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In Geography (WGE01_01)
Unit 1: Global Challenges

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Introduction

This was the second paper for this unit (WGE01) and it was generally well received by the majority of candidates. Most candidates were able to complete the paper in the time allowed and generally used the space available well, without need for extra lines. Question 5 proved to be the slightly more accessible and more popular choice, with just over half of candidates opting for question 5 (57%) and just under half opting for question 6 (43%).

As a general comment, performance across the paper was reasonably consistent; however, it was clear that some candidates performed better on some sections for example, questions 1 and 4, with question 2 producing the lowest overall mean. Candidates should also try to write answers in line with the demand of the question, as it was clear that some had run out of time in the 20 mark essays due to over-writing on the lower mark answers.

Paper Analysis

Q1ai

For those candidates who focused on describing landslide risk levels many scored full marks. Most focused on the higher risk areas to the north and nearer the coast. Some candidates identified the reduced risk away from the coast. Some candidates were able to describe the exceptions to pattern. Overall good answers focused on the pattern of risk rather than identifying individual settlements with high or low risk. Try not to list places when describing distribution. Try to get the overall pattern in relation to the categories needing describing.

Q1aii

This was a generally well answered question as most candidates were able to offer reasons for increased landslide risk. The biggest issue for many was linking the point made to the landslide risk. A common answer linked the increased shaking as a result of earthquakes from the fault system in California, thereby shaking the ground and increasing landslide risk. Increased rainfall, or heavy rainfall events were commonly noted by candidates but this point was not often explained. Candidates must learn to link their ideas to the demands of the question not assume the examiner will make the link for them.

Q1aiii

There was a clear distinction between those candidates who knew specific methods of mitigation and those who adopted a more generic approach. Candidates were able to score three marks with reference to three different but relevant ideas. Common answers included evacuation measures in threatened areas, designing buildings or infrastructure to withstand landslide risk or even education measures to increase understanding and therefore reduce the impact on people. Some adopted a more generic approach of preparation, prediction and prevention and therefore were self-limiting as they did not have measures specific to landslides. Some also used answers which were relevant to other geophysical hazards not landslides. Overall, most candidates had some understanding of methods to reduce landslide risk.

Q1b

A generally well understood question with many students scoring Level 2 or above. Common approaches took the idea that warmer oceans would lead to increased number or intensity of storms leading to increased landslide or flood risk. Candidates were able to quote specific information about sea surface temperature or include examples of damaging recent storms. Some candidates also mentioned the increased likelihood of drought as a result of climate change and the impact of this. A large number of students referred to the impact of rising sea levels as a result of a climate induced ice melt. The resultant sea level risk is not a hydro-meteorological disaster therefore these points were not relevant to the answer.

Those answers that had range or depth, either through supporting examples or explanation were more likely to reach the higher levels. Some candidates were able to show the spatial changes as a result of these impacts which also helped gain credit. Candidates should make the links between climate change and the hydro-meteorological disaster clear. One way to do this is to develop the point with an example.

Q2a ii

This question produced a range of answers. Lower scoring candidates took the generic approach, of uncertainty based on different scenarios derived from modelling, often related to the resource. Higher scoring candidates were able to explain their uncertainty. Uncertainty over government action as a result of different and changing attitudes to international agreements, such as Paris. Or alternatively the impact of feedback mechanisms increasing or decreasing the rate of ice melt. It was clear to see which candidates had been taught this as a concept from the specification.

Q2b

There were two distinct types of answers to this question. The candidate who could identify one or two relevant reasons and the candidate who was able to explain the link between the reason given and how it showed fluctuations in medium term changes in climate. Common answers made reference to trees rings (dendrochronology) but relatively few explained the link between ring size and the impact on climate. Ice cores were better understood as was reference to historical sources. Few candidates made reference to pollen grain analysis.

Q2c

This question brought a range of answers and was the least successful for those attempted of the 6 mark items on the paper. Many of the low scoring candidates ignored the reference to 'causes of short-term climate change' in the question and talked about the Milankovitch cycles (long-term) or recent global warming which is largely human induced and not naturally occurring. Many of these answers scored either 0 or level 1 as they lacked focus on the question. Higher scoring candidates focused on the impact of volcanic eruptions or changes in solar output and were able to explain the link to climate change. Candidates need to understand the difference between the causes of short and medium or long term climate change.

