in SoE: Functionalism on page 6 (section 1.3), conflict theory on pages 12–13 (section 1.4) and symbolic interactionism on pages 19–20 (section 1.5).

NB: Only read the introductions to the theories for this exercise. In the table below, write down the main argument of the theories and the main authors of the three theories.

Theory	Main argument	Authors
Functionalism		
Conflict theory		
Symbolic interactionism		

NOTE THE FOLLOWING

Before you start with the learning units on the three theories, take note of the following: Sometimes you might feel confused about the key ideas and terminology of theories. You need to remember that some ideas are specific to theories and indeed have even been "invented" by some of the relevant theorists. Other ideas cross over to different theories. You might read about the term "social system" in functionalism and "social structure" in conflict theory. However, Parsons, a functionalist, also wrote about social structures. It is important to remember to keep concepts within the context of the theory in which you find them. One way of dealing with this confusion is to try to understand that sometimes terminology is used synonymously or by a variety of theorists. At other times, you may need to associate the usage of the concepts and terminology with a specific theorist.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Dhiman, OP. 2008. *Understanding education: An overview*. Dehli, India: Gyan Books.

Giddens, A. 2006 *Sociology*. 5th edition. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Schofield, K. 1999. *The purposes of education 3: Final report*, [Online]. Available: http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/qse2010/pdf/purposesofed3.pdf. Accessed 1 December 2015.

Siyakuazi, B & Siyakwazi, P. 1999. *Strategies in teaching and learning*. Harare: SAPES Books.

Stewart, P & Zaaiman, J. 2014. *Sociology: A South African introduction*. Cape Town: Juta.

LEARNING UNIT 2

Functionalism

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After working through this learning unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the theory of functionalism and its relationship to schooling.
- Apply some of the main ideas of functionalism to the family, school and broader society.
- Develop a critique (criticism) of the theory.

NB: Learning unit 2 links with chapter 1 in SoE: Theories in sociology of education.

SCHEMATIC OVERVIEW

THREE MAJOR SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION THEORIES

- Functionalism
- Conflict theory
- Symbolic interactionism

MAIN IDEAS

- Functionalism (macro-sociological): Social order, consensus, social systems, socialisation, norms and values, manifest and latent functions.
- Conflict theory (macro-sociological): Conflict, change, social class, inequalities, power.
- Symbolic interactionism (micro-sociological): Capacity for thought, meaning, interaction, interpretation, self and agency.

MAIN PROPONENTS OF THESE THEORIES

- Functionalism: Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton
- Conflict theory: Karl Marx, Max Weber, C Wright Mills, Bowles and Gintis and Pierre Bourdieu.
- Symbolic interactionism: Max Weber, George H Mead, Erving Goffman, Herbert Blumer and Charles H Cooley.

FUNCTIONALISM

Durkheim (1858–1917) (1956), one of the major proponents of functionalism, asked the question: What holds society together? He proposed that there are two types of solidarity that form the "glue" that holds society together, namely:

- Mechanical solidarity which occurs when society is held together by shared belief systems
- Organic solidarity which reflects the specialisation of tasks found in modern industrialised societies.

The specialisation of tasks refers to the vast range of jobs found in modern society: Industrial workers, medical specialists, engineers, computer analysts and so on. Durkheim argued that in these societies people are held together by factors, such as economic interdependence. Functionalist theory compares society to a living organism. Just as the parts of the human body function together, the various components of society also function together to maintain a social "whole". Durkheim contended that to produce social stability, the different parts of modern industrial society need to work together to form a complex whole. For example, functionalists argue that there are links between schooling and the economy and links between schooling and the family. Hence, if the economy does not function this will affect education and families negatively.

NB: See section 1.3 page 7 of SoE for more information on mechanical and organic solidarity.

ACTIVITY 2.1

Functionalism uses an organic analogy or comparison, such as the body to explain how society works (or functions). What analogy would you use to explain society? Justify your choice.

Robert Merton, a theorist of functionalism, wrote about manifest and latent functions:

Manifest functions: These are apparent to participants who take part in a social activity. For example, a timetable in a school is "known" and can be seen in most contemporary schools. It has the manifest function of planning the teachers' and learners' daily activities.

Latent functions cannot be seen, but have certain effects on participants. For example, the timetable might have the latent function of engendering obedience and compliancy in children.

NB: See section 1.3 page 7 of SoE for further information and examples on Merton's manifest and latent functions.

ACTIVITY 2.2

Draw on your experience of school to provide your own example of manifest and latent functions. Explain why your example is manifest and why it is latent.

Manifest functions	Latent functions

NB: We shall investigate the role schools play in functionalist theory in more depth in learning unit 3.

ACTIVITY 2.3

Do you think that for society to function/work there should be some agreement on basic values? Justify your position.

Durkheim and Parsons

Two major authors, Durkheim and Parsons, are associated with the theory of functionalism (see pages 7–10 of SoE). Durkheim saw education and particularly the teaching of history as important foundations for that stability.

ACTIVITY 2.4

Read the quote from Haralambos and Holborn (1990:229) on page 8 of SoE and identify the main points about education made by Durkheim.

Parsons (1902–1979) elaborated on the work of Durkheim and his work focused on "how society functions as asystem" (see section 1.3.1.2 page 9 of SoE). Parsons argued that if social systems were to survive they need to perform four basic functions, what he called the AGIL model.

NOTE THE FOLLOWING

AGIL is an acronym for **A**daptation, **G**oal attainment, **I**ntegration and **L**atency.

ACTIVITY 2.5

Look at the summary of the AGIL model in section 1.3.1.2, page 9 of SoE. Do you agree that these functions should be in place for a society to work? What do you think could go wrong? Is it possible to put the AGIL model into practice in societies?

