**GP Flipside – Is formal education still relevant in the future?**

**Synopsis**

Question Requirements

1. Identify perspectives

2. Evaluate the relevance in formal education for the future

3. Extent of Argument

**Perspectives**

**Yes, formal education is still relevant**

**1. Explain how formal education is still relevant → to provide ease of access to specialised jobs and other career pursuits**

TS: No doubt, formal education still holds relevance in the future as it remains the only pathway to specialised knowledge tied to highly skilled jobs, such as doctors, lawyers and engineers.

EL: Highly skilled jobs nevertheless require the ease of access to advanced knowledge that is often taught in higher level of educational institutions. This is the result of knowledge complexity, which cannot be explained by straightforward means, like resources from the Internet. Therefore, prospective applicants that are venturing into specialised employment must pursue formal education to attain accreditation by qualified institutions.

EG: There are strict requirements to be fulfilled for individuals who are reading Law and Medicine at the tertiary level of education. For example, law graduates that seek to be called to the Singaporean Bar must pass the Singapore Bar Examinations and complete a six-month training contract with a local law firm, which is also known as the Practice Training Contract. Similarly, doctors will join the Singapore Medical Association (SMA), which is a national medical organisation for practitioners in public and private sectors.

Admission Requirements for Law:

<https://www.mlaw.gov.sg/content/minlaw/en/practising-as-a-lawyer/AdmissionRequirements.html>

Requirements to practise as a Doctor or Specialist:

<https://www.moh.gov.sg/content/moh_web/healthprofessionalsportal/doctors/career_practice/professional_registration.html>

LS: Evidently, these two examples show the importance of formal education in advancing the career paths of individuals pursuing specialised fields.

**2. Explain why formal education is still relevant → formal education is useful for the development of social skills, cultural values and character-building**

TS: Formal education continues to maintain its relevance for the future as it is useful for the development of social skills, preservation of cultural values and character development for youths.

EL: Formal education maintains its relevance in this technologically-advanced age as the cultivation and application of social skills require face-to-face interaction and other forms of educational activities. Although technology has given us greater convenience and access to information about the notion of social skills, individuals lack the ability to internalise the concepts well without external guidance. As such, formal education is still necessary in modern societies.

EG: For example, the introduction of co-curricular activities (CCAs) is important for the development of social skills and character-building. Social interactions amongst the students and educators will refine interpersonal communication skills. The Student Council, for instance, teaches students how to harness on each other’s strengths and carry out student-related activities within and outside school compound. In the process, students will learn how to bring across their ideas to the staffs and student population confidently and clearly.

Purpose of CCAs:

<https://www.moe.gov.sg/education/programmes/co-curricular-activities>

Additionally, formal education will strengthen cultural values that nurture students to become socially responsible individuals that will contribute to the Singapore community meaningfully. For example, the Values-in-Action (VIA) programme  replaced the Community Involvement Programme (CIP) in 2012. The VIA is made compulsory for students at the primary, secondary and junior college schools. Students will learn more about social issues and participate in activities to contribute to the school and local community.

Values-in-Action (VIA) programme for students:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/chung-cheng-high-main-lessons-from-butterflies>

LS: Therefore, formal education remains relevant in the cultivation of social skills and character development.

**3. Explain why formal education is relevant → comprehension of moral dilemmas and other conflicting implications**

TS: From the ethical perspective, formal education remains relevant in this modern day and age as individuals can study the implications of moral dilemmas and comprehend the complexities of conflicting consequences.

EL: While education has fulfilled its purpose of imparting the young with knowledge on discerning fact and fiction, as well as the right and wrong, it is folly to assume that such knowledge will be adequate to prepare them for the future. Formal education can bridge this gap by exposing students to the ideas of moral dilemmas, which reveal to them that there are no moral absolutes. By doing so, formal education can help individuals to make better choices in life.

EG: For example, the relevance of formal education can be seen by the exploration of ethical issues that relate to scientific advancements, like organ donation, abortion and euthanasia. The moral implications of respecting one’s life and choices are essential in helping us to understand these controversial debates.

Ethical issues of euthanasia:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/a-good-life-to-the-end-or-a-quick-death>

<http://www.asiaone.com/health/euthanasia-its-legality-parliament>

Abortion in Singapore:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/health/steady-decline-in-abortion-numbers>

Organ Donation (Human Organ Transplant Act, HOTA):

<https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/organ-donation-consider-mandated-consent>

LS: Hence, formal education maintains its relevance in this diverse and challenging decade.

