

# TTUTA ON TUESDAY

## Education and the family

NEWSDAY

TUESDAY 5 MAY 2020

TTUTA

*“A child educated only at school is an uneducated child”*  
– **George Santayana**

THE ASSUMPTION that the social problems of our country can be resolved solely through the education system is erroneous. A basic philosophy of life involves three institutions which are directly related to the individual – the family which produces the individual, the community which protects him, and the church which preserves him (Green, 2011).

Each of these institutions is reciprocally related and cannot stand alone. In order to optimise the school climate for achieving success in education, it is essential to understand how people function within these institutions and to keep the welfare of the individual student in focus.

When students do not have the support, care and nurture of a loving family, many challenges are imposed on society. These often manifest in the school system in some form, from as simple as unpunctuality to as serious as violence requiring police intervention.

It is not difficult to deduce that students who are frequently absent or late for school, wear the wrong uniforms or wear them incorrectly, are not well groomed, don't complete their homework, come to school sick, are dropped off at school hours before the first bell, are picked up long after dismissal, are comfortable bringing home items that do not belong to them, and are openly rude to authority are a reflection of dysfunctional homes.

The assumption that social problems are the results of a failing education system is faulty. Social problems are the products of dysfunctional families and declining moral standards (Kopsztein, 2015). Resolving societal problems is contingent on effective parenting which involves instilling ethical values.

The first seven years of a child's life are extremely critical in this regard as research shows that during this period a child's value system is so impressed and ingrained that it affects his thinking for life.

Consequently, many social problems may be avoided through the collaborative efforts of parents, guardians, and teachers in using "tough love" to adjust the attitudes and behaviour of children during these early years. It is usually too late to adjust attitudes and behaviours when students enter secondary school at the age of autonomy. Good parenting is therefore critical.

Numerous studies have also shown that active family engagement in students' schooling generally reduces absenteeism, improves behaviour, helps students develop better social skills, increases student achievements, encourages learning up to post-graduate level, and restores parental confidence in their children's education (National Education Association, 2014).

There are several ways for parents to actively engage their children's education. These include: frequently checking homework, uniforms and books; reviewing educational goals with their children; becoming involved in the school's support groups; liaising with teachers to ensure their children are academically and socially progressing; supporting the school's disciplinary proceedings; lobbying for improvements in the school's infrastructure to ensure students' safety and comfort; advocating for resources needed for providing a world class education, and supporting adequate compensation for teachers.

TTUTA encourages parents to provide their children with critical support at home while partnering with their teachers at school.

Currently, schools are regrettably closed due to the covid19 pandemic. While this is cause for concern, it is important for parents to understand that education is not the same as schooling. Education is preparing for life. Schooling is preparing for examinations. Education focuses on learning. Schooling focuses on grades. Education is about teaching students. Schooling is about teaching a curriculum. Those who understand the difference know that teaching is not merely a career but a divine vocation.

Parenting is also a divine calling. Education begins at home: values, citizenship and character education are strongly influenced by parental behaviour; work ethics come from doing chores; cooking is chemistry involving scientific observation, mathematical calculations and measurements of capacity and time; family conversations develop listening and oral skills in language arts; caring for pets and plants augments agricultural competence, and watching the news or googling for information develops reading and research skills. The home is a learning centre where parents are a child's first teachers.

In the future, when our children look back on this period of crisis they will not remember what was written on the printed worksheets given to them, nor will they recall all the educational websites they were directed towards. They will remember how they were cared for by their parents.

Be assured that teachers will resume their duties when school reopens with ennobled professionalism but during this time of uncertainty, parents are urged to focus on helping their children feel loved, safe and happy.