

HELP FOR PARENTS

YOUR FEEDBACK

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Caning a child for marks is wrong

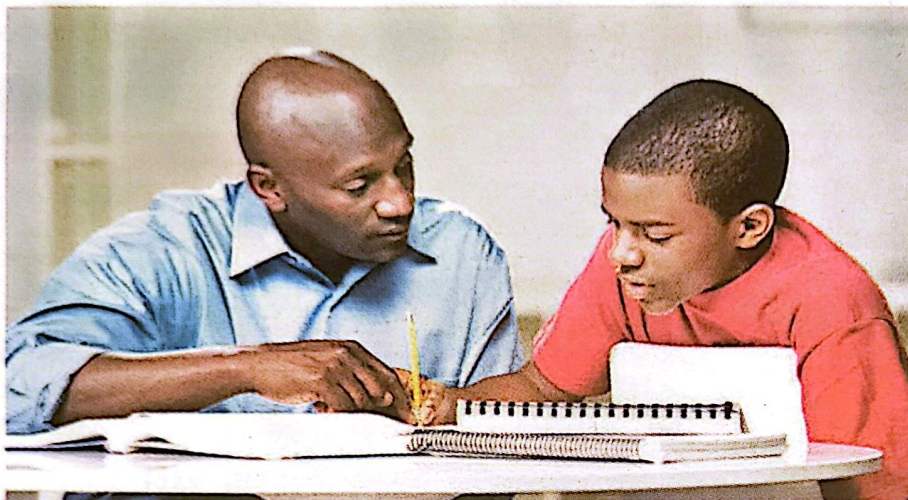


Bob Kisiki

It is end of term and, worse, end of year. It is the promotional term and while for some this is great news, for others it is terribly dreadful. It means presenting reports that bring no joy to anybody – not the one who earned it; not the one who funded it. Tension is in the air and, in some families; the cane is crouching around the corner. I know families where the cane even has a name – it is a familiar family member. In one home it is Stinger... you get the idea...

Beating children for failing in their exams does it make (logical) sense? Does the cane enhance academic excellence in a child, or in anybody else for that matter? Should we beat our children because they have not excelled?

First, you as the parent should know your child's



Try to help your child with their studies before punishing them

potential, basing either on the genes that flow in the child's blood or other factors. Because our education system leans heavily – almost exclusively – on passing end-of-year exams, parents, teachers and the learners themselves put their every effort in ensuring excellent performance.

But this in itself is not all. The examinations are done under varying circumstances that determine how children perform, either individually or corporately. Sometimes, they write their exams under tight security, because of rumours of spread of leaked papers;

sometimes the room is stuffy; the roof leaks and it's raining during the paper; sometimes the child is in labour and other crazy conditions. I know someone who wrote his first paper the day after his mother was buried.

Of course, nobody will beat a child who performs badly when they wrote their exams immediately after burying their mother, but there are other circumstances that affect children in ways they have no control over and to beat them for not passing is unfair and irrational. Fear of failure plays a big part in performance.

Sometimes children get a

sudden memory lapse before the paper. Sometimes they have other reasons we may not know about. They are being disturbed by a teacher or fellow student who wants to sleep with them. How do you know? When you beat a child like this because they failed, you compound the problem and could push them over the precipice and into the abyss of perpetual failure.

If beating helped, many parents who beat their children on academic grounds would not need to do it a second and fifth time; yet for some it is a termly

ritual. Every end of term, the child presents an even worse report, so they give them a higher number of the cane.

If you know that your child is just lazy and every intervention you have come up with to help, she has rejected, you have every right to punish her, but there are so many ways you can do this (withdrawal of privileges, denial of certain needs that won't fundamentally affect them, grounding, etc), that you will be amazed at their results.

Beating is more likely to result in animosity than other punishments you might employ. It is violent and sometimes parents are tempted to beat their children in a rage. When they think of the money spent throughout the year, paying regular fees, paying for extra hours of special coaching with more than three teachers; buying special books for coaching clinics and the many visits to the school; as well as the money they will have to fork out the following year as the child repeats a class, their anger rises fast and furiously, and the beating becomes a special thing. You are better off not taking that route at all.

Bob Kisiki is an educationist and youth worker