Hint: Look at Parson's premises on functionalism, section 1.3.1.2, page 10 of SoE. You will see that even though it is important for society to differentiate so that it can adapt to modern industrialisation, differentiation can also be problematic because it is difficult to coordinate large numbers of systems. One of the reasons for this is that differentiation can lead to some systems seeing themselves as more powerful or independent from other systems.

NB: Before you move on to the next section, complete the activities on page 10 of SoE.

CRITIQUE OF FUNCTIONALISM

Giddens (2006:835) writes the following:

"There is little doubt that functionalist theory does tell us something significant about education systems; they do try to provide individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to participate in societies, and schools do teach children some of the values and morals of wider society. However, functionalist theory appears to overstate the case for a set of society-wide values. There are many cultural differences within a single society and the notion of a set of central values that should be taught to all may not be accurate or well received. This highlights a recurring problem within functionalist accounts, namely the concept of 'society' itself. Functionalists see education systems as serving several functions for society as a whole, but the problem is that this assumes that society is relatively homogeneous [the same] and that all social groups share similar interests. Is this really true?"

This means that although functionalism has valid points to make about education systems, it can be criticised for assuming that there is only one culture in society and schools should transmit that culture if society is to function properly. As Giddens suggests this is problematic.

ACTIVITY 2.6

Read through section 1.3.3 on the critique of functionalism on page 12 of SoE.

1. Pick out key words, such as 'status quo' and 'indoctrination'. Within the context of the above section, write down the meanings of the selected words.

2. Identify the major criticisms of functionalism.

RECOMMENDED READING

Blackledge, D & Hunt, B. 1985. *Sociological interpretations of education*. London: Routledge.

Durkheim, E. 1956. *Education and sociology*. New York: Free Press.

Giddens, A. 2006. *Sociology*. Fifth Edition. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Haralambos, M & Holborn, M. 1990. *Sociology: Themes and perspectives*. London: Collins Education.

LEARNING UNIT 3

Conflict theory

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After working through this learning unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the main ideas of conflict theory.
- Identify the main proponents of conflict theory.
- Explain how inequalities exist in modern capitalist societies.
- Develop a critique of the theory.

NB: Refer to the schematic overview in learning unit 2.

CONFLICT THEORY (MARXISM)

Conflict theory is deeply influenced by the writings of Karl Marx (Marxism). In the 1800s (19th century), there was an unprecedented growth of industrialisation and the economic system of capitalism became influential. Marx focused his attention on the development of capitalism and developed a strong critique of the system. Capitalism was and is characterised by the following points:

- The ownership of capital (that is, money) and assets such as factories and machinery. The owners are known as capitalists.
- Waged labour, these are the employees who work for the owners. Waged workers are also referred to as the working class.
- Capitalism revolves around the central issue of industrialised society and the social class system.
- Marx argues that the relationship between the capitalists and the working class is based on conflict because it is inherently unequal and exploitative.
- Capitalists and workers are dependent on each other, but they are in an unequal relationship. The inequalities are based on the Marxist argument that workers do not have access to the means of production (e.g. the factory buildings and machinery) because the capitalists are the owners of these. Workers are obliged to sell their labour to an owner who extracts profit from this labour.
- Conflict theorists also argue that because there are of inequalities society needs to change so that a more equal society can be created.

What can we conclude about Marxism from these points?

- Society is based on conflict between workers and owners: The "haves" and the "have nots".
- Society consists of social classes: broadly speaking the owners, middle class and working class. These social classes are often in conflict with each other.

ACTIVITY 3.1

Read through section 1.4.1 on page 14 of SoE on Marx, Weber and Mills. The three theorists have different ideas about how conflict manifests itself in society. Marx argues that the state uses property and material conditions to gain political power. Weber, for instance, proposes that economic factors were important, but that ideas and values also could bring about social change. Mills focuses on the different interests that emerge in society. For example, the middle classes might have certain interests and privileges in society which they work hard to protect.

Outline the theorists' three different notions of conflict. Provide examples which reflect their approaches.

Marx	Weber	Mills
Examples:	Examples:	Examples:

Furthermore, conflict theorists tend to reject the emphasis on consensus found in functionalism and argue that the theory provides an insufficient focus on the divisions and inequalities in society. These inequalities are often based on race, class and gender differences and lead to conflict rather than consensus. Conflict theory also focuses on power relations and the inevitable tensions between dominant and disadvantaged groups. Conflict theory is concerned with large structures such as social class hence it takes a macro perspective on society.

ACTIVITY 3.2

Think about your own life and jot down some autobiographical information. Also include something about your family and your schooling.

My narrative: family and school

Read through the three case studies presented in SoE (pages 13, 15 and 16).

Are there any similarities/differences between your narrative and the case studies?

Similarities with case studies	Differences with case studies

Now read the sections on conflict theory and families: Section 1.4.2 on page 14 of SoE. In this section conflict theory proposes that society and families play a role in perpetuating inequalities. Consider what you have learnt so far about conflict theory in learning unit 1. Does your life reflect aspects of the theory in any way?

ACTIVITY 3.3

Comment on the following points made in sections 1.4.2 and 1.4.3 of SoE

1. Families work towards reproducing/continuing social inequalities

2. The myth that education is for everyone

3. The existence of conflict between various interest groups

NB: Do this activity together with the activities found on page 17 of SoE.

ACTIVITY 3.4

Read through section 1.4.6 on page 19 of SoE. Summarise the criticisms of conflict theory. Can you think of any further criticisms?

