

# **Checking indiscipline and non-performance in schools • Is corporal punishment or out-right dismissal the solution?**

## **Checking indiscipline and non-performance in schools**

### **• Is corporal punishment or out-right dismissal the solution?**

Today one cannot pick up a news paper or switch on the TV without being reminded that we are in a world dominated by violence. This is the reality of our time; one cannot run away from it.

It does not mean that there is no hope for the future. There is, but that depends on how one handles the situation of the day and what one makes out of it, and not forgetting that world peace begins at home; and peace in the world depends on peace at home.

To many people, child abuse is a strange word and it is something which happens to people from afar. The day they are told that they have abused their child; they strongly oppose the word abuse and even defend the act. Close relations and friends also join hands in defending the culprit and push the blame on the victim; mostly innocent and defenceless children.

In schools, when children are hurt and the parents pick the teacher on, other teachers join the culprit to protest in the name of solidarity strike. One wonders if teachers are there to protect the interest of their pupils or protect their colleagues in destroying these innocent children.

Should this incident happen to a teacher's child from another school, would there be division in their strike? Would one group support the parent of the victim who happens to be on their staff against the other teacher in the school where the child was injured?

The old lady who pushed her grand daughter's hand in the fire to remove the leaf of a mango tree she the small girl dropped in the fire on which she was cooking, had the courage to blame the small girl, and this had the approval of the some family relations and sympathisers.

They even advised the old lady not to send the girl to the hospital else she would be arrested. It seems to me that we are becoming a race of people that are abusing and killing our own children in the name of discipline. My heart cries when I hear such things.

The Juampong case is yet another one; blames and counter blames, to the extent that even the police became powerless in the face of what to do at that material moment. What is wrong with us as a society?

A deep reflection on what took place suggests that the culprits could be exonerated. This is because there is no law in this dear nation which prohibits corporal punishment and those who practise it are just doing what the law of the land allows them to do. Moreover, there is no measurement or degree to which corporal punishment is allowed or not allowed.

People who beat their children and hurt them are labelled as abusers while those who do it and are never caught and so are not given names join the rest to blame those who are caught. What sheer hypocrisy?

So long as we allow corporal punishment in this nation, very few unfortunate people, mostly the underprivileged ones, would always be victims of the law, and our dear children would always suffer at the hands of people they trust for protection and whom they are supposed to have a bond with.

Has anybody ever reported an abuse from the classroom? Today in Ghana, the only people who can smack someone on the buttocks (irrespective of the age of the victim) as part of their paid professional duties are prostitutes, pornographic stars and classroom teachers.

Why such a double standard in our laws? It is wrong for parents to beat their children but right for educators to do same irrespective of the age of the students. Matured ladies are being beaten on their buttocks and that is right because they are students and their teachers are paid by the state with the tax payers' money to do so.

If it is right for educators to beat matured ladies on their buttocks in school as a corrective measure, what makes it wrong for the employer to do same with his employees as a corrective

measure at the work place? If the employer does it he would be charged with felony, meanwhile the teacher would be paid for doing the same thing.

To let people hide behind corporal punishment for the maltreatment of children is wrong. Let us review or repeal the law on corporal punishment. Parents and educators should be educated on the many alternatives which are more effective in making responsible human beings.

Children are entitled in law to the same protections that adults expect: to be free from assault, to be free from being hit. Giving parents and educators a legal defence for hitting their children sanctions violence. A repeal of the law is important to emphasize that violence toward children is harmful.

Many countries banned physical punishment of children, according to the UN. Sweden was the first to introduce an explicit ban, in 1979. Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland and Norway joined Sweden and were followed by Israel, the state that received the ever cited scriptures in defence of abuse. We can learn from these countries how they have done it all these years.

Even the colonial masters who brought us the formal education have researched into corporal punishment and have outlawed it, why do we still hold to this backward and slavery mentality.

To those who think that some children cannot be managed without the cane, or that if children were not manipulated or

engineered they would grow like wild grass in the field, I would say that it is a fallacy. Nature has programmed children to learn naturally from their environment.

