

Millions
of
ROBOTS



by *Waithanga Otieno*
(Magdalene)

SPEAK OR BE EATEN!

*Don't be fooled by anyone
By no means shall time dine with anyone
For it takes no side
Whether born to beggary or prosperity
Time just flows and it's up to you to draw.*

*Race not against it
Time is independent, just like the wind
It seeks
not your permission to flow
For there's just but one master of time
That lives outside time
He only can turn it on or tune it off
The He who fashioned you.
So plan your life against the measure He's given to you,
But race not against time
Tis like chasing after torrents
You never gonna catch them!*

*Waste not what you don't possess for you live within it not without
You can't recapture time that you let pass
So take control of your being
Plotting and planning every tip and dot of it.*

*Flow in that call,
Grow with that fall
Speak child, speak through that call
It's your season; let none speak for you at all
For your call ushers you into the palaces of the greatest of them all
Ascend to greatness, for that's your call
Speak!
or be eaten.*

Waithanga Otieno

Prelude

“To better that which is good, best that which is better, making today better than yesterday and tomorrow more glorified than today. Never resting on yesterday’s splendor, we just cannot afford to sabotage tomorrow’s victory. Dance in the limelight for a little while but forget not to rise up at the dawn of the day to do something that is going to make today worth living for every mankind.” That is the voice in the whispering wind, the sparkle in the eye of the morning sun. Every child deserves his or her crown of championship, for all are champions though in different fields. Each and every champion enters the stage to showcase a different gift while the rest cheer in jubilation.

Greatness is in the heart and making of every child, none that has come to this world without it. The field is wide; each and every one of us has a part to play in the lives of the children around us. For as long as they are young, they are influenced by what they see; a call to be positive role models. That is the call of every parent, guardian and mentor, a sign that you are worthy of this call, to begin.

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CHAPTER 1

YOUR CHILD YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Whose child is it anyway?

Children are a gift, a gift that parents only have an opportunity to have at present and no other guarantees after that. This gift has a label with the parents' address, date of birth and a huge stamp stating "ENJOY IT NOW" that is the reason they are called gifts. They cry at birth and all has to be done for them, they crawl along as time goes by but once they are on their feet there is no telling how fast they will grow. Every parent has that child for a limited time, a time that ought to be treasured. A time that should fill every parent with joy for before they even know it, the child will be gone, and they too will be parents to other children. Life is such a flash, isn't it?

Considering that one has just but less than twenty years to train up his child, such little time can only be taken one second at a time and with keen vigilance. No parent, regardless of his or her calling can afford to waste this precious gift of taking care of "the gift" in form of a child. Children are simply special no matter the age, color, shape or size. The parent has been given that responsibility to nurture that child, it is in his or her hands to make that child a hero; a master of something or a zero if this specific parent has a conscience large enough to carry the guilt of failing to lift the child into his mastery to his or her grave. It's such a simple assignment, lasting such a short time but carries a lot of credit by which the whole world passes the judgment on the parent and never the child. The innocence of the gift doesn't allow that. We know it just too well.

Instructions of child handling goes like this, ***"And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*** ***Ephesians 6: 4.*** This is for mothers as well; it is the call to our responsibility in parenting.

Many a time parents assume that taking children to school is a huge favour. The responsibility of providing the child with basic needs as just a tip of the iceberg is a rude awakening to many. A child once born has to be taken care of and that responsibility falls greatly into the hands of the parents and guardians.

The child will definitely require food, clothing and a home to live in; that is simply basic. The list doesn't end there. The next thing that the parent needs to keenly consider is the training of the child. By this I don't mean taking them to school but

instilling wisdom and insight into the child as soon as they are born. Every gift has a manual of “how to” whether written or not, the manual does exist.

The learning process of a child begins very early in life; a smile or a frown is easily interpreted by a toddler. Every dimension of education should be carefully provided to the child. Just as the fear of God and the relationship between the child and God are not left to the religious masters so shouldn't education be left to teacher or even those at school. Other parties may be involved in handling discipline, academics, religious life and play but the responsibility largely falls into the hands of the parent.

