



PSAC 2020- 2021

Grade 6

Modular Assessment
History & Geography

Subject code : **P142/2**

Examiners' Report

Key messages

Candidates should:

- read questions carefully paying particular attention to the key words written in bold; these often denote a specific place or location (e.g. **Rodrigues, north**) and preparedness for a natural hazard (e.g. **before** arrival of a cyclone);
- be encouraged to use the inquiry approach in the study of natural hazards such as tropical cyclones and volcanoes and realise that they are called 'natural hazards' because they can cause damage to the environment and to people (e.g. injuries, loss of lives)
- learn to make the difference between the work slaves did in the colony **before** abolition of slavery and the occupations they chose to engage into when they were free **after** abolition;
- be given more opportunities to participate in group and class discussions to communicate and share their ideas orally and engage in writing regularly to answer open-ended questions (e.g. describe modern trends in agriculture/ describe new methods of sustainable agriculture and their advantages).

General Comments

The Grade 6 Modular History & Geography question paper of 2020-2021 consisted of 7 questions. It was set on a 'deloaded' Grade 6 Teaching and Learning Syllabus in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a balanced paper which assessed in equal terms knowledge and understanding in Geography and History as well as the application of skills (reading and interpreting maps and diagrams). The total mark for the Grade 6 modular question paper is 50.

The overall performance of candidates this year was quite good. The mean mark was 30.5.

Candidates were well prepared to successfully tackle Multiple-Choice Question 1 and Question 7, a structured question assessing the history topic 'Independence'. They also performed well on specific questions which assessed specific skills such as:

- reading a labelled diagram of a tropical cyclone (Question 2);
- interpreting features related to agriculture shown on a map of Rodrigues (Question 4);
- matching items on waste recycling (sub question 1 of Question 5);

It is commendable to note that candidates performed well on the learning outcomes related to the independence of Mauritius (Question 7). Many candidates produced excellent answers to the open-ended parts of this question. However, it was expected that candidates would have done equally well on the two other History questions (Question 3 and Question 6). Poor performance on specific parts of these two questions could be due to a lack of adequate reading and writing skills. This could have caused the misunderstanding of the questions. For example, in Question 3, many candidates tended to confuse between the work done by slaves **during slavery** and occupations which the freed slaves chose to engage **after the abolition of slavery**. A table of comparison with relevant examples of types of work before and after slavery may be drawn. They may be encouraged to ask questions and find new examples.

Candidates performed better on the items assessing knowledge rather than those assessing understanding in the Geography questions (Questions 2, 4 and 5). For Question 2, some of the answers given showed that some candidates still confuse between precautions to be taken **before** the coming of a tropical cyclone and precautions to be taken **during** or **after** the climatic event. It was also noted that the meaning of the term 'natural hazards' was not fully understood by many candidates. In addition, only the

high-achieving candidates could provide relevant answers to the questions about new trends in agriculture such as sustainable agriculture and new techniques of farming such as organic farming and greenhouse farming (Question 4).

To improve the quality of learning, it is advised to engage learners into inquiry-based learning (asking questions and trying to find out and communicate ideas and feelings about geographical and historical issues) through a variety of activities. Enrichment activities include studying posters on cyclone awareness, watching the news and videos on natural events; outdoor/ field observation and producing memos/writing short notes (for example, when they study 'changes in agricultural land use'). Inquiry-based learning offers the potential to foster a genuine interest and motivation to develop a deeper understanding and to bring more confidence in writing about one's own learning.

Specific Comments

Question 1

This question comprised seven multiple-choice items which assessed knowledge of facts and understanding of terms/concepts in Geography (items 1, 2, 3 and 4) and knowledge of facts in History (items 5, 6 and 7). It carried a total of 7 marks. It was well answered by candidates. Nearly 50% of candidates scored full marks in the MCQ and this is considered to be a good performance on such a question.

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| Item 1 | It was well answered. Candidates were required to select the type of land use for the setting up of shops and shopping malls, that is commercial land use. |
| Item 2 | It was well attempted by candidates. A few candidates chose option C , Bel Ombre, as the answer. They did not pay heed to the geographical location of the tourist resort though the word north was written in bold. |
| Item 3 | This item assessed knowledge of types of farming. Candidates were required to choose the correct term for the rearing of animals only. It was generally well answered. Some candidates wrongly chose mixed farming or market gardening. |
| Item 4 | This item was well answered mainly by the high achievers. Many candidates confused a tsunami with an earthquake. |

- Item 5 As expected, it proved to be an easy item. Most candidates were able to give 'Réunion Island' as the correct answer.
- Item 6 The vast majority of candidates could remember that the three names of Machabee, Mangalkhan and Diamamouve are the names of slaves who gave their names to places. This is a laudable effort which should be encouraged to uphold the teachings of values from historical facts.
- Item 7 This item was also well answered though a small number of candidates decided to choose option **B**, a dodo, for the bird on the Coat of Arms of Rodrigues. These candidates probably did not pay enough attention to the word **Rodrigues** written in bold.

