



SOUTH PACIFIC BOARD FOR
EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

*Chief Marker's
Report
2009*

**Pacific
Senior
Secondary
Certificate**

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The Examination Paper

a) General Comment.

The exam paper covers a wide range of geographical skills which ranges from naming/listing at the lower knowledge level to evaluation at a higher cognitive level. This wide range of geographical skills required the students to demonstrate and response using higher and variety cognitive domains. In addition, it has also successfully differentiated the ability of students and have specifically identified the weaknesses to be serious considered and address as well as the strengths to be enhanced.

The exam demonstrates the PSSC prescription similar to previous years, the rich resource based questions has attributed to its good quality in the attempt to bring out the best in the candidates. The inclusion of graphs, pictures, cartoons, diagrams and short comprehension has taken the response to be more of an application rather than knowledge only. Similarly, the nature of both the resources and the questions could be a fundamental basis for the improvement of both the teaching and learning processes of geography.

However, the panel of markers think that the paper is quite challenging as it is 'essay heavy' considering the command of English of our students in the Pacific. The expression is easily deviated from the point of discussion due to the low command of English. It is also a lengthy paper.

b) Allocation of Marks

This year's marking follows the suggestions in the Marking Schedule especially the followings:

- No half marks offered.
- The right/wrong answer was wrong.
- If one mark for two answers, both have to be correct to score, otherwise incorrect.
- The essay follows the impression marking and the criteria provided with no 2, 4 and 6 marks.

However, the panel of markers have some suggestions;

- Could half marks be offered? Some of the answers are partially correct and there are also questions that require two answers, and unless both are correctly answered, no credit is given. An accumulation of half marks could make a lot of difference.
- The marking system for essays, would there be any possibility of giving 2, 4, and 6 marks? The general feeling is that some students are more benefit than other in using the present system of essay marking.

(A) *The Examination Paper*

a) Nature of the Questions

A similar pattern to previous examination papers is followed. It shows clear and precise language of instruction pinpointing the specific requirement for each question. It presents variety of resources providing excellent stimulus for thinking, application and evaluation thus require the practicality of the theories taught and learnt in the classroom. Using a variety of geographical knowledge, skills, and

concepts in the question included have been effective as assessment tools in the attempt to evaluate the years' teaching and learning.

Candidates have acquired, learned and exposed to great knowledge, skills and concepts but it is obvious that the flaw is the lack in the ability to apply that knowledge and skill to answer questions appropriately, completely and accurately.

There are errors in the Question Paper and although there was no effect on the candidates' performance, the exam papers should be free of errors. For example, Q.3; Part C resource; there are errors on the age groups which is a typing error, In addition is Q.3; Part D: 11. It should be '*GNP*' not '*GDP*'

b) Production, Format and Layout

Generally the format is similar to previous papers. The order of the questions is aligned with the content of prescription. The resources which are immediately by the questions on the same page make it easier for the students to view and respond at the same time. The clear layout of the questions makes it easier for students to follow and answer the questions accordingly.

Well structured, clear and easy to follow. However there is a concern over the level of English used considering that English is our second language. Using of basic English in resources and questions could be of more assistance and hopefully better performance. For example; 'Ego' as used in Q.5.

In addition some of the questions are too wordy for a second speaker of English, for example Q.3; 6 and Q4; 6. The key words in the questions should be highlighted by bolding, underline or italicised.

c) Mark Capture List

Entering of marks could have been easier if the SPINS were arranged chronologically.

d) How the candidates performed

Generally speaking, this years' performance is poor. The marks range is from 0 to 79 in comparison to 0-84 last year. The majority of the marks are again in the 20s and 30s not to mention the extensive number of candidates in the tens. This indicates that there is a great need for improvement both in the part of the teachers as well as the type and king of learning that takes place in the classroom.

