
The Synergy of Formal and Informal Christian Education in The Restoration of The Value of Truth in The Era of Relativism

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Abstrak

Era relativisme membawa tantangan serius bagi dunia pendidikan, khususnya Pendidikan Kristen yang berlandaskan nilai-nilai kebenaran absolut dari firman Tuhan. Dalam konteks masyarakat modern yang cenderung menafsirkan kebenaran secara subjektif, pendidikan Kristen menghadapi tantangan dalam mempertahankan nilai moral dan spiritual sejati. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis sinergi antara pendidikan Kristen formal dan informal sebagai strategi pemulihan nilai kebenaran di tengah arus relativisme. Metode penelitian menggunakan deskriptif kualitatif dengan *library research*. Temuan menunjukkan pendidikan formal seperti sekolah dan lembaga teologis, berperan dalam pembentukan rasio dan sistem nilai intelektual yang berakar pada Alkitab, sedangkan pendidikan informal terutama dalam keluarga dan gereja menjadi ruang pembentukan karakter dan spiritualitas yang hidup. Melalui sinergi keduanya, pendidikan Kristen tidak hanya mentransfer pengetahuan iman, tetapi juga menumbuhkan kesadaran etis dan tanggung jawab moral bagi peserta didik. Pendekatan teologi pendidikan yang integratif menunjukkan bahwa pemulihan nilai kebenaran harus berangkat dari kolaborasi antara komunitas iman, keluarga, dan lembaga pendidikan untuk menciptakan generasi yang berakar pada Kristus dan berkomitmen terhadap kebenaran ilahi. Sinergi pendidikan formal dan informal merupakan wujud nyata partisipasi gereja dalam mengembalikan arah pendidikan kepada tujuan teologisnya, yakni memuliakan Allah melalui kebenaran yang menguduskan.

Keywords :

Christian Education, Formal
Education, Informal
Education, Value of Truth,
Relativism

Abstract

The era of relativism brings serious challenges to the world of education, especially Christian education which is based on the values of absolute truth from God's word. In the context of a

modern society that tends to interpret the truth subjectively, Christian education faces the challenge of maintaining true moral and spiritual values. This article aims to analyze the synergy between formal and informal Christian education as a strategy to restore the value of truth in the midst of the current of relativism. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive with the library research method. The result show that formal education, such as schools and theological institutions, plays a role in the formation of an intellectual value ratio and system rooted in the Bible, while informal education especially in the family and church becomes a space for the formation of character and a living spirituality. Through the synergy of the two, Christian education not only transfers knowledge of faith, but also fosters ethical awareness and moral responsibility for students. An integrative approach to educational theology shows that the restoration of the value of truth must depart from collaboration between faith communities, families, and educational institutions to create a generation rooted in Christ and committed to divine truth. Thus, the synergy of formal and informal education is a tangible manifestation of the church's participation in returning the direction of education to its theological purpose, which is to glorify God through sanctifying truth.



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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary era is marked by a shift in the discourse of truth: many voices of modern culture affirm that truth is relative, contextual, or dependent on the perspective of an individual/group (epistemic relativism). This relativistic position challenges the claims of absolute truth that underlie the doctrine and practice of Christian Education, thus creating an urgent need for Christian institutions to reformulate educational strategies capable of maintaining and restoring an understanding of divine truth. Philosophical views on relativism and its impact on education provide an important theoretical context for understanding the social-academic pressures facing religious education today (Baghramian, 2015).

Traditional Christian education takes place in two main arenas: formal education (schools, madrasas/high schools/theological themes) that develop intellectual capacity, curriculum, and teaching methods; and informal education (family, church, spiritual community) that shapes character, worship practices, and daily spiritual life. The synergy between these two arenas is key because each has complementary strengths: formal education transmits systematic knowledge and critical thinking, while informal education internalizes values through example, liturgical practice, and intimate relationships within the family and church. To restore the value of truth, the two need

to be strategically and consistently integrated (Tarigan, 2019).

In addition, the flow of technology and digital media is accelerating the dissemination of plural narratives and hoaxes, which further blurs the boundaries between facts and opinions. In this context, an educational theological approach that emphasizes the restoration of truth needs to blend critical teaching of epistemology (how we know something is true) with the practice of character building that is contextual and conducive to spiritual transformation. Therefore, the study of the synergy of formal and informal education is not only academically relevant but also practical—it aims to provide an implementable model for schools, churches, and families in the face of the pressures of relativism (Darmawan, 2025).

In practice, many Christian schools experience fragmentation between the academic curriculum and the spiritual life of students: theoretical material on faith is often taught without a clear bridge to family practice or church community, so that the instillation of truth values becomes weak and vulnerable to cultural relativism. In addition, the competence of Christian teachers and educators in dealing with post-truth and information technology challenges still varies, so that critical teaching methods and media literacy have not been optimally applied in many contexts (Karlau, 2023).

Theoretically, there is a tension between the normative truth claims of the Christian theological tradition (truth as the nature of God and His word) and contemporary epistemological pressures that highlight the plurality of perspectives and relativism. Educational theories that address these tensions need to bring together epistemology (theory of knowledge) and practical pedagogy in a coherent theological framework, but literature that explicitly designs a formal-informal synergistic model for the purpose of truth restoration is still limited and scattered (Baghramian, 2015).

