

## **TTUTA ON TUESDAY**

### **EDUCATING FOR NATIONAL SECURITY (09.01.18)**

TTUTA writes a weekly column for the Newsday called TTUTA on Tuesday.

Many would argue that the current rate of crime and criminality engulfing the country at every level of society is an indictment on our education system. It is a reflection of the deficiencies of an education model that is antiquated and irrelevant to the current needs of society. The continued perpetuation of such a model will guarantee the majority of school graduates being certified as failures, fueling the anger and disenchantment that forms the basis for crime and criminal activity.

These school failures are angry that they are unable to take advantage of opportunities that abound. Through primary and secondary school, their failed futures are sealed owing to their socio-economic deficits. A school system that pays lip service to issues of equity, serves to perpetuate a class differential that sees a widening gap between the rich and poor.

Marginalization of large numbers of young people with commensurate denial of capacity to achieve their maximum human potential, generates anger and resentment. This translates easily into revenge on those structures and systems of society they perceive were responsible for their inability to achieve.

Most teachers will identify children with such dispositions from an early age in the school system. Unfortunately, they are unable or sometimes unwilling to deviate from the prescribed curriculum or the narrow confines of their job descriptions to treat with the underlying barriers to underachievement. This is compounded by a woefully deficient social support structure that is currently under-resourced and overwhelmed.

Consistent failures to make strategic interventions at the successive levels of schooling both social and academic, create a young human mind with no sense of hope, diminishing capacity to add value to themselves and society. It then creates an individual who becomes an economic burden to the society that gave birth to them.

The adage that it takes a village to raise a child, has taken on new dimensions in this paradigm of failure and denied opportunity. Children of a system that failed them, easily gravitate to negative socialization elements within communities that are more than willing to embrace them. Miseducation begins to take root. In these groupings they find validation, commonality of background, and, consequently, purpose.

The negative energies of oppression, resentment, self-pity and anger morph into revenge through rejection of the status quo, by force if necessary. Gangs provide many young people with a sense of belonging and empowerment. Its rigid structures of hierarchy and role definition give many marginalized young persons the sense of order and purpose alien to their upbringing. Therein lies many lessons for our efforts to reform our education approach.

To compound a system that thrives on the certification of approximately 75 per cent of its output as failures, is a political structure unable to create a legal and governance framework with the capacity to treat crime and criminality as a major societal deficiency, characterized by a police service and judiciary severely challenged and hampered in fulfilling their responsibilities.

Blaming and abdication of civic responsibility by citizens combine to produce a society whose cultural toxicity is at an all-time high. It's the colonial thinking of dependence and mental enslavement – it's someone else's responsibility to fix.

In this scenario, the school must take the lead in re-engineering the transformation of the society into the one that is characterized by fairness, social justice and equity. If schools cannot build cultural capital and provide hope for their graduates then their very purpose

must be challenged on the grounds of validity and relevance. Schools must justify their continued existence on the basis of their capacity to meet the ever changing needs of the society. The modus operandi must not contribute to social dysfunction but rather adopt systems and structures to address this as a primary imperative. The evolution of an education system that anchors its existence on the holistic development of the society through empowerment of the individual is the key to social and economic security.

The mere production of workers cannot be the major objective of our education system, for one can also argue that while the focus has consistently been on of blue collar criminals, our blue collar criminals essentially emerge from the educated elite.

Our security as a nation is contingent upon what we do in our schools, not necessarily more police or new national security ministers. Collectively we all contributed to the problem by admission or omission. The solution must come from all of us. Building civic responsibility and empowerment must be schooling priorities. Our future as a nation is ours to create.