

Critical thinkingpsychology



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The article was written by distinguished veteran journalist, Clare Forrester. Ms Forrester received an award in 2006 from the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) for effective leadership and was praised in the citation for the Award as being an effective journalist. The article was published in The Daily Gleaner on September 22, 2010 and is titled “ Is the Milk of Human Kindness Drying Up at St. George’s College?”

Although the title is limited to St. George’s College, the purpose of the article is to bring across the writer’s opinion that church- based schools in general are autocratic, draconian and unsympathetic in their approach to governance of schools operated by them. It is her opinion that greater scrutiny of church-based schools is desperately needed.

The writer bases her conclusion on two recent cases. The first, being the appointment of a principal in a church-controlled school. She believes the main criteria of the selection process to have been the individual’s church affiliation as opposed to who is the best person for the job. The second example was that of St. George’s College where a number of students were recently expelled without regard for their legal rights, including the right to a fair hearing. In one case, this was followed with the refusal of the principal, Ms. Margaret Campbell, to discuss the matter with the child’s family members. The writer pleads for greater public scrutiny of church-controlled so as to ensure that the children’s rights are not breached.

Are church-controlled schools being governed properly?

The article is well-organised and the writer's style effective. The title draws the readers' attention: is care and compassion at St. George's College a thing of the past?

The first statement is bold and immediately gets the readers thinking. The author then suggests that the selection of principals and teachers in church-controlled schools is based on his/hers church affiliation. The average reader would view that process as being flawed.

There is even a bigger concern namely, the domineering approach on the part of those in control. Having started by stating that the governance is autocratic and that this is ' unchecked', the Ministry of Education is then painted as being helpless. This further draws readers to her point-of-view that the governance of these schools are virtual bullies.

The readers are now told of the principal's at St. George's College actions of quick expulsion. Those who might consider the actions as being necessary because of the breakdown in discipline are made to sympathise with the students as quite often they are hampered because of they face great difficulties including financial hardship. She cements her point by giving a personal experience. The style here is also effective. She writes of a young child who was at one stage doing well.

After poor grades and deteriorating behavior, intervention was sought from a well known psychologist who suggested that the child could be saved. This is followed quickly by the draconian and uncaring approach of the principal. The average reader cannot help being sympathetic. Sympathy, she states, was received from the Ministry of Education. Perhaps so as not to alienate

those who value church controlled school she acknowledges their contribution to the system. Her article has an appeal to a wide cross-section of readers.

Her technique is that of subtle yet powerful and convincing words and phrases. For example, Ms. Campbell is described as being a “ powerfully connected Catholic” and her principalship, as her “ regime.” The child’s story is described as “ the plight of one such boy” and he was “ definitely not irredeemable” but “ alas such a view was not shared by the principal.” The school is described as “ the mighty Roman Catholic Institution” who is “ hell-bent.” The child is then described as the “ young soul.”

Though well written, the conclusion is not founded as it is based on generalization. There are scores of church-based schools and St. George’s College is just a single example. In order to support her conclusion, more examples ought to have been provided. Her comments were not limited to St. George’s College as titled and to go one to make the generalizations as she did (which was the clear objective of the article having regard to the opening paragraphs and the last) is unwarranted.