Integrating the Gap Between Faith Education and Christian Learning in the Indonesian Context with a Christian Worldview

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ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, there is a striking contrast between faith education and Christian learning, which raises major questions regarding integration. Faith education is often associated with worship and character formation in the church, while schools are expected to strengthen Christian values. Understanding Christianity in the concept of worldview is very important, stressing the Christian's responsibility to live in the world, not of the world. This research used qualitative methods, including surveys and thematic analysis, which produced three main findings. First, faith education is usually carried out in religious schools, in line with specific religious doctrines, whereas Christian learning involves systematic exposure to Christian teachings. Second, religious education in Indonesia aims to overcome inter-religious disorders, while Christian education seeks to understand God's will. Research puts forward the concept of a universal worldview as a means of bridging this gap. Three proposed approaches are Teaching for commitment, Teaching for commitment Teaching about commitment, and Teaching from commitment.

Keywords: Christian Education; Romans 12; Christian Worldview; Indonesian Christianity

INTRODUCTION

This study looks at the gaps that have not been connected holistically between the relationship between faith education in churches and schools. Where does the estuary meet the two in a believer, especially students at an important age for forming their faith? Smith (2019, p. 22), explained the importance of integrating Christian education, faith, and experience into the learning process. He views the Church as a place where people participate in worship and learn together, while schools should strengthen Christian values and build student character. National education, part of the implementation of Pancasila, should encourage the creation of a holistic relationship between Christian education in the Church and schools. Andar Ismail stated, as quoted by Betakore (2021, p. 3980) that

> Christian religious education can only be said to fulfill good didactic principles when Christian religious education teaches the Christian faith quickly and accurately, and students can understand and respond to it (in the sense of practicing it). If Christian religious education does not make students grow through a good process of spiritual formation, then the education is said to be non-didactical.

Ismail's view criticizes Christian religious education in churches and schools that has not been appropriately and truly integrated. He saw that the results of spiritual formation manifested in everyday life were not yet visible.

In connection with the discussion described, a Christian needs to understand that the role of Christian education is crucial in shaping a person's worldview (Anderson et al., 2017). As Christians, they are called to live in this world, but not of this world (John 17:16). The meaning of this verse shows our responsibility as Christians to function correctly according to God's plan. This is in conjunction with the teachings of Romans 12:2. In this Scripture, apostle Paul tells Christians not to let the world's ideals and ways of doing things affect how they think and behave. Rather, he tells them to let God's truth refresh their thoughts so that they might know and do what God wants them to do. The world of education contains a philosophy of human life. This is a reality that is happening now. The result is that the understanding of education is mostly about information. More so, the end of Christian education has been seen as the mere dissemination and communication of Christian ideas rather than a process for forming one's worldview (Smith, 2009, p. 34). Christian education today needs to consider and provide a correct perspective on the world so that we can live according to God's will and positively contribute to society. This can be achieved by viewing Christian education in schools and churches as a holistic Christian insight, not separate ones that create gaps.

Moreover, different scholars have exemplified the concept of Christian worldview in different ways. The Christian worldview refers to the lens through which individuals see and interpret many aspects of life, based on their preexisting beliefs and presuppositions (Ryken, 2006, pp. 23–37). A worldview is not merely a vision of life; it

is also a vision for life. Indeed, a vision of life, or worldview, that does not lead a person or a people into a particular way of life, is not a worldview at all. Our worldview determines our values. It helps us interpret the world around us. It distinguishes what is important from what is not. Therefore, a worldview provides a model of the world which guides its adherents in their way of life (Walsh & Middelton, 2020, pp. 20–23). Meanwhile, for Christian faculty in higher education institutions, a Christian worldview is particularly crucial, as all educational endeavours impart values and ideas to students, thereby influencing their behaviour. This perspective is essential because it shapes the moral and ethical framework within which students operate (Esqueda, 2014). These perspectives underscore the significance of a Christian worldview as a guiding framework for interpreting life and shaping values. A genuine worldview must not only reflect a vision of life but also actively influence the way individuals live and interact with the world. In the context of Christian education in Indonesia, this integration of faith and learning helps cultivate a generation of students who uphold Christian values in their personal and professional lives.

