

Joy! November 2003

– Education in focus

Hope for the next

generation- Martie du Plessis

As this is the last contribution to Joy! Magazine, I would like to take this opportunity to thank John and Helen Gardner, for the enormous support they have given educators in South-Africa over the years.

I had the privilege of being part of John and Helen's church for a few years and was blessed by their zeal for God and their passion to see His Word being spoken without compromise.

What you have read in Joy! over the years is a reflection of their radical hearts after God.

The magazine gave opportunity for a home education column for more than a year and subsequently a column for education in general. Through feedback received, I know that many lives were touched and hope was brought to countless people who felt helpless about education.

I started off with Dynamis ministry five years ago and travelled extensively throughout South-Africa giving information about different curricula to home educators. At present there are more than 25 000 home educating families in South-Africa.

As a result of the work of Dynamis, it became clear to me that the need for guidance and direction no longer lies just with the home educators but that there is

a widespread need for encouragement and guidance in education in South-Africa. I became aware of a feeling of hopelessness among educators and realised how many heads, teachers and parents are desperate for help, leadership and guidance.

Even dedicated and enthusiastic teachers have lost their passion for their work because they spend a large percentage of their time on administration and on managing the system rather than being actively involved with the children.

I hear many complaints about the different forms of abuse in schools (verbal, emotional, sexual or physical), about lack of discipline and about the high percentage of learning problems and illiteracy. In some schools 80 percent of children get labelled as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) children and many of them are found to be on Ritalin. Of late, many children are being labelled as schizophrenics, and so they are given subscriptions of heavy medication.

Most children come from broken homes where there is a lack of proper parenting or immorality. Schools are not a safe place any more- children do not get the individual attention they need nor can they cope with the type of educational methods they are presented with. For instance, not all pupils perform well in group work situations due to the amount of noise that is involved in this type of interaction.

One of the most painful realities for parents is not knowing whether their children will be suitably equipped for real life. Only 5 percent of matriculants will be sure to get work after school, only 20

percent of graduates will get a job in the corporate world and the rest will be either self-driven or unemployed.

Most children will change their jobs 20 times in their lifetime and so the emphasis should now be on developing internal qualities like perseverance, honesty and integrity rather than on external securities like money, work or skills development, so that people can create jobs when there are none.

If one looks at the summary below on the current South-African National Educational Policy it is questionable whether the outcomes will produce good fruit in our nation.

“Summary of submission on the Religion and Education Policy Document”

The Religion and Education policy document is unconstitutional and as such, should be scrapped.

There is sufficient legislation in place to protect individuals from “unfair” religious discrimination (although specific cases of religious discrimination are far and few between). This policy is therefore an unnecessary attempt to restrict religious freedom in the name of protecting against ‘religious discrimination.’

This policy is itself, discriminatory, particularly against citizens of South-Africa of a particular faith. Most monotheistic religions prohibit syncretism with other faiths. As such this policy is offensive and could have the unintended consequence of alienating much of the religious community in South-Africa, of which 75 percent are confessing Christian. It is also discriminatory in that although as yet it does not dictate the religious ethos, religious observances and religious

instruction of independent schools (it does for public schools), it nevertheless imposes its religion education on all schools – private, public and homeschool alike.

This policy is discriminatory against teachers as it limits their freedom to speak about their own faith. This policy is discriminatory against parents and faith or religious workers as it severely limits their access to schools. This policy should rather encourage the positive contributions that faith workers and men and woman of faith can contribute towards public life by seeking their participation in the life of the school, whether as chaplains to school, or in any other capacity.

This policy is divisive as it seeks to separate the institutions of the home and church from the school (or state). This will increase the tensions and differences between the values and traditions of the home and church against that of the school, thus hindering nation building. The age appropriateness of Religion Education is questioned and it is recommended that the scholars only learn about other faiths from grade 9 onwards. It is discrimination to allow the optional extra subject of Religious Studies from grade 10 onwards but simultaneously drop Biblical Studies from the curriculum. Such a move constitutes a marked bias and discrimination, especially in the light that 75 percent of South-Africans are confessing Christians.

The public process has been a farce. Despite innumerable submissions favouring a particular faith model, the document fails to acknowledge this or allow for it. As such it constitutes unfair discrimination against particular faiths.

Rob Mc Cafferty, United Christian Action, e-mail:uca@global.co.za

God spoke to me very clearly about the next

“God seems preoccupied with the generation. In His Word there are 1314 passages of Scripture that speak about parents and children.

Concerning a father’s relationship to his son, there are 2208 verses; and there are 1426 passages that have instructions to fathers. The portions of Scripture that deal with passing the torch from one generation to the next number 180. The Lord wants people who will live not just for themselves, but will pour into children. He is looking for Christians who will give themselves to equipping and preparing the next generation (Don Nori, 1999).”

It is a time like never before for each parent to stand before God in honesty and recommit themselves to the leadership of those entrusted to them. God established families as training places for children. “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6).”

Parents, you have a few brief years to pour into your children and to raise those whom God has given you so they can fulfil their destiny. Children have no real concept of the future; they can see ahead for only the next three hours or so. As

parents, you need to see a lot further than that on their behalf, you need to project a lifetime.

Our young people will be filled with rebellion and have no sense of purpose if we do not train them for holiness while they are young. If teenagers are confident about who they are they will have no need to succumb to the pressure to conform. A Christian in a secular high school can have a positive effect – not by preaching bible verses, but by simply shining. As a result of living the Christian life, our young people will set a higher standard to which others are challenged to conform.

Don Nori says: “Our purpose is to prepare and release our sons and daughters into the purposes of God, whatever the purpose might be. We want a generation of young people so filled up with God that they will do what He wants them to do. They will pass on their fire to the generations that will follow. Our children will go where we have been too religious to go. They will talk to people whom we are too afraid to talk to. Their journey with the Lord will far exceed our own.”