

OXFORD CAMBRIDGE AND RSA EXAMINATIONS

Advanced Subsidiary GCE

CRITICAL THINKING

UNIT 2: Assessing & Developing Argument

Friday

26 MAY 2006

Afternoon

1 hour 45 minutes

F492/01/RB
F492/02/RB

Resource Booklet

TIME 1 hour 45 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Use Documents 1 and 2 to answer the questions in Sections B and C.

This Resource Booklet consists of 3 printed pages and 1 blank page.

Document 1: Single sex success

Education provision must be judged by the exam results it produces. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that single sex schools improve exam results and so we should adopt single sex schooling as a strategy for improving our education system.

1

Despite the decline in the number of British single sex schools over the last 40 years to about 400, many schools are now experimenting with single sex classes, recognising that there are considerable benefits in subjects such as maths and English. An example is a school in Wales that has tried teaching half of its year eight pupils in single sex classes in response to evidence that girls were underachieving in some subjects.

2

Hormonal changes affect pupils in the 11–16 age group – changes that can pose serious academic problems for many adolescents as they become too interested in the opposite sex to concentrate. Many students also report that competition for the attention of the opposite sex results in lessons that are constantly disrupted. With this in mind, it is hardly surprising that it has been argued that single sex schooling would solve the problem of poor concentration in all our schools.

3

Single sex schooling is also appropriate given the differences in the way that the brain functions in girls and boys. Girls have been shown to excel at memory and sensory intake whilst boys excel at spatial tasks and abstract reasoning. Given this information, we should not be surprised that girls' schools have a record of continued success in school league tables. Indeed, girls now achieve 18.1% A grades at A level compared to boys' 17.5%. Single sex schools are evidently successful in raising academic standards.

4

Importantly, girls in single sex schools are more likely to pick traditionally male subjects such as maths and science, demonstrating that single sex schools break down gender barriers. Some have argued that these schools are in some way discriminatory – perhaps thinking that the success of girls' schools is to boys' disadvantage. This is simply not the case and is typical of the views of those who want girls and boys to be treated exactly the same – presumably including shared changing rooms and toilet facilities.

5

It is odd that boys-only schools are unpopular with many parents, as such schools are an effective remedy for many of the problems faced by boys. In urban communities, single sex boys' schools have successfully tackled high rates of truancy and violence, dispelling the myth that boys-only groups are likely to be very badly behaved. Single sex boys' schools are also more likely to provide positive male role models for boys and smaller classes.

6

Document 2: The American perspective

The USA has traditionally been opposed to single sex education on ethical grounds. However, the Department of Education is beginning to change its stance to create a more favourable climate for single sex schools. California led the way in 1997, with a trial programme of 'single sex academies'. Each participating district received \$500,000 additional funding, which demonstrates a huge vote of confidence in the single sex approach. Just as with past advances such as space travel, the development of computers and the internet, America is once again showing us the way forward with this excellent educational initiative.

1

There will no doubt be those who do not want us to use ideas from America because they dislike American foreign policy. This is a ridiculous position to adopt and would be like someone refusing to accept a school subject prize because of a dislike of their school's uniform policy. No sensible student would do that and so we should not miss the opportunity to learn from American experience.

2

Permission to reproduce items where third-party owned material protected by copyright is included has been sought and cleared where possible. Every reasonable effort has been made by the publisher (OCR) to trace copyright holders, but if any items requiring clearance have unwittingly been included, the publisher will be pleased to make amends at the earliest possible opportunity.

OCR is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which is itself a department of the University of Cambridge.