Discipline and religious education comes before the child can proceed to school and is the largest investment a parent can input in a child's life. These two parts of education are a continuous affair and they order the child's life even after the parents are gone. With these two sections of education a true legend is also made. It is an area no one can afford to ignore.

When time comes to take the child to school, every parent should realize that the choice of school that he or she makes sends a strong statement into the child's mind. It's a picture every parent should be concerned about.

It is important to acknowledge that the first 20 years of your child's life if well directed would promote his future lifestyle otherwise it would render him hopeless. That is why it is important to mind what you say or do in the presence of your child. Twenty years is such a short time that we ought to be good managers of that time, those who have not used the time wisely ought to learn how to redeem the time for the close of it is so near.

USING TIME TO MANAGE OUR RELATIONSHIPS AND SHOW RESPONSIBILITY.

Availing time on a daily basis to spend with your child especially after a day away from each other adds great value to your child's life. Of course while doing something that portrays your love and concern for his entire life.

Unfortunately today's world has left parents and their own children in two different worlds with plenty of space in between. Parents in the process of providing for their children live in a world called “*busy-ness*” or shall I call it “*Busy-Mess*” and the children are aliens to this world. They are left in a world “waiting to exhale”. Not a fair scenario. There is the need for the two parties to be in the same world, speaking the same language, being in the same wagon; none needs to be a fossil in the others presence. “For two cannot walk together unless they have a common goal.”

Running businesses and full time 8am to 5pm employment seem to grab every opportunity that parents have to see their children. Who can complain? They are

just doing their best to put bread on the table we can't blame them, can we? So the parents are left with the option of placing the children in the so called great schools and hire very educated house helps to assist at home. It only gets ugly as they assume that the teachers are meeting all the needs of their children at school and the house help doing the same at home. Besides, they are paying handsomely for duo! Such parents may even feel that they can afford to get home late six days in a week because Little Ben knows only too well that they work so hard to keep his life worth living. They get home just after Little Ben has gone to bed and leave very early in the morning because they've got to beat the traffic jam and be at work before 7.30am. Guilt does not build up in their lives because the well paid nanny; Auntie Rose wakes Little Ben up right on time, baths him, dresses him up and prepares his favourite breakfast before walking him to the bus stop so that he does not miss the school bus. To cover up for all the rush his parents give Auntie Rose a whole set of Dos and Don'ts or shall I call them the house commandments for Little Ben and herself, oh and a good amount of petty cash just in case Little Ben changes his mind about going to school one morning.

They don't mind extra time with the teacher for Little Ben, in the name of tuition. They will offer anything to keep him so busy that he doesn't realize that Mom and Pop haven't been home lately, or have they? He probably heard their voices in his dreams. The beautifully painted portrait of the "Happy Family" resting on top of the well polished dark mahogany table is a good reminder that his parents' spirits hover around him only that he isn't sure if that is good or bad because he hasn't seen the physical beings since last Sunday when they visited the "Rich-Only" Complex owned by Wealthy Moneyed and Sons where all meals have a four-figure value and the kiddies' menu advertises the magnificent toy that comes along with the meal more than it explains the content of the meal! In fact, every car packed in the parking lot of this complex tells all about the family that drove it into the parking lot. The jumping castles here are accessed upon booking a table so as to dine at Flush Hotel. This is just but a small tip of the iceberg, when it comes to entertaining the children who come here, the list goes on forever. The strange thing is that whenever Little Ben comes to this place, he rushes to the jumping castle or heads straight for the play station. Daddy immediately goes on phone with the international businessman who doesn't stop talking until the meals are brought to the table. When the party finally begins, Mommy and Daddy get into another conversation about some mortgage that needs to be paid, Little Ben's new French teacher who is now pregnant and cannot continue with the private tuition on Saturday evening, the red wine Subaru for Mommy that tells all about her status not to mention work, work and more work but nothing is ever said to him. He skips off to the jumping castle again leaving his meal half way eaten and no one ever notices that the little fellow is

gone! Am I being harsh? Not at all, am only telling you a huge bit of my story which is also your story. Let us tell it as it is.

While this may be a parent's way of saying "I love you" to his child, with time they only find out that since the words were never uttered Little Ben does what he wants when he wants because his parents have simply no time to chat with him. He depends on every penny they are so eager to make but have no relationship with him. It is so strange to realize that some parents don't even notice it. Their children may be "using" them but they don't even see it that way.

