



Tutorial Letter 201/1/2020

Sociology of Education

SED2601

Semester 1

Department of Educational Foundations

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

This tutorial letter contains important information
about your module.

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1. MEMORANDUM OF ASSIGNMENT 01

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TOTAL: [40 MARKS]**2. MEMORANDUM OF ASSIGNMENT 02****Question 1**

- a) **Describe in your own words the following concepts and give one example for each concept:**

Firstly, when we asked you to 'describe in your own words' **we did not want you to copy from the textbook verbatim**, rather we wanted you to try to **summarise the main concepts/ideas**. Furthermore, you were asked to provide an example of the concept – so again you are using your own words and you are thinking about education and society rather than merely copying the answer. Please note examples provided are at the marker's discretion. We do, however, expect them to be relevant to the concept and you should try to provide school-based examples because that keeps it relevant to the discipline of sociology of education.

- i) Macrosociological (3)
 Macrosociological approaches concern the 'bigger' picture of society. So, when you are taking a 'macro' perspective, you are looking at, for example, large groups in society such as the working class or the middle class. Another example is gender: you are taking a macro approach by examining the gendered role of boys and girls in schools and society (there are thousands of learners in South Africa). Functionalism and conflict theory are associated with macrosociological approaches.

See p 98 in your textbook, *Sociology of Education (SoE)*.

ii) Microsociological (3)

Microsociological approaches are concerned with 'smaller' groups and the interactions between individuals or small groups in society. An example of this is the relationship and interaction between the teacher and the learners in a classroom or the interaction between parents and the principal of a school. The perspective or approach is associated with the sociological theory of symbolic interactionism.

See p 9, **SoE**.

iii) Socialisation (3)

Socialisation takes place in the family and in the school and is identified with how children are taught, their roles in society and how they fit into society. So, when children are socialised, they learn about the culture of their community, they learn about norms and values (how to behave in society and about morals). An example would be that learners at school are socialised into being punctual because of the timetable and the school rules which set out when schools start and end. See p 38 and p 101, **SoE**.

iv) Transmission of culture (3)

This is how cultural rules and morals are transmitted or passed on to children by their families and communities. On p 82 of **SoE**, you will see that it is also associated with tradition. For example, different cultures in South Africa are often identified by their language; how they dress. Schools can also have a 'dominant culture' (more powerful culture) which could mean that some less powerful groups in the school are marginalised.

See pp 4, 5, 82 and 102, **SoE**.

v) Social class (3)

Social class is about the different classes in society. In South Africa we have two main social classes: working class and middle class. For example, middle class learners are often more privileged than working class learners. This is because middle class parents can afford to send their children to better-equipped schools. The issue of social class is often associated with conflict theory. Conflict theorists argue that there are inequalities between the social classes, and this results in social injustice.

See pp 13, 43, 90 and 100. **SoE**.

b) Functionalists argue that for societies to survive and develop there needs to be some agreement or consensus on norms and values. Briefly discuss whether you think we have agreement on norms and values in South African schools.

Firstly, define what is meant by consensus on norms and values. What is meant is that for a society to work or function its citizens need to agree on certain ways of behaving and on their value systems (morals). Most people in society agree (have consensus) that schools play a 'good' role in that children become literate and develop certain skills. Most people agree that murder is immoral and should have consequences. The argument is that if we agree on these issues, society works better than if we are divisive.

Any relevant position/example on whether schools have or do not have agreement on norms and values will be accepted. There is an argument that school share common moral values and learners are encouraged to tell the truth, not steal and so on. The other argument might be that schools are so unequal that is difficult to have a common value system.

See p 11 and p 100 (under Social Consensus), **SoE**.

(5)

[20]

Question 2

(a) Diversity and culture in education:

- i) What is diversity? Explain in your own words and provide a school-based example.
- Diversity refers to a range of social differences which are found generally in a 'multicultural' society. Diversity includes learning about group differences; addressing how different social factors influence institutions; the development of group and individual identity; the process of social change. It also emphasises enablement – so, for example, if learners have special needs how are they accommodated in the school? Other examples could include gender; race; class; access to education; culture. For example, race might be specified as an example of diversity and either seen as an asset to classroom teaching (e.g. tolerance) or more negatively as a source of possible conflict.

See pp 77, 78, 96 **SoE**.

(4)

- ii) What is culture? Explain in your own words and provide a school-based example.

Culture is the way of life of people; how people adapt to the environment; elements of material culture can include dress, language, sports; religion. For example, dance in South Africa might vary from culture to culture and play varying roles in society.