**No, Formal Education is not relevant**

**1. Explain why formal education is not relevant - technological advancements have caused the decline in relevance for formal education**

TS: Formal education has ceased its relevance for the future as new industries are experiencing extensive rate of advancement in technology that made education qualification obsolete for employment.

EL: Rapid changes in modern societies → due to technological progress and heavy industrialisation → made it difficult for schools and higher levels of educational institutions to keep up with these trends → such that the knowledge acquired from formal education depreciates in value quickly

As such, individuals may find the value of formal education less appealing → and choose to adapt to the changes in environment → rather than focus on the pursuit of formal education → so as to meet the demands of various industries

EG: The ‘fourth wave of industrialisation’, as observed by the technological advancements, has caused widespread panic due to the growing perceptions that jobs are inevitable replaced by automation. According to a 2013 study by Carl Frey and Michael Osborne, almost half of the present-day jobs will be taken over by computers within the next two decades. In general, most low-income jobs are at risk of being automated, whereas jobs that involve the use of social skills and creativity are less vulnerable to the impacts of automation.

Fourth Industrial Revolution:

<http://www.visualcapitalist.com/visualizing-jobs-lost-automation/>

<https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2018/04/24/a-study-finds-nearly-half-of-jobs-are-vulnerable-to-automation>

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/economics-blog/2016/jan/24/4th-industrial-revolution-brings-promise-and-peril-for-humanity-technology-davos>

LS: Hence, given the ineffectiveness of formal education in stemming the tides of a technological revolution, it is clear that formal education is no longer relevant.

**2. Explain why formal education is not relevant - individuals can learn independently**

TS: As our societies develop with greater information symmetry, formal education is inevitably losing its relevance due to the individual’s ease in ability to conduct independent learning.

EL: Technology granted people access to many sources of information → the use of traditional and new platforms → enabled individuals to expand and deepen their knowledge → to augment and improve their skills → As such, the ability to self-learn has made schools lose its relevance

EG: Online learning platforms → like Khan Academy and Coursera → are new platforms that revolutionised the way individuals can study and obtain information → further, these online learning platforms provide accreditation, which will enhance the individual’s proficiency.

Traditional classroom-based teaching is limited by many constraints → like physical space and time → whereas online learning enables many to decide when and where to start their lessons → be it at the comfort of their homes or during a bus journey

Furthermore → online learning platforms offer a wide range of courses → that can stretch beyond what schools can offer → these courses include the standard subjects as well as trendy courses that help individuals to keep up with latest issues → such as the ability to recognise cyber security threats and protect oneself from fake news

Online Learning & Flipped-Classroom Learning:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/tech-in-schools-out-by-year-2065>

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC):

<https://www.bbc.com/news/education-23069542>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2012/07/17/is-coursera-the-beginning-of-the-end-for-traditional-higher-education/#4ddcfee12ae4>

LS: Therefore, formal education no longer is relevant in acting as the sole content provider for individuals to acquire knowledge and skills.

**3. Explain why formal education is not relevant - unable to prepare individuals for industrial demands**

TS: Formal education is no longer relevant in the future as industrial need are demanding skills and capabilities that we are able to attain from current form of training.

EL: Formal education is unable to keep up with the changing demands of industries → due to the rigidity of learning curriculums → although formal education has been planned and conducted by specialised educators and professionals → it lacks the vibrancy and flexibility to prepare individuals for the complexities that they face in the working environment → as such, individuals have considered alternatives, like part-time education to compensate for their inadequacies

EG: SkillsFuture is set up by LifeLong Learning Institute that is part of a government-initiated movement in Singapore → to create opportunities for Singaporeans to maximise their learning potential → SkillsFuture is available for people from all walks of life → be it young students, working adults and even those in their silver years → by attending subsidised courses, Singaporeans can achieve skills competency to meet the challenges of industries

For example, the inaugural SkillsFuture Festival was held as a five-week event in 2018 for Singaporeans to refine their skills and acquire knowledge further. There are more than 350 educational activities, such as forums with industry leaders and demonstrations. Singaporeans can attend courses that relate to emerging sectors, like cybersecurity and data analytics.

Government-initiated programme for upskilling:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/350-activities-to-take-part-in-at-first-skillsfuture-fest>

LS: Hence, this shows that formal education is not relevant and should be replaced by alternative forms, like government and non-government initiatives to prepare students for industrial demands.