

PRESS STATEMENT ON GNAT'S REACTION TO ASSAULTS ON TEACHERS

Ladies and Gentlemen: of the media, we have invited you once again to air our views on the spate of assaults being meted out to teachers by angry parents.

In February of 1992, a teacher, Sampson Bonsu, 28 of Sewum Anglican Primary School in the Brong Ahafo Region was brutally assaulted by angry relatives of a pupil who was disciplined by the teacher. The teacher later died as a result of the beatings he received.

In April 1994, a special investigative team set up by the Police Administration to investigate the alleged assault of a teacher (National Serviceman) at Kade by Police Chief Inspector M.K.Awuku ordered the immediate interdiction of the officer pending a service enquiry into his conduct.

Quite recently, one Mr. Abdallah Mohammed, a teacher of Our Lady of Fatima Primary School in Tamale was allegedly brutalized by “macho men” hired by parents of a pupil who was disciplined. The culprits have been convicted last Friday by a Tamale Circuit Court.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Ghanaian Times of May 18, 2005 reported that a teacher that a teacher of the Dormaas Primary School at Dormaa-Ahenkro, Mr. Francis Osei, escaped death by a hair's breadth when he was allegedly beaten into a state of coma by the parent of a pupil with the assistance of a “macho man” for attempting to cane the son, Kuffour Sarpong, a class four pupil who was said to have flung a stone into Mr. Osei's classroom while he was teaching. The catalogue of incidents of assault on teachers is endless.

Many teachers have fallen victim to attacks and other forms of intimidation from some misguided parents, sometimes without any justification. Yet in the very recent past, school used to be a very respectable and sacrosanct institution; suitable for nurturing both desirable character and acute intellect. There was the distinct realization that it needed the efforts of both home and school to produce the exemplary citizen. What gave rise to that sanctity of the school was a very simple rule of conduct.

The rule was that whatever happened at school was a school matter and must not be taken home. This simple rule restricted all incidents in the school within the confines of the school compound and in the competent hands of the staff.

Of course teachers love children- that is why they are working at the only place in the world where children abound (i.e. the school).

A teacher could be wrong in meting out punishment to pupil. But so also can parents or guardians be wrong in handling their own children at home. Where teachers mete out excessive punishment, they expose themselves not only to the code of professional conduct but also to the laws of the land.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the notion that a teacher is a tyrant and a bully anxious to brutalize other people's children is wrong and must be eradicated out of people's mind.

No parent or guardian or relative of any pupil particularly in a public school has the right to confront any teacher because of any assumed harm the teacher has caused. Such unacceptable forms of interference by parents in school affairs must be discouraged. Parents and relatives beating up teachers in these circumstances must be sanctioned severely because it is a crime against the state. If the teacher feels insecure he will naturally recoil. The teacher is a citizen of the land who has a right to be protected under the laws of the land. His employer organization will therefore leave no stone unturned to ensure that he gets redress.

It is unfortunate that aggrieved parents and relatives of pupils have taken the law into their own hands by humiliating teachers sometimes in the presence of their own students. This is bound to destroy morale or discipline among such students. Obviously there is the need for a closer co-operation between parents and teachers.

According to the 1966 UNESCO/ILO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers "every possible effort should be made to promote close cooperation between teachers and parents in the interest of the pupil; but teachers should be protected against unfair or unwarranted interference by parents in matters which are essentially the teacher's professional responsibility"

The provision also states, among other things, that parents having a complaint against a school or a teacher should be given the opportunity of discussing, in the first instance, with the school head or the teacher concerned.

Ladies and Gentlemen, teaching, like any other profession, is full of occupational hazards. That is why parents should exercise restraint when they feel their wards have been "maltreated" by their teachers.

But we want to reiterate that the untoward behaviour of parents particularly in the two most recent cases cited should be condemned in no uncertain terms and the culprits brought to book. Every effort must be made to create a peaceful atmosphere for teachers to discharge their duties without fear from any quarter.

It is our prayer that teachers would not be made targets of attack while discharging their legitimate duties and obligations.

Thank you.