The following quote provides a useful definition:

“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 Sociology Themes and Perspectives 8th Edition, 2013. p 5.)

Examples might include how culture needs to be understood and negotiated by an empathetic (insightful) teacher so that learners do not feel that their culture is being ignored or marginalised.

See p 82, **SoE**.

(4)

(b) How is the concept 'identity' explained by the following theorists?

- i) A functionalist

A functionalist sees identity as being a product of socialisation. Socialisation helps people in society internalise rules, norms and values (or make the rules their own - so they don't have to be told what to do). Once they have internalised these rules, society will function better because people will work towards the common good of broader society. (2)

ii) A conflict theorist

Conflict theorists argue that people are products of the class inequalities in society and it is the context of class inequality that shapes people's identities. So, you might have a 'working class' identity because of your social context. Conflict theorists are concerned with group identity rather than individual differences. (2)

iii) A symbolic interactionist

Symbolic interactionists also view identity as formed by society, but their focus is on how identity is formed by our interactions with other individuals and groups. Identity is constantly shifting and changing depending on our social environments and who we interact with. Childhood is constructed through interactions with significant people (e.g. parents) as well as the child's environment.

See p 81, **SoE**.

(2)

c) Identify yourself with a teacher. How would you apply gender-fair teaching in your classroom?

Based on the principles behind gender-fair teaching, responses might include:

For sociologists, gender is socially defined – society shapes girls and boys into being feminine or masculine. So, gender is **not** seen as biological. Gender - fair teaching should be continuous and not separated from daily instruction. For example, if you are teaching history, include women in the syllabus. If you are assigning tasks in the classroom, make sure you assign them equally to boys and girls. Be aware of stereotyping learners in the classroom e.g. "girls are chatty"; "boys are naughty" and so on. Gender issues should be seen in conjunction with race, class, ethnicity, disability. Gender-fair teaching should be in partnership with parents and communities. It involves all school practices e.g. sport, assemblies. It must include emotions as well as thinking processes (reasoning). It should be active and affirmative (not demeaning learners or humiliating them) See p 87 **SoE**

(6)

[20]

Question 3

a) Summarise the following paragraph in your own words:

Keep in mind when you summarise, you need to read the paragraph, look up any difficult words, identify the most important word/s and then write a shorter version of the paragraph (such as when you summarise a book). Only write down the most important points! Write in full sentences. "It was mentioned earlier that Bowles and Gintis were of the view that the education system serves the objectives of capitalist societies. Research on class in South African schools shows that many

things are happening in wealthy schools that conspire to keep the poor child out. According to Skeete *et al* (2001:67), the move from township schools has a lot to do with a search for better education. However, it also has to do with costs. In a study by Soudien and Sayed (2009:39), it was found that finances proved to be either exclusionary or inhibitory.”

(See p 91, **SoE**)

(8)

The assessment of the summary is at the student's discretion. However, they will check that the basic rules of summarising have been followed (see above). An example of a summary is the following:

Theorists such as Bowles and Gintis argue that schools are not neutral and tend to serve an unequal, capitalist economy. In the case of South Africa, parents want their children to go to good schools, but wealthy schools often exclude less privileged children because of the high fees they charge.

b) Define the following concepts:

i) Social class

Social class is how society is divided into different classes such as working class and middle class. These classes share common economic resources. There are divisions between the classes and inequalities of wealth. Social class is also fluid so one can shift from one class to another.

See p 90, **SoE**.

ii) Gender

Gender refers to the different qualities of being a man or a woman, but these qualities are socially defined and created through socialisation and cultural expectation. Sociologists see gender as 'a social fact' and not as biological.

See p 86, **SoE**.

iii) Race

Race has a genetic component, but sociologists see race as a social construct because race refers to how a group is defined socially. They look at how the group is defined by historical, cultural and economic factors.

See p 88, **SoE**.

iv) Access to education

Access to schooling is dependent on race, class and gender. Children from privileged families have access to better equipped, fee paying schools. Children from less privileged families often

go to under-resourced schools, so their access to schooling depends on the financial situation of their parents.

See p 92, **SoE**

(8)

c) Briefly explain the two systems of stratification. Provide examples of the two systems.

The first system is the caste or 'closed' system. Ranking (being placed in a certain order) depends on ascribed characteristics (recognised by certain societies) and people have no control over how they are ranked. An example: a society where there is a queen and peasants who are ranked far below the queen and who are compelled to accept their position. The second system is a class or 'open' system where ranking is based on merit, talent, ability, hard work and performance. An example: in capitalist society if you have certain talents and work hard you can become successful and move to a 'higher' class.

See p 85, **SoE**.