Research by I Putu Ayub Darmawan & Evi Namsem, shows that the use of mobile devices and social media by theology students in Indonesia has a significant role in gospel communication and informal religious learning. The study revealed that "mobile phones play a significant and effective role in gospel communication among theology students" (Darmawan & Namsem, 2025). Although the focus is not directly on the formation of children's character in the family, these findings underscore the strong potential of digital-based informal education as an additional arena for the internalization of Christian values. Thus, families or faith communities that consciously utilize technology can expand the reach of informal education and support the restoration of the value of truth in a digital context.

Furthermore, research by Yasozatulo Larosa, in the *Eduvest Journal of Universal Studies* explores how Christian schools integrate Christian values into the Merdeka curriculum in the era of digital technology. Larosa concluded that Christian schools that implement values such as love, honesty, responsibility through a creative and contextual curriculum produce graduates with strong character and are ready to face digital challenges (Larosa, 2024). These findings reinforce the argument that formal education is a key arena in character building rooted in truth values, and that formal-

informal synergy can be strengthened through clear curriculum design as well as school involvement in value activities outside the classroom.

Furthermore, in an article by Elisabeth Sitepu & Sharon Salsalina G. Munthe, published in the Indonesian Research Journal in Education (IRJE), it was found that the integration of Christian values into the school curriculum can effectively shape students' character in the digital age, but the challenges that arise include gadget addiction and inappropriate content exposure (Stephen & Munthe, 2025). In this context, the authors advocate that schools and families should work together to offset digital influences through value-affirming informal education. Thus, the current literature shows that synergy between (formal) schools and (informal) faith-based families/communities, including the judicious use of technology, is an important strategy to restore the value of truth in the midst of relativism.

In research by Jefry Kalalo, it highlights the importance of the role of the family in the implementation of Christian Religious Education (PAK) in the local context of Indonesia. He found that consistent family practices such as prayer routines, shared Bible reading, and moral example from parents are the main foundations in the formation of a child's character. Kalalo emphasized that the family is not just a complement to formal education in schools, but is an arena of primary education that determines the continuity of the internalization of Christian faith values. Therefore, schools need to view the family as a strategic partner in any character education intervention design. These findings reinforce the idea that synergy between formal and informal education is a prerequisite for the effectiveness of Christian education in instilling the values of truth in the midst of the rapid trend of moral and epistemological relativism (Kalalo, 2024b).

Meanwhile, a study conducted by Karlau and Rukua, in *Didache: Journal of Christian Education*, emphasizes the importance of PAK teacher competence in the era of information technology disruption. Through quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study found that teachers who have epistemological insight, critical thinking skills, and good digital literacy are more effective in dealing with the phenomenon of post-truth and relativism in the classroom. Teachers with these competencies are able to integrate theological values with contextual pedagogical approaches that are relevant to today's digital generation. The study also recommends ongoing training for teachers to strengthen their ability to convey objective concepts of truth in a culture that tends to reject value absolutism (Karlau & Rukua, 2023). These findings show that teachers are important actors in bridging the synergy of formal education (schools) with informal education (family and church).

In addition, Fitriyanti, researched the pedagogic competence of PAK teachers in strengthening students' character through an integrative approach involving schools, families, and churches. He emphasized the importance of contextual, faith-based curriculum design, as well as the active involvement of the church community in non-formal educational activities such as spiritual retreats, faith mentoring, and social service activities. Fitriyanti argued that the continuity between teaching in schools and

spiritual practices in the family and church can only be achieved through formal mechanisms such as institutional cooperation, parent training, and memorandums of understanding (MoU) between schools and churches. The integration is believed to be an effective model of Christian education synergy to restore the values of truth and strengthen the moral resilience of students in an era of relativism that thins the boundaries between facts and opinions (Scott, 2024).

From the literature review, several important gaps were found: (a) although there have been empirical studies on the role of the family and school separately, relatively few studies have designed, implemented, and evaluated integrated synergy models (formal + informal) that explicitly aim to restore the value of truth in the context of relativism; (b) literature that combines educational theology, epistemology, and media literacy practices perspectives is still limited—even though all three are crucial to facing contemporary challenges. In summary, interventional and evaluative research is needed that tests the effectiveness of concrete synergy models (Stephen & Munthe, 2025).

In addition, most existing empirical studies focus on individual contexts (e.g., specific families or schools) without a multi-level analysis that considers the dimensions of policy, teacher training, and the role of the church as an institution. This gap demonstrates the need for multi-stakeholder research to formulate implementable recommendations that can be adopted by school networks, church synods, and local communities (Makahenggang & Sihotang, 2025).

The relevance of this research is high because the issue of truth and education is central to the survival of the faith of the younger generation: if divine truth is not restored or internalized, then Christian identity and community moral practices will be eroded by relativistic narratives. Practically, this research contributes to the formation of Christian education policies (at the school/church/family level) that are more responsive to cultural and technological challenges (Tarigan, 2019).