Christians navigate the complex dynamics that arise from the convergence of biblical narratives and cultural narratives, examining the significant ramifications in several spheres of society, including education, academic, economic systems, political structures, and religious institutions. Smith identifies the contemporary challenge confronting theological education by examining the extensive historical context of religion in the United States, spanning from the establishment of religious orders during the colonial era to the emergence of voluntary organizations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (T. A. Smith, 2023, p. 37). The author subsequently establishes a connection between present-day difficulties and transformations occurring within modern society, such as the decline in religious adherence, the increasing emphasis on individualism, the growing pursuit of authenticity, and the disintegration of traditional professions. Central to this discussion is the concept of the Creator God, who is inherently intertwined with the God who offers salvation through Jesus Christ by means of the Holy Spirit.

The concept of the Creator God is inherently intertwined with the God who offers salvation through Jesus Christ by means of the Holy Spirit. The concept of a divine being is often attributed to the ultimate origin of all phenomena. The world has been created by God by a deliberate exercise of His will (Arnold, 2010, p. 24). The Christian perspective asserts that God is the supreme and omnipotent Ruler over all aspects of reality. This statement refutes the concept of dualism and argues against the eternal existence of matter, as well as the notion that matter is inherently bad, due to its fundamental opposition to God, who is considered the ultimate source of goodness (Schreiner, 2018, p. 34).

The Christian worldview maintains that God is distinct from and surpasses His creation (Linhart, 2016). Furthermore, it asserts that the concept of God encompasses a purposeful deity who exercises creative agency unrestrained by external influences (Maccullough, 2008). Through the act of creation and the subsequent supply and preservation of creation, God is actively fulfilling His ultimate intentions for both people and the planet (Moo, 2018, pp. 11–23). Human existence has inherent value, profound significance, cognitive prowess, and a sense of purpose. This statement confirms the fundamental coherence and comprehensibility of the cosmos. In this context, the manifestation of God's magnificence, benevolence, and sagacity is evident. This article attempts to answer the question of how the integration of Christian education in churches and schools effectively bridges meetings in the formation of faith among believers based on the concept of a Christian worldview?

METHOD

The chosen method of research uses socio-rhetorical analysis. This method involves examining texts through the lens of social and cultural contexts, rhetoric, and ideological perspectives. By employing this approach, we will analyze how the opportunities for worldview concepts for faith education in the church and Christian learning in schools are integrated so that they become harmonious in Christian education in Indonesia. This analysis will uncover the underlying values, beliefs, and rhetorical strategies that shape the integration of a Christian worldview in these institutions. The aim is to bridge the gap between faith and learning by identifying and addressing the socio-cultural and rhetorical dynamics that influence this integration. At the same time, the research methodology includes several stages, the first of which includes the direct search of data. Articles, studies, and books were found using keyword searches in such data repositories as Scopus, PubMed, Eric, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR. Initially, the collected materials were carefully selected by assessing the relevance of the research to the topic and the authority of the source and author.

Generally this study used a qualitative research methodology to examine the gaps that exist between faith learning and Christian education, as well as explore potential strategies for their integration. Qualitative research is a methodological approach that involves a naturalistic inquiry aimed at obtaining a comprehensive understanding of social occurrences as they occur in their actual context (Virginia Braun Victoria Clarke & McEvoy, 2021). Integrating the teachings of faith in the Bible, one model that is important to consider is the Integrated Core, where in this model, the teacher will always start from the core concept of the Christian worldview to students, then pay attention to every available material by combining it in correlation with the teachings of the Bible. After that, students are encouraged to be able to reflect this knowledge in their lives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Challenge of Integration

Theologians have long maintained that worldview is a deeply religious concept, a pre-theoretical background or perspective to our thinking and actions that directs our lives (Naugle, 2010, p. 3). Particularly in education, people need to understand that realizing a worldview is at the core of one's beliefs; this ensures that Christianity offers an education that is faithful to God's call to celebrate Christ's lordship over all creation. For Christians, their worldview must be biblically grounded because, paradoxically, not only does the Bible shape one's worldview, but one's worldview also shapes one's hermeneutics (the way we read and interpret the Bible). Therefore, Christians need to continually subject their conscious and unconscious patterns of existence to the penetrating gaze of Scripture (Edlin, 2008, p. 2). The Church and school Christian education curriculum must be one unit that is integrated in harmony with each other. However, it is unfortunate that this has not yet been achieved optimally in the Indonesian context. Each institution has a different point of view and is even incompatible with each other.