(4)

[20]

Question 4

a) In a paragraph discuss what is meant by 'democracy'. Discuss both ancient and modern concepts of democracy in your outline.

A democracy is a political system in which citizens are supposed to participate in decision making and running affairs in their group, community or their nation state. In modern societies citizens over a certain age (18 in South Africa) can vote in elections.

In an Athenian democracy citizenship includes status (a citizen); a sense of belonging and active participation in public affairs. Active participation meant that citizens were exercising their agency.

In a modern democracy, personal and public dimensions of citizenship are not mutually exclusive but are reciprocal (give- and -take). So, if you want to live a green, eco-friendly life you need to ensure that the state legislates around environmental issues and you yourself live a 'green' life. Modern democracies are inclusive and do not exclude women and slaves (as in ancient democracies) nor do they exclude people based on their race as in apartheid South Africa. Modern democracies can be representational (you vote for someone to represent you in parliament) or they can be active and participatory (you are an active agent for change and development in your community).

P 52-60, **SoE**

(8)

b) Explain 'soft' and 'hard' notions of community participation in citizenship education.

A **soft notion of community participation** entails that learners rely on the school curriculum to learn about citizenship education. By extension it is a more 'passive' way to learn about the topic. So, citizenship is 'taught'.

A **hard notion of community participation** refers to learning by doing and creating opportunities to learn about citizenship in school but also outside of the school walls. So, citizenship is 'caught' not 'taught'.

P 62, **SoE**

(4)

c) Draw put ome of the differences between citizenship education in the United Kingdom and citizenship education in post-Apartheid, democratic South Africa.

Firstly, 'post' means 'after' so post-apartheid means *after* apartheid and refers to the democratic South African society formed after 1994 (the 'new' South Africa). There are some similarities, but you were asked to focus on the **differences**: South Africa is more 'rights' based (constituional rights) than the United Kingdom (UK) which focuses more on social and moral responsibility. In South Africa the focus is on making up for the inequalities of apartheid which is an issue not directly relevant to the United Kingdom (UK) where there might be racism, however, they were not an apartheid society like SA. The United Kingdom focuses on community involmment and SA has a strong interest in the participation of citizens in a democracy (so there is also a broader focus than just on community and a strong focus on what it means to be a citizen of a country). The UK focuses on political literacy and being effective in public life (e.g. knowing about the different political parties in the UK) and in SA we focus on human rights, social justice issues as well as party political knowledge.

Pp 62 -63; 65-66, 67, **SoE**.

(6)

[20]

Question 5

a) Do you agree that gender and race are social constructs and not biological in nature? Discuss with reference to the sections in SoE on *gender and race* to back up your argument (SoE, pp 85 - 90).

NB: As this is a sociology of education module, hence, a stronger response will be to answer 'yes' to the above question. You also will have access to more examples to back up your response. (See SoE: 85 – 90) In addition, you have been asked to address issues of gender (socially constructed) not biological (sex) issues. Race too has a strong socially- shaped component.

Yes: The distinction between the terms gender and sex is important. Gender refers to the qualities between women and men. These are social qualities and are created by culture. Sex relates to

biological differences between females and males. As we are examining gender, we can argue that gender is socially conveyed and comprises learned behaviours, attitudes and expectations. Families and schools (which are social constructs) play a significant role in encouraging different gender roles. Functionalists argue that schools should teach learners gender roles that are appropriate to the society that the school is part of. Conflict theorists argue that women are often exploited in the workplace (for example they get lower salaries) and that men often devalue women's work. Symbolic interactionists agree that gender is constantly constructed in society and is produced, and reproduced or perpetuated, through social interactions. By behaving in gender-specific ways we are confirming the current, dominant social order. Race is socially constructed: "society assigns people to racial categories such as Black, White and so on not because of science logic or fact, but because of opinion and social experience." (SoE: 88). Sociologists have different approaches to the issues of race and schooling. Functionalists argue that minority groups should assimilate into mainstream, dominant society. Hence learners from minority groups should fit into the dominant culture of the school (for example in some American schools). Some conflict theorists argue that not only is race a factor in schools, but social class also plays a major role in school achievement and life chances. It is more important to make changes in economic and class structures than to focus on race. However, other conflict theorists argue that the issue of race and racism should be confronted. Symbolic interactionists who make use of contact theory argue that conflict between races is reduced if contact is among people of equal status, is long-term and there is consensus among participants about what equality means. Any relevant examples will be considered.