The urgency arises from the acceleration of the dissemination of misinformation and epistemic relativism through digital media—a phenomenon that requires a swift and structured response from the Christian education ecosystem. Its academic significance is to fill the void of the literature regarding formal-informal synergy models and empirical evidence of their effectiveness; Its practical significance is an implementable recommendation for educators, church leaders, and parents (Darmawan, 2025).

This study aims to formulate and test a synergy model between formal Christian education (theological school/school) and informal (family/church) education to restore and strengthen the values of truth among students in the era of epistemic relativism, focusing on (a) the design of integrated educational interventions, (b) the integration strategy of the curriculum and family/church practices, and (c) the evaluation of effectiveness in increasing the understanding and internalization of the value of truth. (Theoretical reference: Tarigan, 2019; study of educational epistemology) (Tarigan, 2019).

Based on the background and literature review, the formulation of this research problem is: How can the synergy model between formal and informal Christian education be designed and implemented so that it effectively recovers and strengthens the value of truth in students in the era of relativism? Sub-questions: (1) what components should be present in the synergy model; (2) how the school-church-family collaboration mechanism works; (3) the extent to which the intervention improves the understanding and practice of the value of truth. (Supporting references for theory and empirical studies: Tarigan, 2019; family and school studies 2023–2025) (Tarigan, 2019).

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with the library research method, which aims to analyze the phenomenon of synergy between formal and informal Christian education in depth based on relevant literature sources. This approach allows researchers to understand the reality of Christian education as a socio-theological phenomenon that is inseparable from the cultural context and the postmodern era characterized by value relativism. (Moleong, 2019), explains that qualitative research aims to explore the meaning behind the facts by interpreting social phenomena contextually. In this context, the researcher analyzed various educational theological textbooks, academic journals, and research reports 2020–2025 to find conceptual patterns that explain the relationship between formal and informal education in the formation of truth values. This approach is in line with the view that (Creswell, 2018), that qualitative research provides space for an in-depth understanding of the relationship between values, beliefs, and social practices in the context of religious education.

The data collection technique is carried out through a systematic literature review which includes analysis of primary and secondary sources such as books, scientific articles indexed by SINTA, Google Scholar, and Christian educational theology journals. This process follows the steps suggested by (Snyder, 2019), namely: (1) identification of research themes and questions, (2) literature selection based on academic relevance and credibility, (3) extraction and synthesis of thematic data, and (4) interpretation of results to build a conceptual framework. Data collection also pays attention to the current literature criteria (at least the last five years) so that the analysis remains contextual with the emerging issue of epistemic relativism. In the context of Christian education, this approach helps to find synergistic dynamics between family, school, and church in the formation of objective truth values (Scott, 2022).

Data analysis was carried out using thematic content analysis which focuses on identifying themes, patterns, and conceptual relationships between literature related to the synergy of formal and informal Christian education. This method helps researchers find the common thread between theological values (truth, faith, character) and educational practice (curriculum, family roles, contextual learning). (Braun & Clarke, 2021), states that thematic analysis is an interpretive process that organizes data into meaningful themes that support the development of theories or conceptual

models. Data is analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2018). Thus, the results of the analysis are expected to be able to produce a systematic understanding of how the synergy of Christian education plays a role in restoring the value of truth in the midst of a crisis of relativism.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

This chapter discusses the conceptual basis and literature review that is the foundation for the analysis of the synergy of formal and informal Christian education in the restoration of the value of truth in the era of relativism. Discussions include theories of Christian education, the concept of truth from a biblical perspective, and its relevance to the challenges of postmodern cultures that reject value absolutism. In addition, this chapter also reviews the results of previous research that strengthens understanding of the role of the family, school, and church in the formation of character and value of truth. Thus, this theoretical foundation provides a clear direction for the development of integrative and contextual research frameworks and analysis.

The Essence of Christian Education

Christian education is essentially a process of forming a whole human being based on the truth of God's word with the aim of bringing students to the true knowledge of God and the actualization of faith in daily life. This education not only focuses on the intellectual aspect, but also touches on the moral, spiritual, social, and emotional dimensions of human beings as the image of God (*imago Dei*). (Knight, 2006), affirms that Christian education aims to restore human nature that has been corrupted by sin through a Christ-centered teaching process. In a modern context characterized by relativism and the disintegration of values, Christian education is a means of character formation rooted in the absolute truth of God. As stated by (Estep et al., 2008), the essence of Christian education lies in the pedagogical act that integrates faith and learning so that every aspect of knowledge is directed to glorify God and serve others.

Purpose and Principles of Christian Education

The main goal of Christian education is to form individuals who have firm faith, Christian character, and are able to live as witnesses of Christ in the midst of a plural and secular world. According to (A. F. Holmes, 1998), Christian education plays a role in leading people to the integration of knowledge, faith, and action, thus producing a person who lives under the authority of God's righteousness. This goal affirms that Christian education is not just a transfer of knowledge, but a transformation of life towards Christlikeness. Therefore, Christian education has a dual mission: to develop

rational intelligence and to cultivate spiritual sensitivity as the basis of the ethics of life (M.J. Anthony & Benson, 2003).