CRITIQUE OF CONFLICT THEORY

One of the criticisms in section 1.4.6 page 19 of SoE is that conflict theory can be deterministic. What this means is that social forces can determine/control who we are and what jobs we end up doing. For example, if someone is born into a working-class family, they will go to a working-class school and end up in working class employment. This is a deterministic position because it does not consider free will, human agency and the ability to move into a different class position. Conflict theory also does not consider that schools do not merely reproduce social class structures, for example, some schools actively encourage learners to aspire and achieve despite their disadvantaged circumstances.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Giddens, A. 2006. *Sociology*. 5th edition. Cambridge: Polity Press. Chapter 17: There are two relevant sections: Theories of schooling and inequality (pages 704 and 711) and Inequality in education (pages 714–723).

Ballantyne, J, Hammock, FM & Stuber, JA. 2017. *Sociology of education: A systematic analysis*. London/New York: Routledge. Chapter 3.

LEARNING UNIT 4

Symbolic interactionism

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After working through this learning unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the main ideas of symbolic interactionism.
- Identify the main proponents of symbolic interactionism.
- Explain the ideas of interactionism and interpretation.
- Explain human agency.
- Develop a critique of the theory.

NB: Refer to the schematic overview in learning unit 2.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Functionalism and conflict theory both take macro-sociological perspectives of society which means that the individual, or the human element, is marginalised. Symbolic interactionism redresses this omission by using a micro-sociological perspective and by focusing on the self/individual within the context of society. Symbolic interactionism argues that humans make **meanings** which are derived from social interaction (our contact and our communication with other humans). These meanings are dependent on and modified by **interpretation**. The theory emphasises the human ability to think and to act (take action). This ability is referred to as **human agency**.

ACTIVITY 4.1

Read through pages 19–21 of SoE (from section 1.5). Do you think people have agency? Discuss this notion.

We shall consider the two words in the theory of symbolic interactionism, namely "symbol" and "interaction". A symbol represents an idea, object or relationship. For example, a flag symbolises a country. Words are also symbols as are non-verbal gestures, such as nodding your head in agreement. Symbolic interactionists suggest that words (language) allow us to become conscious of ourselves and aware of our individuality. In the previous exercise in which you wrote a brief autobiographical narrative, you "saw" yourself through your words and they helped you to become aware of your individuality and perhaps how other people see you. We need symbols, such as words to interact with each other and to interpret and make meaning of social situations.

ACTIVITY 4.2

Woods (1983:1–17) writes that symbolic interactionism looks at the "… small scale detail of interpersonal relationships, what people do, how they react to each other, the patterning of behaviours, the ebb and flow of everyday life."

The above quote contains the following key concepts.

Add your own notes and/or examples in the section headed Explanation and examples

Key concept	Explanation and examples
Small scale	Symbolic interactionism falls within a micro-sociological perspective …
Interpersonal relationships	The theory of symbolic interaction concentrates on face-to-face interaction …
Do (action)	Symbolic interactionism proposes that we can take action …
React	We interpret people's behaviour and respond to it …

Patterning	Our everyday lives are "patterned"/we have routines …
Everyday life	Every day activities provide structure to what we do …

Symbolic interactionists argue that everyday life is central to an analysis of society. As thinking beings, we can make sense of these small worlds and through our interpretations of everyday life we have the potential to change ourselves and even influence the context in which the interactions take place. For example, after being admonished by an educator, a learner can try to negotiate a hostile situation by changing her behaviour by being courteous and working conscientiously. The learner herself has acted (used her agency) and consequently has influenced the context in which she finds herself.

The following concepts are also central to symbolic interactionism:

- **Context:** We tend to behave according to the social context. If you are an educator you might play a formal, authoritative role in the classroom but when you go to the staffroom you drop your "front" and relax with your colleagues and refuel with a cup of tea. Irving Goffman referred to the area in which we play a formal, professional role as "front region" (in this case the classroom). He called the informal zone (the staffroom) the "back region".
- **Perspectives:** We interpret the world through a variety of perspectives. For example, some educators might see an aspect of the world through the perspective of rigid gender relations and might consider girls to be inferior to boys. Alternatively, educators might identify boys as problematic and girls as hard working.
- **Negotiation:** As seen above, humans have the power to negotiate situations. However, social class could be the "latent culture" in the school which means that children from the "wrong" class face limitations and have few strategies to negotiate situations.

NB: Read pages 19–23 of SoE which expand on the above points.

ACTIVITY 4.3

In section 1.5.4 on page 22 of SoE, children learn to differentiate between the kinds of behaviour required for specific situations. For example, learners tend to behave one way in the classroom and another way on the playground. Sketch a scenario from your own experience which demonstrates this kind of differentiation. Do you have a "front" and a "back" region?

NB: Read section 1.5.3 on families and symbolic interactionism on pages 21–22 of SoE.

ACTIVITY 4.4

Explain the concept "socialisation". In what ways do you think your interactions with your family have socialised you?

CRITICISMS OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Symbolic interactionism has been criticised for focusing too much on small interactions in society and not considering the bigger issues of power and social structure. However, there are theorists who try to explain micro-human interactions in conjunction with macro theories, such as theories of gender and social class.

Recap of learning units 2, 3 and 4.

ACTIVITY 4.5

Summarise the main assumptions, principles and propositions of functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism. See page 11 on functionalism; page 18 on conflict theory and pages 20–21 on symbolic interactionism in SoE.

Sociology of education theories:	Main ideas and assumptions	Brief explanation of the main ideas. Provide your own example.
Functionalism		
Conflict theory		
Symbolic interactionism		

ACTIVITY 4.6

Plot the differences between:

- Micro-sociological and macro-sociological perspectives
- Functionalism and conflict theory
- Conflict theory and symbolic interactionism

Similarities:

- Do the theories and concepts have any similarities? If so, include these in the blocks below.

Macro-sociological	Micro-sociological	Any similarities?
Functionalism	Conflict theory	Any similarities?
Conflict theory	Symbolic interactionism	Any similarities?
Criticisms Functionalism	Criticisms Conflict theory	Criticisms Symbolic interactionism

Now complete the checklist below:

Question	Yes	Not yet
Have I read through chapter 1 of the prescribed textbook?		
Have I completed the exercises in the wrap-around guide?		
Have I completed the exercises in chapter 1 of the prescribed textbook?		
Do I understand the main concepts of the three theories?		
Can I give examples of these concepts?		

