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Biblical wisdom: rethinking Christian education according to Proverbs 1:2-7 and its relationship with national education philosophy

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to discover the significance of biblical wisdom according to Proverbs 1:2-7 in Christian education and to use it as a point of view when highlighting the national education philosophy, as well as to see whether the nature of the two complement each other or sharpen each other when they meet? The method used was a combination of theological interpretation of Proverbs 1:2-7 and a synchronic perspective on the philosophy of the national education motto. This research found that Christian education has two sides when it meets the philosophy of the national education motto. First, Christian education remains based and aims at biblical wisdom, next, it can be open to the philosophy of the motto but applies analytical rigor and criticality.

Keywords: *Christian education; philosophy; proverbs; rethinking; wisdom*

INTRODUCTION

Christian education is significant for the life of Christians. Its philosophy is unique in that it cannot escape from the Bible and has a biblical framework (Simanjuntak, 2021, p. 4). The Bible talks a lot about humans, namely humans who exist, are present, and wrestle in the midst of the universe, one aspect of which is education. This is similar to the main discussion of philosophy, namely the origin, meaning, and purpose of human existence (Simanjuntak, 2021, p. 4). There needs to be a clear distinction between the philosophy of Christian education and philosophy in general. As already stated, the Bible is the fundamental framework of Christian educational thought, while philosophy flows from the "natural wisdom" of thinking humans. Although there is a connection, there must still be significant differences between the two.

One of the elements as well as biblical values that theological activists research about Christian education is wisdom. Therefore, one of the goals of Christian education, regardless of the model used, is that all members of the learning community are able to pursue and achieve wisdom. Thus, Christian education is theological, integrated, accessible, capable of praxis, transformative, and encourages lifelong learning (Backfish, 2019, pp. 382–383). Admittedly, when talking about biblical wisdom, the book of Proverbs is often the main reference, especially Proverbs 1: 2-7. Verse 2 indicates that the prerequisite for quality and tested wisdom, upbringing, and knowledge is the fear of the Lord. However, can this passage be related to Christian education, let alone to a particular educational philosophy? In this case, the national philosophy of education?

Alice Ogden Bellis (2022, p. 133) has an opinion regarding the research of the concept of wisdom in Proverbs. She argues that from 2011-2020, wisdom in Proverbs has undergone intense research. However, many researchers doubt the existence of the genre of wisdom in Proverbs, and if it exists, they doubt how to define it. An example is the research presented by Jeanette May Hartwell at a conference in 2017. She looks at wisdom through the lens of feminism so that the concept of wisdom in Proverbs 1 is first deconstructed from patriarchal ties, then pinned and tied to female personhood. Thus, wisdom undermines the male view of women who are always considered inferior (Hartwell, 2017). In addition, there is also research from Shirley S. Ho. Ho assessed that wisdom in Proverbs 1 practiced itself in

essential hospitality, namely hospitality that is not false and protects strangers from false hospitality. This wisdom prevents strangers from falling into the trap of false hospitality offered by organized crime syndicates. Wisdom can make strangers wise and evolved (Ho, 2021, p. 611).

Bellis (2022, pp. 133–134) believes that the main reason many scholars doubt the existence of the wisdom genre in Proverbs, or find it difficult to define wisdom, is due to the use of contemporary methods, namely modern literary criticism, which is too imposed on the text of Proverbs. In line with Bellis, Suzanna R. Millar argues that the characteristics of Proverbs are indeed open to various interpretations. However, Proverbs should not be treated arbitrarily. Openness is important but at the same time the dynamics of "closure" and "transformation" in the process of interpretation need to be maintained so that fidelity to the nature, type and function of Proverbs can be objectively maintained (Millar, 2020, p. 79).

This is not to undermine the intention of theologians to re-examine the concept of wisdom in Proverbs. Matthew A. O'Kelly (2022, p. 98) sees that the concept of wisdom in Proverbs 1-9 must be understood in relation to the book of Deuteronomy, which shows a response of exclusive loyalty to YHWH. The concept of wisdom following the fear of YHWH is challenged. Rather, the fear of YHWH is the result of wisdom rather than the source of wisdom. This is considered relevant to the early post-exilic period in which Proverbs 1-9 was most likely written.