The basic principle of Christian education is rooted in the view that God is the center and source of all knowledge. (Knight, 2006), declares that the whole educational process must be rooted in a personal relationship with Christ, for without this relationship knowledge loses its moral direction and theological purpose. The principles of theocentricity and Christ-centered learning became the normative framework that distinguished Christian education from the secular education system. In this principle, all teaching and learning activities are directed to know God, understand His word, and manifest love in tangible actions (Estep et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the principles of Christian education also emphasize community and ministry as tangible manifestations of living faith. According to (Palmer, 1998), true Christian education must create a space of encounter between knowledge, faith, and social relations so that the learning community becomes a place for the formation of Christian character. This principle makes Christian schools, families, and churches not separate entities, but part of a single body of Christ that works together to form a generation of faith and integrity in the midst of a relativistic culture.

The Dimension of Faith and Character Transformation

The faith dimension in Christian education affirms that the ultimate goal of education is to bring students to a deeper personal relationship with Christ and to live the values of the kingdom of God in all aspects of their lives. According to (Fowler, 1995), faith is the structure of meaning that leads man in understanding reality and shaping his moral actions; thus, Christian education must foster a reflective and contextual faith. This process occurs through an integration of learning, prayer, and spiritual practice that fosters an awareness of God's presence in every area of life.

Character transformation is a direct result of growing faith. (Towner, 2010), explains that true Christian education leads to inner change through the work of the Holy Spirit, not just a change in outward behavior. The Christ-centered learning process plays a role in instilling values such as love, truth, honesty, and humility. In a postmodern context that blurs the line between right and wrong, Christian education serves as a means of moral and spiritual restoration that rebuilds the foundations of absolute truth based on God's word.

Furthermore, the character transformation resulting from Christian education does not stop at the personal aspect, but has a social impact. According to (Brummelen, 2009), faith embodied in acts of love and social justice is an indicator of the success of Christian education. Education that combines faith and character produces individuals who are able to present Christian values in a pluralistic society. Thus, Christian education acts as an agent of cultural transformation, restoring the value of truth, and affirming the identity of faith in the midst of a relativistic world.

Formal and Informal Education in a Christian Perspective

From the perspective of the Christian faith, formal and informal education are two complementary domains in the formation of faith, character, and understanding of God's truth. Formal education—through schools and academic institutions—provides a systematic learning structure, while informal education through the family and church becomes an arena for the formation of real values and examples of faith in daily life. (Estep et al., 2008), affirms that Christian education is holistic and not limited to the classroom, because all life is a context of learning about God and His will. Thus, the synergy between formal and informal education is a tangible manifestation of God's mandate in Deuteronomy 6:6–7, that the teaching of truth be continued on an ongoing basis "when you sit in your house, when you are on your way, when you lie down, and when you get up." This principle affirms that Christian education cannot be separated from the context of faith and community living in relationship with God.

Functions and Roles of Formal Education (Schools and Institutions)

Formal education in a Christian perspective serves as a forum for intellectual formation rooted in biblical truth and directed towards the development of faith and ethical responsibility. According to (Knight, 2006), Christian schools are not just institutions of knowledge transmission, but communities of faith that lead students to know God through every discipline. Formal education plays a role in instilling a biblical worldview that helps students interpret the reality of the world from the perspective of faith, not secularism. In the context of the era of epistemic relativism, Christian schools play a strategic role as a bastion of truth values, teaching that truth comes from an absolute God, not from a changing social consensus (Holmes, 1998).

In addition, Christian schools function to form discipline, integrity, and moral responsibility through a curriculum that integrates faith and learning. (M.J. Anthony & Benson, 2003), calling this process the integration of faith learning, which is a conscious effort to make faith the basis for all fields of study and educational activities. Such a learning process allows students to understand the relationship between knowledge and faith, so that education is not dualistic between "secular knowledge" and "sacred truth". When faith becomes an epistemological framework, learning activities become a means of spirituality, not just academic.

Furthermore, Christian educational institutions play a role as agents of transformation in society. (Brummelen, 2009), explaining that Christian schools should equip students to live as servants of God in the world, contribute to justice, and uphold truth in a social context. Faith-based formal education has a dual function: to equip students intellectually and to form them as witnesses of Christ who bring a positive impact to the community. Thus, formal education serves not only to build academic capacity, but also to expand the influence of the ethics of God's kingdom in a modern world steeped in moral relativism.

Functions and Roles of Informal Education (Family and Church)

Informal education from a Christian perspective is the main foundation for the formation of one's character, faith, and morals, because it takes place in the earliest and most influential environments of the family and the church. The family is seen as an *ecclesia domestica* or "mini-church" where Christian values are first introduced, instilled, and exemplified. (MJ Anthony & Estep, 2010), declares that the family is "the first educational institution that God wills" where faith is taught not only through words, but through love relationships and daily life. The process of faith education at home takes place naturally through the practice of prayer, joint Bible reading, and the formation of habits of life that imitate Christ (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). Thus, the family functions not only as a social unit, but as a spiritual container that forms the basis of the child's character and faith before getting to know the world of formal education.