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Ballantine and Spade in *Schools and Society* have a useful section in chapter 1. (pp 6–8).

Blumer, H. 1969. *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. (pp 1–21).

Meighan, R. 1997. *A taste of sociology*. Chapter 20. (pp 299–315).

Woods, P. 1983. *Sociology and the school: An interactionist viewpoint*. Chapter 1 (pp 1–17). London: Routledge, Keegan and Paul.

LEARNING UNIT 5

Practices in sociology of education: Social institutions, ecology and the role of the school in society

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After working through this learning unit, you will be able to:

- Grasp the idea of social institutions
- Understand the basics of ecological systems theory
- Understand the ecology of the school
- Enhance your knowledge on the role of the school in relation to functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism

NB: Learning unit 5 links with chapter 2 which is entitled: Practices in sociology of education: Social institutions, ecology and the role of the school in society

SCHEMATIC OVERVIEW

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

- Family
- School
- Religion
- Economy
- Government and state institutions

ECOLOGY OF THE SCHOOL

Bronfenbrenner's theory:

- Micro system
- Mesosystem
- Exosystem
- Macrosystem
- Chronosystem

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN SOCIETY: THREE PERSPECTIVES

- Functionalism
- Conflict theory
- Symbolic interactionism

INTRODUCTION

In this learning unit, you will revisit some familiar concepts. You have come across micro-sociological and macro-sociological approaches already in the previous learning units. However, in this learning unit we shall introduce a new model of schooling which is termed the 'ecology of the school'. In addition, we shall provide more detail concerning the three theories we have covered: Functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism and their perspectives on the role of the school.

On page 28 of SoE, you will find a glossary of words. Identify these words as you read through chapter 2 (SoE) and then go back to them and define them within the context of what you have learnt from learning unit 5 and chapter 2.

You now know that schools and society are interdependent and that schools play an important role as socialising agents and in the transmission of norms and values (see previous learning units). You have also learnt that social institutions, or sub-systems contribute to the perpetuation and the stability of that society. You also know that social institutions can change over time.

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Read through pages 29–34 of SoE (from section 2.2). Complete the activity on page 34 of SoE. This activity gives you the opportunity to question and debate some of the issues that are covered in this section.

THE ECOLOGY OF THE SCHOOL

The ecology of a school can also be termed the 'school climate' or 'school environment' (see section 2.3 page 34 of SoE). The ecology of the school is based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

ACTIVITY 5.1

Did the school you attended have a 'climate'? Explain what it was.

ACTIVITY 5.2

Examine figure 2.1 on page 35 of SoE. Explain why the model is represented as circular. Do you think another model, for example a triangle, would provide a better explanation of human development?

ACTIVITY 5.3

Read through Bronfenbrenner's definitions of the five systems (pages 35–37 of SoE). Provide examples of the systems drawing on your own experience. For example, in relation to the chronosystem, think about how political and technological changes over time have affected you, your family and your schooling.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory:

System	Examples of the systems
Microsystem	
Mesosystem	

Exosystem	
Macrosystem	
Chronosystem	

ACTIVITY 5.4

Draw out what is new about the notion of the ecology of the school. What does it tell you about schools that you did not know before?

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

Read about the role of school in society on pages 38–48 of SoE (from section 2.4).

Schools of today are a response to modern societies. They play an important part in the socialisation process of children through the transmission of norms (standards, rules) and values (morals). They are also intended to assist with the transference of a selection of knowledge and skills appropriate to modern, capitalist societies. The above pages explain the role of the school in relation to the three theories you have already covered: Functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism. In the previous three learning units, we discussed the main points of the theories and included relevant case studies to provide a social context for the theories. In this section, you will discover that the three theories have very different views on the role of the school.

ACTIVITY 5.5

Read section 2.4 pages 38 and 39 of SoE for a brief discussion on socialisation. Identify an aspect of socialisation that you have encountered. Explain why you think it is a suitable example of socialisation.

FUNCTIONALISM AND THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL (PAGES 39–43 OF SOE FROM SECTION 2.4.1)

The role of the school is central to functionalist theory. We have already discussed how functionalism makes a comparison or analogy between society and a biological organism, such as the body. According to functionalists, institutions or structures such as schools, the family, the economy, the law are all parts of the "body" which represents society in its totality. These institutions are inherently connected and all of them need to function well for the "body"/society to remain "healthy".

So why is schooling so important? According to functionalists, schools play a vital role in the functioning and in the survival and perpetuation of society. Schools socialise learners so that they can adapt to a variety of institutions, such as the economy and schools teach certain skills that will assist learners to become part of a competent workforce. Hence, schools perform a **manifest or visible function** which entails teaching learners school subjects, some of which might have relevance to the workplace, such as the teaching of computer skills. Schools also perform a **latent, less visible** function including the transmission of practices such as punctuality, courtesy and the meeting of deadlines, all attributes which are pertinent to the workplace.

Schooling therefore contributes to the harmony of society and society simply cannot function if there is no consensus among institutions.

ROLE DIFFERENTIATION AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY (PAGES 39–40 OF SoE)

For society to function, members of society need to perform different tasks. Functionalism proposes that the more complex society is, the greater the need for specialised occupations. We need medical doctors, but we also require hospital janitors/caretakers. All occupations have an important role to play in society and the continuation and success of society depends on the different occupations cooperating with one another. For example, caretakers need to believe that they do important work and that they contribute to the functioning of an institution.