Question 2

This question carried a total of 10 marks. It comprised two sub-questions which assessed knowledge and understanding of candidates on topics of Unit 3, 'Natural Hazards'. Sub-question 1 was based on **Diagram 1** showing the different parts of a tropical cyclone. It carried a total of 6 marks. Sub-question 2 assessed understanding of candidates on the topic 'Volcanoes'. It carried a total of 4 marks.

Sub-question 1

Part (a) Candidates were required to name the season during which tropical cyclones are usually formed. This was answered successfully.

Part (b): Candidates were required to identify which part of the tropical cyclone, Part **X** or Part **Y** in **Diagram 1**, has the most violent winds and gusts. It was successfully attempted by fewer candidates than for part (a).

Part (c): Candidates were asked to describe the weather conditions in Part **Z** of the tropical cyclone. Two marks were awarded for any two of the following weather conditions: clear sky, calm weather/no wind, no rain. Fewer candidates than expected scored full marks. Many candidates scored one mark for naming only one weather condition which prevails in Part **Z**. The answers given by some candidates were quite vague and irrelevant such as 'blazing sun', 'light rain', 'good weather', 'cloudy', 'blue sky'. This indicates that these candidates had a rather poor understanding of weather conditions in the different parts of a tropical cyclone presented on a diagram.

Part (d): This part question was attempted quite successfully by most candidates who showed a good awareness of the precautions to be taken **before** the coming of a tropical cyclone.

Examples of relevant answers were: buy necessary provisions, consolidate houses, prepare emergency kits, store food and fresh water, trim tree branches etc.

Some candidates would have done better, had they paid careful attention to the word **before** written in bold. They ended up writing about precautions to be taken during or after a tropical cyclone.

Sub-question 2

Sub-question 2 comprised two part questions, each part carrying two marks. This question was only successfully tackled by high achieving candidates.

Part (a): Candidates were asked to give one reason why a volcano is considered as a 'natural hazard'. The more able candidates scored full marks. They had understood well that, just like other 'natural hazards', volcanoes can cause harm to people and their activities such as 'injuries and loss of lives' **and** 'damage to the environment' e.g. forests, buildings, roads, settlements etc.). The other candidates scored one mark for naming only the harm caused to the natural/built environment or the harm done to the people and their activities. Weaker candidates focused their answers on the word 'natural' ignoring the key word 'hazard'. They produced irrelevant answers such as: 'it is natural/caused by nature', 'it is not caused by humans'.

Part (b): Candidates were required to explain how volcanoes can be an advantage to people. A good explanation was required to gain two marks: one mark for identifying one advantage and one mark for a good description/explanation of the advantage. This part was generally well answered by the high achievers who could express fluently and clearly their ideas in complete sentences. Examples of answers given by the better performing candidates were:

- volcanic soils are rich in minerals and nutrients and therefore fertile to grow crops;
- volcanoes produce scenic and spectacular landscapes to be protected for the leisure activities of local people and to attract tourists;
- volcanoes form new islands and extend land surface areas;
- lava flows from volcanoes become basalt rocks used for building purposes.

Less able candidates gave two-word answers such as ‘fertile soils’, ‘basalt rocks’, ‘attracts people/tourists’. Such answers were credited with one mark.

Question 3

This question assessed knowledge of important aspects of the slave population during the colonial period. It was fairly well attempted by candidates across the whole ability range.

Part (a): Candidates were shown a picture of the monument commemorating the abolition of slavery at Pointe Canon, Mahebourg (**Picture 1**). They were asked to tick the box which showed the date on which the abolition of slavery is celebrated in Mauritius. As expected, the great majority of them chose the correct date, 1st February.

Part (b): A large number of candidates answered this part question well by providing one or two names of places where slaves came from. However, It was noteworthy to see that though it was felt that though they had knowledge of the places, candidates were not able to write these names. Candidates were not unjustly penalised for some spelling mistakes but care should be taken to write the names of places such as ‘Mozambique’ and ‘Madagascar’ correctly.