In addition to the family, the church has the function of complementing and strengthening informal education through community of faith and spiritual ministry. The Church provides a space for spiritual formation, Bible study, and opportunities for individuals to grow in faith and develop their spiritual gifts. According to (Estep et al., 2008), the church serves as a "community of learning that lives the love of Christ," where all members are educated to be true disciples who grow in relationship with God and others. Through Sunday school ministry, discipleship, and other categorical activities, the church expands the dimension of informal education by providing a real experience of love, forgiveness, and moral responsibility. Thus, the church is not only a place of worship, but also a center of faith education that is relational and communitarian.

Furthermore, the relationship between family and church is synergistic and complementary in the process of Christian education. (Kalalo, 2024a), emphasizing that the collaboration between the two is the key to the success of faith education, because the spiritual formation of children will be more effective if the teaching received in the church is strengthened by example and practice of living at home. The function of informal education is to ensure continuity between the teaching and the application of Christian values, so that God's truth does not stop at the cognitive level, but is lived concretely in a changing social and cultural context. In the context of the culture of lost truth and the current era of epistemic relativism, the synergy between the family and the church is very important as a bastion of truth values that are unshaken by the currents of relative morality and digital disinformation.

The Concept of the Value of Truth in Christian Theology

In Christian theology, truth is understood not as a mere rational or moral concept, but as a reality that originates and is centered on God Himself. Jesus Christ declares Himself to be "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), so the truth in Christianity is personal, relational, and transformative. According to (Erickson, 2013), Christian truth is not only about the proposition of truth, but also loyalty to God who is the source of all truth. Within this framework, Christian education is called not only to

teach true knowledge, but also to lead students to a personal relationship with the Truth Himself. This view is in line with Holmes' (1998) idea that all Christian education must be based on a biblical worldview that places God's truth as the epistemological and moral basis of human life.

Truth as a Principle of the Christian Faith

Truth in the Christian faith is the basis for all dimensions of spiritual and moral life. According to (Lewis, 1952), the Christian faith is built on the belief that God is the unchanging source of truth, and therefore, followers of Christ are called to live in fidelity to that truth, even in the midst of a world that rejects moral absolutism. Truth is not the result of human consensus, but the objective revelation of God through His word (2 Timothy 3:16). This means that true faith is always closely related to a commitment to divine truth that is universal and non-negotiable.

Furthermore, Christian truth is incarnate, meaning it is manifest in the life and work of Jesus Christ. As explained by (Grenz & Olson, 1996), in incarnate theology, truth is not only taught through doctrine but manifested in acts of love, justice, and sacrifice. True Christian education therefore demands an integration between doctrinal teaching and a living praxis that reflects Christ as the exemplar of truth. This principle affirms that true faith must be lived, not just understood cognitively.

In addition, the truth in the Christian faith has a transformational dimension. According to (Wright, 2010), the experience of Christ's righteousness brings moral and spiritual renewal in a person. Truth is not just about knowing, but about being "renewed in spirit and mind" (Ephesians 4:23–24). Therefore, in the context of Christian education, truth is inseparable from the process of spiritual formation that enables individuals to live in the light of God's word. Thus, the truth becomes the principle of faith that guides all dimensions of life, both personal, social, and spiritual.

The Relationship between Truth, Ethics, and Spirituality

Truth, ethics, and spirituality in Christian theology are closely and complementarily related. Truth provides a moral basis for ethical action, whereas Christian ethics is a practical expression of the recognition of God's truth. According to (Hauerwas, 2017), Christian ethics cannot be separated from the community of faith that forms moral character based on the values of the kingdom of God. In this context, truth serves as a normative standard that guides the ethical behavior of Christians to conform to God's will, not just a fickle social norm.

Christian spirituality grows out of the appreciation of God's truth lived in obedience and love. (Foster, 1998), explaining that true spiritual life is born from a spiritual discipline rooted in the truth of God's word and manifested in the loving service of others. Truth without spirituality would be dogmatic, while spirituality without truth would lose its moral direction. Therefore, Christian education must foster a balance between sound theological understanding and deep spiritual practice.

Furthermore, in the context of the post-truth era, the relationship between truth, ethics, and spirituality is becoming increasingly important to form moral resilience

and faith. According to (J.K. Smith, 2021), postmodern challenges demand that churches and institutions educate spirituality based on moral integrity. The synergy between the three produces a consistent Christian character and is able to bear witness to the truth in the midst of a relativistic world. Thus, Christian education functions not only to transfer theological knowledge, but to form a person rooted in truth and fruitful in authentic ethics and spirituality.

Relativism's Challenge to Education and Truth

The postmodern era and digital culture have given birth to an epistemological crisis known as relativism, which is the view that truth is subjective and depends on the perspective of an individual or group. In the context of Christian education, this challenge becomes serious because it blurs the line between objective truth and personal opinion. According to Groothuis (2000), relativism rejects the existence of moral standards and universal truths that originate from God, so education tends to lose its normative direction. This phenomenon also affects pedagogical practices, where teachers and students often place "feelings" above the authority of God's words (Plantinga, 2002). Christian education is therefore faced with the important task of reaffirming the absolute truth that comes from God's revelation and developing critical capacity for relativistic discourse in modern society.

