

Parents' role in children's education

Parenting



Bob G Kisiki

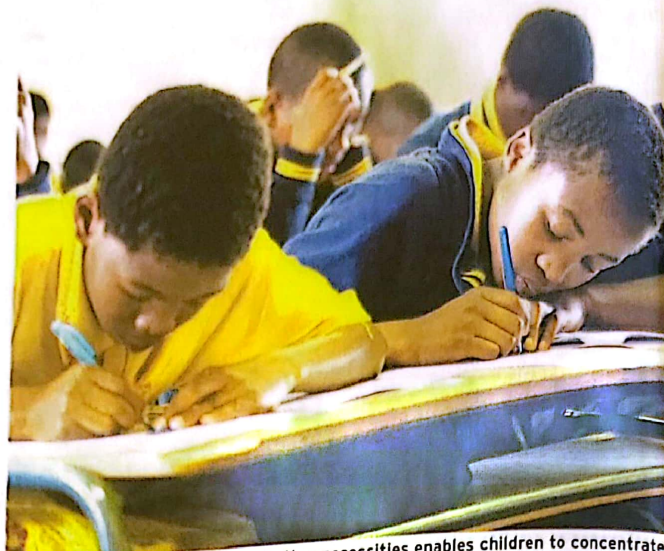
The other day my ailing father passed by our house on his way for treatment at Mulago Hospital. As people his age are expected to do, he talked non-stop about this and that, until we settled on the matter of education.

We are both retired teachers, but he goes further than me; he is a retired headteacher, and he has also served on all manner of education-related boards and committees.

So although he is in his late 80s, people still want to glean from the experience he has gathered over the decades by coaxing him to serve on things such as parents' teachers association (PTA) or school management committees.

That is how he came to address some parents recently on the matters I thought I should share here.

Being the newly appointed chairperson of the academic committee on a school's PTA, he asked that on visitation



Providing scholastic materials and other necessities enables children to concentrate

day, he is allowed to talk to the parents. So he set up a desk near the gate, where parents stopped and had an informal chat with him before they walked out.

Yeah, walked, because this is not Gayaza High or any of the St. Lawrence schools we are talking about. But that is immaterial.

The point is that as they walked out, they would stop and see him.

"I told them three important things," he said.

Academic performance

"One, the parent plays a big part in how a child goes through school and, ultimately, how she/he performs academically. When a parent does not stop at taking the child to school, but also follows up on how the

TOP TIP ✓

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child is coping with school life, that parent makes it possible for the child to settle in."

His reasoning is that the child then knows that she/he is not alone; they are in it with the parent. They feel a sense of "someone cares" and put in more than they would otherwise do if the parent merely dropped them there and walked away.

Requirements

The other point he raised with the parents was provision of what schools and parents have come to call 'requirements'.

"When you, as a parent, do not do your part, it is irrational for you to expect others to do theirs. A child without all the requirements will not be able to study well. If they have the books but only one pen, it is wrong. What will they do when that one pen is used up? Do you want them to steal? Will you be happy when the child is sent back home over theft allegations? If they have the uniform shirt and shorts, but no day wear, what do you expect them to use on weekends?" he asked

He believes that when children have all the necessary items for all aspects of their school life, they have every reason to concentrate and if they do not, then you and the teachers can hold them responsible. Yet, if you fail to provide, you waive that right.

Relationships

Finally, he talked to them about relationships. Oh yes, do not joke with the old school type.

"I charged them not to get entangled in relationships with their children's teachers. When they do, it jeopardises the school system. The teacher who is in love with the parent is compromised; she cannot handle that child as the school law demands; and could easily cheat for that child. Besides, if the child is involved in criminal activity, how does she punish the rest and leave her stepson?"

However, he also thinks that if that teacher wanted to get her own children with the parent, she could be a danger to this child who is in the school.

The writer is a parenting counsellor

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