ACTIVITY 5.6

Think of an institution such as a hospital or a school and identify the many different roles employees have in these institutions. Why do we need to differentiate roles in institutions and ultimately in broader society?

ACTIVITY 5.7

Read section 2.4.1.1.2, pages 40–42 of SoE on the essential norms for functioning in a modern society. Do you agree that schools provide their learners with certain capabilities that families cannot provide? Motivate your answer.

Read section 2.4.1.1.2 pages 40 and 41 of SoE. Dreeben (1968:92–94) draws on the work of Parsons who suggests that the family is particularistic and therefore is not capable of conveying the skills necessary for modern societies. In addition, the family's social ties are based on emotion, traditions and rules. Parsons argues that schools are universalistic in that they transmit norms and values that go beyond the family and are more egalitarian, neutral and 'universal'. Families sometimes base their rules on particular/specific circumstances, for example, older boys might have different rules from younger girls in the family. However, all Grade 5 learners are expected to follow the same rules hence schools play an equalising role in relation to girls and boys.

ACTIVITY 5.8

Briefly list the kind of particularistic rules that families have for children and the universalistic rules in schools that are developed for learners.

Do you think school rules are fairer and more equal than family rules?

What is a "norm"? See page 40, section 2.4.1.1.2 of SoE for a definition.

Read through Dreeben's "four essential norms" in section 2.4.1.1.2 of SoE. Summarise the main points of each norm and provide examples where appropriate.

ASSIMILATION, POLITICAL SOCIALISATION AND MODERNISATION (SECTION 2.4.1.1.3, PAGE 42 OF SoE)

ACTIVITY 5.9

Read section 2.4.1.1.3, page 42 of SoE and summarise the following concepts:

- Assimilation
- Political socialisation
- Modernisation

Note: Meritocracy: Learners achieve their status according to merit, that is how hard they work and how competitive they are in schools. Meritocracy suggests that learners' gender and social class (e.g. working class or middle class) are not relevant to achievement.

CONFLICT THEORY AND SCHOOLING (PAGES 43–46 OF SoE FROM SECTION 2.4.1.2)

As discussed in learning unit 3, conflict theory differs from functionalism and opposes a range of the claims made by functionalist theorists. Bowles and Gintis (1976), two American theorists, criticised functionalism for proposing that schools promoted equality of opportunity. Bowles and Gintis argued that in fact schools divided learners rather than united them and tended to reproduce/perpetuate the hierarchies found in capitalist society.

However, there is also some agreement between the two theories in that both theories see schools as performing an important function in society and both maintain that education is linked to other social institutions such as the economy.

ACTIVITY 5.10

Write two short paragraphs discussing the differences and the similarities between functionalism and conflict theory. This exercise will assist you with your writing. You need to link your points so that they feed into sentences and paragraphs. How can you do this? Start each paragraph by making a main claim:

Paragraph 1:

- Main claim. For example, conflict theory differs from functionalism because ...
- Follow this claim with evidence to back up the differences. For example,conflict theory argues that schooling reproduces class differences among learners whereas functionalists contend that school is beneficial to learners because ...
- Provide your own relevant examples.

Paragraph 2:

- Main claim. For example, conflict theory agrees with functionalism in certain areas because ...
- Follow this claim with evidence to back up the similarities. For example, the two theories agree that schools stream students into different grades …
- Provide your own relevant examples.

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS, FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS AND HEGEMONY

Read through section 2.4.1.2.1 on page 44 of SoE.

Write down the following definitions:

Class consciousness:

False consciousness:

Hegemony:

NB: Complete the activity on page 45 (section 2.4.1.2.3) of SoE. Numbers 1 and 3 of the activity will help you to evaluate hegemony and class consciousness.

NOTE THE FOLLOWING

What is the hidden curriculum? In addition to the formal curriculum in schools there is also a hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum teaches learners to be disciplined, to know their place and to accept hierarchical arrangements as normal. There is not a timetable slot teaching the hidden curriculum, rather its lessons are absorbed through, for example, observation and the disciplinary procedures in schools.

ACTIVITY 5.11

Think about your own experience of schooling. Try to "find" the hidden curriculum by providing a few examples of how it featured in your former school.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AND SCHOOLING (PAGES 46–48 OF SoE FROM SECTION 2.4.1.3)

Symbolic interactionism attempts to fill some of the gaps found in macro-sociological theories, such as functionalism and conflict theory, by focusing on the interactions and the micro-sociological encounters found in schools, for instance, between educators and learners.

According to Blumer (1969), a proponent of symbolic interactionism, the three main premises of symbolic interactionism are:

- Human beings act or "take action" towards people and things based on the meanings that they have for them. These are part of their daily life and can be friends, family, school principals, the school as an institution. You will act in one way with a friend and in a completely different way in front of the school principal based on what they "mean" to you.
- Meaning is derived from interactions with other members of society.

- Meaning is shaped and changed by interpretation, people interpret symbols and their meaning. If a parent shakes her head, it can be interpreted that she is saying "no".

Within the school context, symbolic interactionism focuses on how educators and learners interpret each other in small, subtle ways. For example, learners often can detect the mood of an educator before that educator has uttered a word.

ACTIVITY 5.12

Read through section 2.4.1.3 on the principles of symbolic interactionism (page 46 of SoE). Explain how these principles help us to understand how learners construct meanings through interacting with and interpreting their educators.

RECAP: LEARNING UNIT 5.

Read through the following points and then add your own points to the list.

I learnt that:

- Education is not a neutral zone divorced from the rest of society.
- **Functionalism:** Schooling is an integral part of the functioning of society and is interrelated with other social systems.
- **Conflict theory:** Schools can advantage some students over others in relation to their social class. Middle class learners sometimes fit in better with the "culture" of the school because schools themselves have a middle-class ethos.
- **Symbolic interactionism:** Learners are not passive and can construct their own meanings and shape their lives.