At first it would have been easier to think that the child belongs to Auntie Rose or maybe the teacher at school. But at this rate, I think he belongs to the money, or is it the money that belongs to him? Which is which?

Little Ben comes home and doesn't find his parents at home nor have the opportunity to chat with them. Day in day out he sees the same pattern of life. His parents come home late and leave before he is up. House rules and regulations are left to Auntie Rose who is only too keen to miss a comma in the list. This is the life; he thinks to himself. But as time rides on and he gets older, his parents decide to change the trend and leave the instructions stuck on the yellow sticky paper right on his door, a new mode of communication. They even send him Short messages before they leave but his phone is on silence for he needs to enjoy his sleep over the holiday. In return, when he rises up he responds to the text message. ***"Hey Pops I'm gonna be late tonight so please send some cash over when you get where you are going, I'll need it. Don't forget Pops and have a good one!"***

This is where I would expect the father to go, "Haiya, where did I go so wrong in my duty as a parent? What kind of language is this?" But no, he doesn't see it. He has been receiving similar texts from Little Ben day in day out that he has lost count, he just have to oblige to keep his dear son happy. It doesn't occur to him that he needs to ask for an account of how the money is to be spent. It is not right for the Little Ben to keep asking without accounting for the money. Pop, as he is commonly called doesn't see it this way; he would die of guilt if he even allowed the thought of denying him the cash or asking about how it is going to be spent settle on his mind.

A child who keeps on asking for money or any other thing from his parents and doesn't account for it or even have his parents follow up to see that the commodity is well spent develops an attitude where he assumes that his parents are simply providers who need nothing from him, not even love!

If this is the situation at home; you should get worried, so worried that your hair should start thinning forming a good playground on your head. You have been played, I should say; and you allowed it somehow by being too afraid to ask because you felt you could buy love from your child.

Now, let us go back a little and see where exactly you might have gone wrong, shall we? The lecture begins. Sending Little Ben to school during school sessions should not be taken for granted. It is not some kind of mantra to be recited without an aim. Education in all its totality should be taken seriously by the parent first then the child. The only way to show how important school education is to a child's life has to be demonstrated through instilling discipline at home and a sense of accountability. This is where you as a parent show the interest of knowing what exactly goes on at home and at school. Create the time and opportunity to find out or you will have left the child in a hyena's den!

It is not a sin at all to ask and do a thorough research about a school where you desire to place your child even if it is for a day. May I remind you; the money is yours and so is the child so why not be cautious on where exactly you invest your hard earned cash?

A school therefore is not a dumping site for unwanted children the least I can say. It is not a "keep my child busy" institute while I go and make some money, for goodness sake take time to know more about the school, the teachers, insist on taking a tour through the school compound not once but even twice. Go and visit the swimming pool during the swimming lesson, ask questions even such as one will think you are a fool. It is your great investment, isn't it? It is not a sign of being paranoid that you ask about the school or even ask a child who is attending the same school about that school, it is the art of being concerned. Your child's education is the greatest investment you will ever make in his life and yours too. Why shy away from knowledge of the investment?

Let me cut a slice of knowledge that you and I need to share; when you take your child into a new school, the school management demands to interview him or her before they can admit him. That way they have some kind of insurance that assures them that your child can perform to their expectations. Now, ask yourself this; wouldn't it be good if you did the same to the management? Interview them to see if they are worth speaking to your child to say the least. See if they are cut out to touch your precious child, a bit of pride here will put you in a class of "don't mess with my child". Conduct the interview with some sense of direction, you know what you want. This is your child.

Remember this, selecting a school that doesn't suite your child's needs may encourage truancy or a parasitic relationship between you and your child. Ensure that the reason as to why you choose to keep your child in that specific school is not just to favour you or soothe an egotistic feeling inside of you. Your child is the one who is going to rise up early every morning to go to that school, spend the entire day there and come home either feeling hated and unwanted or feeling so loved that he wouldn't mind sleeping on the cold floor so that he can return to school the

following day because he benefits from the input he gets there. You may be thinking, “I pay the school fees so it’s all about me!” This is a suicidal thought you are encouraging in your mind. If only it didn’t matter to you who he becomes later in his life then I wouldn’t argue it out. It does matter otherwise you wouldn’t bother taking your child to school at all, worse still you wouldn’t allow the child in your house.

