

Wall Street English Public Speaking Competition 2020 - Talk Like Ted

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Award: Certificate of Award

Are online classes as effective as traditional schooling?

Like thousands of students in schools all over Hong Kong, I had to deal with the suspension of face-to-face classes for many months this year, due to the global coronavirus outbreak. During this unprecedented pandemic, many schools implemented e-learning so their students wouldn't fall behind. However, as I got into the routine of online lessons, I looked back fondly on my real-life lessons and would argue that online classes are clearly not as effective as traditional schooling.

In the first place, traditional schooling encourages good learning habits, such as concentration and self-control. Face-to-face learning in classrooms condition students to concentrate more than in online classes. Self-control isn't easy when having virtual lessons: it's tempting to go off-task and use smart devices secretly. In traditional classrooms, the physical presence of teachers can be an effective deterrent, but during online classes, students can misbehave easily, as they are not constantly under supervision.

In addition, online classes create logistical and ethical problems. During online assessments, teachers rely on an honour system – as it's impossible to check whether or not students have placed textbooks or other aids out of view of their webcams. It can be argued that cheating can still occur in traditional schooling, but the fear of being publicly caught and shamed means that students taking in-person assessments are less likely to cheat.

The most serious – and frustrating - drawback to online learning comes in the form of unstable internet connection. Regardless of where you live or how fast your Wi-Fi connection is, you will encounter such connectivity problems sooner or later. Students experiencing poor Wi-Fi connection often cannot hear their teachers or see the board clearly, nor access assignments or resources efficiently. Traditional schooling does not pose such problems because when teachers are talking or sharing materials, all students have equal access.

In conclusion, given the irrefutable reasons above, it is clear that traditional schooling is more effective than online classes. From a learning, assessing and accessing viewpoint, traditional schooling offers the best way. In the most crucial period of their education, shouldn't students benefit from the most efficient and effective way of schooling? Learning through the human eye – and NOT the camera eye – it the ONLY way to ensure this aim is achieved.

Thank you for listening to my speech. Good day to you all.