I also learnt that:

-
-
-
-
-
-

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Blumer, H. 1969. *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall (p 2).

Bowles, S & Gintis, H. 1976. *Schooling in capitalist America*. New York; Basic Books.

Dreeben, R. 1968. *On what is learned in school*. Reading. Massachucetts: Addison-Wesley.

LEARNING UNIT 6

Citizenship education

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After working through this learning unit, you will be able to:

- Define and understand the concepts of democracy, citizenship and citizenship education.
- Provide an overview of the historical context of democracy, citizenship and citizenship education.
- Understand that citizenship education should be both local and cosmopolitan in its goals and perspectives.

SCHEMATIC OVERVIEW

CONCEPTS

- Democracy
- Active citizenship
- Participation
- Responsibilities
- Curriculum

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ancient and modern concepts of citizenship

History of South African citizenship

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

- United Kingdom
- United States of America
- South Africa

What next?

- The future of citizenship education

NB: Also see the list of concepts in the glossary on page 52 of SoE.

INTRODUCTION

In this learning unit, we are going to look at what it means to be a citizen and what is understood by citizenship education. There is a thread running through your sociology of education

module which links individuals and communities to larger social systems such as education, the economy and the state/government. Another constant is that the module remains within the context of education. Learning unit 6 addresses in more detail what it means to be an active participant in a democracy, that is, a citizen. Chapter 3 in your prescribed textbook provides a historical account of the concept of citizenship. This is followed by an overview of citizenship in three different countries including South Africa. It is proposed in the chapter that learning about democratic citizenship should not be confined to the formal curriculum in schools but should go beyond it. To be a citizen also requires active community involvement and to be "politically literate". The chapter also considers South African citizenship and citizenship education in post-apartheid schools. An important part of citizenship education is to develop ideas around human rights. The final section presents a cosmopolitan view of citizenship and citizenship education.

OVERVIEW: CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

We shall start off by considering some of the concepts found in the introduction. This will provide a foundation for your understanding of core issues in the chapter. The concepts will be further elucidated as you read through the chapter. Some of the concepts such as democracy might already be familiar to you.

ACTIVITY **6.1**

Write down what you think these words mean:

- Democracy
- Citizen
- Citizenship education
- Curriculum

Read through the introduction section 3.1 on page 52 of SoE and expand on your previous responses in the above exercise.

ANCIENT AND MODERN CONCEPTS OF CITIZENSHIP (SECTION 3.2)

C Wright Mills (1959) argued that history is essential to an understanding of society. This section demonstrates that history is not only about "the past" but can help us understand how the past has impacted on educational decisions in the present. For instance, citizenship education

in South Africa has a strong emphasis on equality. This is a direct response to the segregation and inequalities of the apartheid past.

ACTIVITY 6.2

The following activities will assist you to start thinking about the past:

Our sense of self is often rooted in family history. Many of us live with someone who is older (perhaps a grandmother or an older sister). Consider your own family tree and how your family history has affected your identity/made you currently who you are.

History can help us think about ways of rectifying past injustices, such as apartheid. However, can we use history to aid reconciliation or does revisiting issues such as apartheid create animosity and conflict? Comment on the questions.

Think about your own schooling/education. What do you think has changed over time?

ACTIVITY 6.3

Examine figures 3.1 and 3.2 on pages 53 and 54 of SoE.

Explain why you think a triangle is a useful shape to demonstrate hierarchies in society?

How would you represent our current South African democracy? Draw your own model.

What shape do you imagine South African society to be in the future?

HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENSHIP FROM 1910 TO 1996
(SECTION 3.3: PAGES 57–60 OF SOE)

ACTIVITY **6.4**

Draw a timeline plotting the main dates and events described in this section. It does not need to be depicted as linear (in a line), but you do need to start with the earliest date and then work forward in time. You also need to be brief – just add the main events and their consequences. This exercise will help you to outline events and gain an understanding of what is known as a historical trajectory (or a route). The timeline will also provide you with a summary of events over a period of 86 years.

Start 1910 → → → → finish 1996.

Example:

1910 South African Union Government formed → next major event and date → next ….

ACTIVITY **6.5**

Pick out the key words on pages 57–60 of SoE (section 3.3). For example, “segregation”, “homeland”, et cetera. Write a short paragraph on why South Africa was not a democracy before 1994.

Follow the above exercise by completing the activity on page 60 of SoE.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

ACTIVITY **6.6**

What is meant by citizenship education? See section 3.4 page 61 of SoE.

Read through section 3.4.1 on page 62 of SoE which identifies the two types of citizenship education: Active and passive. Which approach do you think is the better one for learners? Motivate your answer.

In the United Kingdom citizenship education is taught to children between five and eleven years old. Do you think learners are too young to grasp the topic? Motivate your answer.

The programme of citizenship education continues into the senior phase in the United Kingdom and is also encouraged in the United States of America. (See section 3.4.2 on pages 63–65 of SoE.) How do you imagine senior phase learners would respond to community involvement and political literacy?

NB: Complete the discussion section on page 65 of SoE which covers the similarities and differences between the two countries.

ACTIVITY 6.7

Read through section 3.4.3 on **citizenship education** in post-apartheid South Africa on page 65 of SoE. Why is it "unsurprising" that equal citizenship is emphasised in a post-apartheid society?

Read through the summary of the general aims of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (2012) in section 3.4.3, page 65 of SoE.

With your knowledge of conflict theory, do you think that South African learners "… irrespective of their socio-economic background will develop skills and values necessary for self-fulfilment and meaningful participation in society …"? (See page 65 of SoE).

Will some learners be "self-fulfilled" and others not because of inequalities in the school system? Motivate your answer.

Now think about what you have learnt about agency and symbolic interactionism. Do learners have agency? Explain your point of view.