Issues to do with the time the child reports to school, the breaks and daily close down time at school are not to be taken lightly. While the 6am to 6pm may seem favourable to you as a parent because it suits your day at work, but it will cause a major damage to your relationship with your child. You may want to find out how much time is left for you to be with your child. Under no circumstance should you allow yourself or your child to be too busy for a chat and time together. You may be wondering how your child could possibly get that busy. Well then consider this; if your child comes home after 5pm, takes a seat at the study table and starts doing his homework, stops for a few minutes for dinner while he is between this book and that book and finally sleeps after 9.30pm with a gloomy face because he couldn’t finish all the homework, you should certainly get worried.

Many parents believe that the more the homework the child has the better for him. Honestly speaking, is that parent happy because the child is gaining from the homework or because he is too busy to notice the late arrival of his parents or even that the parent wants some peace so that he can watch his favourite television programs? Some parents have even gone to the extent of complaining to the school authorities that the children are not kept busy enough. At this point the school authorities should pose a question; “Keep the child so busy so that the parents can do exactly what?” If any living being is to be kept busy, it should not be at the expense of his happiness and sanity, otherwise it’s a punishment and mere slavery. Children need time to rest especially when they come from school, time to pray and to play, time to socialize with those around them and time to chat with their parents to mention but a few. It is sad to hear parents who complain that their children are playful. The value of play cannot be underestimated. Play is to a child and child is to play do not deny a child the time to play.

I once had an encounter that drove me into writing this book. I placed my two daughters in a school that at the first visit at the school my heart felt that it was just the wrong place for my children. The school compound was rather squeezed and the major building holding the classes was openly questionable. The only trophy in the secretary’s office made me wonder what exactly it was meant for. But I went ahead and placed my children after getting a good dose of a pep talk with the school director. My concern about lack of a playground was met with a convincing reply that the school ensured that the children played at a rented playground at a nearby public school. Mind you, this was a high cost private school. I was promised that

swimming lessons were offered to interested students twice a week, netball and races were done to the level of competing with neighbouring schools. I never asked for information about the latest events that had taken place and being too excited about the small talk I made the hasty decision, signed the admission forms and off I was to attend my supposedly more important schedules, boy was I wrong?

I hurriedly shopped for the uniforms and books that were required and the following morning at 6.20 am I dropped my children at the school to begin a new life. A new life indeed. I was informed that the school bus would bring the children back home after school. I must say I was excited to have put the kids at the school leaving me with the whole day to myself. With all the time in my hands I could go shopping and job hunting whenever I wanted or so I thought.

The younger daughter who was only 5 years old and attending Pre-unit class only showed up at home at 4 pm. "How was school dear", I greeted her. "Ok mum, but we didn't play at the swings nor go to the field to play with the rest of the children. In fact we sat in class till lunch time, went for lunch then took a nap. My teacher woke me up earlier than others so that I could work on my reading then the bus driver came to pick us up to go home." That was the most devastating report I had heard in such a long time. A day without play for any child in the face of the globe, how bad could life possibly be?

My elder daughter who was about to turn 10 came just a few minutes before 6pm. The sight of the girl carrying a huge bag pack weigh so heavily on her back threatening to break her at any instance was not what broke my heart, that had long crashed me early that morning when I saw other children carrying theirs on their backs. The dear girl came home in tears. "Why?" I inquired, "Every student kept asking my name and speaking to me in Swahili."

My children had not learnt the language at all. We had left the country and settled in Botswana for seven years. Our plan did not include returning to Kenya and therefore made the mistake we gravely regret for not introducing them to the language. The ordeal of my daughter showing up at home in tears was an emotional blow to me. That was just the beginning of the whole issue.

