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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Level
In History (WHI02)

Paper 2: Breadth Study with Source Evaluation

Option 1D: South Africa, 1948–2014

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Introduction

It was pleasing to see a range of well-informed and well-written responses from candidates on IAS Paper WHI02 1D which covers South Africa, 1948-2014. The paper is divided into two sections. Section A contains a compulsory two-part question for the option studied, each part based on one source. It assesses source analysis and evaluation skills (AO2). Section B comprises a choice of essays that assess understanding of the period in depth (AO1) by targeting five second order concepts - cause, consequence, change/ continuity, similarity/difference and significance.

In common with the previous series, candidates found Section A more challenging than Section B. Some candidates were still not clear on what was meant by 'value' and 'weight' in the context of source analysis and evaluation. Performance in Section A was also affected by the absence of the detailed knowledge base required to add contextual material to support/challenge points derived from the sources. Most candidates did use their time effectively and, although a few responses were quite brief, there was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions both sections. The ability range was diverse, but the design of the paper allowed all abilities to be catered for. Furthermore, in Section B, most responses had an analytical focus and there were very fewer that were wholly descriptive essays which were devoid of analysis and, for the most part, responses were soundly structured. The most common weakness in Section B essays was the lack of a sharp focus on the precise terms of the question and/or the second order concept that was targeted. This meant that some candidates wrote at length on topics that were only peripherally related to the question or which did not cover the whole time period.

It remains important to realise that Section A topics are drawn from highlighted topics on the specification whereas Section B questions may be set from any part of any Key Topic, and, as a result, full coverage of the specification is enormously important. There was little evidence on this paper of candidates having insufficient time to answer questions from Sections A and B.

The candidates' performance on individual questions is considered in the next section.

Question 1 (a)

Most candidates understood the question and were able to comprehend the source and comment on what it revealed about attempts to improve healthcare in South Africa in the 1990s. There were some well-focused responses that drew out inferences about the significance of the achievement and the importance of free healthcare. The best answers developed the inferences with well-selected context to establish their validity. However, many responses were completely devoid of contextual knowledge and were therefore not credited at all in bullet point 2 of the generic mark scheme. This did depress achievement overall in Section A. Some candidates were able to use the attributes of the source effectively to develop their ideas about the value of the source from a speech by Nelson Mandela. Those candidates who discussed the limitations could not be rewarded for that part of their answer as it is not the focus of part a responses.

Question 1 (b)

Candidates understood the source material and were able to select from it to develop some inferences about actions of white opponents. There were some effective answers that weighed up the strengths and limitations of the source and used this as a basis to reach a judgement about the weight that should be attached to the source for the enquiry. Some candidates made effective comments about the nature of the source as the recollections of a woman who had lived in South Africa as a young child and considered its reliability in the light of its obvious partiality towards her parents. However, many candidates focused on speculation and assumption which undermined the evaluation of the source. Some candidates still approached the consideration of weight by writing about adding and subtracting weight rather than considering the strengths and weaknesses of the source material and then reaching a judgement about the weight that the source would bear in an enquiry. Many candidates did not use contextual knowledge and could not be rewarded in bullet point 2 of the generic mark scheme. In other cases the contextual knowledge was free standing, being added to the source material rather than used to interrogate content and inferences. A number approached the question of limitations by focusing on what was missing, criticising the source for not mentioning Helen Suzeman or Helen Joseph who have both appeared on previous source questions. This did not advance the argument very far. Candidates need to deal with what is in the source as presented unless there are grounds to consider a deliberate omission.

Question 2

This question prompted a number of focused responses. Some candidates displayed a good knowledge of the development of the political system in the period 1948-61 and were able to focus their answer on the second order concept – change. These candidates considered the rise of the National Party and its impact on the system, the role of apartheid in developments in the political system, the transition to a republic and the development of the system of self-government in the Bantustans. These were contrasted with continuities such as the restrictions on back voting, the dominance of the National Party and the repression of opposition. The most common errors in addressing this question was the failure to focus on the time period and thus to explore later developments under Botha and De Klerk and to provide a description of apartheid without linkage to the political system.

Question 3

This was the least popular question in the paper. Most candidates who answered it achieved in level 3 and level 4 although a small minority were unable to develop a successful answer and remained in level 1. Those candidates achieving in the higher levels demonstrated a good knowledge of Vorster's role in maintaining apartheid and considered his role in the development of the Security Police, the passing of the terrorism Act and the Separate Voters Act. They contrasted this with the roles of Verwoerd and Botha and reached a judgement on significance.

Question 4

This was the most popular essay question on the paper and prompted a range of answers across the different levels. The best responses demonstrated a good knowledge of the role of the UN in putting external pressure on the National Party to end apartheid and contrasted its significance with other external pressures including sporting and economic boycotts and the role of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Candidates developed secure criteria for reaching judgments such as the luke-warm response of the USA to UN sanctions until the end of the Cold War. The most common errors included a lack of focus on the UN and a focus on the role of internal opposition to apartheid. This latter was not a focus of the question and could not be rewarded.

Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Section A

Value of Source Question (1(a))

- Candidates must be more prepared to make valid inferences rather than to paraphrase the source
- Be prepared to back up inferences by adding additional contextual knowledge from beyond the source
- Move beyond stereotypical approaches to the nature/purpose and authorship of the source e.g. look at the specific stance and/or purpose of the writer
- Avoid writing about the deficiencies of the source when assessing its value to the enquiry.

Weight of Source Question (1(b)/2(b))

- Candidates should be prepared to assess the weight of the source for an enquiry by being aware that the author is writing for a specific audience. Be aware of the values and concerns of that audience.
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to use contextual knowledge to support/challenge statements and claims made in the source
- Try to distinguish between fact and opinion by using your contextual knowledge of the period
- Knowledge should be integrated with the source evidence, to discuss the inferences drawn and their validity in the light of the contextual understanding of the period.
- In coming to a judgement about the nature/purpose of the source, take account of the weight you may be able to give to the author's evidence in the light of his or her stance and/or purpose
- In assessing weight, it is perfectly permissible to assess reliability by considering what has been perhaps deliberately omitted from the source. However, simply stating that a source is limited because it does not cover certain events or developments does not establish weight since no source can be comprehensive.

Section B

Essay questions

- Candidates must provide more factual details as evidence. Weaker responses lacked depth and sometimes range
- Take a few minutes to plan your answer before you begin to write your response
- Pick out three or four key themes and then provide an analysis of (for e.g.) the target significance mentioned in the question, setting its importance against other themes rather than providing a description of each
- Pay more careful attention to key phrases in the question when analysing and use them throughout the essay to prevent deviation from the central issues and concepts

- Pay careful attention to the date range in the question. Plan the answer with a focus on this range and avoid lengthy exploration of events outside of the time period set
- Try to explore links between issues to make the structure flow more logically and the arguments more integrated.