SEC EXAMINERS' REPORT MAY 2009

Sec Social Studies
May 2009 Session
Examiners’ Report

Part 1: Statistical Information

A total number of 1,975 candidates registered to sit for the examination. There were 818 applicants for Paper 2A and 1157 for Paper 2B. There were 4.3% absent.

Table 1: Distribution of grades for SEC Social Studies - May 2009 session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>ABS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAPER A</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
<td>323</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAPER B</td>
<td></td>
<td>145</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% OF TOTAL</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>13.62</td>
<td>22.73</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>38.28</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2: Comments regarding candidate's performance

Among candidates taking Paper 2A, in Section A question number 1 (definition of terms) has the highest average (7.45) while question number 4 (on mobility of labour) has the lowest average (2.96).

In Section B, question number 1 (definition of terms) has the highest average (6.64) while question number 2 (on welfare services) has the lowest average (3.95).

Table 2: Paper I – Paper 2A (818)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A</th>
<th>Section B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Marks</td>
<td>5976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Mark</td>
<td>7.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of candidates taking Paper 2B, in Paper I Section A question number 1 (definition of terms) has the highest average (5.86). Question number 2 (on local authorities) has the lowest average (2.16). In Section B question number 1 (definition) has the highest average (4.81), while question number 2 (on welfare services) has the lowest average (1.92).

Table 3: Paper I – Paper 2B (1157)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section A</th>
<th>Section B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>1087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Marks</td>
<td>6384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Mark</td>
<td>5.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Paper IIA each question carries a maximum of 25 marks. Question number 5 has the highest average (11.86), while question number 8 was the most popular with an average mark of 10.34. The least popular question was number 7, with question number 6 having the lowest average mark (7.88). It may be noted that this year’s general average was 9.71.
### Table 4: Paper IIA – Average mark per question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Q5</th>
<th>Q6</th>
<th>Q7</th>
<th>Q8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total marks</td>
<td>4573</td>
<td>2488</td>
<td>4873</td>
<td>3041</td>
<td>2859</td>
<td>4394</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average mark</td>
<td>8.86</td>
<td>8.79</td>
<td>10.17</td>
<td>9.53</td>
<td>11.86</td>
<td>7.88</td>
<td>10.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Paper IIB, each question carries a maximum of 25 marks. Question number 2 has the highest average (16.71) while question number 2 was the most popular with an average mark of 13.01. Question number 4, the least popular, has the lowest average mark (9.23). Here the general average mark was 12.63.

### Table 5: Paper IIB – Average mark per question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>Q5</th>
<th>Q6</th>
<th>Q7</th>
<th>Q8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of candidates</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total marks</td>
<td>9404</td>
<td>4797</td>
<td>11231</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td>4589</td>
<td>7251</td>
<td>4414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average mark</td>
<td>11.91</td>
<td>16.71</td>
<td>13.01</td>
<td>9.23</td>
<td>12.81</td>
<td>10.31</td>
<td>13.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of candidates who opted to answer their questions in English remains low, as indicated below.

#### Percentage of candidates answering in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates opting to answer in English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 2A (818 candidates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper I: 125 candidates – 15.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper IIA: 106 candidates – 12.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 2B (1157 candidates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper I: 132 candidates – 11.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper IIB: 107 candidates – 9.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All candidates (1975)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper I: 231 candidates – 11.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper IIA and Paper IIB: 213 candidates – 10.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.2 Comments regarding Paper 1

**General remarks**

1. Many candidates did not answer all the questions, leaving a blank page.
2. An alarming number of candidates have the tendency to write meaningless sentences, to write about irrelevant matters and to beat around the bush or to reword the question into a statement.
3. There is the tendency to sermonize and to write generic statements leading to no concrete ideas.
4. Lack of knowledge of and meaning of basic terms and key words.
5. Many candidates do not know how to write a good sentence, even less a paragraph – structure, idiom, spelling, punctuation. Sometimes it is difficult to decipher or interpret a sentence.
6. Many ignore the structure of the question and in writing their answers, they lump everything in an unpunctuated sentence, or else loop the answers to several questions.
7. There were answers that betray very limited knowledge, reading, ability to formulate an opinion, to describe or to evaluate, to show awareness of historical and current affairs which give a meaningful dimension to topics addressed in the syllabus.
8. Many candidates ignored the rubrics and did not write the number of questions on the cover of the answer book and sometimes, even within the answer book alongside the answers. Others did not follow the rubric “Read the text and answer ALL the questions, using around 50 words for each answer”.