Characteristics of Epistemic and Moral Relativism

Epistemic relativism is characterized by a rejection of claims of universal truth and the affirmation that all knowledge is contextual and relative to culture, experience, or language. According to Boghossian (2006), in epistemic relativism, there is no objective basis for distinguishing between true and false beliefs, since all are considered valid insofar as they conform to a particular community's frame of mind. Within this framework, truth is no longer something that is discovered, but is socially constructed. As a result, education loses its epistemological compass, as the criterion of truth is replaced by subjective preference.

Meanwhile, moral relativism arises from the idea that ethical values are personal and have no absolute basis. According to Geisler (2010), moral relativism rejects the existence of universally applicable moral laws and replaces them with the principle of "what is right for me is not necessarily right for others." This attitude fosters misguided tolerance and erodes moral sensitivity, as good and evil are no longer measured by divine standards, but rather by the feelings of the majority or the interests of the individual. In the context of education, this can lead to confusion of values and inconsistencies in character formation.

Another characteristic of contemporary relativism is emotivism, which is the tendency to judge right and wrong based on emotions or subjective experiences. According to MacIntyre (2007), emotivism leads to the loss of moral rationality and makes every ethical statement merely an expression of personal feelings. In Christian education, this is evident in the view that faith is merely a personal spiritual experience with no moral or social implications. Thus, these characteristics of relativism require

Christian education to reaffirm the basis of objective truth derived from the word of God so that students are able to think critically and live in eternal values.

The Impact of Relativism on the Formation of Values in Society

Relativism has a far-reaching impact on value formation in society, especially in terms of moral shifts and identity crises. When truth is considered relative, society loses a stable moral reference point. According to Keller (2012), relativism gives birth to a culture of self-referentialism, in which individuals become the center of their own moral judgment without reference to objective norms. As a result, education, media, and public policy tend to promote unfettered pluralism, but without a solid moral foundation. This crisis can be seen in the increasing ethical pragmatism and permissive attitude towards sin or dishonesty, which in turn normalizes the confusion of values among the younger generation.

In the realm of education, relativism changes the orientation of learning from the search for truth to a mere construction of subjective knowledge. According to Carson (2015), this approach is dangerous because it removes the moral and spiritual dimensions in the educational process. Students are no longer encouraged to seek the true truth, but are only invited to think "critically" without moral direction. In Christian education, this condition poses a serious challenge in instilling biblical values, as secular paradigms tend to reject claims of absolute truth that come from God's revelation.

Furthermore, relativism also has an impact on church and family life as an agent of informal education. According to Smith and Snell (2009), many young Christians today live in moralistic therapeutic deism, which is a superficial form of faith because it emphasizes feelings of comfort rather than adherence to the truth. This phenomenon shows that relativism is not only an intellectual issue, but also a spiritual and pastoral issue. Therefore, Christian education needs to respond by reaffirming the biblical epistemology that places God's truth as the foundation of human life and character.

Synergy of Formal and Informal Christian Education

This chapter outlines the importance of integration and collaboration between formal Christian education that takes place through schools and educational institutions and informal education rooted in the family and the church as a community of faith. In the context of the era of relativism, these two domains cannot run alone, because the formation of truth values requires continuous teaching, example, and consistent habituation. In line with the view of Estep, Anthony, and Allison (2008) that Christian education is a holistic process that involves the entire faith community, the synergy of these two forms of education is key to restoring and affirming the value of biblical truth in the lives of learners. Therefore, Chapter III will highlight practical concepts, models, and strategies on how collaboration can be effectively realized in the context of today's Christian education.

The Relationship between Formal and Informal Education in the Formation of Faith

The relationship between formal and informal education in faith formation is complementary because they work in different but supportive spaces and functions. Formal education through Christian schools provides a systematic pedagogical structure, curriculum, and learning process to instill theological understanding, moral values, and intellectual discipline. (M. Anthony & Benson, 2003) affirms that Christian schools act as "faith learning communities" that serve to expand the spiritual experience built in the home and church. In this paradigm, formal education provides a cognitive framework and learning praxis that enriches the reflective dimension and rationality of children's faith.

On the other hand, informal education in the family and church is the main basis for the formation of character and spirituality that are relational and practical. The family teaches faith through example, spiritual habits, and an atmosphere of love, while the church presents a community of faith that facilitates ongoing spiritual formation. (Estep et al., 2008), states that effective Christian education always takes place in three spaces: home, school, and church, which must work synergistically. Thus, the formation of faith cannot depend on one institution alone, but requires a unity of formal and informal efforts.

The Role of Christian Schools in the Restoration of Truth Values

Christian schools have a strategic role in restoring the value of truth in the midst of the challenges of relativism by providing a curriculum based on biblical truth. Through the integration of biblical worldviews into all subjects, the school helps students understand that truth is not a subjective construct, but comes from God. (Dockery, 2018), emphasizing that Christian schools should be "centers of intellectual and moral formation" that reaffirm the objectivity of truth. With this approach, schools not only transfer knowledge, but form a way of thinking that is in harmony with God's word.