Carrying out integration in order to bridge unconnected gaps requires comprehensive thinking. Several educational experts in the West, such as Bryan Smith, an expert on Christian education, offer an integrative model for Christian educators in several steps, namely: Relegating the Bible, responding with the Bible, rebuilding with the Bible, rebuilding the discipline (B. Smith, 2012, p. 5). In short, Smith encourages every Christian educator in schools to be able to relate as many themes and Bible verses as possible to the subject matter. Until the final step, each student realizes the purpose of their life as a sinner who has been sanctified to live obediently to God's truth. The model offered by Smith is something that can ideally be done in Christian schools so that with the existing curriculum, each teacher adds strong spiritual competence, not just transferring knowledge.

Existing methods in Indonesia Christian education so far have not been able to help teachers realize the importance of understanding worldview as a direction in determining an integrated curriculum. This situation causes a polarization between Christian Education in schools and Christian Education in churches, creating a separation that influences the mindset of Christians in Indonesia, particularly between teachers and pastors. This divide has widespread implications for two institutions that are fundamentally interconnected (Hattu, 2019, pp. 29–34). Lauterboom asserts that current educational practices, which he considers to be restrictive and oppressive—dominated by Christian Religious Education—are manifested in three primary aspects: the utilization of the Bible as the source and content for Christian religious education, the dynamics between pastors and congregations or teachers and students, and the pedagogical methods

employed (Lauterboom, 2019, p. 99). In the recent time, a typical approach might involve separate religious studies courses without connecting these teachings to broader academic subjects like science, literature, or social studies. This lack of integration results in a fragmented educational experience where students learn Christian values in isolation rather than seeing how these values can inform and enrich all areas of knowledge and life. As Herman Bavinck (2019) emphasized, worldview is not a patriotism or weak theory to separate public intellectuals into neat compartments. Rather, it is a principle and posture of control that was first discovered when religion came face to face with science and wisdom, bringing them together into one whole. Paying attention to this understanding, worldview is a concept that sees the value of biblical truth as a unit that must be taught as a whole, well and systematically.

Fragmentation and Polarization in Indonesian Christian Education

In the context of faith education, faith schools are mainly used to promote education. The schools are educational institutions that adhere to the national curriculum while maintaining affiliations with certain faiths or religious organizations. In the year 2022, Indonesia was home to a total of 128 functioning state universities that maintained religious affiliations. In the same year, the nation hosted a total of 2982 operational private universities that maintained religious affiliations (Team BPS, 2022). The phenomenon of fragmentation and even polarization within Christian education in Indonesia manifests in various forms. As illustrated by several examples in the introduction, there is a general lack of awareness and effort to correlate what is practiced in one context of Christian education with another. This is a common occurrence, reflecting the broader issue of disconnected approaches within the field (Harjanto, 2019, p. 50). The reasons for this phenomenon remain ambiguous; nevertheless, some ideas posit that it may be attributed to the implementation of strict laws, the active involvement of parents, or a multitude of other contributing elements. Individuals in this particular group have a propensity for achieving elevated results on standardized assessments as well as attaining very high ratings from the public in comparison to the national average. Certain parents hold the belief that exposing children to a continual environment of faith will foster a more profound and unwavering connection to their religious beliefs.

