About English Essay

[Purpose of the question]

This essay was asked to test examinees' reading comprehension of the journal article. It also tested the examinees' comprehension and logical reasoning abilities regarding contemporary social issues.

[Model answer]
Example of an Answer to Question 1: [183 words]

This editorial raises significant concerns about Japan's plan to expand digital textbook use, questioning its timing amid declining student academic performance. This decline is widely linked to COVID-19 disruptions and prolonged digital device use. Despite this, a working group of the Central Council for Education aims to officially recognize digital textbooks by 2030, permitting local boards to choose paper, digital, or hybrid formats. The author argues this is questionable, citing studies that show paper is superior for deep thinking and memorization. The text warns that hybrid formats can disrupt concentration and impose a high "cognitive load" on students. This move contrasts with nations like Sweden and Finland, which are returning to paper textbooks due to similar academic declines. The editorial also highlights the 2024 survey confirming lower scores, and points to existing problems like students playing games on school devices during class. The author argues that leaving the choice to local boards threatens the uniformity of compulsory education and creates potential academic disparities. Concluding, the editorial urges a careful review of learning effectiveness over a "digital-first" mindset, noting implementation costs and infrastructure challenges.

Example of an Answer to Question 2: [342 words]

In my view, the digitization of education is a complex, double-edged sword. Its effect on academic performance depends entirely on how it is implemented. As the editorial rightly warns, a "digital-first" mindset that simply replaces paper textbooks with screens is insufficient and potentially harmful to student learning. A nuanced approach is required.

The concerns raised in the article about declining academic performance are valid. There is strong evidence, as seen in Japan and the policy reversals in countries like Sweden, that unstructured digital device use can negatively impact concentration, deep reading comprehension, and long-term memorization. The superiority of paper for managing

"cognitive load" and fostering deep, undistracted thinking is well-documented. Furthermore, the practical challenge of classroom distraction—students playing games or watching videos—is significant. This risk, combined with the potential for creating academic disparities between regions, makes a rush to digitization dangerous.

However, to reject digitization entirely because of these risks would be a mistake. When used appropriately as a tool, not a replacement, digital resources enhance learning in ways paper cannot. For instance, interactive 3D simulations can make complex subjects like biology or physics more intuitive. Adaptive learning platforms can offer personalized learning paths, allowing students to progress at their own pace. Digital tools also provide instant access to a vast array of global information, fostering vital research skills. Preparing students for a modern society requires a curriculum that includes digital literacy, which cannot be taught using paper alone.

Therefore, the most effective solution is not an "either/or" choice, but a thoughtful hybrid model. As the article suggests, paper should remain the primary format for core reading and foundational learning to build deep concentration. Digital tools should then be carefully integrated in a supplementary role. They should be used for specific tasks where they offer a clear pedagogical advantage—such as interactive exercises, data analysis, or collaborative projects. This balanced approach requires clear national guidelines to avoid disparities, significant investment in teacher training, and a constant re-evaluation of learning effectiveness. Technology must always serve education, not the other way around.