Mitchell A. Baris (2015, p. 129) highlights Proverbs 1 more in terms of morality. Wisdom is associated with the cause and effect relationship of internalizing wisdom in a person. According to him, Proverbs 1-9 focuses on the morals of the human soul and highlights the self-destructive consequences of immoral behavior as an internal phenomenon.

Wendy L. Widder relates wisdom in Proverbs 1:2-7 to voice and speech. According to Widder (2022, p. 1), the sounds that come out of the mouth can produce wisdom or on the contrary seduce and push someone into a coffin. Wisdom becomes a positive prerequisite for someone when they want to talk about something through their voice and mouth. Meanwhile, Arthur Keefer focuses on the audience of Proverbs 1:1-7. Some say the audience is "fools" and "young people". However, based on an examination of the grammatical and rhetorical factors in Proverbs 1:1-7, Keefer (2017, p. 103) argues that the ideal and intended audience of Proverbs 1:1-7 is only one, namely "the wise".

Based on previous studies on wisdom in Proverbs 1 as discussed above, it has not been seen that anyone has related it to Christian education, and generally wisdom is interpreted into the internal wisdom itself, its relationship with the audience, and social context or modern literary criticism. Yet as previously stated, Christian educators recognize wisdom as an element as well as a biblical value that is one of the ultimate goals of Christian education (Backfish, 2019, p. 382). This is significant for Christian education, especially in the Indonesian context.

In addition, given that Christian education in Indonesia cannot be separated from local traditions related to education, Christian education must remain critical of existing concepts/understandings (Sahertian et al., 2021, p. 147). In Christian understanding, worldly concepts or understandings about something can be called worldly wisdom or wisdom from below (Prajnamitra et al., 2020, p. 11). This is not wrong, but it needs to be re-examined in

the light of God's word (the Bible). One of the concepts of national education is stated in the motto of national education initiated by Ki Hajar Dewantara, namely "Ing ngarsa sung tuladha, ing madya mangun karsa, tut wuri handayani." In addition, there have been Indonesian theologians who have researched Christian education in Indonesia but they have looked at it from the perspectives of philosophy, leadership, teaching-learning management, and psychology (Baskoro, 2020; Marbun, 2020, pp. 72–74; Sidjabat, 2021, p. 2) There is a lack of research that looks at the significance of biblical wisdom in Christian education, especially when it is related to the philosophy of the national education motto.

This study aims to rethink the significance of biblical wisdom according to Proverbs 1:2-7 in Christian education and use it as a touchstone when criticizing the national education philosophy, as well as to see whether the two will complement or sharpen each other?

METHOD

The method used is a combination of theological interpretation and synchronic perspective. Theological interpretation is used to examine biblical wisdom according to Proverbs 1:2-7 and a synchronic perspective is used to criticize the philosophy of national education. Theological interpretation can be interpreted as an attempt to see Proverbs 1:2-7 as a sacred writing and a medium of divine communication for God's people throughout history until today which is drawn into the specific context of Christian education. The theme of wisdom in Proverbs 1:2-7 will be associated with Jesus Christ or the Trinity as the center of interpretation and using the researcher's theology. In addition, the theological interpretation will read biblical wisdom in Proverbs 1:2-7 with the aim of producing a paradigm transformation in Christian education in Indonesia which certainly has a relationship with the national education philosophy (Margaret, 2019, pp. 141–148).

A synchronic perspective on the philosophy of national education can be interpreted as the researcher's effort to understand and criticize the national education philosophy of the researcher with the current context of national education. Of course, it does not miss the context in which the national education philosophy emerged (Anderson, 2016, pp. 11–20).