Students are often discouraged from asking deep questions, these questions are essential. Encountering challenging questions can lead students to doubt their foundational beliefs, but for those with a living faith, the study of theology becomes an exhilarating and transformative experience. Academic theology, when approached existentially, goes beyond intellectual exercises, addressing the profound questions of life and meaning, and engaging students on a deeply personal level (Dunn, 2002, p. 111). Many families find it crucial that educational institutions provide a combination of daily services, designated prayer duration, and other experiential activities alongside their

academic programs. Moreover, engagement in such activities often fosters a strong communal atmosphere inside educational institutions, whereby all individuals actively participate, establishing a fundamental basis for cultivating friendships (Hemming, 2018, p. 808). The influence of this feeling of community extends beyond children and often includes parental involvement as well. Parents bear final responsibility before God for how their children are trained for life (Jones, 2019, p. 295). Educational institutions have the potential to be affiliated with a house of worship, whereby they may conduct regular religious services, particularly around holidays or other notable occasions. Many parents frequently discover that living within a community, including others who share the same religious beliefs, offers valuable opportunities to establish social connections and friendships. Additionally, such communal environments facilitate the process of nurturing their child's comprehension and engagement with their faith. This approach aligns with the concept of a Christian worldview, which emphasizes the integration of faith into all aspects of life, including education. By adopting Informal Education, Christian educators aim to nurture children's spiritual, moral, and intellectual development holistically. This method seeks to create a cohesive educational experience that reflects Christian values and teachings (Yang, 2018).

On the other hand, Christian education refers to the systematic approach through which individuals are exposed to and influenced by the teachings of the Christian gospel (Cooling, 2021, pp. 37–56). This systematic approach is rooted in a Christian worldview, which seeks to integrate faith and learning by emphasizing biblical principles across all subjects. It aims to develop individuals who not only possess academic knowledge but also embody Christian values and a deep understanding of their faith (MacCullough, 2013, p. 16). It pertains to historical aspects as it endeavors to acquaint Indonesians with their religious lineage. However, this is unlikely to occur because teachers or pastors adopt the missionary style in conducting education, particularly in the use of the Bible, their relationship with students or congregants, and in the methods and content of the education itself (Lauterboom, 2019). Additionally, it encompasses contemporary elements as it strives to establish religion as a dynamic influence in all aspects of life. Furthermore, it encompasses future considerations as it fosters innovative experiences that contribute to personal development in terms of wisdom, maturity, and positive relationships with both the divine and fellow human beings.

Moreover, the field of Christian education in Indonesia has experienced significant development since its presence, which can be traced back to the VOC colonial era (Lauterboom, 2019). There have been many dynamics due to various factors, which have contributed to widening the gap between Christian education in the school and the Church. Christian education can be considered a branch of practical theology that focuses on the interaction between traditional theological studies and the processes of teaching and learning. Fundamental educational questions lead to key areas that reflect the

perspectives on human nature held by Christian educators (Cram, 1992, p. 335). This approach is closely linked to the concept of a Christian worldview, which integrates theological principles with educational practices to provide a holistic understanding of faith and knowledge. Consequently, Faith education and Christian learning are integral to developing individuals who are both knowledgeable and spiritually mature. Through faith education, individuals are taught the principles and practices of their faith tradition, fostering a deep understanding and commitment to its beliefs and values. Christian learning, on the other hand, integrates these religious teachings with a broader educational framework, promoting a holistic approach to intellectual and spiritual development. Together, they ensure that learners are equipped to apply their faith in all aspects of life, embodying the principles of a Christian worldview.

The Role of Faith-Based Education in Promoting Harmony and Understanding

The primary objective of a faith-based educational institution is to provide education in conventional academic disciplines while emphasizing and incorporating religious principles and values (Parker, 2014). The desire for religious parents to instill in their children a comprehensive understanding and deep affection for their faith, seeing its presence in all aspects of life, is often seen as a significant concern. Educators adhere to the national curriculum but sometimes tend to endorse their religious beliefs and corresponding perspectives. In Indonesia, the implementation of faith-based and religious education serves as a means to address inter-religious disputes. The primary objective of a faith-based educational institution is to provide instruction in conventional academic disciplines while incorporating and emphasizing religious principles and values (Hattu, 2019). In Indonesia, the implementation of faith-based and religious education serves as a means to address inter-religious disputes. The alignment of religion with government services and schools suggests that such a course of action is suitable within the Indonesian setting (Posumah-Santosa, 1998, p. 159). The majority of the Indonesian population, over 90%, adheres to Islam (Strong, 2007). A significant portion of approximately 9% identifies as Christians, while the remaining individuals practice Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. It is important to note that Indonesia does not classify itself as an Islamic state that only recognizes its predominant religion. According to Parker [2014], Indonesia may be characterized as a religious state that embraces all officially recognized faiths, including Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Kong Hucu. Parker contends that Indonesia does not fit neatly into the categories of an Islamic state or a secular state. In this context, it is essential to provide education on Pancasila to the populace of Indonesia, as it facilitates comprehension of the state's philosophy that promotes the inclusive embrace of six distinct faiths without granting preferential treatment to any one religion.

