

22 February 2019

Minister Angie Motshekga

Minister of Basic Education

BY E-MAIL: Mabua.s@dwe.gov.za / Martens.t@dwe.gov.za

Dear Ms Motshekga,

URGENT: FEEDBACK ON INVESTIGATION IN BUSINESS STUDIES 2018 EXAMINATION PAPER

1. We refer to the abovementioned matter, where the School Support Centre (SOS) has, as early as 15 January 2019, brought to the attention of the Department certain discrepancies pertaining to the Business Studies examination.
2. The nature of the discrepancies we regard as being material and wanting of urgent intervention and decisive action. We submit that by merely looking at face value at the sharp decline in the national average for the subject: Business Studies, an explanation of sorts for this is warranted. We refer to the tabature below, showing a decline in the

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national pass rate from 75.7% to 64.9 % in four years:

National NSC pass rate:				
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Business studies:	75,7	73,7	68	64,9

3. A drop of more than 10 percentage points in the national average raises cause for serious concern, as it is ultimately the learners who stand prejudiced in the face of this worrying state of affairs. We have conducted an investigation and unearthed evidence that will show serious shortcomings, which includes the assessment process and the preparation for the Business study examinations.
4. We have shared our findings with the Department. For your ease of reference, we attach hereto the string of correspondence with the Department as from 15 January 2019.
5. We summarise the salient points of our investigations as follows (we shall elaborate in more detail should circumstances permit):
 - 5.1. Of the many prescribed textbooks for the subject: Business Studies, the entire examination was solely based on a single textbook, *Mind the Gap*.
 - 5.2. It is of grave importance to point out that *Mind the Gap* did not form part of the

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prescribed textbooks, nor was it freely available to all matric learners. Yet the entire examination for this subject was derived from this single textbook.

- 5.3. The position above can be easily established by comparing the examination paper with the memorandum. It can be estimated that about 70% of the exam paper consist of theory and 30 % application.
- 5.4. On the theory side, the memorandum consists of a simple copy and paste of excerpts of *Mind the Gap* (and we remind, this textbook did not form part of the prescribed material for the subject), whereas, we submit, this method is not conducive for this subject.
- 5.5. On the application side of the examination, the memorandum was overly rigid, leaving little room for learners to elaborate on their answers. This method of assessment does not adequately test whether learners understand the core concepts of the subject, as it follows a theory-like assessment.
- 5.6. The Department arranged workshops for only underperforming schools, of which performing schools did not have knowledge of, nor where they invited.
- 5.7. Performing schools had therefore no indication whatsoever, of the material the Department seeks to use in the examinations. As stated, only underperforming schools had the benefit of gaining access to the material.
- 5.8. *Mind the Gap*, as a non-prescribed textbook, is only available in English, which also places Afrikaans learners at an immediate disadvantage.
- 5.9. This raises the glaring question on how the Department ultimately derived at opting for a non-prescribed textbook as the sole book for the examinations, and the textbook only being available in English.

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6. In conclusion, for the subject of Business Studies, the Department had used a single, non-prescribed textbook for the purposes of a final exam, only in English, had largely copied and pasted applicable excerpts of the textbook, and followed a rigid and strict format of examination.
7. This comes to no surprise that the final marks are dwindling and we view this as a serious matter. Learners are continuously prejudiced by this, which manifests in different ways.
8. It affects their overall average, which may impede their ability to enter into further studies, it may be the difference between failing or passing the subject or even your grade, of obtaining a series of distinction, or even a single distinction.
9. In short, the handling of the subject directly affects the future of learners.

List of demands

10. Unfortunately, it is our impression that the Department have not addressed the matter at all, or, with the requisite urgency and seriousness.
11. It is our firm view that on the basis of all the above, the Business Studies examinations are contaminated, and cannot be regarded as a credible outcome. The seriousness thereof, as referred to above, is of such a nature that we demand that the following steps be taken:
 - 11.1. That it be announced that the examination mark for Business Studies' credibility have been compromised, which renders the marks unreliable and prejudicial to

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learners and their respective futures.

- 11.2. That a review of the examination papers will not address the compromised results, as the memorandum, and the examination paper itself have been improper and prejudicial to learners.
- 11.3. That it be announced that an investigation will be launched anew, with a pertinent focus on the following issues:
 - 11.3.1. The criteria to establish the list of prescribed and non-prescribed textbooks.
 - 11.3.2. The reason behind electing the use of a single, non-prescribed textbook, in the examination.
 - 11.3.3. The reason behind electing the use of a textbook which is only available in English.
 - 11.3.4. The reason behind the decision to only approach underperforming schools for workshops, in preparations for the examinations, and not performing schools.
 - 11.3.5. The reason behind the drafting of the memorandum which compromises of a copy-and-paste of a single textbook, and whereas the application questions was rigidly compiled.
 - 11.3.6. Steps the Department shall take to avoid any such action.
- 11.4. That schools are invited to add to the aspects of listed in the paragraph above.
- 11.5. **Finally, and most importantly, that it be announced that the final examinations marks for Business Studies will be disregarded and replaced with the SBA-mark for Business Studies.**

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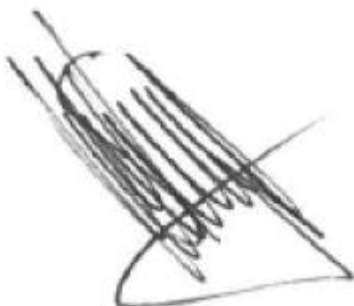


12. We look forward to your response hereto as a matter of urgency.

Yours Sincerely,

Melanie Buys, head of Development at SOS

Werner Human, Deputy Operational Head of Solidarity



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