Can learners transcend or rise above their social disadvantages? Yes/No and motivate.

Explain why you think history and geography are important subjects to support citizenship education.

Why is it important that learners become familiar with ideas about democracy?

NB: To reflect further on the issues covered in the chapter, complete the discussion section on page 67 of SoE.

SUMMARY

In this learning unit, we have tried to assist with relevant terminology. We have focused on the following:

- Why history is important when addressing social issues
- The issue that citizenship education is a "good thing" but that it is also debatable because there is no single version of citizenship education.
- Active and passive approaches to citizenship education. Do you teach learners to participate in a democracy or do you teach them merely to vote for a political candidate who will represent their interests?

THE FUTURE OF CITIZENSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

This section (section 3.5 page 68 of SoE) provides an argument for why it is important to think about the future of citizenship in South Africa. Note that the authors of this chapter have not told you what should happen. Rather, they question current thinking about citizenship.

ACTIVITY 6.8

What do you think it means "to think globally, act locally"?

What does it mean to use a cosmopolitan approach to citizenship education?

NB: The questions on page 73 of the prescribed textbook form a valuable summary of the main issues on the chapter. Ensure that you respond to these, as well as the exercises in your wrap-around guide.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

McLaughlin, TH. 1992. Citizenship, diversity and education: A philosophical perspective. *Journal of Moral Education*, 21(3).

Mills, CW. 1959. *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mohlala, T. 2008. From rights to responsibilities. *The Teacher*, 13(3).

LEARNING UNIT 7

Diversity and culture in education

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After working through this learning unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the notion of diversity.
- Understand the notion of identity.
- Appreciate that identities are not fixed and that they are socially shaped in that they depend on social contexts and socialisation.
- Examine the complexities of culture.
- View gender, race and social class from the perspectives of functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism.

NB: Learning unit 7 links with chapter 4: Diversity and culture in education (SoE).

SCHEMATIC OVERVIEW

MAIN IDEAS

- Diversity
- Social identity
- Culture
- Social stratification
- Gender
- Race
- Social class

Chapter 4 invites you to extend and apply many of the ideas that already have been covered in this module. It examines the idea of culture and the issues of race, class and gender through the lens of functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism. The chapter also responds to current changes and challenges in the educational field.

NB: The chapter contains a range of case studies and activities. The activities need to be completed together with the exercises in the wrap-around guide.

OVERVIEW: DIVERSITY AND CULTURE IN EDUCATION

Sociologists are critical of the perspective that we are born with certain qualities, that is, that they are innate. They argue that we become social beings through a process of socialisation. This

means that we learn norms and roles from others in society. We shall see later in this learning unit that we can also learn negative traits such as racism and sexism.

DIVERSITY

ACTIVITY 7.1

It is suggested on page 77 (section 4.2) of SoE that there are differences in terms of how people are treated in societies. The South African White Paper on Education and Training sets out the provision of equal opportunities for all based on non-discrimination.

In relation to the above, do you think there are equal opportunities for all children *before* they get to school?

ACTIVITY 7.2

Read the section on diversity, section 4.2 page 77 of SoE.

Explain what is meant by "… enabling every member to perform to his or her potential."

What are your thoughts about this statement in relation to what you wrote in activity 7.1?

NB: Synonyms for pluralism are heterogeneity and diversity. These words point to societies that are mixed in terms of language and ethnicity.

SOCIAL IDENTITY

Turn back to chapter 2 (page 35 of SoE) and re-examine figure 2.1 (the ecological systems theory). Think about the "you" in that centre of the model. The model indicates to us that our identity (the "you") is interrelated with social forces, such as the school and the political system. So, in other words, identity is contingent to (dependent on) society. Identity is also relational, that is, humans exist in relation to other human beings and in relation to their environments. Identity also contains many parts or dimensions that sometimes can be held simultaneously even though they might seem contradictory. For example, you could be a career person, a mother and a daughter all at the same time. Your identity could change too if, for example, you move from a rural area to a city.

NB: Socialisation. See section 4.3 page 79 of SoE for a definition of socialisation.

Primary socialisation takes place in the family and is when the child learns a language and the behaviour acceptable to society. Socialisation continues throughout one's life and schools are particularly important conveyors of what is known as secondary socialisation.

ACTIVITY 7.3

How does socialisation "work" in societies? Read page 81 (section 4.3) of SoE. How do functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism perceive the socialisation process?

Identity

In learning unit 3, you wrote a narrative paragraph in relation to conflict theory. Reread your narrative. Write a fresh paragraph using what you **now** know about the concept of identity.

Reflect on your narrative paragraph:

What do I know now about the concept "identity" that I did not know before?	Explain …
Can I explain my own identity better than I could before?	Explain …
Have any of my ideas about my identity changed since I started this module?	Explain …

ACTIVITY 7.4

Turn to section 4.3 page 81 of SoE and read the paragraph on **identity and socialisation** seen from the perspective of the three sociological theories we have covered in the module. All three theories would argue that our identities are socially constructed. However, can you detect any differences in their arguments?

CULTURE

Read from section 4.4 pages 82–83 of SoE. Follow this up by doing the activity below.

ACTIVITY 7.5

"To a large degree, culture determines how members of society think and feel: It directs their actions and defines their outlook on life. Culture defines acceptable ways of behaving for members of a particular society" (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013:5).

Considering the above quote, do you think "culture" is good or bad for society? Sketch a scenario from your own life depicting how culture can either enable or constrain you.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Sociologists use the concept of social stratification to describe inequalities that exist between individuals and groups within human societies. We often think of "stratification" in terms of the amount of money and property we have. Some people are better off than others and are in a different social "class". However, stratification also occurs because of other factors such as gender, age and religion. Social stratification is often linked to life chances (or the lack of life chances) and to inequalities found in society.