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3
9. Some candidates indicate that they were well prepared. They indicate that they are not familiar with the syllabus – there were a few who wrote ‘Business Studies’ or ‘Environmental Studies’ on the cover of the answer booklet.

10. Though it is not a policy to penalize handwriting and spelling, some candidates need to improve their presentation to enable markers to assess their answers properly.

Specific remarks
Section A
Question 1
(a): Many candidates just do not know the meaning of the term. They mixed it up with dependence/independence. Moreover, answers were limited to family and need of support. Some have the misconception that the world owes them a living.
(b): Quite a few mixed up social control with self-control and family upbringing. Many could not amplify their answer.
(c): There were some good definitions, but there were quite a few who limited their answer to partisan politics and family feuds.
(d): Many equated traditional occupations with what they consider as old and common (eg. farming). They have no idea of crafts. Moreover, candidates betrayed a number of misconceptions in their answers: they equated traditional occupations with housewives, villagers, gender-oriented activities, the primary sector, ignorance, illiteracy and poverty.
(e): Many candidates are unable to produce a concise explanation: for many ‘rural communities’ simply means ‘not found in the cities’. Others simply described them as backward and narrow-minded people, organizations away from the village centre or simply Maltese!

Question 2
A number of candidates are not so sure about the functions of Local Councils. Others mixed them up with the police, the parish church, the courts of justice, the armed forces or even the family. While a number of candidates gave exceptionally good answers, others limited themselves to the setting up of Local Councils and their structure rather than their functions.

Question 3
Candidates seem to have been baffled because they have not yet grasped the meaning of ‘civic’. Few realized that such a community implies a group of people having a common purpose for civic life and that it is a social group having a common habitat, a body of common interests, a degree of social cooperation and interaction and a sense of belonging.

Question 4
Many candidates mixed up ‘mobility of labour’ with social mobility or the necessity of having to travel from home to office/factory to work (implying having to decide on whether to use public or private transport). Few emphasized the movement of people (geographical) when labour moves from one country to another, or to occupational mobility in response to changing needs.

Question 5
Quite a few candidates mixed up ‘consumerism’ with ‘consumer’, and this in turn with producer/seller and the market economy, when emphasis should have been on the inordinate extent of the accumulation and consumption of goods and to standards of social achievement – today’s stratification based on occupational differences and also on differences in consumption and lifestyle. Some candidates emphasized the effects of mass media, the internet, materialistic values and the use of plastic money.

Section B
Question 1
(a): Many tended to re-write the phrase or give the impression that they have a vague idea of the concept. For most candidates giving the indication of the presence of factors was enough.
(b): Candidates generally have an idea of what the term means, but do not know how to explain it. Many focused on social aspects or mixed it up with global warming (climate).
(c): Often mixed up with charity or recycling. Some assumed a physical redistribution of natural resources.
(d): Though there were some fairly good answers, many do not have an idea of what an economically disadvantaged country is. Some did realize that the term refers to third world countries.
(e): Generally explained as having different cultures in a given country, but many candidates give the impression that they do not know what culture means.

Question 2
Many candidates simply do not know the terms ‘welfare state’ and ‘welfare society’, neither do many know the meaning of welfare. But there is an indication that some know the difference between state social service and private social service. Many gave good examples of the former but could not describe them clearly. They just produced lists. As for the latter, examples were generally limited to private hospital care or something irrelevant. Many mix up the welfare society with voluntary charities. Several candidates wrote about rights.

Question 3
Candidates have not yet grasped the meaning of the concept of global solidarity. Many tended to betray an insular mentality linking their answer to voluntary, parochial or church charitable institutions or others within a Maltese context – MMDNA, YMCA, Appogg, Sedqa, Puttinu Cares, Dar tal-Provvvidenza, Caritas, Prayer Groups. Some built up their answer around the Red Cross, UNHCR or ‘emotional solidarity’. A good number of candidates stuck to charitable activities (fund raising) or crisis situations (earthquakes, inundations, tsunamis).

Question 4
Many candidates tended to ignore the question: they wrote about ‘rights of poor people’ or ‘types of poverty’ rather than causes. Moreover many tended to split the question attempting to describe one example of poverty and another of inequality. Some listed differences among sexes, discrimination (racial, religious, sexual, social), illegal immigrants, child labour, overpopulation, war or natural disasters, but few cared to explain why. Few wrote about unemployment, illiteracy, lack of sanitation or health care, and basic needs (food, shelter, clothing).

