

Why teaching life skills is essential in today's parenting

Recently, as I organised Continuing Professional Development sessions for our school. A recurring theme kept resurfacing — one that goes beyond lesson plans, examinations and academic targets. It forced me to ask an uncomfortable question: Are we educating children, or are we merely schooling them?

Many parents believe that once a child is enrolled in a good school, the work is done. We push our children to get degrees, secure good jobs and perhaps earn impressive titles. Success, in our definition, often wears a suit and carries a certificate. Yet, somewhere along the way, we forget to teach life skills.

CHARACTER VERSUS THEORIES

School teaches theories and formulas, but hardly teaches character. As Martin Luther King Jr. wisely observed: "Intelligence plus character

— that is the goal of true education."

So, when a young person chooses 'soft money' over honest labour, it is not always rebellion or stubbornness.

Often, it is a sign of lack of principles. We prepared them to pass exams — but not to stand firm when temptation comes their way. We taught achievement, but not endurance. Wealth without dignity is temporary. Borrowed comfort ends in regret.

DO NOT CURSE A CHILD

In moments of disappointment, some parents respond with silence, anger, or even disowning their children.

We must note that silence does not heal, and rejection does not restore. If you can still speak to your child as a father or mother, do it now. Teach what was missed. Guide, do not curse.

At the same time, we must acknowledge an important truth: a



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child's poor choices are not always proof of poor parenting.

Parents can love deeply, teach values faithfully and still watch their child choose a different path. At some point, free will takes over. Life, peers, personality and personal decisions

shape outcomes in ways no parent can fully control.

Good parenting does not guarantee perfect children. It means showing up, doing your best and continuing to love — even when the choices made are painful.

Some lessons are learned late, through experience and failure, not because parents failed, but because growth often requires trial and error.

We also live in an age where ambition collides with scarcity. Survival pressures can push people into choices that look like moral failure, but are, in reality, a sign of human desperation.

Judgment is easy; understanding is harder, but far better.

One parent recently shared how, in their home, holidays are marked by reading a book together as a family, whereby each child owns a copy.

They discuss chapters, lessons and values. One holiday it was *Rich Dad Poor Dad*; the next will be *Gifted*

Hands by Ben Carson.

Alongside school fees, seeds of wisdom are being planted.

Prayer after supper is non-negotiable.

Faith, reflection and conversation are part of daily life.

As James Baldwin reminds us: "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."

The Bible captures this responsibility succinctly: "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

This is a reminder to us all: paying fees and feeding our children are not our only duties.

Education without values is incomplete, and parenting does not end at graduation.

If we want children who succeed with integrity, we must raise them with intention — long after the report cards stop coming home.