

Report on performance of Deaf learners in schools for the Deaf in South Africa in 2016.

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The following report has been compiled from information publically available through newspapers and the Department of Basic Education website, as well as by verifying such information directly with the schools.

Pass rate and class of pass

In the 2016 Grade 12 NSC exams, there were 12 schools for the Deaf which entered candidates. These 12 schools entered a total of 143 learners of which 41 passed. This is a shocking result of a 28.67% pass rate. These numbers include progressed learners and compared to the national pass rate of 72.5% (which included progressed learners) it shows that schools for the Deaf are achieving a pass rate of more than 40% less than the national average.

The results are somewhat skewed by the very poor results obtained at one school (X). This school had a 100% failure rate with 63 Deaf learners sitting for the exams. This in itself is evidence of a crisis! The average marks obtained for all subjects at that school were in the failure range (below 30%) except for Life Orientation which had an average of 30.16%. As a result, analysis was done both including and excluding the results of this school. There is very serious cause for concern, however, that so many young Deaf people have failed Grade 12 and have no access to Second Chance Matric programmes or TVET studies.

The results excluding the above school indicate a pass rate of 51.25% (41/80) which is a marginally better pass rate than 2015 (50%). However, the **quality of passes has declined** which results in severely limited post-school study options for these learners. Table 1 below shows the split of results in 2015 and 2016.

Type of pass	2015	2016
Bachelor	5	4
Diploma	23	12
Higher Certificate	6	7
Endorsed	8	18

Table 1: Number of each class of pass in 2015 and 2016

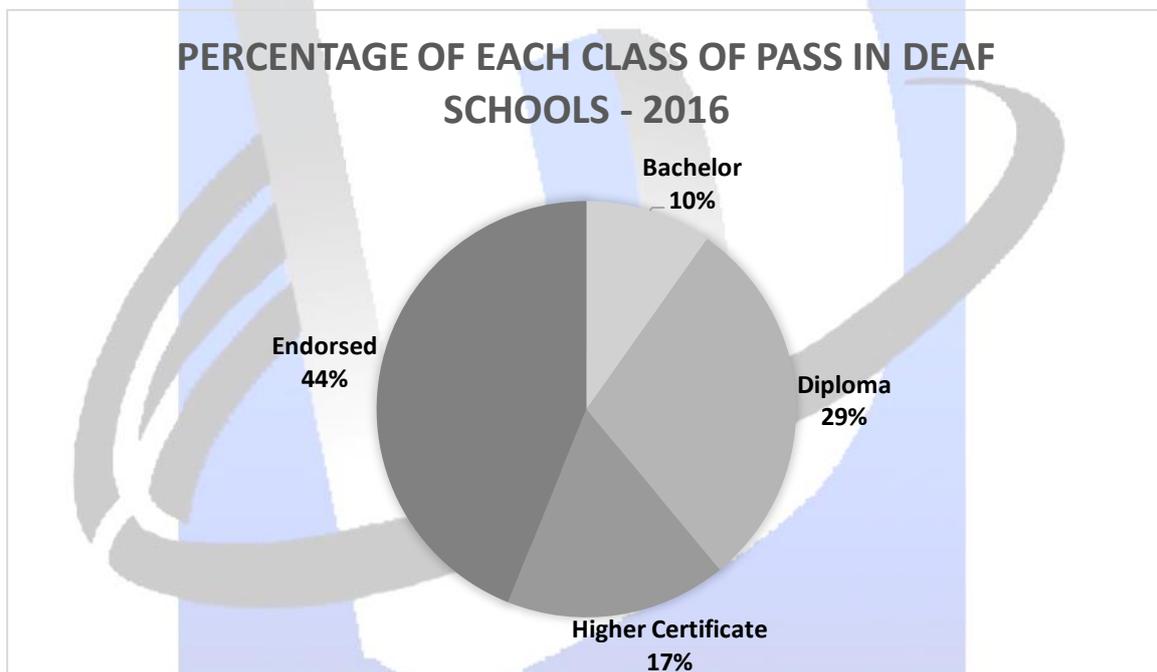
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It can be seen that the number of diploma passes reduced significantly while the number of endorsed matric passes increased. The endorsed matric certificate is essentially a waste of 3 years in the FET phase in school however, as currently the only study opportunity for these learners is an NCV course at a TVET college. Although credit is received for the compulsory subjects, the two additional subjects that they studied for 3 years will not be credited to their studies. They thus need to spend three years doing a reduced work load in order to achieve a qualification which may allow them to access higher studies. In addition, there are only 3 TVET colleges nationally that have interpreters and two of them only have interpreters in one course. The **endorsed matric is therefore itself creating barriers for Deaf school leavers.**

The pie chart below indicates the percentage of each class of pass:



Considering the severely limited access to further learning after completion of an endorsed matric, this class of matric pass could be considered disabling for future study and career prospects of Deaf school leavers. The increase in the percentage of endorsed passes from 2015 (19%) to 2016 (44%) is therefore of great concern.

It is clear from the information regarding the pass rate and the types of pass that are being achieved that there is continuing and even growing evidence of the need to ensure access to TVET colleges for Deaf students. The status quo is a violation of the Deaf school leavers' rights to equal access to further education and training. For the class of 2016 a total of 120 Grade 12 learners ONLY have the option of TVET study. In 2015 this number was 50. Thus in 2 years, considering only the Grade 12 learners who registered to write their exams, there are 170 Deaf school leavers requiring access to TVET colleges. This does not include the

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(estimated) hundreds of other Deaf learners who leave school after Grade 9 and in subsequent years before reaching Grade 12. This situation needs to be addressed urgently by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

Provincial analysis

Since most of the authority in terms of implementation of inclusive education policies and monitoring of special schools lies with the Provincial Education Departments, it is useful to analyse the performance of each province in the Grade 12 exams. Of course the averages represented here do not indicate the individual successes and failures of specific schools (except perhaps where only one school in the province offered matric in 2016) but they provide a national picture of where additional support is needed.

