



SAOU

Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie
South African Teachers' Union

MEDIA STATEMENT

ISSUED BY DR JOPIE BREED, PRESIDENT OF THE SAOU ON 6 JANUARY 2010

EMBARGO : 20:00 ON 6 JANUARY 2010

RESULTS OF THE 2009 SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

The SAOU has noted the results of the 2009 National Senior Certificate Examinations and congratulates learners, teachers and school principals on outstanding achievements. Years of hard work have finally been rewarded and a basis has been laid for a future which is now in the hands of each successful candidate.

Outcomes Based Education

These results are rendered more notable because they reflect the achievement of the first group which received instruction in terms of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) from Grade 1 onwards. This group was thus part of an experiment which lasted for 12 years and which delivered some positive outcomes but unfortunately predominantly negative ones as well. The negative feedback has given rise to the current move back to a more conventional method of instruction. From the very outset the standpoint of the SAOU was that the method whereby OBE was introduced was not sustainable, and the SAOU is grateful that a better balance is now being sought.

The value of the National Senior Certificate

The National Senior Certificate (NSC) is a particularly important part of education provision in South Africa.

- First, it certifies that the holder of the certificate has successfully completed his/her school career by satisfying requirements which reflect a particular education standard.
- Second, the figures as a whole relating to the number of certificates issued and the achievement of this group give an indication of the effectiveness of the education system.
- Thirdly the certificate is supposed to furnish entry to further education and training, as well as access to the labour market.

The role of UMALUSI

The SAOU welcomes the declaration by UMALUSI that the results are valid and that they reflect the desired standard. The SAOU emphasises that UMALUSI must recognise its responsibility with regard to the maintaining of an acceptable standard in the question papers for different subjects, and that this responsibility must be meticulously discharged. As external moderator, UMALUSI



should ensure in advance that the standard of difficulty of each question paper is correct. This will prevent the unnecessary adjustment of marks and will indicate where there is poor instruction at schools. Too many complaints were received that certain question papers were too difficult (eg Mathematics Paper 1, (Algebra)), while other question papers were particularly easy. UMALUSI's role does not begin only with the standardisation of results which sometime necessitates adjustments to resolve the problem of question papers which are too difficult or too easy. It should begin when question papers are drawn up and moderated, and in the case of Life Orientation should include the moderation of internal assessment as well.

Mpumalanga

The SAOU is grateful that irregularities in Mpumalanga have been pointed out and supports UMALUSI in dealing with this matter. It is unacceptable that the information was furnished to UMALUSI so late. The SAOU drew the attention of the Department of Education at the national level to this matter as early as November 2009. It is now essential that guilty parties will be identified and that the due processes of the law will take their course. No protection should be afforded to departments, heads of departments or officials. If such protection is afforded this will seriously impair the trustworthiness of UMALUSI and of the NSC.

The SAOU fully supports UMALUSI in its approach of identifying individuals and dealing with those schools where possible irregularities took place. However, the interests of innocent candidates in such schools must be protected. UMALUSI and the Department of Education at national level are urged to act cautiously in this connection in order to avoid litigation. The SAOU expects UMALUSI to determine a reasonable date for releasing the results of schools where no problems are detected. Friday 8 January 2010 should be attainable.

The examinations fiasco in Mpumalanga in 2008 and again in 2009 gives rise to serious doubt about the ability of the Mpumalanga Education Department to administer the National Senior Certificate Examination. To ensure that justice is done to learners in the province, as well as to ensure the credibility of the NSC, the examination process should be managed from elsewhere until the Department is in a position to do so.

The SAOU is well aware that a number of competent and dedicated persons were involved in the examinations process in Mpumalanga in 2009. These persons should continue to be involved in the future, but the overall management of the process must be located elsewhere and not in the Mpumalanga Education Department.

The National Senior Certificate as access to further study and the labour market

Over the past years there have increasingly been questions about the value of the NSC as a basis for providing access to further education and training and to the labour market. These questions have not diminished over time, and whether they will diminish as a result of the examinations in 2009 will obviously be determined by feedback from the universities and the labour market.

The value of the NSC for its holder is determined not only by the standard achieved in the various subjects, but also by the nature of the content as well as the combination of the subjects in the package taken. There are still large numbers of learners who take subjects and combinations of subjects which do not prepare them fully in terms of their interests and attitude on the one hand, or for the demands of universities and employers on the other.

A question which arises is whether this certificate has any value for those who do not attend or desire to attend universities, particularly in view of the expectation that 45% of school leavers in 2009 will not obtain employment. If the certificate cannot satisfy this criterion, in effect the State is contributing to the unemployment and socio economic problems about which various commentators are issuing urgent warnings.

Appreciation for responsible parties involved

The SAOU expresses its appreciation to all responsible parties for the manner in which the examinations were managed, and more particularly to teachers and school managements for the hard work which the examinations demand. In this regard we refer specifically to the 37 000 educators who sacrificed part of their holiday to act as markers.

The organised education profession and the road ahead

The SAOU is convinced that the organised education profession as represented in national teacher unions must now jointly reflect on a strategy to address the problems currently besetting the education system. Tentative discussions in this regard indicate that there is already unanimity in this regard.

End

Enquiries:

Dr Jopie Breed – 083 266 8614

Mr Chris Klopper – 083 708 7733

Dr Huw Davies – 083 306 9317

Dr Gustav Niebuhr – 083 561 7539