In addition to the curriculum, Christian schools also restore the value of truth through the formation of the school's character and culture. A culture of discipline, honesty, justice, and love becomes an "ethical incubator" that accustomed students to live in true moral values. (Knight, 2006), states that true Christian education must combine academic and character dimensions so that students undergo a holistic transformation. The role of teachers as role models and spiritual mentors is also key in presenting biblical truths in a tangible and practical way to students.

The Role of the Family and the Church as Informal Education Spaces

The family is the most fundamental informal educational space because it is the first place where values, spiritual habits, and character are instilled. Parental example, prayer habits, Bible reading, and daily conversations of faith play a significant role in strengthening moral and spiritual truth. (Rice, 2018), affirming that effective faith education "always starts at the dinner table and the living room," because that's where

children learn to connect faith with real life. This role makes the family the main partner of the school in the restoration of the value of truth.

The Church, on the other hand, provides a community of faith that expands spiritual formation through worship, discipleship, service, and the formation of the younger generation. The Church strengthens the truth through Bible teaching, joint prayer, and other spiritual practices that form the identity of faith. (Miller, 2014) notes that the church serves as a "pedagogical community" that ensures children and youth not only receive teaching, but also experience life in the body of Christ. Thus, the family and the church together form an informal education space that is essential in sustaining formal education.

Synergy Model of Christian Education in the Face of Relativism

The synergy model of Christian education in the face of relativism emphasizes structured and intentional cooperation between schools, families, and churches. This collaboration can be in the form of regular communication, integrated coaching programs, and a mutually supportive curriculum. (Webber, 2017) states that the synergy of Christian education depends on the "alignment of vision and values" between institutions so that there are no contradictory messages in child development. Through consistency of teaching, values, and examples, the three institutions can strengthen objective truths in students.

The synergy model also involves a clear division of roles: schools reinforce the cognitive and reflective dimensions of faith; the family instills spiritual examples and habits; and the church builds community and discipleship. This integrative approach is reinforced by research, (C. Smith & Snell, 2009), which shows that young people with consistent faith-building patterns from all three spaces have more stable faith beliefs and are resistant to cultural relativism. Thus, effective synergy is a practical answer to the value crisis in society.

Principles of Integration of Faith and Knowledge

The integration of faith and knowledge is a fundamental principle of Christian education that affirms that all truth comes from God and is inseparable from faith. (A. Holmes, 1987), declares that the task of Christian education is to "unite knowledge with faith so that intellectual understanding becomes a form of worship of God." This means that every discipline, whether science, history, or art, must be understood in the light of biblical truth, not free from faith. This principle forms a strong Christian epistemological framework in the midst of relativism.

This integration also requires students to have a holistic, critical, and theological way of thinking. (Tuesday, 2020), emphasizing that the Christian worldview is not merely a religious addition, but the primary lens through which to understand the whole of reality. When faith and knowledge are combined, students gain not only academic competence, but also the moral and spiritual ability to correctly assess

information. Thus, the integration of faith-knowledge becomes the foundation for building a generation capable of rejecting relativism and living in true truth.

Theological Analysis and Reflection

This section discusses how the theological foundations of Christianity provide direction, correction, and a framework for formal and informal Christian education to face the challenges of truth relativism in the post-truth era. Through an analysis of biblical perspectives, church traditions, and the thought of contemporary theologians, this chapter highlights that truth is not just a social construct, but a reality rooted in God's character and embodied in Christ's work. This theological reflection also affirms the importance of the integration of faith and knowledge, the restoration of the role of faith communities, and the formation of character rooted in the truth of the Gospel in response to the epistemic crisis of this age, so that Christian education is able to become an agent of light and transformation for society.

The Biblical Perspective on Truth (John 8:32; Romans 12:2)

In John 8:32, Jesus declares that "the truth will set you free," affirming that truth from a biblical perspective is not just an intellectual idea, but a divine reality that frees man from the power of sin and lies. Truth is God's own nature (Psalm 119:160), so knowing the truth means entering into a relationship with God through Christ. According to Carson (1991), Jesus' statement shows that the truth of the gospel has a transformational dimension, not just informational. Thus, Christian education must be rooted in an understanding that truth is not a fickle social construct, but rather an absolute and liberating revelation of God.

Romans 12:2 reinforces that perspective by affirming the need for a renewal of conscience as a process that leads people to "distinguish between the will of God, what is good, acceptable to him and what is perfect." Paul emphasized that truth shapes a different mindset and lifestyle from a world tainted by relativism. Wright (2012) explains that this transformation of mind is the essence of a spiritual formation that is rooted in the revelation of God and not in cultural norms. Thus, the biblical perspective teaches that truth is objective and demands moral and intellectual renewal for every believer.

Education as a Restorative Effort in Christian Theology

In Christian theology, education is understood as a restorative act of a process of restoring man to the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). Education is not only the transfer of knowledge, but the formation of character and the restoration of human morals corrupted by sin. (Bosch, 1991), declares that Christian mission, including education, is part of God's work of reconciliation in the world. Thus, Christian education is built on the belief that truth restores man to integrity, wisdom, and a life that glorifies God.