The assertions made by Parker are substantiated by the biblical text found in Romans 12:18. The passage Romans 12:18 acknowledges the limited extent of human control over external circumstances, emphasizing the need to pursue peace actively (Ruggerio, 2020). An example of this is the inability to maintain control over another individual's anger or hostility while retaining the capacity to exercise self-control. Through the regulation of people's language, behavior, and demeanor, human beings can foster an atmosphere of harmony rather than conflict (Auga & Schirr, 2014). As individuals who adhere to a particular faith, it is essential to refrain from inciting conflict or engaging in violence consciously. During times of emotional distress, individuals may feel inclined to incite a group or respond impulsively. Alternatively, it is advisable to prioritize the pursuit of peaceful resolutions in instances of dispute. It is advised not to retaliate with harm when faced with harm from others. It is essential to use caution in adhering to actions that are seen as morally correct by all individuals. The passage from Romans 12:17-19 advises against seeking vengeance and instead encourages individuals to allow for divine retribution. Hence, it is not within the purview of Indonesians to seek retribution. Individuals need to place their confidence in God for the purpose of discerning and retributing injustices (Kim, 2004). When individuals have the temptation to inflict harm upon others in response to being injured, they should refrain from such actions and instead relinquish their emotional pain to a higher power.

In contrast, Christian education is pursued within the framework of the Christian worldview, which is centered on comprehending the divine intentions of God as revealed in the Bible (Andrean & Ming, 2020). As individuals engage in the process of teaching or learning the Scripture, they acquire a deeper comprehension of God's attributes and develop an enhanced capacity to discern His will. As indicated in Romans 12:2, individuals are advised against conforming to world patterns and instead encouraged to undergo a transformative process through renewing their cognitive faculties. Subsequently, one will possess the capacity to examine and validate the intentions of the divine being, discerning its inherently positive, agreeable, and flawless nature. Hence, through means of Christian education, people acquire the understanding that they fulfill God's intentions by aligning their thinking with those of God, as opposed to conforming to world patterns (Altman, 2020, p. 304). The global societal context constantly imposes influence on individuals, urging them to choose a lifestyle characterized by immoral and self-centered actions. However, adhering to a virtuous life that aligns with God's will requires a transformative shift in behavior, which may be achieved via the alteration of one's cognitive processes (Boaheng, 2023). When individuals in Indonesia undergo a cognitive transformation, they demonstrate the manifestation of God's will, characterized by its inherent goodness, acceptability, and perfection. Individuals can see and comprehend the manner in which God intends for them to lead their lives (Salurante et al., 2021). To close the second gap, churches and schools in Indonesia should work

toward the same goals for Christian learning and religious education. That is why it is important to teach both the will of God and intellectual subjects.

Approaches to Bridge the Gap

The primary purpose of Christian education is to glorify God by making students disciples of Christ (Yang, 2018). Given the historical association of religious education with indoctrination, academics face the challenge of determining the best approach to impart religious teachings to children without coercive influence. This research outlines three approaches by which teachers and parents can impart religious education, as discussed below:

