**Essay Question 1**

**Is it possible for your society to achieve inclusiveness?**

**Do you agree structure?**

**Introduction (1)**

**Main body – Opposing View (1) / Rebuttal (1) (prove why the opposing view is wrong) / supporting view (2 to 3 paragraphs)**

**Conclusion**

Analysis of the question:

Students are required to derive a good description of the meaning of inclusiveness, which can be examined from the various aspects of the society, and assess the diverse approaches that the state has taken to work towards this aim. In doing so, they must consider how these approaches interact with fundamental characteristics of our society (to be identified).

source of information -

Possible – policies are effective, nature of the society, social life

impossible – frictions in the policies, nature of the society, values and behaviours of the society

Other considerations:

* “inclusiveness” - accepting and catering for the interest and welfare of all members of society - inclusive of your ideas, your welfare, way of life
* “your society” – Singapore
* Categories of discussion / evaluation:
  + Political
  + Economic
  + Social – education
  + cultural – ethnicity, religion
* Nature of the question: DYA

Introduction (general observation, perspective, stand)

When Singapore’s Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong mentioned the notion of an inclusive society, he was aspiring to shape our society to move towards the mindset to accept and cater the interests and welfare of all members in our country. Although we cannot deny that this aspiration is of noble meaning, it is criticized by some as a utopian vision as Singapore still faces many thorny issues and inherent complexities that may undermine our efforts for this achievement. Given a closer examination of the context of the society of Singapore, this essay will support the view that it is not possible for the society to achieve inclusiveness.

EG -

* Universal acceptance of taxes and wealth transfers
  + Income tax
  + ABSD / SSD
  + Workfare
  + GST vouchers etc.
* Universal (generally) acceptance of redistributive measures
  + HDB as programme of land and housing redistribution for easier access by lower income--generally accepted by diverse Singaporeans with few objections (in fact, object when not effective enough)
    - CPF housing grant, AHG, lower-income have further subsidies as well as subsidies on utilities and S&CC
    - Poor singles - SSSS (highly subsidised 2 room flats for as low as $6000)

**Rebuttal**

EG:

* Mass (traditional and social) media - lack of support for and high degree of toxic criticism of the state
* Reflection of clear educational (academic / uni v.s. vocational / poly + ite) and sociocultural (urbanites v.s. heartlanders) divide in social dynamics and media- shows how Singaporeans are not willing to remove social boundaries, even in the name of national interest.
* Lack of identification with Singapore, lack of the “Singapore identity’s” pulling power to prevent outward migration (42% want to migrate--Ipsos, 2016)

there is still a high degree of social divide that will undermine the social cohesiveness - less sense of sharing and self-sacrifice

The doubtful power and acceptance of the “Singapore identity”, whatever it might constitute, makes it unlikely to be effective in compelling our people to look past their own interests and instincts, making our support of inclusiveness purely theoretical, and its attainment practically impossible.

**Supporting View**

EG:

* Egs of varied ideas of “inclusion”
  + Economic:
    - economic inclusion: provision of opportunities? welfare payments? allocation of jobs?
    - if welfare, how much and in what form?
    - These disputes make it difficult to craft economic redistributive policy with truly wide-ranging support.
  + Social:
    - social inclusion: all seen as the same, with difference de-emphasised? all different but equally treated? Is the latter even possible?
* Economics
* economic policy: need to consider *inter alia* prevention of inflationary pressure, maintenance of incentive to work (inasmuch as it is dampened by distributive measures), international economic competitiveness etc. See severe disagreements internationally on suitable sum of minimum wage,
* high cost of financing social spending – LHL said about high social spending in the future
* social policy: can neither disfavour nor favour any particular group, and can be seen to do neither. also, both equal opportunity and affirmative action approaches have social costs (dissatisfaction over structural disadvantage, and unfairness in differentiating requirements respectively)

EG:

* popular belief that the educated are more “deserving” of respect or even esteem - the main cause of class divide based on education hierarchy.
* popularity of the view that the poor are less deserving.