What the adults need to do is to guide them. Children do not need caning, they need guidance. Many parents in Ghana do not spank their children, yet they are doing well. There are equally many schools in this country where children are not spanked and they are the best schools.

In the first place, it is because those schools and parents are effective that is why they are training children without relying on the cane. Schools that use the cane the most are the poorly performing schools, children who are routinely abused are the worst behaved kids.

If the cane were to be an effective teaching aid, all training colleges and universities training teachers to be would have instructed their students in its use. There is no Teacher Training College in Ghana that has the use of the cane in its curriculum. Why do teachers then use the cane at school? This goes to show how ineffective caning is.

Those who are recommending sending of children home because of misbehaviour are misleading us. It is a plot to keep widening the gap between the poor and the rich. They want more gardeners and cleaners. Let us resist it.

All children in this country need education, irrespective of their parent's financial statuses. Let us train our teachers in handling such children. This is possible since it is being done elsewhere. Let us be a nation building its future leaders rather than destroying them.

It is sad to hear that now children are being sent home for not performing well in school. Do we forget that if these children knew the lessons taught they would have been in the house and not in the school?

They are in school to learn and we need to do everything possible; both parents and educators, to assist them. They have a right to education and we have a responsibility to provide it.

Were the parents of those children being sent home for non-performance told on the first day they sent their children to school that the school had a policy of sending children who do not perform well home to join the group of street children so that the parents would prepare for that? If not, the parents have a right to take the school on.

Expelling children from school puts them on a path that often leads to prison. When we keep on kicking our young children out of school, let us remember that we are sending them into oblivion and some would sooner or later come back to demand what society denied them at any given

opportune time through any foul means. Let us not forget that, anytime a child suffers from violence, neglect, abuse or injustice, it is the larger society that pays for it.

Behaviour that results in young children getting expelled from school is sometimes the result of corporal punishment at home by parents, a legalised form of abuse by the state.

There is a high level of child abuse and neglect in this dear nation. There is an overuse of beating kids, and research shows the more they are beaten, the angrier they get. The angrier they get the greater the rate of vandalism in our institutions.

So long as legalised violence against children continues with impunity, violent demonstrations, vandalism and attacks on teachers would always be with us. So would the fight to end violence against women be a mirage.

Let us stop the beating and start the nurturing. Let us guide our children and drop the cane. We can raise effective children in this ineffective world using the right method.

There is hope for the future if only we get the conviction that the cane is not an educational tool but a tool of inflicting pain and creating timid, cowardly and unproductive beings.

Legislation for the fight to end domestic violence must begin with a legislation to end all corporal punishment of children and mature adults both at home and in our educational institutions; else it would be a waste of time and money. Research shows that, those who were victims of abuse grow up to become abusers. This is because we are all a reflection of our environment and our homes.

As a society, let us decide on what is good for all of us and not just for a group of people. A proper research into the cause of the inability of those children's performance; could equality put the blame on the doorsteps of the teachers themselves. Let us be seen to be helping our children rather than destroying them.

Our educational system is now more interested in grades and money rather than moulding character and preparing a generation of future leaders. One wonders if that was the system our leaders of today went through, where money and grades were the priority of the colonial masters.

Would Ghana be a better place for us in the future when the current generation takes over the mantle of affairs in this country vis a vis the current development in our educational system?

Would we look back and proudly say we fought a good fight and have prepared a generation of world leaders who would not use violence for non-violence, thinking that it is the only way to handle human differences? Would our children look back and be proud of us for neglecting them and chasing material things which they might not be able to manage because we did not prepare them enough?

Fellow Ghanaians, why do you struggle so much in search of material wealth neglecting the very children you would one day be called to bequeath those things to? Let us be courageous and put our children first. Failure to do that that would always make the larger society suffer.

As a nation we can do better if we all agree on spending more money in the training of our teachers and motivating them. After all, the bedrock of an economy is education. If we keep on pretending that we are doing our best for our teachers and that they are alright, they would also pretend to be doing their best and assume that everything is alright.

The future of this nation is in the hand of our educators; let us pay close attention to our educational system and change laws which are outmoded and Ghana our beloved country would be on the right path.

Christian Platini Ashiagbor