Teaching for Commitment

Children are effectively nurtured within the religious customs and beliefs upheld by their parents, as guided by biblical teachings (Prov. 22:6). Evangelical theology emphasizes the importance of grounding children in their faith, ensuring they understand and adhere to the big picture of biblical principles. Additionally, individuals are taught in a manner that exposes them to a range of perspectives, fostering respect and understanding for others while remaining steadfast in their own beliefs (1 Pet. 3:15). Christians who view life through a biblical worldview perceive learning uniquely. Instead of seeing education as separate from faith, they believe that all knowledge falls under God's sovereignty and should be studied with this perspective. This approach aligns to integrate faith education and Christian learning in the Indonesian context, emphasizing that true education encompasses both spiritual and academic growth within a Christian framework (Corey, 2019, p. 305). This research found that within the context of contemporary religious diversity, it is essential to establish educational institutions that align with the specific religious affiliations held by parents within a given community, ensuring a biblically grounded education. The argument posits a perspective that aligns with religious beliefs while promoting acceptance and critical assessment of other religions. The educational process acknowledges the whole development of individuals, including their familial and communal contexts.

Teaching about Commitment

The primary focus of this strategy is to ensure that children receive a balanced religious education without coercion. Instead of solely focusing on cognitive processes and knowledge transfer, indoctrination (Hattu, 2019). Dockery warned that Theological education at its best focuses on head, heart and hand. If those involved in the work of theological education focus only on the head, we will have ministers who are well informed but not Christianly formed (Dockery, 2017, p. 4). Children should be exposed to various social and cultural manifestations of spirituality in a manner that aligns with a

biblical worldview. Schools should integrate a Christian perspective, offering a comprehensive analysis of different belief systems while upholding the principles of Christianity. This approach fosters critical thinking and respect for diverse perspectives, ensuring that education remains grounded in Christian values and equips children to engage with the world thoughtfully and faithfully (See. Prov. 4:7).

Teaching from commitment

Complementing the first two techniques this research also advocates "teaching from commitment" in the field of faith-based education. This strategy involves introducing children to the values of Christian truth holistically and universally. Which aims to simultaneously encourage the development of children's logistical autonomy. To bridge the gap between Christian education in schools and churches, the concept of a Christian worldview must be integrated into both settings. This approach involves presenting a cohesive and consistent set of beliefs and values rooted in evangelical theology. By doing so, children are not only introduced to the Christian faith but are also taught to understand and apply these beliefs in their daily lives, fostering both spiritual growth and intellectual autonomy (Kanitz, 2005, p. 107). The evangelical theological framework emphasizes the importance of Scripture, the centrality of Christ, and the transformative power of the Gospel. To integrate a biblical worldview, teacher education programs and Bible college curricula must engage students actively in their learning while professors guide them in understanding how biblical principles apply to their disciplines through discussions and experiences. This approach goes beyond merely integrating the Bible; it emphasizes the underlying rationale for why biblical integration is essential (Watson, 2007, p. 364). In this context, teaching from commitment helps to create a unified primary culture where the teachings of the church are reinforced in the school environment, and vice versa. This holistic approach ensures that children develop a robust and resilient Christian identity capable of withstanding the challenges posed by a predominantly liberal society. By instilling a strong sense of faith and moral integrity, educators can help safeguard the cultural heritage of Christian communities and support the development of well-rounded individuals who are both faithful believers and thoughtful, independent citizens.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study identifies three key findings regarding the gap between faith education and Christian learning in Indonesia from a Christian worldview. The gaps pertain to the setting, aim, and tactics employed in these practices. Faith education predominantly occurs in faith schools, delivering an academic curriculum within a specific religious ideology, while Christian education involves presenting individuals with the teachings of the Christian gospel.

The differences in the purposes of religious education and Christian learning emerge as another gap. In Indonesia, faith education and religious education serve as strategies for addressing inter-religious conflicts, whereas Christian education aims to understand God's divine will within the Christian worldview. Addressing these gaps requires collaborative efforts. Schools and churches in Indonesia should work together to promote both religious education and Christian learning, improving the quality of Christian education. Aligning objectives in faith education and Christian learning is crucial, emphasizing the simultaneous teaching of God's will and intellectual subjects. To bridge the third gap, educators should experiment with various methodologies, crucial for discovering common techniques in integrating religious education and Christian learning. For future research, focus on the role of trained teachers in integrating the gap and exploring individuals' ability to comprehend multiple religions is essential, considering Indonesia's diverse religious landscape.

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