The discussion begins by rethinking biblical wisdom according to Proverbs 1:2-7 through theological interpretation. Then, rethinking the philosophy of the National Education motto through a synchronic perspective. Then it ends with an effort to integrate the results of rethinking biblical wisdom according to Proverbs 1:2-7 related to Christian education and the results of a critical examination of the national education motto.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rethinking Biblical Wisdom according to Proverbs 1:2-7: A Theological Interpretation

Christian education (CE) should be able to develop creative and active integration between faith and knowledge (Backfish, 2019, p. 382). Faith and knowledge should not always be seen as opposites or even separated from one another (Esqueda, 2014, p. 91). One form of integration is the effort to connect biblical wisdom with CE. Biblical wisdom is essentially theological, practical, integrative, and transformative (Backfish, 2019, p. 382). This wisdom is able to become the right model for CE's identity, so that CE can be recognized as an education that exists in, is enveloped in, and transfers biblical wisdom to all

parties involved in it. It becomes significant for CE to rethink what is meant by biblical wisdom, especially that in Proverbs 1:2-7.

Biblical Wisdom Goes Beyond Knowledge and Intelligence

Wisdom is more than just knowledge and intelligence, as it must include practical outcomes and often involves dynamic and evolving virtues (Backfish, 2019, pp. 382–383). Although some try to fence off wisdom to only knowledge and spiritual intelligence, it still seems very idealistic (Marbun, 2020, pp. 3–4; Tarigan et al., 2022, p. 49). How can it be called wisdom if it is only "stuck" in the realm of idealism? Wisdom must have a form. Just as it is seen later in the person of Christ, the source of wisdom. He himself embodied wisdom in tangible forms such as the choice and use of words, actions, work, how to get along, how to solve problems and so on until dying on the cross. Wisdom reaches the realm of praxis so that it is appropriate to doubt the previous opinion that biblical wisdom is only idealistic knowledge and intelligence, it goes beyond both (Prianto et al., 2022, p. 58).

The above pillars of refutation are clearly stated by Proverbs 1:2-7. This section of Proverbs shows at least six aspects of biblical wisdom, which are theological, integrative, open to all, practical, transformative, and involve lifelong learning (Backfish, 2019, p. 384). All these aspects certainly go beyond knowledge and intelligence in the context of our current understanding, which usually only talks about cognitive and thinking and intellectuality and spirituality. In addition, these aspects are certainly significant for CE.

Biblical Wisdom is Theological

Wisdom is necessarily dependent on the source of wisdom which is God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10; Prov 15:33; Job 28:28; Ps 111:10). The fear of the Lord has many facets. First, it is serving and worshiping God in obedience (Deut 6:2; 1 Sam 12:14; 2 Kgs 17:36, 39). Second, turning away from evil (Prov 8:13; Job 28:28). Third, admire and honor God (Ps 33:8; Backfish, 2019, p. 384).

The fear of the Lord gives life and provides protection for God's people (Prov 14:24). The search for wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord, then wisdom leads to the knowledge of the Lord and will in turn yield wisdom from the Trinity (Prov 2:5-6). The Trinity is the source of wisdom, and anyone who wants to possess it must have a faithful dependence on the Trinity (VanDrunen, 2013, p. 154). Thus, biblical wisdom is inseparable from its theological nature of being sourced only in the Trinity (Prov 3:19-20).

Biblical Wisdom must be Integrative

Wisdom is present and active in all forms of a person's life. Biblical wisdom must be integrative because all aspects or facets of life are integrated with one another. Knowledge and observation of life and the nature in which it exists will definitely be integrated. One example of this is in Proverbs 6:6 which says, "go to the ant, O sluggard; consider its ways, and be wise." The writer of this Proverb uses biology to understand human nature and encourages his readers to do the same if they want to exercise the wisdom received. People who possess biblical wisdom do not limit their knowledge and learning to the scriptorium, but are open to considering the entire "library of the world" at their disposal (Backfish, 2019, p. 384).

Biblical Wisdom is Open (Offered) to Everyone

Biblical wisdom is open or offered to everyone regardless of age, social status, or level of education. Biblical wisdom is not only for the intellectual elites, or those servants of God who have a special calling and seem to have a special calling to acquire it. Verse 4 makes it clear that even the simple and the young can become possessors of wisdom, even for all who would seek it (Schipper, 2018, pp. 21–34).