The low performance in this years' paper has clearly pinpointed the weaknesses that have been displayed in the past years. It is a serious concern now as the trend of performance is obviously continuing in a downward trend. In order to stabilise and upgrade the performance of young geographers in the region, there is much to be considered and seriously taken into consideration for its future excel. This refers to the whole content of the exam paper hence the prescription and all its requirements. Unless something more serious is done to upgrade this performance, geography as a discipline will be very much in the dark academically and its future blurred in the region.

Listed below are the areas identified for improvement and needs much assistance in both in the strategies of teaching and learning, Most are similar to last years, but the teachers need to be constantly reminded of these weaknesses and work on them for improvement;

- Lack of understanding of the geographical basics, such as map reading using the topographic map, **map skills** in Q2, Q3, Q4 and Q5. Candidates are still to master map reading, calculating distance, directions and the general use of the key to identify features on the map. The précis mapping skills are still very poor and needs close guidance and more exercises.
- The lack of skills in graph reading, interpretation, comparison and summarising have depicted the great need for more practicals on such exercises. Such resources and exercises are included in Q2, Q3, Q4 and Q5. The very poor performance really spells out the problems associated with such skills and requires much to be done.
- Lack of understanding of basic concepts hence misinterpreting questions and discuss irrelevant information in essays. For example Q5 essay on tourism, many candidates misinterpreted '**challenges**' as 'benefits' and has performed poorly.
- Lack of skills and knowledge of higher cognitive level and the use of action words or verbs which provides the major requirement of the question. Misinterpreting of such words has taken its toll on the overall performance of the candidates. For example the inability to make **generalisation** such as in Q1.3 & 11, Q2: 1, Q3:1, Q4:2, 12 Q5:1 and **evaluation** in all essays except Q3. Other vital skills include **interpretation, compare, trend** and **analyse** should be developed and practised more.
- There is an obvious weakness in resource interpretation which reflects the lack of resource based exercises and activities. Candidates should be familiarised and exposed to using resources to practice and to build their analytical and critical thinking. Teachers should be more resourceful and detach from note taking as the only mode of teaching and stimulate students' thinking with resources. ***This is again a very serious concern as this year's paper's performance is a repetition of what happened in previous years.*** Teachers should be aware of the fact that this might be the trend in the types of questions; to be more resource based and try to teach accordingly.
- Candidates lack the '**reading**' skills and the ability to identify the major parts of the questions to address. This is reflected in some of the responses which are either partially or totally irrelevant to the question. This is most obvious in the essays where there are two (except Q5) parts are to be discussed. In some questions the requirements are either bolded, yet the answers were not complete or totally irrelevant. More drill of this skill is very much needed for improvement.

The identified flaws mentioned above can be dealt with perseverance, much practices and drills of appropriate skills and techniques. It is a collaborative effort where both parties (students and teachers) play their individual roles with great responsibility. The progress in performance is closely monitored through continuous assessment. An early start always snatches the best.

This report and suggestions are not to undermine the stakeholders' abilities but it is for assistance which could be considered for the betterment of the quality of the exam paper and the candidates' performance in the future.

(B) Report on individual questions

(I) Highlight specific areas of the examination: where candidates did well; point out questions which candidates had difficulty; examples of the kinds of problems and misconceptions apparent from the candidates' answers.

The following report, suggestions, and recommendations are valuable contribution of the markers in the attempt to facilitate, stimulate and improve the teaching and learning of geography.

Question 1: Living with Natural hazards

1. Was poorly done, either the answer was wrong or partially correct which does not win any credit at all.
2. Poorly answered similar to question 1, the 'explain' part is the stumbling block which either left the question partially answered or not answered at all.
3. Poorly answered. The "generalisation" requirement was no answered accordingly, hence contributed to the poor performance.
4. Poorly answered as candidates cannot differentiate the types of plate boundaries. Many are mixed up with the types of plate boundaries and other they do not know.
5. Poorly answered. The problem lies in the 'process' part of the question. The students should be well aware of the meaning of the term and answer accordingly.
6. Some candidates were able to answer the question while most cannot. This is due to partially correct answer. Explanation is needed.
7. Most got their answer correct while others cannot accurately provide the answer.
8. Many candidates answer the questions correctly.
9. Well answered
10. Most candidates do not get this mark, this is partially due to the lack of access and practicals on such resources.
11. Again the 'generalisation' part is the problem which explains the poor performance.
12. Poorly answered. Candidates' analysing skills should be developed more.
- 13a. Well discussed with examples. b. Most candidates missed to 'evaluate of effectiveness' and to provide examples. There is also a lack of supporting examples. This should be emphasized as it clarifies and illustrate the theories taught. Some student's misinterpreted 'strategies' to be 'impacts' therefore answered the question wrongly.