Q3a ii

Most candidates were able to give examples of very high shipping movements, for example USA to Europe and therefore score 1 mark. However for many of the candidates who scored only 1 mark there was a tendency to just give examples rather than describe a pattern. Good answers made reference to most very high shipping movements taking place in the northern hemisphere or through shipping canals.

Q3a

There were some good answers linking containerisation to a shrinking world and these candidates tended to score 2 marks. However, for many who scored 1 or 0 there was either a lack of reference to shipping, a reference to a reason which was not linked to a shrinking world or a generic reference to globalisation. Clearly candidates know the definition of globalisation but they need to consider the demand of the question before answering.

Q3b

This question produced a mixed response and therefore discriminated well between those who understood the role of the WTO and those who did not. Most credit worthy answers made reference to WTO's role in reducing trade barriers and encouraging free trade. However, less understood the role of the WTO in trade disputes and the consequences of these actions. Some lower scoring candidates gave generic answers about improving culture and trade which were loosely linked to the actual role of the WTO. These responses often did not score credit.

Q3c

This represented a popular question and produced some of the best responses to the 6 mark items on the paper. Candidates were familiar with the concept of TNC outsourcing and a tiny percentage of candidates scored 0, mostly as a result of not answering the question. Many candidates scored either top Level 2 or low Level 3 with a general focus on the costs of the outsourcing. The biggest issue for many candidates was finding the appropriate balance between costs or benefits, or having a range of ideas but a lack of depth. Good answers made reference to examples of TNC, although this was not a requirement. Many Level 3 answers were able to give a range of ideas and explain them.

Q4a

The vast majority of candidates were able to work out the correct percentage of the UAE population born abroad, which was 88%.

Q4a

The vast majority of candidates were able to use information from the figure to identify the source country for the high skill elites and low skill workers.

Q4a

The vast majority of candidates were able to score some credit on this item. The key difference was whether they developed or explained how the point raised had led to a problem. The most common problem was linked to

cultural tensions from have a diverse group of workers. Some low scoring answers made reference to large groups of skilled workers migrating or to a large youthful population which were not directly relevant to the question.

Q4b

This question was a good discriminator and as a result there was a good spread of marks. Many of those who scored 0 had understanding but focused on the host country rather than the source country and were therefore self-limiting. Better scoring candidates tended to focus their answers on the benefits of remittances sent home, with some developing their answer based on the strength of the exchange rate. Other common responses included the training received by workers who on return to their source countries could share such skills or train others.

Q4c

The vast majority of responses to this question were held in Level 2, scoring either 3 or 4 marks. This underlined the point that candidates had a grasp of the concept, but were either unable to develop their points or were unbalanced in their approach. Many Level 2 candidates commented at length on the disadvantages of a youthful population but were unable to give any relevant points on the advantages; clearly something which needs to be addressed. Many candidates made reference to the demands on healthcare and the education system which had knock on effects for the future, while others made reference to issues to do with dependency. Higher scoring candidates who made reference to advantages also, often made reference to the potential future workforce, or the competence of the youth with changing technology, coupled with their entrepreneurial ways meaning greater potential for future development.

Q5a

This question required the candidates to use a lot of data to suggest reasons for the variation in disaster impact. There was plenty of opportunity for AO1 marks and as a result many candidates were able to use the data to score 3-5 out of 5 for AO1 marks. However, one must be careful in a question with lots of data not simply to recite the data presented in the Figure. Good answers identified patterns in the data, showing exceptions to these, while others identified where there were not patterns. For example many noticed that where there were greater number of people affected by disaster impacts there were often more people killed. However, this was not often the case for example in 2007 and 2011. Equally many higher scoring candidates noted that there was not necessarily a link between the cost of damage and the number of people killed, though generally 2011 was a bad year. It is good practice for candidates to practice recognising patterns in the data so that they are not simply repeating, year by year, what has happened.

For AO2 marks, a range of answers were given. High scoring candidates were able to link the data to possible reasons, for example the high death count associated with named hurricanes, or earthquakes, such as Haiti in 2010. Some gave more generic reasons for the variations between deaths, numbers affected and cost. These included the frequency of disasters, the level of preparation and the response to the impact. Many candidates found

it a challenge to do this and hence few answers scored more than 7 out of 10 on this question.

