

Discipline and prayer will help in restoring teachers' dignity

“DISCIPLINED people can do the right thing at the right time in the right way for the right reason,” John Ortberg, an American Evangelical pastor and author, wisely states.

Practising discipline develops habits and strengthens the heart's purpose; it enables one to respond to one's calling in life. The noble profession of teaching is one example of responding to such a call. There must be consistency and common purpose among those who are involved in education.

The role of the teacher is to provide leadership and guidance to pupils. Teachers today should be engaged in their career with a high sense of calling, passion and professionalism, like the honourable teachers of yesteryear.

The teaching profession

in our country has developed negative connotations over the years. Teachers have been painted negatively, largely because they do not display the joy and earnest devotion one would expect to see.

As a society, we have failed to demobilise the profile of a teacher from the 1980s, the teacher who was entangled in the politics of resistance. Most teachers were trained at a time when the profession was embroiled in the struggle for liberation.

They now need to re-focus their minds to accept the new challenge of recon-

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structing our society.

It is teachers themselves who can ultimately change negative perceptions about them. Of great significance will be the return of discipline in schools.

First, teachers need to develop a sense of self-confidence, assertiveness and a high level of professionalism. This is what is currently missing in this noble occupation. Teachers themselves must love and appreciate their profession more as a calling than just a job.

Other significant role players have a part to play in changing the prevailing stereotypes about teachers.

The religious sector, as part of a collaborative effort spearheaded by the National Education Trust, (NET) should be allowed to lead campaigns on morality and the ethics of

learning in schools. The purpose of those efforts is to build professional unity and a common identity among teachers.

Religious practice can instil in teachers and pupils alike a sense of moral responsibility and an attitude that says, “Every child is my child”. Once teachers appreciate pupils as their own children, they will show only love and treat children as they treat their own children.

Teachers and pupils must pray together so that their relationship is not an end in itself but a continuing union.

It is important for all teachers to be acquainted with the demands of the

National Development Plan (NDP) through a special training programme.

It should be made compulsory for teachers to undergo a formal study of the NDP under the guidance of the NECT.

Teachers must be patriotic. They must understand their calling in the broader context of society

and ensure that they show the country in a good light to those beyond our borders.

They must master the art of discipline inside and outside the classroom.

Celebrations and events such as World Teachers' Day will motivate teachers as they interact with their counterparts from other parts of the world. They

will be exposed to the world of education beyond South Africa. They will appreciate their calling and see how society appreciates and values them.

Schools must become centres of excellence both tangibly and spiritually.

These two factors must be balanced to produce effective teaching and active students in society.

Ultimately, society must take primary responsibility for the bringing up of children. Teachers can only mould what the home environment provides them with. It is the responsibility of parents to see that their children succeed in education.

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