



By Martie du Plessis

Attack on *Home Educators*

During consultations with home educators I become more and more aware of the increase in students being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyper Disorder (ADHD). Teachers are finding themselves needing to work with learners for which they may be inadequately prepared. Many parents of children with these, sometimes incorrectly diagnosed, disorders are concerned with the education programming and readiness for the future available through the public school system, and as a result turning to home education as a viable alternative. Home education offer many possibilities where parents are free to consider flexible and individual options.

Parents choose home education because they know their children better than anyone else and know what kind of education is best for each unique child. The right of parents to choose the nature of education for their children is acknowledged by international, national and provincial legislation. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that, "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." The South African constitution states that, "A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child."

Home schooling (which is often referred to as home education) was illegal in the previous political dispensation, but since it was recognized in 1996 under the SA School Legislation, it has since grown exponentially. For almost 20 years, home education has been a legal education option in South Africa. Homeschooling and the homeschool community have experienced a notable revival around the world since the late 1970's. In the United States studies

show that there are between 1.7 and 2.3 million home educated children (Brian D. Ray (PHD) 2011, www.nheri.org).

"According to the results of the 2012 census, there are approximately 57000 home schooling students in South Africa. If all these learners were to be accommodated in schools, 130 schools would be required as well as 2000 teachers. Currently the government is saving approximately R700 million per year because they are not paying for the education of these children" (Leendert van Oostrum 2013, www.pestalozzi.org).

Homeschooling parents were recently shocked when the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) attempted to curb the freedom of parents to choose what is in the best interest of their children. On 11 February 2014 the WCED issued Draft 8 of a Proposed Policy On Home Education that unlawfully requires parents to use the state curriculum, register before 30 September of the year before they can start homeschooling, prohibiting home learners to come together in groups and a multitude other unreasonable requirements. In protest against this policy, many parents wrote letters to their DA councillors and the Pestalozzi Trust wrote a letter to the Western Cape minister of Education, Mr. Donald Grant. As a result the proposed policy was withdrawn on 14 February 2014. However, on 4 March 2014 the WCED published a notice in Western Cape newspapers prescribing similar unlawful requirements.

This double attack has made the homeschooling community aware of the fact that they must always be alert and vigilant in order to protect their rights. Failing this home education could easily be transformed into a public-

school-at-home model that will produce the same gloomy results as public schools (www.tuisskolers.org). Leendert van Oostrum, a legal specialist on home education states, "These instruments of law and policy are being used by fervent education officials to bully, threaten and persecute people who are trying to provide for the educational needs of many children."

While the Western Cape constitution acknowledges parental choice, the WCED publishes a notice that requires the curriculum used by homeschoolers to cover the content and skills of the NCS (National Curriculum Statement). Since the NCS is so detailed and prescriptive, this requirement will mean that the curriculum choice of parents will be reduced to less than a handful of South African curriculum suppliers who have based their curriculum on the NCS in the minutest detail. This will severely limit the parental freedom to choose a curriculum that is in the best interest of their child.

The notice also requires that parents register for home education before 30 September, in the year before starting. For example, if parents decide in January that homeschooling is in the interest of their child because of bullying at school, this requirement would mean that the child must be bullied for the rest of the year, so that the parents can request permission before 30 September to homeschool the following year. Such a requirement has nothing to do with the interests of the child, but only serves bureaucratic convenience, and could amount to a form of legalised child abuse.

Parents, who choose home education, do so in the best interest of their children, and they sometimes have to make significant sacrifices for this. Research on the performance of home learners indicates that these parents are doing a very good job. Parents performing this worthy task, for which they have sacrificed much, should not allow themselves to be robbed of this liberty.

Parents will lose the freedom to choose an education that is in the best interest of their children and children will lose their constitutional right to parental care if bullying tactics by government is allowed to prosper. The constitutional right to education is defined as "the right to develop every aspect of one's personality to its fullest extent." The supreme law in South Africa is the Constitution, and according to article 29(1) of the constitution, everybody in South Africa has the right to basic education. "This means that everybody has the right to decide whether they want basic education, where they want to receive this education and what the content of this education should be" (Bouw van der Eems, www.tuisskolers.org).

In 1 Kings 18:17 Elijah was considered a "troubler of Israel." If Christian parents are doing their job properly, they will at some time or another be seen as troublemakers. "It's inevitable, because you're identifying with a God who has a rebel world on his hands" (Terry Virgo, www.terryvirgo.org). Virgo further suggests not to deliberately make trouble by being obnoxious, but also not to live passively in an attempt to avoid righteous conflict. In order for salt to affect society, it has to be scattered where the action is - get involved and stand for righteousness! 

Dynamis empowers parents to take up their unique roles as God intended with the dads being the visionaries (spiritual leaders) of their household. The fullness of this influence in essence is not in what the parents say but who they are. Contact Dynamis for a presentation in your community.



Dynamis
Transforming People

A New Generation of families

Martie du Plessis

*Educational Consultant and
Remedial Therapist*

Cell: 082 57 4 14 33

Fax: 086 642 7743

**martcham@vodamail.co.za
www.dynamislearning.co.za**

**Specialised help to home
educating families**