Part (c): This part question assessed the ability of candidates to list two things that slaves were not allowed to do. Most of them were able to give at least one relevant example of the ways in which slaves were denied basic human rights and did not enjoy the same rights as the free skilled workers and European settlers. Slaves were considered as the property of their masters. Slaves could not buy or own any property such as land. They were not allowed to be paid for their work, to wear shoes, to own houses, to travel from one plantation to another, to visit their friends or relatives, to leave their masters or plantations, to go and live in another place/ country... They had to endure many hardships in their daily lives despite the fact that they worked so hard to develop the colony and make it prosper.

Part (d): This part question was also well answered. A large number of candidates were able to name at least one occupation that freed slaves chose when they left the sugar estates. Two marks were awarded for writing the names of two occupations. Examples of correct answers were: small cultivators/farmers/growing of crops, fishermen/fishing, raising cattle, masons, carpenters, tailors, artisans/craftsmen, cart drivers, shoemakers, tinsmiths (ferblantiers), blacksmiths, maid etc. Some candidates misinterpreted the

question and wrote about the work done by slaves on plantations but not about the work freed slaves chose to do after they had left the sugar estates. A few candidates even wrote about places where ex-slaves went to live such as the interior of the island, the suburbs of Port Louis, and on the coasts. It is important to use examples to show the types of work done by slaves and the occupations they chose to do after the abolition of slavery when they left the sugar estates.

Question 4

This question carried 7 marks. It comprised three part questions which assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of important aspects of farming under the topic 'Agricultural Land Use'. Even if candidates were not always able to name 'market gardening' as the type of farming practised in the three river valleys shown on the map of Rodrigues, they were able to give one reason why farmers grow crops in these areas. The high-achieving candidates generally attempted part (b) and part (c) on organic farming and greenhouse farming respectively.

Part (a) (i): Candidates were asked to name the type of farming which is practised in the three river valleys of Rivière Malgache, Rivière Banane and Rivière Mourouk, after studying **Map 1**. Many candidates found it difficult to recall and to write the term 'market gardening', the type of farming practised in river valleys in Rodrigues. Some of them devised an approximate term such as 'market farming'. Some examples of relatively frequent wrong answers were 'organic farming' and 'plantation farming'.

Part (a) (ii): Candidates fared better on this part question. They were asked to give one reason why farmers grow crops in these river valleys. The best candidates wrote elaborate answers qualifying the type of land in river valleys and their suitability for agriculture. Examples of such answers were: 'because river/alluvial deposits produce deep/fertile soils' and 'there is flat land with deep/ fertile soils'. 'Water is available for irrigation' was also an acceptable answer. Candidates were awarded only one mark for two-word answers such as 'fertile soils', 'rich soils', 'good soil', 'water available' and 'flat land'.

Part (b): Candidates were expected to write about the positive aspects of organic farming. This was moderately well answered. Methods of sustainable agriculture such as organic farming aim to protect the environment and our health. This method does not encourage the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Answers such as 'reducing pesticides which

cause harm to people's health' or 'organic farming does not cause pollution and help people to eat healthy food' were awarded full marks whereas answers such as 'less pesticides' or 'it does not cause pollution' were given a partial mark. It was necessary to show a reasonable level of awareness about concerns for health and the protection of the environment to achieve full marks. Weaker candidates showed a lack of awareness about sustainable agriculture. They confused between organic farming with greenhouse farming. Ideas related to increase in population or to produce enough/more food were not relevant and did not deserve any mark.

Part (c): This part question assessed knowledge of the advantages of growing crops in greenhouses. It proved to be slightly less difficult than the previous part question. Examples of relevant ideas developed by candidates were 'control of temperature', 'use of sprinklers/drip irrigation to water crops', 'protection against bad weather conditions' and 'pest control' (e.g. crops are not damaged by insects). Weaker answers such as 'crops grow well' and 'it does not cause pollution' were awarded one mark. Answers such as 'no sunlight' or 'feeding more people' were not credited with any mark.

It is important to develop a good understanding of the main characteristics of these two modern methods of sustainable agriculture.

In greenhouse farming, modern technology is applied. A greenhouse is a sheltered structure covered with a transparent material where farming conditions are controlled. Organic farming is generally practised in natural settings and aims to promote eco-friendly practices such as biological control and judicious use of the natural resources. The former is based mainly on technology to produce high yields and quality crops and the latter relies mainly on natural principles to conserve the fertility of the soil and to produce healthy foods.

QUESTION 5

This question carried 4 marks. It comprised two parts. Part (a) assessed knowledge of human activities and their impacts on the environment, namely recycling of household waste. Part (b) assessed understanding of the harmful impacts of the use of fertilisers and pesticides on the environment. Candidates performed fairly well on this question.

Part (a): Candidates were required to correctly match two actions listed in column 1 to the ways they can be reused or recycled in column 2. This was well attempted.