	Number who wrote	Number who passed	Provincial pass rate	No of schools offering matric	Bachelor Passes	Diploma passes	Higher Certificate passes	Endorsed certificate
Western Cape	16	13	81.25%	1	1	3	2	7
Eastern Cape	14	2	14.29%	1	0	0	0	2
Free State	5	4	80.00%	2				4
Gauteng	21	10	47.62%	3	2	2	1	5
KZN	24	12	50.00%	4	1	7	4	0
Limpopo	63	0	0%	1				
	143	41		12				

It is worrying to note that the North West Province and Mpumalanga still have no schools which offer Grade 12. The Northern Cape is offering learners a modularised Grade 12 this year (only recently opening Gr. 12 to Deaf learners) and these learners will only complete exams in June 2017. The lack of schools offering Grade 12 in some provinces results in unfair stress on schools in neighbouring provinces as can be seen in the case of Limpopo. In that province there is only one high school for Deaf learners which accepts Deaf learners from 4 primary schools within the province as well as learners from neighbouring Mpumalanga and North West. This is not only unfair on the fiscus of the hosting province and the school (very high student numbers) but is also detrimental to the family structure since learners are often very far from home. In addition, it raises safety concerns considering the very long distances learners travel to and from home and the early closure of schools and late start of school terms due to the logistics of ensuring learners go home during the holidays and return once schools open.

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It should also be noted that while the Western Cape and Free State have high pass rates, they also have the highest number of endorsed matric passes. This is an “easy” pass to obtain as the learners are only required to do 5 subjects. The reservations about this matric certificate were detailed above and it is recommended that provincial departments of education encourage all schools to register Grade 12 learners for the full 7 subject matric. Even if learners fail a single subject they may still obtain a higher certificate pass and have an access pathway to occupationally-directed higher qualifications and even diploma and possibly degree study in the future. Some schools have mistakenly argued that they are required to offer the endorsed matric because the learners do not take 2 languages. This is an incorrect assumption as 3 of the 4 learners who obtained bachelor passes did only 1 language as per the concessions available for Deaf learners. In addition, these learners are accepted for degree and diploma study with only one language.

Subject analysis

Information was graciously received from 11 of the 12 schools (representing 136 of the 143 learners who wrote) regarding individual student performance in each subject written in the 2016 exams. Some schools gave me only the symbol of the pass (A, B, C etc) and in these cases calculations were done using the middle score (e.g.: C = 65; E = 45 etc). The table below paints a bleak picture.

Subject Summary	National Average (%)	No of learners who wrote	No of schools offering the subject	National Average (%) excl. school X
English FAL	31.23	121	11	41.60
Math Lit	22.59	112	9	36.10
LO	44.99	136	12	58.17
Business Studies	13.17	63	5	18.97
CAT	40.24	49	9	
Dramatic Arts	65.75	12	3	
Hospitality	41.15	26	3	
Mathematics	35.09	11	4	
Consumer Studies	30.93	92	6	36.25
Visual Arts	62.13	23	5	
Economics	26	5	2	
Afrikaans FAL	44.65	17	2	
Design	51.67	3	1	
EGD	56.50	18	4	
English SAL	46.29	7	2	
Tourism	30.87	90	4	41.96
Geography	12.33	18	1	0
Life Science	35	6	2	
* Fail				

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The very **urgent need for teacher training and intervention in the lower grades** in schools for the Deaf is evident from these results. Of great concern is the English FAL, Maths Literacy and Business Studies results as these are taken by many learners. Computer Applications Technology and Consumer Studies are also cause for concern. Although support materials for these subjects are available for example, online on YouTube, **none of the videos are subtitled or have included an interpreter** and are therefore of little assistance to Deaf learners.

There is thus an urgent need for the DBE and their partners to **ensure that materials available to hearing students are made fully accessible for Deaf learners** who may wish to access the same support. In addition, any new materials which are developed – specifically videos where there is explanation of subject content – must be developed to be **universally accessible** for ALL grade 12 learners.

Furthermore, there needs to be **urgent discussions and research into teaching methodologies** that work in these subjects and **opportunities for subject specialists in schools for the Deaf to meet and network and hold workshops to develop their own pedagogy** for these subjects. Anecdotally it is known that there are a great number of **FET phase subject teachers who have no background in Deaf Education** at all and are therefore completely unable to teach Deaf learners adequately. Add to this a similar inability to use South African Sign Language for teaching and learning among teachers from ECD to Grade 9 and the resultant **lack of establishment of a strong conceptual foundation among young Deaf learners**, it is easy to understand why the Grade 12 results for Deaf learners continue to be so dismal.

Conclusion

The 2016 Grade 12 results in schools for the Deaf continue to raise high levels of concern. While there **needs to be urgent research done** by the Department of Basic Education into why there has been little change in the dismal results of schools for the Deaf over the years, there needs to be a simultaneous urgent intervention in the **DHET to ensure access to post-school studies at TVET colleges**. There clearly needs to be targeted interventions to turn around the results in schools for the Deaf but it is unthinkable that more generations of Deaf school leavers should be sent back home with no hope for their future because of lack of access to education opportunities post-school. The human rights and dignity of Deaf learners and school-leavers can no longer be ignored.

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