LETTERS: All educators are experiencing the new norm of teaching online and students are also experiencing the new norm of learning and being educated online.

As an educator myself, I have encountered several challenges, opportunities, fears, joy and excitement, and I am still thinking about how to ensure my students are eager to attend my classes online.

In this Covid-19 pandemic era, many teachers want to make a difference. But, many end up getting "tired", "burnt out" and more stressed by the day as they find online preparation tedious and time consuming. And, when it comes to the actual online teaching, only a handful of students attend and worse still in the case of a senior Math teacher, not even one student attended his class.

As we in the university have been exposed to blended learning, which is a mix of face-to-face and online teaching, going fully online during the pandemic was not a serious issue.
However, we were given lots of online training on how to use different platforms to ensure that the most conducive teaching and learning take place.

Just as coming to class, online classrooms are just virtual spaces for students to attend and the teacher takes off from there with lessons and activities. But teachers need to change their mindset to understand that online education is highly dependent on Internet connections, the electronic equipment used to support the process and the human touch.

My suggestions, based on my own experience, are: First, survey the students to identify how many have the facilities and how many do not.

This should include talking to the parents or caretakers (especially for primary and secondary schools) because there have been situations where one laptop and two mobile phones had to be shared by five children in a household. In such cases, teachers should always record their lessons and upload them instead.

Second, teachers must ensure a working agreement with students to ensure that the connectivity between the teacher and the student is ongoing, effective and warm. Many students and teachers feel lost and isolated with no one to keep them going. Sharing moments of uncertainty with each other can slowly but surely build a solid relationship between teachers and students.

I have a student, who is a teacher in Lahad Datu, who shared that her Form 4 and 5 students used to work after school before the Covid-19 era. Now, with no face-to-face schooling, they start work in the morning.

My student felt their need to support their poor families and agreed to teach them at night. It was a lot of sacrifice on her part, but isn't that what education is supposed to be?

The most important message is when educators are teaching their students, online or offline, they must always remember the philosophy of education of our nation, which is to ensure the growth and development of a holistic individual in every school going child.

It does not matter how or when education takes place, but every educator should ensure that knowledge, skills and values are parted to students in the most natural and authentic way.

**Associate Professor Dr Vishalache Balakrishnan**

Director, Centre for Research in International and Comparative Education (CRICE), Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya

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