When I asked the girls to take a bath and prepare for dinner, my elder daughter told me that we had to keep dinner brief because she had 50 questions in arithmetic to work on and another set of 50 in English. The pile of homework came with a set of instructions that the students were supposed to write down the full question and the answer in their exercise books. Dinner wasn't going to be a social time. It was completely ruined. Needless to say we only went to bed after eleven o'clock having accomplished only 80% of the homework. I had been robbed of my time with the kids by my decision to place the children in a school like this.

Rising up in the morning had to be as early as 5pm so that we could catch up with the school bus that picked up the kids at exactly 6.05pm. The agony faced by my elder daughter of sleeping late and rising very early in the morning then spending the 85% of her day at school seated in her desk in her extra congested class was just but the beginning of a hard time for her. Her timetable indicated that she had in excess of 12 sessions in one single day each lasting 35 minutes, the first break lasted for 15 minutes allowing the children to visit the wash rooms, the next break was 30 minutes for tea break but was hardly honoured and finally the lunch break that was 45 minutes long. With this kind of information in my hands, I felt my hopes of seeing my children happy crashing into tiny pieces that could not be put together again. I had ruined a great deal of their lives.

I decided to take matters into my own hands; I had to make sure I knew everything I needed to know before I could take a bold step of moving the children into another school. I therefore called the school and requested for an appointment with the head giving myself a week before I could go for the meeting. This could allow me to investigate through asking children who attended the same school about their day at school and also taking time to meet their parents. Through these meetings with specific parents and children who were attending that school I learnt that the timetable I had seen was hardly followed and the information regarding compulsory Saturday classes for class 1 to 8 had been omitted. As if the 5 days of acute grilling at the school was not bad enough for the children, the same children had to endure lack of play time on Saturday because they brought home a pile of homework everyday including Saturday. Talk of keeping a child busy.

Sunday was not a day for worship for the Class 8 children. All class 8 children had to be boarders for the sake of passing the end of year examination. This meant that even though the child's home was the next block from the school, the poor kid had to stay at school. The investigation took an ugly turn as I learnt that most of the topics in every class took about 2 days to cover therefore allowing for example a class 4 child to study class 5 material by the mid of second term. Maybe school curriculum was not meant for this school, besides it was private, I thought.

The same school subjected children from class 4 to 8 to 3 days of examinations twice a month in the name of preparation for end of year exam. The ugliest thing about the examination period is that the children came home with the same pile of homework even during the 3 days of examination. This was all in the name of appearing at the top hundred in the country in the class 8 exam. If that is not torture then there is probably something I don't understand about education.

Physical education lessons were clearly indicated in the timetable, the lesson was however replaced by an arithmetic lesson while swimming hardly took place because the children had to make a choice between the exercise and a continuation of the

Arithmetic or Social studies lesson. For the fear of failing and hence attracting the pain of the cane the children had no choice than to keep off the swimming lesson which their parents had paid for.

It was a clear case of too much work and absolutely no play; I don't have to say that the children had therefore developed a hardened hatred for their teachers to the point of wishing them dead! Children had taken up habits of booing down their teachers and using hardcore insults openly even during prize giving day which was a public event where the mayor of the town was invited as the guest of honor. Discipline was just a written word, never spoken or practiced.

It is such a surprise that the number of subjects taken nowadays by the primary school children are not as many as there were over ten years ago. These days the subjects have trimmed down to Arithmetic, English, Swahili, Social Studies and Religion and Science. When I was in primary school, late 80s and early 90s we had Art and craft, Music and Agriculture added into the pack yet we had time to play and we passed very well hence contributing majorly into the building of our nation, the continent and the globe at large. Then there was a good reason to have a grilling curriculum but it wasn't so, maybe because fun was a major part of learning. Play was a catalyst of education and education was treated as a tool to sharpen and polish our talents, schools were worth attending. We studied under very relaxed environment. What exactly happened? What went wrong?

Greed happened- Tuition nowadays is a money making venture and therefore the more the students showing up for the tuition the better for the tutor. School management insists on as many children to turn up for tuition as possible. The question is, "Do the children actually benefit from the tuition?" All the children I mean.