ACTIVITY 7.6

- Read through section 4.5.3 on page 85 of SoE.
- Indicate the differences between the closed and the open system of ranking in society.
- Can you describe how these two systems work in the South African context?

ACTIVITY 7.7

"All societies in the world have a way of categorising their own people and ranking them accordingly" (Page 84 of SoE).

Think about how categorisation and ranking systems work in your own community and in broader society. What ranking systems do you find in the family (e.g. grandmother, the eldest child), school, workplace?

Now think about how ranking can create **inequalities** in the above three social structures. Comment on the inequalities.

GENDER

There is an argument that differences between women and men are innate. Hence, the size of our brains, our hormones contribute to differences between men and women. Sociologists take a different route to understanding gender differences. They argue that gender roles are learnt through a process of socialisation and gender identities are shaped by institutions, such as the family, by schools and by the media.Central to the sociological position is the argument that gender differences are not "natural", rather they are socially and culturally formed.

ACTIVITY 7.8

Find definitions for the following in section 4.7 page 86 of SoE:

Biological _____

Gender _____

Gender differentiation _____

Gender stratification _____

Construction of gender _____

ACTIVITY 7.9

What differences do you think exist between men and women in society in terms of the following?

Voice _____

Hair _____

Jobs _____

Household chores _____

Dress _____

Emotions _____

List any further differences that you can think of.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you think these differences are representative of biology or are they socially learnt and examples of social stratification?

Why do you think we often see male and female as “either or” rather than as “and”? For example: I can be a woman **and** a good sportsperson.

How do you think a functionalist, conflict theorist and symbolic interactionist would interpret gender differences? Outline the three approaches.

Are gender differences immutable (unchanging)?

ACTIVITY 7.10

We have seen that gender is a socially created concept which assigns different roles and identities to men and women. Importantly, gender differences are not neutral. Rather gender has a significant impact on "who gets what" in society.

Read through the **gender-fair teaching** section on page 87 of SoE (section 4.7). Would you draw on these guidelines if you were a teacher in a school? Explain why there might be problems with the implementation of some of the guidelines.

Imagine that you have the power to change gender discrimination in schools. From a gender perspective, what solutions would you find to improve the life chances of learners?

RACE

Is race socially constructed or is it innate? Pages 88–89 of SoE (from section 4.8) cover the sociological perspective on **race** and argue that although we are born with biological features (bodies and brains), the notion of "race" is socially constructed. The argument follows that racism (prejudice against "races") is also socially constructed. Sociologists argue that people are not born racist, but are socially shaped to hold beliefs and ideologies based on racial prejudice. Racism also can be historically traced. Ultimately, racism is a crucial human rights and social justice concern in South Africa.

ACTIVITY 7.11

Read the following quote:

"In fact, a recent work on the Human Genome Project of the British Council has shown, there is more reason now than ever before to argue that there is only one 'race' and that is

the 'human race'. All human beings share the same basic genetic makeup and are different only in a fraction of a percentage. The Genome Project shows that there is no gene for 'race' and that all we have is a gene for skin pigmentation" (Human Genome Research, 2000).

What are your thoughts on the above statement? Can the idea of "race" be questioned?

ACTIVITY 7.12

Assimilation. This process can be seen in schools to this day. Are learners obliged to fit into an existing school system which does not always considerrace, class and gender concerns? What are your thoughts on this topic? (See section 4.8 page 88.)

SOCIAL CLASS

ACTIVITY 7.13

We have covered **social class** in previous learning units when we addressed conflict theory. Recall what Karl Marx and Max Weber proposed about social class in capitalist societies and indicate their main points.

Once you have done this, read section 4.9 pages 90–91 of SoE.

ACTIVITY 7.14

Social expectations, and stereotypes, are often deeply embedded in society. For example, would you expect the daughter of a domestic worker to become a doctor? Would you expect the daughter of a doctor to become a domestic worker? What is your opinion?

ACTIVITY 7.15

Social class and access to amenities, such as housing and schooling often go together. If you have a privileged position in society, the chances are you will have access (or admission) to good housing and good schools. If you originate from an underprivileged position in society, your access to a good education might be severely limited.

Think about access to schooling: "Access to schooling is largely dependent on race, class and gender". See section 4.10 page 92 of SoE. What are your thoughts on this statement? Do you agree/disagree with the statement? Write a paragraph briefly outlining your position and substantiate (back up) your points.

Getting started on your paragraph:

- Identify a key word – in this case it is "access".
- What impacts on access to schooling? Race, social class and gender?
- Explain why these three factors are central to the access of schooling.

CONCLUSION

As you worked through the Sociology of Education module you will have detected that mass schooling is a vital component of modern, industrialised societies and that schools and broader society are interdependent. The sociological perspectives that were introduced to you in the module have enhanced your understanding of education and have assisted you to gain insight into your own practice as future teachers. The discipline, Sociology of Education, comprises a range of theoretical perspectives, while the application of sociological concepts to schooling encouraged you to analyse educational systems and led you to identify the merits and demerits of the various theories from an informed position. In addition, the module introduced you to the ecological model of the school which demonstrated the interrelationships between components of society, starting with the individual and expanding into the dimension of time. The module provided an overview of citizenship education which included historical perspectives on schooling and emphasised the importance of citizenship education to assist learners to grasp democratic principles. Finally, the last chapter and its allied exercises on diversity included the issues of race, class and gender, all of which are central to current debates in education.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Ballantine, J, Hammock, FM & Stuber, JA. 2017. *Sociology of education: A systematic analysis*. 8th edition. London/New York: Routledge.

Haralambos, M & Holborn, M. 2013. *Sociology themes and perspective*. 8th edition. Collins, London. (Chapters 1, 2 and 3).

Human Genome Research. 2000. Parliamentary office of Science and Technology. Report 142. United Kingdom.