Question 5
Few realized that the answer should have focused on what students could do against poverty and inequality and that development education gives them the right formation and information for such action. Many indicated that education raises awareness of poverty. Quite a few candidates wrote about various situations that could lead to poverty and inequality – also including abortion, divorce, racism, sexual inequalities. Where action was inferred, the action described was limited to charitable handouts, charity campaigns and voluntary work (missionaries). Candidates have indicated that they have a superficial knowledge of both situations and actions listed. Moreover, it seems that they are not aware of education for sustainable development.

2.3 Comments regarding Paper 2A

General remarks

1. Overall, the standard of the essays was not found to be satisfactory. The aim of Paper 2A is to provide an opportunity for candidates to deal with a number of areas in depth. However, only a limited number of candidates adopted the dialectic approach in their answers, with the majority exposing only one side of the argument without attempting to show the alternative view.
2. A considerable number of candidates failed to address questions adequately. Candidates often beat about the bush to give the vaguest of answers. Thus, for example, in question 1, candidates tended to describe various examples of inequality in contemporary industrial society whilst providing a very brief exposition (three to four sentences) of Marx’s and Weber’s contributions. Similarly in question 3, candidates generally wrote in detail about the role of education as an agent of socialization but dealt very briefly, if at all, with the issue of inclusive education.
3. Rather than trying to be selective and to apply their knowledge and understanding to answer the question, candidates tended to throw all accumulated knowledge, some derived from hearsay or
folk wisdom, in the hope that some of it would hit the mark. Consequently, many answers were too simplistic in their generalisations and naïve in their arguments.

4. As in previous years, most candidates answered the questions in a superficial manner. They seem to be under the impression that this paper is not demanding and that one may answer the questions on the sole basis of common sense logic.

5. It must be made clear to the students that just because the areas in question (eg. family, education, immigration) will be familiar to them, Social Studies is a social science that requires scientific explanations.

6. Another issue was that few candidates opted to answer the actual gist of the question but delivered a well rehearsed answer. Candidates should be advised to take some time to read the questions and reflect whether their answers are relevant. There were, of course, candidates who had studied intensively, and who were thus well-prepared and disposed to engage in a rigorous form of argument. This led to socio-economic arguments and evidence which were both intellectually challenging and refreshing. However, it remains that the numbers of such promising candidates were limited.

Specific remarks

Section I

Question 1
Candidates were expected to provide a definition plus explanation of the concept of social stratification, and then continue to elaborate Marx and Weber’s thoughts on this issue. However, most candidates went at great length in their exposition of the concepts without addressing the latter. Many also went out-of-point by providing detailed examples of differences in the power of expenditure between the ‘rich’ and the ‘poor’ or by writing at length on the subject of ‘global stratification’. Few provided satisfactory information on Marx’s contribution to the understanding of the materialist conception of history, surplus and profit, and how history is ultimately the story of class struggle. The same can be said as regards how Weber rejected Marx’s materialist explanation of history, with many candidates just pointing out very briefly (one-two sentences) how class, status and power were the fulcrum of Weber’s theory.

Question 2
Students generally started answering this question well as many were familiar with the meaning of the concept of secularisation. However, instead of dissecting the issue – by highlighting how secularization brings forward a separation between State and Church, how the dominance of rationalisation in contemporary industrial society has contributed to the decreasing influence of the Church, and how nowadays religion-based values have given away to civic ones so that such practices as abortion and euthanasia are becoming increasingly accepted and even legalised – as is warranted in rigorous Social Studies learning, many candidates opted to dedicate most of, if not all, of their answers to the description of the contemporary attitudes and behaviours resulting from secularisation (the issue of declining mass attendance, increasing rates of separation, and rising number of babies born out of marriage were popular arguments). Although the question did warrant such and other examples of how secularisation brings a lot of changes in modern society, it is more important that candidates are familiar with the analytical components of the issue in question.