Saturday classes are another area where tuition is greatly emphasized. Having classes running on Saturday for any child is very much questionable. The question being "Is there a tete-a-tete between the teacher and the child?" Tuition is a polishing up moment. This is where every student ought to have a moment with the teacher being guided through a tough area in a specific lesson or subject. Where tuition is to be held as group work then it should be in a round table with the teacher included as a discussion not as dictation. So if tuition is to be held, every participant has got to contribute and be evaluated by all the other participants. It is either a one on one or a major debate. It cannot be a dictation time.

If proper planning is done for the five school days that is Monday through Friday, a great output would be realized. Focus while teaching should be on the child being taught. How is the student benefiting from the lesson, the topic, the subject and the day at large? Have this in mind; when you do laundry, you do not do it so as to

simply get the laundry basket empty but your focus is to get the laundry clean. A common phrase that keeps ringing in my mind; “***Nguo itihuragwo nigu ithire, no nigu ithere.***” We wash clothes to get them clean not just to empty the laundry basket, is a more direct translation of the phrase. Loading the whole laundry basket of clothes into a washing machine doesn’t warrant for clean clothes when the timer clicks off. Some clothes could shed colour on others and hence messing up the whole washing. Caution has to be taken through sorting the clothes first to ensure that the proper result is obtained, the clothes actually got to end up clean.

Every student is special, each has his own strength and weakness, each has his talent. Is today’s primary and secondary education helping the child realize their talent through addressing their strengths and setting a way of handling their weaknesses so that such don’t make him a failure in his daily walk?

Is your child’s strength being realized through the education you are offering him? Is he able to use his strength to benefit himself and the community around him today and is there a guarantee that he will use it tomorrow and the day after?

Is he able to use his talent effectively or has the world of books booked him a ticket to the world of failure?

Have you as a parent ensured that the education you are taking your child through is worth the time and money you are investing? How does it benefit you and the child today?

How is the law protecting the child from being abused by business people who put up private institutions as schools and do not honour the children’s rights?

What are we going to do as a community to ensure that the children we have today actually benefit from the education we so badly seem to value? If there are potholes in the path of education, are we willing to mend them to benefit our children?

Shall we speak out loud and do something constructive about the situation today, or we shall choose to be quiet and be eaten by the same situations we desire to ignore in the name of the paralyzing fear creeping through our veins?

CHAPTER 2

THE BIG PICTURE ON CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Today's childhood education focuses more on studying already written material. Most of the work is done theoretically and inside classrooms. Whenever there is something to be done practically there is very little creativity involved. Fascinatingly so, the same children we have in your schools are expected to grow up in an aggressive world, rather taxing to them is the reality that they have to be innovative as they deal in the same world upon employment or running businesses to keep up with the trend leave alone being successful.

Concentrating on class work which is majorly reading and revising from text books covering a set curriculum tends to keep the child's focus constrained within the small box of that year's curriculum. Worse still there is the emphasis of the end year examination to qualify the child to progress to the next level in his education. As much as this seems to have produced great leaders in the world, there is the need to realize that those that can truly be termed as masters or great leaders are great thinkers. They thought outside the box so to speak. They focused out of the set program, they seemed to look and see things beyond the horizons and limitations of the average man. What the ordinary man considered daily bread was not satisfying to them; it was simply unbuttered bread that they simply couldn't contain in their mouths. Most of them may not have had the best of in-class education but they knew better than to let that bring them down. They didn't come from well to do families, but what has that got to do with being great? They asked themselves. They refused to be termed as "good" because they understood that "good stands in the way of greatness" they just had to shove "good" out of their way, be ridiculed as they missed the scores set by those called "good" severally just to emerge with greatness. They thought and dreamed great things and breathed life into their dreams. Their dreams may amaze us today even as we realize that they probably were considered AB-NORMAL, "above normal" is what I could call them.

Those are the masters of today's life and we are just benefiting from their greatness. Such have blessed us with Arts, automobiles, aircrafts, light bulbs, computers and cellular phones to mention just but a few. Google them up if you have to and while you are at it find out the master of Google and the god of Microsoft, check out the dreamer who dreamed the combined harvester just maybe you will find your place in the masters' gathering. Just maybe.

However, we ought to look deep into the masters' arts to figure out that by containing a child between four walls with just but enough ventilation to keep them

from falling asleep will not make these children realize their dreams. They ought to be taught to dream with their eyes wide open and in the open!

