

Tuesday English News Report

Schooling choice a lesson in economics

Broadcast Date: 21st April

Among my circles of friends and colleagues, we are forever debating the **merits** of an IB (popular in International Schools) or DSE education for our children. So my **colleague** Elaine Yau's article on precisely this topic - which is one of the most read stories on the *Post's* website - aims squarely at our demographics.

Well then, which one is better? As a parent of two children who have studied in both systems, I can honestly say: it depends. Many parents take strong positions and we sometimes **come to blows**. It's a bit like Hong Kong people fighting over "true" democracy and "enlightened" authoritarianism. I am an **agnostic** in both debates.

But, one objective observation first: if there is a real choice for you to pick between an International Baccalaureate and a Diploma of Secondary Education for your kids, you are already well-off. Such a choice would not be available to the majority of Hong Kong parents, whose children attend either government or aided secondary schools, virtually all of which do not offer an IB stream.

So if you really do have a choice, it means you have the financial ability to pay for your kids' education, either in an international, private or direct-subsidy school (DSS). There is an inherent economic inequality and unfairness in this debate.

The **rigour** and/or arbitrariness of some of the subjects in a DSE programme - which includes the **infamous compulsory** liberal studies - is not for everyone. There is a good deal of rote-learning and **regurgitation** involved, though it is no doubt a vast improvement from the old Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, a season in hell for previous generations of students. At least one of my old schoolmates killed himself under pressure from studying for the HKCEE.

One good thing about DSE is that it's a bit like McDonald's: you know more or less what you are getting no matter which school you are in.

On the other hand, IB stresses self-exploration and self-study, even in hard sciences like physics. If your kid is **inquisitive** and his or her teacher is creative, IB could generate a real spark. If not, your kid might end up not learning as much as you expect.

But, on a more **cynical** note, an IB education is academically probably an easier ticket to university, both local and overseas.

Alex Lo (SCMP)



An IB classroom

1. What do you think?

2. Vocabulary

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below using words from the box.

merits	colleague	come to blows	agnostic
rigour	infamous	compulsory	regurgitation
inquisitive	cynical		

1. My daughter is very _____. She is always asking questions.
2. The men were so angry with each other I thought they were going to _____
(start fighting)
3. Wearing school uniform is _____ in most schools in Hong Kong.
4. Hitler was the _____ German leader who led his country to almost total destruction.
5. A _____ is a person that works with you.
6. One of the _____ of learning English is that it opens many doors for you.
7. _____ means toughness or extreme difficulty.
8. If you are _____ you neither believe nor disbelieve in the existence of God.
9. Some animals use _____ to feed their young. They will eat something and then vomit when their young are hungry.
10. John is very _____. He never really believes that people can be nice.

BREAKING NEWS!

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**Have your lunch in the English Room from Wednesday to Friday
(Open from 12:45-1:30).**

THE ENGLISH CAFÉ IS OPEN!

☺ **FREE COFFEE / HOT CHOCOLATE WITH MR. LANE!**

When: Every Tuesday lunchtime from 1-1:30pm

Where: The English Corner (Room B001B by the basketball court)

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