

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Sociología del trabajo

Idioma: EN

EXAM STATEMENT:

No materials may be used. The exam consists of two topics. The first must be summarised in an outline. The use of bullet points or numbering (with at least three levels of detail) is recommended to express the structure of the content. Your presentation should not exceed one side of a sheet of paper. The outline must contain the main theses of each section. The second topic should be as extensive and detailed as possible, taking into account the time available (90 minutes for the entire examination). Pay special attention to your handwriting and spelling. Repeated spelling mistakes may result in failure.

Question 1: To summarise in an outline: The reorganisation of work or Fordism after Fordism (I): Fordism in motion; subcontracting, offshoring and global production chains; Fordism 2.0; Fordism in services.

Question 2: To develop: The Coming of Post-Industrial Society

Question 1

To summarise in an outline: The reorganisation of work or Fordism after Fordism (I): Fordism in motion; subcontracting, offshoring and global production chains; Fordism 2.0; Fordism in services.

STUDENT RESPONSE:

Outline: The reorganisation of work or Fordism after Fordism (I)

1. From classic Fordism to "Fordism in motion"

1.1. Limits and crisis of classic Fordism

1.1.1. Rigid mass production based on standardized goods

1.1.2. Strong internal labor markets and stable employment

1.1.3. Crisis from the 1970s: saturation of mass markets, rising costs, global competition

1.2. Fordism in motion as adaptation rather than rupture

1.2.1. Persistence of mass production principles

1.2.2. Introduction of flexibility to maintain productivity and profitability

1.2.3. Reorganization of firms without abandoning Fordist logic

1.3. Central thesis

1.3.1. Fordism does not disappear

1.3.2. It is reorganized, fragmented and geographically expanded

2. Subcontracting, offshoring and global production chains

2.1. Subcontracting

2.1.1. Externalization of activities previously done inside the firm

2.1.2. Core-periphery firm structure

2.1.3. Transfer of risks and costs to smaller firms and workers

2.2. Offshoring and relocation

2.2.1. Geographic displacement of production to lower-cost regions

2.2.2. Search for cheaper labor, weaker regulation and fiscal advantages

2.2.3. Impact on employment in industrialized countries

2.3. Global production chains

2.3.1. Fragmentation of the production process across countries

2.3.2. Coordination by lead firms (multinationals)

2.3.3. Unequal distribution of value and power along the chain

2.4. Main thesis

2.4.1. Fordist mass production becomes global

2.4.2. National Fordism turns into transnational Fordism

3. Fordism 2.0

3.1. Combination of standardization and flexibility

3.1.1. Standardized products with differentiated versions

3.1.2. Economies of scale combined with economies of scope

3.2. Technological support

3.2.1. Automation, ICTs and digital control of production

3.2.2. Just-in-time production and lean management

3.2.3. Intensification of work and performance monitoring

3.3. Labor relations in Fordism 2.0

3.3.1. Weaker job security and collective protections

3.3.2. Greater individualization of employment relations

3.3.3. Persistence of hierarchical management

3.4. Central thesis

3.4.1. Not post-Fordism, but an updated Fordism

3.4.2. Mass production adapted to new markets and technologies

4. Fordism in services

4.1. Extension of industrial logic to the service sector

4.1.1. Standardization of services

4.1.2. Simplification and routinization of tasks

4.1.3. Separation between conception and execution

4.2. Examples of service Fordism

4.2.1. Fast food, retail chains, call centers

4.2.2. Health, education and care under managerial logic

4.2.3. Use of scripts, protocols and performance indicators

4.3. Consequences for employment

4.3.1. Deskilling and loss of autonomy

4.3.2. Precarious contracts and high turnover

4.3.3. Strong control over time and behavior

4.4. Main thesis

4.4.1. Fordism survives by expanding beyond industry

4.4.2. The service economy adopts mass-production principles

Question 2

To develop: The Coming of Post-Industrial Society

STUDENT RESPONSE:

The coming of post-industrial society refers to a profound transformation in the structure of advanced capitalist economies and in the nature of work, employment, and social stratification. The concept is mainly associated with authors such as Daniel Bell, who argued that industrial society based on manufacturing and manual labor was being replaced by a new social formation centered on services, knowledge, and information. This transition has major implications for employment, skills, inequalities, and the organization of work.

The starting point of the post-industrial thesis is the long-term decline of industrial employment. In advanced economies, especially since the second half of the twentieth century, productivity gains in manufacturing, driven by technological innovation and automation, have reduced the need for labor in industry. At the same time, part of industrial production has been relocated to other countries through offshoring and global production chains. As a result, industry loses its central role as the main provider of employment, even if it remains important in terms of output and exports.

In contrast, the service sector becomes the dominant sector of employment. Services expand both quantitatively and qualitatively, including traditional personal services, public services such as health and education, and advanced services linked to finance, business, technology, and information. According to the post-industrial perspective, services are less standardized, more interactive, and more dependent on human skills than industrial work. This shift is often interpreted as a move from the production of goods to the production of services and experiences.

Another key element of the post-industrial society is the centrality of knowledge and information. Scientific knowledge, technical expertise, and formal education become the main sources of productivity and economic growth. The workforce increasingly requires higher levels of education, and occupations linked to professionals, technicians, and managers expand. Decision-making is expected to rely more on theoretical knowledge and expert systems rather than on tradition or manual skills. In this sense, education systems and credentials play a crucial role in structuring labor markets and social positions.

The coming of post-industrial society is also associated with changes in social stratification. Class divisions based on the opposition between capital and industrial labor are said to lose relevance, while new inequalities emerge based on education, skills, and access to knowledge. The expansion of the middle classes and professional occupations is often highlighted, along with the idea of a more meritocratic society in which individual achievement matters more than social origin. Employment stability and career trajectories are thought to depend increasingly on continuous training and adaptability.

However, the post-industrial thesis has been widely criticized. One major critique is that it tends to idealize service employment, ignoring the strong polarization within the service sector. Alongside highly qualified and well-paid jobs, many

service jobs are low-skilled, poorly paid, and insecure, such as those in retail, hospitality, and personal care. Thus, the dominance of services does not necessarily imply better working conditions or higher job quality for the majority of workers.

Another criticism concerns the persistence of industrial work and material production. Industry has not disappeared but has been reorganized and geographically displaced. Moreover, even advanced services depend on an industrial and material base, often located in other parts of the world. From a global perspective, the post-industrial society appears as a phenomenon limited to certain countries, while industrial labor remains central elsewhere.

Finally, critics argue that post-industrial society has not eliminated unemployment, precarity, or inequality. On the contrary, labor markets have become more fragmented, with the growth of non-standard employment, overqualification, and employment insecurity. The promise of a knowledge-based society offering stable and rewarding jobs for all has not been fulfilled.

In conclusion, the coming of post-industrial society captures important transformations in the structure of employment, the rise of services, and the growing importance of knowledge and education. However, its optimistic interpretation must be tempered by a critical analysis of job quality, social inequalities, and the continued relevance of industrial production and power relations in the labor market.