Part (b): Candidates were asked to explain how the use of fertilisers and pesticides can be harmful to the environment. It was fairly well attempted across the whole ability range. The variety of answers given by candidates showed a reasonable degree of awareness of the impacts that air, water and land pollution arising from the use of fertilisers and pesticides can have on the natural environment and people's health.

QUESTION 6

This question carried 7 marks. It assessed candidates' knowledge of the health conditions of the people in 19th century Mauritius. The focus was on how diseases seriously affected their health.

Part (a): Most candidates could easily name one disease which affected the health of the people of Mauritius in the 19th century. As expected, malaria was the most common answer. 'Cholera' and 'small pox' were also correct answers. Candidates should learn to correctly spell a key word such as 'malaria'. This would avoid them making spelling mistakes as 'malaya', 'maleria' and 'malria' in the examination.

Part (b): Candidates were required to give two reasons for the prevalence of diseases at that time in Mauritius. It was quite encouraging to note that they could generally identify one reason why diseases were common at that time. However, one serious weakness was the difficulties they had to elaborate and produce answers giving a good description or explanation of the reason. Therefore, relatively few candidates scored four marks for giving two distinct relevant answers. Examples of two mark answers were : no drains/canals or lack of drains and canals to evacuate foul/stagnant water, presence of breeding grounds for mosquitoes, people living in overcrowded houses, lack of medical facilities (e.g. there were few doctors, there were few hospitals), there was a lot of pollution, there was a lack of clean drinking water. Examples of wrong answers given by candidates were: 'because of the climate/hot temperatures', 'no doctors and no hospitals'.

Part (c): This part question assessed the ability of candidates to write about one remedial measure taken to improve the health conditions of the inhabitants at that time. Candidates attempted quite successfully this part question. Relevant answers such as 'reservoirs and fountains were built', 'more hospitals/dispensaries were built', 'more doctors to treat sick people', 'improvements in the provision of clean drinking water', 'the building of railways encouraged people to go and live in the Plaines Wilhems where the

climate is cooler’ were awarded full marks. Some of the highest achieving candidates produced remarkable answers such as ‘fountains and reservoirs were built for the inhabitants to get clean drinking water’ and ‘dispensaries and hospitals were built to cure sick people’. Weaker answers with only one word or two words were credited with one mark (examples: more canals/more drains, hospitals).

QUESTION 7

This question carried 8 marks. It comprised four parts assessing knowledge and understanding of the national flag and the national anthem. Candidates performed well on the part questions assessing the colours of the national flag and its symbolic significance. The part question on the name of the writer of the National Anthem proved to be rather difficult to candidates.

Part (a): Candidates were told that two colours of the national flag of Mauritius are red and blue. They were asked to name the two other colours of the national flag. This was well answered.

Part (b): Candidates were required to describe what the colour blue in the national flag represents. Many candidates were able to associate the blue colour with the ocean surrounding our islands or the lagoon/sea around us. Some candidates successfully developed the idea of the location of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean and were awarded full marks. One word or two-word answers such as ‘the sea’, ‘the ocean’ or ‘the lagoon’ were credited with one mark only. Some examples of wrong answers were ‘water’, ‘the climate’, the ‘light’, and ‘the sky’.

Part (c): Candidates were expected to write one sentence to describe the importance of having a national flag to obtain two marks. It was well answered by candidates across the ability range.

Examples of correct answers were: ‘it shows that a country is independent’, ‘it develops a sense of belonging among the people’, ‘it instills a sense of pride/citizenship in the country’, ‘it distinguishes a country from another country’ and ‘it represents Mauritius in international events’.

One-word answers such as ‘belonging’, ‘pride’, ‘identity’ and ‘independence’ were awarded one mark only.

No marks were given for writing about the strategic importance of Mauritius – the star and key of the Indian Ocean - or that the national flag shows that it is a republic. Among the four national symbols, it should be emphasised that the Trochetia was declared national flower on 12th March 1992 when Mauritius became a Republic. The national flag was designed and chosen at the time of independence in 1968.

Part (d): It proved to be quite difficult for many candidates to recall and properly write the name of the author who wrote the national anthem, Jean Georges Prosper.

The full name was not required to earn full marks. Candidates were not unjustly penalised for spelling mistakes provided that their answers were clearly referring to the author of the national anthem, Jean Georges Prosper. Some bright candidates did not attempt this question at all.

We should encourage learners to remember Philippe Gentil as the composer of the music of the national anthem and Jean Georges Prosper as the author who wrote the national anthem. It is our shared duty to pay them tribute for their contribution in the promotion of nation building at the time of independence and thereafter.