Section II

Question 3
Candidates were all very familiar with the role of education as an agent of socialisation with many going at length to highlight how schools provide an environment where children develop an awareness of social norms and values, and achieve a sense of self. However, this question also emphasised the issue of inclusive education which basically refers to the need for the education system to take into account the diversity of characteristics and needs of every pupil within a child-centred approach to combat discriminatory attitudes against marginalization. It was expected that candidates provide more detailed elaboration of the concept of inclusive education other than stating for the need to cater to students with special needs, and go on to highlight the debate between supporters of total inclusion versus others who
advocate partial inclusion, as well as explain how inclusive education is premised on the affirmation of the basic rights of children. Moreover, candidates were expected to highlight the setting up of the KNPD and the Inclusive Education Policy (2000) which led to the Individualised Educational Programme (IEP). Credit should also be given to the Learning Educational Assistants (LEAs) and the special schools (e.g. Helen Keller, San Miguel, and Guardian Angel).

**Question 4**
Candidates generally provided satisfactory answers for this question. Although a significant number of candidates did elaborate too extensively how in recent times the world of work has changed by an increase of female workers, many also highlighted how changes in economic and occupation structures influence the world of work by producing different types of cultures regarding work and employment, depending on economic structures that have evolved through the ages. Some candidates also rightly pointed out that changes and developments in mechanism, technology, communications as well as in labour organisation, commerce and trade have affected economic transactions and brought about free movement and products across borders bringing about globalization that has, in turn, affected again work structures and organisation, for example, companies, multi-nationals, and labour laws.

**Section III**
**Question 5**
This question was answered by 241 candidates or 29.5 per cent of those who sat for the exam. 27 per cent of these or 65 candidates scored less than 10 marks. Many did succeed in mentioning some of the social services, the majority referring only to the help given to single mothers and to older persons. Very few referred to such benefits as occupational injuries, sickness, education and health, disability, etc. Hardly anyone mentioned such social services as pregnancy and parenthood benefits, widowhood, etc, The majority also limited their answer to financial aid. Very few did mention benefits in kind. Some did succeed in discussing the justification or not of Baldacchino’s statement pointing out to the possibility of abuse of these services. However, only a very small number of respondents pointed out to the means testing process as a mechanism to deter abuse. Reference to the welfare society was only made by less than 25 candidates. This clearly shows a superficial understanding of what the Welfare State really means.

**Question 6**
It is very clear that the majority did not understand the question namely to show how governments of industrialised countries can alleviate the poverty of illegal immigrants residing in their country. On the contrary, many limited their answer to explaining why immigrants leave their countries and recommending ways as to what can be done to stop the very high outflow of illegal immigrants. A good number also mentioned what the Maltese can do to alleviate the plight of these people in their own country by sending financial help, housing, food. Only 89 candidates or 16 per cent of those who attempted this question succeeded in getting a pass mark or 12.5. Here it was encouraging to read answers emphasizing job creation, education, burden sharing and steps against racial discrimination.

**Section IV**
**Question 7**
Not a very popular question. In fact, only 39 candidates or 4.8 per cent of those who sat for the exam answered this question. Sixteen of these succeeded in giving very good answers clearly evaluating the economic and social benefits of Fair Trade. Although the majority of the other 23 candidates did show what was meant by Fair Trade, very few succeeded in discussing how the practices of Fair Trade can be beneficial to the international community vis-à-vis the present world economic crisis.

**Question 8**
This was the most popular question in Section IV, being answered by almost 93 per cent or 760 candidates. Many answers mentioned the technological progress which is resulting in an environmental crisis in many areas. They highlighted the gas emissions from factories and automobiles polluting the clear air and destroying the protective ozone layer, the cutting down of forests for wood and building purposes, the pollution of sea water. A good number of respondents also did tackle the second part of the question by giving practical suggestions to reduce the environmental degradation. These included alternative energy sources and energy saving devices, re-forestation, more rational use of transport, restricting sulphur
emissions. Few did also succeed in emphasizing the creation of partnerships and shared responsibilities aimed at preventing or diminishing the environmental damage.

2.4 Comments regarding Paper 2B

General remarks

1. The overall level of candidates’ performance was quite satisfactory, and in a significant number of cases one can safely say that it was even very good. The most popular questions were Questions 1, 3, 6 and 8, while those least chosen were Questions 4, 5 and 7. Judging by the kind of responses given, the candidates found Question 4 was the most difficult.

2. The structured setting of the Paper reflects well the Assessment Criteria of the SEC Syllabus and the performance expectations of Paper 2B. The distribution of the questions within and across the four sections of the Paper maintains a balanced coverage of the syllabus in its entirety. The equal weight of questions is maintained and the allotment of marks for parts within questions reflects the level of difficulty and candidate engagement, with graded level of difficulty from part (a) to part (b) to part (c). This makes it possible for the less prepared candidates to achieve an acceptable mark and grade, with those who were more prepared with an opportunity to obtain their deserved higher marks.