Restorative education also emphasizes the transformation of communities, not just individuals. According to (J. K. A. Smith, 2009), Christian education must form

habits and orientations of the heart that restore man's relationship with God, others, and creation. These restorative efforts occur through continuous liturgical practice, learning, and moral example. Thus, Christian education moves beyond the academic realm towards the reconstruction of human identity as the bearer of shalom in society.

Synergy as a Manifestation of the Body of Christ in the World of Education

The concept of synergy in Christian education is rooted in the theology of the Body of Christ as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. Each limb has an important and complementary role in order to achieve the divine goal. In the context of education, schools, families, and churches cannot run alone, but must work as one body to shape the faith and character of students. According to (Bank, 1999), the Christian community is a collaborative space where education takes place in an integrated manner through mutually constructive relationships.

This synergy strengthens the identity of the church as a learning community (learning community) that brings God's wisdom in the world. (Astley, 2002), explains that effective faith education occurs when all educational agents carry out their roles in harmony, integrating experience, formal teaching, and spiritual habituation. Thus, synergy is not only an educational strategy, but a manifestation of the theology of the living Body of Christ and working together to realize the truth in the lives of students.

Theological Implications for the Restoration of Truth Values

The theological implications for the restoration of the value of truth affirm that the church and Christian education must be guardians of truth in the midst of an increasingly relativistic world. Truth is not just a doctrine, but a moral requirement that directs all aspects of life (2 Timothy 3:16). According to (Grenz, 1994), Christian theology affirms that truth flows from the character of God, so the restoration of the value of truth means returning man to the moral standards that come from God's word. This requires that Christian education present learning that fosters honesty, integrity, and wisdom.

On the other hand, the restoration of truth requires a holistic approach that includes intellectual, spiritual, social, and ethical dimensions. According to (Tisdell, 2003), spiritual formation in education plays a role in reviving values that foster true identity and character. This means that schools, families, and churches not only teach the truth, but create a culture of truth through example, practice, and relationships. Thus, Christian education becomes a means of social transformation that recovers society from moral erosion due to relativism.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that the challenge of epistemic and moral relativism places Christian education at a critical juncture that demands an integrated response: formal education (school/institution) and informal education (family/church) must function synergistically to restore and affirm the values of truth. Literature reviews

show that formal education provides a cognitive and methodological framework—through curriculum, teaching, and the formation of school culture while informal education reinforces the internalization of values through example, spiritual practice, and ongoing relationships. The synergy between the two proved to be a stronger approach than separate efforts to foster understanding and practice of truth among students.

Further, theological analysis asserts that truth in the Christian tradition is personal (embodied in Christ), normative, and transformational; therefore Christian education does not only transfer information but involves the formation of the heart, the renewal of the mind, and consistent spiritual practice. In that context, successful models of educational intervention are those that integrate faith and knowledge, strengthen teacher competence, involve parents, and selectively utilize media/technology to expand the impact of truth values. Without a clear theological framework and concrete pastoral-practical action, educational efforts are vulnerable to being displaced by relativistic narratives.

Finally, the study identified several key elements for synergy effectiveness: (1) alignment of vision and goals between schools, churches, and families; (2) communication mechanisms and structured collaborative programs (e.g., parent training, institutional MOUs, joint discipleship programs); and (3) strengthening the capacity of educators and spiritual leaders in theological literacy and media literacy. The implementation of these elements is expected to strengthen the moral resilience of the younger generation, reduce vulnerability to relativism, and produce tangible fruit in the form of characters who live according to biblical truth.

5.2 Implications for the Church, Schools, and Christian Family

For churches, these findings affirm the call to actively build discipleship programs that are coordinated with schools and families such as parenting classes, youth mentoring, cross-institutional ministry as part of pastoral practices that prioritize value formation. The church needs to position itself not just as a doctrinal presenter on Sunday, but as a learning community that provides consistent spiritual practice, ministry opportunities, and pastoral support so that the truths taught in schools do not stop at theory.

For Christian schools, the implications are the need for a more value-conscious curriculum design and learning activities, teacher training that emphasizes faith-knowledge integration and media literacy, and mechanisms for active parental involvement. Schools should open systematic channels of communication with families and churches—e.g. regular meetings, parent workshops, joint service projects so that the message of formal education and informal practice reinforce each other. The family, in turn, is given the strategic task of being a "laboratory of faith" that applies and reflects the values that children learn in school and church through example, spiritual routines, and daily conversations of faith.

Recommendations for Christian Education in the Age of Relativism

First, policy and practice recommendations: institutionalize formal school-church-family partnership programs e.g. the creation of an MOU, an integrated coaching calendar, and parent training modules as part of the strategic plan of Christian educational institutions. Schools need to design a curriculum that explicitly integrates the biblical worldview across all subjects, including media literacy and digital ethics modules to prepare students for information flows and relativism.

Second, capacity-building recommendations: invest in ongoing training for teachers and church leaders in Christian epistemology, integrative pedagogy, and digital literacy; and facilitation of cross-institutional discipleship programs that combine theological, practical, and social aspects. In addition, encourage action research in schools to design, test, and reflect on contextual synergy models so that interventions are not only normative but also operational evidence-based that can be adapted to various local contexts.

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