Q5b

This question produced a wide range of marks, with the majority falling between bottom Level 2 (6 marks) and top Level 3 (15 marks). A small group of candidates were able to access Level 4 marks. Generally candidates tackled both adaptation and mitigation as separate issues to varying levels of development. Only some candidates looked at the relationship between them and therefore created meaningful discussion. The lower scoring candidates tended to define the key terms and then proceed to describe different methods of mitigation or adaptation. In some cases candidates confused the two. However, often references to mitigation were more prevalent than adaptation, with focus largely on the impact of global agreements or reducing carbon emissions. There was a tendency for lower scoring candidates to be more descriptive and generic in their response and they could have improved with reference to specific schemes or organisations trying to implement change. The higher scoring candidates were able to offer greater understanding of adaptation and mitigation schemes but more importantly were able to make a comment as to the extent of their success, rather than just describing it. Higher scoring candidates were able to comment on the relationship between adaptation and mitigation schemes and how one may influence the other. They also were able to comment on spatial changes looking at success or failure within different regions of either mitigation or adaptation practices. Finally these candidates often had a clear conclusion and were able to make some overall comment based on the arguments they had made.

Q6a

This question scored marginally better than the equivalent in Question 5, perhaps due to there being less data to handle or because there were specific places to enable the candidate to reference their answer, thereby the responses being less generic. Like on Question 5a some candidates did not score well on AO1 simply because they recited the information rather than manipulating it. Those candidates scoring well on AO1 did so because they could identify relative rises and falls or even look for patterns in rises in different parts of the world.

The AO2 element of this question was well attempted. Often candidates would try to explain the variations shown. It was clear that specific reasons were not always known, however in some cases candidates used their own understanding of world affairs to contextualise their answers. This was particularly the case in reference to North Korea and the control exerted by the regime as a reason for limited increases. Candidates found it more of a challenge to explain the changes in the African states, however, some did relate this to their knowledge of growth in tourism or conflict in areas. Many could offer reasons for the change in China and the USA. In some cases generic reasons were used to explain the changes and this was also acceptable, though it would be encouraged for candidates to try to differentiate reasons based on different locations. Overall this was a well

attempted question with a range of answers with clear understanding of the link between internet connection and globalisation.

Q6b

Question 6b proved to be a less popular choice than 5b and performed slightly less well. However answers were bunched between bottom Level 2 (6 marks) and top Level 3 (15 marks) with few exceptions. Generally answers were either generic, regarding future population rises and the impacts of these, or made reference to the models of Malthus, Boserup and the Club of Rome in a bid to explain the likely impact of a population rise on resources and food. Lower scoring answers offered generic references to changes in future populations followed by simple references to the models named above or generic changes to resources as a consequence. Often answers systematically went through each model, if mentioned, and described in various levels of depth the impact of future population rises. References at this level were most commonly made between Malthusian disaster and Boserup successes. There was not often much in the way of assessment and answers tended to focus only on population rise. Higher scoring candidates followed a similar approach, making reference to the different scenarios presented by Malthus, Boserup and the Club of Rome though there tended to be in a greater depth of understanding and discussion between the different outcomes. In some cases candidates argued that some resources/foods were more likely to be impacted or indeed some countries were more/less likely to be impacted. Creation of argument and use of examples compared impact often enabled candidates to access higher marks. There was some attempt by candidates to use overall conclusions, however, they were often general.

Paper Summary

Based on the performance of the candidates in the January series, here is some general advice for future series:

- On 4 mark explain questions, ensure that your reasoning is clearly linked to the demand of the question.
- When describing patterns, try to cover the overall pattern rather than listing specific places.
- On 6 mark items, try to offer a range of points and support them, where possible, with examples to give you the best chance of achieving level 3.
- On 10 mark essay questions, ensure that you manipulate the data rather than just recite it as part of your answer.
- On 20 mark essays, ensure that you meet all the demands of the question and that you offer a conclusion with sound judgement, rather than just to sum up the obvious general points made. If the question is to assess, ensure that you offer a balanced argument as part of your answer.

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