Proverbs describes wisdom as a wise woman who invites everyone to a big party (Backfish, 2019, pp. 384–385). She does not send exclusive or VIP invitations to a certain circle, but instead calls everyone indiscriminately, everyone who passes by (Prov 8-9; Bay, 2020, pp. 393–394; Habel, 2021, p. 287). Compare this with the poor but wise man who delivered his entire village from the attack of a great king (Ecc 9:13-16; Prov 4:13). His poverty in no way hindered the achievement/result of his wisdom. Wisdom is not limited to those with power, wealth, seniority, or higher education, but is open to anyone who wants to possess it faithfully (Backfish, 2019, p. 385).

Biblical Wisdom reaches the Realm of Praxis

Biblical wisdom is not merely idealistic but always reaches the realm of praxis or applicability and is always focused on the realization of skills in the real world. Proverbs 1:3a highlights this by showing the results of having great insight and wisdom (cf. Prov 21:11, 10:5, 19; 2; 1 Sam 18:5). A biblical wise person does not stop at theory but moves towards and achieves praxis and application. For example, the wise man not only knows the best time to harvest a certain crop in a certain area, but he also acts on that knowledge by actually harvesting the crop (Prov 10:5) (Backfish, 2019, p. 385).

Biblical wisdom teaches that it is never enough to know the right answer, but rather how to respond correctly when faced with various situations and to know clearly how to use one's understanding of the truth to face the world at the right time. An example is the wisdom of Job. He did not rely on the answers he got when he asked many questions, but his wisdom depended on a much greater understanding and trust in God (Backfish, 2019, p. 385).

Biblical wisdom must be transformative

There are already four aspects of biblical wisdom described. Transformative is the fifth aspect. Since biblical wisdom is theological, integrative, open/offered to all, and reaches the realm of praxis, it is transformative. This transformative quality is displayed by those who fear God and seek wisdom and reflects it in morality, including honesty, integrity, justice, and equality (Prov 2:7-9). This transformation is possible due to the internalization of wisdom in a person, where wisdom will enter his heart and knowledge will delight his soul (Prov 2:10) (Backfish, 2019, p. 385).

A wisdom-seeking person is one who specifically practices righteousness, justice and equity, and integrates transformational qualities with practical outcomes (praxis) inherent in biblical wisdom. Ultimately, it is not enough for a biblically wise person to theorize in class about the right values of life, such as economic trade justice. He must actively practice it in the marketplace (Prov 16:11), where it will become a praxis flowing from his character that has been transformed by wisdom itself (Backfish, 2019, pp. 385–386).

This fifth aspect or trait of biblical wisdom is needed in CE because today, the generation involved in CE is different from the generation 25-30 years ago. They are a postmodern generation that has a myriad of reasons why they join and want to be educated in CE (interests, values, attitudes, relationship patterns, even worship styles) (McKINNEY, 2004, p. 152). The transformative nature of biblical wisdom can help them to be able to experience personality transformation in facing the context of the times, and remain firmly grounded in God as the source of wisdom.

Biblical Wisdom is Learned and Lived for a Lifetime

Biblical wisdom is a lifelong journey, it can even be likened to the "tree of life" in the garden of Eden because wisdom will continue to exist in a person's life as long as he lives despite the fluctuations of life (Yoder, 2018, pp. 11–12). Those who already possess this wisdom are encouraged to continue to listen and add valuable learning related to wisdom going forward (verse 5a). It is true that one can grow in wisdom, but no one can fully grasp it, because it is not about getting the right answer, but about how to live right in a complex and ever-changing world. Even until the world stops changing and man reaches his peak as a human being, one's growth in wisdom will still never be fully mature. Humans will never "retire" in terms of biblical wisdom, and wise people will certainly never want to do so (Backfish, 2019, p. 386).

The consequence of the above is that wisdom can be lost or diminished when it is no longer pursued and practiced. Solomon's life is an example of this. When he stopped modeling to the world how to be a person of biblical wisdom, he fell into the mire of ugliness and foolishness, this happened especially when he stopped depending on God.

