
As technology advances, schools will lose their relevance in education. Is this a fair statement?

The technological advancement has transformed the flow of information and knowledge as information becomes digitalised, inter-linked and integrated. This revolution has affected society in many ways, especially on how our education system will function now and in the future. Consequently, it has led to many technocrats to comment that schools will soon lose their relevancy as technology advances in this modern era. However, the educators view that this is an unfair statement as the educational institution and the teachers have significant roles to play in the functions of education. In view of these controversial opinions, this essay is inclined to the view that it is not a fair comment that technological advancement will lead to schools being less relevant in their roles.

Technocrats are quick to point out that schools will soon lose their relevance when technology advances as they have shown how the basic function of schools as an institution for transferring of knowledge will be redundant. As an education institution, schools have traditionally been the source of knowledge to prepare us for work and social integration. We learn numeracy and literacy, develop analytical and thinking skills, cultivate innovation and creativity and build social and communication skills which will enable us to be a productive worker of the economy and a contributing citizen of the society. However, such a function of the school has become less relevant as technological advancement made in the field of internet and social media platforms will make learning more accessible, convenient and extensive. As technological advancement in these areas, e-learning has become parts and parcels of our life as we can learn more easily and at our convenience. E-learning platforms like Udemy, Khan Academy and WhyLearn have developed e-learning platforms for a huge range of subjects at all levels. Interactive communicative technology has also made learning online more personalised and illustrative, enabling students to learn at their own pace as tutors cater the learning to their needs. With such instrumental development, it is a fair statement to make that schools will lose their relevance as technology advances.

However, educators are careful to point out that the role of the teachers is of great significance in the education process and schools will never lose their relevance. The face-to-face interactions during our classroom activities are imperative in the

learning process as this close contact serves to enhance communication in our learning process. In the e-learning platform, the learning is devoid of such contact and even with the interactive format of learning where students can talk to educators directly visually, the closeness of the learning experience is not built and this will undermine the inspiring and enriching educational experience. The role of the teacher is indispensable to the students' education process and this is validated by Brad Henry, former governor of Oklahoma who has recognized that 'a good teacher can inspire hope, ignite imagination, and instill a love of learning'. As such, we cannot deny the role of the teacher in this technological era and school will never be less relevant.

Schools will always be a relevant institution for education if the consideration of the functions of the education is broadly defined and one such function is seen in how schools act as moral compass for the individuals. Although we can observe how social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Google search engine are being used to propagate messages and videos to convey proper social values and conduct to the youths as it is the common source of media contact for the youths and the storyline of the video in its visual and oral presentation is more appealing to the youths, technological advancements that make these forms of promotion of moral values still inappropriate for the youths. Moral education inculcated by the school teachers will be influential and impressionable as teachers act as role models for the students and schools are nursery ground for development. Since 1991, civics and moral education has been introduced in the Singapore education system and has been playing a critical role in shaping the youths and the people should be pleased to know that our youths have outdone in being gracious as compared to other generations in the gracious index conducted by the Singapore Kindness Movement. Obviously, we can credit our education system for playing a vital role in forging the moral development of our youths which cannot be replaced by technological advancements.

Schools will still be the main source of cultural development which cannot be replaced by technology despite its extensive influences on cultural heritage. Over the past years, technological advancement in communication, media and transportation have exposed people of different countries to different cultural experiences and it is also used by activists to promote their own cultural heritage as seen by the digital presentation made by Culture Academy. However, schools are the mainstream of cultural education as they are institutions that can promote 'culture as a pillar of

sustainable development' as stated by Mr Baey Yam Kim, parliamentary secretary for culture. Cultural heritage cultivated by the schools will bring about an in-depth impression for the students as it will be a source of reference where the knowledge of the cultures will be taught through a nurturing process with the aid of the teachers and institutional process of the school.

Scientific and technological development may be able to expand the knowledge of the students as they expand the source of information the students may need to learn and alter the ways that students learn in this technological era. Students live in the days and age where knowledge transmitted to them is often done in a visualized, audio and interactive format which can be obtained from multiple social media and educational platforms. However, we cannot ignore the significance of the social interactive process of the schools where students can benefit from discussion with peers and academic guidance from the teachers. In this learning process, creativity, language expression, interactive and co-ordinating skills are cultivated from the class activities like project work introduced by the Ministry of Education as part of curriculum which cannot be achieved through technological development. These personal skills to be developed by schools and its learning environment are not replaceable and replicable by technology to make school become less relevant.

In retrospect, it is not a fair statement to conclude that technological advancement will make the schools become less relevant in their functional roles for the society and the individuals as the knowledge transfer is now different from the past in context, nature of transfer and means of transfer. No matter how this is altered, schools will still be the learning institutions we will need to have as the learning environment and teachers will help us promote the holistic education mankind needs to conceive to thrive.