No: If you disagree with the above position you will need to focus on biological arguments. The argument will follow that gender is not a social construct, rather people behave in certain ways because they are born that way. Our emotions and attitudes are also dominated by our biology. It is 'natural' for us to behave like women and like men. Differences between men and women are also not socially constructed but are 'innate' (we are born with them) and as such they are unchanging and not subject to social change.

Race from a biological perspective pertains to a person's distinctive gene frequencies. Race is hence about innate physical characteristics and social factors do not play an influential role in this perspective. This position is problematic if one considers that 'race' also includes historical, cultural and economic factors. Any relevant examples will be considered.

Pp 88- 89, **SoE**

(12)

b) Social class is 'achieved' rather than 'given' at birth. Briefly discuss this statement.

In modern, capitalist democracies social status is not necessarily inherited, as in historic kingdoms. Instead, social status is achieved through education, hard work and economic success. Economic resources influence the status and the type of lifestyle people have and these are generally achieved not inherited. Conflict theorists would be critical of aspects of this position as they argue there are inequalities of opportunity in society.

P 90, **SoE**

(4)

c) What is meant by access to education? Do you think there are groups in society that have greater access to education than others?

Access, or entrance into the educational system, includes several different factors including the state provision of education. Functionalists suggest that education is an equalising force and all learners have equal access and equal opportunities in school. So, if you take this position you would argue all children have equal access to schools. On the other hand, conflict theorists propose that schools perpetuate inequalities and that access is reliant on whether there are resources (money) available for learners to attend schools. Access is not neutral and is also dependent on historical influences and the race, sex and class of the learner. Some learners are denied access to schools because of one or more of the latter factors. In your argument you would suggest that there are some groups that have greater/easier access than others.

P 92, SoE

(4)

[20]

TOTAL: [100 marks]

3. EXAMINATION PREPARATION

The end of the semester means it is time to prepare for the examination. We want to bring the following to your attention with regards to examination preparation:

3.1 Material to study

The tables of content in the prescribed book and study guide offer a good summary of the content to be examined.

For the examination please study the following:

- Prescribed textbook
- Wrap-around guide
- Assignment 01
- Assignment 02

Test your understanding of the learning content and your examination readiness by working through previous examination papers, which you can access on myUnisa at Official Study Material (please note this is a new module and there are only papers from 2019). Do not expect questions from previous examination papers or assignments in the examination. **In this module, new questions are set for each examination.**

3.2 Position of the College of Education regarding the demarcation of the examination contents

Please find the below the verbatim communication that we have received from college management regarding detailed demarcation of content for examinations, also known as 'scope':

Demarcation or "scoping" for examinations and assessments

NB: In terms of a decision reached by the College, lecturers may not demarcate or “scope” specific work for examination purposes and examination questions should be based on all the work covering the notional hours of modules. Lecturers should encourage students to learn everything. In cases where competencies or skills are assessed differently during the tuition period, the various methods of assessment will be spelled out clearly by the lecturer in Tutorial Letter 201. According to Assessment Procedure Manual 2013, paragraph 4.5.2(e), the examination memoranda (guidelines, rubrics, and so on) shall not be made available to students.

3.3 Tips on answering examination questions

NB Please read 3.4 first which outlines the current May/June 2020 examination arrangements.

In answering questions in the examination, please pay special attention to the following:

- Make sure you answer the posed question. Read the question several times, if necessary, before you answer it.
- Take note of the allocated marks.
- The format (how they are set out) of the multiple -choice questions is similar to those in Assignment 1.
- Good advice: Start IMMEDIATELY to study, prepare well in time and compile mind maps to understand the contents. Remember, your common sense and experience as a student or as a teacher are also valid sources of information.

3.4 Structure of the examination paper

- The duration of the examination is TWO HOURS and the paper counts 100 MARKS.
- The Covid-19 lock- down regulations have resulted in the following decision being made for **MAY/JUNE 2020 Examinations**. The examination paper will comprise **multiple choice questions only** and will be an open book examination.
- You will have an additional quarter of an hour to access the paper.
- Please note you need to study (so the advice in 3.3. is still useful). Make sure you understand what is in all the chapters in the textbook as all four chapters will be covered.
- Try to answer all the questions first without referring to the textbook. Then go back and address questions that you have not been able to answer. Remember you only have two hours.
- Unisa will inform students about the technicalities of the examination.

4. CONCLUSION

We hope that you have enjoyed your studies related to this module and that you have broadened your academic reasoning and writing skills and found the content informative and applicable to the classroom and to the social sphere where you reside.

Finally, we wish you all the best with your examination. Persevere and discipline yourself to work diligently to achieve your goal. Should you experience any academic problems, do not hesitate to contact us.

Your lecturers

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