3. Questions on current issues like ‘waste management’, ‘sustainable welfare’, ‘sustainable pensions’ and ‘social exclusion’ help to make the subject closer to home. Whatever their choice, a significant number of students showed a satisfactory level of preparedness in the subject. Very few of them did not attempt all four questions and what may be considered as very poor answers occurred infrequently. The majority of candidates gave good answers, even when attention to more detail was expected.

4. Unfortunately, candidates do not always give attention to marks allotted to the different parts of a question, with the result that parts which carry the highest marks, usually part (c) are answered in short or very superficially. In fact, in many of the cases in this year’s edition of the examination, the overall mark of each question was relatively determined by the marks in these question-parts under discussion.

5. This calls for more emphasis with students to give more attention of rubrics and to better reflect the weighting of questions in their respective answers.

6. All factors considered, examiners’ repeated call to students and teachers to approach the subject with a more social-scientific rigour as is expected by the nature of the subject is, hereby, being made even when a considerable progress in this direction is being registered in the present edition of the SEC examination.

Specific remarks

Section I

Question 1

This was chosen by the majority of candidates. Most candidates could define culture, some in more detail outlining the various cultural aspects and also referring to multiculturalism. Most also gave a suitable example of an aspect of Maltese culture, although there were some who mixed up culture with religious rituals such as going to church on Sunday. However, there were quite a number of candidates who could not define sub-culture and give a suitable example.
Question 2

This question was less popular although also chosen by a significant number of candidates. Many had a fairly good idea of what the two concepts mean, although many restricted the definition to voting rights and neglected other aspects such as freedoms and rights.

Section II

Question 3

The majority of candidates chose this question from this section. As in previous years, many candidates did not relate socialisation to the transmission of culture, but to socialising with friends and other people. However, there were those who answered this question relatively well. Most candidates could not define “inclusive education” and only very few of those did extend the term to the inclusion of different categories of people. Many, unfortunately, think of inclusion only in terms of children with disability. Most answers to (c) were restricted to physical features such as lifts and ramps and to facilitators.

Question 4

Few candidates answered this question and most did not do well. The definition of work was largely restricted to paid work. Very few mentioned other forms of work, such as housework or voluntary work. Most candidates defined division of labour in terms of people having different jobs or in terms of the three sectors of the economy, and not in terms of a job split in different operations or areas of specialisation. The term ‘occupational structures’ by itself was very difficult to explain, let alone the whole phrase ‘factors which bring about occupational structures’. Admittedly section (c) was a difficult question which few could answer.

Section III

Question 5

Social exclusion could be defined by most candidates, although a few could explain what social indicators are. Many candidates gave suitable examples of indicators or mentioned categories of people who are likely to be excluded. Section (c) was answered satisfactorily by many candidates.

Question 6

Most candidates restricted the problem simply to ageing and the increased longevity. Others mentioned low birth rates, although both these factors were mentioned in the question. There were quite a few candidates who extended the discussion to why we have lower birth rates and death rates. Some candidates identified the problem as one of pension sustainability, although very few candidates actually referred to the problem as a welfare gap. Many candidates understood the problem to be one of low income among pensioners and not being able to cope with the low income due to the cost of living and to increased expenses on their part. Consequently, in the last section there were those who restricted their suggestions to how pensions could be increased. There were quite a number of candidates who suggested that the retirement age should be increased or that government expenditure should be managed better.

Section IV

Question 7

Most candidates addressed this question satisfactorily. There were a few who mixed up residential with social mobility, but most understood the term. Causes of the urban sprawl in Malta were sometimes mixed up with its consequences (advantages mainly). The last section was answered fairly well by most candidates.
Question 8

Most candidates answered this question quite well. In the first part there were candidates who mentioned both negative and positive consequences of industrialisation. There were others who thought they had to restrict the answer to waste-related factors only. Most candidates mentioned relevant risks especially related to disease, pollution, climate change and a decrease in the number of tourists. In the last section many students mentioned the three or five Rs. However, the majority of candidates gave central or sole importance to recycling and less importance to reduction or waste. However, quite a few candidates addressed this question in a comprehensive manner.

Chairperson
Board of Examiners
July 2009