

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCE in Global
Development (6GL02)

Unit 2: Global Development
Challenges

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General Introduction

There were some strong scripts from this year's cohort and a distinct improvement in the ability of candidates to use the Resource Booklet effectively in their answers to Question 3. Some of the old issues persist with too many responses neglecting key words in a question and thus drifting into irrelevance or, more frustratingly, failing to make the point that would help clarify their view; this was especially evident in the extended writing.

As many of the following comments indicate knowledge and understanding of basic categories which is vital; but so too is the ability to see beyond these categories, and uncover some of the complexities and inter-relationships that make this such a fascinating area of academic study.

Question 1ai

Most students managed this question well with at least one clear statement about poverty, generally absolute poverty. What was extremely uncommon was any concept of relative poverty and its relationship with GDP per capita. This is obviously a more challenging definition but ultimately very important in grasping arguments about inequalities in modern societies.

Question 1aii

The focus here was on the reduction of poverty and the financial mechanisms that might bring that about. Broadly speaking micro-finance was better handled than the role of the banking system, although descriptions of how systems such as the Grameen Bank had evolved were not always well linked to the reduction of poverty. The best answers saw that there was a top-down/bottom-up contrast implicit in the question and they were able to make useful comments about the relative efficacy of these two contrasting approaches.

Question 1b

It was a little disappointing that there were relatively few answers that took the necessarily cynical view of green development. Several students became distracted by descriptions of allegedly 'green' approaches to development but very few were able to articulate a view of the inherent tension between environmental and economic development. The role of values and attitudes is critical here with key players being the large corporations, governments and environmental pressure groups as well as a deeply confused and divided general population.

Question 2a

This question provided an unexpected challenge for a number of students. This section of the specification clearly outlines what is meant by 'crises' as it does 'humanitarian disaster'. Despite this a significant number of students wanted to write about 'crises' in a much more general sense and, in particular, about financial crises. Although not in the letter of the specification in this section these were, of course, marked in their merits but it was rather self-limiting both on this question and subsequent questions.

Question 2b

What was expected here is clearly outlined in the mark scheme but what we got was often very different with some reasonable responses about the impact of the most recent global banking crisis on economic development.

As with Question 2a this was rather self-limiting given that only once a general slow-down was noted and a few generic comments about recession added; there wasn't much more provided. Those who did relate this to an identifiable event such as the Haiti earthquake were far better equipped with case study knowledge to develop their answers.

Question 2c

The mark scheme suggests that there are cogent economic reasons to support this case as well as the moral imperative that many students did indeed identify. Two things went awry in the less successful answers. Firstly, they restricted their case almost entirely to one based on humanitarian and sometimes religious principles.

Secondly, they didn't come to terms with the need not just to argue but also to provide counter-argument when asked to 'Examine the view...'. There were a small minority who did indeed offer a 'case' here and they were duly rewarded with marks at Level 3.

Question 3ai

This was essentially an exercise in interpreting a pre-release resource, although perhaps interpreting it from a slightly different perspective from what had been done in preparation for the exam. It was thus not altogether surprising that some stumbled and found it hard to look beyond Millennium Goals 3 and 5 which are the most explicitly gender related. The indirect links were not clearly identified by many which was a little disappointing especially given the clues in the text accompanying Figure 1.

Question 3aii

Progress is a relative concept and it was expected that the best answers might contextualise Iraq's performance. The hint that this might be a productive route also comes with the command word 'Examine' which obviously calls for rather a simple description drawn from the Resource Booklet. The weaker answers limited themselves to the booklet whilst better answers did indeed add some regional context and came to a view about whether Iraq's recent history constitutes meaningful 'progress'. Most did not see recent history as especially comforting.

Question 3b

There were some good answers to this question which allowed the more fleet-footed students the opportunity to draw together some of the points that they had obviously worked on in the classroom. Once again the key differentiation factor was how critically they engaged with the title set which above all required a view about the contrasts which are quite stark. The reliability of the source evidence was touched on by a few who saw the importance of self-interest but most concentrated on describing differences in views rather than examining the reasons behind these differences.

Question 3c

As with Question 3b there were a few very good answers to this question. Time constraints, as in previous years, seems to have inhibited some but for most it was not so much time but poor question deconstruction and limited use of rhetorical argument that proved to be the main inhibitions.

It was also evident that only a minority chose to pay much attention to the three elements that candidates were instructed to address in their evaluation. Thus culture was scarcely mentioned whilst there was real haziness about the meaning of 'social' (development) despite the attempt in the steer to narrow the focus to health and education. As elsewhere on this paper the need for students to be coached through these definitions and, most especially, their relative complexity is self-evident. Weaker students often conflate categories such as economic and social simply because they don't know what the clichéd definitions are whilst stronger students know the clichés e.g. economic = jobs and income, but can also see that these are not unrelated to social development e.g. health and education.

Summary

The need to work with students on their understanding of command words is an obvious lesson to be drawn from this examination paper in most years. Although certainly not restricted to this paper nor, of course, this specification on a paper with a pre-released resource booklet forming the basis of a question that carries well over half of the total number of marks available. This does take on an extra layer of significance.

Given that all students, in principle at least, have the same information at their disposal albeit at different levels of comprehension, interpretation therefore becomes vital. They need to know what exactly to do with this data and thus whilst having the same material available the direction and selection indicated by the command words becomes especially significant.

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