

Sample Writing  
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**In some countries, like the United Kingdom or the United States, many students take a year off (which is called a “gap year”) after secondary school to gain working experience and become more mature before they enter university. Discuss the pros and cons of such a decision and say whether you would like to do the same if this were acceptable in Hong Kong educational system.**

There has been a growing trend in the so-called ‘gap year’, which refers to the year off taken by secondary schools’ students to gain more working experience before going to the university. Notwithstanding the popularity of this programme, should it be accepted by Hong Kong educational system still remains unknown.

In our curriculum, we have all sorts of classes including science and art subjects. But do you realize that something is missing? That is the real experience of working outside. Being able to work outside, students can gain more practical experience so as to make better preparation for their future career. In their working environment, they may come across difficulties such as conflicts among colleagues, communication problems and many other problems. In the process of seeking ways to solve the problems, students are more likely to adjust themselves to a new position as well as to have a better understanding of their own needs. Furthermore, they can cooperate well with their colleagues and learn how to get along with others in perfect harmony.

In order to adapt to the new environment, students are forced to behave independently. They are no longer under parental care and will soon have to face the society alone. Thus, the ‘gap year’ provides a great opportunity for students to gain more problem-solving skills. For many Hong Kong students, they are leading a life planned by their parents. They have no critical thinking skills but just follow blindly their parents’ instruction. If they join this programme, not only can they learn to be independent, they are able to grow from a child to an adult.

Another point is that they are surely to broaden their horizon in the 'gap year'. For being able to meet different people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, they will experience the cultural shock. Once they have overcome the cultural shock, they will learn how to respect as well as to appreciate other's cultures.

It is undeniable that there are many advantages of this programme. However, everything has its dark side. It is not difficult to find the disadvantages of such programmes.

First, a 'gap year' means students have to spend one more year for other things. During this year, students may lose their studying habits as well as the heart in studying. They may soon forget the knowledge gained in schools. This can be explained by the lack of time in doing revision since they will be busy with their work.

Not only will the students lose the heart on their studies, students may also find themselves unwilling to return to their study environment. Some students may choose to leave schools early as they have adapted to the new working environment. It seems good if they can continue with their own career. However, it will be difficult to take up their studies again once they have abandoned them.

Last but not least, this programme may pose dangers to students as they may encounter bad guys during the year off. There is no insurance to ensure students' personal safety. Even worse, under no parental supervision, students may easily go astray as they will meet different people including those gangs as well as bad companies.

There are both pros and cons in such programmes. However, does it worth for trying at the expense of spending one more year? For me, I don't mind letting myself gain more real life experience. It would be rather good to learn something that will never be learnt from textbooks.