However, this is the most well answered essay question out of all the 5 essays.

Question 2: Use and Management of Water Resources

1. Poorly answered. Candidates missed the '*generalisation*' part. Most identify a characteristic of one or two regions without looking at the whole picture.
2. Poorly answered. '*trend*' is the stumbling block here. Candidates cannot talk on the trend rather they talk on a single region or two.
3. Well answered with the exception of some.
4. Very poorly answered. Students should be more analytical by looking at the whole picture and then make conclusions and predictions.
5. Well answered by most students except for some candidate who cannot actually read the graph.
6. Poorly answered. Some give other activities rather than '*human activities*'
7. Poorly answered most candidates cannot work out the inter-relationships between geographical location and its effect on the climate. Again it is analytical thinking that needs to be taught.
8. Well answered.
9. '*Explain*' is the problem, as well as the lack of analytical skills.
10. Many candidates got this correct but some still have to master the map reading skill to be able to answer such question.
11. Poorly answered. Candidates cannot calculate the difference from reading the graph. Graph reading skills should be put into practice more.
12. Poorly answered. Lack in analysing skill hence predicting what might happen in the future.
13. Poorly answered. There is a lack of interpretation, comparison.
14. Some good essays however, Part a) most candidates were able to discuss, **Part b)** Most were able to evaluate the different strategies but as experienced in previous years, some *failed to evaluate* with *reference to specific examples*. Candidates cannot differentiate between developed and developing countries. Expression of ideas is very poor.

Question 3: Consequences of Population Growth

1. Poorly answered. Most candidates do not answer the question accordingly as to '*generalise*'. Some consider individual regions rather than looking at the whole picture.
2. Poorly done. This shows the lack in the knowledge of maps and location of important features in each topic. Some candidates know the river basin but incorrect location cost them their mark.
3. Generally well answered.

4. Poorly answered. Candidate give BR or DR rather than saying natural increase and migration rather than Immigration
5. Poorly answered. Again '**trend**' is the problem. Candidates were not able to **compare** the graphs.
6. Poorly answered. Again analytical skill is needed as well as the ability to compare.
7. Poorly answered however some were be able to answer this question, however students should be taught to be able to compare and contrast. Basic knowledge of the pyramids should be also taught.
8. Some were be able to answer this question well while some needs to know the composition of the dependency ration: Age group 0-14 and 60+. Moreover, students should be well informed of the correct terms to use in the appropriate context, like low/high BR and not less/more.
9. Not so well answered. '**Social impact**', some candidate talk of other impacts but not social ones.
10. Well answered.
11. Very Poorly answered. Most candidates cannot relate the information presented in the cartoon to be able to answer the question. Cartoons should also be included as stimulus resources for more practice.
12. Well answered.
13. Well answered. However there are still unanswered ones.

Question 4: The Challenges of Urbanisation and Urban Environments.

1. Very well answered.
2. Poorly answered. Most candidates did not give a generalisation.
3. Poorly answered. Candidates should know their facts and trends.
4. Poorly answered. Candidates lack the ability of map reading. This is a basic skill that should be mastered by all geography students.
5. Not so well answered. Again, it's analytical skills. This question requires graph reading and interpretation as well as giving the reason. This should be taught and mastered.
6. Not so well answered. Candidates fail to identify the '**trend**' and the '**result**' of such trend.
7. Poorly, candidates cannot calculate the urban population by reading the graph.
8. Well answered.
9. Some got this correct while others did not. Some candidates are still not sure of the difference between '**pull**' and '**push**' factors.

