

Endeavour

Commitment or Consumerism – A life and death struggle

Presenter

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Challenges

- The Why
- Consumerism
- Community
- Community Building or Community Entertainment
- Consumerism in Education
- Consumerism or Commitment
- Traditional and Contemporary Families
- Implications for and Interactions with the School

“It is one of the greatest privileges of life when families entrust their precious children into our care, for us to share in the joy and responsibility of helping raise and teach them in the nurture of the Lord.”

Infants Teacher

Consumerism

Consumerism is the equation of personal happiness with consumption and the purchase of material possessions (Wikipedia)

In Bernard Mandeville's "*Fable of the Bees*" 1714, he argued that a country's prosperity ultimately lay in the self-interest of the consumer.

And we have swallowed it whole!

Community

Wikipedia: The sharing of –

Intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs, and risks

A group of people who reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage

Joint possession, enjoyment, liability, etc: *community of property*.

Similar character, agreement

There are aspects of Christian fellowship that we desire in our school communities. This of course is not taking the communion interpretation but a desire for unity of purpose and commitment.

Community Building or Community Entertainment

- Service
- Demonstrative
- Challenging
- Beneficial
- Intellectually stimulating
- Uses people's gifts
- Learning experience
- Relevant
- Encourages action

And all fun !!!!

Community Building or

Community Entertainment

- Requires nothing back
- Event focused
- One way interaction
- Overly disconnected from core business
- Child centred
- Disproportionate amount of staff hours needed to conduct events
- An ongoing inability to predict numbers of attendees

Consumerism in Education

- Families can expect certain results based on their expenditure of time and money
- Buying a service gives rights of control over individuals and organizations
- Their children's attendance at a particular school will impart certain social status on the children and the family

Consumerism in Education

- When certain criteria aren't met, the withdrawal of students is an early option so the desired result can be obtained elsewhere
- The child's approval and happiness is a highly determining factor in enrolment and retention
- Quote from a Community Health Audit – “My daughter is happy with the school. I have had ‘creative indifferences’ with the management at times. Her overall happiness is my greatest concern. When she feels that she does not want this ‘gig’ anymore, then we will reassess our situation”.

Consumerism or Commitment

The outworking of Consumerism

- Children dictate what they want
- Market conscious
- Rules should be flexible around their child
- Impatient and intolerant of delays
- Expect instant solutions
- Money equals results
- If you don't provide it someone else will

Consumerism or Commitment

- Committed to the school beyond the needs of their own child
- Supportive of the teacher's and involved in community
- Take the parent educator role seriously
- It's about raising a child not buying a product
- Financial commitment beyond the fees
- Bringing others into a partnership

Traditional and Contemporary Families

Millennium or Contemporary families –

Where the first child started school from 2000 onwards

Traditional families –

Children started earlier than 2000

Of course this is not an absolute picture of family attitudes

The Traditional Parent

Characteristics

- Nuclear family
- Accepting and supporting of authority
- Committed and involved
- Supports school discipline
- Mother involved in daily school activities, father and mother attend special events
- Mother in contact with other mothers and teachers
- Family life is worked around school life

The Traditional Parent

Characteristics

- Teachers are viewed as professionals and held in high regard
- Mother brings children to school
- Mother reads all literature from school
- Cooperates closely with the school
- Follows school calendars
- Sees the school as worthy of time and financial support
- Narrower church base

The Contemporary Parent

Characteristics

- Dual income
- Single and blended families
- Question authority
- Consumers
- Smaller families
- Multicultural
- Children dictate what they want
- Individualistic, independent, well-informed and involved in areas of personal interest

The Contemporary Parent

Characteristics

- Market conscious
- Scarcities of time, attention, trust and loyalty
- Short attention span with subject not immediately relevant to them
- Images rather than words capture attention
- Have high stress levels and suffer from the time crunch
- Impatient and intolerant of delays
- Expect instant solutions
- Expect value for money

Implications for and Interactions with the School

- Less parents volunteer
- Christian culture is much less traditional
- Do not attend evening meetings
- Can't be counted on to read notes that are sent home – rather phone reception for details
- Expect the school to assume more of a parenting/ disciplinary role
- More academic expectations
- Willing to pay, not to give

Implications for and Interactions with the School

- Drives up the cost of education
- Gifts of time, money and resources are directly related to benefits received
- Query disciplinary decisions
- Less likely to encourage children to uphold school rules
- Indulgent with their children (child easily persuades parent to write a note to get out of assignment)
- Want instant gratification, and not willing to work through issues if there is a problem

Implications for and Interactions with the School

- Want help with after school care and holiday care
- Less direct contact with teachers
- Less contact with other parents
- Prefer to absorb word of mouth or talk to teacher rather than read literature
- Learn most about the school through their children
- Are critical of staff
- Are not loyal to the school

Implications for and Interactions with the School

- Confrontational – prefer to go straight to the top rather than through regular channels
- Allow the child to have more say in big decisions, for example changing schools
- Protected children
- Quality education is a given – value added extras are expected

It is important to understand that not all parents will interact with the school in these ways, but the mix is changing and there are implications to the school because of changing parent attitudes.

Holding and Growing Community

We can't expect families to embrace, own and support community if the vision we have is one of encouraging consumerism.

We need, must and should have a vision for who and what we can be beyond the achievement of marks.

Our school communities have feet in both consumerism and commitment. How they move forward will depend on your understanding of and vision for Christian education and how you can inspire them into life long commitment, or settle for entertainment based consumerism.