Biblical wisdom is a theological, transformative and lifelong endeavor that is open to all those who desire to know and serve God. This means that biblical wisdom is holistic, an art of praxis in living life well in all areas of life. Biblical wisdom thus requires the integration of faith and all aspects of life from a broad range of learning (Backfish, 2019, p. 386). Biblical wisdom is not only the end goal of CE but also the means to that end (Taylor, 2020, p. 1). In short, Proverbs 1:2-7 is very appropriate as the model, means, and goal of CE.

The Philosophy of the National Education Motto: A Synchronic Perspective

"Ing ngarsa sung tuladha, ing madya mangukarsa, tut wuri handayani," delivered by Ki Hajar Dewantara, later became the motto of Indonesian national education. Of course, there is a philosophy behind it. Ing ngarsa sung tuladha can generally be interpreted as educators being role models. While Ing madya mangukarsa can be understood by educators as pioneers or providers of an idea. Then Tut wuri handayani refers to educators as encouraging students to move forward. The next discussion attempts to rethink the philosophical motto using a synchronic perspective.

Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha: Not Limited to Modeling but Transforming

Literally, *Ing ngarsa sung tuladha* can be interpreted as "in front as an example, example, and role model" (Suharta & Kristina Herawati, 2020, p. 71). However, the meaning of the sentence is not limited to how an educator becomes a role model but he must be able to instill pure and true educational values to the educator with the aim of transforming the

character of the educator. The transformation begins with the educator's efforts to reconstruct learning into a positive learning building and transform the character of the educator (Kristianto & Saija, 2021, p. 14). This transformation will occur when the learner himself succeeds in choosing and determining the direction of his learning by considering that he must have the spirit of leadership, motivator, and guide others. He is also passionate about having high values of integrity, courage, discipline, achievement, generosity, and work ethic (Kristianto & Saija, 2021, pp. 14–15).

This is significant for national education, that what must be considered is not only educators, programs, or systems (which are "njelimetimet" and tend to provide punishment like education in the Western world - in Ki Hajar Dewantara's view) (Suharta & Kristina Herawati, 2020, pp. 74–75), but focuses on the joint development of the learning community, namely educators and students. This is because if the motto is misused and too narrow in scope, it will only become something normative/formal, then what is more risky is that this motto becomes a boomerang for national education because it is only used as a "mask" through the wrong motivation (Rambitan, 2021, p. 44).

Ing ngarsa sung tuladha cannot be limited to the person and ethos of educators alone (Kaley et al., 2022, p. 1). This is too narrow. *Ing ngarsa sung tuladha* should be transferred to the students until they themselves dare to decide the positive steps to be chosen, stepped on, and lived. Thus, this motto is no longer centered only on educators but is centered on the existing learning community. *Ing ngarsa sung tuladha* transforms educators first and then transforms students, and culminates in the transformation of the learning community.

Ing Madya Mangun Karsa: Not Just Giving Ideas but Constructing Quality Personalities

Ing madya mangun karsa literally means that educators are pioneers or initiators (Marce & Purbonuswanto, 2019, p. 137). The ideas given are tied to the educator's hope that one day the educator will succeed or succeed both in terms of material, mental, and spirituality (Basuki et al., 2022, p. 23). However, educators cannot simply give a brilliant idea and then leave or release the educator to cultivate it on their own under the pretext that there is hope that can lead the educator to achieve these ideas.

Educators must follow up on these ideas. The educator must first ensure that the ideas are constructive rather than destructive. Furthermore, he must ensure that the ideas have been captured and deeply reflected upon by the educator. Then, he must be the first helper to help the naradidates achieve or put these ideas into practice in their lives. There is only one motivation for educators, which is to construct the educator's personality into a quality person (Febriyanti, 2021, p. 1633). Thus, educators cannot rest on their laurels after providing brilliant ideas. He must go further by ensuring the construction of a quality person in the students, and this process takes a long time (Mudana, 2019, pp. 77–79).

Tut Wuri Handayani: Not Just Encouraging but Maintaining the Harmony of Differences

Tut wuri handayani literally means that the educator is the one who pushes the learner forward (Marce & Purbonuswanto, 2019, pp. 137–138). But as a driver, he needs to respect every difference that students has. Of course, naradidates have diverse backgrounds and ideas. They should still be seen as valuable individuals and not just the preserve of certain

families. Harmony of differences is needed, in this case, educators can no longer only encourage students to move forward personally, but need to be encouraged to move forward together communally. Every step to achieve this, educators need to be the guardians of the harmony of existing differences.

