



UNFAIR BURDEN PLACED ON OUR TEACHERS

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OUR STUDENTS have just come back from their teaching practice. I have taken some time to listen to them as they reflected on their teaching practice, and realised that the problems in our schools are bigger than we think.

The issues include safety, respect, bullying, selling and use of drugs – the list is endless. These issues are of great concern to the education community, and surely are worrisome to our leaders as well.

I propose a solution for both Basic and Social Development Departments.

When I started teaching, I knew it was a noble profession. Reflecting on my school days and the teachers who influenced me in one way or another, I take my cap off to them. The lessons were not just about the subject, but also life lessons, which were always impeccable. I learnt to respect my teachers and carried them in high regard. I learnt to understand that they were human beings just like myself.

Recently, Davids and Waghid (2018) contended that "Teaching is about the dignity, compassion and care teachers can establish with learners". Besides the fact that these two scholars evoke important values of a teacher, they also state that these values must be modelled for the classrooms.

As a language person, one can argue that the importance of a teacher modelling to the pupils is one of the best pedagogical methods in the classroom.

It is because of the values, such as compassion, dignity and care, demonstrated to me by my teachers that today I would like to produce teachers of the same calibre. How current pupils are treated and educated will definitely benefit our society.

However, what is happening in our schools makes it difficult for our teachers to educate, model and produce brilliant and responsible South Africans. Furthermore, in a school where there is violence, disrespect towards teachers and fellow pupils, and drugs, there will be dire consequences for the culture of teaching and learning.

Recently we have witnessed teachers being attacked by pupils, and unfortunately colleagues have their lost lives on school grounds because of pupils. This is a clear indication that the teachers are working under painful circumstances.

The government needs to get its hands dirty and make our children's education a priority.

Clearly the problems are multi-faceted ones and there can be many contributions to these occurrences, but unfortunately ubuntu among some of our pupils has vanished.

Dear Ministers of Basic Education and Social Development, the universities are producing thousands of social workers who are now languishing at home unemployed, as was emphasised by Nkosi (2018). In 2017, unemployed social worker graduates took to the streets to demonstrate for employment. Surely, if Basic Education can start employing these social workers in schools, that would be a start?

Evidence suggests that there is a dire need for the qualified personnel in schools to assist pupils navigate these hardships. Teachers can no longer be expected to deliver holistic pupils who are willing to achieve against all odds.

It is not fair that teachers are expected to do work they are not formally trained in, while there are thousands of unemployed social workers.

As an educationist, I further realise the need for our government to get its hands dirty in making our education a priority. But how does one do so under such adversity?

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