**2008**

**14-16 Years**

**1st Place**

**Sindiwe Mvubu**

**16 years**

**The problems facing young people today can be traced back to the failure of parents to give their children what they need most: time, attention and love. Discuss.**

The problems faced by young people today are schools and the access to education. Schools alone hold many problems for children such as; the competition to do well in lessons, the pressure of receiving homework everyday, balancing life and social life, wanting to be accepted by other students, the pressure of peer groups and avoiding being bullied. Also being pulled into dangerous activities in the street such as gang culture, vandalising and stealing.

School is such a challenging environment, as children know that for them to be able to follow their choice of career they must get good grades. However, most children still want to enjoy time with their classmates and close friends something that is vital for socialisation. “School should be enjoyable” teachers and parents say, but once you approach year 9 you have SATs, Mocks and then your GCSE’s. The pressure is high and a lot of work is required. The stress of it could make children unhappy or even decide not to do some of the work. Children entering year 9 desperately need parental support. Children need their parents to be very supportive and regularly encourage them to try their hardest, and this encouragement should not just be received from the parents but extended family members too. Parents should issue their children discipline when it comes to coming home and doing homework they received in school and completing it on the same day. Time doesn’t wait for anyone and avoiding doing work just ends up becoming stressful as you try to cram it up at the last minute.

So how does this link to the parents? “New Right Thinkers“, a group of people who have views similar to sociologists but have tended to be journalists and politicians, see the problems with youth today as a result of the increase of the following: lone parent families, fatherless families, divorce rates, cohabitation and gay and lesbian couples. New Right thinkers believe the consequences of having these changes in families can result in young people underachieving at school and behaving in anti social ways ranging from rudeness to crime.

The problems young people face is because there is not enough time, attention and love in the families. When the things listed above are not ensured in the family home you see children going below their targets and losing their sense of mind that school is important.

Once children find that they don’t need school, children begin to truant and spend their time on streets and not in school. What children find on the streets isn’t child friendly, you hear about gangs starting up, children smoking. They ask adults to buy the cigarettes for them and some adults do, this may even go as far to finding drugs and starting an addiction and possibly even stealing to feed the addiction. Parents focus so much time and energy on working hard and earning money for the welfare of their children and also material things like buying a house, buying a car, going on holiday, that they don’t spend time with their children to find out how everything at school is going. Parents don’t have time in the evenings since they’ve come home late and are stressed out at their day at work. Children just need this quality time so that they can open up and let their worries be known to their parents. Instead the time is lost. Pugh 2002 (sociologist) suggests that parental spending on children is ‘consumption as compensation’. This means parents that are ‘cash rich but time poor’ release their guilt about what is lacking in their child’s life by giving them material things. Parents believe as long as their children have the latest technology and clothes they will be satisfied. Parents give their children what they demand but don’t look at what they need which is time, love and attention. Charles Murray (Functionalist Sociologist) says young children growing up without fathers lack a male role model in the home, they lose out on learning the discipline of respect and respect for work. This is the sort of care they need from fathers.

Divorce affects children in many ways. Some may find it traumatic, some may be able to deal with it. It’s when a situation like this happens that children then lose their consistency in daily habits in the home and for a period of time, love attention and time lacks. The attention from both parents will then be decreased and if they are in a situation where they have other siblings the one parent can only issue out enough attention to all children which could make children feel like they aren’t wanted. Children then go through depression which could alter their mood swings and lead them to do unsociable things.

However, the problems children face today aren’t just because of the lack of attention, time and love but because parents simply can't discipline their children. In contemporary Britain we see that children have more rights than they used to. The Children Act 1989 gave children greater legal status and rights. Children cannot be harmed or hurt and have the drastic option to divorce their parents. Although the act is good in protecting children from harm it has in some ways taken away the right for parents to discipline their children as they see fit.

However although we can say parents are to blame for the lack of time, attention and love we cannot ignore the impact of the commercial world that we live in. Most parents feel that they have to work in order to provide for their families. In most cases companies want to make as much profit as possible, even charities want to get the most out of their employees with the least input. This forces most people to work harder and harder and fall into the rat race.

I myself have experienced times in my life where I felt I had lacked attention time and love. The times I’ve felt this way is because of my parents not just having me but two of my brothers who are younger than me. I have found I should just accept that I have younger siblings who need time attention and love slightly more than I do and try to understand how the difficulty my parents go through day to day to offer us time, attention and love.