As the guardian of the harmony of differences, educators are required to be active, sensitive, and wise in directing the learning community to achieve objective mutual expectations. The hope in question is the progress and even transformation of community life together which has a major impact nationally to globally.

Biblical Wisdom in Christian Education and the Philosophy of the National Education Motto: A Rethinking Integration Effort

The purpose of biblical wisdom in CE and the purpose of the philosophical points of the national education motto are related to one another, namely positively constructing the personality of the educator. The direction is clear: character, attitude, and the implementation of knowledge that goes beyond cognitive needs. However, CE basically has a more specific and noble goal of making biblical wisdom the ultimate goal and using it also as a means to achieve this goal. This is quite different from the philosophy of the national education motto, which uses the quality of the educator's personality as a means to achieve the goal of national education according to the philosophy, namely character education. In addition, the philosophy of the motto of national education also requires other means, namely students who are nurtured and guided so that there is collaboration between educators and quality students to achieve educational goals.

CE must retain its distinctive characteristics as an education based on and specializing in biblical wisdom. Just as biblical wisdom itself is beyond knowledge and intelligence (cognitive/brain) because it is theological, integrative, open or offered to everyone, reaches the realm of praxis, transformative, and is learned and lived for a lifetime, CE must also be based and aimed at these biblical wisdom characteristics. On the one hand, CE must be able to maintain its identity according to the characteristics of biblical wisdom, but on the other hand CE can also be open to positive philosophical values about education without losing the strength of its identity. One of them is the philosophy of the national education motto.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The development of the combination between CE and the philosophical motto of national education can be a recommendation for further research development which is quite interesting. Because it cannot be denied that points such as transforming, constructing quality individuals, and creating guardians of harmony of differences that are internalized in the philosophy of the national education motto, also exist in CE although CE has its own characteristics. CE can combine these philosophical points strictly and carefully. The main reason is that CE has its own characteristics, namely the internalization of biblical wisdom in educators and students who transform the learning community, and is not based on the philosophical points of the national education motto. Another reason is that the philosophical points of the motto require paradigm transformation in themselves. As has been done in this research through a synchronic perspective. This helps the philosophy to escape from the view

that transformation, the construction of a quality person, and efforts to maintain the harmony of differences are very dependent on one party, namely the educator. Whereas the real purpose of education is not only achieved by one party such as educators, but by a combination of all parties, namely educators and students or all those involved in the learning community.

CONCLUSION

Biblical wisdom is significant in Christian education in the Indonesian context and can strengthen the foundation of CE when it relates to the national education philosophy. Biblical wisdom is not only the goal of CE but also the means to achieve this goal. This is the hallmark of CE related to biblical wisdom in Proverbs 1:2-7, where biblical wisdom itself goes beyond knowledge and intelligence (cognitive/brain) because it is theological, integrative, open or offered to everyone, reaches the realm of praxis, transformative, and is learned and lived for a lifetime. CE ultimately leads to a conclusion that has two sides. On the one hand, CE must maintain its identity as CE, which is based and aims at biblical wisdom, and not simply merge with the values or philosophical points of the national education motto. On the other hand, CE can open itself to the three philosophical points, namely transforming, constructing a quality person, and creating or maintaining harmony of differences, provided that it continues to tighten analysis and criticism. Thus, CE and the philosophical points of the national education motto can collaborate in positively transforming all those involved in the learning community nationally and even globally, which does not only pursue pragmatic results, but continues to be fought for a lifetime, like biblical wisdom that is learned and lived for a lifetime.

BIODATA



Yulianus Latuihamallo adalah lulusan magister teologi dari STT Injili Indonesia Yogyakarta. Saat ini melayani di STAK Reformed Remnant Internasional sebagai dosen tetap. Melalui tulisannya kiranya dapat menjadi sumbangsih terhadap kemajuan ilmu pengetahuan di Indonesia.

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