We’re living in a very fast-paced world, where anything can change in a blink of an eye. Yes, even as significant as education is not exempted. Over the years, we have witnessed the change in the education landscape. With the rise of digital media, there’s also an increase of interest in online education. The traditional in-campus classes seem overrated nowadays, especially with the presence of Covid-19, almost every student around the world is now being forced to pursue their studies through online learning. But the question is: Is it really effective?

In 2010, an analysis made by the US Department of Education found that on average, students in a digital learning set up performed modestly better than those students in a traditional classroom set up. In an article for go1.com, John Sherman, a writer based in New York, noted that a study by Harvard University showed that students in online learning process information better when modules are broken into segments, rather than sitting down in lectures for a whole day in campus. According to Eric Fredericksen, a professor from University of Rochester, one of the advantages of online learning is that students are no longer required to commute to schools and be in class at a certain time. Education is much more accessible and can be attained even in your own home. However, Catherine Van Weele, a political science student from San Diego State, argued that online education provides convenience more than genuine education that involves critical thinking. For someone who experienced online classes first-hand, Van Weele (2020) observed that students mostly rely on self-discipline to get through their studies. As a result, students cram for exams and settle for a passing grade rather than genuinely engaging with the course material. Van Weele (2020) also emphasized that not everyone has access to the resources online education requires—i.e.
reliable internet, laptop, computer—and this brings more liability to students who couldn’t afford them. Recently, there’s a petition for academic freeze in the Philippines due to the impact of Covid-19 to the country’s education sphere. Many believed that the planned online classes by the Philippine’s Department of Education was anti-poor. 12 million of students were not able to enroll this school year alone due to the lack of access to resources. A proof that there’s a gap needs to be filled.

Another issue that needs attention is the relationship between online education and the social-emotional skills of the students. In a blogpost published by Penn State University, it was emphasized that peer interaction is critical in academic environment. Studies have shown that kids with poor social skills struggle in different aspects of their lives, including academia, while kids who have positive relationships are more likely to succeed. Van Weele (2020) believed that the absence of face-to-face interaction between students and their tutors is the biggest disadvantage of online education. The interaction is very minimal amongst students as the communication only happens through email and group chats. As a result, it’s harder for students to make new friends and establish better relationship with their peers. However, Fredericksen believed otherwise. “Every online student can have a voice and be heard. In addition, expanding the time for discussion permits students to reflect and explore additional information, thoughtfully consider the views of their classmates, and then take the time to construct their own contribution, which can lead to higher quality responses.” (Fredericksen, 2015). With the flexibility of communication through digital platforms, interaction amongst students and tutors increased both in quality and quantity. According to Sherman (2016), online education is an innovative way to collaborate socially. Online learning encouraged the use of social media platforms as discussion boards about the course work, and these creative ways of information sharing herald the future of communication.
Online education has shown promise to be effective, but it was also clear that there are still gaps that need to be met. In a very fast-paced world we live in, we could only hope that they would be fulfilled at the right time.

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