



what does parent control mean?

by Ken Dickens

It is obvious that 'parent control' implies a certain kind of school governance. The rationale and the outworking of this model, however, are not always so obvious. 'Parent control' is not about parents' rights but about taking seriously the responsibility that the Bible gives to parents in educating their children.

The emphasis is on responsibility rather than the negative connotation of control. In our schools, this responsibility is exercised, in community, through association membership and through an elected board. Parents recognise the gifting, training, and experience of teachers and they honour their office. Teachers seek to work in partnership with parents, whom they acknowledge as the principal educators of their children and whose office they honour. These relationships and roles take place within a community where submission to God and His word is affirmed.

All schools are parent controlled to some extent. It is exercised in different ways from car park discussions and subtle expectations to voting with one's feet. The distinguishing mark between schools is how 'parent control' is controlled! In our schools, it is done openly through association membership that is dependent on commitment to a biblical vision for life and schooling. It is not individual parents who control the school but a vision driven community. Professing Christian parents are invited into this 'covenant' community to partner with teachers in pursuing a gospel vision of life and learning. Teachers are conscious that they work with, and for, parents in this community to bring the children up, in the instruction and training of the Lord (Eph 6:2). This work is carried out in the context of formal schooling. Whether formal schooling is the best context to do this is a question that needs to be regularly addressed. However, many people concede that regardless

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of whether it is the best context, it is the one our culture prescribes and we might as well use it. But asking the question helps us see the deeply entrenched cultural constraints that we have inherited when we choose to take part in the system of formal schooling. By themselves, teachers are not the best people to critique these cultural constraints because they are so much part of the schooling culture. One of the great aspects of parent control is that parents can be part of the cultural critique from a different perspective. Teachers and parents together can work at creating a learning community that may not be so captive to the often unexamined cultural givens of western schooling or even Christian schooling. 🐦