Today's children seem to have infinite knowledge at an early age, the children actually are more intelligent and perfectly so at an early age because they don't believe in impossibilities. To them, everything is possible. The amount of information that a ten year old child has at his disposal today is definitely more than that a ten years old child had ten years ago. Which leaves us with open wisdom that the way childhood education was handled ten years ago, should not be applied the same way today! Is that too much to ask? I am sure not.

It has come to a time when children as young as five can type on their computers, they own computers, and they search for information on the internet. Most of these children learn how to read before they turn five so watching their parents open the Google website and look up any kind of information is quickly copied into their memories and soon they google up their favourite cartoons characters and play online games. This I say from experience. I have watched my five year old daughter google up her favourite cartoon character, Sponge Bob Square Pants and play the games on their website! I wouldn't have done that at her age. Technology is here and behold even toddlers have embraced it. Who are we to restrict them?

THE FACE OF CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, AS IT SHOULD BE TODAY

Many parents have actually felt the pinch as they watch their children study the same material; follow the same forum they did when they were in primary school decades ago. A little may have changed; like the number of subjects taken, books have been revised and some schools have even changed the way children sat in class one behind the other into round tables suitable for discussions. This is just the tip of the iceberg. There is more than enough room for improvement.

Imagine this; imagine if the ordinary classroom study ran through the morning session, say 8am till 1pm allowing two breaks totaling up to 45 minutes. That would leave us with 255 minutes of between the four walls class work. Using this time for teaching children subjects like Arithmetic, Language depending on country of application, Social studies and Religion education and Science. The children then take a one hour break for lunch and time to socialize. As from 2pm till 4.30pm should be the time spent in developing creativity in every child. This time should be used for clubs. There is a whole variety to select from; what is needed here is creative planning in every learning institution. A few choices to pick up from would range from Chess- a game that challenges children to think quick, Scrabble, Domestic science in a practical approach, Theatre, Music not to mention the whole range of sports there is to choose from. Some sporting activities include golf, swimming,

netball, basketball, volleyball, cricket, softball, tennis and hockey. The range is so wide we are left without excuse as not to offer what the children require. Each one of these activities should be practiced and competitions amongst the children done regularly. Competitions encourage desire for excellence. The competitions should be held within the schools and against other institutions even to the international levels.

Instead of holding tuitions as it has become a common practice, every parent should identify the child's point of weakness and deal with that particular point and not as it is currently done, having the whole school miss out their holiday rest for more of the same norm of class work. The tuitions should not be restricted to the classroom subjects but also be spread to the sports and games through camps and clinics that are held during the holidays. During school holidays should be a time for active rest. At this time the parents may consider 2 hours for 3 days of each week as time for the child to go through training in their favourite sport or other advantageous activities. Some people have actually taken time to build up clubs that help children excel in specific sports and other activities. There are taekwondo classes normally held in major cities, football clubs, swimming clubs, music clubs and domestic science clubs most of which are held at the trainer's home. That is the way children's life ought to be.

Children who spend an active kind of rest during their holidays are more likely to perform better as their minds are totally refreshed. They will have escaped the monotony of academics. Such are likely to be able to realize their talents and polish them before their 18th birthday hence being able to earn a living out of their calling even before we honour them with identity cards.

We seem to forget that while technology is here with us and is growing at the speed close to that of light, we are not to be left behind clinging onto old methods; we just can't afford to miss this flight. The only thing that can save mankind from becoming a fossil at a tender age is creativity which by the way is not a constant. Why then should we lock up our children in tight boxes called classrooms and expect them to exist in this evolving world?

There is need for an Ultra-dimensional shift, what most of the people term as a paradigm shift. The way we think and the way we act on that which we are thinking about ought to change. The time is now that we realize that teenagers are not emotionally unstable human beings under the control of some alien hormones. They are simply people who hold in their minds great ideas seeking guidance from trusted hands to help them evolve such great ideas into great opportunities. Peter urges us ***"Each one, as a good manager of God's different gifts must use for the good of the others the special gift he has received from God"*** – 1 Peter 4:10 .Instead of shoving them aside as people who speak no sense and simply want their way, we ought to

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