

23 January 2019

Department of Basic Education
Sol Plaatje Building
222 Struben Street, Pretoria, 0002
Private Bag X895, Pretoria, 0001

Attention: Sybil Nomsombuluko

REPORT ON BUSINESS STUDIES RESULTS OF NSS 2018

Thank you for the opportunity for the School Support Centre to send a report on the problems reported to us by concerned teachers and parents regarding the results of the 2018 NSS Business Studies examination. On Thursday 17 February 2019 we met with 116 teachers from Gauteng, North West, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and Free State provinces. We also received a high number of e-mails from concerned teachers from Western Cape, Northern Cape and the Eastern Cape as well as correspondence from concerned parents from all ethnic groups and back grounds.

Some of the teachers have taught Business Studies for more than 30 years and were very upset in the manner how accepted answers and the marking of papers have changed over the last two years. Concerns were raised regarding the closed memorandum used for marking. Answers in the official memorandum also corresponded word for word with the contents of certain text books and documentation handed out at training of underperforming schools. Although roadshows and training did take place in 2018, only certain schools were allowed to attend some of these workshops. Teachers attribute the much better final marks than the internal SBA marks of some underperforming schools to the fact that documentation handed out at training of underperforming schools, corresponded closely with the NSS memorandum. Schools that were not allowed at the underperforming schools' coaching sessions, had a much worse final mark compared to their moderated SBA mark.

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After listening to and sifting through all the feedback and information the main concerns are:

- The very strict and uncompromising marking guidelines set by the examiner, not accepting any answers not directly provided in the approved final memo. No leniency was given to any answers slightly different from the set memo. This is very different from guidelines provided during teachers' training and implemented by most other subjects. In more than one question, learners whom only quoted the relevant words, were penalized, because they had to quote the full sentence in which the relevant words/facts appeared. Many learners were disadvantaged by this style of marking.

For example: On the final marking guideline, at the bottom of Section B and C questions, it was stated that any relevant answer will be accepted. However, it was NOT ACCEPTED. This was confirmed by sub-examiners. Business Studies has become a rigid subject with no opportunity for learners to use their own words. The question was raised: Why is the sentence: "Any other relevant answer related to" placed below some questions, if it is not applied?

- In quoting certain facts from a case study or scenario, learners that only quoted a few relevant words, were penalized, because they were expected to quote the full sentence in which the relevant words/facts appeared. If the provinces marked these questions according to the marking guideline, the candidates would have lost 16 marks in total if they did not quote the full sentences in all the questions which required it.
- Accepted answers to questions marked correctly in 2017 was not accepted in 2018 causing confusion to markers as well as teachers to what the expected correct answer should be. An answer for the same question asked previously, should be accepted, as the content matter did not change, except e.g. when the laws are amended.
- Certain answers in the memorandum were directly taken from one or two text books, specifically the book Mind the Gap. Thus those children who had this book, performed very well and those that could not buy or afford it, were disadvantaged.

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- The Mind the Gap – Business Study book is only available in English, thus not allowing Afrikaans pupils the same preparation and opportunity. This kind of discrimination is widely condemned.
- Not all schools received a 2018 Grade 12 examination pack. Only schools that attended Departmental workshops received specific notes/ information packs handed out at these workshops. Only underperforming schools were allowed to attend these workshops in 2018. By doing this the department discriminated against pupils of schools not on the underperforming list of schools. It is clear that not all information from the Education Departments reach all the schools. Some provinces compile core notes for their Grade 12 learners, but these notes were only sent to selected schools. Many schools did not receive core notes for Grade 12 Business Studies, which were circulated to other schools in the same province. Thus the question is asked – why do only certain schools receive certain information packs?
- Not enough Afrikaans mother tongue teachers were appointed at the different marking venues causing many Afrikaans Business Study papers being marked by English speaking markers.
- Many pupils that excelled in all other subjects did much worse in this Business Studies examination. In some cases their marks were 30-40 percent lower than the moderated SBA marks for Business Studies. The other subjects of the same learner showed very little difference between their SBA and final marks. This was confirmed by many teachers and parents from different schools and provinces.
- Grade 12 Business Studies examination guideline is too vague. It creates uncertainty when the topic content is not explicitly listed.

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The School Support Centre therefore demand:

- A thorough official investigation into the marking process in general, with specific attention to the “no leniency”- policy adopted in the final memorandum and marking guidelines. The marking guidelines and the contents of certain textbooks must be compared to identify word for word comparison. Examiners must be provided with a database of all past examination questions and answers for consistent marking. Grade 12 Business Studies examination guidelines must be clear and unambiguous, eliminating uncertainty.
- All schools must have access to all information packs and training. Workshops, road shows and guide lines planned for all provinces and districts in 2019 must be open for all schools in South Africa to attend, not just the underperforming schools.
- All documents given to students and teachers in preparation of the examinations must be available in Afrikaans as well. The School Support Centre is prepared to assist in the translation of contents to Afrikaans.
- The number of Afrikaans markers appointed must correlate with the number of Afrikaans answer papers. This must be in equal balance to provision of English markers.

Please provide official feedback to the School Support Centre (SOS) and all schools regarding the findings of this investigation as well as processes in place for all schools to perform optimally in the 2019 examination.

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As an organisation the SOS is committed to quality education, thus be assured of our support in your quest to ensure quality education for all. Please acknowledge receipt and favour us with your urgent response to advise us on the DBE's planned course of action in this matter. The SOS will still appreciate the opportunity set up a meeting with you to advise us on the DBE's process to constructively address the matter.

Yours faithfully

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