10. Poorly answered. This question requires observation and analytical skills, to identify what is in the resource and to decide how to answer the question based on the observation.
11. Well answered with some exceptions.
12. Poorly answered. Requires '*generalisation*', candidates should be exposed to variety of graphs to be able to counter any questions on any graph presented. However this should be at the F/6 level.
13. Well answered with a very few exceptions.
14. a) Most candidates were be able to answer this part well except for some that could not identify three strategies. b) Again the problem with '*evaluate the effectiveness*' remains a problem. Some candidates cannot differentiate *developing* from *developed* countries. Paragraphing is very poor, should be better organised for better coverage and credit. The expression of ideas is problematic in expressing the ideas, hence lack of clarity.

Question 5: Geographical Perspective on Tourism.

1. Not so well answered. It's the '*generalisation*' part of the question that is problematic.
2. Not so well answered.
3. Poorly answered. Majority got only one of the 2 social factors correct so they lost the mark. Others were not aware that the rise in oil price is not a social factor. There is a need to differentiate social from economic factors and others.
4. Poorly answered. The mapping skill is still very poor. Of all the questions I may confidently say that this is the most poorly answered question.
5. Not so well answered. Candidate should master the mapping skill of direction using the key and the North direction on the map.
6. Not so well answered.
7. Not so well answered.
8. Poorly answered. This is mostly due to the lack of interpretation skill. More practice for cartoon stimulus is suggested.
9. Poorly answered. Candidates still cannot interpret the question and relate it to the theories taught in the classrooms. This question refers to the *multiplier effects*
10. Well answered.
11. Well answered
12. a) Poorly answered, candidate misinterpreted '*challenges*' to be either benefits or the problems faced by tourism in the Pacific, hence most score very low marks. B) Poorly done as well because the discussion of this part depends on the identified challenges in Part a.

(II) Report on the Marking Scheme.

General Comment

1) Preparedness

The Marking Scheme was well prepared and also allows accepting other possible and accurate answers decided upon by the markers.

2) Clarity and detail answers.

The answers were clear and free of ambiguities which made it easy to follow. Moreover the answers also clearly decide what to accept and what not which leave the markers clear on the limit to accept any other possible answers.

Furthermore, the answers are detail especially the essays. There is an excellent reference to specific examples which supports the stated points of discussion.

3) Allocation of marks and scoring.

Mark allocation is clear and appropriate marks are stated beside each question. It also goes into detail on how the marks are allocated according to the answers expected. This is clearly shown by the allocation of marks for the essay writing. Despite the fact that impression marking is used for the essays, the allocation of marks is clear with specific marking criteria.

For questions that require two answers to score, it is clearly stated that both answers have to be correct to score. This avoids the confusion and the hassle with half marks. The total mark for each question is given at the end after the essay which reminds the marker of the total mark for each question.

The additional description at the end of each answer further clarifies the condition for scoring or otherwise. This avoids confusion and very helpful in the scoring decision. It also gives example of an inadequate answer to score and the scoring ones.

When there is no other answer, it is stated likewise as ‘the only correct answer’

4. Additional Answers.

For some answers, other possible correct answers were added to the marking schedule. Other answers could be given by candidates but have to be true and valid to score.

Question 1: Living with Natural Hazards.

3. Within the tropics

4. Passive

5. Seafloor spreading

9. Breathing Problem

Question 2: Use and Management of water Resources

6. burning

Question 3: Consequences of Population Growth

11. 3.54 billions

12. Discouraged – slow population growth, migrate (move out), died from waterborne diseases.

Final Comment with an Earnest and Urgent Plea

It is obvious from the performance of the students that there is much to do to improve. The basics are not mastered and it is a challenge to maintain the quality of performance of our students. Both parties have an invaluable task to do and unless these are not carried out with great care, dedication and sacrifices, we can never improve.

You can do it, I can do it and both we can improve the quality of teaching and learning.