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)
1. What do you think?

2. Vocabulary

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>merits</th>
<th>colleague</th>
<th>come to blows</th>
<th>agnostic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rigour</td>
<td>infamous</td>
<td>compulsory</td>
<td>regurgitation</td>
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<td>inquisitive</td>
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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!**

**THE ENGLISH ROOM IS OPEN FOR LUNCH!**

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)

Have a free drink with Mr. Lane, check the answers to the Tuesday News report and talk about life in general!